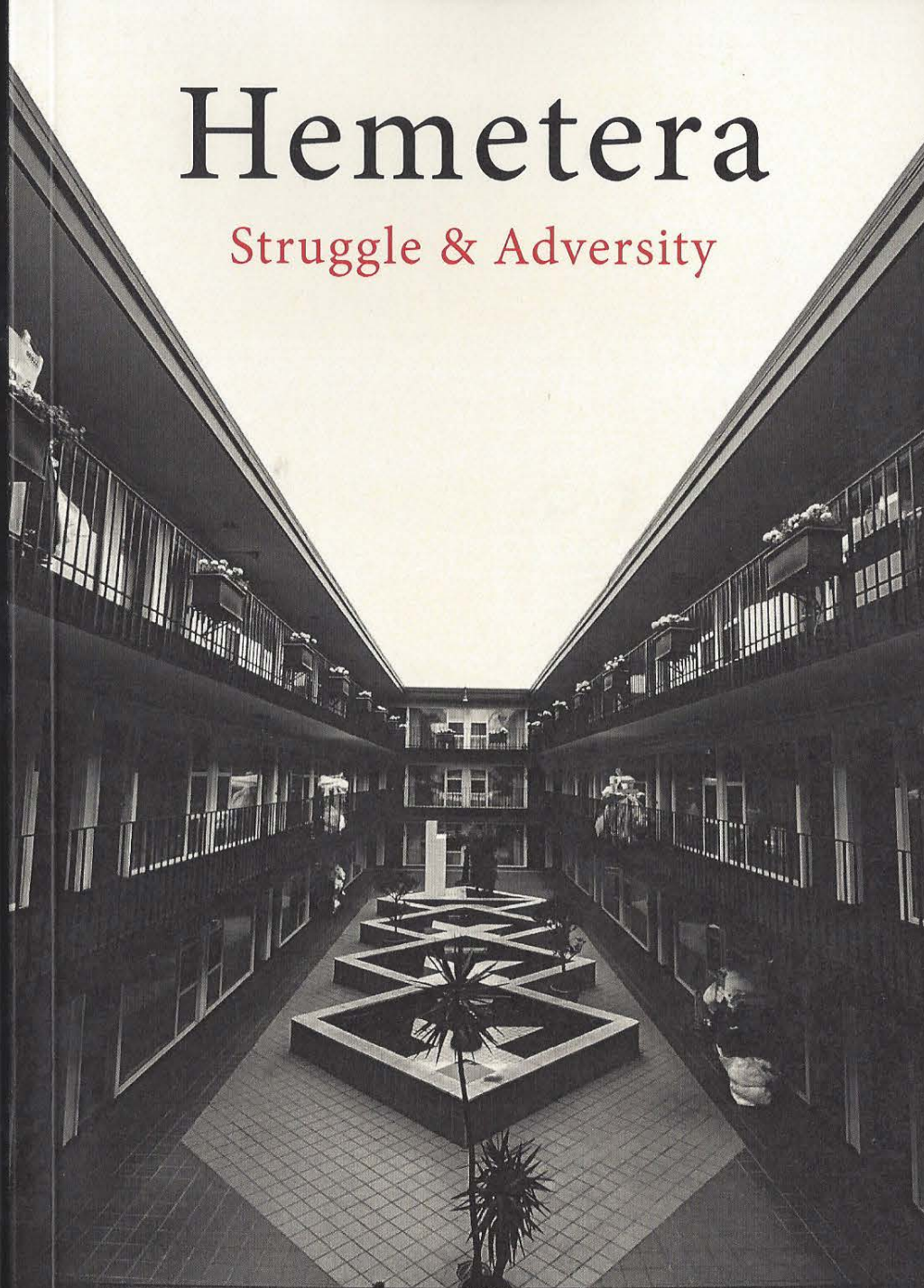


# Hemetera

Struggle & Adversity



2016  
Edition

## HEMETERA 2016

Editors: ..... Gerard Buckley '16  
Michael DeRosa '17  
Chris Legee '17  
Jessica Nguyen '16  
Ekene Ogbue '17  
Leonard Paul '17  
Michaela Tridento '18  
Sara Weaver '17

Advisory Editor: ..... Anthony D'Aries

Production: ..... Christopher Draper '17  
Leonard Paul '17

In 1946 a “doughty seedling poked its vigorous head” into the Regis community with the emergence of the new literary journal *Hemetera*, meaning “Our Own” in Greek. The journal was founded as an opportunity to spotlight the creative talents of the students of Regis, the journal welcomes submissions of verse, prose, artwork, and photography.



## EDITORS' NOTE

This year's edition of the *Hemetera* is filled with excellent submissions from the Regis student body. Inside, you will find powerful and politically conscious poetry, two fantastic memoirs, and a plethora of emotionally charged flash fiction pieces. Despite the large number of submissions in this year's issue, two themes were most apparent: struggle and adversity. It seems fitting that in such a palpably tense election year, we would receive such deeply political pieces of writing. In the opening poem, Shogofa Amini recounts harsh realities of injustice, and the costs of war. After, Michaela Tridento writes about the challenges of womanhood. Felix Judcine tackles the prescient issue of police brutality afflicting the African American community, and Kelsey Morton muses on geopolitics and the tragedy that struck Paris in November.

However, not all of these pieces depict adversity in such a global context. Many submissions depict personal struggles that are smaller in scope, but make for equally powerful reads. Joseph Woods opens our fiction section with the story of a Vietnam War veteran struggling with survivor's guilt; Emily McNamara writes a powerful flash fiction piece on the attempted assault of a young woman on a jogging trail; other powerful stories touch on the pains of illness, both mental and physical, on the loss of friends and loved ones, and on distant family relations.

The editors of this year's issue of the *Hemetera* are proud to publish such powerful writing. We thank you for reading, and hope you enjoy!

The Hemetera Team:

Gerard Buckley, Michael DeRosa, Chris Legee, Jessica Nguyen, Ekene Ogbue, Leonard Paul, Michaela Tridento, and Sara Weaver

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Poetry

<b>Shogofa Amini</b>	
Grab the Pen.....	10
Women Walking Alone.....	12
<b>Michaela Tridento</b>	
I am .....	16
What do you call a woman?.....	17
<b>Judcine Felix</b>	
Another One.....	18
<b>Kelsey Morton</b>	
A Global Glitch.....	22
<b>Jessica Nguyen</b>	
Chelsea Girl .....	25
The Scotch Mist and I.....	26
<b>Amy DiPace</b>	
Smoker's Cough.....	27
<b>Nicole Jean Turner</b>	
To Love an Alcoholic.....	30
The Generosity of Clarity.....	32
<b>Emily Murgo</b>	
Losing Tomorrow .....	33
<b>Joyce Crosby</b>	
Untitled .....	34

### Non-Fiction

<b>Maggie McCarty</b>	
GV.....	38
<b>Katlyne Britner</b>	
My First Car .....	44

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Fiction

<b>Joseph Woods</b>	
Veteran .....	50
<b>Sara Weaver</b>	
What They Tell.....	52
<b>Andrea Baez</b>	
Organs .....	58
Secrets in the Dark.....	59
<b>Yassira Diaz</b>	
Recess.....	60
<b>Sophia Benzan</b>	
Snow.....	63
<b>Emily McNamara</b>	
On Fire .....	66
<b>Jennifer Amaral</b>	
Bailey's Bargains.....	68
<b>Kylie Homem</b>	
Dig.....	72
<b>Elisabeth Lam</b>	
Wired.....	75
<b>Emily Murgo</b>	
(S)he .....	77
<b>Gerard Buckley</b>	
Cocoa Before the Courier .....	80
<b>Katelyn Galvin</b>	
From Beginning to End .....	86
<b>John Abbate</b>	
Breaking Through .....	88
<b>Michael DeRosa</b>	
Through the Marsh .....	92
<b>Lauren Mercer</b>	
Hot Coffee.....	96



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **Fiction**

<b>John Wise</b>	
A Coin Flips on the Roof .....	98
<b>Melissa Lopez</b>	
Unspoken .....	104
<b>Ekene Ogbue</b>	
A Simple Taste .....	106

### **Photography**

<b>Arianna Alcorn</b>	
8, 14, 15, 20, 21, 29	
<b>Christopher Draper</b>	
42, 43, 48, 56, 57, 62	
<b>Justine Murphy</b>	
65, 71, 78, 79	
<b>Leonard Paul</b>	
84, 85, 90, 91, 95	
<b>Nicole Jean Turner</b>	
102, 103	



*By ARIANNA ALCORN*

# Poetry

# GRAB THE PEN...

BY SHOGOFA AMINI

Grab the pen and write and write,  
write from beginning to end.  
Write about the injustice that happened to you.  
write about the pain that never healed.  
Write about the silent pain you  
can't do anything about.  
Write about the dead body you held and  
screamed over as people watched you drown in sorrow.  
Write about the body part you lost in an explosion  
and when you buried an empty coffin.  
Write and write—until  
you can't cry any more.  
When your eyes are dried,  
Your words shut down,  
The world is deaf to your voice,  
blind to see you,  
Grab the pen and write about you.  
Write about your dream of peace and  
about the better life lost to the war.  
Write about your son who died in your hands.  
Or write about your father who was killed in an explosion,  
or about your daughter who was beheaded or

burned alive on the street.  
Write about no justice.  
Write about the men who wears a suit  
and the face of a devil.  
Write about how hopeless you feel inside.  
How you cried enough.  
How you screamed enough.  
How the world is deaf now.  
Write about how you live in hell  
with no name of religion and humanity,  
where money comes before human life.  
Put the power in your pen and  
write about your history.  
Let the world know  
about your true identity,  
about your true love and cares.  
Fill the pages and papers,  
fill the books and shelves  
until your story can be read.  
Until your voice can be heard  
Until war stops. Grab the pen and write.  
This is the power that is in your hand.



# WOMEN WALKING ALONE

BY SHOGOFA AMINI

I am from long line of women who have walked alone ...  
From a land that smells of the blood of innocent people  
From a people who have lost everything in war – sons, daughters, fathers, and mothers  
From a people feeling hopeless  
I am from long line of women who have walked alone  
I am proud to be the daughter of a brave woman  
Who never gave up and showed her children the right way  
Who sacrificed herself,  
Who in childhood slapped me once to remind me  
How important it was to concentrate on my lessons  
She was the best mother in the world  
I am from long line of women who walked alone...  
From a place where I could never hear what my heart told me  
And I could only follow what family told me  
From a place where I couldn't express my wishes and I hid my hopes  
Where I couldn't support my rights and I had to accept  
What everybody said  
"You can't do it"  
"You can't go ahead; you can't achieve your goal"  
I am from a place where girls are exchanged for money and forced to marry  
Where I was humiliated for being for a quiet girl  
Where a teacher told me, "I don't care what you think  
Because you can't do anything."  
I am from a discouraging world that killed my talent because I was girl  
I am from long line of women who have walked alone...

From women who failed many times in different situations  
I lost my confidence when I lost my mother  
Feeling alone without her guidance and losing hope  
Feeling afraid to gain knowledge, fearing that there is no freedom  
From a culture where girls never see the outside  
Sitting in a cage like birds who don't know how to fly  
When my mother leaves me, she tells me—  
"Find your way. I cannot always be with you."  
She passed on the responsibility to me.  
I am from long line of women who have walked alone...  
I know now how to enter society  
And find my answers though I'm alone  
Learn from my experience, though I have failed many times  
I never give up  
I find my way and learn nothing is impossible to achieve  
I ignore those things that destroy my mind  
I learn that no one can help me except me  
I accept reality and I'm ready to face any problem  
Now I have ambition to achieve my goal  
To help my people bring peace to the next generation  
I am from long line women who have walked alone...



*By ARIANNA ALCORN*



*By ARIANNA ALCORN*

# I AM

By MICHAELA TRIDENTO

I am stronger than the woos that bend my bones  
I am weaker than the cry of a grey newborn  
I am forced to be strong and I am forced to be weak  
The clad restraints weigh heavily around my raw wrists  
Muscles torn from bone, without repair  
But still I prevail  
Their noise ruptures my eardrums and pierces the cortex of my brain  
My face smothered in the pure soil of the earth while they snicker,  
feed the ever-consuming fire suppressed in my soul.  
My womb bears no worth  
My body is a hindrance to myself  
The rough pads of my feet bleed, lashes still fresh glisten with anticipation  
I thirst for a moment of absolution despite the embellished marks  
that encapsulate me  
But still I walk among you  
Poised as a willow, the embodiment of strength and undying will  
I refuse to fall.  
I press on, cloaked with beauty but rendered by oppression.  
I am  
The Woman

# WHAT DO YOU CALL A WOMAN?

By MICHAELA TRIDENTO

What do you call a woman who has titanium fused within her bones?  
What do you call a woman who has a lion's bite, but the laugh of a lamb?  
What do you call a woman who has bright dreams that remind her of  
what she does?  
What do you call a woman who can light the darkest of rooms with  
her brimming confidence,  
The woman who could wipe the dirt from her cheek and never let it  
taint her eyes with such filth?  
Who never needs a reminder of who she is!  
But,  
What do you call a woman torn from herself?  
What do you call a woman shaking and shivering for her magic fix  
to keep her going?  
What do you call her when all life has been shredded from her eyes?  
The body of a woman now slumps around, losing herself each time  
she walks the streets.  
What do you call a woman who once had the power to have a dream?  
Could you look in the face of a woman who has nothing to lose, but  
a tattered soul that sleeps deep in her heart?  
A woman smothered in her own despair.  
Encapsulated by demons created by her own trashed mind.  
Could this possibly be the same woman?



# ANOTHER ONE

BY JUDCINE FELIX

Another one.

There goes another one.

Shot dead in the street.

Blood shed by the blue hooded sheets.

Another life,

Lost soul gone into the light.

Young life not lived to its might.

There goes another one.

Officer, officer I can no longer

Pay you respect because of the other

Authority, yes you may hold,

But deep down inside it's like

hatred ready to explode.

Officer, officer, please don't play God.

Don't take my life away because of my race.

Don't cut this life short because of what may.

Another life dead.

Another life lost.

God Almighty

I cry out to you.

For the lives that were taken,

Way too soon.

Martin didn't walk for this.

Malcolm didn't fight for this.

Momma didn't give birth

for my life to be treated like this.

And yet another one.

There goes another one.

Shot dead in the street.

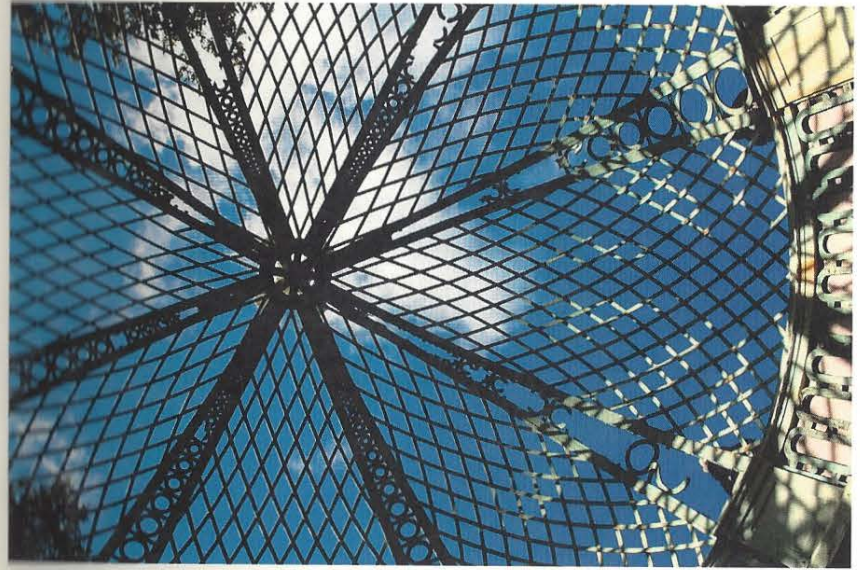
Blood shed by the blue hooded sheets.

Another one.

Bang Bang.



*By ARIANNA ALCORN*



*By ARIANNA ALCORN*

# A GLOBAL GLITCH

BY KELSEY MORTON

I know that I don't know much  
About international relations and such.  
I don't know why we choose to use violence,  
Or why it's bombs that break the silence.  
I know America's relations with Syria and Iraq,  
And unfortunately history can't be taken back.  
I don't know why we put one another in danger,  
And living with the fear is even stranger.  
I know our relationship with ISIS  
Has now become a global crisis.  
I don't know what motivates these actions,  
Or what determines the reactions.  
I know Paris, Beirut and Belgium are now healing,  
A mourning we too are feeling.  
I don't know why there is always a plan of attack,  
Or why it's necessary to fight back.  
I know that there must be a miscommunication,  
But that's no excuse for this dehumanization.  
I don't know what can open doors to redemption,  
Or why it's beyond each nation's comprehension.  
I know that the world has its imperfections,  
But we can work together and make the corrections.

I don't know if in the future we will form an alliance,  
Despite a group's acceptance for recent acts of defiance.  
I know that agreeing on foreign policy,  
Can never be done flawlessly.  
I don't know the difficulty of compromise,  
However that's no reason to ostracize.  
I know some blame our President,  
But he is not the cause of our discontent.  
I don't know why immigration is up for debate,  
Striving for a better life? We can all relate.  
I know some view the cause as discrimination,  
Of race, religion whatever the classification.  
I don't know why we live with the boundary of borders,  
Or why we stereotype some to be radical supporters.  
I know that we should pray for world peace,  
And you should be able to pray to whomever you please.  
I don't know the reason for murder or genocide,  
And why in each other we aren't able to confide.  
I know it's hard to understand,  
But it's time to lend a helping hand.  
I don't know why some prefer weapon over word,  
All this fighting for peace is absurd.  
I know that there's talk of World War III,  
But that won't be necessary.  
I don't know if this is only "The first of the storm,"  
However we can only hope for reform.



I know that we should construct a system that prevents  
Occurrences like these, such tragic events.  
I don't know if Hollande still has plans of "destroying,"  
However Obama knows the risk of deploying.  
I know our military is strong,  
But ground attacks could go wrong.  
I don't know if we will learn from our past choices,  
Perhaps this time around we will use our voices.  
I know that America and Japan were once at War,  
However we aren't enemies anymore.  
I don't know how much time is required,  
For the world to recover from what has transpired.  
I know that through the power of education,  
We can influence our people to begin a transformation.  
I don't know if we are running out of time,  
To prevent our people from future crime.  
I know we have to keep faith in humanity,  
Otherwise the world would will its sanity.  
I don't know what will come of tomorrow,  
Whether or not we will feel relief or sorrow.  
I know that there could be more lives lost,  
And the price of "winning" isn't worth the cost.  
I don't know what is going to happen next,  
The possibilities are all too complex.  
I know that together we can,  
Live in peace, a brotherhood of man.

## CHELSEA GIRL

BY JESSICA NGUYEN

Scuffed floors and that dingy white door  
The oven isn't working anymore  
The sweat of my brow is blistering and glistening  
my skin: made crimson by the abrasive heat. (Maddening.)  
There's no more food in the fridge.  
coolness, the only relief it can give  
Only got about a handful of bills  
to pay fees that grew into hills  
"Only when you're a peasant,  
nothing and everything is pleasant"  
Blue veined hands, surrounding me  
slap me hard, as reminders of what I am to be:  
Someone good, someone great, someone (debt) free  
(Someone who will make more money)

## THE SCOTCH MIST AND I

BY JESSICA NGUYEN

A bottle of Scotch  
Just me, myself, and I  
The mist rolling in  
Greenest pastures I can see  
No sign of human life  
Just how I like it  
Scotch and I get lost together  
We overcome the past, present, and future  
In just a few gulps  
It's swallowing therapy, cold medicine, and chamomile tea  
All at once  
My grey ivy cap and hairs match  
My khaki trousers as patched as can be  
My sweater, sad and sagged  
It's just a matter of time, I know  
I believe very much in freedom  
But no one understands  
How freedom can teach you so much about yourself  
Especially when you just want something simple  
Something no one can give you:  
Peace.

## SMOKER'S COUGH

BY AMY DiPACE

He smiles and laughs  
but when he talks about quitting  
the smile doesn't reach his eyes

"Ame' you know I'm trying"  
these words have now been  
engraved into my head

Followed by a look that  
would shatter my heart to pieces  
on our cold linoleum floor

An apple a day  
keeps the doctor away,  
not a pack a day, Dad.

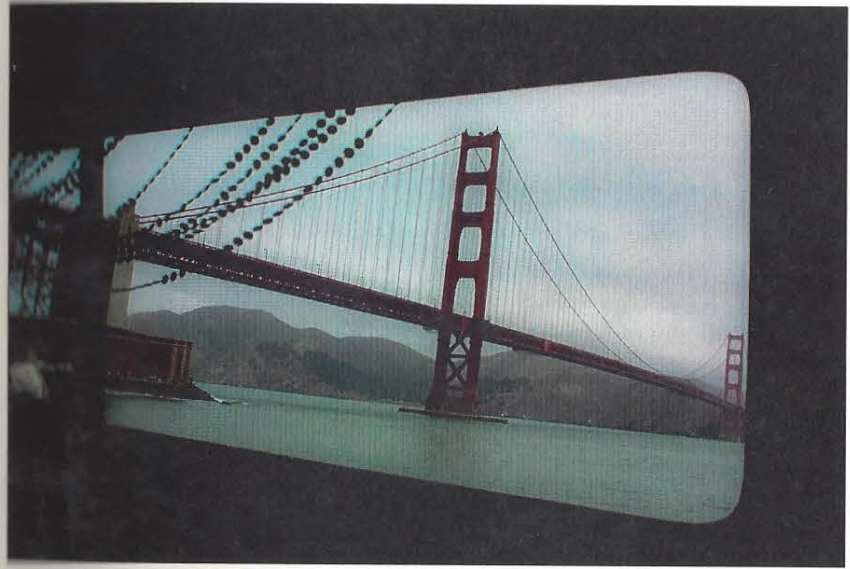
His lungs ache whenever he coughs  
his whole chest shakes  
like a tree in hurricane winds

They should create shelter  
for the lungs, heart, and ribs

Instead they just crumble  
around his cough  
a hopeless attempt

To rid the lungs  
of the black soot  
which has built up  
over a lifetime

No, my Dad isn't sick.  
He's just let his one vice  
get the better of him



*By ARIANNA ALCORN*



# TO LOVE AN ALCOHOLIC

BY NICOLE JEAN TURNER

He taught me many things.  
Of most, to love my garden.  
I learned to sew and mend, to attend to my anxious, ambivalent voices;  
in our garden I found clarity.  
I found patience at the roots of weeds,  
learned to obviate the obvious trivialities.  
Between two homes lay the rows  
little leaves, slices of life,  
they'd claw to the surface and wave, and in my eyes,  
I'd given birth over and over to pure beauty.  
Witnessed the exquisiteness of creation at my thumb tips  
overturning soil, playing God.  
It was a love affair that weathered my most inner self through the seasons  
reborn every March in the landscape I'd rooted in.  
In every storm, I held tight to stakes I'd long before driven into the ground.  
I'd ring twine around stalks that couldn't hold on alone, and found religion.  
In our garden I build a floral home.  
Scientists say it's global climate change that's intensified the weather.  
Drove out coyotes and allowed gentle predators back into woodsy areas.  
Maybe it was deer, maybe hoards of rabbits.  
Something hungry picked until the sprouts were nothing but corpses.  
After 3 years, I held the lifeless roses, and I thought  
I hadn't listened, and never really learned to love the garden like he did.

My hands weren't calloused like his.  
I questioned every moment of passion,  
every peat grain, every emptied watering can.  
Begging Mother Nature to validate the excuses.

He taught me many things,  
of most, you can't grow a garden watered by spirits in secret.

*The weather for tomorrow is a steady cast of showers that they  
say will birth spring flowers in my heart, but I forecast an overcast of  
grey and cloudy pencil shavings shading the sky from light to dark.*

# THE GENEROSITY OF CLARITY

BY NICOLE JEAN TURNER

I think the reason why the human mind  
is so drawn to beauty and dance, music and writing,  
is that for a moment the calamity is overtaken  
by a single stream of consciousness,  
for a moment the mangled mind no longer sounds  
like two radio stations colliding through a bent antenna,  
static lacerated melodies crackling between chatter, stop.

Drop of oil.

Oxford comma.

One swift chase into the embrace of a cello.

Throughout the day the brain takes by way of virtue  
every ephemeral dash of sound, drop of light  
compressed into little files —simultaneously, unbutton  
comprehend, amend, append, send back out.

Art in all of its forms gives  
the mind a period of time to turn off  
and experience the very essence of some  
one  
else.

# LOSING TOMORROW

BY EMILY MURGO

Your communion melts  
on my tongue  
a tasteless circle of  
betrayal,  
a crown of thorns,  
adorned with hymnal praise.

*God is watching,*  
so I hide my heart  
in the confessional,  
*forgive us our trespasses*  
I cradle my child in secret,  
*and deliver us from evil*  
and before you can see,

I whisper the final word  
to my prayer...

*Amen.*

# UNTITLED

By JOYCE CROSBY

My ears are keen to your silently spoken words  
From sunrise to sunset beside my head rest  
as you sleep so peaceful every night, my angel  
My eyes more into perfect shape of your face with constant thoughts  
of you  
you that I love, you that I married, you with whom I bear child  
as I write this poem  
my mind and heart race  
An unknown experience  
as if my soul and spirit escape my flesh  
Just to find you, my soulmate  
Felt my body in your arms and yours in mine  
your touch which silenced all my pain  
your kiss, the taste, so sweet  
As we lay beneath these satin sheets  
I, your wife, and you my husband  
here we've birthed our first child  
A masterpiece drawn and painted from scratch  
a bond so tight no one but God can detach  
you are inspiration, you are my soulmate  
I love you  
These, my five senses, I believe led me straight to you  
from sunrise to sunset  
constant thoughts of you.



# Non-Fiction

BY MAGGIE MCCARTY

Driving was the worst part. Crammed in the back of a Dodge Durango or a Toyota Sequoia, a Honda Odyssey or someone's small Civic, we would drive for 14-or-so hours across the desert to get home, the one in the Northern California woods that stood all alone, engulfed in trees. Legs ached by hour 3 as we stopped to fuel up in a dingy Blithe gas station, the one with the giant green dinosaur statue across the street, paint chipping off the eyes and claws. Our small family stood waiting in line at the gas station bathroom, waiting for someone to pass off the key attached to the long wooden pole, someone's initials carved in it, along with other profanity and discoloration, along with all of the other families making the long two-lane trek across the desert, leaving Arizona behind, and entering California. It was always a let down when we crossed the border, feeling that the minute we crossed the Colorado River, beige and shallow, the desert should have instantly faded away. The desert would be a mirage in the background, while trees, large homes, and green would replace the sandstone and tan that was our home. But no. The desert remained the same, no matter where the border was.

We would continue on, suitcases piled high in the trunk, making it hard to see out of the back of the car. After hour five or six, we'd stop again, fuel up, and decide on what fast-food restaurant to drive through. I preferred McDonalds, but my brother Peter, sitting squished behind pillows, headphone wires, and sweaters, complained, saying we always went there. *Of course we did, Peter, it's delicious!* I would think. My brother would complain that he never got his way, that McDonald's was the worst food he had ever eaten, continuing on with complaints. My parents would consult with my aunt and uncle via walkie-talkie, later upgrading to cell phones. Their kids were having a similar argument in the back seat of their Odyssey. My aunt would go to McDonald's, and my mum would go to Burger King.

They would pick up the meals, and the crisis would be averted for the moment.

There are only so many books you can read, only so many games you can play, movies to watch, and naps to take, before the reality of being in a car for over ten hours became intolerable.

Thoughts would whirl around my mind as the hours dragged on. "We have already played *The Police: Greatest Hits* album three times. The movie I wanted to watch is in the Finley's Odyssey; can I ride with them now? Is there a bathroom we can stop at? I drank that diet coke in three minutes, only because Peter said I couldn't. Where's my GameBoy? Did it fall out of the car when we stopped?"

Mum and Dad would take turns napping. Dad would always recline in the passenger seat, further pushing the back of the chair down, until someone shouted "Hey Daddy, Dad, DAD MY LEGS!" This was followed by giggling, and Dad dramatically pulling the seat up, folding forward like a cheap lawn chair. "Kids...kids help, I'm stuck!" he'd giggle. Peter and I would roar with laughter. "Doug, honey put the seat back; it's not safe," my mum would say, trying not to laugh. Our dog Reilly would bark and yelp from the back seat, though this became white noise after a while: he was a terrible dog to travel with.

Passing through L.A. traffic was inevitable. Sometimes we'd remember to stop: to use the restroom, grab a snack, and fuel up before hitting the long strip of stand-still freeway. Other times, we'd barrel through as tempers rose like ribbons from the asphalt. No matter what time we'd leave in the morning, in an attempt to beat the traffic, we'd still get stuck, bumper-to-bumper. We were silent companions with the other cars who were unlucky enough to get gridlocked in Los Angeles. L.A. is where tempers would fly, doubts about the whole trip would begin to creep in, making us question why we made this stupid drive in our old, beat-up Durango twice a year.



Auburn was my favorite part of the drive. It looked different from the desert that we left so far behind. Trees grew thick and tall, a mirage of green and brown as we'd twist down the narrow patchwork road that never seemed to get fixed. Reilly would perk up again, having finally rested after his long struggle with the back seat. He'd leap for the window, trying to get over the cup-holder barrier Peter and I created so he wouldn't breathe, and drool onto our faces. Dad would crack the window, and shove Reilly's tiny black nose into the crack, his black ears standing straight up, his tail spinning on his cream colored body, faster than it ever did in Phoenix. He'd catch the fresh scent of the pines against the decaying smell of old shops which families struggled to keep open. For Reilly, this was home.

Rarely did we arrive at the Grass Valley home in daylight. The narrow roads, worse than Auburn's, would bounce us around, gravel and rock hitting the sides of the car. The road was really only big enough to be a one-way, but that didn't stop cars from trying to pass each other. There was one way into the GV home, and one way out. I never got used to the deep, endless black between the barely visible trees. I'd look for deer, for any sort of life within the black. We could hear animals, howling, barking, crying, and yet they remained safely hidden. Mum would drive this last leg of the trip, knowing these roads better than she'd ever know the ones back home. She drove much slower than Dad, which is not so bad after so much driving. All we wanted was to get to the GV home, settle in, and sleep, because sitting in a car for 14 hours was exhausting. And yet, Mum would drive slow and steady, switching high-beams on when no one else was coming, quickly shutting them off when another car dared to share the road with our small caravan.

We would arrive sometime in the afternoon or evening, the sun slowly setting behind the trees, the smell of pine and dirt seeping into our travel-weary bodies. Legs would unwind themselves, bodies would fold out from cars, aching, tired, and somehow lighter. The kids would pile into the house, exploring the familiar vastness that was my cousin's vacation home. We would check drawers for things

we remembered leaving. Sometimes we'd find money and things from last Christmas, other times we'd find nothing at all. Yet, the thrill of opening the musty drawers and cabinets was its own reward. We'd go around flushing toilets, turning the sinks and showers on and off, making sure the house was working exactly as it should be. We had learned from past visits. Our parents would bring the suitcases in, instructing us that these suitcases must be put away immediately, saying "no messes this year, kids!" We'd let the dogs out back, who had also endured the journey across the desert. Reilly had to stay on a leash after running into the woods for what felt like days, but may have only been hours, in one of our earlier visits.

I never did get another chance to go back to Grass Valley. I was invited by my cousins, but never took up the offer, always thinking there would be another time. Several years ago my aunt and uncle sold the home to a nice lawyer and his family.





*By CHRISTOPHER DRAPER*



*By CHRISTOPHER DRAPER*

# My FIRST CAR

By KATLYNE BRITNER

Sophomore year of high school is in full swing, and I have just received my license. I was walking into my house to share the great news with my younger brother, Derek. Afterwards, my parents told me they had a present for me.

"Maybe it will be a cute wallet that my license can be carried in," I had thought. I couldn't have been more wrong. They walked me outside and pointed to my dad's silver 1997 Mercury Sable and said those magical words that every newly licensed teenager dreams of hearing: "this is your new car!"

I was beyond excited. If you were to look at my car, you would probably wonder why I was so excited. It is not a beautiful car, but it was my first car, and my first big responsibility with my new license.

I didn't have school the following day, so I had to wait the entire weekend, including Friday, before I could show everyone my new car. I spent the entire weekend driving around, as happy as could be. Monday finally came around and I got to show off my car to all of my friends. After the school day ended all of my friends and I huddled into my car.

"What should we name it?" One of my friends shouted.

After two minutes of thinking, and about a hundred names we decided to name him Craig. We didn't care if it sounded weird to name a car. Craig was now my best friend, and I loved him for all of his problems.

Craig made it through the entire school year, but as soon as the summer started, things went south. On the second day of

summer vacation, his air conditioning decided that it was done, and stopped working. As I drove to my house to see if my dad could fix it, the check engine light came on. My dad couldn't fix either problem, so we drove off to the mechanic. No one could fix my car, because of how old and broken it was.

I didn't think things could get worse, but they did: the back door began acting up. My friend Hannah was sitting in the back seat, buckling her seatbelt, when the door whipped open and she fell out of the car. From the driver's seat, I could see Hannah rolling on the ground screaming, while she fell under the force of gravity. I slammed on the brakes. My friends Lindsay, Amari, and I all jumped out of the car to see Hannah in tears from laughter. She could not control her laughter, which sounded like a raspy smoker's laugh. When we realized that she was safe, we were all laughing, unable to contain ourselves.

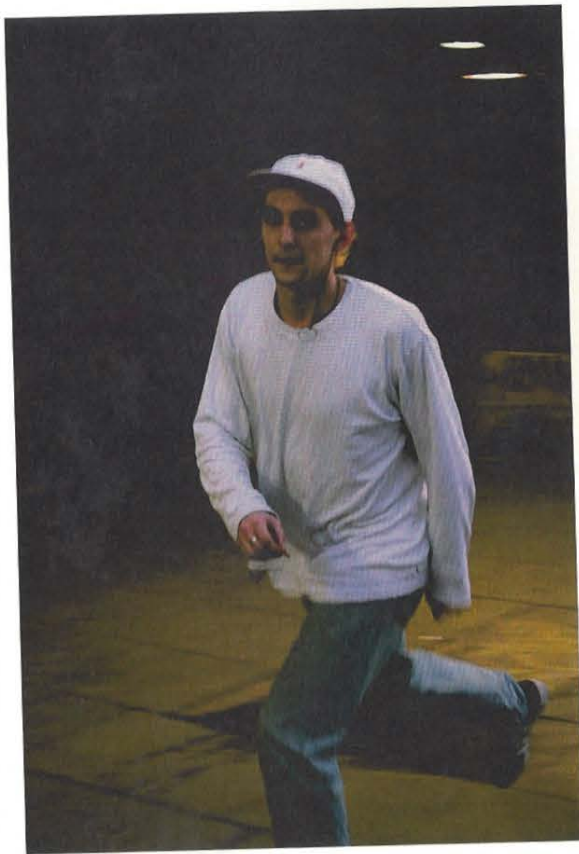
As soon as senior year rolled around, Craig was known by everyone in the school. People knew him for the bad stories, and for the good. Craig was a safe place for my friends and I to spend time in before practices for our volleyball, basketball, and softball teams. We could vent about our problems with family, school, or anything else. My teammates and I would get food before every practice. He became a part of my their lives, not just my own.

Eventually, Craig started to get worse. When I would turn him on, he would shake for about ten minutes, especially when it was cold. Sometimes he would die, at the worst possible times. He died on the highway a couple of times, and in neighborhoods. When he died on the highway I was in the fast lane, of course. During the winter he was known for not starting at all. I received multiple detentions for being late, due to him not starting up in the morning. I was told that it "wasn't a good enough excuse" for being late. It reached a point where I had to call AAA so many times that they knew me on a first name basis. By the end of the year Craig was just holding on.



It may seem strange to care so much about a run down car, but your first car is meant to teach you how to improvise and handle future breakdowns. I tend to laugh when bad things happen with Craig and I. He is currently off the road, due to him not passing inspection and we may have to send him to a junkyard. Despite all of that, first cars are a great experience, especially when they aren't new cars.





*By CHRISTOPHER DRAPER*

# Fiction

# VETERAN

BY JOSEPH WOODS

As I walk along the wall, I see thousands of names etched into the shiny black marble. I stop and see the name I've been searching for, the white letters somewhat fading, like the memory of the men who lost their lives.

I can see John's face, and I'm taken back to Nam. *"It's so fucking humid in this country. At least it's not raining like yesterday."* We were humping up the side of a hill in the jungle, somewhere in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam.

When we finally got to the top of the hill, we started digging our foxholes. John looked over at me asking, *"Hey Mike, what do you think you would have done if you didn't get drafted?"*

*"I would have probably worked at the old meat packing plant, until I found a better job."* I didn't have much back home, just my mother and father; John and I became very close during our days in basic.

I had just finished digging my foxhole when Sgt. Bailey told everyone to shut up, and listen. Then I heard a gunshot, and saw Sgt. Bailey hit the ground, blood pouring from the side of his skull. I frantically crouched into my foxhole and looked to John's across from me, to make sure he was OK. Bullets flew in from all directions, with mortars being dropped all around us. All of a sudden, I saw a Vietnamese soldier charging at me with a bayonet fixed to the end of his AK-47. I had no choice but to aim down the sights of my M-16, ending his life with the pull of a trigger. I looked over at John, he was clenching his bloody right arm with his left hand. As I ran from my foxhole over to his, the sharpest pain I've ever felt ripped through my thigh. John reached out and pulled me into his foxhole, squeezing my bloody leg as I cried out in pain. My leg poured blood, and John

wrapped his belt around it, using it as an improvised tourniquet to stop the bleeding. *"Don't worry pal, you're going to be just fine."*

A voice on the radio started to call in air support to stop the Vietnamese advancement, but mistakenly gave the wrong coordinates for one of the napalm drops. Moments later, I looked to my left towards my old foxhole, to see half of my squad burning from napalm.

The next second, a grenade fell into the foxhole. For a fraction of a second, John looked at me for the last time, and jumped on it, yelling *"Grenade!"* as his life ended before my eyes.

Now, as I look at his name, and the names of so many others etched into this wall, I wonder why my name isn't up there with them.



# WHAT THEY TELL

BY SARA WEAVER

"Oooh, oooh, wait! This guy!" Sidney screeched from the passenger seat, pointing vigorously at an old man in a blue Honda Civic. His back was hunched over, old age contorting his features, with a twinge of sadness in his eyes. Sitting in a beat up puke-colored green Bug, Sidney had begged her sister to go for a ride in her car. Her sister had agreed, as long as she could drive.

"Hell no, he's too old to even be considered. Death's basically sitting shotgun." Tory made a face, wrinkles bunching around her nose. She turned to the car on her left, a green and silver Mini Cooper. "Now, look at her. She's definitely worth it. The face, the body, hell, I bet she even has a great personality; the entire freaking package." She rolled her eyes and flashed a middle finger at a black truck that swerved in front of her. "Didn't even have the decency to turn on his damn blinkers!" She yelled, before smacking her hand back on the steering wheel horn. Sidney jumped.

"Come on, anyone can have a story. Just cause he's old, doesn't mean he hasn't got a good story," Sidney argued.

"I bet he does. He could do sky diving for a living, or hang gliding. Maybe he joined the circus? Except the circus is more like American Horror Story than those boring shows, like a freak show." Tory's nose crinkled again, her voice laced with sarcasm.

"No way, I bet he fought in the war. Hmm... Vietnam or World War I? Wait, when did they even happen? I can't remember at all. Would that count as interesting, or is it PTSD?" Tory turned her head to keep an eye on the black truck. She rolled her eyes when Sidney wasn't looking, and tapped her fingers against the wheel, feeling the dry smoothness under her calloused fingers.

"Okay, what about that guy?" Tory nodded in the direction of the young man sitting in a Toyota with a concave dent in the fender, and a little boy in the backseat. The little boy was wearing a pair of overalls with smiley faces for buttons.

"What a hunk, but he's probably an asshole," Tory said, frowning in his direction.

"If you think so, then what's his problem?" Sidney argued.

"Hmm... Let me see, cheater, asshole, douchebag, player, homewrecker, one night stand. Pick one, or all of the above. I mean, look at him. That baby, I bet you, is from a one nighter."

"You know, just because Justin was a cheater doesn't mean every guy is, or for that matter, will be." Tory scoffed and made another face at her sister.

"Doesn't mean you can trust 'em, either. Can you open that bag of chips?" Sidney reached around the back of her seat, fingers wiggling.

"Got it." The bag was crinkling music to Tory's ears. The blaring sounds of the highway filled her ear with a more raspy and growling music. She eyed a blue Volkswagen warily.

"Wait, take a look at this dude..." Sidney whistled and jerked her head at a white Audi, which had obnoxious eyelashes on the grill. "What a guy." Taking a quick peek, Tory took note of the man's muscled arms, his youthful face with a little bit of stubble growing in, and his short hair, which Tory loved. There was a dog sitting in the passenger seat, a Shetland Sheepdog if her guess was correct.

"Let me guess: sexy police officer on his day off, going to meet his girlfriend." Tory stole another glance and matched his speed.

"He can arrest me any day." She snuck a wink at Tory. "But, even better, male stripper that dresses as a cop, on the way to see his



girlfriend, who's also a stripper." Sidney made a face at Tory that said "one-up that".

"What the hell? There is no way that his girlfriend is a stripper. His girlfriend is in the hospital, he's bringing their dog in for therapy, today is his day off. And he's driving her car. No guy would have something as tacky as eyelashes on his car." Tory eased her foot on the gas pedal a little more, they were neck and neck with the cute guy.

"What if he doesn't have a girlfriend? Or he has two, a double life, he's a con man!" Sidney's voice rose with the plot of the man's story.

"He has a hidden talent of walking while doing a handstand, and he went to clown college," Tory chimed in.

"He has a fetish for ankles or fish." Tory laughed, her foot easing on the gas with her movements.

"This is great. Why did we start this?" Sidney turned her face to Tory.

"Hmm..." Tory tapped her thumbs against the wheel, and switched into the middle lane. "I guess... I started it. Before dad left, and before you were born, he used to create stories out of nothing, pulling together words, strung from the air."

Sidney was silent, waiting patiently. Tory pulled the car into Exit 23.

"Well..." Tory began. Sidney turned down the beats of the music to listen to Tory's choppy words.

"You know when someone tells you a story that's so beautiful that you try to remember every word, but no matter what, it never sounds as good as when that person first told it? You were too young to understand it when dad left. But, I guess... These stories are all...

Attempts. Or wishes for something I'm positive won't ever come true." Tory shook her head, as answering a silent question.

Sidney watched a blue truck pull by them as Tory checked to make sure she was clear to merge.

"Look, it's okay that you don't remember dad. Maybe it's even for the best. He was a bit of a jerk anyway." Tory had to break the silence.

"It's okay, Tory. I can't hate someone I never knew."



*By CHRISTOPHER DRAPER*



*By CHRISTOPHER DRAPER*

## ORGANS

BY ANDREA BAEZ

I am searching for the surface, but can't find it. My body numb, the water as cold as the piercing look my mother would give us as children. Sunday mornings, the warm sun in my blinds. My dad holding my hand, wind blowing against my closed eyes. The start of fall, the smell of rain, driving with my favorite CD on repeat, singing "*love is watching someone die*." I'm on the monkey bars, my grip slipping just before breaking my arm. I feel myself letting go of each moment like air bubbles. Who's going to watch me die? In the library, or 10,000 feet in the air, my blood is the bitter wind on a January day. I am frozen, rooted in this water like a weed in a stubborn garden. I try to replay in my mind how I got to this point. My body is stiffening and I am sinking. I try to tread but can't find my legs. My body is an anchor, pulling me under. I keep telling myself that I will make it out, but I know that this is where my story ends. I no longer feel the strength to keep moving. Mrs. Skirdla is yelling at me to raise my hand but I don't care. The water pulls me, and I try to reach the surface but it's useless. I close my eyes and let it consume me. I am the water.

## SECRETS IN THE DARK

BY ANDREA BAEZ

We are skin against skin. Sweat trickling down our spines. Your touch is electric. I pull you in closer. Hands shaking from our clumsiness, my breathing heavy, the pressure of your slurring words against my neck. In this dark room, on unknown sheets, we are bodies moving to background music, moving into unfamiliar territory. We are one in this house of spilt beer and crowded hallways. We lay against each other, staring at the ceiling, knowing that when we move forward our goodbyes will mean nothing. In this moment I am you, and you are me, out of breath and out of time. We've become pieces, tiny fragments within each other.



# RECESS

By YASSYRA DIAZ

"It's time for recess! If you have not completed your homework, you have to stay in today," Ms. Gerald said to the class.

The kids grabbed their things and shot out of the door. Ms. Gerald sat down and released a deep breath. She looked up; a girl with a pony tail rested her head on her crossed arms. Her jeans were faded and ripped at the bottom, stopping at her ankles, revealing one pink and purple polka-dotted sock, and a black one. Her Converse sneakers had once been white, but faded to tan. Her right foot rested on her left.

Ms. Gerald walked over to the girl, and with one finger, she tapped her on the shoulder. The girl moved her head rapidly and slapped Ms. Gerald in the face with her ponytail. The girl looked up, confused, her blue eyes gazing into Ms. Gerald's.

"Are you okay Janey? Do you know that it's recess time?"

Janey nods. "Yes Ms. Gerald, I am just not feeling well."

Janey made sure to pull her sleeves all the way down to her fingers, holding them there, as she put her head back down on her arms. Ms. Gerald sat down next to Janey; she gently put her hand on the girl's arm. Janey popped up and put her hands under the table.

"Janey, is everything alright? Do you think you need to go home?"

"No! No Ms. Gerald, I will be okay."

"How about we have the nurse look at you then?" Ms. Gerald suggested.

"I said no!" Janey yelled back.

"Janey, if there is something wrong, please let me know, okay?" Ms. Gerald looked at her for a response. Janey simply put her head down.

\*\*\*

As all the kids came running in, Ms. Gerald stood up, trying to calm the class. One of the kids shook Janey and asked her why she didn't play with her. Janey sat, motionless, as her sweater fell off of her shoulders. Ms. Gerald walked over to tell the girl to stop, accidentally pulling Janey's sweater halfway off of her body, revealing Janey's arm.

Ms. Gerald stopped.

The girl stopped.

Janey ran out the room.



BY CHRISTOPHER DRAPER

## SNOW

BY SOPHIA BENZAN

Even though fresh snow covered the ground, and the wind whistled so hard it made their ears ring, Jacob and Sabrina decided to venture out into the cold to smoke. Sitting on the steps of Morrison house, they took the fire into their lungs. This was like any other day: Jacob complained about the snow because he wasn't really the outdoorsy type, but Sabrina loved it. The winter had always been Sabrina's favorite season; When that white powdered fell, it meant a new beginning. The two were contemplating returning to the warmth of their dorm when Sabrina's phone rang. She hesitated to pull out her phone in the snow, but she did it anyway. Sabrina's roommate Lacey had texted her, "We need to talk when you get back to the room". This made Sabrina panic: so many thoughts raced through her mind.

"Did something happen? Did I do something to piss Lacey off?"

Jacob reassured her as they walked back to their dorm. As the pair entered the room, Lacey wasted no time. "Jacob you need to leave, I need to speak with Sabrina alone."

Sabrina's face became hot, she was sure that she had done something wrong, and that Lacey was about to yell at her. Once Jacob had left, Lacey began to sob uncontrollably. Shocked, Sabrina embraced her.

"What happened Lacey? Are you okay? What can I do? What's going on?" In between the sobs all Sabrina could make out was "she's dead."

Sabrina's heart sank and she began to violently shake Lacey's shoulders, shouting "Who is dead? Tell me! Stop crying and tell me what's going on!" Lacey attempted to pull herself together, and told

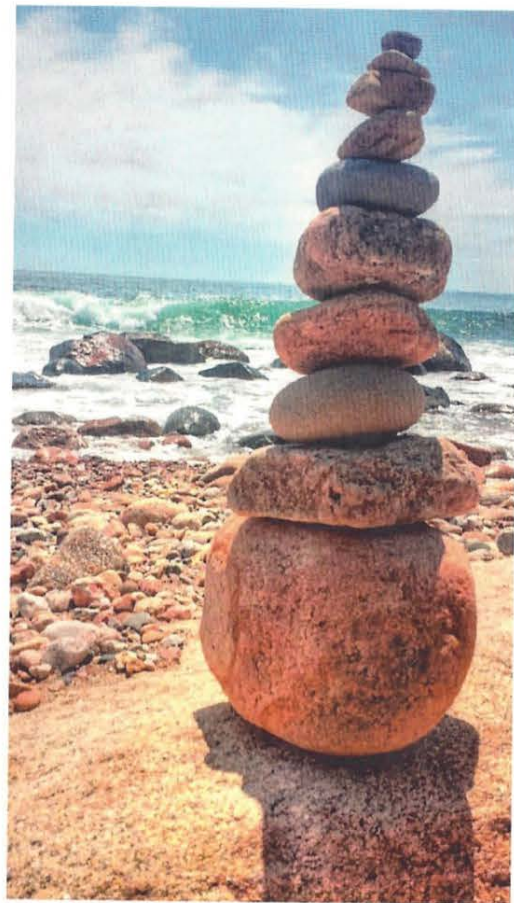


Sabrina everything. Their friend Dahlia had passed away, and she had just gotten a call from Dahlia's family. Sabrina's eyes began to burn as if she was about to cry, but nothing came falling down her cheeks. She sat in place, stunned, and began to feel as if her throat was going to close up. Lacey began to hug Sabrina, who could only sit, unable to move. As Lacey began to speak, Sabrina snapped out of it. She shook lacey off of her and did the only thing she could think of: she ran.

She took off down the stairs, out the front door, and into the snow. She collapsed into the snow, waiting for that new beginning. She waited for everything she had just heard to be erased, to somehow go away. She sat still, shivering, thinking of Dahlia. That was when the tears began to stream down her face. She knew that she should go inside and be with Lacey, but she could not bear the thought. She knew they should get through this together, but it had felt as if the falling snow had turned her to ice. It felt as if her whole body was going numb, and there was nothing she could do. She couldn't move.

She could only wait in the snow for her new beginning. As the snow continued to cover her, she could only think of Dahlia's face. She was so deep in thought that she didn't hear Jacob walk up to her. He pulled her up to her feet, and helped her slide on her coat. Until Jacob helped her put it on, Sabrina hadn't realized that she wasn't wearing her coat when she left. Jacob pleaded with her to go inside with him, but all Sabrina wanted to do was to stay outside in the snow. Sabrina thought that if she went inside, and her body warmed up, that numb feeling would go away. Without that numbness, all she would have were her feelings.

Jacob and Sabrina made their way back to Morrison house. They sat on the steps, as a fresh coat of snow fell and the wind whistled in their ears. Sabrina sobbed as Jacob held her in an embrace. She cried for all the times she had with Dahlia, the times she would never have, and for the pain that all her friends would now feel with this news. They sat on the steps of Morrison house, took the fire into their lungs and realized that this wasn't like any other day.



By JUSTINE MURPHY



# ON FIRE

BY EMILY MCNAMARA

*Got on my knees and asked my Lord to keep me clear  
from the devil cause my girl  
She she's on fire,  
Yeah now everything so cool,  
Yeah*

Lil' Wayne's raspy voice blares into my ears as I run down the rocky hill in First Woods. The workday had dragged, and there was nothing like a long, therapeutic run to clear my mind from the argument I had gotten into with a customer. Knowing I could come here when I punched out at five is what got me through my day. Every Sunday this summer I made my way through these woods, breathing in the fresh air and taking in my bright, green surroundings. Deep breathing, sweat dripping, music blaring.

At a fork in the dirt path, I take a left, heading toward the main road. I had these trails memorized, as I should. I'm about to be captain, after all.

I come to the clearing where the main street separates the two forests. Looking both ways, I cross the road and enter Second Woods. This is my favorite part of the run, looking up at the canopy above me to see the sun beam down through the leaves, illuminating them. I begin to mentally prepare myself for the upcoming hill, just as my runner's high starts to kick in. The trail wraps around a bend ahead of me, and I turn with it.

*Mama bad,  
Mama mean  
Kerosene,*

*She's on fire, put her out  
As of matter of fac-*

Something sharp crushes into the back of my head as my face hits the dirt. Searing pain rushes across the perimeter of my skull. I reach for the throbbing area, and bring my hand back into my blurred vision to see it covered in blood. I gasp dryly for air, tasting nothing but dirt. Dirt on my tongue, dirt on my lips, dirt up my nose, dirt in my eyes.

Trying to prop myself up, I begin to feel around for my phone. A blow to my right side knocks me back onto the dirt, as somebody kicks me in the ribs. Having lost the little breath I had left, I begin to see shades of blue and stars twinkling across my vision. Yanking. Pulling. Someone is dragging me off the trail. I begin to kick and flail, trying to rid myself of their tight grip on my leg.

Hands on my spandex, he begins trying to yank them down. I kick my legs and twist and roll my body around, trying to evade him. Realizing he won't be able to pull them down, he begins trying to rip them down the side. I scratch whatever I can reach: his face, his eyes, his neck. I try everything to get him off me. There's a lump in my throat, and I find myself unable to scream. Only tight, constricted sobs leave my mouth.

He says something hateful to me in a language I don't understand. He grabs my hair and slams my head into the ground again.

A dog barks. My attacker stands up quickly, looking around and bolting toward the woods' entrance. Another bark, and I hear footsteps running over to me, yelling. I try to sit up, wincing at the pain in my ribs. I look up, seeing my neighbor and his dog.

"Don't worry, honey. He's gone. The police are coming. You're safe now."

# BAILEY'S BARGAINS

BY JENNIFER AMARAL

*Beep. Beep.* I scanned the rest of the items in front of me—four apples, a Snickers bar, a pint of Ben & Jerry's Pumpkin Cheesecake ice cream, and a *People* magazine. "\$15.25, please." The strawberry-blond, blue-eyed college girl stared back at me—smiling with her flawless pearly white teeth. I waited, wishing I could ooze that much confidence, as she dug through her Louis Vuitton purse with her perfectly manicured fingers—a Chinese symbol that looked familiar etched in jet-black ink peeking out from under the cuff of her shirt.

"Nice tattoo," I said.

"Oh, thank you. I got it done this past weekend—I wanted something artsy, but simple.

"That's cool, what does it mean?" I asked.

"Hope—my name," she said, and I was secretly in awe, as I looked back at the computer screen—*Bailey's Bargains* printed across the top of the monitor in big, block letters, letters that have been partially scratched off with age.

Glancing around at the pristine white walls and polished, wooden floors, I couldn't help but sigh nostalgically. It took a few months, but the once ancient-looking grocery store, with a little elbow-grease, proved its potential. I worked every day during my Christmas break with my boyfriend, George, and his mother, Bailey, to fix up the store. Most high school girls would've cringed at the cob-web ceilings that needed to be cleaned and the wooden, splinter-inducing floors, but not me. I loved helping people, so I didn't mind getting down and dirty with the rest of them—my dream to become part of the Peace Corps one day, propelling me forward.

A phone rang and I glanced up to see Hope balance her cell-phone on her ear with one shoulder, holding up an index finger. She would be a few minutes. Thankfully, the people left in the store opted for the self-checkout option. I combed a hand through my ponytail and brushed off my khaki pants—having restocked the milk aisle earlier, only to spill a carton in the process. I remember cursing myself for having been so clumsy but luckily, Bailey didn't hold it against me—George had done the same thing before he went off to college three months ago.

George. Thinking about him, I felt a little pang in my chest. He rarely called anymore and when he did, we only spoke for five minutes, before he had to rush off to a study group session. I glanced over at the bench an elderly woman was sitting on with her bags, probably waiting for the shuttle bus to the senior center down the road. It was the same bench George and I had built together his junior year and my sophomore year of high school—having etched our initials under the left wooden leg. It was also the first time he said he was falling in love with me.

I heard the audible sound of the bell ring as the door to the entrance swung open. A tall, brown-haired male of about twenty-five walked in.

"Roy! There you are!" Hope said as she sauntered out of the bread aisle she had disappeared into, placing a loaf on my counter. "I can't believe I left my wallet in your car."

"It's okay, babe. It happens," Roy said, placing a sweet kiss on Hope's lips, before turning to me with a twenty dollar bill.

"She would have a hot boyfriend," I thought as I wordlessly took the cash from Roy's outstretched hand and returned the correct change as Hope droned on about her internship at Sassy Sally. Apparently, she was asked to model in an upcoming fashion show that would reveal the new spring clothing line; proceeds from the event would go towards St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.



I handed the bag of items to Roy and watched them both walk out of the store—Hope’s hand nestled in the crook of his elbow. I saw him help her into the car before riding off in his Mustang towards Weymouth Avenue. It was like a scene out of a Rachel McAdam’s movie.

I took off my apron and went to sit down on the bench I built with George. I looked at my hands—calloused and in need of a manicure from all the nervous biting. The floors looked the same way, scuffed and in need of another polish.

I felt my phone vibrate in the pocket of my khakis and pulled it out. It was a text from George—*Can’t talk tonight. I have a late-night study session with the boys. Big exam tomorrow!*

I threw my phone on the bench frustrated, and stared at the now-empty grocery store. The once-inspiring pristine white walls now felt suffocating.

I leaned back against the bench as I debated asking Bailey about changing the color to yellow and felt it shake with a loud groan under the weight of my body. Puzzled, I crouched down to take a look, noticing the left wooden leg was slightly crooked. With a sigh I grabbed a piece of cardboard from the side station at my register and slid it under the leg before heading to the storage room for some paint samples and a damp mop—three more hours to go.



By JUSTINE MURPHY



# DIG

BY KYLIE HOMEM

“Dig.”

That’s all Pat said to me when we reached the woods, passing me a shovel. He started to dig, a frantic look on his face. An hour before, when he arrived at my house, the same desperate look on his face, telling me to get dressed and get in his car. I asked no questions.

“Dig!” he exclaimed again, his voice steadily growing louder.

“Why?” I asked.

“See that bag over there?” he asked me, still digging like a maniac, throwing the dirt over his shoulder.

“Yes.”

“Dig a hole that bag will fit in, all right? Now stop asking questions and dig.”

I looked over at the bag sitting by a nearby tree. It looked long and heavy, but Pat wouldn’t let me touch it. As I started to dig, still staring at the bag, I slowly began to realize what Pat was having me do. I could hear my heart start to pound, feel my palms start to sweat, a slight buzzing in my ears.

Dig.

I finally had the word repeated in my mind, my digging growing as frantic as Pat’s.

Dig.

What the hell? This is really happening; I’m in the woods

helping my friend dig a hole to hide a questionable bag.

Dig.

I can’t believe this. I won’t believe it. I didn’t do anything. Pat dragged me along in this scheme, just like he did in all of his other ones. In Freshman year, I got detention because he tricked me into helping him break into a teacher’s classroom to change a bad grade. In Sophomore year I was grounded for months because he brought booze to my house in a water bottle and my parents found out. I almost got suspended senior year because he decided to hide the weed he was selling in my locker. Two years later, and it looks like I’m still just a pawn in his game of chess. This time I might even go to jail for it.

Dig.

The hole finally looked bigger, like it was wide enough to hold the bag. I stopped digging and looked at Pat, hoping he would agree with me.

“Not deep enough,” he said, his shovel splitting and cutting the dirt. “Keep digging.”

So I did. I dug for what felt like hours. I dug until I could feel the blisters on my hands. Why didn’t I bring gloves? I dug until the buzzing in my ears finally went away. Why did it go away? I dug until Pat told me stop.

I stood there, numb, watching Pat lift the bag and throw it into the hole. I didn’t help him cover it up with dirt, only watched, my heart still racing. I watched until the hole was filled with dirt, watched as he covered the freshly dug hole with leaves to make it look like undisturbed earth.

Pat took the shovel from me, staring straight into my eyes. “Thanks. If anyone asks, I won’t drag you into this.”

That's what he said last time, but I didn't mention that. I simply nodded, still trying to recover from the realization that I may have committed a crime. I followed Pat back to his truck, parked a mile or so from where we dug our hole.

"Hey, Pat," I said, already knowing the answer. "Where's Linda tonight?"

"Unavailable," was all he said.

## WIRED

BY ELISABETH LAM

He holds it firmly in his hand. He tries to imagine himself at one of his practice trials. *It can't be that hard, right?* He takes a deep breath as she smiles.

*She's beautiful, isn't she?* A voice says.

*Can I really keep the promise?* he thinks. His sigh is heavy with regret and uncertainty, something he hasn't felt in a long time. He packs up his weapon in his guitar case, ready to send a message.

He doesn't know how to approach her—here, in this coffee shop. Her smile is always reaching her eyes, all the time. What is making her so happy? He recalls old memories, when his best friend was still alive.

"Do you see her?" his partner, Krys, points at the barista. Her hair is pulled back in a ponytail, swinging, as she swiftly strides between the machines and register.

"What about her?" he asks.

"She's gorgeous!" Krys exclaims, "She's beautiful, isn't she?"

She doesn't recognize him. *Good, no attachments,* he thinks. He orders and pays, slipping a napkin as part of the exchange. The napkin reads, "can you attend my friend's funeral?"

Her lips are parted, holding back a few questions. Only one escapes her mouth, "When and where?"

He gestures. She flips the napkin over, catching the message. He takes his leave, holding a cup of coffee with his name sprawled on



the sleeve.

The promise he made with Krys isn't something guaranteed of keeping – “if she's ever on the blacklist, don't kill her,” he said. Why did he even agree? Krys knew that it wasn't possible. The outcome is never a friendly one. It's risky business you can never get out of, no matter how hard you try.

“What was he like?” she asks, all clad in black. Her hair was no longer the way Krys favored it. It drapes her face, settling on her shoulders.

Krys was many things — he was his partner, his best friend, and his brother.

He says, “He was more than you imagined.”

Krys had a kind heart. He knew how to talk smoothly, always getting what he wanted. He was never manipulative. He killed quick and easy, without any mercy. He made sure that there wasn't any more blood left to shed.

She holds the picture in her lap. “Why did he want me to go to his funeral?”

“He liked you, genuinely,” he replies. “He would've loved it if you came, even if you didn't know him,”

She doesn't say anything - not because there wasn't anything to say, but because silence was more comforting than words. He wants to know if she ever noticed Krys.

After the funeral, they wait outside, side by side.

“Kaito—” she gasps as she is ripped away from his side. Gunshots are fired and all he sees is red.

*No.*

## (S)HE

BY EMILY MURGO

It's raining.

The phone rings.

Jocelyn grunts, lost in sleep, as I slide out from under her arm. Our skin glides smoothly across the other's body, as I remove myself from the warmth of her hand-me-down comforter.

She makes a sluggish effort to pull me back, but the phone rings again.

I slip my t-shirt over my head.

Jocelyn's apartment is vast and open: the bed rests in front of floor-to-ceiling windows, which have no shades, against the wall and opposite the door. The fridge is to the left, directly inside the door. The only thing separating the kitchen from her 'bedroom' are three stairs, at the top of which sits two chairs at an island.

My phone rings once more. My mother's smiling face, a picture from several years ago, glows on the screen. The green bar invites me to answer. I decline.

Jocelyn rearranges herself on the bed. She flicks her long blonde hair out from under her head, and it spills onto my side. She crinkles her nose and struggles to remove a tuft of hair caught on her nose ring.

My mother hates her nose ring.

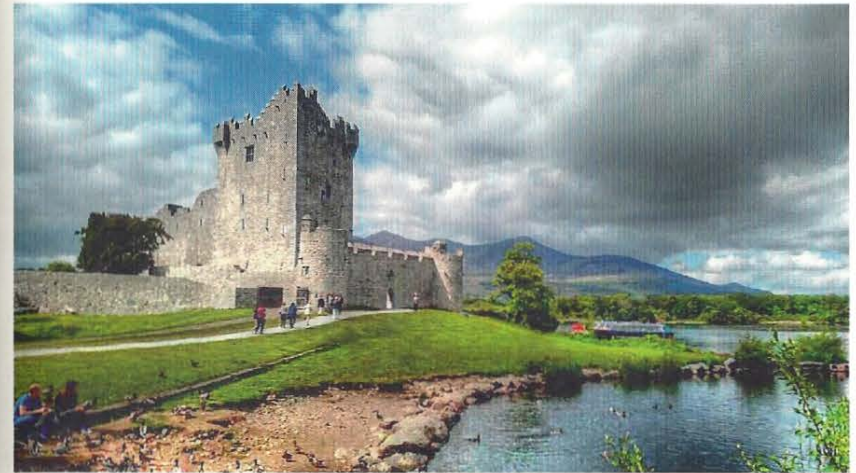
Glancing back at Jocelyn, I cross to the counter and pour myself some Joe in Jocelyn's “Fuck the Patriarchy” mug, a mug she claims to have purchased for me. It never left her apartment.

Then again, neither have I.





*By JUSTINE MURPHY*



*By JUSTINE MURPHY*

# COCOA BEFORE THE COURIER

BY GERARD BUCKLEY

"FULL STOP!" hollered the tobacco-stained voice of the guard, who waved his red flag erratically as he stepped down from the brakevan. His recently-polished boots crunched along the glittering, frost-covered ballast stones which were spread unevenly across the wooden sleepers. He quickened his pace, fighting the sharp wind while keeping the lapels of his navy blue frock coat steady.

The engine at the front hissed and carped with fury against the frigid, wintry air of the approaching dusk. Its brakes squealed, showering radiant sparks along the rails before shuddering to a harsh stop at the transfer halt. The driver and fireman clambered down the footplate ladder, sweeping crisped ashes and curled cinders from their perspiring brows before strolling up to the red-faced guard, who was clutching his gold-plated whistle and signal flags within his gloved hands.

"Good evening, Mr. Stokeholst," coughed the fireman. "You're looking well."

"Good evening, gentlemen." Mr. Stokeholst had drawn out the introductory sound of "evening" with an air of stern pomposity. "Might I use this opportunity to gauge you both on your shoddy, inadequate attempts at bringing us over that gradient back at Rupley? It's a miracle a banker wasn't needed! Otherwise, we would be stuck on the slope 'til dawn!"

The driver and fireman sighed; criticism from cantankerous Mr. Stokeholst was never an indication of promising tidings. Nothing was ever deemed suitable from the guard's vantage point, and tonight was certainly no exception to those expectations.

"Oh, come now," said the driver, "far worse could have happened!"

"Which is precisely what I find terrifying, Mr. Spratt," Mr. Stokeholst said with a slight purse of his lips. The driver shivered vehemently at the guard's biting words. "Nonetheless, it is far too cold out here to further deliberate on this subject," he muttered tucking his whistle into the folds of his waistcoat pocket. "Shall we resume conversation from inside my van? The 'Kipper' Courier isn't due to pass for another hour, and there is plenty of cocoa to go 'round."

Mr. Spratt shot a furtive look towards the fireman, who was now sporting a wide grin from underneath the layer of soot which coated his face. "How 'bout it then, Hexham? It's difficult to refuse!" he said in earnest.

"Anything to be out of this wind!" bellowed the fireman over the wheezing steam which fizzed over the frames of the engine.

The three gentlemen trudged in a uniform line alongside the queue of weather-beaten trucks and tarpaulin-covered wagons which formed their goods train. They hastened their strides as they approached Mr. Stokeholst's van at the end of the consist, sensing the taste of the delectable cocoa which awaited consumption. They ascended the steps of the balcony, observing the diamond twinkle of the scattered ice patches around the boundaries of the track. Mr. Stokeholst wrenched the bent door open and stepped aside to let the crew pass, tendering a curt gesture towards a gnarled, oak table which stood in the center of the dimly-illuminated room.

"Now then," said Mr. Stokeholst as he poured the scalding, brown liquid from the teapot into two lingering beakers upon his cluttered desk, "I—well, please do sit down..."

Mr. Spratt and Mr. Hexham cautiously pulled out two, poorly-upholstered stools from underneath the table and proceeded to lower themselves unhurriedly into seated postures. Mr. Stokeholst, eyeing both men with tremendous qualm, as he usually did, extended his beefy arms across the wood table surface and pushed the two beakers towards his soot-faced colleagues.



"As I was saying," continued Mr. Stokeholst, who dipped his chin, now glaring unsmilingly at his guests, "I have been made privy to rather a depressing announcement which gives me such pains to mention to you both." He blinked before continuing. "Suffice it to say, your performances this evening only proceeded to solidify the case against you, not for the better, shall we say."

The driver and fireman frowned, unable to offer a response against the rising heat of their beverages.

"Sir?" murmured Mr. Hexham, who suddenly felt as if the air inside the room had vanished.

"It seems I shall have to take the slow path," scowled Mr. Stokeholst, rolling his eyes in disdain at the apparent idiocy his coworkers exuded. "To be blunt, there is to be a shortening of the wages bill around here, according to the chairman, Lord Darnley, and in the end, it must be decided on who is useful, and who is ornamental."

"Are you suggesting, Mr. Stokeholst, that our jobs are in peril?" glowered Mr. Spratt, setting his beaker down upon the table with such scorn, a small torrent of cocoa splattered across the varnished surface.

"Well, I do hate to sound smug, Mr. Spratt, but there are particular standards by which we keep the railway running, and Lord Darnley so detests inefficiency."

The kerosene lantern above the table was now swinging ominously on its rusty hook, groaning noisily over the hostility which was floating around the room.

"Well, heaven forfend we lowly folk should do anything to contradict the exacting standards of the blessed Lord Darnley!" barked Mr. Spratt; his tone served as a warning.

"I beg your pardon?" scolded Mr. Stokeholst furiously. His lips were pursed slightly again, which made it quite clear to Mr.

Spratt that nothing short of standing down would save his hide.

Mr. Hexham had now risen to his feet; he grasped hold of the epaulets of Mr. Spratt's overcoat, bringing about a conclusion to the frenzied exchange.

"Come on, chap," he mumbled. "We'll be warmer by the fire."

With a short, agreeing nod, Mr. Spratt pushed his beaker aside and stormed out of the van, muttering curses into the frigid air until his hunched silhouette disappeared into the fog.

Mr. Hexham turned his gaze towards Mr. Stokeholst, staring gravely at the burly guard with malicious contempt.

"We'll be awaiting your signal to depart, Sir."

"Certainly," bowed the guard. "But, take heed, Mr. Hexham, we none of us know when the signal will come."





*By LEONARD PAUL*



*By LEONARD PAUL*

# FROM BEGINNING TO END

BY KATELYN GALVIN

The heat of my breath trickling through the air, teeth chattering, hands shaking. My heart thumps rapidly. "I can do this, I can do this," I say to myself. "Just relax Max, don't make a fool out of yourself." Quickly, I turn to the left and see the dew piled up along the grass, and the brown crusty leaves that have fallen along the path have created small tornados, as the wind whipped across the peak.

I turn to look back at Charlotte, just as a fresh scent of pine grazes my nose. Her long brown hair crisscrossed her face. She was wearing tight-legged jeans with two large rips at the knees, ankle-length hiking boots, and a large plaid shirt with a black vest that hugged her waist. I walk over to Charlotte's side, wrapping one hand around her waist while lightly brushing a kiss on her forehead. "This better be worth it," she says to me. "Don't worry, hun, the whole town said this ledge was the best place in the Northeast to catch the sunrise."

I look at the dark jagged mountains. The sky has begun to fade, shades of red, orange, and yellow. For a moment I let my mind wonder. I stand here today thinking that there is not another person in the entire world that I'd want to watch the day unfold with. But this was only the beginning, the beginning of a perfect life. As the rays of sunlight illuminated the White Mountains, I returned my focus back to Charlotte. Her crystal blue eyes, so lively and captivating, dance across the mountain peak, taking in every angle of the morning sunrise. "Charlotte" I said, as I grab both of her hands, pulling them in close to my chest.

My palms begin to sweat and my heart feels like it is ready to jump out of my chest. I steadily manage to drop to one knee, still holding onto Charlotte's hands. I begin to gather my thoughts. With

a brittle voice I say, "The story of our love is only the beginning, the beginning of many moment's like these, as we continue to grow side by side we will be able to write our own happy ending. Ten years from today, I want to be able to tell our children the story of how I proposed to you. Charlotte, will you marry me?" Her cheeks give way to a glowing smile just as the sun beams across her face. "Yes, yes of course," Charlotte said. I rise just as Charlotte jumps into my arms, slowly melting into each other. At that moment, the world seemed to stop. I can no longer hear the birds chirping in the crisp autumn air, nor the leaves rustling across path.

As the sun continues to climb the morning sky, the mountain range becomes more vivid. We can now see miles and miles of fall foliage. The brisk morning air is now filled with warmth as the sun meets our faces. The fall, like many other seasons, is the beginning of an end. The beginning of a new season, where the leaves change colors that soon fall off and allow the trees to grow new buds that will soon bloom in the spring.

*Five years after that very day, I sit here in a cold and bland hospital room overlooking the Charles River. I always find my mind wandering back to that moment...on the ledge in New Hampshire. Now happily married, I take one look at Charlotte. She has IVs stuck in her arm, pale skin, and almost no hair left. Every week we come here to undergo chemotherapy, I'd never miss these appointments for the world. Every once in awhile, I remind Charlotte that cancer is the mountain range on that one October morning. That the sun will continue to shine, as long as you continue to fight.*



# BREAKING THROUGH

BY JOHN ABBATE

It was a damp, cool morning, the weather seeming to sense the occasion. All but the nearest gravestones and markers were hidden from view by a bank of fog that had rolled in overnight, the weak morning sun failing to scatter it. Unsurprisingly, the moist chill failed to lift Dmitri's mood, particularly when combined with the fact that Alexei was late. He scowled briefly for a moment before forcing his facial muscles to return to neutral. Just as he began to contemplate giving his brother a call to ask him where he was, he heard the click-clack of the small cemetery's gate swing open and closed, followed by footsteps crunching along the gravel path. Moments later, Alexei appeared out of the mist, dressed in a cheap suit that hung loosely on his tall, thin frame.

"You're almost half an hour late, *bratan*."

Running his hand sheepishly through his short brown hair, Alexei muttered something about traffic, but didn't make any further explanation. After a moment he grew more serious, moving to join Dmitri.

"It's been ten years, huh?" he mused, his tone almost wistful. Dmitri didn't respond. A moment later, Alexei continued, "I guess it just goes to show that anybody can die, huh?"

Dmitri let him talk, Alexei had always been the friendly, open one; the brother who always had something to say. Dmitri in contrast rarely spoke, hiding a sharp mind behind a stoic countenance. Nonetheless, they got along well despite their differences.

Listening to his brother talk, Dmitri thought back to their childhood, the ghost of a smile appearing on his face. Raising two

children alone couldn't have been easy, especially with children as rambunctious and prone to adventure as them, but his mother did a good job of it. At that thought, the half formed smile slid off his face. Despite her success at navigating the rough waters of single motherhood, her health had taken a turn for the worse and she had died not long after Dmitri had turned 22, with Alexei barely out of his teens. Cancer, the doctors had said, not something that could have been avoided. Nonetheless, both of the brothers felt that some share of blame fell on the fact that their boisterous childhood had tired her out and worn her body down, making her easy prey for the disease. They had coped with the feelings of guilt in different ways, Dmitri throwing himself into his work and Alexei writing poetry. Both had gradually come to terms with things. After a decade though, there was one habit that both of them had retained, their annual visit to the grave.

He was drawn from his thoughts as Alexei trailed off, finally out of words. After a moment Dmitri nodded, reaching out and placing a hand on the smooth granite. Drawing back, he turned to leave, knowing that his brother would be staying a bit longer. As he opened the old creaky gate he looked up. The fog began to fade away and the first sunbeams hit his face, he smiled slightly.



*BY LEONARD PAUL*



*BY LEONARD PAUL*



# THROUGH THE MARSH

By MICHAEL DEROSA

"Give it to me straight, Boris." I looked to my obese lawyer as I clenched my fists together. "Do I have any chance to gain custody of my children?"

"Do you want to know the truth?" Boris replied while doodling all over his folder. It was as though he was trying not to make eye contact with me.

"Umm... yeah. I'm paying for your service and all I want right now is your honesty. Don't bullshit me here. I'm going to ask again. Do I have any chance to gain custody of my children?"

His face turned bright red as he let out a sigh. He looked up at me and said:

"At this present moment, the answer is no... And I don't see that changing anytime soon. I'm very sorry."

I already seen this coming, yet I was still surprised to hear it from Boris. My stomach began to cramp up and each breath became more of a challenge. Somehow, with stone cold expression, I was able to let out my final statement:

"Okay. Thank you, Boris. Could you please let Hilary and her lawyer know that I'm done with this case?"

Before he could respond to me, I was already out of the meeting room.

As I walked toward my car, I couldn't help but notice the beautiful weather. It was not a typical, humid Orlando day. It was in the mid-sixties, sunny, and quite comfortable.

*I'll take a walk after I get back to the apartment.*

Driving home, I decided to turn on the radio to ease the silence. I put on my favorite classic rock station. Free Bird was the first song that came on. Back in 1980, at a Lynyrd Skynyrd tribute concert, I met Hilary, and danced with her to this song. Five years later, it was our wedding song. I turned the radio off and took a deep breathe.

*I guess I'll go back to silence.*

As I walked into my house, I went straight to my bedroom and went into my closet. I pulled out my black gun case and grabbed my pistol.

*It is time to make use of this.*

I went to my favorite spot in Orlando: The isolated three leveled deck that was located in the middle of the marsh. I walked up to the top of the deck and stared down at the water.

*Why am I still alive?*

I pulled my pistol out of my black windbreaker and made sure it was loaded, that a round was already in the chamber.

*Am I really going to do this?*

Without hesitation, I put the gun in my mouth and closed my eyes. The taste of metal overwhelmed every breath I inhaled.

*Who would care if I did this? I know Hilary wouldn't. Hell, she left me so why the fuck would she care if I died? It's not like I have my parents to worry about anymore. Alcoholism took out their lives, and I don't want to let that happen to me too. I'd rather the choice be in my own hands, I'm going to die either way. And now I've lost my kids to this shit. Kendra and Lacey deserve a good father, one so much better than me. I don't know why I keep trying to find the good in this life. I am*

*done. Would anyone even be surprised?*

I opened my eyes and started to cry. My jaw began to hurt as I looked down at the water. The sun was falling down and the sky began to darken.

*Who will find me if I do this? Will anyone even look? Hilary? Kendra? Lacey? Obviously not my parents. Will it be Boris? Will my lawyer find me? Is he my only friend?*

Mosquitoes started to eat me alive.

*Could I let my daughters live without a father? They are so beautiful. So intelligent. So innocent. What if this is a mistake? Well, I know Hilary will find someone else anyway. I hope he is a better father to them than I am... than I was.*

I opened my eyes and looked at the dirty water one last time.

*Okay... Let's do this. One... Two... Three.*

As I was about to pull the trigger, I froze up. I took the gun out of my mouth.

*No. I won't do this. Kendra and Lacey need my guidance, even if it's from a distance.*



BY LEONARD PAUL



# HOT COFFEE

BY LAUREN MERCER

Dim light streams through the windows of the coffee shop on a dreary day. It's 7:30 on a Saturday morning in early November. The threat of the first snow storm of the season has kept most people shut in, the store is all but deserted, just me and the young baristas. I'm sitting by the corner window, as I do day after day, reading my newspaper. I turn as I hear the doorbell ding and notice the young woman, about 5 years younger than me, who has a similar routine to my own. I've seen her every day, always buying two coffees for who I assume is her and her husband. Her arms are covered by long sleeves, just as they are year round, that she pulls at so they are constantly covering up to her wrists. Today, her sweater covers her neck as well.

She fidgets with her hair, covering pieces of her face with it, as she walks up to the counter. I assume she's covering a blemish as most girls her age do. She orders and stands to the side. Her shoulders slouch as she stands with her back towards the window. Every few seconds she turns around, her eyes wide. She's always here alone but that second coffee must be for someone.

Her order comes up and I see only one coffee. I look at her again, studying her, trying to find some reason for this change. As she turns toward the back of the shop, I see her face more clearly. What I assumed was a blemish is a bright red eye, beginning to turn black and blue with a cut across it, like that from a ring. She catches my eyes and I see an odd look, a caged animal.

In that second, the door slams open. The ding of the bell repeats wildly as it swings back and forth, over and over.

The slam of the door stops everyone in their tracks, the girl's body quivers though she makes no movement. Coffee still in hand, she turns, as I do, to face the newcomer.

A man of about the same age as her stands there, fist clenched, eyes bloodshot and wild. He moves with a wobbling limp, his eyes never quite focus. He screams something I cannot understand but the girl clearly does. She is still frozen halfway across the shop. He storms towards her. I move to get in his way but something catches me halfway between sitting and standing.

The bell keeps swinging, ringing, as he makes his way towards her and pulls the coffee from her hand. In one swift motion the steaming liquid splatters across her chest and face. She tries to scream but no sound comes out. He grabs her hair and pulls her out of the shop. The bell swinging slower now in time with the church bells from down the street, like those of a funeral.

I turn to watch them out the window. I notice it has started to snow. I look at the young employees staring at me, their mouths hanging open. I sit down and try to go back to my paper, but the words just swim on the page. I look up and see the baristas still staring at me. I get up and ask one of them for a rag. I pick up the cup and lid that are still sitting on the ground. I toss them out and start mopping up the now cold coffee, as the white snow covers up red marks on the sidewalk.

# A COIN FLIPS ON THE ROOF

By JOHN WISE

When I was little, my mom would tell me that there are people in this world who need our help, people who feel like their life has no purpose, people who want to give up. I remember her saying to me "Raphael, it's your job to save them," and I proudly placed my small 10 year old hand over my heart and swore that I would save those people. Two years later, my parents passed away in a plane crash, leaving me on my own. Despite the rocky beginning, I've lived a good life with my foster dads, Erick and Ken. I'm Captain of the Sacred Heart Prep lacrosse team, Homecoming King, and Prom King for two years in a row. Yet here I stand, on the roof of the Prep, my suicide note placed in my lacrosse locker. It suddenly hit me how ironic this situation is. The kid who once promised to help those who wanted to commit suicide wants to kill himself. I laughed softly under my breath.

"You shouldn't be up there, it's not safe."

I quickly turned around. Standing no more than an arm's reach away was Sandy Hamilton, the editor for the school newspaper; he was the school weirdo. I looked at his bag laying on the ground by his feet, his frail arms crossed over his chest.

"I wasn't expecting anyone to be on campus at this time." I murmured to myself,

"Neither was I." Neither of us dared to move. Neither of us dared to breathe. We stood in complete and utter silence.

"So," I asked awkwardly, "What, um....what, um... why are you up here?"

"Same thing I guess," He looked me up and down, I couldn't

tell whether he was judging me or questioning me. "Well if you're going to jump today, I guess I can do it another time." He shrugged and grabbed his satchel off the floor. "Jump... Jump... another day..."

"Hold up!" I hopped off the ledge to safety, leaving my date with gravity to be continued later. Sandy stopped and turned with his hand in his pocket. The glare in his eyes stopped me from getting any closer to him. "Wait, wait, you're not thinking of killing yourself are you?" Suddenly, my familiar friend named silence snuck in and took hold of us once more, until a smirk and soft laugh made its way out of Sandy's lips.

"Of course! I don't have enough energy to deal with life anymore. Might as while just punch out early and get it over with, right?" Sandy turned to walk away but I grabbed ahold of his arm.

"There's a lot to live for and so much more to come! Wait, what about the school's newspaper? Or - or - or, your poetry! I've read some of it in the paper. You're really talented, hell maybe even better than Frost himself. And what about the fut-"

"You're such a fucking hypocrite. Here you are, ready to commit suicide, and you're lecturing me? Weren't you a step away from falling off the edge just a minute ago?" He yanked his arm free from me, "And what about you, huh? Don't you have loads to live for 'Mr. Popular?' Why do you want to die?" He turned all the way around to face me, or maybe he was looking through me, at the edge he was so willing to accept, the same edge I was so willing to accept. "You have two loving, caring fathers. The whole town knows they would do anything for you. Fuck man, you're dating the hottest girl in the school! You're the fucking captain of the lacrosse team! You were voted Prom king two years in a row!"

"All I have is my poetry and the stupid school newspaper. I'm a social outcast, no one says my name without saying 'the school weirdo' right after it. Did you know once my English teacher called me "Sandy 'the great white virgin' Hamilton, during attendance? Fuck! It's all I am to these people, it's all I will ever be." He turned



away and, I swore I could hear him sniffle. His hand raised to wipe away a tear or two, maybe even three. "So... so don't tell me that bullshit crap about having so much to live for! I have nothing! My parents are junkies! My grades are slipping! I haven't slept in weeks because of the goddamn SAT! I can't-" I cut him off, in one hasty movement I pulled his fragile, sad, hurt body against my chest and hugged him.

We sat and we cried, we kept talking, and cried some more. I told him about the pressure, the pressure of being the captain, the pressure of being Mr. Perfect, and the foster son to two openly gay dads. I told how much I care about my dad's, but it kills me to see them suffer because of their sexuality. I even told him about my biological parents, about their death and my youthful promise to my mom. He told me about his parents' divorce, and their Methadone induced fighting every night. He told me about the bullying he had suffered through. I apologized to him for my part in tormenting him. After, I stood up and held out my hand to him. He took it and we made our way down the stairs, towards the school parking lot. We were silent, but it wasn't the awkward silence of before, it was a comforting one. We exchanged phone numbers so we could keep in touch and promised we'd see each other at school the next day.

The next day came, and he never showed up. He didn't show up the day after that. Days turned into weeks, then a month. Thirty-two voicemails and forty texts later, and still no word from Sandy. And then came the news. A feeling that I haven't felt in years. News that I had lived through before, news that I prayed would never come true. Sandy Hamilton was found dead in his car at an abandoned tire factory. We found out a month after he disappeared, when the cops showed up to school, holding a folded up old school newspaper.

They announced Sandy's death to the entire school. They made us all sit in the gym, while they asked some questions and said prayers for his family. For a minute, the fucking phonies acted like they cared about him, and then the police came up to the microphone,

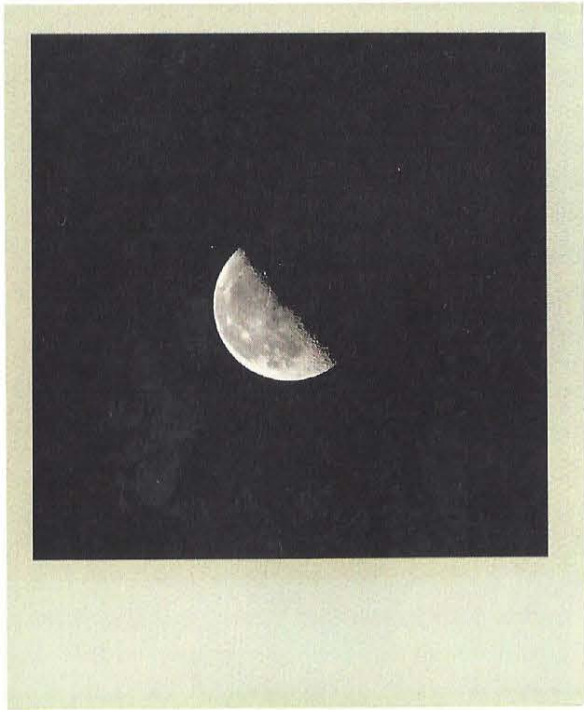
"We're looking for Raphael Bello, is Mr. Bello here today?"

A wave of heads turned towards me, confusion written on all of their faces. I didn't blame them for being confused. I mean, my reputation at this school does not exactly say "Friends with school weirdo." I found myself wishing it did, wishing I could have done more. I walked down aisles towards the police officers. However, instead of asking me to step into the principal's office for questioning, the officer handed me a folded old school newspaper. My heart sank and my legs began to shake as I read the words scribbled on the front of the School newspaper: *For the phony, Raphael Bello.*

People's lives are like a coin that's been flipped in the air. Eventually they land on a side, heads or tails, positive or negative. We pray and hope for that coin to land on the side we want but a flipped coin is always unpredictable.

*"Thank you for everything. Don't feel bad that you couldn't save me, my coin landed on an unfortunate side but I'm happy I could save you."*

-Sandy "The Great White Virgin" Hamilton



*By NICOLE JEAN TURNER*



*By NICOLE JEAN TURNER*



# UNspoken

By MELISSA LOPEZ

"I love you"

"I love you, too"

A confession. A moment of pure intimacy. Words spoken into a room where only we are. Eyes meet.

His hands weave themselves into my hair and he presses his forehead against mine, eyes closed now.

His thumb lightly strokes the side of my face and I feel vulnerable.

When he kisses me again it's a little more frantic. *A little more pressure. A little more pleading. A little more tender.*

He pulls back and rests the side of his head against mine, staring off into the hotel room.

"What's wrong?" I ask as I turn and look at him.

His eyes light up and he turns all the way towards me with a quick jump. His fingers begin to smooth my hair back into place so he can see my eyes. He's tracing my cheekbones.

With his smile curling at the edges he replies, "Nothing, I just can't believe how lucky I am. Thinking about how we've made it work all these months, with you on the other side of the country. I just know now, you're the girl for me."

As I look at him smiling I know that he has always told me what I wanted to hear and even though it made me happy, I didn't fully believe it.

"I'm gla—"

"Wait. Hold on, my mom's calling me. She's probably pissed that I left the house a mess."

I look at him confused as he rushes into the bathroom with his phone in his hand. Why couldn't he just answer it in front of me?

After less than a minute he comes out and sits next to me kissing me on the forehead and says, "I knew that was why she was mad, I'll be back in an hour tops, I'm sorry."

"It's okay I understand"

He turns my head back to face him and for a moment I almost think he's going to kiss me again. I wait, but he just presses his forehead back against mine and raises his hand again to smooth back my hair. This time he doesn't close his eyes. Instead, he looks right into my eyes and tells me he loves me one last time.

While he brings one hand down onto my lap along with his phone in the other, his phone lights up. I look down and read

*Alexa: I'm so happy you're sleeping over tonight; I missed you after last weekend.*

I look up at him and with a slight smile, I give him a kiss back.

"I hope you get everything settled with your mom."

"Yeah. Uh, me too. I'll text you when I'm on my way back."

He gets up slowly, we both knew what we just saw, but we remain silent as he makes his way towards the door.

"I love you," I say to him with a smirk.

"I love you too" he replies as the door closes.

# A SIMPLE TASTE

BY EKENE OGBUE

She sucks in a deep, sharp breath, wincing at the unmistakably loud creak the door makes as she pushes it forward. The creak grows louder and louder, until there's just enough space for her to slip out. She waits for sounds of sheets being pushed aside, feet being shoved into shoes, doors opening and closing. She waits for sound, for any indication that the loud creaks attracted unwanted attention.

She waits, holding her breath as if the action could silence the noise from the creaking door to her thundering heart. Nothing. She makes her move.

The old, rusty floorboards were no better than her door, popping and cracking in rounds of sounds. She curses herself, her feet, and the floor with every step she takes. At the fifth step, nearly wincing as the rusty wood groans underneath her feet, she decides to run, running so fast she could feel sweat gathering at her brow. Still she runs, faster and faster as she climbs down the stairs.

She turns to the left, where the living room is silent and the cat lounges on the arm rest, its tail lazily swinging back and forth, green eyes watching her with an eerie awareness. When their eyes meet, the cat lets out a biting hiss. Resisting the urge to answer back with a hiss of her own, she turns to the right, where the hallway is empty and silent like the rest of the house.

Water falls from the kitchen faucet in a steady beat, drip by drip, drop by drop. Time glows from the oven's clock; fifteen minutes after one. Her stomach ties itself into knots as she glances around the room. The knots tighten as she sees nothing to satisfy the hunger, until her eyes fall on the kitchen table, where a peanut butter

and jelly sandwich sits on a plate of fine china as if it was waiting for her.

A beautiful peanut butter jelly sandwich with toasted white bread, the crusts cut off, the edges oozing peanut butter and jelly calling her like a siren's song, silencing the voice in her head warning her to be cautious. She sees strawberry jelly, her favorite, dripping onto the plate. The aroma of peanuts lulls her into a soothing daze.

*I shouldn't.*

She knows, even with the sun down, she's still being tested. Nothing ever stops, not truly, no matter the time of day.

And yet...she could feel her twisted intestines eating themselves, starting with the smaller organs, then working their way up. Standing in front of actual food, this forbidden fruit, her stomach rejoices, almost squealing in delight.

*You can't.*

She leans down and inhales deeply, her knees buckling from the overwhelmingly sweet aroma. She grips the kitchen table tightly.

*To hell with it.*

She snatches the sandwich, bringing it to her mouth. In that moment, she isn't a girl. She's a lion with a deer caught in her grasp, a wolf feasting on her meal, mouth devouring, teeth biting and chomping, like a predator relishing in the scraps and bits of its prey.

"You can at least try to eat like a lady, Elena."

The next bite she takes wedges itself deep into her throat, nearly choking her. Peanut butter and jelly fall onto the ground, smearing the marble floor with caramel and red, as the remnants of the sandwich slips through her fingers.



Ice-cold fingers grip her chin, turning her head so sharply her neck nearly snaps. Black eyes, a cold mockery of a smile, peer down at her.

“Look at yourself,” he cooes. “You’re filthy. You made such a mess.”

“Thomas-” He tightens his grip.

“Such a filthy, disobedient girl.”

“I’m sorry-”

He tightens his hold, cutting her off. Those black, emotionless eyes pierce right through her, cutting her like a knife. “It was a test. To see if you have the strength to resist. To see if you can stand up against temptation.” He leans in close. “And you failed.”

“I was so hungry,” she pleads, tears spilling from her eyes. “I haven’t eaten in two weeks. My stomach wouldn’t stop. I-”

A storm rips through the kitchen, blowing a strong wind that knocks her onto the ground with a single blow. A blow that was one of the many to rain down on her, bashing her head and sides. Hard, swift kicks to the stomach, blood spurting from her lips, coloring the porcelain floor crimson.

*I was hungry. I was so hungry,* she wants to say but blood fills her mouth.

When the violent storm passes, she tilts her head up, meeting his cold eyes. “I...it was just a taste.”

“A simple taste is what caused Adam and Eve to turn against our Father. It’s as easy as that. I will make you learn it.”

## COLOPHON

*Hemetera* is a student submitted, edited, designed and published literary journal of Regis.

This year's *Hemetera* design was put together by Leonard Paul. The cover was designed by Christopher Draper. The cover artwork was created using a photograph by Arianna Alcorn. The trim size of the 2016 edition is 5.5" x 8.5". The titles of the works are set in 24 point Lucida Calligraphy typeface, the authors' names are set in 14 point Athelas typeface, and the body copy is 12 point Adobe Garamond Pro typeface.



*Regis*  
*235 Wellesley Street*  
*Weston, MA 02493*