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THE UNIVERSITY OF



THE LIGHTER

fall 2010

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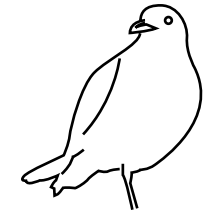
The Lighter staff would like to thank our faculty advisor, Allison Schuette, for her guidance and direction throughout the publishing process. We would also like to thank Sherod Santos for taking the time to be interviewed and sharing his knowledge with the campus community, and thanks to Karl Strasen for fitting all of the selected works between two covers in the face of a tough deadline. A big thank you to Jake Just for steering the literary selection committees and transcribing the aforesaid interview, and a thank you as well to Ellen Orner for partaking in the interview in addition to offering a few tips on how to make the art selection committee run a bit more smoothly. Thank you to all members of the selection committees for judiciously choosing the pieces for this semester's edition, and to all who were willing to submit their work for consideration.

All submissions remain anonymous throughout the selection process. The Lighter is an award-winning university journal of literature and art that welcomes submissions from all undergraduate, graduate, and law students of Valparaiso University, regardless of race, gender, religious creed, or sexual orientation. The editor assumes responsibility for the contents of this publication. The views expressed in these works do not represent any official stance of Valparaiso University.



literary selection

Ellen Orner
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Jeremy Reed
Megan Telligman
Christopher Burrus
Lauren Nelson
Greg Maher



the lighter staff

Editor | Dan Lund
Assistant Editor | Jacob Just
Graphic Designer | Karl Strasen

art selection

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Hilary Clark
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Ellen Orner
Carmelo Castillo
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Sherod Santos on Poetry

an interview by Jacob Just and Ellen Orner

Poet and essayist Sherod Santos, author of *Accidental Weather* (1982), *The Southern Reaches* (1989), *The City of Women* (1993), and *The Perishing* (2003), was a guest of the Valparaiso University Wordfest Series in September, 2010. A collection of his essays, *A Poetry of Two Minds*, was published in 2010. His fourth book of poems, *The Pilot Star Elegies* (1999), was a National Book Award Finalist and the winner of a Theodore Roethke Poetry Prize. In 2007, Santos retired as Professor of English at the University of Missouri, Columbia. He now lives with his wife in Chicago. His most recent book, *The Intricated Soul: New and Selected Poems*, was published in 2010 by W.W. Norton and Co.

Sherod Santos: Where was I at, in terms of my poetry, when I was 21? Hmm, I think I was in Paris. I had 300 dollars and a plane ticket. I had just hopped off the plane and had no idea what I was going to do or where I was going to go. I just wanted to get away from friends and family and the United States, from that sense that becoming a poet had anything to do with other people. Did I think this was a cool thing to do? Did I do it because I was rebelling from a normal career doing something else? Or did I do it for the myriad reasons why, when you are with people you know you might choose to do things? In Paris, I didn't know anyone. I didn't have anywhere to go but I knew I had to find work. So I worked in a hotel taking coffee and croissants to people in the morning for probably 50 cents an hour. There was also an American library there. My hours were something like 5 to noon everyday, so after work I would spend the afternoon in the American library reading and writing. And when that was done, I mean, I had Paris. So I had gone to make sure this is what I wanted to do with my life and to make sure I was doing it for no other reason. I was, at

that point, deeply committed to poetry.

Ellen Orner: So, what poetry have you been reading, lately?

SS: Actually, I haven't been reading poetry in a while. I have been writing plays, or a play, for the past year or so. I don't know why that turns me to reading other things, since I'm not reading plays either. Well, that's not true, I am reading plays but not exclusively or systematically. But, no, I haven't been reading poetry. Any recommendations? Any new things that are out? What are you all reading, in terms of poetry?

EO: Well, I've been reading your poetry for the last two days, but...

(Laughter)

EO: Do you see yourself primarily as a poet?

SS: I do see myself primarily as a poet, although, like I say, I am writing plays now. I have done a book of essays and a book of

translations of early Greek poets. So I write a lot of different things, but I think of myself as primarily a poet. That's my sort of my sustaining interest in terms of writing.

EO: I'm curious about what your play is about. Do you want to say anything about that?

SS: Yeah, it's called *The Lives of the Pigeons*. It would be very difficult to describe what happens in it, but it is mainly a two character play. There is a third, rather incongruous character, who appears in the middle of the play, completely unlike and almost opposite to the other two characters in the play. This character introduces an element of danger and violence and certain psychological stress that alters the lives of the other two characters in a fairly dramatic way. That's about as close as I can come.

EO: Your newest collection, *The Intricated Soul* is a combination of things from your previous books, but also with new poems. What was your logic for the selections in that book?

SS: I don't know, I think it was just a matter of which one seemed to create the most coherent sense of the interests and obsessions. Which poems would most clearly identify those things? I think of my books as bracketed obsessions, and I don't know if you have looked at the selected poems but they sort of tend to change fairly dramatically from one book to the other in the form, the style or the manner. That's largely because of the obsessions of those particular books tended to change, too. So I always think that a change in subject will necessarily bring about a change in what we might call style. One of my books called *The City of Women* is a book of prose speculations, lyric poems, narrative poems, fragments and little vignettes. So it, by no means, contains what we would call traditional poetic forms. With that one it was a matter of finding the balance between those particular genres and one that might sustain what one might call the progress and thought of the book. I just sort

of just thought my way through romantic and erotic love. The poems would sort of trace the arc of the book that way.

Jacob Just: Thinking about the idea of a bracketed obsession, I know that in something like the visual arts, there is always a deep anxiety about when the work is done. So when do you know when you are done with a poem? Or, when do you know when you are done with a collection? When and where do you put the brackets on?

SS: Yeah, you know, I am probably the last person you should ask that question of. Poems that have appeared in journals were significantly re-written when they appeared in the book and were significantly rewritten when they appeared in *The Intricated Soul*. I noticed when I was picking up a book to bring with me there were all sorts of dog-eared poems. I have crossed out words and written other words in so, you know, maybe poems never end. But I think certainly you can get to a point where you can write the life out of them and this has been true of poets historically. Wordsworth was famous for writing to the point where he was losing the poem and what he finished with was something sort of neat and lucid but had lost the kind of urgency that was there in the earlier, rougher, more unformed version of the poem. So that is always a danger and one I am very conscious of when doing a revision. I consider it more of an affliction than anything else. (Laughter) I mean, I wish I could just say, "It's done. It's fine. I like it the way it is." But for some reason when I read, whatever I read, I read with a pencil which is another obsession I wish I could do away with. But unfortunately when reading my own work, I still have that pencil in hand. It's like a weapon I use on my own work. But having said that, there are some poems that I have written and read that I have no desire to change. Maybe those are finished and I guess I know they are finished when I have stopped tormenting them. Overall, I guess I can say that I don't really know where that place is. I mean, you know how

it is in writing or painting, that you write something and you say, "I've got it, this is it," Then you put it away for a couple of months and you come back and it doesn't quite sound the way you felt it sounded. It is like hearing your own voice, it sort of sounds nice until its played back to you. Then you say, "Ah, no, this note is not quite right." So in putting a poem away I feel I can hear it more impersonally and objectively, I can forget that over-sound which may have obscured my thinking of particular lines or words or rhythms.

EO: You mentioned objectivity, which makes me wonder if your rewriting process involves anybody else, any other particularly trusted individuals that you can show things to before publication?

SS: You know, there is nobody, and again, I consider that something of a hardship. I don't send my work to anyone. My wife is also a writer, but we tend to steer a wide path around each other until we arrive at that kind of truce you make with a work after a long labor. But in terms of sending drafts to someone, there is no one.

EO: And is that something you regret or enforce?

SS: Well, it's not enforced so much. What is it? I suppose it's by choice originally but now there just aren't as many people left that I am in contact with to send anything to. But it's possible we lead fairly reclusive lives, so there just aren't people around.

EO: Next question, and this is a really old question, but what is the role of the poet in society, then?

SS: That is a wonderful question. It's one that I feel has a special poignance in our day. The relationship between the two has been called into question and perhaps created a broader divide than it has in previous times and places. I think of poetry as something, and this is true of the arts in general, as a way of laying solitudes side by side in the hope of creating some shared

feeling that can then evolve into a shared meaning. That, to me, has become something that has great and necessary life within a society. However, if you mean it in the broader and more political sense of social responsibility that extends beyond the writing of poetry, then it gets a bit more complicated because I am never quite sure what people think poetry could be responsive to. We have poetry that is something intrinsically, and then we have poetry that is something extrinsically. The extrinsic part is the social part, from what I take from your question. So what my question would be then, is: why isn't what poetry is intrinsically exactly what it is in terms of its place within a culture? The arts in general play a significant and sometimes underrated role within a culture and it is a deeply political role. Certainly the history of the modern world has demonstrated, over and over and over again, how significant that is because every time a tyrant arrives in the world, the first people they want to shut up are the artists. You know this has been true under Stalin, under Mao, and countless other tyrants. These are people who weren't writing governmental poems or protest poems. These were people who were simply writing poetry. So the question then becomes: what is it that arouses such murderous instincts? That's the place where I think poetry or the world of the arts within a society becomes clearer. It's much more ambiguous in a country like ours. However crazy our political world is, it is a very different country than Russia under Stalin or China under Mao. So I think the role of the artist is less definable in that sense. What the arts seem to represent is an alternative world to the one that the tyrant would like to maintain and it is a world that essentially says of human existence, that life can be something more than a chore and certainly more than a terror. There is a possibility for life that is richer, feeling more just in its nature, that provides a possibility completely contrary to the one that the tyrant would like to represent as acceptable. It keeps alive the notion of the world of human existence that is better, more alive, and less

suffocated. It always shocks me. This is part of what the people's revolution was about in China. It was essentially to eliminate and do away with artists, most particularly self-expressive artists and most particularly of all, experimental artists. So what you had, instead, was a people's art. These paintings, for example, were always paintings of people out fishing together, in the harmony of the community and involved in this collective enterprise. Everybody's smiling and hauling in nets full of fishes. These were images that Mao would allow. It became, in a global way, the approved images of Mao's regime and they were in no way reflective of what was really happening. Do you know what the imaginative inner workings of the Chinese artist was? These people all went underground, with Stalin, too, except Stalin had a greater capacity of rooting them out and sending them off to gulags or doing away with them all together. So, like I say, when we talk about the social responsibility of art, my first instinct is to say, simply: make the best art you can make. One that is truest to your own instinctual sense of how to make something. That has a social and communal and political purpose to it and, should we be in a situation of crisis, that role would be dramatized in a way that we don't recognize fully in the relatively peaceful world of the United States.

EO: You are talking about poetry in a way that we often think about religion. In some ways, it becomes more apparent and stronger in the face of hardship. The things you said make me think that art is in some way very sacred.

SS: I'm shy of terms like sacred, and I suppose I see poetry as distinct from religion because religion has this sort of collective agreement about the nature of God. Even the nature of societal responsibility, certainly ethical and moral responsibility, are all sort of agreed upon. So in the arts there is more of an outlaw cast to the individual members of an artistic community. The notion of law breaking has always been a part of life within the arts. There is always someone who is trying something new. I

think there is always an attempt to make something people recognize as art, and people say, "Oh, that's art, because I have seen art before and that looks like art."

EO: And it fits into the tradition.

SS: Yes, and it fits into the tradition. And then there are those who are trying to expand the tradition, and for art to be art in the first place, it has to unbecome art for it to continue and grow and evolve and change. Art that doesn't has sort of reached an impasse in its development, whether it be music or painting or dance or what have you.

EO: Do you see yourself as a traditionalist?

SS: Absolutely, and I don't mean to say that my idea is that there is a constant sort of pressing against the notion of an identifiable art form, that you have to destroy what came before it. I am completely opposed to that idea. However, it is very much in the air in the contemporary arts and it's one that I resist completely. In some ways I don't think it's even possible. If you are rebelling against something, then the thing that you are rebelling against is just as real as it is to a person within that tradition. In fact, W. H. Auden once said of Baudelaire, one of the first modern and atheistic poets who was constantly, violently opposing the notion of the Christian God, that in some ways, he was the most Christian of poets because he took God so seriously. So compare that to a certain church-goer and practicing believer who doesn't take God nearly as seriously. I mean, his was a soulful and almost physical and active violence against traditional notion of God. Therefore, in some ways, in reading Baudelaire, God becomes much more real than in reading a Christian poet.

JJ: Maybe I am thinking of Shelley, and his "unacknowledged legislators of the world," but I find it interesting that the poet, as a law maker, is often perceived as a law breaker.

SS: I think Shelley's political life supports that. I think the idea of law is one that artists always feel uncomfortable around. I think it's one of those words that artists don't want to find themselves sitting around at lunch with. What it denotes is that there is a fixed thing. And that's what it does, it fixes things, spells out particular constraints and restrictions and so on. So in Shelley's case, I think it was more of an advocacy of political activism, but also when you go back to Greek times, poets were considered philosophers. It's not the least bit unusual that they would occupy senatorial positions and were placed as heads of armies. These poets were generally considered amongst the highest and most important minds in the formation and continuity of their countries and communities. Certainly we have fallen a long way from that, not everywhere but certainly in the western world. You could still go into parts of Africa and if you are a poet and you walk into a room, everyone stands up and gives you their seat. The sciences have certainly supplanted the place of the arts in our culture. There has been a rise in sciences and a decline in the role of the arts, at least in the 20th century.

EO: You did have a role as an educator, though. How has your teaching affected your writing?

SS: After about 10 years of teaching literature, I was just doing writing workshops. I began to worry though, that I was either getting stale or responding reflexively. I feared that this would somehow stop feeding the work and would start feeding off the work. It was perhaps draining some of the love and the passion I had for writing. So at that point I thought, "Well, I love working with writers and I'm not the least bit interested in giving that up," so I began to experiment with the classes themselves. We began to develop workshops that would take a particular focus, translation or the history of the elegy. In the elegy course, for example, we went back to the very beginning and asked, "Where did it begin in poetry? How did it start?"

And what does it mean historically?" So you have this deep reading within western literature and other cultures as well. We went to early Greek texts in which the word elegy was considered to be the lettering on the inside of a flower; and if you were to look closely at this flower you would see the word. It was associated with various things. If someone dies and the last breath was breathed into the hollow reeds along the river banks, the sound that was made had a mournful tone. One began to see the elegy again and again in these kind of remarkable ways. Then you have these sort of formative myths of poems and poets that are tied to elegies. The elegy as a poetic form originally did not mean poems of mourning. Anyways, I don't mean to give you a lecture on elegies.

JJ: It's funny, we were just talking about elegies today.

SS: Oh, really? In what context?

JJ: Well, I was just curious and asked Ellen, if an elegy was, in fact, restricted to death. When I asked it, I felt it was a silly question, but maybe could an elegy concern, not only a person, but say, an object?

SS: Oh, sure. This sort of thing became fascinating in the 20th century, for example, the idea of a self-elegy or writing an elegy for oneself. However, what happens in the 20th century which is so interesting and challenging in some ways for us as a culture, was that traditionally an elegy was a way of translating a person from this life into another life, from an earthly life into a heavenly life, so a belief in this other world was essential, this carrying of a soul who has died into another life. The elegy, historically, is also a way of honoring that person who has died, essentially filtering out the bad stuff and highlighting the good features of this person. But when it got to the 20th century and people started to lose belief in this other world, it was not a matter of restoring them, it was a matter of simply saying goodbye and recognizing and realizing and thinking and believing that this is it,

they have just disappeared. At the same time, this other sense seemed more extraordinary--well, not more extraordinary, but there are poets to back this up, like Thomas Hardy. There is a poem entitled Elegy for God, which depicts God being carried on a cart to be buried. This is all a part the falling belief. There is also this sense that an elegy should be true in that it represents a whole life rather than just the good parts of the life. So elegies are not all about things that you honor but things that one might dishonor. With a poet like Sylvia Plath, these might become patricidal attacks, as in her poems and elegies for her father; and her; "Daddy, Daddy you bastard I'm through." They're anything but trying to translate him into another world or trying to honor him. They are to attack him and assault him. This is a very new phenomenon in the history of the elegy, and so for us as a class to trace that and then for me to watch and see, really, how important this is to writers and how this makes its way back into the work. So for those poets who had been through the workshop stage, there was great interest in these subjects and they would go off into some particular tangent of their own as readers and bring back into class these things they had discovered. It wasn't that each one of them started to write elegies, since there wasn't this great outbreak or plague where we were living, (Laughter) but everyone sort of had a deeper understanding the evolution of poetry. This whole time we have been talking about tradition and how it changes over time and the cultural definition of what a love poem is, or what an elegy is, or what have you. I think many of them found this very inspiring and I think it nourished the work in ways that manifested themselves after the class was over. Certainly in my case, it became deeply enriching and helped me greatly as a writer from getting bogged down with one discussion about poetry. I found myself involved in these amazing conversations and I had to do what they were doing. I didn't know these things, so I had to teach myself right there with them and that was kind of fascinating and incredibly difficult, but in the long run

I found it very rewarding. I did that for about a decade or so and I taught only one of those a year because it was so time consuming. Overall, that was a way of feeding the work rather than just kind of putting it into a coma.

EO: So now I am thinking of The Pilot Star Elegies, and Elegy for My Sister specifically. I wanted to ask you a more specific question. You were talking about the elegy having a traditional role of translating, from the physical realm to the spiritual. But reading these poems, they felt centered on the physicality of memory and encapsulating time and space in a moment.

SS: My sister was not a believer and I have never been one either, so the whole idea of translating became difficult. I often wonder if I was a person of faith, how I would have handled that part of it, if I believed that I could help transport and usher her into this other world. What would it mean to be doing that with someone who didn't believe? I never came up with an answer because I felt the same way she did about it. That was a very interesting problem, not that I would have liked to answer it.

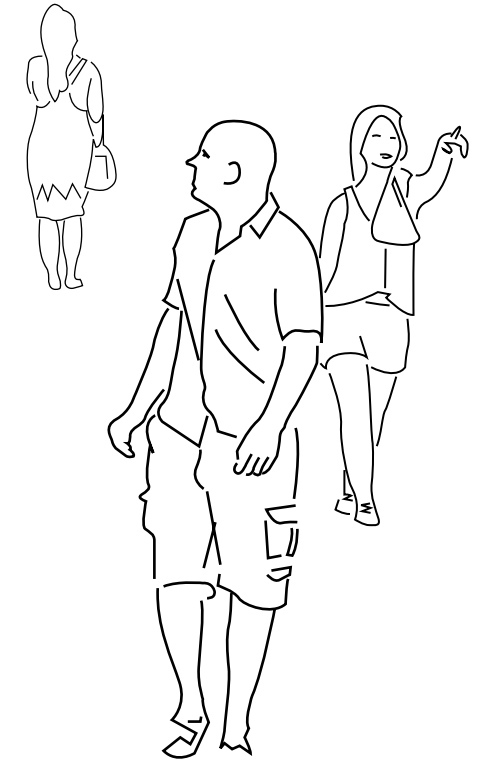
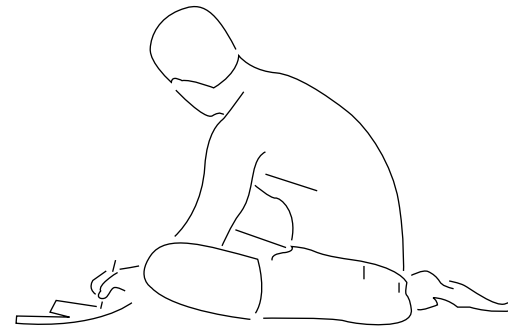
EO: The question I wanted to ask you was about the process of writing that poem and your relationship to the process. Would you say that you primarily perceive memory as being encapsulated in a physical moment or that in writing a poem, you construct it in that way? How much of the immediate perception of a moment in the past, for example, with all these physical senses, is pre-existing and how much of it is arranged?

SS: The relationship to memory was the most immediate thing that I felt faced with, that as soon as someone dies, what starts instantaneously is forgetting. One thing about creating these memorializing poems was that the person was represented in the most positive and illuminating light as possible. That involves a certain kind of forgetting or omitting or glossing over. The thing for me was that I didn't want to distinguish between the

good times and the bad times with her. I wanted to show the difficult parts of her life and the tragic moments with the good times, because for me they were inseparable. You just never knew which person you would be encountering, and as her life progressed, the difficult times began to predominate. The idea of trying to simply focus on the good things in her life just didn't seem true, no, not true, but honest to me. I tried not to filter memory, however, every time you write a poem you are selecting something. So it is not as though I believe I have the whole life, by any means, captured within the poem. There are things I am picking over other things and there is a process of selection. In some ways, though, her life was quite tragic and I didn't want to make it any less tragic. In order to be true to her life I tried to not to make the poem about me and how sad I am, but to make it about her and to make it about the her that I actually knew. I wanted to preserve my memory as being alive, and it seemed to have been a betrayal to have forgotten her, the good or the bad. But that is happening. It's going to happen, and I don't know if, as it is being forgotten, it has been extinguished in the mind or the heart or wherever it may be. I wanted to keep her alive in my conscious mind as much as I could and I began writing the day after she died. I worked at it and it was ten times as long as it is now. You don't want it to become sensational. There is an elaborate kind of balance that I was trying to maintain in all those respects and certainly it was the most difficult poem I had ever had to write because it involved all these things. In a sort of ethical way, I felt as if I was as implicated by this poem as I was by any poem I had every written. I tried to withhold myself as best as I could and as much as possible. I did not want to filter it through my own reactions, be they, anger or disgust, but to let them be what they were, and not to make them better. If the reader responds with anger or disgust, that is fine, but I wasn't setting out to awaken or evoke those kind of reactions.

EO: I think I can say that you succeeded. Our class read this together and a comment that was often made was that this was not a confessional poem, against all odds.

SS: No. Good. Good good, because that is exactly what I was afraid of when I started writing it. I feared that I was going to make it about me and I didn't want to be in it at all. A number of these things, if not all, happened in my presence. I didn't want to be one of the characters. I wanted to be simply, what? Even witness doesn't sound right. I'm not quite sure what the right word is.





Grow Up | Jackie Kenyon

And Dwelt Among Us

ELLEN ORNER

After viewing El Greco's Crucifixion with Two Donors

Gazing heavenward
or perhaps only to the light
in the ceiling of our train
a Spanish man sits and sinks
into his sockets, eyes
the size of billiard balls. His
swan neck bends around itself
to lift his slackened chin.
Reddish whiskers fill his cheeks.
His hands, slain on the tray before him,
demand to be believed. Though I see
no thorny crown, though his ears aren't filled
with blood, I can almost see the strokes,
the single strokes that give him life—
El Greco's Christ is breathing,
and here am I, the donor on the right,
asking how this can be, and whether I
—me—should fold my lace-sleeved
hands and gaze beyond him
to the light that floods His face.



Under a Frozen Sky | Samantha Kampersal



In the Morning Light | Kyle Whitgrove



Crooked Gallery | Hilary Clark



Beloved | Caleb Kortokrax

At Conrad Polk's Cabin On Squaw Point

LAUREN T. NELSON



Untitled | William Graff

The old Ford moaned over the pockmarked road, fracturing the pavement into gravel. Through the side yards of Lincoln Log cabins I snatched glimpses of the lake. The water was white and choppy beneath an ashen sky and still the surface was scarred with pontoon boats and jet skis. I scanned the water for fishing boats and saw none. Just as the road began to narrow at the end of the point, Conrad cranked the wheel and the truck lurched into the ditch. "There she is," the old man grunted.

A single-story cedar building shrugged beneath a grove of oak trees. It was tucked between two sprawling estates designed to resemble the traditionally quaint log cabin. I noticed that the foundation walls of the neighboring homes were laid within feet of where Conrad's property line must have been.

"Used to be identical to the place next door; 'til they tore it down and started putting up these eye-sores. Practically fill the lots, right up to the shore." He tugged a tackle box out of the hatch.

"Want some help with that?" I asked him.

"I got it. Just grab the rods and let Gunnar out of his kennel. Poor guy's shaking he's gotta go so bad."

I squeezed the metal prongs on the kennel and Gunnar shot out the door so fast I caught my finger and gave out a sharp yelp. He ran to the edge of the gravel drive and squatted on

the first strip of grass he saw.

"I told'ja," Conrad laughed. "Ain't nothin' in that dog's way when he's gotta shit." I grabbed our fishing rods and started to follow the man to the back door. "Grab those beers too, but leave the Stellas. They're for later," he added.

I jogged back to the truck and pulled out a case of Budweiser from the cooler, closing the lid on Conrad's Stellas. My strides lengthened to match his as we stepped over the recently seeded lawn. A half finished path of interred cinder blocks stopped ten feet before the steps. Above the door the underside of the awning swarmed with a constellation of insects. Lake flies careened on ellipses of chaos. "Hexagenia lymbata," Conrad informed me. "Hex flies." Cobwebs cradled swaddled corpses of beetles. I swallowed my breath and squinted my eyes against the winged fog guarding the door. The brass leaf on the handle flaked off in the palm of my hand. Beneath the paint the handle was mottled and dull. The screen door whined shut behind us.

"You can set that on the floor for now," Conrad said. He hung the car keys on a rack by the door. Plastic tags cuffed the heads of most of the keys while others chained themselves to paper tags protected by thin rims of tinsel. Their labels were varied and specific: *garage door west, bathroom door, trailer hitch, tool shed, Monarch, boathouse, back door, lawn mower*. Behind the key rack a banner of wallpaper striped all four walls of the

kitchen—pale blue and spattered with white hydrangeas: the sole evidence of a female presence in the home.

The kitchen was a square brown hole; cavernous and flanked with red-orange counter tops dating back to 1969. The room smelled of dishwater and old fruit. A handful of fly fishing rods slouched against an old icebox tucked into the nook behind the door. I added our rods to the collection. Electric bills, receipts, and handwritten notes blanketed the top of the icebox. A toolbox collecting dust sulked on the corner. Two aluminum cans of insecticide towered over it and behind them a plastic jug of lighter fluid had frozen in a perpetual squeeze. A collection of batteries scattered over the counter like mouse droppings on the carpet. I remembered Conrad kept at least one loaded flashlight in each of the drawers.

Across from the icebox stood the kitchen table, bare except for a Styrofoam cooler. The table had the slick, metallic look of a diner. It was too long for the wall and hung over the doorway into another room. A brown plastic accordion-pleated curtain divided the kitchen from a bedroom. The only piece of furniture in the room was a white metal bunk bed set in front of a wall of shelves. The covers were torn off and the bare mattress lay beneath a chain dangling from a bare bulb on the ceiling.

I went to put the beer in the fridge and wasn't surprised to find that it was primarily being used to house condiments. Two bottles of ketchup, a jar of Dijon mustard with brown speckled gunk caked on the rim. Pickle relish and an economy size bottle of soy sauce. A tub of margarine, unopened. The shelf on the door was littered with packets of taco sauce. On the main shelf someone had refilled a cranberry juice container with tap water.

From the back door I could see through the kitchen a corduroy recliner in the center of the living room. The track marks in the carpet where the chair was dragged were rubbed out long

ago beneath the bodies of sleeping dogs. A new flat screen television perched on top of two cinder blocks on the floor while the old set remained wedged in its socket on the face of the entertainment unit. The old dial was rusted to a standstill on the weather channel. On the adjacent wall, a little wood burning stove looked neglected. The year before, I'd asked Conrad if he'd ever thought of tearing it out. "Nah," he'd shrugged. "Been here longer than I have."

The stove slept at the feet of two blue and white plaid couches sprawled beneath yawning windows. I turned the blinds to look at the front yard and the grey lake churning just beyond. Weeds dangled from the wooden dock and a brood of ducklings swam underneath. The hen nestled in the sumac by the fire pit, watching her offspring from the bank above the water. At the edge of the water I noticed a new addition to the view. Wooden and painted white with tiny shingles glued to the turret, it paid homage to the seaside towers of the American Northeast. The lighthouse was rooted to the shore like a sentinel, unlit and unarmed, waiting for something to happen.

We heard Gunnar in the front yard, barking at a bird or a goddamn squirrel up a tree. This bark was higher-pitched than the pointer's usual greeting. His hunting yelp fell somewhere between the musical keys *guard dog* and *fraidy cat*. I walked back to the kitchen.

"Guess we should get the rest," Conrad said, turning back toward the door. I followed him back outside. The bugs had pretty much abandoned the awning by that point. Sure enough, Gunnar had his claws in the trunk of one of the old oaks, barking his fool head off at a tawny falcon pretending not to give a damn. The bird rustled its feathers a couple times, flexing its knees like it was about to take off, but in the end it decided to stay put.

We grabbed our duffel bags and the rest of the groceries out

of the hatch and headed back inside. "Hey Gunnar, hup! Hup, boy!" Conrad called after his dog. I watched the poor animal's head flick back and forth, in conflict between his master and his prey. "Heel," Conrad bellowed and the dog came scooting in the house ahead of him. "Good boy."

The kitchen began to grow dark as we moved around unpacking the bags and putting groceries away. "Sun's setting," I said. Conrad flipped the light switch next to the stove and the overhead fixture hummed to life. "Might be a good night for a fire out in the pit. Maybe drink a few? What do you think?"

"Best idea you've had all day, Jimmy." The old man's face wrinkled up like the mug of a bulldog when he smiled.

I grabbed the can of lighter fluid off the icebox, shoved a packet of matches in the back pocket of my jeans and went out the front door. The evening sky was a dull grey-blue over the water, but it deepened to aubergine where the sky cleared to let the bright moon shine through the clouds. The tops of the trees were bathed in silver moonlight. I felt the wind dying down and the evening took on a new atmosphere, something more fraternal and appropriate for the occasion, as if the sky gods were submitting to our itinerary. I prayed for the next day's calm.

The pit had been dug next to the water right on the hump of the shoreline. A stack of logs leaned against an oak tree behind it. I grabbed three and made a teepee in the middle of the fire pit, then stuffed it full of kindling from a cardboard box on top of the woodpile. I drizzled lighter fluid over the logs and bent down to spark a match on a stone. Flame blossomed on the red tip and I tucked it quickly between the logs underneath the kindling. A few minutes later the fire roared. Conrad emerged from the cabin squeezing four Budweiser bottles between his fingers. We pulled two tree stumps up to the blaze. He handed me my beers and the bottle opener. The cap hissed

and bucked backward off the lip. A cold steam floated up out of the neck and got caught in the remaining breeze. I handed the opener back to him and leaned forward onto my knees. His cap clinked against a rock and bounced into the fire. He leaned back against the woodpile and took a long drink before speaking.

"What is it now, eleven or twelve?" I watched his eyes drift as he calculated the years in his head.

"Twelve years tomorrow," I reminded him.

"Getting harder to remember." He sighed heavily, as if he were trying to force all the air out of his lungs.

"Don't mean anything," I assured him. "Just the way time works."

"It'd be our 50th this August." His eyes fell to the fire.

"Sounds like an occasion for a toast," I told him, leaning in to clink the neck of his beer with my own. "To Marilyn," I said.

"To Marilyn." He breathed her name without taking his eyes off the flames. They flickered in the velvet night, a frenzy of red-hot tongues licking the blackened tree limbs. "Been seeing Duke in my dreams the last couple weeks," he said.

I usually tried not to bring up my old man during our weekends on Squaw Point—knew it would just upset Conrad. But he was always on my mind when we talked about Marilyn's accident. I wasn't home when it happened—my girl friend needed a sober ride home from a party near the high school—but Conrad found me on my cell phone. His voice sounded hollow, like a vacuum was sucking the words back down his throat. I felt my palms perspiring.

"What is it, Conny?" I asked him. "What's wrong?"

He said, “Get yourself home, kid. I’ll meet you there.”

The green Buick was still smoking when I got there. It was wrapped around the telephone pole on the street corner in front of my house. I ditched my bike on the sidewalk and kept walking toward the wreck. Their bodies had been removed from the car and taken to the hospital. “Never even turned on the sirens,” Conrad told me. The coroner said the impact had killed them instantly.

When the officer’s left and the flashing blue and red lights finally disappeared down the street, Conrad pulled down a bottle of whisky from the cupboard and poured us each a drink. It was the first time I’d tasted hard liquor. We drank in the living room until we both passed out—me on the sofa, Conrad in the recliner.

In the morning he drove us to the hospital. We were told to take the elevator to the basement level marked M. One of the physicians who’d worked on them the previous night escorted us to the room where their bodies had been laid out. He pulled down the blankets, revealing their faces, one at a time.

“Yes that’s her,” Conrad confirmed.

“That’s him,” I said.

The physician thanked us and told us to stop by reception before we left. Back on the main level, the nurse at reception pulled out two wire baskets from underneath the desk and handed one to each of us.

“Your wife’s things, Mr. Polk,” she said. “And your dad’s, kiddo. I’m sorry for both of your losses.”

Conrad didn’t look at me when he said it, but kept his eyes trained on the fire. I couldn’t tell if he was thinking about Duke or her. Maybe the old man couldn’t separate the two any

more—his best friend and his girl. I wasn’t sure if he wanted me to say something or if he was going to continue. We sat there in silence, sipping our beers and staring into the fire for a few moments before I asked him any more about it. “What does he do, my dad?”

“He’s just there, in front of me, all pink in the cheeks and skin sweatin’ out whisky just like when he was alive.”

“He say anything?”

“Nothing. Just stands there grinning at me like a goddamn clown.” Conrad stood up and dug his hand into the pocket of his slacks. When he pulled the hand back out it was cuffed around a thick little spliff and a packet of matches. He offered it to me with a lift of his eyebrows. “Picked this up from some fat schmuck in a hostel on Waikiki. Smelled it one night he was smokin’ out a bunch of Dutch boys on the porch, so I asked him for a hit. I figure, what the hell? I’m 75 and my wife’s dead.” Conrad sat back down on his stump, putting his hand on the tree trunk for support.

“...said it came from a part of the island called Puna. Called it *puna butta* ‘cause it’s ‘smooth like butta.’ And it fuckin’ was, kid. I’m telling you.” He struck a match on the back of the packet and singed the paper tip. The old man fucking French-inhaled the thing. Right through his bulldog nose. He lifted his eyebrows at me again and I took the offer. I hadn’t really touched the stuff since college and it choked me up a bit, sitting there on the edge of Gull Lake with my father’s oldest friend. “I froze a bunch of it when I got back in March. Been saving it for tonight. Smoke up, boy.”

My father’s oldest friend.

Conrad stood up and walked back inside the cabin. I watched him fiddling with something in the living room. The stereo

crackled onto a classic rock station and when he turned up the volume I jumped up with my air guitar and started sashaying around the fire. I heard him laughing as he walked back and galloped over to do the hand off. He grinned at me through a wisp of smoke and walked back to the fire.

I woke up to the sound of Gunnar barking and scratching the door so fiercely I thought he was going to tear it off the hinge. My head was pounding and I had to wait for the courage to open my eyes. Once I opened them I realized I was lying on the ground, flat on my back next to the fire pit. A pile of three skinny logs had been piled under my neck like a primitive kind of pillow. I rolled over toward the pit and found it still smoking. Ash flakes fluttered in a beam of sunlight over the smoldering skeletons of tree limbs. The ground was littered with beer cans and cigarette butts. An empty highball tumbler sat on Conrad’s stump; the last sip of whisky had caramelized in the bottom. I looked for its mate and found a couple shards of glass on the rocks surrounding the pit. Other pieces were scattered throughout the grass. I collected them gingerly in my hands and tossed the remnants in the fire pit to dispose of later.

Standing up I could see Conrad sprawled out on the dock still asleep. I called to him, but my voice got lost in the sound of waves crashing on shore. I heard the door shaking on its frame and remembered the dog. I stumbled over to the house and set him loose. He ran straight down to the beach onto the dock where his owner lay batting flies off his nose in his sleep. Gunnar straddled him, licking his face until Conrad sat up sputtering.

“What the--?” the old man stammered. His eyes were like paper cuts beneath his furrowed eyebrows. He wrestled blindly with the animal, trying to get Gunnar to stop licking his face.

“Get the f-f-fuck off!” Conrad threw his arms around the dog and tried to roll him over, but the old man miscalculated and both dog and master plunged into the lake.

I jogged down to the beach to make sure they were okay. Conrad stood up in the shallows unfolding his body so quickly a cascade of water shot off his back. It shimmered in the morning light. He laughed and walked toward the shore, grabbing a stick out of the water to throw when the dog finished shaking himself dry on the beach. “Morning,” I called down from the shore.

“Morning, kid,” Conrad called back. “Might as well jump in and wash off so we can get going.” I offered my hand to him and he grabbed it, letting me pull him onto the dock. He grunted some version of thanks and kept walking down the dock.

I shrugged off my jeans and t-shirt while Conrad removed the boat cover and started lowering the Monarch into the water. The sound of the lift lowering split through the tranquil sounds of morning like a chainsaw. I hopped off the dock and into the water, submerging my head to escape the sound of scraping metal and chains uncoiling. Beneath the surface the lake water was flickering shades of brown and murky with algae. Black bugs darted across the surface of the water, trailing delicate white tails like jet streams in their wake. I scruffed up my hair in a minimal attempt at hygiene and walked back to the beach. Back on the dock I shook myself dry like I’d seen Gunnar do moments before, slid back into my jeans, and ran inside to get the fishing rods.

By our fifth beer, the lake on the other side of Squaw Point had grown calm. We’d spent the first hour just cruising around the chain, drinking and seeing he familiar sights: the house with the seaplane, Ernie’s bar, Zorba’s, the resorts Maddens and

Craguns. We did a whole loop of the perimeter. Getting our bearings and just appreciating the roll of the waves against the hull as we smoked and drank and thought about the people we couldn't talk about.

Eventually, Conrad steered the Monarch into the edge of a marsh about a hundred feet from the shore just on the other side of the sandbar from his cabin. He was hoping we'd find some largemouth bass around the perimeter of the marsh where the weeds dropped off suddenly.

"Think we're getting too far in?" I asked him.

"I'm gonna come back out right over there where the weeds are thicker." Conrad was focused on splitting his attention between watching where he was going and watching a little grey screen mounted on the dashboard.

"What're you looking for?"

"Gotta find a spot that's at least eight feet deep." He said and continued to flick his eyes back and forth between the depth finder and the lake. "Suckers like it dark and cold." Gunnar's ears perked up at the inflection in Conrad's voice and the dog stood up where he had been laying in the bow of the boat. He put his paws up on the windshield in an attempt to climb back into the stern, but Conrad pushed him off shouting, "Down boy! Lay down." Gunnar obeyed, though reluctantly. "Here's the spot," Conrad concluded, killing the engine.

All of a sudden he was moving quickly and with precision. He scooped up the tackle box and swiveled around in his seat to open it on the chair behind him. He was meticulous in his fly selection. His eyesight was still good enough that he could tie his own flies with the help of reading glasses. However, he had been indulging the hobby more and more frequently since his marriage had ended. Eventually he would go blind from it.

Conrad made his selection: a small, thin spear of yellow—his own version of a Dahlberg Diver. It had a sleek look to it and reminded me of a foxtail. Conrad's tied his fly on with swift perfection and stood up to cast before I had even secured a fly on my rod. He pointed the rod out in front of him, hanging it over the water with the rest of the line. Then he brought the rod back over his shoulder, whipping the translucent line back and forth barely grazing the surface of the water.

Conrad brought the rod back again, but this time when he tried to loop it forward the rod bowed in resistance. He pulled back hard, jerking the line upward to get a firm hook. Gunnar barked from the bow where Conrad had him sequestered.

"Got something, Conny?" I asked, feeling the boat shift as both he and his mutt moved from one side to the other.

"Dunno, he's not putting up much of a fight." Conrad gave the line an extra jerk and finished reeling it in. A round little fish with a pale belly and iridescent blue scales covering its spine from nose to tail burst out of the water and came swinging through the air straight at my head. Gunnar snapped at it as Conrad tried to grab hold of it without cutting his hand on the spiny fin.

"Fuckin' crappie," Conrad huffed. He loosened the hook from the fish's jaw and tossed him over the side of the boat.

When our luck failed to improve after a couple hours fishing the weeds, Conrad drove the monarch out of the marsh and we headed north to Love Lake where the boat traffic wouldn't be so heavy. Once we were through the channel we switched places and he had me drive the boat around the shoreline of the lake so slowly I almost had the boat idled. While I drove he stood in the bow of the boat casting into the shadows beneath

the docks.

"It takes a lot of patience," he explained when I asked him how he could do this all the time, casting and waiting and only catching a fish every once in a while.

"What is it about fishing? Why have you always kept doing it?"

Conrad thought about this for a long moment before answering. Then he grinned. "I guess I just like what happens when you do finally make that catch," he said. "Little guy comes along just as your fly touches the surface of the water...and he's fast enough to get it...and you pull back at just the right time. Everything happens the way it needs to. Feels kind of like fate."

"I like that, but I don't know if I'd call it fate," I said. Conrad looked at me inquisitively and without rebuff. I rubbed the place on my wrist where the watch hung and chafed at the skin. "I guess I don't know what I think of fate. Seems more like coincidence is behind a lot of what happens."

"It's more of an art though, with fishing. It's precise. The movement of the line is timed. Something happens when the fish is caught, things align—that's what I mean by fate. He falls into the rhythm of the line and a connection forms between fish and fly," Conrad explained. "Only he is the fly and I am the fish." He winked.

I nodded back saying, "Okay, okay. I see what you mean about fishing. In other scenarios though...I don't think fate can be accountable for everything."

"I guess that's a fair statement," Conrad conceded.

"Some things are just accidents."

Sometime after four, Conrad decided it was time to take a

break. He lit a cigarette and sat down in the captain's chair, grabbing an extra cushion off the floor and tucking it behind his back. He leaned back in the reclining seat.

"Grab us a couple beers out of the cooler, Jim." The cooler was in the back of the boat, right beneath the motor. I pried off the Styrofoam lid and stuck my hand down into the ice for a second before pulling out two cold green bottles of Conrad's favorite Belgian brew. I handed one to him as he took a drag from his cigarette. He offered me the carton and I saw that there were four packs remaining.

I said, "I'll just take a single." He pulled his own pack back out of his pocket and hit it against his palm until a slim white shoot fell out. He tossed it to me and I caught it. Muscle memory kicked in immediately. Fingers to lips, thumb to flame. I inhaled and held the smoke in my mouth, savoring the woody taste. Conrad took another drag from his cigarette.

"They'd been to Leroy's." He exhaled through the statement. A mushroom cloud of smoke chopped up by the bite of his words. "Police found a receipt in his jacket pocket," Conrad continued. "He had the veal. She had the calamari. It was her favorite. Leroy's had the best seafood in Northfield."

I asked, "Were the drinks on the receipt?"

"No. Probably went to the hotel bar," he said.

"What they must have been drinking."

"Obliterated."

"Both of them, I'm sure."

"Wasn't the first time." Conrad let his mind linger on this thought. When he spoke again his voice was different, groggier, like he was waking up. "What were they thinking?" he smiled, making eye contact.

“Who can know?” I said. “Dad courted the whisky mistress all his life.”

Conrad turned around to watch the place above the tree line where the last pink nugget of sunlight quavered on the brink of dusk. “Bet they were laughing,” he said.

The beer was gone, but not the whisky. I pulled a bottle of Jack out of the foam cooler, set it on the dashboard, and proceeded to pour the melted ice out over the side of the boat.

In the front of the boat, Conrad had opened one of the doors in the seat and started digging around in the storage bin. He pulled out a bundle of kindling and handed it to me. We worked in silence. I shook the rest of the condensation off of the cooler lid, flipped it upside down and piled the twigs ceremoniously on top.

From a drawer—capable of locking but unlocked—Conrad pulled out a tin box with a hinged lid. He opened the box on his lap, but I didn’t need to see inside to know what it contained: a lock of hair—no, you couldn’t call it that—it was more like a clump, really, of silver-blond hair he had cut from Marilyn’s head when she was in the hospital. He raked the strands into the box and replaced it in the pocket of his coat. I watched him and I understood. I was wearing my father’s watch beneath the sleeve of my sweatshirt.

Conrad separated one curl from the nest. It was crisp and wiry and held its shape. I tunneled out a divot in the peak of the teepee where the twigs met, creating something akin to the cauldron of a volcano. Conrad tucked the curl into the hole tenderly and stepped back from what had taken on the aura of an altar. I grabbed the whisky and we stood there passing the bottle back and forth, taking swigs until it was half gone.

Then Conrad wrapped his hand around the neck of the bottle, covering part of the mouth with his thumb, and sprinkled it over the kindling. He set the raft in the water and threw a sparked match at it before it could drift. The altar crawled with flames spreading out from its center. The stench of singed hair laced with Styrofoam would have been appalling if our senses hadn’t been previously dulled with alcohol. Embers scampered over the black water and drifted into the air. They flickered like fireflies and extinguished like light bulbs, without smoldering.

“Cold out here,” I said. We were standing ankle deep in the lake out on the sandbar that culminates in the end of Squaw Point. Behind us, the Monarch was anchored to the beach and Gunnar was running up and down the sandbar chasing waves. The wind had picked up and the last sliver of light had long since vanished from the horizon. The moon hung low and white over the lake and we watched Marilyn’s altar burning out beyond it where the water was indistinguishable from the night sky. I was starting to sway from the whisky and felt my eyelids drooping. Conrad didn’t falter though, even when a wave crashed at his ankles he stood there still as a sentinel. Every so often we heard Gunnar whining from somewhere further down the beach.

“Why don’t you go on and take him home,” Conrad suggested. “Sounds like he could stand to be fed.” His gaze was locked on Marilyn.

“Coming?” I asked him, though I knew what his answer would be.

“Think I’ll stay out here for a while and make sure it goes out.” His face was etched with resolve. I gave him a quizzical look and he laughed. “Don’t worry about me, kid. I’ll see you in the morning.” He patted me on the back as he said this. I thought about saying something else, but didn’t. Instead I nodded and

kept walking to the boat calling Gunnar over the roar of wind and wave. I hopped over the side of the boat and Conrad gave it a shove to move the hull off the sand. I started the motor and waved to him, but he didn’t see me in the dark.

It was a quick drive to the cabin and Gunnar was on the dock before I’d pulled the boat up to the lift. I picked up a couple bottles from the fire pit and brought them inside. I left the back door unlocked for Conrad and went to bed on one of the extra long twins in the room I took for the guest bedroom. I fell asleep thinking about the ghost of my father and wondered if he was lurking in the walls of Conrad’s cabin.

I stepped out of the cabin into a cool grey morning. I could tell it was early by the mist still hanging over the lake. I walked to the end of the point and climbed to the top of the bluff. In the distance I saw Conrad sitting cross-legged on the sandbar. I tripped through the brush on my way down the hill toward him. When I came up behind him he pulled a cigarette out of his hatband.

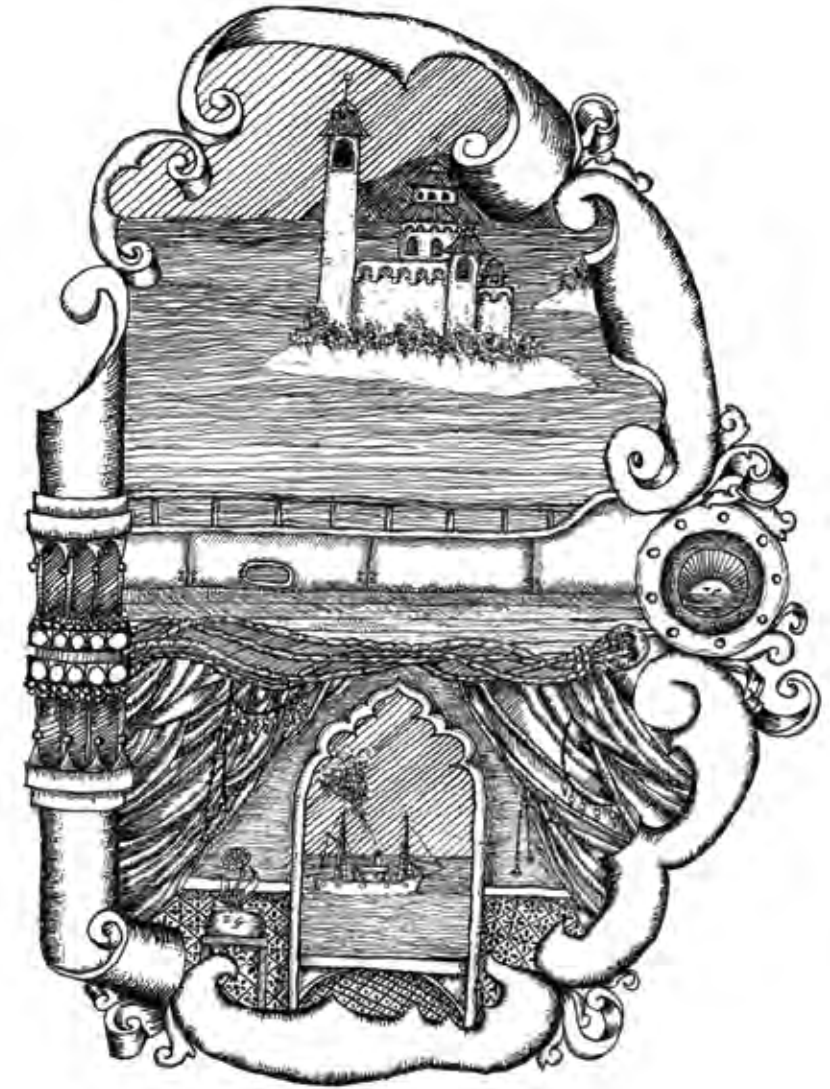
“How was it out here?” I asked him.

He grinned and answered, “It was nice, just the two of us.”

I thought I knew who he meant. He wasn’t gone for me, though, and I didn’t say so to Conrad. We stayed out there a while, at the end of Squaw Point, watching the sun rise and waiting for something to happen.



Seaside Youth | Dan Lund



Seen from the Tower and the Sea | Nicholas Burrus

The Hike

ELLEN ORNER

Cottonwoods clatter like paper
dimes. Wind from the east
crests grass into troughs,
trapped in their periods (crest
and trough). Tarnished silver
plates the sky and hikers
top the dune. Our footpaths
furrow like palm lines.
Cottonwoods clatter
like dimes.

Into the Grate

R. JAMES ONOFREY

i saw you tossing
pennies into the street drain--
bouncing off the rust,

into the grate. you
waited for the splash before
plucking another

from a tin soup can.
one coin had a coat of green
tempering the beard.

cars swerved around you,
drivers looked in their mirrors
at you and focused

again on the road
with raindrops bursting on their
hoods and cracked windshields.

hours ticked away,
the can finally empty--
you sighed and dropped it

to the pavement. an
arid din echoed as you
kicked it down the street.



Katie Reading | Caleb Kortokrax



Die Alte und Die Junge | Hilary Clark

Autoimmune Destruction Eats Antigen and Self Alike

DIANA STUTZMAN

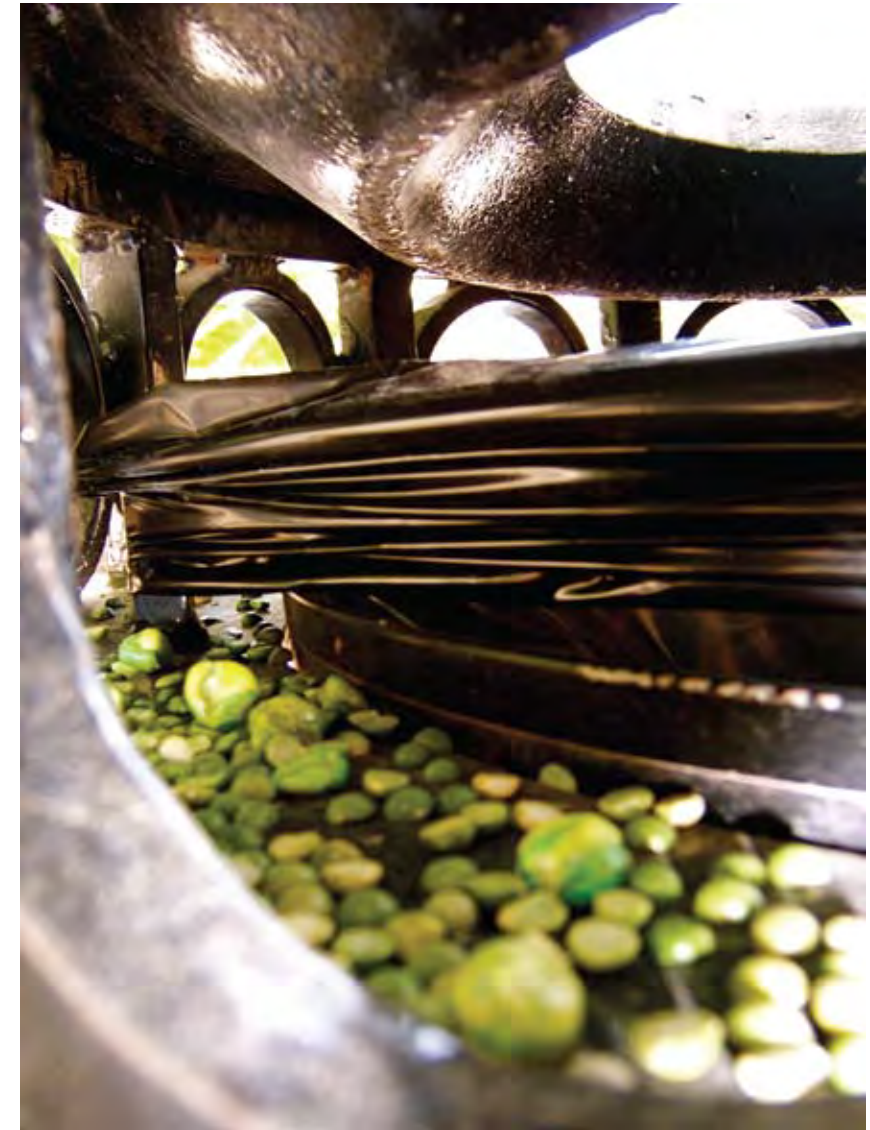
Pink
buccal mucosa
blooms.

Unlock my masticating tongue, ask
your open-ended inquiries, give
me your prognosis. Touch

me, from my toes to my hair
follicles, palpate my palpitating
myocardium; gasping

breath, flinch,
you found
an area of tenderness,

inflammation.



Untitled | Austin Hill



Beloved | Emily Royer



Modge Podge | Abbey Houx

At three past twelve the house is dead.

There is no sound.

Nothing to mistake

for the warmth of human voices,

just cellar rumblings of a furnace,

electric whirrings of fan blades,

and scritch scritch scritch always

scritch scritch scritch the razor

sailing over seas of stubbled flesh,

red and bladeburnt clots of skin

poxed by fluorescent light, reflected

off beads of blood that bud

from time to time, dripping

but never staining the white.

Mirrored eyes above the sink,

mere mannequin eyes,

two hollow watery balls

fixed on the curl of lips over teeth, and

scritch scritch scritch scritch scratch.

When the lights are doused

what is there but moonlight

falling through blinds,

cold upon the floor?

It is a dead December night,

driven back by razorblades,

basins and blood.

It is a numb December night,

when fluorescent bulbs

outshine the brightest star.

Ritual ETHAN GRANT



Untitled | William Graff



Studying | Caleb Kortokrax



Pull | Emily Royer



Discard | Emily Royer

Trespases LAUREN NELSON

ÁCOMA PUEBLO, NEW MEXICO

How we dare to climb you, your vertical sandstone road up the mesa. They call you the city in the sky, built from the blood of Uchtsiti, the Great Father, Lord of the Sun. Our white feet slip from the summit as if unworthy of your climax. You are the needle the desert threads.

Mesa morphs into pueblo, a crown of adobe plunging clay roots into stone the way your ladders splinter into doorways, feed the New Mexican sky, white clouds braided over you like long black hair trailing the strong backs of your women.

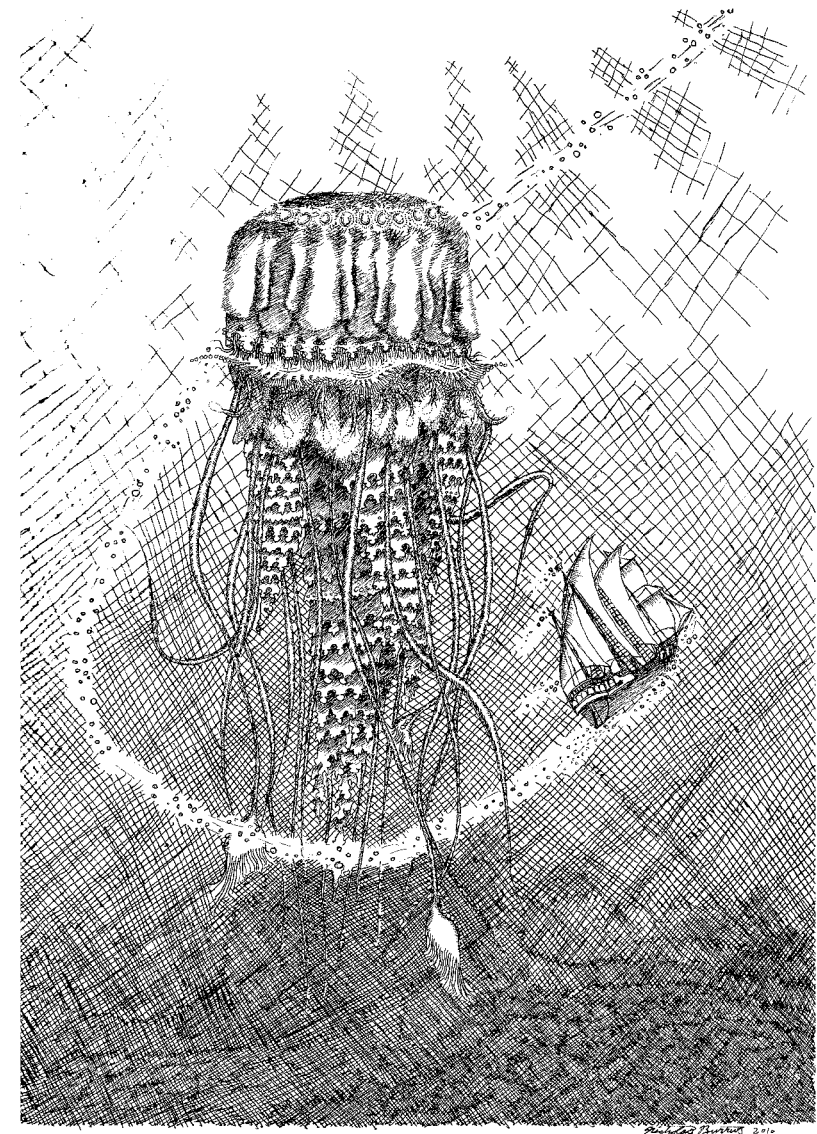
Chained to chunks of sandstone walls, two mutts, mangy and wild, sleep in the shade of plywood lean-tos or growl at the sun. We're warned against petting them. Territorial as timber wolves, they remind us of our trespasses. Not even your dogs have lost the spark in their eyes.

Adobe walls of San Esteban blend your lineages in the firmament. The wooden reredos behind the polychrome altar is ancient and erect in silent prayer. We, too, are praying silently for the images captured in our cameras, the spines of your Keresan women and our eventual descent.

They throw pottery inside their pueblos. Luiz with his painted pot poses beside a rust-red Buick, the front window rolled down, empty with heat. Behind him a red screen door with white lattice opens into a dark hall: at the other end, a window bright with blue sky pouring out of Manitou. I snap the image, wonder where the water pours out, then spot a tiny hole piercing the butterfly wing. We read our fortunes in the water:



Lady of the Lake | Kyle Whitgrove



Following the Voyage of The Albatros, No. 1 | Nicholas Burrus

Tar River

ELLEN ORNER

Beneath the combined crackle of turntable and frying pan, it begins to rain.

--Okay

she says, and because the front door is already open, she stands and moves to the porch.

He follows.

From under the awning, she reaches out a hand. Then she is walking in the street, barefoot and arms outstretched.

He does not follow. He watches from the porch.

She considers, with a giggle, walking on, away, goodbye. But she is already cold.

Gutter water is overflowing in a bold and steady current. Under the awning again, she points one foot under it, and then the other. Bracing, of course, but more important is the look of it, anointing her skin like oil.

She wraps herself in a blanket and sits.

He sits.

Her feet are glittered with drops. With an effort, she lifts her eyes from them. With more effort, she points.

--If the Impressionists were living now, this is what they would have painted.

He turns to her a passive face, which means, say more.

--This ugly back of a hospital. These machines, those trucks, all this water and electric light.

He nods.

--This is grace.

he says. She nods, then points.

--That puddle right there.

The night is close and warm as an incubator. A deep salty pang rises up and startles them both. They are still for a moment, and then silently he tucks his face into his shoulder, and she takes her feet in her hands.



Silent Treatment | Adam Jackson



Alone, Together | Abbey Houx



Grow Old with Me | Dan Lund

3 AM EMILY ROYER

I dreamt in black & white last night.
Snapshots of rain pricked window panes
and lined, hat topped faces
pressed their way through the heavy moist air of that room.
Boy bodies stretched across apartment floors,
graced by Lamplight shadows,
choreographed to adjusting stomach choruses and page turning fanfares.
Light closed fists and tawny heads buried in floor pillows-
1950's drag race tires through screenless summer window cracks-
Two lights, not five,
that harshness hides too much of your shaded lines.
My heavy fevered head rolls
Back and forth back and forth
lifting to meet your eyes would strain too much.
Hearing is easier
without seeing my prophetic reflection.
The oracle of Delphi knew my image there
when she read those orbs in your skull,
Armored by glass to deflect the painful flashes
of your singular, white-tipped pupil.



For Luck | Nathan Sullivan



Untitled | Austin Hill



Folk Music Has Roots | Christopher Burrus

The Witness

LAUREN T. NELSON

The car looked like it was trying to strangle the life out of the apple tree. Daddy and I found it out on the side of Highway 9, right on the edge of Will County. It was the day before the Fourth of July in 1983. The frame had twisted around the skinny trunk a time and a half and the red fruit lay on the grass beneath the wreck like collateral damage. The doors kinked out where the metal had snapped and a barrage of bullet holes punctured the left side of the car, the side facing out from the tree. The body of the car was charred black and the interior had melted onto the bodies of the man and woman inside. I was too small to see inside the cab, but Daddy stuck his big farm hands under my armpits and hoisted me up saying, “I hope this don’t strike your curious bone, boy. That there is the evil side of man.” I begged him to lift me higher and when he did I squinted through the shattered window. Singed grey flesh peeled off the bones of their corpses in flakes that caught in the breeze, mixing with the dust kicked up from the road.

When I was four years old I started having a hard time staying asleep at night. Ma says it started with a thunderstorm, but she just doesn’t like me dwelling on something that ain’t no future, as she puts it. I’m not supposed to bring it up when I’m home, but I’ve been thinking about it a lot since I moved to the city.

There *had* been a storm that night, a couple veins of lightning

flickering way out across the cornfields on the neon horizon. But the weather had calmed down around our rickety old farmhouse and I had my head tucked under my pillow, all balled up in my sheets and my eyes finally growing heavy. That was when I heard something else crack across the night. It wasn’t like no lightning either this time. This was something striking against metal—gunshots. Not just one, either, but about a dozen of them *ping ping ping*-ing like hail on the hood of a car. I sat up in bed, fully awake, and listened. I heard an engine revving down the road and rolled out of bed, dropping to a crouch on the floor. I crept over to the window and pressed my ear to the cool glass. A second louder and more guttural engine joined the first. The cars grumbled for a couple of seconds and then I heard a loud crunch and a single horn blaring in the night. A couple minutes later I saw a blaze of light, but it died out after a few minutes. I climbed back in bed and lay awake the rest of the night.

In the morning I tagged along after Daddy when he left to do the plowing. We were half way down the road and almost out of sight of the house when he dropped the shovel he had slung over his shoulder and said, “Shit,” real quiet under his breath. I took off running after him and caught up to him when he stopped in front of the tree. I was puffing real hard in my overalls and too big shoes, but Daddy just stood there with his mouth hanging open. He wouldn’t have moved, I don’t think, if I hadn’t said I needed a boost to see in the window.

Three years later when *Scarface* came out, I compared the Hollywood version to what I’d witnessed as a little kid. The way I remembered it was just like the movies. The victims, Billy Dauber and his wife, had gone down in a hail of gunfire and a supernova of flames right in my front yard. I thought of the car door spattered with bullet holes, the charred bodies, the metal contorted around the apple tree. The way I remembered it was no less gruesome or glorious than Tony Montana going down in a hail of gunfire, his blood spattering on the red velvet carpet.

“Trumpy Card...” the security guard hesitated as he read the name. “That’s kinda queer innit?” He smirked as he handed back my license.

“Guess my parents knew I’d be a lucky sonuvabitch.” I tossed him my typical cavalier response and let the insult slide off me like my suit was made of plastic. I stepped through the metal detector without setting it off, grabbed my wool coat and fedora, and shot the guard a big false grin. “You have a fine day now,” I told him and walked toward the stairs.

The courtroom was on the third floor of the Chicago Federal Building. I was a little out of breath by the time I reached it, so I took a moment to gather myself and straighten my tie before pushing through the double oak doors. The inside of the courtroom looked exactly as I had imagined it. The media cameras flashing at the front as reporters climbed over one another snapping pictures of the five men seated in the first bench. Closest to the doors were the regular citizens who had crowded in to see the festivities. Many of the women wore suits, but others wore sundresses and frilly blouses from the 80s that looked a decade out of place. The men were all in suits of various dark hues, but even that couldn’t camouflage the mobsters I knew were seated among them. I could tell them

by their cold black eyes and their faces permanently set on don’t fuck with me. They sat in clusters, mostly near the middle of the courtroom, but a few lingered along the wall in back. I walked to the end of the line of other men in fedoras and stood with my back against the wall, eyes scanning the room from underneath the brim of my hat as the officer at the front called the court into session.

“All rise. His Honor Judge James Zagel presiding.”

Zagel walked out of his chambers with a look of perfect stoicism smeared on his face. He turned his head down as he walked to the podium and sat down in the chair. He took up the gavel and called the courtroom to order. “Will the defendants please rise.”

The accused were elderly men now. They leaned on the table and the backs of chairs as they stood facing the judge from the front row. I recognized them all immediately from having followed in the papers for the last 20 years the slew of murders for which they were now being held accountable. On the far right was “Joey the Clown” Lombardo, who I knew to have been a reputed mob boss. Stone cold, James Marcello stood at Lombardo’s right hand with Frank Calabrese, Sr. next to him and then Paul “The Indian” Schiro. At the end of the row stood Anthony Doyle who used to be a Chicago cop back before he got pinched in a racketeering conspiracy. They all looked kind of pathetic standing up there, all of them over 60 and Lombardo pushing 80. I just kept thinking *what’s the point*, except that I was itching to watch it all play out.

Growing up I always knew I belonged in a world where girls had names like Jennifer and Ginger and they all got a big kick out of being topless in a hot tub. I had big dreams of a mobster lifestyle: all machine guns and armored cars, champagne fountains and cocaine buffets. Over time I learned it wasn’t really like that, though. To any old sap on the street, the

mobsters were basically invisible. They were regular Joe's who watered their neighbors' flowers when they were on vacation and pet their dogs at the mailbox. Or maybe that's just how they wanted to seem. I'd rather believe it's like the movies. Ever since I watched *Casino* back in high school I can't shake the image of Joe Pesci at the bar standing in a stream of smoke over the body of the guy he stabbed in the neck with a pen. There's something in those slitty black ferret eyes that's dead and cold as he's cranking his arm back and plunging the pen in over and over; something inside of him that doesn't leave any room for regret. If I focus hard enough I can hear the guy on the ground squelching out his final bloody whimper.

In the courtroom that day all I could do was imagine the bloodstains on the hands of all the men slouching in the wooden pews. I studied the defendants closely as each one approached the bench to give his statement. Looking at Lombardo I figured he had to have been given his moniker for his crazy eyes. They were just what you'd expect to see on a psychotic clown; deep-set under thick brown caterpillar eyebrows, the pupils dilated and swimming in bulbous red corneas. A glassy yellow film clotting over the surface of his eyes gave the man a tearful, sad look. It wasn't difficult to imagine him luring little kids into his clown mobile with candy and balloons. At certain angles, though, he kind of looked like Tommy Chong—well, if you add a fifty-year-long addiction to heroin. Still, the meager resemblance made Lombardo almost endearing to me, like a junkie grandfather type.

Now, James Marcello was an interesting looking character. Head shiny as a pool ball and one eye bigger than the other, lookin' like it was about to pop out of its socket. He nailed that deadpan mercenary look. His unwavering glare produced a shield of intimidation that made the man seem impenetrable. On a lesser criminal the cue ball look would have a weakening effect on his aura, but not on Marcello. Curved around the

base of his skull he allowed the final coils of black fuzz to creep toward his ears like ivy growing on a brownstone. Every few minutes one of his bejeweled hands reached up and smoothed down what was left of his mane.

Next, Calabrese sauntered up to the podium. He had never been a handsome man, but age and experience had settled on his bones in rolls that rippled as he heaved himself into the chair. I guessed the man had gained at least 75 pounds since I had last seen him in a mug shot in 1990. His double chin had quadrupled and hung down almost to his belt now. Even his eyelids had gained weight it seemed. The skin drooped over his beady eyes, giving him the mug of a Saint Bernard. He was unkempt looking and had about a week's stubble on both his cheeks and on his upper lip. In a way I'm sure it all served as some kind of defense mechanism. The man was a fortress.

Perched on the witness stand, shoulders broad and back straight, hawk-nosed Paul "The Indian" Schiro looked improbably well preserved. His shock of raven hair had silvered over the years, giving him a sharp, sly look that demanded reverence. He kept his eyes narrowed to slits the width of razor blades, so thin that a person had to be face to face with him to know they were blue as Lake Michigan. Every couple of minutes I'd catch him turning sideways to whisper something into Calabrese's shoulder or leaning over Doyle for directions from the lawyer. When he wasn't hunched over in conversation Schiro sat still as an Indian with his mouth drawn up to his nostrils in a provoking sneer. With his upper lip curled back to bare two long white incisors, he reminded me of a jungle cat quietly sizing up his prey.

The fifth and final contender to approach the bench was Anthony Doyle. Doyle nailed the hard chiseled look of the beat cop. The bone structure of a dinosaur was somehow refined by the way the one-time Chicago police officer had slicked his

salt-and-pepper locks back from his face in what I imagined involved sort of a bending and swooping motion handed down through generations of mobsters.

The judge spent the first half of the session going over the details of the Spilotro Brothers' murder back in 1986. The story goes that Tony "The Ant" Spilotro was a big deal hit man working for the mob out in Vegas. Some say he liked to think he owned the fucking town. Well, no one one's Vegas; Vegas owns Vegas, and Tony found that out the hard way when he got back to Chicago one day and he and his brother were trying to set up some kind of new deal with The Outfit. Turns out they were pissed at him for something else and decided to make an example of him. Tony and his brother got the piss beat out of them before they were buried, bloody and still breathing through broken ribs, in a cornfield in Indiana.

I didn't need to hear the story again; it was one of my favorites. I'd studied the newspaper articles and I watched the Hollywood version obsessively as a kid. It's all about trust with the mob. Trust ties people together. You tell your secrets, they tell theirs, and then you're bonded. You have the power to either help or destroy each other. That's trust. Sometimes people make the mistake of forcing others to be trustworthy, but it's nature, you can't force a thing like that. Either you can trust them or you can't, but that's for you to decide, not them. Just like in *Casino*—Ace should have cut Ginger loose the minute she asked for the 25K. That's not a mistake I would ever make.

When the session broke up over the lunch hour I followed a couple of rough looking fellows in long coats to a little coffee nook tucked away across the street. When I got to the window I saw the dive was packed with gangsters. Instead of going in, I lit a Cuban and walked around the corner to smoke it inconspicuously.

At 1:00 the court reconvened. I came back early to get ahead in line and possibly claim a seat for the second half of the day. It was already crowded in the courtroom by the time I got through the doors, but being a man of narrow stature I was able to slide into a spot on the eleventh row bench. I almost pissed myself when I glanced sideways to see who was sitting next to me. Seated three feet to my right was the son of Frank Calabrese, Sr. The guy was big, like his dad, but not as gluttonous. He looked about 45 but could have been younger. The stress from a life of crime can gnaw away at you like a parasite for years before you realize what's causing you grief. By then it's usually too late though and you just got to hope you can mold the relationship into a state of symbiosis.

I looked back and forth between Frank Jr. and his father, who was back in the front row next to Marcello and Shiro, searching for some kind of connection between the two men. I thought maybe they would be signaling each other in some secret way they'd come up with for the trial. I couldn't stare too long without Frank noticing, but I kept checking back and never saw anything even flicker between them.

The courtroom quieted as Judge Zagel reemerged from his chambers. He said something about new evidence that I couldn't exactly hear over the scuffle of feet on the floor. The next time Zagel spoke I heard him loud and clear. "The prosecution would like to call Frank Calabrese Jr. to the stand."

Before I could move out of the way, the lumbering form of Frank Jr. was looming over me attempting to squeeze between my knees and the bench ahead of them. I swung my legs over to the side just in time before they were clobbered by 250 pounds of Mafia muscle. I readjusted myself in my seat as he walked up to the stand carrying two cassette tapes in his hands. He inserted one of the tapes into a tape player on the witness stand while the judge explained that Frank had secretly

recorded his conversations with his father about Outfit business while Frank, Sr. was imprisoned in Milan, Michigan. When the tape started rolling it was the raspy baritone cadence of Frank Calabrese Sr. the court heard first.

“They came to see me three weeks ago. So it was about, uh, let’s say altogether it’s been about four weeks, four and a half weeks since, uh, they came,” said Calabrese Sr.

“So, Twan works with the ‘G?’” Frank Jr. asked.

“No. Moon works with the ‘G.’”

“Oh.”

“Moon is a compository for the ‘G’. He came up there when we were up there—that old, short, fat guy. Remember, he walked in front of the cage. That little short, fat guy.”

“I don’t remember,” Frank Jr. mumbled.

“He had a brown sport jacket on with dress pants.”

“Oh,” he responded without any detectable recognition.

“And, uh, he walked by, don’t you remember when he walked by, you, maybe you had your eyes closed.”

“Maybe I was.” Frank Jr.’s vocal chords weren’t as torn up from cigarettes and booze as his father’s, but I could detect a kind of wheezing rattling in the back of his throat. I looked around the courtroom, gauging people’s reactions to the tape and saw other people doing the same thing. I wondered what little Frankie was going to do once he got out of that room. Guys were probably already coming up with a destiny for him that ended with something like a bullet in the back of the head. That would be the kindest fate they could give him—far superior to four metal bats and a cornfield burial. I figured he probably made a deal with the prosecution to get him into witness

protection. The man looked completely calm sitting up there letting that tape roll.

“I was sleepin’,” Frank, Jr. laughed.

“Yeah, ‘cause, uh, Philly spotted him too. Now, since they know that’s his nickname, what we’re gonna call him—remember this name—Tires.”

“Tires? Alright.”

“You know why?” Calabrese, Sr. sounded like he was grinning. “Because he used to sell tires.”

The bullshit that came out of these guys’ mouths had me trying to smother myself to keep from cracking up right there in my seat. Of course there was seriously illegal shit going down in the background of it all, but mixed in there was a sense of humor I’d always hoped was true among criminals. It was a kind of self-mockery that you needed to have in order to survive in that world.

“They looked for hairs, now its blood,” Calabrese, Sr. complained. “They can take that blood. But then it was hairs. They can tell by your hair. That’s why they used to take samples from us.”

“Right, alright. I heard about that. I thought that was something new too, though.”

“They did that back in the seventies. That’s why, if you remember, we used to wear our hats under the hood, so that when you pull the hood off your head is still covered, and remember what I used to do? Wash my hair before I’d go anyplace? So, nothing; there would be no loose hair.”

“Now we don’t gotta worry though,” Frank Jr. chuckled on the tape.

“Why?”

“‘Cause,” he paused, “No hair.” I soaked in the sounds of the father and son laughing eight years ago. It was a world I had dreamt of belonging to since I was four years old and my daddy lifted me up to that car window and I saw what happened if you betrayed one of these guys. I saw the power they had, the power to get away with murder. Maybe I didn’t realize all that at four, but that sure was where the gears started turning.

The summer I turned 18 I bought myself a Harley and started cruising Will County moving shit for a grower who had a plot hidden out in the middle of his corn crop out near our farm. I was sellin’ a lot of dime bags to high school kids, but a bunch of my clientele were retired farmers stuck sittin’ on their asses. Some of those guys were smokin’ quarter ounces a week all on their own. Anyways, I made enough to more than cover the cost of gas to get me to Chicago on the weekends where the real business was done. At this point I hadn’t let Ma and Daddy in on my grand scheme. I kept them under the impression I was just fucking around doing odd jobs on farms and visiting friends from high school since I’d graduated. They didn’t get on my case about it because they thought my weekend gig in Chicago was an apprenticeship at a furniture maker. Fuck, but what I really had going on was much more exciting.

Somehow through my sales I got hooked up with these guys running a little cross-country tobacco operation out of Chicago. The cost of cigarettes in the city had been jacked way the hell up, like a dollar every twelve months. Basically what these guys did was outsource to states where the prices were under control. We were making inflation work in our favor. On Friday mornings I would tell my parents I was going into the city and then I’d take off for Missouri on my Harley. The drive was glorious. Usually I smoked like half a joint in the bathroom while I was getting ready in the morning, so when I got out

on the road I felt a connection between us pulling me toward the horizon. I’d get to St. Louis by mid-afternoon and cruise a couple convenience stores loading up on a variety of different brands. When I filled up every inch of storage on my bike I usually crashed at the apartment of the brother-in-law of one of the other guys doing the same job as I was. His name was Dale and he kept pretty tight-lipped; a real unassuming kind of character. We’d watch the news and sip on glasses of whisky while I repacked my saddle bags and opened up the extra storage attachment to put on the back of the bike.

On Saturday mornings I usually tried to get out of there pretty quickly. Dale was cool about it. Most of the time he wasn’t even up before I left. I never forgot to leave a carton of Camels on the counter for him before I went out the door and locked it. It was crucial to know how to take care of people. I’d hit a couple more stores on my way out of town to load up the extra bag I hadn’t filled the night before, and then I’d be out of there and on my way back to Chicago. On Saturday nights I would drop off my cargo at the headquarters, collect my money and be back in Will County before it turned into Sunday.

The job paid pretty decently and occasionally it got me connections with guys I suspected were linked to the Outfit. They seemed like the kind of guys who rubbed elbows with the bosses in passing, but weren’t invited to the inner circle. Anyways, that’s how I started saving up to go to law school here in Chicago. In fact, I was at the trials that day trying to do a little elbow rubbing myself. See, eventually I plan to get myself recruited as legal counsel to The Outfit. You have to put in your dues though. Breaks like that just don’t come to you unless you work for them. You have to get in good with these guys, do them favors, and show them you’re trustworthy before they’ll have anything to do with you. But even trust, I could see looking at Calabrese and his son, could be faulty. Frank Jr. was empirical proof of how placing trust in the wrong person can

blow up in a guy's face.

On the recording, Frank Jr. was asking his father about hypothetical scenarios involving a murder: "Say they went in there and they indicted him. And they got, they knew about the arm, right. Okay, because you said Poker knows about that right. Alright, and they'd be able to indict him. What would he be looking at? If he kept his mouth shut. I mean what would he be looking at?"

"I'm going to tell you what his defense could be, want to tell me what I thought of. Let me tell you what I thought. Son, see how you like this. They went there, Johnny was the one that got a hold of him and told him to take a ride down there. He went there with Johnny. They had an argument. And, uh, he shot; Johnny shot him in the arm. And, uh, they were arguing and, ah, go in to almost a fistfight. They ran out of the car, he ran after him he says," replied the mechanized version of Calabrese Sr.

"Yeah, but the, but you said the one time he got him in the car."

"Yeah he got him in the car but that could be that Johnny shot him first."

"Johnny shot him and then he shot Johnny in the car?"

"Then he got out of the car and he chased him. He went crazy because he thought he was dying himself. So that could be a defense for him. Where, he was so..."

"Yeah. I see where you're going. But, no, I mean it's so, what do you think he'd be looking at? I mean, you know?"

"I don't know. It all depends, how it would, what kind of situation we'd be getting into in Chicago. That's a local place."

"It's not a good place."

"So I don't know, what *are* we looking at?"

"I mean..."

"It's up to you to get when you get your ass out on the street. Would you go see that mother fuckin' uncle of yours and tell him we need a favor?" Calabrese Sr. implored. The tape kept rolling, but I tuned out.

If I really think about it, the real life version does seem to match up pretty close to the way it looks on TV a lot of the damn time. That inherent human flaw that allows us to trust each other always fucks the kingpin over in the end. Lamborghinis go up in flames, women run off with the money and the jewels, guys get buried alive in cornfields, and sons become turncoats when the deal goes south. The whole system is built on this single weakness that bonds everything together like atoms in a molecule, and without it the whole damn thing would disintegrate altogether.

When the court recessed at the end of the day, all I could think about was the voice of Frank Jr. on the recorder reassuring his father that things wouldn't turn out too bad for him, eight years before Frank turned the tapes over to the police. "There's light at the end of the tunnel, that's what I'm sayin'."

Outside on the steps of the Federal Building, I spotted Marco "The Mover" D'Amico from the Cicero crew trying to light a cigarette. He had taken several steps away from the group and stood there exposed as a nun dropped smack in the middle of a nudist colony. I recognized my chance and seized it, strolling over toward D'Amico and stopping at his elbow to spark up my Cuban. Thick grey smoke coiled around the leafy brown shaft like hands wrapping around a throat. As the embers spread through the burning tobacco, they singed the paper grey until it flaked off in the breeze. I heard D'Amico's lighter sputtering like

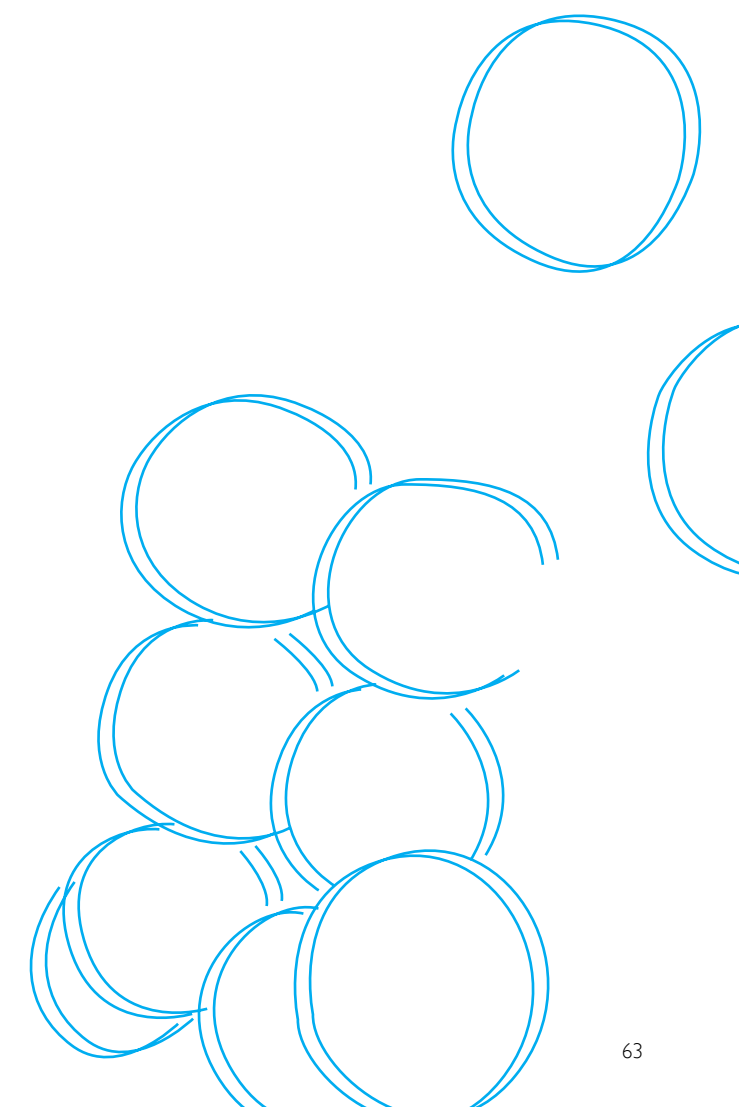
a car with an empty gas tank.

"You want?" I asked and proffered my packet of matches.

"Thanks," he grunted. We made eye contact when he took the matches from my hand and I thought I sensed that an understanding had grown between us.

"Hell of a trial," I said and took a puff. The gangster grunted something that sounded like agreement. In the back of my mind I was wondering how much he had known about that night in Will County. Had any of them known there was a little boy watching from his bedroom window ready to piss his self from terror and adrenaline while they torched his apple tree? For all I knew, I could have been introducing myself to one of the guys who cooked the whole thing up. The thought brought a wry smile to my lips which I covered by taking a drag from my cigar.

"Name's Trumpy Card," I said and turned to face him. Maybe it was a bold maneuver, but I just stood there with my hand floating between us.





Autumn Down Union | Dan Lund



Untitled | Nathan Bernacet



Clog Fiddle | Christopher Burrus



Untitled | Ashley Roll

My Name Was William (excerpt)

ELLEN ORNER

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM also called Bill, Dad, and Poppop
ADRIA WILLIAM's wife, also called Mom and Grandma
DAVID elder son of WILLIAM and ADRIA,
also called Dave
ELLEN granddaughter of WILLIAM
and ADRIA, DAVID's niece

ACT II

(DAVID sits with feet on desk, stage left, reading newspaper.
ELLEN sits beside him, further left, shuffling through a large
box of photographs and papers. WILLIAM sits stage right at
Formica table, also reading newspaper. Other props on table:
camera, typewriter, army hat)

ELLEN

(Shows photograph to David)

What do you think...seventh grade?

DAVID

I don't know. Maybe sixth... I just don't understand what you
think you're going to write about. Make a pictorial history,
that'll be more interesting.

ELLEN

No, you're looking at it the wrong way.

DAVID

How am I supposed to look at it?

(turns photograph sideways)

ELLEN

(laughs, takes photo back)

How about this: three boys in knickers and scuffed leather
shoes sprawl in the grass, reading a comic. It's the summer of
1933.

(WILLIAM puts down paper with a rustle and looks up to
listen)

William's mother teaches English at Clark's Summit, and his
father, Lawrence, is the principal. In the deep end of the Great
Depression, he's been selling Bibles and hymnals door to door,
to make ends meet. William—but the boys call him Billy—still
has his sight in both eyes, and hasn't missed a day of school in
his life.

WILLIAM

I had perfect attendance all twelve years. You have to, I
suppose, when your father is the principal.

(Resumes reading paper)

ELLEN

(Pulls out another photograph)

1942, fresh from boot camp in his army suit. William stands in
his parent's front yard, flanked by his older sisters. He looks up
and to the right, as if to the flag.

WILLIAM

And to the country for which it stands...

ELLEN

His left eye, blinded by a golf ball when he was twelve, draws
in a little behind his glasses.

WILLIAM

My best buddy had found a set of old golf clubs somewhere,
so we took them out in the front yard, naturally, and hit balls
at each other. Couldn't find anything better to do, I guess.

Wouldn't you know it, one flew up and hit me—bam!—

(Motions)

right in the eye.

(Pause)

It was just an accident, of course. Maybe a lucky one,
considering the war.

ELLEN

I used to ask Poppop to tell me about the war stories, but
instead, he'd tell me about his mother's cousin, who lived on a
pecan farm in Georgia, near his training camp.

(WILLIAM puts on army jacket, buttons it while facing
audience)

WILLIAM

Aunt Martha sent out thirteen bushels of pecans each year,
one for each cousin. Whole, shelled Georgia pecans. The
whole ones taste better than the pieces.

ELLEN

He did say he was a mail clerk for the Army Corps of
Engineers, but I thought clerk meant secretary, so I always
imagined him in a tiny cubicle with a big black typewriter,
pecking out copies of letters from the commanding engineer.

(WILLIAM returns to seat, hunched over, pulls out a ribbon
from typewriter)

WILLIAM

(typing)

Now-is-the-time-for-all-good-men-to-come-to-the-aid-of-
their-country.

ELLEN

But he wasn't sitting in a cubicle, he was running all over
Europe.

(ELLEN picks photograph out of box. WILLIAM, wearing his
hat and camera, walks slowly from stage right to stage left)

WILLIAM

Wesel, Germany. February '45.

ELLEN

William goes for a morning walk with his camera. Three
women step carefully toward him on a warped brick road.
One of them reminds him of his sister, Anna, dressed like a
school teacher on Sunday. Another is tall and girlish in a plaid
skirt and white socks. The eldest, her tweed skirt held up by a
rope, smiles from the middle.

WILLIAM

(Takes a few steps toward audience)

Guten Morgen.

(Tips hat, smiles)

May I take your picture?

ELLEN
They discuss for a moment, and then nod and shrug. Ja, ja.
(Aiming camera at audience, WILLIAM takes a picture)

WILLIAM
Danka.
(Tips hat again, returns to table, removes his hat and hooks it on chair; sits)

DAVID
Have you found the love letters yet?

ELLEN
From Grandma?

DAVID
No, from a French girl named Mary.

ELLEN
(Pulls fat envelope out of box)
Blue calligraphy on tissue paper?

DAVID
I guess.

ELLEN
Prattelu, 18th October 1945. My dear Bill, I beg your pardon that I write to you already, but you see I think about you very much; and the great chance we had to meet each other last Sunday! I was so happy to find you again. I went in twenty minutes time on my bicycle from home to Basle. I almost had a swoon on arriving at a station and was looking around in hope to see you. I felt sad and was at the way to got home again without seeing you. All at once, I heard my name and what a joy! Can you realize it? Too bad, I could not speak English any better. It was tiresome for you and your comrade to speak with me, but I am eager to learn English.

Bill, how can I ever thank you enough for your little remembrance? It is of great value to me, because you have always worn in through hard times. Where will you be now? I hope that you both will be well. I pray every night for you, that you may reach your home sound and safe. Now it is bedtime, and you will laugh at my letter when you get it. I enclose a little photo, may I have one from you too?

I wish you good luck and goodnight with a hearty kiss . . . Mary.

(ELLEN looks up at DAVID)

ELLEN
Grandma knew about these?

DAVID
I'm pretty sure she didn't.

ELLEN
Of course, it was before he met her. . .

DAVID
Yeah, but she wouldn't have liked it, anyway.

ELLEN
(removes another letter)

There's only a rough draft of his response. In French.

WILLIAM
(Typing, speaks in a flat American accent)

Votre récit de la Foire Swiss à été très intéressant. Je pense, que les journaux américains direraient beaucoup concernant

(Quietly, while ELLEN reads)

la foire internationale le prochain an. Non? Oui, j'apprécis tout les photos, si c'est possible pour vous de les envoyer à moi. Toutes les choses qui concernent la gravure des photos sont intéressantes pour moi. Maintenant que j'ai écrit un peu de français, je fais un regard. S'il vous plaît, écrivez encore

les phrases pour moi qui ne sont spécialement pas correct. C'est une méthode facile pour moi d'apprendre le français et de parler avec vous, une jeune fille que je t'aime—cela me fait heureuse.

ELLEN
(Overlaps William's reading)

Your story of the Swiss Industries Fair was very interesting. I think that the American newspapers will have much to say concerning the international fair next year, no? Yes, I appreciate all photos, if it's possible for you to send more of them to me. All things concerning the printing of photos are interesting for me.

Now that I have written a little French, I make a suggestion. Please, write again my phrases for me that are not especially correct. This is an easy method for me to learn French and to speak with you, a girl whom I love. —It is this that makes me happy . . . Bill

(WILLIAM puts letter in envelope, stands and puts hat on)

ELLEN
(Unfolds a greeting card)

Happy Easter, 1946. Bill, darling, I wish you all the best for the coming Easter festival. I'm just wondering whether you received my letters? Please write to me only a short letter; I love you and miss you so much . . . Mary

(WILLIAM picks up camera and walks to far stage right, into dimness)

ELLEN
It's strange to think about Poppop having a girl chasing him.

DAVID
(Puts feet on floor)

He did all the chasing with your Grandma. She was the hottest

waitress in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. Every cop in that town was trying to get her to go on a date.

ELLEN
Do you think he loved her?

DAVID
(surprised)
Your Grandma?

ELLEN
No, Mary. "You, a girl whom I love."

DAVID
Well, I don't know. Imagine being twenty years old and very, very far away from home. He probably thought he did, at least.

ELLEN
(pulls stack of photographs out of box)

May '45. "This is some of the water we lived in at "Soggy Flats" at Antwerp.

(WILLIAM moves quietly to stand behind ELLEN, looks over her shoulder)

WILLIAM/ELLEN
The inside of our tents look just like what I'm standing in. One of "my boys" is calling mail for latecomers while I finish my chow.

ELLEN
(Picks up another photograph)

Mary could have snapped this one.

WILLIAM
December '45, Biarritz, France. Hotel Carlton, room 203
(WILLIAM sits at table in posture described below, reads newspaper)

ELLEN
 Poppop's trench coat and army-issue necktie hang from a hook on the door. Everything's carefully propped on something else—his arm on the kitchen table, foot on a chair rung, paper on his knee. His right thumbnail runs the inky nail groove of his ring finger, and his watch peeps out from his sweater sleeve. He's the very same man who read the Post-Tribune at Grandma's kitchen table every morning.
 (Pause, looks at DAVID)
 So what happened to Mary?

DAVID
 The war ended and all the boys came home. Dad got a job as a photographer for the Pottsville Morning Press.
 (WILLIAM stands, puts on a light blue cardigan with ink smudges, sits at table. ADRIA, wearing an apron over a light blue dress, brings WILLIAM a cup of coffee)

ADRIA
 (Leans on WILLIAM's chair with one arm, facing audience)
 I was working at Fest's, in town. Bill would come into the diner for lunch, pretty much everyday, with his little news crew—he and another man and a woman.

WILLIAM
 One day I was sitting at the counter with a cup of coffee and Adra came right up—never spoken to me before except to ask for my order
 (ADRIA walks toward table with two plates)
 But she marched up and said to me [laughing]. She said—

ADRIA
 (sets down plates down hard)
 Bill! Don't.

WILLIAM
 But she hated for me to tell that story, so I won't.

ELLEN
 Oh, come on.
 (ADRIA, still wearing apron, moves to table, stands beside WILLIAM's chair.)

ELLEN
 (To DAVID)
 What did she say to him?

DAVID
 (Shrugs)
 Maybe she asked him a very blunt question about the woman on the news crew.
 (WILLIAM sips his coffee loudly; ADRIA crosses her arms)

ELLEN
 (Crosses her arms at DAVID)
 So, who was chasing who?

DAVID
 The point is, it wasn't long before he walked her out after work and proposed to her right under the streetlight outside Fest's.
 (WILLIAM stands, walks around chair to ADRIA, kneels and takes her hand)

ADRIA
 (Nods quickly)
 Yes.
 (WILLIAM stands and kisses her. Lights down and ADRIA moves to chair at center stage, removes apron, knits; WILLIAM sits at table, writing letters)

ELLEN
 (ELLEN pulls envelopes from box)
 Postmark: December 7, 1948

WILLIAM
 (While writing)
 Adria, my darling, Just a note at noontime to let you know I'm loving you and looking forward to seeing you Thursday night. I'll eat supper at home and then we'll have a date.
 (Beat)
 Leave it to the Press to screw up an important engagement announcement. Let's make them run it over. I want everyone to know whom I'm marrying—Miss *Adria* Kathleen Wenner.
 All now, I love you 'til it hurts . . . Your Bill.

ADRIA
 He lived at the YMCA in Pottsville, to save money, and I lived with my grandparents in Bendertown, about an hour away, but he managed to drive down and see me at least once a week. Bill'd come pick me and we'd go see a jazz show, or go to a party.
 (WILLIAM moves upstage and takes off cardigan, moves downstage toward ADRIA wearing a white collared shirt and yellow tie)

ADRIA
 I wore my hair curled under back then—I'd sleep with soup cans tied to my head so my hair would come out in big waves.
 All the girls did it.
 (WILLIAM takes ADRIA's hand and they dance while ELLEN reads letter)

ELLEN
 November 18. How did you feel this morning? Not too

groggy, I hope. I had a pretty good day at work. Made my first commercial cut—a TV set. Now the advertising department thinks I'm wonderful. Do you?
 (WILLIAM spins ADRIA over to chair and she sits, he dances his way back to table)

ADRIA
 We were engaged in December, and married on New Years Day. That means we had all of a month to find a place and fix it up.

WILLIAM
 (Writing)
 I know things aren't going to be too cozy at first, honey. However, we have a good start I think. The kitchen furniture looks good and the bed sure is soft. I can't see plain white in the bedroom. That nice wallpaper is a good start on a warm, cozy room. The apartment will seem bigger if we have each room filled up different from the others. I'm hoping you are swinging a deal for a rug. Let me know about that and our blood tests, huh?

ADRIA
 We got married in Bendertown . . .

WILLIAM
 In a little church on a big hill.
 (ADRIA stands, processes toward WILLIAM, who stands waiting by the table)

ELLEN
 (Picks up a photograph)
 January 1, 1948. Bill and Adria burst through the arched chapel doors and make a run for the limousine, grinning through a snowstorm and rice shower.
 (WILLIAM takes rolled up carpet from offstage, unrolls in

front of table. WILLIAM and ADRIA move table forward onto carpet; WILLIAM moves a chair forward and ADRIA sits in it.
WILLIAM stands behind her, hand on shoulder)

DAVID

(Leans forward to desk, takes a photograph from box)

In 1952, the first-born son arrived. (That's me.) Adria gave up her new job as copyeditor at the Pottsville Morning Press, and William took on additional hours to support his young family. On a Saturday afternoon, William takes David for a ride to meet his grandfather. Lawrence, William's father and the original Poppop, stands in front of a shining 1950 Buick, holding his first grandson aloft.

ELLEN

What was *your* grandfather like?

DAVID

(shrugs)

He had a stroke when I was about five. I remember him lying in an upstairs bedroom of our duplex for two weeks, and then he died.

ELLEN

(Pulls photograph out of box)

He was shorter than Poppop. Wry smile. Same eyebrows.

DAVID

(Pulls an envelope out of box, hands it to ELLEN)

Here's what you're looking for.

ELLEN

(Takes letter out of envelope, hands it to DAVID)

You read it.

DAVID

From Lawrence to William, on his birthday. December 9, 1947.
My Dear Bill. Well, you are just about 26 years old now.

(WILLIAM puts newspaper away, listens)

When you were born things in general were looking very bright for me. It was my first year in Clark's Summit and at that time they thought I was the best principal that they had ever had. But I did not start to write about myself.

(Lights dim on ADRIA, spotlight on WILLIAM as he moves downstage, in front of carpet, lights a cigarette.)

I want to say to you that nobody or nothing has added any more pleasure to my life than you have. It is this generally that a father does for his son, but it has been the other way around in our case.

I wish every good thing for you. I hope that you will set your mind on the future determinedly to succeed. I would like wonderfully to know that you did not smoke, but that may be just a whim of mine, as many very successful men have smoked.

(WILLIAM looks at cigarette, then drops and crushes it. Puts hands in pockets. Pulls out a piece of hard candy, eats it)

I would like to see you take a very active part in church and Sunday School work. I think that is more than a whim. Certainly it is the thing that is needed today more than anything else. Don't neglect it.

So long, best boy. I do hope that the years ahead will be filled with success and happiness. God bless you abundantly. Lovingly
... Dad.

(Lights down)



Untitled | Ashley Roll

Contributors' Notes



Nathan Bernacet - In this modern day global environment, I have stood in nine countries on two different continents. I have studied in such locales as Costa Rica, England and Scotland. I lived in Central America, for one calendar year, and taught such courses as Visual Art, Technology and English. This image comes from a church in Cartago, Costa Rica.

Christopher Burrus - Combine in a pewter mixing bowl:

- 2 parts Folkloric Entanglements
- 1 part 19th Century Hot Air Balloon
- 2 parts Broomball and Curling mixture
- 1 part Chimney Soot
- dash of Tweed
- scoop of Pine Tree Needles (fresh)

Mix and serve outside after a thunderstorm with boiled sausages and hard cider, or in a tree house at Afternoon Tea with Earl Grey and sandwiches, while listening to Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony.

Nicholas Burrus occupies various trees across campus. Sometimes he comes down to make a drawing.

William Graff is a senior Meteorology major and Christ

College student. In addition to various academic field studies, his participation in the Air Force ROTC program has allowed him to travel to numerous locations around the country and world. From chasing storms to hiking across active lava fields, William always keeps his camera close at hand. He plans to work in Germany following graduation and will continue to make photos there in his spare time.

Austin Hill is a junior theology major with minors in communication and math. Both pictures were taken last spring while visiting Nashville.

Abbey Houx is a senior art major who enjoys a good composition, lots of contrast, hand-rendered typography, and the musical stylings of the Fab Four. And my bird can sing. Much thanks to the Lighter and to you all.

Adam Jackson - Well Valpo, I stuck to my guns and came back like I said I would in the last Lighter. I'm working on becoming a high school art teacher now. How crazy am I to try and take on such a task? Not really that crazy but I still feel pretty cool about it. Anyways, since I decided to do this I have no more art classes to take here at good ol' valpo. I miss the art psych building, and... well ok pretty much the art psych building. I still frequent the VUCA, but while I could visit art psych whenever I wanted to, it's not the same without a purpose like a class. Oh

well, this teaching thing has got me marching to the beat of a different drum anyways. Hehe, get it? Because my photo this year is of a drum. Haha? No? Alright fine, I'll be quiet, later!

Jackie Kenyon - Breath by J. Daniel Beaudry

Tree, gather up my thoughts
like the clouds in your branches.
Draw up my soul
like the waters in your root.
In the arteries of your trunk
bring me together.
Through your leaves
breathe out the sky.

Dan Lund is in his fourth and final year at Valparaiso University, and will miss it dearly upon graduation. But in the meantime, he will continue to enjoy the best times of his life.

Lauren Nelson is a senior-plus-a-little currently working toward achieving a sustainable existence away from Valpo. Until that day, she is living like a rock star in the Chicago of her mind.

R. James Onofrey is a creative writing and journalism major. He enjoys typewriters and bebop. He finds solace in the tarantula.

Ellen Orner is a supah-seenyah. WUT.

Emily Royer has spent these last three years on our lovely campus studying french and philosophy amongst other things, though it's those other things that really interest her. She loves to read the same books over and over again while listening to

the same songs on repeat and hiding behind cups of coffee, but spends the majority of her time trying to keep her hair out of her eyes.

Karl Strasen has a knack for getting inspiration at inopportune moments. Future plans are tentative at best as he is considering either going back home to Colorado, or living in Chicago. But for now, he will continue livin' it up at the 603. He would like to thank Amanda Gartman for her artistic guidance. Go Sig Pi!

Diana Stutzman likes big words with lots of consonants, and that's why she's a Biochemistry major.

Nathan Sullivan "Thanks for sending me to Japan Mom and Dad! Sorry 'bout the grades."

Kyle Whitgrove is a junior psychology major from Rockford, IL who frequently daydreams about the places these pictures were taken in Washington.

