

# The Lighter

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## The Lighter Fall 2013

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The Lighter  
fall 2013



# The Lighter

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Fall 2013

Issue One

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# Acknowledgements

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"Our gifts, once given, must here abide.

Our work is done."

-R.Browning

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, religion, 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.

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# Down in the Workshop

1.

I sweep gold dust into swirling drifts  
leaving broom bristle trails and mazes for ants  
guiding them under the table to Sawdust Mountain.  
Tonight, I am Cinderella.  
The broom dips me into a foxtrot. On tiptoe  
I keep time to whirling saw blades  
and avoid the cold concrete creeping through my gold powdered socks.  
*Step two three four, Sweep two three four.*

2.

My dad sketches on the back of yellow paper  
straight lines, right angles: exact calculations.  
He rubs the sawdust from his sandpaper chin  
and wipes his glasses on the old orange t-shirt worn soft,  
speckled with pink paint. "Cut once,  
measure twice" three times his pencil strikes  
before he swoops the saw, cutting age-rings in half.  
*One two three slice, One two three slice.*

3.

Confetti flies from blue snapping chalk lines,  
floating, mingling with wood fairies who prance  
into dollhouses stacked of scrap lumber.  
*Crack! Knock! Whirrrrr!*  
Jumping back to my job delivering tools,  
I sock-skate from Dad to the bench  
finding the screwdriver, on the second try.  
*Slide two three four, Glide two three four.*



4.

Nudging through the yawning window,  
deep indigo whispers, "Time for bed."  
Feeling no weights upon my eyelids, I wind  
like a toy to begin again the dance  
that is cut short by a final pirouette leaving ankles  
locked midair in his sure grip. My hair brushes gold.  
Swung over his shoulder he sings me up the stairs.  
*Climb two three four, Laugh two three four.*

5.

Growly serenade over, I plop, bounce  
onto my bed. Kisses soften stubbly cheeks,  
prayers drift to heaven, lights forsake their glow.  
The room greys with a "just a crack" left open,  
eyes close on checkered pink walls opening a chest  
of gold dust stories that brighten into dreams.  
I fall asleep to distant hammering nursery rhymes.  
*Tap tap tap tap*



Dad | Mallory Swisher



Reflections | Madeline Bartsch

# E s s e n c e

Alyssa Boneck

The cool water completely encompassed me. I heard nothing from the world above. I twisted around in the water, loving the feeling of it playing against my skin. I sighed and watched my last bubbles of air float up to the surface. This was the moment, I'd either prove I had mastered it or drown. This far down, I wouldn't get back to the surface in time.

My body stayed complete calm. My lungs didn't begin to ache. I felt no need to take a breath. I smiled. I had done it. I dove down deeper, gliding through the water. I had never wanted to control the water, like other water faeries do. Just to be with the water was enough for me. To be one with it was the most amazing thing in the world.

I reached the bottom of the lake. I grazed my fingers over the smooth rocks that decorated its bottom. Then I saw something glinting off to my right. I swam to it, passing small schools of fish who seemed to accept my presence in their routine. I guess I was here often enough.

If I had a breath to loose, I would have when I finally got to the shimmering stone. I plucked it from the other stones and held it in the palm of my hand. It shined from the deepest purples to the brightest blues and greens. Where had this magnificent stone come from? I closed my hand around it and pushed off from the ground. My feet sunk into the soft earth of the lake for a moment before I was speeding up through the water.

I broke the surface and slowly made my way back to the shore. I relished the fact that I still didn't have to breathe. I ducked back under the surface-until it became too shallow, then finally dragged myself back onto the land. The weight of the earth hit me first, then the need to breathe.

I fell to my knees and rested my head in my hands. I took a deep breath and let my body readjust to life on the surface. It seemed to get harder and harder to assimilate back. I wondered if one day I wouldn't be able to leave the water. A faint smile came to my lips at the thought. I stood and continued to the main path.

"Hey!" I heard someone shout as I stepped out of the woods and onto the path. I turned to see a group of faeries I recognized from school. "Why do you get to get out of school early?" one yelled to me from down the path.

I sighed. They knew I got out early because my practice wasn't something I could do at school. I looked back towards the lake, then down the path at them. I had to go past them to get back home, but I really didn't feel like dealing with their antics. Still, they seemed to be headed to the lake, so there was no point in hiding from them there and I had to get home or my parents would worry. I threw on a smile and stiffly walked in their direction.

"I asked you a question," the same one as before said as I passed. I ignored him and kept walking. "Hey!" I felt something hit my back. I stumbled forward, gasping in pain.

"What was that for?" I yelled, whirling around.

"You think you're so cool because you don't want to control your element." He laughed. "You're just useless. Powerless." He conjured up some water from the air and started playing with it. Morphing it into different shapes. "You can't even do this, can you?" He looked straight at me.

"I have no desire to," I said.

"Oh, you're so high and mighty. You don't want to control your own element." He sneered at me. I turned away from them and started to walk again. I felt something cool wrap around my ankle and jerk me to the ground.

"Don't turn your back to us," another faerie said.

I shoved off of the ground; I could feel tears start to fill my eyes. "Would you just leave me alone?"

"Are you going to cry?"

I turned slowly to the group. I wished I could hurt them. I wished at that moment I had learned how to manipulate water, then what could they do? I was stronger than all of these water elementals.

"She looks scary," one of the faeries mocked, then turned and laughed with one of his friends. I felt my anger rising, starting to boil.

"Is...is she smoking?" I heard someone whisper.

I looked down at my arms. There was a steady amount of steam coming from them. "I..." The faeries were quiet now, just watching in fascination. I turned and ran down the path, taking their confusion for granted.

What is happening to me? I thought as I ran. By the time I got home, I had stopped steaming, but I felt strange. Almost not there. I sighed and went inside. I plopped down at the table and dropped my head in my hands. I wanted to go back to the lake.

I clenched my fist and slammed it on the table. Why do they always have to ruin my good times? I finally achieve something amazing and they come along and humiliate me. At least I have... Then I realized my hand was empty. I must have dropped the stone when I had fallen. I slowly looked up, feeling a great deal of loss for such a small object. I considered going to look for it, but the idea of the others finding me again was something I very much wanted to avoid.

I pushed myself up and headed to my room. As I passed the kitchen window, I caught sight of my dad working in the garden. I paused. He was stooped over an empty section of the garden, his hands were hovering over the spot and his eyes were closed.

After a moment, I saw something start to emerge from the soil. A bright green stalk poked slowly out from the ground, growing until it was as tall as my father's knee. Then the bud at its tip bloomed, revealing a huge, magenta flower with black at its center.

Then he opened his eyes, and saw me watching him through the window. He smiled at me and gestured for me to come join him. I went around to the back door and made my way through the overly abundant garden.

"I made this for your sister," he said, looking down at the flower.

"It's beautiful. Are you going to show it to her the next time mom calls to her?"

He nodded. "Do you think she'll like it?"

"She loves your flowers." I bent down and put my hand above the flower. A few drops of water dripped from my finger.

"How do you do that?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I can't make a flower grow from my little finger. You conjure water from your very being."

I shrugged. "It's just something I noticed I could do." I bit my lip and stood. "Speaking of which..." Dad turned to me, giving me his full attention. He always knew when something interesting was going to pass my lips. "I started steaming today."

"Steaming?" He raised his eyebrows. I nodded. "What do you think brought it on?" he asked.

I chew on my lip some more. "I got a bit angry."

He quirked a smile. "And you started to steam?" He laughed. "How appropriate."

I laughed too. "I guess."

"Is there something I should know about," he asked, "that got you mad enough to steam?"

I sighed. "Not really. I'm more concerned about the steaming itself." I wrapped my arms around myself. He gestured for me to follow him to the stone bench in the garden. We both sat.

"I don't think you should be concerned. Your powers have always come out in unique ways," he said.

"Right..."

"What's on your mind?"

"I just sometimes wonder if I should have practiced water manipulation, like everyone else. It...just seems more useful."

"More useful, we'll see. But, it isn't something you feel right doing. Don't go against that feeling. You have a lot of power in you; those other water faeries don't even come close."

"I can breathe underwater," I said.

"Really?"

I nodded. "I've been practicing for a while, and today I finally mastered it."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

I shrugged. "I don't know, but it was really cool."

"I bet." He sighed and leaned back in his seat. "I bet none of those other faeries can do that."

"Air faeries probably could."

"They still have to bring air down with them."

I stood. "I'm gonna go to my room."

"Ok. Keep up the good work," he said as I left.

I let myself drop onto my bed and stared up at the ceiling. What do I do now? I lifted my hand and let a few drops of water drip onto my face. How did I do that? I thought, examining

my finger. It almost looked like I had a small pool of water on the pad of my finger.

I wondered if I could expand it. I focused and tried to make the feeling encompass my entire hand. My skin started to waver. I slowly sat up and watched as it turned from a solid, light blue hunk of flesh, to water. Clear, liquid water. Amazingly, it still held its shape; every detail of my hand was there.

I turned my hand over. Clenched it into a fist. The water acted just like my hand did. I went to my desk and tried to pick up one of my stones, but it went through my fingers. "Weird." I picked up the rock with my other hand and dropped it through my water hand. It fell right through, with a little plunk noise.

"Dad," I called. "Dad!"

I heard him hurrying through the house. "Is something wrong?" he yelled when he got to the hallway.

I went to my door and peeked my head out. "I don't think so."

"Then what's happening?" He ran his fingers through his hair. "Please don't worry me like that."

"I'm sorry, I forgot...but..."

"What?"

I brought my hand out from behind my back and did a little wave. "I think I've stumbled upon something."

"Your hand," he said, staring.

"Yeah. I think I turned it into water."

He nodded. "You may be right." He came closer.

"You can poke it," I said. "It won't hurt."

He did and accidentally stuck his finger all the way through. He jumped back. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean..."

"It's fine," I said, laughing. "That doesn't hurt." I took my other hand and ran it through my water fingers. The water moved around the solid fingers, then went back into place.

"I've never seen anything like this," he said.

I spent the rest of the day with him, messing around with my new found ability. Turning fingers then hands, then my entire arm into water and back to flesh again. We even did some experiments seeing if I could float things on myself. After a while, though, I began to feel drained, so we decided I should rest for the day and we went back to our separate projects. Him back to the garden and me to my room. I tried to focus on my other homework, but this new power was too much of a distraction.

I laid in bed, converted my entire arm and watched the moonlight reflect and shine through it. I did this until I felt my eyes began to get drowsy, I made sure to make my arm flesh again before I fell asleep.

The next morning I packed up my things for school, then joined my parents for breakfast. My mom served me some food and said, "Father tells me you learned a new trick."

I nodded, taking a fork full of melon. I bit into it as I held up my unoccupied hand up and easily turned it into water.

"I've never seen anything like it," my mom breathed. She reached out and gently touched my water hand. "This is a special talent."

"So I've been told," I said, smiling at dad. "I've got to get to school." I stood and grabbed my bag.

I was almost at the entrance of the school when I heard snickering from behind me. Whispers. Then finally, "Hey. You actually coming to school today?"

"I come to school everyday," I responded without looking at them.

Someone scoffed, "Right." I continued to walk, ignoring them. I felt a familiar coolness wrap around my wrist. "I want to see what you can do when all you do is go off and playing in the water everyday." He pulled me around to face them, then released me. "Show us what you got."

"I have to get to class."

He frowned and conjured up his water again. "Then we'll show you what we've been taught." All of them pulled water from their bottles or the air, if they were talented enough.

They all sent ropes of water at me, wrapping them around my wrists and ankles. Fine, I thought after I pulled at the water restraints to no avail. I closed my eyes as they began to laugh, then my entire body turned to water. Their talking stopped. I opened my eyes to see them staring, gaping at me.

I stepped from the water bonds and walked to them. "This is what I've been practicing," I said, then I turned back to the school, turned flesh, and went to class.





I Don't Want to be Alone, I Want to be Left Alone | Mallory Swisher



Playing Hypnosis | Daniella Tripodis



Untitled | Jing Liu



Desert Faith | Lydia Hawkins

# Galloway

Gregory Maher

The big, tan hands  
of Western men, low-  
hung like weathered

stirrups. A face  
burnt nickel-cadmium.  
Tomb engraving,


o'er cemetery hanging  
wreath, engulfed  
as church-bell tone

by graven epithet.  
Ixion's wheel spoke out  
a thousand times

across a swirling landscape.  
Time marked, as saturn  
sun bleeds low

over dusty line  
of horizon, here  
to break free

as blister-stung,  
each hand holds taut  
a rope-frayed man



Madeline Bartsch

# M u s i c i a n

I used to watch you in your deepest element:  
You'd sit on my bed, on a bench, in the grass,  
Staring at some untouchable cerebral plane  
Miles above my flushed face as I meekly looked on,  
Embarrassed for my own intrusion into holy ground.

Chords emerged from the framework  
Spilling seamlessly into the air. The tension built  
And your eyes closed in concentration  
--For just a moment--  
As the world shuddered violently into climax around you,  
Compelled by your hands.

I wish you loved me even half as much as you love keys and strings.



The Brick Mason | Lydia Hawkins



Don't Move | Corwin Leverich





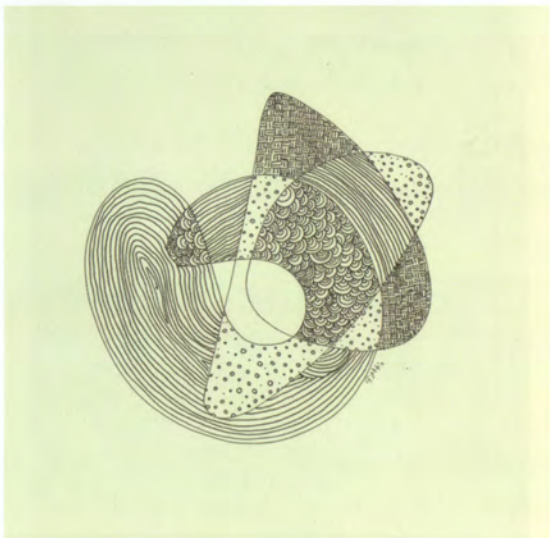
Untitled (Soapstone Sculpture) | Navy Browning



Untitled | Kevin Fedde



Untitled | Kevin Fedde



Thrown For A Loop | Daniella Tripodis

# The Sunshine State

Travis Wilkman

I had a hallucination this morning. Someone was trying to tell me something. I suspect it may have been my conscience. I did some research on aural hallucinations and discovered that they are the most common kinds of hallucinations, but I've never had one before and I don't know anyone else who has. It's not something to brush off. We're not talking about a cold sore here. Hearing voices is definitely something to worry about, so I spent the morning worrying about it. The fear returns to the forefront of my mind whenever I forget about how sick I feel, usually for a few minutes after I vomit. I don't want to see the doctor about it because I don't want to drive. I don't want him to see me this way. I don't want him to call my parents. They say I'm "so smart." I don't want to ruin the illusion.

It was deathly hot this morning, so I'm riding it out in the dark. For me, it's par for the course. My habits have grown wild very rapidly in a dimness of a moist Florida bedroom with the door locked tightly. Today, I really can't do anything else; I've had a rough couple of days and sleep has eluded me for every second of them. My head is killing me, caught in a vice cranked tightly by guilt and exhaustion. If I were honest with myself, I wouldn't blame them.

Everyone migrated to Miami for Spring Break. Meanwhile, I was left behind in Tallahassee, bloated and disoriented. I want it to appear as if I spent my break being active and alive, but I can't tan. The sun caressing my stomach makes me feel ill. It's just too much for me right now. Stepping outside to get some air is the equivalent to swallowing microwaved molasses, so I have stowed myself in my makeshift convalescent home until the shaking subsides.

No matter how hard I scrub, the bathroom sink still smells of the liquor I poured into it this morning. It's stained a light purple as it resulted from cheap wine, mostly. I don't remember buying it, and that's what galls me. That's why I was able to rid myself of it. I used to take alcohol seriously; I still remember what I had when I moved into the apartment: two bottles of Absolut, a six pack of Smirnoff and a collection of unopened microbrew stouts. I don't think of the cheap wine I poured down the drain; it would have been gone by evening anyhow. The exquisite aspects of my collection, however...those had fond memories attached to them. I received my finest liquor as gifts; my family and friends had no idea how misguided their generosity really was. They were unaware of the monster they were sustaining. I had to slay it myself, even if I was a day late in doing so.

I don't know what happened yesterday. Someone must, but I don't know whom to ask. Just a day ago, the house was going dry, and there was nothing I could do about it. I haven't been able to keep a job since I went to that party back in the fall.

Yesterday morning, I remember taking shots from a handle of rum that had been sitting on my counter for months. It seemed absurdly large when I first purchased it, but it evaporated more quickly than I had assumed it would. That gallon jug became my lifeline. I had gone back to the well so many times, I figure it was as frequently sick of seeing me as I was getting sick from it.

Blackouts are painless, but the remnants of consciousness haunt you like a bad dream does when you awake. They eventually fade though, after the night's charcoal darkness is ignited by the dawn. The guilt hasn't subsided for me yet though. I know that I did something terrible when I was out, something that I thought myself once incapable of; when I regained lucidity the house was stocked with liquor. It was an extravagant amount of alcohol, more than enough to drown in. I'm disappointed to find that I didn't; some of it had been drunk before I was even aware I had purchased it. It was as if another person had taken control of my body, but I'm not naïve enough to think that. If pushed, I knew that was exactly what I would have spent a fortune on in that situation. I don't remember what I did to earn a payday, but I'm very sorry for whatever it was that I did. I'm sorry.

Nobody can hear me apologize though. Nobody even knows that I'm ill. I've done an exceptional job of concealing the gaping holes in my personality and social life. I coat myself with so much social lubricant that I cannot be touched. There is no reason to consider my motivations for doing this. I am a shell of a man, with a liquid center. This isn't the migraine talking... I have felt this way for a very long time.

As I close my eyes in a vain attempt to speed up my exhausting detox with a few hours of sleep, I am captivated by the bright yellow aura filling my eyes. Perhaps it's the migraine saying "hello." Whatever may have sent it, the aura looks warm yet fluorescent, rippling constantly, like a pond disturbed by a hyperactive child. I follow its firefly movements with my eyes and decide that they are the appropriate antidote for insomnia. All of my energies are focused on pursuing the aura around my field of vision, as if I were a matador. The only exceptions are involuntary shifts of my torso. The light grows wider and eventually encompasses my entire field of vision. Before I know it, I am surrounded by yellow light. I smell flowers. Am I dead? Am I smelling the bouquets draped over my casket? No. I have full range of motion and can feel black-eyed Susans tickling my ankles as I wander across an endless meadow. It certainly seems endless.

At first, the tickling sensation is extremely pleasant. There aren't any flowers like this in Tallahassee. But there is no end to them and weariness begins to set in. As soon as it does, a town appears on the horizon, as if responding to my beck and call. I reach its borders more quickly than I expected to and when I do, I discover that the town is an island in a sea of flowers; I step onto its cobblestone roads with hesitation, as if I'm no longer accustomed to stable ground. A sign jutting out of the flora reads "Mijmering pop. 2560."

I repeat the town's name to myself, attempting in vain to decide on an appropriate pronunciation while a short man in blue jean overalls walks up to me with a suspicious expression on his face. He mumbles to me in an unintelligible accent. It may be Dutch, but I'm not an authority on the matter. "If you're going to live here, you need to keep your wallet in your front pocket."

I don't have my wallet on me. I left it on my nightstand. After telling him so, he continues on the straight path he had been walking, occasionally glancing back at me. How could one be so paranoid in such a fragrant, beautiful town? Mijmering had the look of a European city that had been lost to history, buried alive in vegetation. Its architecture had not been updated for centuries and its population had not been privy to advances in fashion. Perhaps it was the town's rustic beauty, or perhaps the long draught of sunlight that I just ingested, but suddenly I feel fantastic. Mijmering's many lovely pubs have no power over me. I've killed the beast once and for all.

But I appear to be the only one smiling. The town's citizens, uniformly boasting carnation cheeks, walk on the cobblestones as if they were eggshells, casting nervous glances in broad daylight. I must say that I feel something mysterious about this place as well. While it's tempting to think of this island post as being very small, around each corner lays another set of winding streets and monolithic architecture. From the meadow it looked like a speck, but now I feel the town is imposing on me a bit. Perhaps urban sprawl is smothering the townspeople.

As I continue to explore, a steady breeze blows a tattered beige document onto my shoe. The document is a sort of wanted poster, but it's lacking names or a useful photo; the picture being framed by the text is a generic silhouette. It's no wonder that the man is still at large. But it's not for lack of interest; every telephone pole is clothed in posters about this criminal. This must be what has the townspeople so spooked. I consider what atrocities he must have committed to have an entire town in fear and I begin to feel sick all over again. I gather myself on a nearby bench and take in the surroundings.

People pass by me here the way they do at home. Of course I don't blame them; there's a wanted criminal at large and I've yet to introduce myself to anyone. But I'm lonely.

"You're better off, son."

I glance behind me and see a grotesquely tall and slender man behind me in a blue suit and black bowler cap. His complexion is pale from years of living in the shadow of Mijmering's gargantuan schools and churches, though he appears capable of dwarfing them all from where I sit. "Is that so?" I respond, with genuine interest.

"It is. No one takes the time for idle chatter out in the street anymore. The risk of being robbed is far too high."

Robbed. That word makes me feel ill again, and I'm not sure why. As I struggle to cope with my nausea, I don't dare stop him; this discussion is far too interesting for me. I take my mind off my stomach by thinking up a question to ask this man. "And nobody knows the man's name or what he looks like?"

"How do you know a man is responsible?"

I blush. "It's not often you run into Bonnie Parker, you know."

He mutters something under his breath. It appears that my reference has gone over his head. He lowers his brow and carries on the conversation. "This character - let's assume you're right and that he is a man - doesn't have a name because he responds to whatever identity he's stolen last."

"An identity thief? Fascinating."

"Don't worship him now. He'll take you next. First the wallet, then your name."

I nod and reach out my hand to shake his. He looks at my fingers with great scrutiny. At last I pull it back to my side and make my escape. "Thanks again. What is your name, if I may ask?"

He shrugs, playing down green eyes that glisten like morning dew on a petal. He seems fearless, but something about him is missing. "I don't know. It was stolen from me. That's why I approached you; I have nothing left to lose." He tips his hat and leaves without another word. Before I can ask him for directions out of this paranoid nightmare, he is gone, leaving me stranded and vulnerable. Every shadow crawls over my skin and disappears before I can catch it in the act. It reminds me of hours before, when bugs traversing my shoulders and sternum kept me awake as my stomach began to settle. This is a world I've grown accustomed to; today might have been the first time in weeks that I've ventured outside. I'm still not sure why they call Florida the Sunshine State.

The townspeople, whether they do so from the alleys or in plain sight, constantly gaze towards the city limits, where ultraviolet rays cast an innocent glow on the outside world, now separate from them like a distant childhood memory. I found this place sometime after its peak. Everyone who runs into me must feel the same way when they hear me talk.

I overhear a couple of police officers conversing a few hundred feet to my right. It's pathetic to think so, but I suspect they might be talking about me. Periodically, I give them a look with my peripheral vision. They seem to be getting closer with each glance, though it may be my imagination tricking me. Then again, it might not. This may be how they get you.

I feel a wide, strong hand grasp my shoulder. I knew I wasn't imagining things.

"Hello, son. How are you doing today?"

I pause to consider if this is a loaded question. Undoubtedly it is. It hardly matters, because I can't escape him either way. "Oh, fine," I lied. That's OK; I wasn't under oath yet.

"Oh, that's fine...fine..." he responds with false sincerity. "Say, does this mean anything to you?" He holds out a piece of paper to me. It appears to be a thick piece of cardstock. On it was several sentences of written in a dark grey serif font. Unlike the town's other signs, this was written in English. This took me off guard and must have done the very same for them when they came into possession of it.

"Yeah, I can read it," I respond cautiously, "but I don't know who wrote it."

They were playing good cop/bad cop. Bad cop spoke up sternly. "We'll be the judge of that. Read it off to us."

I oblige, but began to shake from the very first word. "Derrick Malone cannot be found. He won't let you. He can be anything he wants to be."

The two of them exchange surprised glances. Truly they had no idea what the paper said, but they knew who I was. After gathering his wits, good cop spoke up once again. The reassuring tone he synthesizes does nothing to ease my nerves. "What is your name, son?"

I swallow hard. "Derrick Malone, sir."

Bad cop smiles and shakes his head. "It looks like you could be found after all."

The back of the patrol car didn't have any seatbelts. It's the brand of hypocrisy I ex-



pect from cops that, on a slow day, would pull you over for not wearing a seatbelt. Absurd. It reminds me of the day a Florida state trooper "confiscated" an ounce of weed out of my glove box without thanking me. I feel sick again as I listen to them carry on about their triumph. Apparently, I'm a wanted man. It's good to know.

"Can you make out one word of that code?"

"What? Of course I can't. If I could, I'd be a god among men. I figured it was gibberish. But apparently it means something to him, which is reason enough to implicate the kid."

"That bastard! Two years of hiding out and he leaves his code in plain sight."

"Hardly. It's not in plain anything if it only makes sense to him."

"Why did he give himself up so easily?"

"Never underestimate the power of a man in uniform."

The car reaches the police station – which looks ancient, as opposed to rustic – and halts abruptly, slamming me against the back of the driver's seat. My skin is covered in indentations from the leather upholstery, which has also caused me to sweat profusely. I look like a tired, guilty man. I may very well be; nothing would surprise me anymore.

I can judge the competence of the police force from a quick scan around their workplace. It's a haggard old room full of haphazardly-organized documents and folders bearing coffee stains. Truly, this was not a force capable of pinning a criminal mastermind such as myself. I'm asked to sit down in a chair across from a large wooden desk. On it rests a fan whose blades spin drearily, lacking the force to rustle a large pile of receipts that sits beside it. I have no idea where to shop here, but I'm guessing these receipts are the evidence against me. An aging sergeant limps over to the desk and sits down across from me, exhaling with great force. He looks familiar to me, but that may be because he too is a broad, surly gentleman with a grudge, like the officers who brought me in.

The sergeant takes a fistful of receipts in his hand and confirms my suspicions. "This... this is what you've done to us. This is what you've stolen from us. This pile...it seems so small, compared to the extent of the damage."

Stolen. That word stirs a palpable reaction in me. It seems like something I would have done, though I don't remember ever doing something like that. Maybe I feel for these pitiful townspeople. Maybe I'm starting to believe what they say about me. He continues. "One letter at a time...just one. Instead of signing an X, you gave us a D. And then an E. And then an R. And then another R. And so on. We didn't know what the characters meant, but you did. It was so brilliant, until you gave yourself up. Why did you do it?" He seems genuinely curious, but I had no answer to give him. I didn't commit any crime, yet I feel so guilty for committing it that I don't want to correct him. I start to cry. He shakes his head in disgust and exits the room, suggesting that if any real interrogation had occurred, I failed it profoundly.

After several minutes of sitting alone, waiting for a resolution to this mess, I start to notice the peculiarities of the fan in front of me when the metallic swish of its blades suddenly silences. Perhaps a power outage. I squint to see if the room's dim lights are still on, and they do appear to be so. I appreciate the little amount of air circulation it offers; the room's dreary façade is now felt palpably by the suffocating heat. I watch the fan blades in hopes that they

will eventually continue spinning, while being completely aware of how absurd it would be to obtain telekinetic powers when they would be most convenient. Nevertheless, they start to spin, and at a more pleasurable speed. I breathe in the freshly-circulating air and feel like a kid again. I speak into the blades to distort my voice as I did when I was a child, but they do not affect the tone. Could this be some kind of magical fan? Could I be dreaming?

I look over to the sergeant and realize that I am. I recognize this man; he is my 2nd grade gym teacher cleverly disguised as a slightly younger, more likable man. I am in control of everything that happens to me here. The charges against me don't have to stick. I don't even have to be in this room. After returning my gaze from my lap upwards to the room at large, I notice that I am alone. I can leave if I want to.

Before exiting the station, I take a look at the receipts. All of them are from the same store: Al's Liquors, a regular stop of mine. There are no items listed on the receipts; they simply say the balance due. I take a calculator sitting on the desk and use it to ring up my bill: \$4,519.38. At last, I remember, with tears in my eyes: I had been there the morning I blacked out, and though I was penniless, I returned with enough booze to last me the rest of the semester. I was a criminal. This is where I belonged. The room around me shakes aggressively as this realization takes hold of me, defying the Richter scale. It seems redundant, but I can hear sirens blaring from all directions.

I feel a hand on my shoulder. An officer shakes me back into reality, into a much darker room. I know exactly what he's here for. Without him having to ask, I put my jeans back on and grab the wallet resting on my nightstand. I've learned my lesson, but I know that's not how life works. My mistake can't be atoned for with daydreams. But I am content: as the officer's badge glistens in the orange glow of my night light, I realize that I have plenty of time to make up for it.



Beached | Aislynn Wallace



Breakups Suck | Lydia Hawkins

# Survivor

for Social



Teenage Dream | Mallory Masek



Untitled | Marah Mikkelson

# Survivor

*for Sarah*

Carl Covin

This life we share  
is simply a segment

of unknowable plans,  
plans held in hands

greater than ours.  
"Live life to the fullest"

has never felt so true.  
Fear and fatigue fall

off me like shackles.  
My life is my own,

my internal monster  
lost its hold, lost control

to multiply within, mar  
my insides, and determine

my time on this earth.  
I am not my own

but am held in hands  
that will never let go

nor slow to see me make  
it through. My friend,

please say whether I said  
this right, for it is not I

who has your survivor's might.

## E p i l o g u e

Her cape sways with swishing willows  
a red drape flitting down the path.  
Basket bobbing, bare trees reaching,  
beckoning her into the chill.  
Loud shuffling sounds from heaving weight  
make her glance back. On the cold ground  
the beast's claws scratch the scarlet frost.  
A red line rips down his wide chest  
spilling life 'til his heart is spent.  
His jaws part as if to utter  
a pained howl, but no sound pours out.  
The fur on his face is frozen  
from twin rivers' flows of remorse.

She hesitates despite the bite  
of wind whining against her skin.  
With a sigh, she kneels at his side,  
and pale fingers release the clasp  
of her hooded cape. The shroud laid  
out catches his blood in matching  
fabric. Once soaked, she stows the cloak  
into the basket to drip on  
an untouched picnic made for two.  
The girl leans in to cup his chin  
and stops. Instead she darts away  
into the curtain of clicking  
branches, as the beast breathes his last.

Strapped to her leg, a short red blade  
hangs. It never felt heavier.





Hurricane 1 | Aaron Wegner

# Aislynn Wallace Haunt of the “Hey”

The late afternoon sun beams in through the window, turning your laptop screen into a mirror. Your face reflects back to you, an overlay to all the new status updates; three letters and a name. A quick pounding rattles your chest. Your skin flashes from extremely cold to shockingly warm. Time seems to stop. Your contacts sit dry on your eyes, uncomfortable from staring at the screen for so long without blinking, but you can't look away.

Is it true? The words bounce around your brain. No, it can't be. You want to think, but you know it all makes sense. There were early signs.

He was young, your age; 18. Just as people had been assuring you, he too had his whole life ahead of him still. But did he really? The truth made sense. Everyone makes choices about who they are. Some people just get lost and make the wrong ones.

You think back, way back, to before everything got harder; eighth grade. You were walking down the hallway before morning bell. A white Language Arts binder was grasped in your arms, but you still had plenty of time before class. All of your friends were sitting on the floor in front of a short row of purple lockers. Were they your friends? You weren't sure. You still ate lunch with them, out of habit really. They still exchanged a glance of greeting with you in passing. But you didn't really talk anymore, not like before. There were no more weekend outings, no more laughter filled chat sessions late at night. You felt alone even when surrounded by all five of them. You felt lost.

You hesitated just outside of the hallway. Did you want to sit next to them? Yes, you decided. Might as well keep up the façade, you didn't want to be pegged as a loner, not in eighth grade. Appearances mattered. You passed him on your way. He stood by the drinking fountain with a friend. As you approached, his friend muttered something and kind of motioned in your direction. He smiled at you and held up his hand in a half-wave fashion. He said “Hey.” You mistook his greeting as meant for someone else. Why would he talk to you? He had great hair, he always did. It made the girls crazy and the guys jealous. He was a kind of popular that you were not. You marched silently passed, your eyes focused on the single square of floor still next to your pseudo-friends.

He passed you by as you sat there in silence. You realized nobody else was in the hallway. He had been greeting you and you had ignored him. You felt embarrassed and stupid. You wanted to say something as he passed, but that would be even more stupid and embarrassing. You kept quiet. The bell rang and you went to class. You forgot about it.

Until now.

You never wondered then, but you wonder now. What would have happened if you said hi back?

You think about the rest of high school, but you come up empty. Eighth grade was the first and last interaction and it didn't even really exist.

Sure, you still saw him all the time. You passed each other in the hallways frequently and you noticed him at school functions, but another contact attempt was never made. You still felt like you knew him though, everybody did. He was popular enough to be on everybody's radar. He was funny and nice and very creative. Sometimes you wondered though, was the creativity truly his or did it belong to the drugs? You knew he used, that was also something everybody knew. He was part of 'that crowd'. When you thought about him though, you pushed that knowledge away. It never seemed to matter; he still made it to class, he still won the art award, he still managed to graduate.

After school you heard he went out east. You didn't know why. It couldn't be for school. Or could it be? In your world good grades meant out of state college. Bad grades meant community college or fast food. He wasn't known for a high GPA, just a high state of being.

Over time you forgot about him. Just like you forgot about those old friends of yours. They had melted away in high school. Now in your new life, in a new city, in a new state, it was almost as if that part of your life had never happened. It was easy to forget the forgettable. They were just old meaningless memories and couldn't reach you here.

But now they had.

You replay that eighth grade moment over and over in your head. You wonder if you could have been the difference. Perhaps a simple "hi" from you could have saved him. You might have become friends. Would you have turned out different? Would eighth grade actually matter to you now? Both of you were searching then. You longed to find friends that mattered and he was trying to find his place. You put up with cold silence and he found a path a little too crooked. You could have found a warm, clear path together.

Your thoughts haunt you as you click onto his profile page. His face appears smiling. He is looking into the camera, looking right at you. He still has the hair, although it is a bit more artsy now, styled in medium length dreads. The same coppery brown color remains. He looks so innocent, so unassuming, so alive. He was the first of your graduating class to go, taken by bad choices.

If you had chosen hello, would he have chosen life?

You get up from your chair and grab a jacket. You can't stay here, with his existence captured in your laptop. Thinking about what could have been infuriates you. Everyone knows you can't change the past. A stupid rule, you think.

Outside you walk along a leafy sidewalk. The trees around you are busy changing colors and shedding leaves. A person comes down the path towards you. He looks at you for recognition. You don't know him, but you smile anyways.

"Hi."

He smiles back.

"Hey."

R.I.P Joe.



Doors of Venice | Aaron Wegner

1901  
A B O L I T I O N I S T



The Clash | Sterling Long

# Grace Shemwell Anorexia


In all the universe  
No one has seen a waist  
As large  
As mine  
As what the mirror  
Points out  
Pushes out  
Push it out  
Past my belt line  
Flab...gross.  
As fixated hands fixate like my eyes  
that are belly gazing too much to see  
beyond my belly that everyone else  
sees touching my spine.  
I'm hallow  
*No you're not*  
*You're full*  
*Cave in, fingers in,*  
Concave, caving in,  
Cravings in my mind...  
*Convex, you're convex,*  
*Voluptuous, fat envelops you...*  
Envelops  
Encases  
Incarcerates  
Pools on  
My legs  
My arms  
My belly  
My cankles  
My grabbers pulling skin off bone  
Bone?  
My bones?  
*No, tuck those in the closet*  
*Bones belong in the closet.*  
Or maybe the pantry...  
Yes! Next to the nutty bars, chocolate  
bars, and a whole box of cocoa pebbles

that I sniff  
then put away so I don't  
Concave in  
*Put them away*  
*Vapors and all (is that all I am?)*  
Put them away next to My Bones?  
*No those bones, and we'll put your skin on those, let it hang on the hook to dry after you work  
out those extra calories, demons in costume, by heading back to the fun house...*  
House of mirrors  
To see only the pools of fat  
That live in circus tents  
That my (what) friends can't see  
*Can't you see it?*  
*Yes I can, cause I am you.*  
You Elephant  
*Blubbery, rubbery, pus -like,*  
Gross...  
*I can barely look*  
In the mirror?  
But I can feel it  
My stomach concave  
*I mean convex*  
It's caving in  
*No it's not look;*  
*Push it out...*  
Distort reality.  
*Or rely on my distortions?*  
What do I really see?  
Where did the "I" go?  
Where did the "Ego"?  
*Black magic*  
Black matter  
In the bowl  
In all the universe  
No one has ever seen a girl  
So little  
As me.



Footprint | Malorie Masek





# Bringing an offering [me] to the alter [you]

Gregory Maher

Humboldt said it was crazy, said it could never be done,  
dun, his dogchewed coat as they dragged him up from the sweat-stain  
floorboards, manhattan dregs, gin and (well . . . gin), his  
nightcap, capping morning light with another amber glass

by satin Chicago signs (the new broadway, feeding neon from the last)  
past umber night, filter through the alleyways, causeways, forays (of capitalism,  
of course) to light upon a new sorrel-tan stetson, leather-grain thoughts  
protect his head from smoky parlor talk, in rain to pause, to balk:

"If I cannot touch their tongues, lay bare their sense,  
then what am I but a distant song, fading, sung?"



Der Eibsee | Noah Finegan



The Light Between the Mountains | Daniella Tripodis

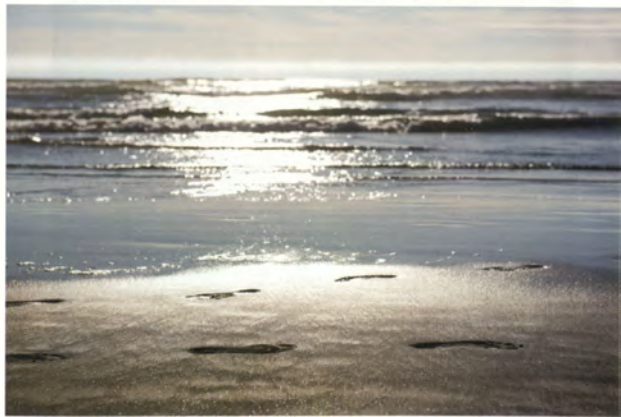
# Hallelujah

Jessica Jachim

Five hundred thirty-two familiar steps from his front porch, around the house, down the hard dirt path lined with trees, to the open pasture. Breathing, something he used to do with ease, is difficult now. As he reaches the white fence, he gazes at her paint horses and kneels slowly. They stop grazing and watch him, and their eyes look soft and sad and even sympathetic. He thinks that they must be broken too, and he remembers that he's not all she left behind. And they must be thinking the same. He thinks of how beautiful they were when she'd ride them through the hay fields. She was beautiful. It was a sight which could bring him to his knees, kneeling as he was now, and he'd feel the urge in his heart to shout "Hallelujah," and then just whisper it over and over, like a prayer, because he'd never seen or felt anything so beautiful or graceful in his life.

He looks to the distant willow trees, and there she is, standing with one hand against the trunk, almost shy-looking as she always did. She's as young and pretty as ever, with a white laced dress and soft curls. He's ashamed of his loose skin and the lines impressed around his eyes and the way he walks so slowly with a slight limp from wear on his hips. His hands are softer than they used to be and his hair is gray and thin. He starts to get up; he wants to be near her. She puts a hand toward him to spare him the struggle and walks to him instead. His cheeks flush, but he relaxes as she smiles and nears him. She helps him to lie back on the grass and she takes his young, strong hand rough from farm work. She lies her head on his firm chest. He smiles and the only wrinkles on his face are from his happiness in this moment. She looks up at his green eyes and runs a hand through his soft brown hair. He kisses her forehead and rests his head back just as a soft rain begins falling. He's too content to move, so he soaks up the warm drops, feeling as serene as he did when he'd watch her with the horses, moving across the fields so softly that it looked like she was sailing.

He opens his eyes and the horses are standing near the fence, still watching him. Did they see what he saw? He opens his arms, still lying on the ground and whispers, "Hallelujah, hallelujah..."



Untitled | Kevin Fedde



Manny | Daniella Tripodis



Chaste | Aaron Wegner

# Grave Solace

Jessica Kok

Can mindless, tactless babbling  
the ancient talk of brooks and folly  
Be still so dulcet, so lovely?

As if the chaos is too perfect to overwhelm,  
its murmurs insistent on the helm  
of hate and loathing.

Yes, sisters, let us hum as we go down,  
Down to the stones in the river  
like stories in their watery grave.

Where the rushing wind  
Does mellow oceans of worry,  
the things that flow through and carry over.

They are all in passing,  
a dream could not matter less.  
Ceaseless to their end, always dawning.

And underneath the red crescent moon,  
This river descends from me so soon.  
I think it needs to, so should you.

\* \* \*

My love, how has he loathed me?  
I understand nothing of his war.  
He is both friend and foe.

If I could know his graveling words  
I could fear their gruesome sound,  
but murky pools bathe my ears in blood.



The specter in the Persian's eyes  
Could not have been more brooding--  
this river has not seen a better one than I.

But Oh! The slick black stones  
and the bearded trailing foam  
at the brink of Gibbon falls do call to me!

And now the flashing aspen  
Dance and tremble, an underwater sea.  
The current runs through them all at once.

I see it clearly, love.  
I see things connecting,  
Noticing the beginning, the beginning.

\* \* \*

Here's what happens next  
a lot has since I walked here last  
will you hear, love?

Tight curls, blue toes  
blue hills, blue sky  
blue lily maids and blue blankets 'neath the saddle

A funny little laundromat  
in Sheridan and near Custer's battle field  
after that, a lot of tombs.

And an iron gate  
lines the road running parallel to the train,  
the Ruby River runs beneath the sky.

And goodness knows there was a friend;  
one I didn't get to see.  
Digging red, digging blue away from me.

# Grave Solace



Monster on the TV | Kyle Smart and Corwin Leverich

# Intoxicating Words

Lauren Zomparelli

Bright, vivid flowers stand tall  
as the only living survivors  
of these dark, death-filled chambers,  
as furnace doors remain open,  
the stench still stinging my nostrils.

I wonder if it was as cold and damp  
then as it is today,  
as the same sad prayers  
must have echoed against  
these sorrow stained walls.

Shivers shoot down my spine,  
with heavy eyes closed  
I can see everyone as they were forced  
inside, stripped naked, final breaths  
intoxicated.

My fingers brush across writings  
of Jewish stars, engraved names, *Daddy*.  
Sprawled in English, Hebrew, Polish, German  
Their only words for the future...  
*We Will Never Die.*



A Hole in the Wall | Alexandra Meyer

# Distance



Recover | Corwin Leverich



Sunset Over Lake Michigan | Brendan Nabozny

# Distance

Caitlin Carter

It is hard to think about you from far away.

Distance delivers a not-so-delicate  
scrape to my spine, like being dragged  
behind your Dodge all those miles,  
(simultaneously chafing raw  
a similar spot on the soft fleshy  
fool in my chest cavity)  
until I curl inward, concave,  
reflecting on what I have left of you.

The physical space we try to span  
inhabits my mind, reminds  
me that maybe I made you up,  
that there is no you, just a dream of you,  
a mental collage of all the traits I want  
or need, and want

After all, what are pixels  
perfectly aligned to be seen on a screen?  
Wayward words  
without their usual inflection,  
a face framed by plastic or glass  
doling out hope for your speedy return,  
one that can't come soon enough.

As hours add up and the clock  
still ticks, I begin to think  
about what it means, to feed  
on these bits of you, flattened,  
packed into a phone or any piece  
of technology, which then takes  
my words and wishes, and wires  
them directly to you

to think about from far away.

## Sarracenia

"All concerns of men go wrong when they wish to cure evil with  
evil."

~Sophocles

Strained shoulders speak of tumultuous mind.  
Virtuous blush hints hope below porcelain  
skin lit abash in cigarette glow. Childlike, barefoot,  
you held a butt to your bow mouth, kissed  
smoke circles and reminisced with Lady White.  
The strike of a match quivers beneath silver spoon;  
the bite of release begs the breach of the edge.

Light aches sweep into seeping, sunken wounds.  
Tear-spiked lashes bleed mascara, but dusted bottles behind  
bookshelves weep scotch. Blue rivers course across white  
canvas and bleed bright against the sharp prick of liquid gold.  
Scarlet lipstick smudges twist into broken grins. With a maniac  
smile demons rear, snapping yellowed fangs, and the dot  
of flame trembles white-hot and uncertain in ashen sky.

Words run together, cursive drips from your lips  
like the sharp splash of whiskey. Feet drag across  
your battlefield-the gleam of shattered glass against starlit  
street and you dance like a queen. Dressed for occasion:  
the glitter of white against your sleeve turned rose,  
from the sweep across your nose, damming the light stream.  
You are sharp lines, all corners as you glimmer in-



-out of sight, disappear and reappear along the line  
where shadows meet moonlight. You leap with grace  
over your treasures, spoons burnt black and empty bags  
of shimmering crystal. Ribbons circle your arms,  
flutter as you spin, pulled taut against china-doll skin.  
You converse with the lull of traffic, embrace your silhouette  
for a perverse tune of ballet, panic when she matches pace.

Peeling clay walls tell tales with slashes of vulgar colors;  
you wail in reply to the cry of a nearby siren, bless the sneeze  
of a nearby train as it shoots by, belching black, and you  
plead for the moon to lead you home and she smiles warm-  
wraps you in her arms, but the cold seeps, deep, deeper,  
past your bones and into your soul, where you arc and fall  
bend whole into the embrace of your beautiful, deadly friend.



Crucifixion: Light Shines in the Darkness | Aaron Wegner



Untitled | Kevin Fedde

## Final Boarding

1

Umber trunks support our swaying hammock  
'neath swirling clouds that do not yield the rain  
in them, but only screen stars from vision. Healing  
old wounds, you hold me close, a touch I wish  
never had left, for it's cold in this hammock alone.

Preservation of your kin's clean image tore you  
away. You returned, but I see gray reluctance  
clouding your eyes like dark unsure skies,  
icy patches slipping up your judgment in heat  
of final boarding as though we are rushing towards a wreck.  
Ignoring that, I stroke your hair. We smile in the night.  
Clutch me tighter. I fear you'll fade before morning's journey.

2

Under day's blue haze, the grating bay of the train  
nags its conductor for a break. Stop after stop,  
it struggles on, hunting the fleeing sun. I rest my head  
on your shoulder. My heart races to the rhythm,  
never-ending clack-a-clack of steel wheels. Our fingers lace.

Passengers stare as they pass our chairs, thinking we  
are oblivious to dazed gazes and upturned noses.  
"Call him," I whisper. You dial the digits on your cellular.  
Instantly I hear your father's faint voice. Coarse and  
familiar, adopting the same tone that tagged you as a "fag."  
Instead of a gentle goodbye, you state his label with pride.  
Cringing, I don't know whether to smile or die inside.

John Miller – *Beijing Tree* (2010)



Untitled | Marah Mikkelson

# The Nightwatchman

*One... two, three ..... four, five...*

The idle security guard winced. He hated it when the drops falling from the ceiling lost their rhythm. He had time to notice such things every night; the only difference was what he noticed. Tonight he noticed the moonlight reflect on his badge to reveal his name, "Phil Kowalski," engraved on silver that shone with a conscientious polish. These isolated details were the only things that separated one night from the other since he had accepted this job ten years, four months and seven days ago.

This Wednesday was identical to last Wednesday, which was, incidentally, quite similar to the Thursday two weeks before. It was his responsibility to make each one special; he had heard as much on a self-help tape he had been recommended and subsequently purchased.

What made tonight special? Well, besides the irregular drops and the reflection of his badge, he could also see the outlines of the machines on the factory floor thanks to the full moon. That was relatively uncommon. It made the "WARNING: HIGH VOLTAGE" sign take on an eerie luminescence. But the highlight of the evening was that Phil had ventured to Back Bay Hardware to purchase batteries for his flashlight the day before, allowing him to reacquaint himself with the factory's many dust particles.

Going to the store was an easy task for many, but it wasn't easy for him. It hadn't been easy since his mother had last been around to do the talking for him. She always knew what to say, but she couldn't speak for him anymore. There was something wrong with Phil, and he knew it. He didn't like the way people looked at him. He dissected the meaning of every glance and always assumed the worst. People called him "paranoid." His mother preferred to call him a "sensitive child." It was a phrase he never would have thought of, and that's why she spoke for him. That's why he loved her.

Phil didn't have any interest in what others had to say because words only hurt him. He chose an occupation that required no input. His job was to watch over a New England cannery as if it were his one true home. And in many ways, it was. Traveling home meant traffic, uncertainty, hostility, and for what? A couple bottles of Sam Adams and an hour in front of the television. Unless, of course, he had been too cowardly to confront the bill collectors that month, in which case he would watch his fish until his eyes went out of focus, rendering them colorful balls of drifting cotton. Phil loved fish; he could be certain that they would forget the times he forgot to feed them. Until he stopped being certain, that is. He second-guessed himself whenever he

felt tired. After giving it some consideration, he decided that he could not remember the last time he was truly wide awake.

Phil's official title was "security guard," but he preferred the antiquated term "night watchman," and you would too if you worked at the Teabury Cannery. It was a rustic, historically significant yet economically inappreciable factory that took one on a trip through time. The grounds were lit by incandescent lamps that one could see through the cloudy, neglected glass windows of the second floor. From that vantage point, Phil often waited for Paul Revere to warn him of the oncoming British. He could mentally craft an outline of him on foggy nights, which often rolled in and out without protest from the adjacent Atlantic.

Though a bold full moon found its way through cracks in the cloud cover, wintry precipitation was a certainty. Phil always kept a close watch for it. Inside the warehouse, it was so quiet that he could hear the sound of snowflakes in the midst of their fateful kamikaze missions, meeting their brethren on the ground to form a glorious, crackling heap. Phil liked to think about snow. It was soft and kind and brought out the romantic in so many people. It pleased him to think of each snowflake's unique anatomy. He considered each day a snowflake. Or he hoped to start doing so.

Phil had no way of watching the snowfall from the bottom floor, so he clambered up the uncertain stairwell leading to the mammoth windows on the northern wall. It was once steady and a freshly-painted metallic green, but had grown cynical and dull from years of supporting factory employees. He heard its pessimistic creaking with every step and grew to fear it as much as it feared him.

A glance out the window eased Phil's tension instantly. There was nothing he found more soothing than a gentle snowfall on a still night. The town of Teabury was visible to the north, lit up like a quaint ceramic tea light. He found the town to be appropriately named. On bright, clear nights, there was a boat on the shoreline that he loved to watch. It wasn't so much the appearance of the boat that he was fond of; its dark wood had been warped from years of neglect and was encrusted with algae. Rather, he liked the way it rocked while tied to the dock. Though it was unable to escape, it seemed all too ready for the day it could finally happen. Its eagerness never fully ceased, even though its hope was consistently deferred. He created scenarios in his head that would allow him to free it. Perhaps take it on a trip to Teabury and beyond. But he thought it wasn't his place to do so. He wasn't the kind to steal a boat and make his dreams come true. Never was and never will be. Nonetheless, it comforted him to know that it was there.

To the south, through the windows on the opposite wall, one could see Boston. Phil hated that city for everything it represented and for all it offered him. There were people there who smiled and drank and didn't care about what you or anyone else thought. They were happy people who could make their dreams a reality. People who looked utterly flawless in flattering citrus lighting. He knew he couldn't have any of their joy. Especially not tonight. Tonight was not a night for noise and debauch. Tonight was a night for peace.

The night did not *sound* peaceful. It was a massacre. Ice crystals hissed at fate for betraying it so. Sleet popped with machine gun rapidity. But he loved it, as it masked the soul-

less hum of the canning machinery. Eventually, the snow and sleet ceased and Phil could hear himself think. He could hear everything. The natural turn of the earth shifted the aging factory in subtle and terrifying ways. Phil jerked his head back to catch each sound in the act. Loose conveyor belts shook; rats gnawed through ancient wiring.

The cacophony was set aside. He saw something; someone. It stuck in his peripheral vision. It wasn't in the factory; it was someone outside.

*Who would be outside in this ungodly weather?*

This was a good question; it was his responsibility to guard the premises from the sort of people who would be out in ungodly weather such as this. *Suspicious people*. It was also his least favorite part of the job and he approached such suspicious scenarios with trepidation. He had security cameras to aid him in this process, but he found his senses were far keener than any camera the Teabury Cannery could afford.

Phil placed his face up against the window and carefully scanned the parking lot and adjacent sidewalk, which were lit by two fortunately-mounted street lamps and neighbored by a small patch of grass and, a few feet beyond that, the coastline. This coastline was very notorious within the town of Teabury. Many years before, it had been commonly chosen as a location for men and women with nothing left. They went there because they felt no one was watching them and no one could stop them, and they took their own lives. The waters by the coastline were referred to as crimson tides. Phil was aware of this but could never say he had seen one of these suicides for himself. There were no reported cases and he hadn't caught any unreported ones. It occurred to him that tonight may very well be special after. But after seeing nothing he assumed his cruel imagination was playing tricks on him in the night, as it so often had.

Then, at last, he saw them. Two men. One was crouched on the ground. Another was standing beside him in a threatening manner. The second man was shouting at the first. Phil couldn't hear the words but the second man's body language suggested that he was delivering a verbal thrashing. Perhaps he was a friend? A spurned lover? He could make out the details of the first man's face in the amber glow of the street lamps and saw that he was weeping.

The second man – wearing a faded orange suede trench coat and a brown hat with a brim that covered his face with some room to spare – took out a silver switchblade. It was so strange to see a man like him quite literally brought to his knees. He was brutish in appearance, blonde and several inches taller than the man he assumed was the assailant. He had broad arms and an impressive stature; logic dictated that he should easily be able to stand up for himself, but he was the victim of what appeared to be a much weaker man. Phil thought of him as the victim as the horrible scene unfolded.

There was something very strange about the man in the trench coat. Phil almost felt that he had seen him before. Phil had a tremendously good memory, for better or worse, so it was entirely possible that he was experiencing *déjà vu*. But he couldn't be sure from just seeing the back of the man's coat, nor from seeing his pale hands. Despite his relatively diminutive stature, he was in his victim's head and that disturbed Phil. He knew people like that. In fact, everyone had that power over him.

The arms of the brutish blonde were stretched out in front of him and frozen in place.



There were tears in his eyes as the man in the orange trenchcoat cut him to pieces. At last, he collapsed. There was a pool of blood around him, though Phil could not tell where the source of it was. Phil wept for the poor soul, but he was confused by what he saw. Surely this was a homicide. The man in the trench coat had taken this man where nobody could find his body and took his life. He didn't know what the victim had done. It didn't matter to Phil now. All he could think of was that he had to tell someone what he saw. And that terrified him.

The man in the trench coat examined his work and shrugged callously. He then turned around and attempted to pick out possible witnesses. Phil remained perfectly silent. He found himself incapable of movement. His eyes glanced over the shoreline and, on this cloudy night, he found it was impossible to see his boat. He began to perspire. The man inhabiting the right-bottom corner of his vision turned around cautiously and pulled out his knife before turning back to his original position. As he turned, he spotted the witness in his peripheral vision. Just as Phil had watched the terrible homicide without any conscious effort, so the assailant caught a glimpse of the lone witness' face by chance.

Phil retched. He slipped onto the steely green grating and felt merciless waves of memory pummel him. He had seen the man before. After all this time, he had forgotten what it was like to look into his eyes, so villainous and cold. That man had murdered his mother, cutting him off from his one source of protection. He had orphaned him and placed him in the care of his uncouth aunt and uncle, a couple who never understood his unique quirks. Phil felt no hate at this moment; this was not an opportunity for retribution. In fact, he had sought to avoid seeing this man ever again. He had subconsciously moved out of the city to avoid a second encounter with him and, in this moment, only sought to preserve his miserable life.

Phil's best defense was his wits and keen senses. Failing that, there was a gun resting on the table in his office. This was his life to lose. It was his responsibility to stay calm and call upon the training he had hopefully retained. First of all, he stood up straight, rising from the pool of vomit he had created upon seeing the assailant's sociopathic visage. To retrieve the gun, he knew he would have to hurry; the man tracking him was old and rugged yet strangely agile. As Phil ran, kicking up clouds of dust into his flashlight's pale beam along the way, he considered the man's possible motives for murder. What could he want? What did he want all those years ago? He began to feel woozy and ran into the blunt end of a machine on the factory floor, which left a deep bruise on his thigh. As he struggled to his feet, he decided that this was no time to reflect on the past. If anything, it would soon find him.

Every step Phil took sounded louder than he was accustomed to. His adversary must have heard them. He took a brief moment – it could be no greater than this – to consider how he would best navigate the factory floor. Run? A brisk walk? Tip-toe? He chose the brisk walk, allowing him to move at a solid clip without making a great deal of noise, but this put extra pressure on his bruised thigh which was beginning to throb.

Phil heard a quiet rustling in the foyer. The lock on the door leading to the foyer jiggled and then, bizarrely, seemed to create a light thud. The man seemed to have removed the lock entirely. At this moment, the stranger took on a sort of omniscience. There was no choice but to run; Phil would be found and killed if he couldn't locate his weapon in time. Phil was a

large man; his frame was generous and he was not afraid to test it with a poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle. Every stride he took was met with resistance from his own body. His intimate knowledge of the factory was his only advantage, though the superstitious part of him suspected he had lost even that. If he did run into the man in the trench coat, he knew his size wouldn't save him. It hadn't done much good for the old man's victim.

When he at last reached the break room adjacent to his office, paranoia set in fully. He could hear booming footsteps in his head, but not outside of them, as if his temples were standing in for a bass drum. His emotions fluctuated wildly as he turned around each corner, as if every room represented a different part of his psyche. The lighting changed in time with this, ranging from dark to light; colorful to drab.

Eventually, he noticed a pattern. He had been running in a scared circle. Backtracking, he noticed the hallway that led to his office was in the room he first entered but he simply hadn't noticed it. He wondered how many other details he had overlooked in his blind panic.

The gun was the first thing he saw when he walked into the room. He had seldom touched his Beretta, only carrying it when he felt the need to keep up appearances, but he was so overwhelmed with emotion that it seemed to be his key out of a prison of fear and doubt. It felt like an old ally. Finally, he was in control. No one could take this away from him, not even that villainous old bastard.

He thought about the old man. Who could dedicate their lives to such vile acts? How could you age twenty-five years and grow so little as a person? There was something missing in a man like that. When their eyes met all those years before, he knew the man could only contribute death to the lives of those he came into contact with. He didn't understand the value of a life, yet the old man's face hadn't aged a day since the first time Phil had laid eyes on him. It wasn't fair.

His mother had been struggling. She had opened a restaurant and it was a resounding failure. She was deemed unfit by the state to be a parent. All too often, Phil went to school looking ravenous and unkempt. But he wasn't unhappy. He understood that his mother would have done anything to put him in a better situation. He loved her. And he suspected that things were getting better. She wore a tearful smile the night of the break-in.

Phil cocked his gun and kept it as still as he could, facing the open door. Time passed extremely slowly, waiting for his inevitable encounter. The steps in his head were no louder than they were minutes before. Perhaps the man had lost his way. Perhaps he was stepping in place, trying to lure Phil into a sinister trap. Neither seemed all that plausible, but both scenarios were *possible*. And that chance was enough to keep him frozen in place for several more minutes.

This situation felt familiar to Phil. He remembered hearing his mother's footsteps thudding below the stairs the night she died. But they must have been the killer's. They started loud as he walked past the unwitting child and grew quieter until at last they piqued his curiosity enough to chase them down.

The steps were again growing quieter. They grew quieter still until the killer had exited the building, shutting the foyer door behind him. Phil had not been found.

Yet he felt no relief. The machines resumed their soulless whirring, which called him

out to the factory floor like a siren. Much work was left to be done. As he walked down the halls and back to the floor, it became clear to him that the wind had picked up. It was screaming. Its tantrum was fierce enough to topple a nearby power line. The hallway went dark. The machines were silenced. Only a ray of moonlight shooting through the large windows of the second floor allowed him to return to his post.

The backup generators were set up to turn on automatically following a power outage of this nature, so he waited. At first, he played with his flashlight, but turning it on made visible the dust in the room. The dust, along with the square grey shapes in front of him made him feel as if he were occupying a crypt. This was an uncomfortable thought, so he turned it off with a forceful click. He then began to listen to his thoughts, but they were drowned out by the disquieting silence of the powerless machinery. He felt alone. Too alone, even to his liking. At last, he simply waited for the generators to return him to normalcy.

On cue, the power returned. The machines roared with new life. He smiled a sentimental smile. After a short time, it faded. He thought of what he had on the agenda for the night and realized his schedule was empty. And that it would be tomorrow. And that it had been for months. His normalcy was a farce. He wanted those damn machines to silence themselves the moment they came back to life. The door to the foyer opened with a creak. He needed some air.

Phil crossed the threshold absently. There could be something worth fearing somewhere on the premises, but his brush with death had turned out to be the most memorable part of the night. He approached the rocky coastline that neighbored the cannery as if it hadn't had such an ugly reputation. As if it hadn't been the host of a bloody homicide. Off to the east, there was no end to its waters. How significant was one man's life in relation to that?

A thought ran through his mind as if it were racing to a more worthy destination. *Don't look back.* He ruminated on it for a moment. Maybe there was something else for a man like Phil Kowalski. Perhaps he could be a fisherman as his father had been. No, he couldn't.

He looked back at the cannery and began to cry. This had been his sanctuary for a decade. It allowed him to prolong the agony. He glanced over to the brutish blonde lying still on the burgundy rocks and no longer pitied him.

The glance graduated to a stare. There was one detail about the murder scene that he hadn't noticed. The man's wrists – they were the source of the blood. Vertical cuts. Phil looked into his hand and saw his gun clutched within his involuntary grip. Turning around quickly, he saw the old man walking towards him confidently. His countenance grew more overpowering and evil with every step. He seemed to glide toward his next victim, like an angel of death. At last, he spoke.

“I can set you free.”

Phil realized he had trapped himself. He was being offered a way out of dire circumstances, just as the brutish blonde had been. As so many had been on the shores of these burgundy rocks. As his mother had been. His emotions fluctuated wildly, as they had when he first grabbed the gun. Part of him was *glad* to see the man. He wanted to have a memorable night, and it was exactly that, thanks to him. There hadn't been many in a long time and there may not be any others. He wouldn't have to see the Godforsaken cannery ever again. Another part of him

knew that other memorable nights were *possible*. As long as that chance was there, he couldn't give in. He couldn't see it now, but the boat was waiting for him.

He dropped the gun and dove into the frigid water. When he arose, the shoreline was empty except for the brutish blonde and the forsaken Beretta. The old man was gone. An old cannery neighbored by dying trees was not a beautiful sight, but he was grateful to have seen it. More beautiful still was the soggy brown boat. It was just a faint outline, but it was there. He swam back to shore, faced the cannery and arched his brow apologetically. It had been such a good friend to him.

"A true friend would understand," he said with a sigh. Taking a pen and piece of paper out of his pocket, he wrote his letter of resignation and placed it under the arm of the brutish blonde, where everyone would see it.

He faced the boat east, toward the empty horizon, and hopped in. After an earnest, failed attempt to paddle forward, he realized he never had anyone teach him how. He would have to teach himself.

*It'll be OK. Better than OK. It'll be a night to remember.*



Untitled | Marah Mikkelson



Untitled | Kevin Fedde



An Autumn Silhouette | Sterling Long



Conflict | Noah Finegan



# Cracks

Kirsten Pohlplatz

Anxiety is a part of my soul.  
Shifting and shaping, then spearing me,  
like the bone weary tired, leaving me  
trembling in fear with an invisible  
razor pressed to my throat as my eyes search  
a room with no answers for my pain. A bottleneck  
of all the pressure, splintered and shoved  
together. My skin in the mirror reflects something  
I don't dare to show, the sickly fear—as I ready  
myself for sleep, shaking and exhausted, the day  
breaks and I ask *how do I face it anew?*, and *is it  
any different from the one before?*

I cannot tell.

When I crack, every time worse  
than the last, wondering how I become  
whole, again, hands shaking—I can't  
even pick up the pieces, let alone fit them  
back into myself. How am I supposed to  
carry on when I can't even carry the stifling  
weight of my unbound heart? But I run and pretend  
as though I forgot these empty spots with jagged  
cuts, move so fast, as they pierce further—I smile,  
Bags under my eyes, there is no time for  
truth in life. You ask if I'm fine.

I lie.

Fourth in a line of lawless injuries and deaths.

Fourth in a line of drunken slips.

I was The Whip.

The very whip that lashed my own back at my maker's volition and now my spine tells the tale.

He was The Hangman

but his whip is now fractured.

The Hangman broke his own whip.

my Hangman's fracture.

My legs broken by the moose,

My skull shattered from the fall

But I couldn't fight him

I'm so *small*

And who would fight their maker, the only thing they knew and trusted anyway?

But he could make me,

and he could break me,

and I guess he did.

And now my life hangs

in The Hangman's hands

As does His own

# The Hangman

Grace Shemwell

He was The Hangman

I was the hanging

I hung

From The Hangman's noose

The Hangman's hand

raised high

for no one to see

no one came to my trial

no one came to my sentence

as I lay on the floor

helpless for three days

helpless as I lay

Paralyzed.

Literally.

See The Hangman whipped me

My leg his handle

My back the snap

My head the crack

I was The Whip.

I was the child,

fourth in a line of many whose mothers could not control His thirst or quell His anger.



Palmistry | Corwin Leverich

To noisily /  
with a /



Victoria's Heaven | Sterling Long

# Accumulation of Sand *In Memoriam*

Jessica Kok

Four months past, the tragedy and tears  
Covered in sand that piles with the years  
Not better, or worse  
Just a boy in a hearse  
And the world marched on down main street

A couple of blows  
Boston down on its knees  
Crying out to a God who moves the seas  
Wondering how long, how long must we plead  
Wait for the tide to move history

Salt stings the curse  
A girl on the run  
She runs for the thing that bad man has done  
Another day over, another day gone  
The street sweepers come, by night

Swept into the fray  
Father moans at the wind  
wondering how, how did it begin  
How so many suffer from just one sin  
the ashes, all that should remain

Of history that precedes me  
I'm liable to say  
A solemn word for battles fought in that way  
Raw, and dirty, and cold with dismay  
The waves that we fought in are sighing  
And no people, in vain, are dying

Yet the the fight is not over  
It is hardly begun  
Around father looks, then to the sun  
Another day over, a requiem sung  
It melts in the grasslands, and flooded avenue

Washed down to beaches, washed until morn'.



Religious Freight | Aaron Wegner

# Accumulation of *Mammuthus*



Putting Life Into Perspective | Noah Finegan





Entrance to the Pass | Alexandra Meyer

# An Interview with Allison Joseph

By: Kristen Pohlplatz

Published Work:

*My Father's Kites: Poems.* (Steel Toe Books, 2010).

*Voice: Poems.* (Mayapple Press, 2009).

*Worldly Pleasures* (Word Press, 2004).

*Imitation of Life* (Carnegie Mellon, 2003).

*In Every Seam* (Pittsburgh, 1997).

*Soul Train* (Carnegie Mellon, 1997).

*What Keeps Us Here* (Ampersand, 1992).

Allison Joseph's honors include the Aquarius Press Legacy Award, AWP's George Garret Award, the Academy of American Poets prize, fellowships from the Bread Loaf and Sewanee Writers Conferences, and the Ruth Lilly Fellowship in Poetry. She is editor with her husband Jon Tribble of Crab Orchard Review, and also directs the Young Writers Workshop, an annual summer residential creative writing workshop for high school writers. She is professor and director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. Joseph gave a keen and charismatic reading of poems in the Brauer Museum, which drew out elements of her life and development as a writer between cultures and countries. She sat for an interview with Kirsten Pohlplatz before the reading.

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K: Thank you for joining me to be interviewed. The first question... well I guess we'll start basic, when did you first start writing?

A: I just had a flashback of this the other day, I first started writing probably around 11 or 12 years old, I was always a very verbal child... I was the kind of child who read the dictionary. Really a kind of nerdy and sweet and awkward and gangly, and my refuge was the local library. Which at that time, it's much better now, at that time was located down an alley where the concrete steps were crumbling and alcoholics were... well let's just say there was a lot of broken

glass, so I assume there was a lot of late night drinking going on down there. And I, with my little self- I'd tottle off to the library not to do my homework, but to *find* books of poetry. Those spoke to me like nothing else did, just using language in a way that was both ordinary and magical. For some reason that was very important to me, and I just never stopped. Persistent little bugger I am.

K: Did you let people see your writing right away, or did you sort of keep it to yourself?

A: No! Definitely did not let people see until I knew they were safe. Like it was off limits to parents, to my siblings, my sister. But, when I found other kids at school - and this was when I was in high school - who wrote, I'd share with other fledging writers because I felt safe with them. But there is something very precarious when you first start to be interested in writing, with sharing your writing with people, because you can easily get bruised . . . you can get shut down. I've known lots of student writers who are very talented people, but in the process of getting their work workshopped, it hurt so bad. And I've been around the block so long now that I forget that people - in making their first steps out into that world - it . . . it can sting. I've gotten so used to rejection and so used to 'okay, tear this up start all over again' or 'take this piece and do something else with it' that you sort of get those scars that are actually very useful to you, because they prevent you from being discouraged.

K: That makes sense. Along those lines, I was talking with someone the other day who was wondering about undergraduate writers finding their voice in settings like that. How would you suggest doing that without being so afraid? Or is there even a way to do it without being afraid?

A: I don't think it's so much finding your voice. Just by merit of being alive we have a voice and a story to tell, and a distinct human personality. What's important is to feed that voice, and there are ways to do that. Of course reading, reading everything. Reading poetry, reading fiction, reading non-fiction, reading the back of the cereal box! Whatever it is, just constantly taking in material that you yourself did not create will feed that. And I know there are a lot of younger writers who are afraid that 'if I read too much outside, I'll be influenced' - you gotta get influenced. Because what you become is an amalgam of the influences, they come in and they come out and you have to take in as much as you can, and it never bothers me if someone says "this poem of yours sounds like another poet I've read." I'm part of the conversation then, so that's not a bad thing. People put a huge premium on being unique and original - you already are. So by reading other people's work, whether it's the work of your classmates, of contemporary poets, of poets of centuries past, it's all going to feed your poetic personality. So I think it's a matter of taking it in, thinking about it and then deciding where your interests lie, what you're gonna write about. But I always thought that "find your voice" thing was a strange way to put it, because we all have a voice. What happens to some people is that they get shot down, cut off- they refuse to see the strength of their own voice. And maybe I've just believed in myself enough that I never had a problem with that. Not that rejections didn't sting, they're a part of

any artistic endeavor, but rejection never shut me down to the point where I thought "I'm never gonna write another poem again," because writing is such a dizzying and wonderful endeavor in and of itself that I knew I was coming back for more.

K: What advice do you seem to find yourself giving most often to beginning writers?

A: I think it is to feed yourself with poetry and music and all the experiences you can have, and surround yourself with as much stimulation as you possibly can to your heart and to your head. That will give you a whole template of things to observe and material to work from. Take advantage of the world, write it down. I'm not going to guarantee that you'll get wealthy or famous, but I did say to a class the other day that writing a poem is probably one of the most surefire ways to immortality because poetry is something that somehow regains life after you're gone. I mean we read Emily Dickinson's poems and it's kind of a miracle that we do because she was a crazy shut-in. But her we are, years later, reading her poems, still pondering what they mean. Her intention was never for us to read these poems; they were saved, yet she is immortal. I said that to a class the other day and they must have thought I was crazy, but I really believe that. Not all of us are gifted with the ability to draw or paint or sing or dance, but I think a lot more of us than you would think have poetic sensitivity, even if they don't have the poetic inclination. I think it's something that can be developed more than people think. And I think that's why the immersion is so important too.

K: On to the topic of your recent work *My Father's Kites*; one of the things that I noticed is that so many of the poems are based around memories. They're all memories in one way or another, and I was wondering if you noticed anything in particular about how you recalled or shaped your memories when you were writing these poems.

A: Well a lot of the attention people have given that book is on the sonnet sequence. And in order to pin those memories down I needed that format. I needed the very tight structure of the fourteen lines and the rhyming and the metrical beat, because when I tried to write poems on that subject without that frame I found myself unable to do it. I can write free verse, I can write formal verse- I have no preference one way or the other. I see them both as equally valid and equally useful to me as a poet. But for that particular book and that particular set of memories I needed some set of... poetic Spanx, you know, to hold it all in. Grief is such a potent thing, it is so expansive, it can take you over, it can be something that can stop you from recapturing those memories because it's painful, and it sort of permeates the book, I think. So for me form became especially important; it became a strategy for me to get through the thicket of that grief.

K: In that case, with the sonnets, what did you find came first? Did you aim for the form and the content initially, or did you have the ideas and then had to shape them and fit each one into the sonnets?

A: The latter. After I wrote that first one, I thought, "oh, okay." And more started coming and I realized, there's a way I can tell this story and get out the other end. After I'd probably written about ten or twelve of them I realized, okay there's content that I now need to put into this form in order to fit them into this little "novelette." I wanted it to be an overall arching narrative, maybe have an impression like a series of photographs - that you're looking at this situation, at a snapshot in a series of time, where readers are not experiencing the [my father's] death until a year after.

K: Why sonnets specifically? They already have the connotation of an elegy to them, but I was wondering if there's more to the choice.

A: It really came down to writing that first line in iambic pentameter and thinking "Okay I've got thirteen more lines to go." It's such a compact form and I'd written a lot of sonnets for classes I've taught on sonnet writing. It's a really good exercise, whether you consider yourself a poet or not, it's addictive- it's like doing crosswords. It is as if it's a puzzle to solve, and sonnets are the same to me. You have this form, and the first part of the sonnet introduces the problem, there's a pivot, the volta, and then the latter half of the poem is some sort of resolution and it all happens in 14 lines. I'd been teaching sonnets in classes and I was like, "I can use the knowledge I have to really write myself out of this hole." What I encourage people to do, as a poet, is to learn as much about the formal aspects of poetry so that when they have projects like this in front of them they can make choices. You don't have to rely on one skill set, you have multiple skill sets and you can write a sonnet if you want to, or you can write a villanelle.

K: Stepping away from MFK for a minute, you seem to most frequently use "I" as the subject of your poems. You mentioned that you most often choose to write on things that are specifically important to you; is that where the "I" comes from?

A: Yeah, there are a couple of "I's" for a poet. There's the "I" that walks around every day life, gets up, has coffee in the morning, there's that one. There's the autobiographical "I" which is the sum of all you've experienced and all you've done. And then there's this fictive "I," this fictional persona, even in poems that you swear straight up that are one hundred percent true, you're still crafting a version of yourself for the page. I keep all those in mind, Sometimes all you can do is manage to get that first actual "I" that goes and teaches and experiences the world- you manage to get her out the door. Sometimes the weight of that autobiographical "I" is very heavy and you're not necessarily depressed, but you feel the full weight of who you are and the people who came before you and where you come from and what's going on around you. And when all three of those are in sync, that fictive "I" can take the other two and bring them to the page. So it's a really interesting device for me. Like I said in class, I aim for eighty percent truth, that it has the feeling of truth of actually happening. Did it happen in the exact way I said it happened . . . well maybe not. That's why there's a poem in MFK entitled "On Not Wanting to Write a Memoir," because I deal in memory, but I don't claim anything I say is true. It's slippery.

it's my version of events: someone might see it differently. By saying it's not non-fiction - that it's based out of my experience with grief - it frees me a lot.

K: With your topic choices, I know you said you just write about whatever interests you for the most part.

A: Right. Whatever captures my attention, whatever I think about, no matter how small or seemingly meaningless it is, I'll do it. Just because there's a part of me, that fictive "I" that wants to be engaged all the time. It's like a puppy, like "Look at that. Look at that! Look! Take that down!" I'm the kind of person who writes drafts and they kind of trail behind her and I pick them up later and say "Oh, okay. Now I can work on this poem." Sometimes I find poems a year later in draft form. I don't ever feel a lack of subject matter because I don't say "Okay this thing is of a huge importance and I can't write about it" or "this thing is of small importance and I can't write about it." I don't divide things that way. I think about whether it piques my curiosity, whether I'm thinking about it. I mean I'm a story teller, I tell people stories all the time. Have I told this story over and over again? Then maybe that should be a poem.

K: And with the storytelling that you bring out, you seem to take a very conversational approach in your poetry. Is it intentional, or do you just find it happening naturally?

A: I like poems to be accessible on multiple levels. I do want people to come to my poems feeling like they know what's going on. My main aim is to communicate and I want an audience as large as I possibly can, given that my medium is poetry and not popular songs . . . I'm not a playwright. I get jealous, I go to the plays that are staged on campus and I'm like "Isn't that cool, everyone's hearing that man's words," but then I remember I'd have to deal with actors, and with costumers. Poetry's kind of pure that way, because even when you publish a poem, sometimes they ask for edits, but usually it's just the way you sent it out, that's the way it goes into the world. So poetry's pure in that way, as much as the audience for poetry may be kind of . . . miniscule. I'm certainly not going to make my audience smaller by making my poems consciously difficult.



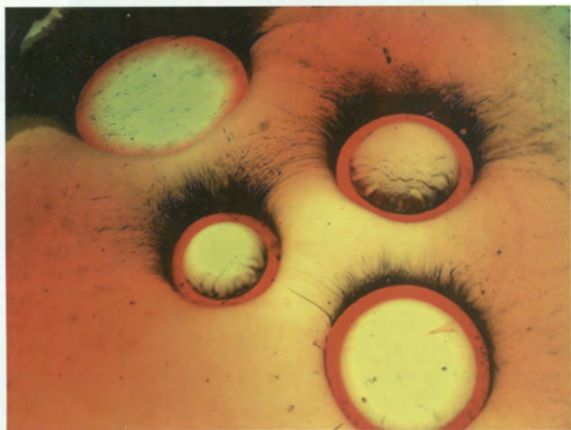


Jet Lag | Gregory Maher





Sweet Mischief | Daniella Tripodis



Glass Bubbles | Sterling Long



Chiaroscuro | Brendan Nabozny

# Contributor Notes

**Alyssa Boneck** is a freshman majoring in business with a minor in creative writing. Her short story "Essence" was created initially to help her develop her novel; to get a better understanding of the life the protagonist had left behind by showing the life of that protagonist's sister, the main character in "Essence." She someday hopes her novel goes big and some intense fan somehow tracks down this short story and connects the dots.

**Navy Browning** I love the art of sculpture because instead of an additive process found in painting and poetry and other art forms, the artist subtracts material to reveal something that already exists within a piece of stone. I fell in love with sculpture while I studied in Rome in high school, where I couldn't begin to fathom the incredible works of Bernini and Michelangelo. After spending an hour every day for two years, with my hammer, chisel and sandpaper, I quickly became disillusioned with sculpting. However, not that my sculpture is finished, I am blissfully content with my work. I now practice my creativity through photography and look forward to seeing the world through the lens of my camera. I am Navy Browning, a freshman from Austin, Texas with an International Service major. Thank you.

**Victoria Bruick** is a freshman English and Music double major. She still spends time traipsing with fairies and discovering magical treasure chests, but she confines such silliness to her notebooks. She is more than excited to share her imagination with readers and hopes they will find a sliver of their childhood to hold onto despite the pressing need to grow up. "The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease for ever to be able to do it." - J.M. Barrie

**Caitlin Carter** is a junior English major who is very excited to be published again in The Lighter. She is looking forward to studying abroad in England next semester, where she will hopefully soak up the skills of all the great dead writers there. However, she will deeply miss all those she is leaving behind, who are a great support to her even when she's in a snarky writing mood.

**Noah Finegan** I am a senior German major and avid traveler. Throughout my life, I have been fortunate enough to visit some truly awe-inspiring, but also thought-provoking places of the world. These pictures are simply my attempt at sharing some of these experiences. Enjoy.

**Lydia Hawkins** is a senior studying theology and psychology. She believes art can open a window to the Transcendent; can offer a taste of the Divine. Sometimes, she goes to the Chapel to pray. Sometimes, she goes to the Brauer.

**Jessica LeAnne Jachim** is a junior English and Elementary Education major who loves her family, writing, journals, hot tea, the countryside, crafting, rustic and whimsical decorations, floral patterns, all seasons, baking, letter writing, traveling, fairy tales, horses, and watching Little House on the Prairie, I Love Lucy, and Gilmore Girls. But most of all, her family.

**Jessica Kok** is a sophomore Creative Writing major with a minor in Meteorology. She did a good bit of writing this summer on a road trip from Chicago to The Grand Tetons, and the two poems chosen are just a couple of favorites.

**Jing Liu** I am a digital media student. I am from China. And I like America.

**Gregory Maher** suggests may I suggest oh good sir If I may oh to be so bold might only I offer this one humble thought: that . . . oh to say it lightly, we might ever (no, no), we shall not, in fact; as the thought consumes me, we shall not (ever), no

**Malorie Masek** As of recent, I have begun living by the quote, "Have patience and and wait for the things you want the most. Don't chase it. Don'r run after it. Remember: If God wants you to have it, He will give it to you." I contributed to The Lighter on a whim, not expecting anything out of it, but was so honored and excited to have had my work chosen. Though submitting work to The Lighter isn't the biggest of risks, it required me to step out of my comfort zone, and put a part of my life in other's hands. I'm glad that I took that chance and that my art can now be seen by others. I hope that in some way, my art can impact others, even if it just makes them smile for a moment.

**Alexandra Meyer** is a senior history and classics double major and a deaconess student. Continually finding something new to marvel at and blessed to have spent the past semester studying in Greece. Both of these photos were taken while wandering around the fabulous country filled with history, with a hidden view from the Acropolis of the bustling city of Athens, and a calm moment trekking through the Samaria Gorge on the island of Crete.

**Marah Mikkelson** I am a sophomore Music Education major with a love for all things artsy-fartsy. I've been making things since I was old enough to hold onto a crayon, and I've used this ability to cope with the most chaotic and obnoxiously overwhelming periods in my life. I'm honored to have had my work accepted into The Lighter; thank you to all on the selection committee!

**Brendan Nabozny** is Junior Theatre major with Music and Business double Minors from New Milford, CT. The photographs he submitted were from a trip to Lake Michigan from few summers ago. He chose to submit these photos because they reminded him of a great summer full of sun, beach, and family. He would like to thank The Lighter for choosing his photographs for this issue.

**Grace Shemwell** It has been said that a poet must not write for others, but for him or herself (Yusef Komunyakaa). I must disagree. My life work is dedicated to helping those who cannot help themselves, and if I am to walk the walk, I must talk the talk as well. I will speak for those who cannot put into words their pain, specifically children who are victims of abuse. My hope is that the words I write here will be spoken, and perhaps they won't fall on deaf ears.

**Kyle Smart** Well, well, well. Look who it is again, The Lighter. It's been awhile, hasn't it? Seems I missed you last time or so. But no hard feelings, right? I'm over, lets move on, I'm sorry Lighter. I have missed you. Don't ever leave me again Lighter. Stay with me, FOREVER. Wait... Where are you going? Come back! Don't go! Please! Hello? Anyone?

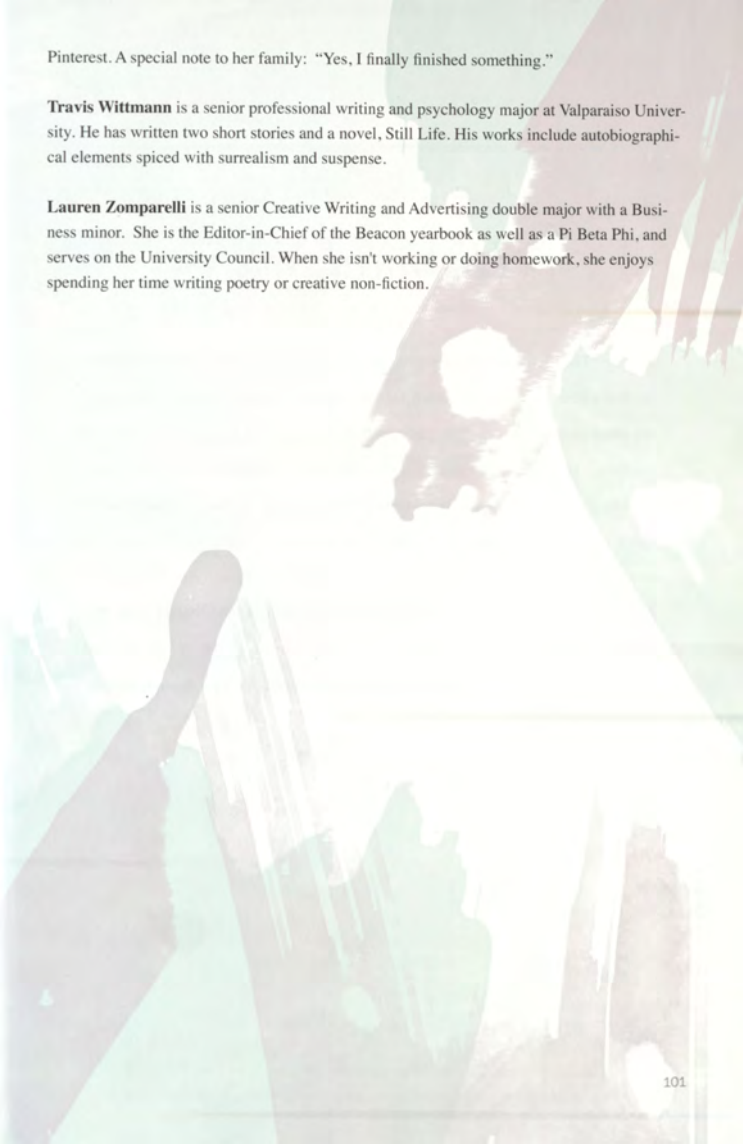
**David Sula** I am a graduating senior Creative Writing major with a Music minor. As someone who spends almost all of his free time working on expansive fiction projects in the prose and screenplay medium, I am very pleased to see my poetry accepted into The Lighter. As my college experience rapidly winds to a close, it is very gratifying to leave a mark on the campus through the means of this anthology. I want to thank Professor Byrne, and the Fall 2012 Poetry Writing class for the roles they played in helping me to write these poems.

**Daniella Tripodis** So one day, I found a fortune-teller's booth sitting out by a carousel. You know — the old, vintage carnival ticket-box type with the mechanical mannequin and crystal ball inside. Upon first sight, I mistook it for a decoration; turns out it was fully functional. Fortunes only cost 25¢ a piece. How could I possibly resist? I pulled a quarter out of my pocket, inserted the coin, turned the slot, and the machine came to life with cheesy music, flashing lights, and automated movement. I was a little embarrassed because the machine was as loud as it was. People passing by paid me and the box a few fleeting seconds of their attention. Finally, after a minute's worth of ruckus, the mannequin powered-off, and a tiny slip of paper poked out from the side of the booth, fortune face down. Tentatively, I lifted the paper... What I was expecting was either a very generalized, sugar-coated summation of my week or some ill-fated prediction. Instead, the slip had printed on it words that rang more true:

"Speak only well of people and you need never whisper."

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## *Historical Note*

The Lighter has been in print since its inaugural issue in October of 1958. Its first editor, Jack Lawson, noted the magazine's function "to print student literary material of good collegiate quality which will appeal to the greatest number of students." The Lighter has since gone through many transformations, from newsprint to propagandistic large-print, from wood-cut design to Magritte wordplay to blank covers awaiting their mark. Where early issues revealed smoking ads, theatre reviews, and the Lighter Lovely (whose idea was literary pin-up?), present ones focus on artwork, interviews with established writers, and literary craft. The Lighter's history is diverse - and tinged ever with a touch of subversive wit - and so it shall remain with the ever-varying tides of students that pass through campus.

The **Lighter** is currently accepting submissions  
for the Spring 2014 edition at [the.lighter@valpo.edu](mailto:the.lighter@valpo.edu)



