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SUPER SPECIAL THANKS

The staff would especially like to thank Professor Emerita Katherine Fischer, an innovator in and beyond the classroom and mentor to many, both students and colleagues. With her colleague in the English department, Ann Pelelo, Katie put the idea of a literary magazine at Clarke on the table and, largely due to the *Tenth Muse* endowment established in her honor, we'll be feasting for years to come.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Evan Stickfort, cover art

The Lowly Potato Farmer explores the inherent meaning behind the scale of objects and what one can say when the scale is altered. For my painting, I chose to emphasize the disparity of wealth that is becoming more prominent in our country. In the history of painting, fruit was used to symbolize wealth since it took considerable resources to acquire. Conversely, potatoes are among some of the cheapest foods one can buy. Altered scale comes into play with the small farmhouse placed atop the potatoes and signifies those who are poor and struggling, whereas the bowl of oranges signifies those of wealth and status.

EDITOR'S LETTER ERIN DALY

Behold, reader! You hold in your hands the second volume of the Clarke Language and Literature department's latest addition, the *Tenth Muse*! This magazine is the product of both scheduled and impromptu staff meetings, a ridiculously fun advertising campaign, heaps of emails, hours of reading and editing, lots of laughter, and more chocolate than I care to admit, and I could not be happier with the final product. I sincerely hope you are just as excited as I am about the fruits of the staff's labor, the writers' and artists' creativity, and your patience.

This was my second year on the staff for the *Tenth Muse*. As someone who had never even heard the term "literary magazine" last year, being on staff was a new, interesting, and fun experience. So fun, in fact, that I chose to be on staff again this year, maintaining the magazine's Facebook presence and taking on the role of co-editor-in-chief.

This magazine would not have been possible without many people. First, I must thank our dedicated staff. It's been a pleasure working with such creative, driven, and witty people: Chelsea Heitkamp, Carrie Pieper, Elaine Hart, and Gabby Barillas. Special thanks go to Clarke alums Will Kelly and Jess Leonard Schenk for taking time out of their working lives to give us a hand; to Celeste Vocke for our fantastic *Tenth Muse* t-shirts; and to Greg White for updating our presence on the Clarke website. Superb work, team!

Special thanks are also due to my fabulous co-editor, Kayla Schnoebelen. Your energy, enthusiasm, and ideas motivated me to help make this edition of the *Muse* even better than the last.

And our faculty advisor, Anna Kelley: Thank you for your dedication and guidance in this crazy endeavor. You are truly a wonderful mentor, and without you, the *Tenth Muse* experience would not be nearly as awesome. And my inbox would not be in danger of filling to capacity every week.

Lastly, I thank everyone who reads and supports the *Tenth Muse*: The students, faculty, and staff at Clarke University; everyone who submitted their work to volumes one and two; and you, the one holding this magazine in your hands. Without your passion and interest, this magazine would probably not exist.

Many thanks, Erin Daly Co-Editor-in-Chief





EDITOR'S LETTER KAYLA SCHNOEBELEN

Another year, another volume have come and gone already! I feel like it was only yesterday when our *Tenth Muse* staff met for the first time to begin our second volume. But then I see the empty bag of chocolate, spilled coffee, and dark circles under my eyes, proving to me it was a long yesterday ago.

I am blessed to have been with the *Tenth Muse* since it launched in my Creative Writing course last fall. I loved the first volume, but I wanted to take a more active role for the second. As co-editor-in-chief, I began this year with clear goals for improvement. The volume more than fulfilled these goals and this would not have happened without some important people.

The staff: A multitude of e-mails, some late night meetings, and spontaneous meetings in the halls between classes, all filled with humor, united and motivated our staff (or maybe it was the chocolate). I have loved working side-by-side with these amazing individuals: Greg White, Jess Leonard Schenk, Carrie Pieper, Chelsea Heitkamp, Elaine Hart, Will Kelly, Gabby Barillas, and Celeste Vocke.

My co-editor: Erin, I am honored to have you as my partner in crime. You kept me sane many a time and listened to my wild ramblings with patience.

Fearless leader: What can I possibly say about the amazing Anna Kelley? She is a much-loved professor, mentor, and friend. I am both honored and blessed to work with her again. Her devotion to the magazine is, at the least, equal to mine and the staff's. She is our Muse, inspiring us to think, dream, and create. Anna, you are amazeballs!

Our contributors and readers: Without you, the *Tenth Muse* would not exist beyond our imaginings. Thank you for your musings and for supporting ours.

With many thanks and much love, Kayla Schnoebelen Co-Editor-in-Chief

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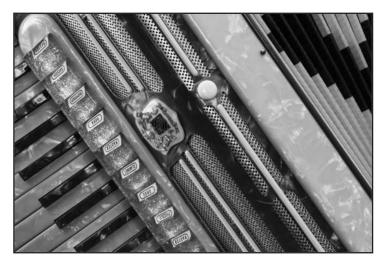


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JOEY STAMP



The Fault, Dear

WIII KELLY

Process K-14

He lacks the proper footwear for this type of weather, and his tiny apartment is not conducive to pacing. The sidewalks in his neighborhood have iced over after numerous botched shoveling attempts, so his only recourse is spinning fiercely in his desk chair after sitting for too long. His fridge is emptier than it's been in weeks, and in it, on the top shelf, are two rolls of film. Both are past the expiration date, and though he is confident they would last the winter, any images captured on their emulsion would never be seen. His vaguely defined "creative issues" have taken on a whole new level of urgency with the impending death of an entire medium.

He knows he is romanticizing, because he is a product of the digital age. He has never used Kodachrome before, nor any reversal stock for that matter. He hasn't even heard the Paul Simon song, though he at least knows of it. He doesn't own a light table or a slide projector, and has no proper means of scanning them for his portfolio. But it was a project, and he couldn't remember the last time he'd been so enthusiastic about planning one. He wanted to do something special since it would be his last opportunity to work with what had once been the Eastman Kodak Company's flagship product. When he learned it had been discontinued, he got into a bidding war on the Internet for two rolls, 72 exposures altogether. Over a year later, they sit untouched in his fridge and he learns—the week before Christmas with a blizzard raging outside—that the only lab in the world still capable of developing them will cease doing so forever in ten days.

He graduated in December of last year, and opted out of walking at the ceremony in May. The B.F.A. in photography and minor in graphic design have landed him four interviews to date, none of which have called back one way or the other. He has two jobs at the moment, one as a barista downtown, the other at the Home Depot out by the highway, but he'd be quick to tell anyone that he isn't complaining. When he doesn't work, he sits. He sits, spends hours alone in front of his computer, makes plans for ambitious projects, and occasionally starts them. His family is upset that he doesn't return their calls on time. He desperately wants to adopt a cat from the humane society, but his landlord won't allow it.

He has learned, through his "research," that for being the most celebrated film stock ever manufactured, Kodachrome is shockingly impractical. It can only be developed using the highly specialized K-14 process, which requires complex equipment and advanced chemistry knowledge far beyond the reach of most photography enthusiasts. Furthermore, he knows that it's very difficult to actually do anything with the slides once they've been processed. He has no idea how prints were made from them, and knows that scanning does not do them justice (an idiosyncrasy with the dye makes the colors extremely difficult to reproduce digitally). He knows that the sheer stubbornness of the medium plays a big part in his fascination with it, which makes him all the more depressed that he will likely miss the deadline. Though he remains less motivated than ever, he does not want to give up so easily. Giving up would be sinking to a whole new level, and he is determined to at least continue the recent trend of doing the bare minimum to get by.

Though it stopped snowing the night before, he is not in a hurry to trudge outside with his camera—what's the point of photographing snow with a film so renowned for its brilliant color reproduction? There are plenty of interesting still lifes in his messy apartment, but it is far too dim for Kodachrome 64 to be viable without a strong flash. He spends an entire day in front of the windows, carefully monitoring where the sunlight hits, and hoping it will land somewhere interesting. It never does. He tries moving various objects into the light, but it all looks forced and unnatural. When the sun goes down, he's sitting in the dark, and doesn't bother to close the blinds. The computer monitor and the street light are just fine, he decides.

He never hangs out with anyone, and it has been well over a



year since he last met someone new. He consistently argues (to himself mostly—one of his harshest detractors) that what sets him apart from the archetypal graduate is that he doesn't actually *miss* being in college. What he misses is something he never had an adequate supply of in the first place, though he either cannot elaborate on this, or simply doesn't care to. But living only a few blocks from campus, he still walks around it quite often, even though most of the people he knew are long gone. They graduated or moved away, many of them long before he did, and every time this happened, the ties were quietly severed. Why does it always come to this? He is not as socially inept as he used to be, nor is he as shy. But all too often, he feels that keeping up with anybody is somewhat akin to nailing Jell-O to a wall. At some point over the past year, he decided to hell with these people, and gave up on them altogether. And now he waits. He sits patiently, occasionally spinning in his desk chair, but mostly lingering quietly in dark storage like a box of old and particularly sensitive color transparencies.

The future doesn't scare him, but most of the time it just isn't there. In lieu of anything promising to grasp onto, he turns to the past, and the Internet has made this easier than ever. He's a lightning rod for nostalgia, and when he gets bored with his own, he inevitably latches onto other people's, hence the fascination with steam power, two lane highways, analog audio equipment, letterpress printing, and, above all, outdated photo technology. Mixing these things with actual memories and regrets, and the borderline phenomena to which he can claim some tangential connection (ex-girlfriends' childhood homes), he ends up with a new buffet of internal melancholy every week, the First World turmoil of someone struggling with an excess of information, and nowhere to go with all of it.

Lately, the thought of hotel pools from childhood vacations has been making him particularly sick to his stomach, but he cannot figure out why. Tossing and turning in bed—alone, as always—he has an idea to travel around the country to these exact establishments (the ones he can remember anyway) and do a whole series of these fondly remembered swimming pools, thinking Kodachrome's vivid but natural blues would be more than ideal for well lit and highly chlorinated water. All night, he thinks of this water, and as his own sheets become increasingly drenched in sweat, he knows there is nothing he can do about any of it, the water or otherwise. He just wants to take some pictures

By the time he is done shooting the next morning, his face is numb and his camera wet from the melted snow. Though decidedly a product of his time (and honestly preferring the convenience of digital photography), there is something intensely bittersweet about listening to the camera rewind after the last exposure, followed by the clicking noise and dead silence. He promptly boxes up the two rolls of film and ships them overnight to Kansas where they will be among the last to be processed before the K-14 machines are turned off for good. The pictures he took are by no means the most interesting, and he's sure that some won't even turn out, but none of this matters. He's going to keep them as a reminder—in typical melodramatic fashion—that procrastination can have life or death consequences.

Danielle Lensen

Every Christmas

randma and Grandpa's house is so small that you almost need to swim through people at the Christmas gatherings in order to get a taste of Grandma's noodle salad, but you'll always make it even though it is a hard swim upstream doing the butterfly stroke not by choice but by means of sheer survival, which is nearly impossible if you constantly have to come up for a breath to tell every uncle "Hello" and every aunt "How have you been," but I also know from experience that if you don't do the breast stroke through the kitchen and down the carpeted steps to the basement, you won't be able to see your twenty-one cousins, who, of course, you need to see because of the individual bond you have with each of them, which can't go unnoticed through the entire night; this night which I tend to forget that Grandma and Grandpa are hosting, and so I do the backstroke up the carpeted stairs and around the corner through the kitchen where I have to interrupt my stroke to take a breather and discuss "my plans after college" with an uncle from out of town, who always asks this question which I skillfully whipped up an answer to the night before while I lay in bed, but my stomach rudely interrupts this thought as it grumbles and tells me "I need more noodle salad," so I swim the freestyle over to the counter and satisfy my stomach before I realize I need to find Grandma, Grandma who made this salad and made my stomach happy, so I do a flip turn off the kitchen stove and execute the butterfly stroke through my aunts' Nerts game and find myself in the sunroom where I see Grandma sitting in her green chair; the chair where she crochets doilies and bites her fingernails, which at this point look just like mine considering the fight I had for the opportunity to sit on the floor next to her chair; the chair on which I now rest my head against its green arm and say, "Thanks for the noodle salad, Grandma."

GARY ARMS

Blackie Writes of Love

She loved me in a discreet way.
From across the room, I'd look up
And see, although half-asleep,
She was aware of me.
I'd go back to my book.
When anyone would come to visit,
She'd growl, not really angry
But just so that I'd know.

One afternoon, I was deep in Keats. The doorbell rang.
She watched to see if I'd move
Or sit quiet as a ghost
(I owed a lot of money)
Until whomever it was went away.

I pulled open the door and found You.

I had not seen you in months.
We'd fought.
You'd gone to California.
I have no idea what we said.
After a moment, we were in the living room.

Attempting to be nonchalant, I remained on my feet. I leaned back against the fireplace.

I may have fallen into the fireplace.

Blackie began to growl.
You knelt and tried to make friends.
She began to bare her teeth and growl—
"Blackie! For god's sake!"—and bark;
She actually began to bark—
This sweet dog who would lick
The hand of a thief.

Seeing you blush, I ran at her. "Blackie, stop!" She ran away from me: Barking, lunging, her eyes bulging

Until I saw that my love Had entered her And driven her mad.

"Blackie! Jesus!" She began to piss. Housebroken five years, She ran in tight, frantic circles, The golden pee squirting out of her, Forming circular spirals All over the carpet As if she was writing out our names.

That is what love can do To a dog.

MATTHEW GRIESON

Do not forget your shoes

Do not forget your shoes

There are children's shoes left on a bench in the park next to the hospital No children play here while I sit thinking of Manchester's hills on bikes It's down then up, down then up, and always the same Never down then down, or up then up Always down then up...and I like it that way It seems complete, a sense of well being It's that it's not all gift and not all work But down then up, down then up I wonder where the little boy is now Riding his bike with no shoes Going down then up, down then up I bet he wishes it were down then down And I suppose there are some With heads full as pies Wishing these hills went up then up Most likely to bring peace to their never-ending need to work But these are the type of people, you see, who never even ride a No sir, down then up, down then up And I say with great caution...

KIM LYON



Windmilled Farmhouses

The Greatest Generation

It is, I believe, the greatest generation any society has ever produced. — Tom Brokaw

Their walkers are lined up like Harleys outside a biker bar and Margaret is taking twice as long as everyone else to get to her place in the dining room. But she used to have boundless energy back when she worked the graveyard shift making flight jackets. Thirty-eight dollars a week was damn good money except for the catcalls and leering grins of the men who called her a floozy and pinched her butt whenever they had a chance.

The old man sitting all alone is talking to himself again.

He still has nightmares about a warm day on Saipan and a young girl in a lemon yellow kimono who kept running around and around in circles with a burning baby clutched to her breast.

Sometimes he tells whoever will listen about mosquitoes that were big as hummingbirds and how you could wake up in the morning with fungus growing in places you hadn't washed for a long time.

Pete has wheeled himself over to his usual place next to a bevy of blue-haired ladies, fresh from the beauty parlor. They simper and giggle like teenagers at everything he says although he has never told them about what happened the night his outfit was captured at the Kassareen Pass and marched all the way to Germany or how he and a few buddies cut through the barbed wire after the Germans abandoned the camp because they didn't want to wait one minute longer to be free.

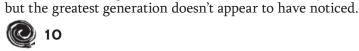
The aides move around the room with plates of tuna loaf, mashed potatoes, cooked carrots and lemon Jell-O.

There are little flags on each table for Memorial Day

EVAN STICKFORT



Old Man Portrait



KATHERINE FISCHER

Black Forest Fantasies

66 She's smiling in *this* photograph, mom. Look."

"No, Katie, she's just squinting in the sun."

My mother and I are finally sifting through the family photographs. We don't want our immigrant tree to become hopelessly entangled by the root rot of lost memories and lost names. We have to label those photos...now.

The perennially frowning woman in our family snapshot vault is Kunigunde Schaefer, my great grandmother and the prime mover who caused the family to leave Bavaria's Garmish-Partinkirchen. But before I tell you that story, I want to show you the photos of Kuni, both those in the pitch black photo album dating back to when photos were affixed to the page by v-shaped catches that hover over the corners like wings, as well as those that exist only in the album of my childhood mind generations after the camera clicked.

Kunigunde is the grand matriarch, the one my parents always talked about, the saving grace of generations, the Dali Lama of my family. For such a tiny woman, barely 4'8", she looms Paul Bunyanish in our family folklore. "I never saw that woman with a smile on her face," mother claims as we continue to label. And in photograph after photograph, my mother's statement is borne out. We categorize her different frowns: "deeply etched scowl," "scowl about to break open," "upside down scowl," "the sauerkraut exploded in the cabinet scowl" and "ja, am I ever mad! scowl," we label them. But as a child, when I first met Kuni, or more precisely, the fantasy image of Kuni, she smiled slyly with the allure of a gypsy.

Second generation American in the 1950s, I grew up almost

exactly like my suburban friends with the fantasies and heroes typical of those Howdy Doody Days. Dale Evans, Snow White and Rose Red, Sky King, and Cinderella, and most exotic of all, Zorro, the Mexican black-caped crusader for justice, waltzed and cantered and skipped through my imagination across the bedroom light late at night as I tried to fall asleep. But alongside these stories danced the folk tales of my father's family from the old country where, I had been told, the "germ men" lived. They talked a different talk, I was told, and every once in awhile, my father would come out with one of those phrases, "Das is gut, mein kleiner kindt!"

Immigrant stories have a way of being passed on with embellishments, with whole movements and variations added. My father orchestrated a full score of tales about our ancestors, but it was the one about Kunigunde I always waited for in his repertoire. "Before marrying," he told us, "she was a belly dancer in the Black Forest." I pictured her, a tall, slender German girl whose high cheekbones barely showed beneath the sheer scarf masking her mysterious face. With blonde tresses but dark eyes, she danced through my dreams, in her silky pantaloons, smooth as sunlight shimmering on water. Her bare midriff rotating, she stepped lightly over leaf and lichen on the forest floor. Barons...no,... kings fell under her spell as she moved to some far off flute. And she was mine. I was the descendant of this exotic siren.

On the dreariest days, Kunigunde beckoned me, dangerous and fantastic. Donning the crinoline slip from my First Holy Communion, I tiptoed in front of the mirror, rounding my belly in circles, proving her talent had been passed on to me, the lovely Empress Latisha Katrina LaRue, the name I gave myself to match the enormity of my real identity. I was convinced my parents were somehow trying to submerge my own regalness in rivers of middle class mediocrity, perhaps with good intention—to hide my identity from some wicked villain. But I knew about Sleeping Beauty stashed away in a humble cottage to keep her safe from spinning wheels and all.

They couldn't fool me.

One night in deep winter with all of us gathered around, as my father reached the crescendo in his family sonata, "Your greatgrandmother was a belly dancer in the Black Forest," my mother sounded a truly discordant note, "No, Norman."

"No, Norman, you know very well that Kunigunde was not a *belly* dancer. She was a folk *ballet* dancer."

A ballet dancer?

With that mere shift in accent from the first to the second syllable, my whole fancy came crashing down around my ankles.

Kuni was not Salome, circling attention with her swaying hips; she was not dangerous, sleek, and seductive. She had been only a simple, dumpy, German peasant girl, wearing a hand-sewn frock exposing not her midriff, but only her thick midcalf.

I am grateful to my mother for setting straight the score. Her disclosure freed me to go on to years of tap dancing, "Doing the Freddy," and waltzing—things no decent belly dancer would be caught doing, even in the darkest shadows of the Black Forest. Searching for the real Kunigunde, a journey back to the Black Forest that began with mother's "no" and continues yet today, has served me far better than any Salome.

"One tough bird, Mom," I hear our daughter, Rebekah, say as she joins us to help label the photographs. I am tempted to tell Rebekah about her great-great grandmother, the belly-dancing girl in the Black Forest, but I see my mother's face out of the corner of my eye and decide not to risk it. Instead I tell my own version of Kuni. "Perhaps in her peasant way, she was alluring," I begin, "It was during her dancing days she met Joseph, your great-great-grandfather."

I see Joseph standing on the edge of a small gathering. After a long morning of grooming horses used to pull beer wagons over cobblestone streets, delivering malts and ales in enormous casks to various biergartens and rathskellers, he emerges from the shadows of the stables. His sleeves rolled up above his elbows, his hair swabbed back by sweat and by the same strokes he used to brush the horses. He holds a stein of beer. He wipes the last of his luncheon wiener schnitzel from the corner of his mouth as the young girls flow into a circle and begin the traditional German reel, simple turns punctuated by dips and slides. As he tips his stein for the last of the beer and starts back to the stables, he sees *her*.

She stands in her hand-embroidered blouse and loose skirts silhouetted long by the afternoon sun. She smiles coyly as she sees him seeing her. She misses a step in the dance and steps on the toe of the girl next to her. She is not Salome, all graceful and perfect. Yet, Joseph is taken with her.

It will be weeks before Joseph has the courage to dawdle after work one day and wait for the marvelous Kunigunde to come walking by the brewery on her way home from cleaning the house of the beer baron up the hill from the brewery. She is not sweet and fragrant. She wears no make-up. Her hair is not tidy. Her peasant girl ways are most apparent in the way her skirts are hitched up so that her feet are freed to make the arduous walk home.

Theirs is not a marriage made in heaven, we tell Bekah, but one grounded in the dark rich soil of the Black Forest.

Years later Fred Miller returns to Bavaria to visit the beer baron who employs Joseph and Kunigunde. He asks the young couple to manage his stables in Milwaukee where he has established his own barony, The Miller Brewing Company. Joseph hesitates. Their entire family lives in Germany. They have *always* lived in Germany. They have never been to America much less a place called "Milwaukee." They don't even speak English. But Kunigunde, with a grit fired by a good but hard life eking out a living in the working class of pre-war Germany, sees opportunity. Their daughter will rise above the life of a stable man's child. It only takes one "Ja bitte" from Kuni, and Joseph exchanges his handshake with Miller for a ticket on the next boat.

In the picture album, the set of her jaw, the slant of her lips become more brittle through the pages. Did struggling for her daughter's place in American society, a culture generally intolerant of difference, cause those lips to crack? She should have smiled when her German-born Margaret, my grandmother, married a "goot German boy," but in the photographs of the wedding, she stands stalwart and un-smiling between her daughter and her new husband, with that glare on her face. It was as though she dared the photographer to make her smile.

Even during the war years when German was forbidden in city public schools, when countless Milwaukee Germans changed their surnames or dropped letters to appear "less German," Kunigunde once told my father (in German, of course) how upset she was that the grocer had re-labeled the sauerkraut "Liberty Cabbage." Bekah and Mom and I laugh as we pretend we are Kuniscolding the produce stocker, "Vat es dis 'liberteeee cabpatch? Das es sauerkraut!"

Was she scalded as "Heinie" and "Jew-killer," words so burning that they may as well have been painted scarlet on her front door along with a swastika by narrow-minded neighbors? I don't know, but certainly it was typical of the age. Husband Joseph died while young Margaret was yet in school. I think of Kunigunde returning to the homes of the rich to scrub away her own poverty. Was she labeled "low-born peasant" by others who clung to old country class lines? Did Kuni set them all straight by constructing a face that could sink a thousand ships? I wonder.

Mother tells that it was Kunigunde who saved their marriage. An only child whose own mother barred her from the kitchen, my Irish scholar-mother claims she was inept at the home arts. In those early years, when Mother says her culinary talents amounted to baking doorstop biscuits, it was Kuni who came carting dinner up the back stairs to my parents' flat. Mother tells us, "She never spoke English, and, as an Irish Gilhooly, I didn't know

German. But somehow we spoke the same language."

The matriarch of my family had a grimace befitting of the Queen of Hearts. I am grateful for it even though in photo after photo she seems to command, "Off with their heads!" This was not a woman of silk, but of grit. This was not a woman of fluid flute dancing, but of fire. Yet I find myself wishing that life had afforded Kunigunde some share of softness, some modicum of mirth in her adult years, enough to upturn the corners of her mouth ever so slightly.

As Mom, Rebekah, and I continue to label the photos as best we can of the Fischer/Schaefer family history, we come upon a photo that none of us can identify. On a tufted pillow, perhaps it was green but now only gray in this tintype, sits an almost plump little girl. Her hair falls in ringlets cascading over a lacy collar bordered in bows—pink I suppose. She is surrounded by a wild unkempt garden of yellow sumac and white maybells encircled by lush darkly green pine trees. We wonder if this is a Black Forest biergarten. Together, Mother, Rebekah, and I write the story of this little girl.

She was brought one Sunday afternoon by her working-class parents to enjoy the mystery, energy, and full life offered by the landscape of the Black Forest, we imagine. This is the Sunday she first sees the dancers. This is the day she first hears the reels of Germanic music, light and airy and fantastic. For all we know, she is Kunigunde. And there on her pillow, held still for one moment by the photographer's eye, she is smiling.

EMILY COTTON CRAM



Canaries



CONOR KELLEY

Honest Work

Evan straightened his white clerical collar and took a deep breath. Wiping his hands on his black slacks, he tried to avoid looking at the worn black dress shoes on his feet. The rest of the outfit was good, but the shoes didn't quite work. That's what you get from second-hand stores.

He crunched the rest of his breath mint and swallowed with a grimace. Evan's throat always got a little dry when he went to a new house. The stairs creaked as he ascended them, and he did not pause long before he rang the doorbell. It was a tried-and-true exercise—when Evan gave himself time to think, he felt guilty.

The morning sun shone on the front yard, revealing the skill of the maintenance crew. Each lawn in this affluent neighborhood was carefully manicured in the same way. A small old woman, maybe in her seventies, pulled the door open. Showtime.

"Yes?" she asked.

"Hi, Miss," he said with his most authentic smile. She smiled back. The little old ladies loved that, especially from a man in clerical garb. "I'm from one of the churches in the area, and I was wondering if I could speak to you about joining our congregation?"

"Oh, I go to St. Rita's down the street," she started. She paused, looking him up and down. "Well, I have been looking for a bit of a change...come on in, come on in."

The house was clearly trapped in a decade that had long passed. Shades of tan and brown covered each wall, and shag carpet was only slightly more prevalent than linoleum. But everything was spotless. There was money here—and it certainly

wasn't being wasted on new furniture.

"I don't think I got your name," she said after she closed the door behind him.

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Call me Evan," he said.

"Can I get you something to drink, Evan?" she asked. "Maybe some soda?"

"That would be lovely, Miss."

"Oh call me Naomi, call me Naomi," she said with a smile, and turned away.

Evan's first genuine smile of the day crept across his face as he watched her gray curls bounce into the kitchen. She seemed happy to have him there, and he liked that. Things like that made him wonder if he was a good person. What if this thing he did was somehow good for them?

He sat in one of the cracked tan leather chairs in the living room. However, as soon as he touched the seat, he was on his feet again, walking toward the wall of framed black-and-white photographs on his right. Evan liked to find out as much about people as he could. It was useful, but it fed his guilt afterwards.

"Is ginger ale okay?" Naomi asked a bit too loudly from the kitchen. Evan laughed quietly under his breath. Ginger ale, tapioca pudding, cottage cheese. Old people had some disgusting stuff in their fridges.

"How about just water?" he asked, matching her volume. He couldn't stomach another glass of ginger ale.

Soon, Naomi emerged from the kitchen with a glass of water and a cup of tea. She gingerly walked over to the couch, and Evan followed, taking his seat on the chair once more. He accepted the glass of water when she shakily held it out for him, and took an obligatory sip before setting it on a coaster. They were silent for only a brief moment.

"I was looking at your pictures; you have a beautiful family," Evan said.

"Oh, thank you, but they're all gone now," she said with a fading smile.

"Oh no," Evan said in his most sympathetic voice. "You know, one of the reasons I stayed here in town was to be closer to my mother."

Naomi took a breath and smiled politely. "Tell me about your church, Evan," she said.

Evan cleared his throat and began. This is when the show really started.

"Well, we find ourselves in a time of great uncertainty, as I'm sure you know. Young people are using drugs, abandoning their families, using foul language, and even giving themselves to the devil."

Naomi's eyes widened.

"Well, not literally, of course, but certainly allowing the ills of higher education and liberal politicians to infect their minds and erode the beliefs that their God-fearing families tried to instill in them."

"It's a terrible situation," Naomi said. She quickly grasped for her tea cup. "Frightening," she added with conviction.

"You're absolutely correct. Now at our church, the James Evangelical Church, we have a great love for reclaiming youth. One of my favorite Biblical passages says, 'Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need." His face broke into a smug, if short-lived, smile, pleased with himself for reciting that passage correctly. "But that's not to say we are a youth club, because we have a large adult contingency as well. You might be interested in our many senior mixers."

"Oh that would be lovely. Tell me more."

"Well, we have Thursday night get-togethers—sometimes casino nights, sometimes a themed dinner—and then we also have Sunday evening social dinners for the older members of our Church."

"Hmm," Naomi said.

"Now, I'll need all of your information so we can get in touch with you for our church functions," Evan said.

"Of course," she said. "What do you need?"

"Just your telephone number, mailing address, and email address, if you have one. Do you have the Internet, Naomi?"

"I do, but I can't figure it out very well."

"That's no problem—your telephone number and mailing address should work fine."

Naomi wrote down the information and handed it to him.

"If you would like to join our congregation, we have some exciting news that has surfaced recently. We find ourselves to be so blessed by the Good Lord as to be able to expand what began as a humble church into something that can give us the space we need to worship the Lord properly."

"That's so wonderful! Where is the church?" Naomi asked.

"The address of our new location is 610 Timothy Avenue, right off of Main Street. We just started construction on the property."

"I don't think I've ever seen construction around there," she said softly. A still moment passed. "Maybe I just wasn't looking hard enough."

"Yes, well, we haven't yet made much progress on the

20

land. You see, this is one of the reasons we are extending our hand to new members of the community. Whenever we speak to new members, we always allow them the opportunity to become involved with this momentous project. So, I'll extend to you the offer that we give all of our prospective members."

Evan stood up and handed her the pamphlet from his pocket, the one that he had typed up and folded himself that very morning. He sat down next to Naomi on the couch as they discussed the pamphlet, Evan pointing out all of the contribution options.

"Now one of the most exciting parts of becoming a new member is the option to become a permanent member of our new Board of Trustees, which votes on funding, future projects, and the philosophical direction of the church. Now, of course, that requires a contribution in the Crusader amount, which is one thousand dollars. This is more than the Good Works and Pure of Heart levels of contribution, but this would really allow you to become a fixture in this expanding church community."

"That sounds like something I might be interested in. How many other members of the Board of Trustees are there?" Naomi asked.

"You could hold one of the five seats on the board, but I intend to extend the same offer to each new member of the church, so this is, as they call it, an offer with an expiration date."

Evan looked at her, hoping he didn't look as unsure as he felt. Naomi thought for a moment. The silence bred the anxiety in Evan. His foot began tapping the ground, almost imperceptibly.

"I'm on a fixed income, you know. How do I know I can trust you, Evan? Are you a good man?"

Evan swallowed. "I, uh...what was the question again?"

"Are you a good man? Can I trust you with my money?" Naomi said. She looked at him soberly. His eyes were caught for a moment, and he knew the answer to the question. Nevertheless, Evan began nodding.

"Yes," he said without conviction. He cleared his throat. "Yes, yes, of course you can, Naomi."

"And my money is going to a good cause?"

"It will," Evan said, with as much conviction as he had. She looked at him and smiled. "Well, then. Does a check work?" she asked.

"Absolutely," Evan said with a smile. Naomi got up and walked into the hallway, disappearing from his view.

Evan thought about that dream he had had, that dream where the old lady comes out with a gun. That was just a dream, he told himself. Just another one of the jarring dreams that stuck

with him; just another time when he gets what's coming to him. Just a dream.

But what if, one day, they know? What if, one time, he didn't fool them at all? Evan thought he heard a siren off in the distance. Pray to God it doesn't get closer, he thought. His palms started to sweat. He shifted nervously in his seat, craning his neck to see if Naomi was close yet.

Evan took a deep breath. It didn't take. His heart was pounding out of his chest. He couldn't catch his breath. Sweat ran down his spine, cold and quick.

He thought about checking his pulse. People were always doing that, touching their wrists and watching a clock or something. His wrist felt like an earthquake; he didn't even want to touch it. Evan sat very still and tried to breathe.

He could feel his whole body relax when Naomi came back around the corner with a check in her hand. He took a big gulp of his water and turned away, wiping his forehead with his hand.

"Who should I make it out to?" she asked as he sat down with her checkbook.

"Well, I would say 'James Evangelical Church,' but I don't think you'll have room for that," he said. "'James Evan Church' works just fine."

"Evan?" she asked.

"No, no, 'E-van,' short for 'Evangelical."

"Oh, oh!" she said. "Silly me. I understand, alright."

Naomi handed the check to him.

"Thank you so much, Naomi. This will be of a great benefit to our church."

She smiled.

"Well, I think that's all. Thank you so much, Naomi. It brightens my day to know that there are good people left in our community."

They got up, and she led him to the door.

"Bless you, Naomi. Thank you for brightening my day today."

"It was wonderful to talk to someone."

"It was my pleasure. I hope to see you at the church soon," he said over his shoulder as he walked down the front steps, hoping to maintain his composure.

"Goodbye now. Thank you!" she called after him.

He got back into his car and pulled around the corner. He pulled off the clerical collar and clergy shirt, putting it into the garbage bag on the seat next to him. He untucked his white undershirt from his jeans and mussed his hair in the rear view mirror, erasing the neat part in his hair that he created that morning.

At the counter of the cash-checking store, he smiled at the bored woman behind the barred window. "Hello sir, what can we do for you?" she said flatly, making the sir sound like an insult.

"Just a check to cash," he said. "What do you need from me?'

"Your ID and the check, sir."

He handed her his driver's license and the check that Naomi wrote him.

"And you're...James Evan Church?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"And you understand that we take a small percentage of the check?"

"Yeah, I know, that's okay."

"Alright, sir, just one second, sir."

The woman behind the window was moving very slowly, filling out a form as though it were governed by a speed limit. James' hands began nervously tapping on the counter like a noiseless piano. Come on, he thought. Your job isn't so damn hard.

"How would you like your cash?"

"Small bills, if you could."

The woman behind the counter took a moment to count out the money.

"Here you are, and have a nice day, sir," she said, handing him an envelope.

"You, too," he said as he quickly walked out, counting his money.

On Main Street, near the corner of Timothy Avenue, he tossed a garbage bag out of his window into the empty lot on the corner.

"The future site of James Evangelical Church," he said bitterly. The light turned green, and he accelerated toward the highway.

Naomi lit her cigarette, inhaled, and settled into her chair by the telephone. She slowly punched the numbers on the telephone and stared out her back window as it rang on the other end. The leaves had changed color and were ready to fall. Winter was com-

"Hellooo?" the voice on the other end said in a melodic voice.

"Julia," Naomi said.

"Oh, hi, Naomi," Julia said.

"Guess who just left my house?" Naomi asked.

"Don't tell me...that James boy?"

"The same one."



"He's such a nice boy. You know, I remember when his family lived around here when he was real young, maybe one or two years old. He was so sweet," Julia said.

"I know; I used to get Christmas cards from his family for years. Until he left home."

"How...was he when you saw him?"

"He didn't seem like he was on anything, but he certainly didn't remember me. I felt bad for him, a little."

"Did you give him any money?"

"One thousand dollars, but..." Naomi said.

"A thousand dollars?! Naomi! Have you lost your mind?" Julia said.

"I was going to say that I think I scared him pretty good, maybe the money will help him start a new life."

"Straight to the drugs, straight to the drugs..." Julia said in a sing-song voice. "You know you're crazy, right?"

"Optimism isn't craziness," Naomi said sharply.

"It is at our age. I have to go. I'll stop by later. Goodbye." Naomi forgot to say goodbye.

GAGE STEENHAGEN



Emerging Man





Casey Tova Markenson

Portraits

i.

The cashier hands me change. His wife's snore is too much, these days.

"Stop fidgeting, Meghann." Meghann will never marry.

The nurse calls Megan in. Megan would like to be pregnant.

Businessmen glance left. That's not how their daughters will learn to cross the street.

ii.Agnes' house burnt down.(Or so the grapevine says.)

A telemarketer calls. "How have you been since high school?"

Mom unlocks the door After she finishes the Obituaries.

iii.Sean retakes his photo.Sean doesn't have a passport.

He asks about her parents. "They've always been divorced."

A dog ran away. Its collar was pinching.

He is reading my Favorite book on the subway. I give him half of

my peanut butter sandwich.

ELEANOR LEONNE BENNETT





TAYLOR KUETHER

Loveliness

my smile feels harsh like fluorescent lights on a linoleum floor. we're made from the skin of stars. i outstretch my fingers; they're bones or feathers, but never both.

GREG WHITE

Off the Top Rope!

A fter anyone spends any amount of time with me, he or she will become aware that I adore professional wrestling. I expect the holier-than-thou look of mild disgust I receive when my viewing habits are exposed. I expect the question: why do I—a relatively well-adjusted young man with a fiancé (she's actually real, and trust me when I tell you this, she's stunning), a job, and a face that is not riddled with acne—still watch professional wrestling? Don't I know that it's fake? Don't I know that it's not a real sport? Don't I get it? Am I that dumb to not know that what I watch every Monday night and once a month on Sundays is just well-oiled men bouncing around a ring in some sort of twisted theatrical display?

I'm no idiot. I know about wrestling, more than any sane human should ever be willing to admit.

But let's take a page out of Loverboy's playbook. Let's start from the start.

I wasn't always well-adjusted. I was a dork. If you could track down my old yearbooks, you would see that I was a bespectacled nimrod who didn't know how to smile for school pictures, whose mother never let him get the cool laser-y background for said pictures, and who thought it was a good idea to wear a leather vest for his fourth grade school photo. You would know that I couldn't grow facial hair until I was twenty. You would know that I thought it was cool to wear oversized Wu-Tang shirts to school. You would know that I didn't kiss a girl until I was more than halfway through the seventh grade (and if you know anything about seventh grade boys, you know that this is social leprosy).

You would know I collected comic books (still do, thank you very much). You would know that I stupidly got a dragon tattoo on my right shoulder at the age of seventeen. I repeat: I. Got. A. Stupid. Fucking. Dragon. Tattoo. On. My. Shoulder. I am that guy. I'm the guy with a dragon tattoo in 2011, which means that it's a miracle I ever got laid.

But even if you did know me when I was in grade school, here's something you didn't know—something that I kept disclosed from the outside world for good reason: I was terrified to be left home alone until I was almost sixteen. And every Monday night, Mom went to the gym to work out and Dad went to get a massage, and big brother and big sister were off at college. So I did what any kid would do: I hightailed it to Grandma's house, made homemade popcorn with that ever-loving angel, parked my dorky ass in front of the dinky kitchen TV, and watched wrestling for three straight hours. Monday nights were the highlight of my week, because Grandma treated me like a king, and I got to watch grown men beat the holy hell out of each other with kendo sticks, chairs, ladders, crutches, and—every once in a great while—prosthetic limbs. For years, my Monday nights were planned, and every Monday night I had the time of my life.

Of course, I wised up to the whole wrestling thing as I got older. I realized it was a farce, a soap opera for maladjusted teenagers and young men. I knew that. And as I hit the eye of the storm known as puberty, I cut ties with wrestling. I wanted to be cool and maybe cup a pair of breasts. I couldn't do that sitting in Grandma's kitchen every Monday night, so I said goodbye to "Stone Cold" Steve Austin, The Rock, Mick Foley, and all the other gods of the squared circle. I abandoned them and never bothered to look back. They'd understand, I thought.

Then, I met the girl of my dreams during senior year in high school. She accepted me for the dweeb I am. Fast-forward seven years, and we're engaged. She knows every inch of my nerd-soul inside and out, and I don't have to pretend that I don't love comic books and wrestling anymore. She doesn't understand why I have the entertainment tastes of a child, but she lets me indulge anyway, because she loves me. And that's what love is: letting your significant other spend inordinate amounts of time watching muscle-bound he-men throw each other around a ring. It's special, what we have.

I still get caught up in the excitement of it all. I'm a helluva lot more jaded to wrestling than I was in the past, but the story lines still excite me from time to time. Where else can you see two fifty-plus-year-old men wrestle in nightgowns? Where else can you see a hulking, 412-pound behemoth carry on a sexual tryst

with a septuagenarian that results in a green hand being birthed (I'm not making this up)? Where else can I experience the unstoppable Irish Whip (the move where one man throws the other in a particular direction and the throwee can do nothing to stop that forward momentum, laws of gravity be damned)? Nowhere, that's where. Wrestling exists in an entirely different reality separated from our own.

The real reality of wrestling is just as intriguing as the product on TV every week. The backstage politics, the sexual affairs, the firings and re-hirings, the injuries, the botched story lines, the constant tragedies. I'm entranced by all of it. I want to know why this lifestyle appeals to young individuals in prime physical condition. I want to know why they opt to spend 300-plus days a year on the road, punishing their bodies nightly while the outside world thumbs their noses at them. I want to know why so many talented wrestlers' lives are claimed far too soon, why there is almost never a happy ending for any of them.

And that makes me appreciate what they do all the more. In a world where television and the Internet have ruined the mystique of practically everything, wrestling exists in a vacuum. It is separate from us, and for as much as we can figure out about it, the real truth constantly evades us. It is one of the few things in life that can still genuinely surprise me, and I love it for that reason.

These men and women risk their lives nightly to entertain us. They make us laugh, they make us cringe, they make us "ooh" and "aah" as they jump off twenty-foot ladders. It doesn't make any sense. But I don't want it to. I just want to enjoy the "fake" chaos once a week and cheer on my favorite wrestlers hysterically. I love wrestling more than you will ever know. And I don't care if it makes me look like an idiot.

I have an entire childhood that does that well enough already.

BRYAN ZYGMONT



Romey der Wunderhund

BRYAN ZYGMONT

Romey the Hound

In 1988, Robert Fulghum published an essay known as "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten." Since then, this discourse has been recited at countless graduations as a gentle reminder to the adults of the world that the secrets to life are not found in places such as graduate school and have instead been with us since our earliest memories. It is a delightful essay, but I believe it to be woefully inadequate. Why, you ask?

Because the good Mr. Fulghum never met Romey.

Who is Romey, you ask?

That's my beagle. And All I Really Need to Know I Learned From Romey the Beagle.

Believe in the Unlikely. Romey is a small dog. So small, in fact, that many people think at first glance that she is a puppy. And yet despite this fact, I have come to learn that there is not a loaf of bread that is safe upon my kitchen counter. I pause here to remark that the counter is 36" high and Romey is only 14" at the shoulder. When standing on her hind legs, her head does not even reach the level of the countertop. How does Romey get the cinnamon bread off of the kitchen counter? I have no idea, and she is not telling. But she clearly has embraced the unlikely.

Take Joy in the Small Things. Romey throws bones. Romey barks at bones. Romey dances around bones. Romey buries bones in the couches, in laundry baskets, and underneath bedroom pillows. I am convinced that she does these things either to amuse me or just to have a good time. I am delighted at both explanations.

Believe in Yourself. The mail carrier for the United States



Postal Service arrives at our house six days a week. The process unfolds something like this: He or she appears. Romey barks like crazy. He or she hastily departs. I am certain Romey is convinced that the departure is because of her ferocity. And I am not about to tell her otherwise.

Don't Give Up. Embarrassing though it may be, I am not a 'dogs are not allowed on the furniture' kind of chap. Although Romey has free access to all the furniture in our home, the couch in the living room is her favorite. Given her small size, it is a pretty sizable leap for her to even get up on the couch (I bet a loaf of cinnamon bread would provide great incentive, however). As Romey is now strolling into her twilight years, she does not always make this jump on the first try. But if given a moment to get over the immediate embarrassment and try again, she makes it on the second attempt. She has never let an initial failure stop another try, and I think this is a wonderful lesson.

Embrace the Power of Forgiveness. Romey entered my life during the Fall 2006 semester. This was my first year as a college professor, and on one rather chilly October morning, I noticed a small beagle (she seemed to be only a puppy) chained to a tree on my walk to school. Several weeks later, I again saw this little hound, and she was again chained to a tree. I walked over to give her a scratch, and the gentleman (I use this term with great artistic license) who owned her approached me.

"That's a great dog, sir."

"Thanks. Do you want her?" he replied.

"Oh, I don't know," I responded, clearly not ready to take on the responsibility of pet ownership despite my great fondness for beagles.

"That's too bad," he said. "Tomorrow I'm going to get rid of her or take her to the pound."

I pause here to remark that I have no idea what "get rid of her" means or if "take her to the pound" meant something different. All of a sudden I really wanted a dog. I walked home, got my car, picked up the dog, and drove her immediately to the vet. As became clear over the next week or so, the beagle—who I rechristened Romey—had been at least neglected, and, it seemed exceptionally likely to me, was also abused. She was remarkably malnourished, and covered with a panoply of bugs. When I put on a belt, it caused her immediate departure from any room. She was skittish and apprehensive.

And yet despite how miserable I interpret her previous life to have been, when we saw the aforementioned gentleman immediately before I moved to accept a new teaching appointment at Clarke, Romey approached him with a rapidly wagging tail. She gave him a good sniff, and it seemed pretty clear to me that she at least recognized him. And if that be so, it seemed that forgiveness was in her heart. And that's a great place to be.

It is difficult to say with certainty how old Romey is. She has been with me for more than five years now, and she was probably a couple of years old when I got her. The veterinarian says she is between nine and eleven. Her eyes are a bit hazier than I would like, and the knee replacement surgery (really!) from last fall means she will never catch the rabbits she chases behind Clarke University. I suppose all of this has me mindful of her mortality and my realization that she will not be burying bones in the living room couch forever. So I try to take her for longer walks. I try to give her longer belly scratches. I embarrassingly sing to her. All the time. Perhaps the most important thing she reminds me of daily: *Tell Those Who You Love that You Love Them. Every day.*



EMILY COTTON CRAM



Nighttime Terrors

JESS LEONARD SCHENK

33

1.

They're building the clock again, hammering away in Basement #2. Ella whines as she comes out of a deep murky slumber and reaches to turn on the old camp light next to the bed.

The lights go up. She can see her old worn vanity with the few shards of mirror still taped into the frame. When she looks in that mirror, her reflection is so scattered that it's barely recognizable as human. A grey eye and a few strands of hair to the left. To the right, a scar at the place where ear and cheek meet. It frightens her, so she rarely looks anymore.

As the old bulb warms, the light in the room grows more intense. Bits of fabric cover the walls. Now that the room's not quite so dim, Ella thinks she can make out some of the spots where water from the old pipes has soaked through. Have to replace them soon to keep the mold out. She'll be sorry to see these pretty scraps go, the gold and burgundy damask, the rich bottle green brocade and the velvet the color of a ballet slipper. When they brought the scraps to her, they didn't tell her where they'd come from, and Ella didn't ask. She didn't want the memories of the scraps to come to her in the night and haunt her like ghosts shaking their sheets.

But she remembers the first scraps, right after the war had ended. She remembers Patient 33. Now, Ella knows better than to call him Patient 33; it's insensitive and dark, and she really must try harder to be sensitive, everyone says so. But it's not often that a nameless man comes around, and too often that a man's obsession can swallow him up, right down to the core.

Alda had seen him first, this 33. He'd come to their office

shortly after the war, and Alda had extended a calm hand, taken him in. The reality hadn't yet set in for any of them. Why should it?

Here, they knew little of the outside. Ella had been a nurse, but at the same time, she was more than that. Alda had *needed* her, right up to the moment when he'd—

Well. It wouldn't do to think of that. She reaches up to pick at her short hair, then rests her chin on a knobby knee and listens to the steady thumping and thudding coming from Basement #2. 33 might have liked the neatness, the symmetry of these sounds, these moments.

He'd been so troubled, which Ella found alarming because he looked normal, healthy. Robust, even, and nothing like those before him, who'd stumbled trancelike into their building and died shortly thereafter, alone and shivering on the cracked linoleum floor.

Dr. Alda seated 33 in a room with high windows near the top of the building. Then, treatment began.

2

"What is your name?" The doctor steeples his fingers beneath his chin and waits patiently. Outside, the world is cold, silent but for the tense howling of the wind. The lantern flickers for a moment, and the nurse rushes in to see that it stays lit. The doctor stops her with a single raised finger and a long glance. She pauses, one foot poised in mid-step, then leaves. The faint, unsettling scent of baby powder and sour milk lingers in her wake.

The patient stares at nothing. "33."

The doctor purses his lips for a moment, then smiles and tries again. He glances at the metronome on the desk, which sits as quiet and motionless as a corpse. The doctor knows all about corpses, though admittedly much of this knowledge was gained only recently.

"What did you see out there?" The doctor's voice lifts slightly at the end, and he clears his throat, embarrassed. While he's genuinely curious, it is neither proper nor professional to reveal this, especially not now.

The patient blinks but does not lift his gaze. "33."

A man shot himself shortly after it all began. He lived down the street from a gun store and walked in one day, calm as anything. Things were still mostly normal then, but a storm was lingering just out of sight. The man asked the woman behind the counter if he could please see a particular gun. She obliged, innocent and stupid as a cow.

Then, the man raised the gun to his temple and made a

horrible mess of things, right there in the middle of the store on a sunny Wednesday afternoon.

The woman screamed and screamed. The story goes that you could hear her a mile away, except that there was no one around to listen.

The patient plucks at a loose fiber on his sleeve. "33."

3

That night, there is a party in the lobby. The nurse wears a mask painted to look like the face of a cat, and she totters around on high, high heels. There is music. The doctor wears a suit. The men from the basement don't come up to celebrate. The patient remains in his room.

When the clock strikes one, they leave quickly and quietly. Plates of half-eaten food and glasses still half full of liquid stay behind. A cigarette floats in one long-stemmed champagne flute.

Hickory dickory dock.

4.

The patient finds a bit of stone one day and begins to draw on the floor. The nurse gives him a soft crayon and some paper.

He draws a portrait, half her real face and the other half the moon.

She kisses him just once, when the doctor's back is turned. The sound of gunshots echo in from the streets as they rub their chapped lips together in the near-darkness.

The next day, the doctor announces that there is nothing more that can be done for the patient. No one is particularly surprised.

5.

The nurse is attempting to make coffee in a Dutch oven over their little stove. The doctor comes up behind her and touches her on the waist. He pulls her in close when she jumps. He brushes some hair away from her face and looks into her flat grey eyes. Then, they huddle down together in a corner for a while, and when it's over, everything seems to be all right for a moment.

Fog presses close around the building that afternoon. Outside, there are no more gunshots, no more wails. The number of lost ones seeking refuge in their building grows smaller each day. Soon, they will be the only ones left.

The doctor presses his lips to her cheek and murmurs her name. He takes a piece of glass and carves an "A" into the tender flesh near the nurse's ear. She exhales hard and leans into him.

Up on the stove, the coffee begins to burn.

6

The doctor lights a cigarette, the last one in his crumpled pack, and looks intently at the patient.

"What does it mean, this 33?" He exhales long and slow, plumes of smoke curling from his nostrils. "Tell me."

The patient sniffles and looks down at his left hand, the fingers of which are splayed and bent at odd angles. The doctor notices his gaze and smiles. Then, he lunges forward and grips the patient's forearms, pressing their foreheads together. White hot rage.

"Tell me, damn you!"

The patient lets out a low, guttural moan and closes his eyes. The scrapes and bruises on his face from when he first arrived are beginning to heal. He shakes his head.

Five minutes later, the sound of shattering glass alarms the nurse and she runs in. But the doctor's chair is vacant. She's too late.

The patient looks at the window and begins to scream. He screams even after his voice breaks, and the sound echoes throughout the building well into the small hours of the morning. He screams until the men from Basement #2 come up to get him.

The silence that follows is deafening.

7

Ella wakes with a start. She's fallen asleep again without even realizing it, an unfortunate habit she'll have to work hard to break. They're always scolding her, those men who work so diligently, even well into the night.

There are no more patients, which makes sense because there is no more doctor, either. The last few outsiders stopped trickling in weeks ago.

Ella has stepped outside only once since the war. She expected to see green grass and people living their lives beyond the heavy doors, as though the war had been just a scar on a fingernail and new growth was gradually pushing it forward, out of sight.

She saw only grey and heard cold, howling wind.

Instead of being bitterly disappointed, as the old Ella would have been, the new Ella shrugged her thin shoulders and told herself she should have expected as much.

8.

On the third day after 33's departure, the nurse goes up to the room where he once stayed and begins to gather the scraps of his shirt from the floor. Then she returns to her room and sets to pinning the scraps to the walls. Basement #2 is still mostly silent, except for the occasional deep rumbling noise coming up through the pipes in the night.

She used to flinch at the sound, but now finds it comforting. The building is like a large cat purring itself to sleep. Yes, she likes that idea. It makes the howling that will inevitably return more bearable.

9

When Ella was a little girl, she lived in a small flat by the river with her mother and father. There were steep wooden steps painted green at the front and back of the house. Once, when she was four years old, she fell down the stairs and fractured her jaw. There was blood everywhere, but the green paint on the stairs mixed with the red and soon everything became a murky brown.

When her father came to her and gathered her in his arms, her blood stained his white, white collar. It was only when Ella saw it there, too bright, that she began to cry.

The doctors wired her jaw shut so it could heal, and she was ordered to stay in bed for several weeks. Her mother and father brought her books and paper dolls and a little chalkboard to write on, but what she wanted was to be outside by the water. Whenever she tried to talk, she felt a terrible pulling.

After a while, she learned to stop trying. When the wires were finally removed, her voice sounded like the rusty hinge on a trap. Ella clamped her mouth shut after hearing her own voice and didn't speak again for a long time.

10

Before the war, Ella had been studying to become a nurse. She did fairly well in school and wasn't far from graduating when things began to fall apart.

Dr. Alda (whether or not he really *was* a doctor became one of those unsolvable mysteries) had swooped in on one of the dark days before the war began and offered her a job as his nurse. Her university had been closed for three weeks by that point, and she wasn't sure when it might open again—if it would ever open again—and she accepted his offer.

He set her up in a small room on the first floor. There were no patients at that time, but Dr. Alda had assured her that she would be needed soon. They would have plenty of work to do.

The people came, first in massive waves, then in smaller clusters, staggering together. Near the end, there were only one or two at a time. The ones in the beginning were awful, all vacant eyes and too-sharp collarbones and, worst of all, flesh falling off

their worn frames. They died quickly. During the first few days, Ella spent more time gathering herself in a side room than she did with the patients.

By the end of the week, she was able to pull sheets or bags briskly over the faces of the dead and move on to the next task.

By the time 33 came and went, she barely felt anything at all.

11.

The men from Basement #2 make it halfway through the winter before they run out of supplies. Then, they stomp grumpily through the first floor lobby, tracking mud and sewage across the floors only moments after Ella has scrubbed them clean. When she complains, they only grumble louder.

This goes on for about a week before they finally send her out to look for parts. She wanders the city for several hours, finding only piles of bodies in the streets and rusted-out cars.

When her feet feel frozen solid and useless after hours of slogging through the gutters, she stumbles upon an old tool shop. Dazed, she grabs everything she can stuff into her pockets or in her mouth or under her arms and walks back to the building. The men from Basement #2 take the pieces wordlessly and begin to move back toward the clock.

Ella calls to one man. "Wait! Why do you have to build?" He shakes his head and turns his back to her. She sighs and starts scrubbing at the floors again.

12.

One day when Ella wakes up, she feels lighter. She walks up to the top floor where she last saw 33 and stares out between the boards covering the broken window. She doesn't remember putting them there—one of the men from Basement #2. The urine-colored sky isn't as cloudy as usual, and there's no sign of the fog that usually comes in the night and hangs around until midday. For a moment, she even thinks she hears a dog barking somewhere in the distance, but she knows it's her mind playing tricks on her. Aside from herself and the men from Basement #2, she hasn't seen another living person in months.

She stays like that for a long while until she feels a heavy, coarse hand fall on her shoulder. When she turns around, she sees that it is the same man she questioned several weeks before. He gives a curt nod, as if answering some unasked question, then says, "We finished it. Then, we destroyed it."

Ella looks up and asks in a small, meek voice, "Why did you build it?"

Q 42

After a long pause, the man from Basement #2 answers her. When he speaks, his voice is like hers all those years ago, that broken-jaw rusty-trap voice.

He says, "We're living at the bottom of the world." Ella thinks she is beginning to understand.

KIM LYON



Graceful

SEBASTIAN M. ARMENDARIZ

Black Avenues

A mongst the multitude of dawn-lit animated prisons rode a compact, salt-glazed, green Ford. It glided across man-made plains indistinguishable from the rest of the mindless boxes with which it joined in parallel movement. There were no spectacular speakers, no pristine paint job, no revered rotating rims. Nothing made this car extraordinary, that is, nothing exterior. However, where the shell was a bland, static palette, the interior was vibrant with conflict...

"Now you just can't make that assumption."

"We are a part of a vast class separation, and the cause of that separation is the neglect of the poor by the rich. It's not exactly a new idea, and it is definitely not an assumption."

"You have no proof."

"Nobody has proof anymore! Only scientists have proof, but if you have not realized, no one listens to scientists because their proof is too damn long and even worse, they use the metric system. You know who people listen to? Dumb fucks. Because they use words that are short and sweet, make just enough sense, and sound really good together. That's one thing all good politicians have in common: they are just dumb enough to get through to the people and just smart enough to get away with acting that dumb."

"You are preposterous. The people may actually surprise you with their intelligence. We are not all lemmings."

"Maybe not all but most, and most is all you need in this country."

"How about us?"

"What about us?"

"Are we lemmings?"

"You are. I, on the other hand, am not."

"Well that doesn't make any sense, considering the circumstances. We wanted to be politicians once, remember? Rule the world, lead the people, bring sanity to this rock."

"Well, I'm not sure sanity can be brought to an inanimate object, and besides, the last thing we need is to lower our IQ to attempt to serve the people."

"Such literal negativity. Have you ever tried optimism? It may suit you."

"You are optimistic enough for the both of us. I'm man enough to see the reality. I'm not a pessimist; I'm a realist."

"Full of shit is what you are."

"Perhaps, but full of shit is what the world is, too. Which is why the world and I don't get along so well. You know, that whole opposites attract thing? But that is why I have you."

"And why is that exactly?"

"Look. You're driving your car, obeying these arbitrary lines drawn by invisible people, paid by an invisible hand and enforced by very visible assholes. Obedience is your best trait, it's why you can survive in this world."

"So you're saying the reason I survive is because I obey? Well, if no one obeyed these, as you say, arbitrary laws, we would all perish. It would be chaos. We need them."

"Do we?"

"Yes."

"That is why you're a lemming."

"Because I follow rules?"

"No, because you don't question them."

"Well, that's why I have you."

"That's why you need me."

A pause ensued in the conflict. During this debate, however, a partner in mechanical movement, curious enough to stare at any car it passed, glanced inside the almost derelict Ford. Observing as if watching a silent movie, the unnoticed driver blinked once or twice in confusion, assessed the image, and finally sped away gratified by the accurate, yet peculiar, analysis.

The pause broke.

"Revolution. When does that happen?"

"Excuse me?"

"You question laws and authority, these 'invisible hands' as you call them, yet you still obey the laws. In action we are the same. When does your questioning turn to action?"

"At the same time yours does."

"But I don't question the society in which I live. I have no

basis for revolutionary action; my basis for action is the law that has been put before me."

"You are the type who is given a plate of food and you gladly eat all of it, for you are hungry. I am the type who is given a plate of food and asks who cooked it; if the answer is provided and satisfactory, I eat and am happy, if it is provided and unsatisfactory, I must eat but am unhappy, and if the information is not provided, I still must eat, but I know something is defective with the cook or its establishment."

"If you eat in all three scenarios, if your end action is the same as mine, why question?"

"Because it is only when no one questions that the cook can serve you shit and not be responsible."

"So in the midst of all your anti-government questioning is a core of responsibility?"

"Exactly. Those in power, the cooks of the world, must be held responsible by those for whom they rule, and they do not feel that responsibility unless their actions are questioned. For instance, these lines."

"But that warrants unwanted conflict. If we are to be a peaceful civilization, we must succumb to the fact that those in power are there for a reason, and they must be trusted. Obedience is not and should not be viewed as a weakness, but as a necessary role in the pursuit of peace."

"What is this naïve obsession for peace? It's intoler-..."

"Naïve? How can you call peace naïve? The one ideal which all cultures, religions, and societies crave is naïve? *You* are intolerable."

"Of course it is naïve. The one thing which cannot be attained is that which all want. There is no peace. All cultures, religions, and societies seek their own peace. Ironically, because of our cultural selfishness, there is a global and internal war for peace. If we were mature, we would abandon the idea of peace and pursue knowledge, and, according to Mr. Socrates, knowledge comes from questioning."

"Well, as you go questioning that which cannot be changed, I will obey that which can bring order."

"Well, Mr. Obedience, you just ran a re-..."

Another pause ensued in the conflict. Pressure, lights, combined with overwhelming, excruciating stimulation. It wasn't pretty, but it was beautiful. A beautiful event in the sense of pure aesthetic impact and effect, the kind which onlookers can't possibly unsee. A perfect symbol of American dichotomy, a scholar would say. And through the production of beauty, a female police officer...

"Sir, are you OK?"

"What do you think? Stupid... Idiot. How ironic that the boy can't follow the very thing he protects. Well I suppose we've seen the consequences of arbitrariness. We're lucky to be seeing at all right now. Look at these cop cars! Shiny black SUVs in a neighborhood where crime is as real as a dress made of cotton candy. Yeah, I suppose the gap is as big as you say."

"Sir, who are you talking to?"

"What? Who...? Oh. Myself...Fuck off."

Kasie Von Haden



Cloud Cover

MAX MCNETT

Just Another Friday Night

Tshift uncomfortably in my back-corner booth. It's dark back here, even for a bar, but I prefer it that way; the last thing I want to do is draw attention to myself in this particular boozehive. There is a plastic Pabst Blue Ribbon sconce that flickers on the wall next to the booth. When the flickering starts to give me a headache, I give it a jab with my elbow. To my surprise, it blinks on and stays lit. Feeling like the Fonz, I take a large pull from the rum-and-Coke that the leather-faced bartender with her hoodornament hoop earrings made for me a few moments ago. I spit the shoddy concoction back into the plastic cup. It tastes less like a rum-and-Coke and more like a shit-and-piss cocktail. I casually push it to the other side of the table and glance around the tavern.

There's a band playing tonight, another a shit-and-piss cocktail. They're terrible, the singer in particular. Heavily tattooed, he's clad in dark jeans and a sweat-soaked wifebeater, banging away on his black guitar as if it were all he knew how to do. At least that's the impression he wants to give. His eyes are clenched shut as he sings in a throaty rasp that seems a little too rehearsed to be honest. It all does, really: the voice, the guitar plastered with stickers, the sad attempt at a sort of Elvis-on-amphetamine swagger. Like the crude pictograms inked onto his flesh, it's all been drawn on. It's as if he's trying to cover up some less-than-desirable identity that would no doubt be victim to a hail of beer bottles from the direction of the bar. I might throw one just to break his spirits. At the very least, I'll likely wind up being the jackass who vells for "Freebird."

The band strikes up a slower tune, and the few people still

in the joint get up and migrate to the patch of hardwood designated as a dance space. I don't really mind the singer now. The saccharine grit in his voice is much more tolerable when he's not barking the words to "Ring of Fire" like a junkyard dog in heat. I watch as varying levels of inebriated folk come together, locate a partner, and begin to slowly swivel and sway on the spot. As the band warbles through what sounds like "Stand By Your Man" sung by that dude from Creed, a particularly lush middle-aged couple stumbles into my view.

She's older than he by a decent margin, perhaps not old enough to be his mother, but maybe old enough to pass for a former babysitter. Both their eyes are closed and they're whispering into each other's ears with big dumb smiles on their faces. What little light there is in the tavern bounces off the rings on their respective fingers—wedding rings. But it doesn't take much for me to figure out that these two aren't married. Not to each other anyway. No, the way that they're dancing with each other, looking as though they're attached together at the crotch...no married couple dances like that. Only horny high school kids dance like that, kids who are patiently waiting for the dance to end so they can sneak off and go play games like, "Is it in yet?" or, "How does that feel?" or everyone's favorite, "You're *done* already?"

I can't help but wonder about their spouses, and what they're doing while these two are basically dry humping each other to the tune of "How Deep Is Your Love" by the Bee Gees. Are they sitting up with the kids, waiting and wondering when their significant others will come home? Does her husband have any idea that she has completely forgotten about him in favor of the handsome younger stranger with half a hard-on? Does it cross his wife's mind that maybe, just maybe, he's got his mind on more than just "a night out with the guys?" But then again, maybe it's these mystery spouses who are the bad guys here. Maybe she decided to go out and leave her worthless, unemployed husband to sit at home, smoke a bowl, and fall asleep to cheap Cinemax softcore porn. Maybe he's tired of thinking about how his wife sometimes calls out his brother's name in bed, and he needs to distract himself with anonymous drunk sex.

The song ends, along with the band's set. Everyone on the dance floor putters back to their respective barstools and booths and falls back into mumbled conversations and fresh beer. I chuckle and shake my head. So this is the best that this little town can do in terms of a "good time" on a Friday night? Pretty pathetic, in my opinion. But then again, who am I to judge? After all, I'm nothing but the cynical bastard who sits in the back and laughs at everyone else.

From across the bar, I hear someone shout "FUCKING ASSHOLE!" which is immediately followed by a beer bottle that crashes into the wall a short distance away from my head. A fight breaks out and soon everyone is throwing punches, howling in pain, spitting out curse words. More bottles are thrown and broken. The flashing lights of a police car appear outside the dirty front window.

Ah. On second thought, it's time to leave.

VI ADISI AV FREDERICK

How to Cross Language Barriers

"No comprende, Senora" Means he has no fucking

Clue what "stir" and "redo" and "fix these apps" should mean to him.

When they don't understand your Demands, it's easy to take offense.

After all, if white servers speak English, Shouldn't brown cooks be equally able?

So how do you correct these clueless Mexicans on something they were

Doing well before your monolingual Arrival? How do you make them understand?

Do you shout and scream as if a high Volume can turn English to Spanish?

Do you revisit the pregnant pauses of Teaching an infant to make words?

Do you enunciate each and every Vowel in each and every word?

Do you both sign and mime as if Hispanics are deaf and love Charades?

Or when all other options have been Lost in translation do you think to

Remember it takes two to make language Barriers do you then think to learn what the

App chef means when he says "¡Aprende nuestro idioma, Puta!"

ELEANOR LEONNE BENNETT



Clarke University Writing Contest

FIRST PLACE **ELAINE HART** Understanding Jude

SECOND PLACE CARRIE PIEPER The Bed

THIRD PLACE **ERIN DALY** I Can't Believe I Ate the Whole Thing! **ELAINE HART**

Understanding Jude

T he first thing anyone noticed about him was the defect in his face. A tumor-like growth the size of a golf ball protruded from his right cheek, and his right eye stared vacantly, unmoving, at a point slightly below his eye level. He had no right ear. I found him sitting in a wheelchair in the camp gymnasium with a gait belt fastened around his waist and food stains drooled onto his shirt. He was 32 years old.

Jude was my first real experience with a special needs individual. Severe and profound mental retardation with multiple birth defects prevented Jude from the routine of what we would call a "normal" life—he couldn't eat by himself, he couldn't go to the bathroom or get into bed or shower by himself, he couldn't comb his hair or brush his teeth or get dressed or put on his own leg braces. There was a lot Jude couldn't do, it appeared, and I, having had no prior experience being responsible for the needs of another, was to be his primary caretaker.

His first day at camp was my first day, too. I was the counselor, and Jude was my first camper. Jude and I were living at a camp for people with special needs. After one week of basic training, I met Jude. Although I had received a photo of him in his application prior to his arrival, his appearance still startled me, and I realized how entirely dependent he was. Immediately my nerves shot up to a level that was difficult to hide. Jude couldn't even communicate with me—his articulations were vowel sounds and his limited sign language was beyond my knowledge. He became agitated easily in noisy, public settings, and I soon discovered that this resulted in him crying a hopeless, mournful howl

and striking himself repeatedly on the side of his head with his small, balled-up fist, sometimes to the extent of drawing blood. At dinner that night I struggled to spoon pureed spaghetti and apple-sauce into his mouth, as his teeth were too worn from grinding to chew his food. This was the first moment I remember panicking. How could there be such a dependent life in my inexperienced hands? What if he choked? What if he fell? What if he was sick or having difficulty breathing and I couldn't understand his erratic communication? I hardly slept that night after putting him to bed, obsessively paranoid that he would fall out of his bed and hit his head and I would be held responsible.

The following day, tense and achy from lack of sleep, I feebly wheeled Jude into the gym for the "Fun and Games" portion of the day. After pulling him up to a table scattered with puzzles and coloring pages, I wearily dropped into a chair. In front of him lay an inexpensive keyboard, containing maybe three octaves of keys and coated in a thin layer of dust. Jude leaned forward and reached toward the keyboard to pull it closer, so I centered it and hit the power button, anticipating the usual amateur sounds of a few dissonant chords followed quickly by a loss of interest. Unexpectedly, Jude shifted the keyboard to an angle and, laying his head down, rested his ear directly on the built-in speaker. His gaze fell somewhere off in the distance, and he laid both crooked hands upon the keys. Then, with his eyes still staring vacantly into nowhere, Jude steadily played a flawless G-chord followed by the beautifully simplistic melody of "You Are My Sunshine." He played it perfectly. A smile began to appear on his face, growing bigger and bigger, as I sat, staring, in complete bewilderment. He shifted hand positions and transitioned smoothly into "My Heart Will Go On," and a lump formed in my throat that I couldn't swallow away. Jude's eyelids fell closed, and the expression upon his face was nothing short of complete and utter contentment and bliss. My eyes filled with tears that I dared not blink away in fear of missing a moment of the most absolute happiness I had honestly ever seen.

I watched as Jude's hands shifted over the keys, as if his fingers could see, landing deliberately on each note without error. All of the stress and worry of the previous day poured over me, and I was overcome with emotion. Jude paused, and then began playing the beginning notes of the Beatles' "Hey Jude." All I felt was an overwhelming desire both to cry and to laugh, but all I could do was sit as still as I could and listen to the melodies pouring forth from the keyboard. Jude could not communicate with me in any standard fashion, but in that moment I understood through his music all of the genuine and pure happiness that Jude could

not simply share with his words. And, in that moment, it suddenly didn't matter at all what he couldn't do. Jude wasn't a severe and profound mentally disabled camper sitting before me anymore; in fact, that label seemed entirely misplaced. How could this man who was so obviously in tune with his gift of music be described in any way as disabled? For the rest of the week, Jude carried the keyboard on his lap with him everywhere and took every opportunity he could to play it.

Sometimes when taking care of adults with severe special needs, there are moments when you inadvertently get caught up in what they can't do – not because you are being derogatory or belittling them, but because you feel so completely responsible for their well-being. You sometimes forget that, beneath the disabilities, there is something entirely, fundamentally, and beautifully human. My experience with Jude and his keyboard this summer changed my perspective of humanity entirely. What I learned was extraordinary, and yet today it seems like common sense that many people sadly never fully realize. Jude, like all people with or without special needs, was a unique and exceptional individual. He had desires and passions like all of us—passions stirred deep within the soul which beg in every human to be released, but which he found difficult to express because of his physical and mental limitations. These limitations masked one of the most extraordinary, albeit, unexpected, talents I have ever encountered, making me astonishingly aware of just how capable Jude really was.

Over the days following Jude's reunion with the keyboard, he and I shared countless memorable moments together. Oftentimes, for instance, when prompted by a first line of a song, Jude would break into a broken choral refrain in his inarticulate but enthusiastic voice. My favorite was his rendition of the Beatles song responsible for his namesake, which sounded something like, "Hey Joo, oh ee afray...." I think his ability to make me laugh daily brought us closer in that week—it certainly made me more comfortable in my position as his caretaker. The moment in which I laughed the most, however, occurred quite unpredictably while he was—well, on the toilet. Jude sat, his 32-year-old body the size of a ten-year-old's, his spine crooked, his knit racecar pajama pants around his ankles, his feet not even touching the ground. I stood outside the stall door with one hand above me holding it shut, waiting for his cue of "I duh!" to let me know he was finished so I could help him get dressed and into bed. I stood, patiently, when from behind the stall door, I heard Jude start counting: "Wah, ooo, wee..." I paused. "Jude, is everything alright in there?" I opened the stall door a crack, and there he was looking back at me with

an enormous grin on his face, pretending to weight-lift with a toilet plunger in his right hand, awkwardly counting off arm reps. He giggled. "Oar, Eye, Ix...." I laughed harder in that moment than I ever remember laughing before, and his face beamed with accomplishment.

Too quickly, my week with Jude was drawing to an end. On one of the final nights of camp, Albrecht Acres held its traditional weekly dance for the campers in the gymnasium, complete with dimmed lights and a semi-professional deejay. I was not confident about Jude attending the dance, assuming the noise and crowded atmosphere would upset him, but when we approached the doors, Jude unexpectedly wheeled himself in with very little hesitation. As if on cue, whatever song had been playing drew to its close and Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On" drew forth from the speakers. Elated, I spun around to Jude to tell him to listen, excited that this would help calm him from any anxiety he might have been having. When my eyes finally landed on his face, I saw that Jude's eyes were wet with tears. He was beaming with his signature grin that I had grown to adore, and I was surprised to realize that I could fully sense his excitement, knowing that he was soaking up every moment of the song that he loved so much. I smiled as tears of happiness once again fought to emerge. This moment truly opened up to me exactly how much this camp meant to the campers who attended. It was for spectacular experiences like these that campers would chat year round about the upcoming summer to anybody who would listen; and it was for the same spectacular experiences that we were told in our first week of training that this would be "The hardest job you'll ever love."

The following Sunday, I slowly and despondently rolled Jude in his wheelchair out to the minivan that had come to pick him up and take him home. Watching Jude go was bittersweet, as I thought about the emotionally tumultuous and self-awakening week we had shared. I thought back to our first moments together, remembering how scared and unsure I had felt, as, I'm sure, had he when he had to place complete dependency on a stranger for a week. I felt honored to have been granted unconditional trust from a man who was so truly extraordinary. In my goodbye hug to him, I tried to squeeze in every piece of love and gratitude I felt, desperate to make him understand what my experience with him meant to me. He draped one arm around my neck, and smiled in return.

The Bed

I walk a path so thin and uneven, with seas of flowers so beautiful on each side.

Multi-colored faces, with bright yellow noses singing sweet fragrance into my skin.

My tongue tastes sugar.

I breathe in—
the air's looming smoke,
bait in the trap.

The smell crawls into those healing scars; I remember that old fresh sting,

From a time
I felt so brave,
accepting a floral invitation
to join in the dance.

That ever-ringing warning drowned out, misplaced by naïve ears, soon to scream again.

A fine first step, soft soil underfoot. Another few I danced to the nonsense I'd been told.

On this garden bed
I began to sit.
Hand reaching back for support,
I found none.

A shard of glass glistening, blood from a trusting grasp. A surprising crimson, I stumbled to stand.

> In the mess, that shard of glass, or maybe a thousand,

autographed my body in red ink.
Quickly as I could,
back to my old path,
the soil now knives,
plunging deeper with every step.

Such a lovely time, filled with so much hurt. Cries for my return etched on my back.

My body a book, bleeding an almost truth in half-formed letters across my chest.

And now completely gone, save but one letter ingrained on the palm, a lengthy reminder.

And that old desire, or is it new? Calls me to retry, voice laced in truth.

I walked in with relative ease, cautious, looking back, feeling for a reminder.

I have sat down, brought soft petals to my lips, sung sweetly to their tune, breathed deeply in their midst.

But if I lay back, as a sunset draws me in, how do I know behind me isn't another shard?

This one just waiting below my upper left side, to tack me down, glued with my own blood.

A permanent fixture, a statue of stone. To lie there forever, or never be whole. **ERIN DALY**

I Can't Believe I Ate the Whole Thing!

↑ dam Richman takes a seat in the dining room of Jethro's ABarbeque in Des Moines, Iowa, to take on his next extreme eating challenge. With the crowd cheering Richman on, a waiter carries out his newest culinary nemesis: the Adam Emmenecker challenge, named for one of Drake University's star basketball players during the 2008 season. Richman has fifteen minutes to eat a five-pound sandwich stacked with a deep-fried pork tenderloin, a hearty burger patty, slices of beef brisket, bacon, buffalo chicken strips, and blocks of deep-fried cheese, all smothered in molten cheese sauce. The sandwich stands just shy of a foot high and is so stuffed that it has to be held together with two wooden skewers. It's intimidating, but I've seen Richman tackle more imposing challenges on his hit series "Man v. Food." Yet despite his best efforts and the encouragement of the crowd, he falls short, like he has in many previous challenges. But his losses don't deter him from his cross-country quest for culinary greatness.

Every week, fans like me tune in to watch Richman attempt outrageous eating feats. Some of them are a kid's dream come true, like a fifteen milkshake challenge and an eight-scoop sundae called "The Kitchen Sink," which is literally served in a bowl that looks like a kitchen sink. Some are almost cruel, like a big bowl of super-spicy curry and face-numbing chicken wings. And some are just plain stupid, like a seventy-two ounce steak with sides and a twelve-egg omelet with hash browns and toast. It's foolish. It's gluttonous. It's disgusting. And I can't get enough of it. Eating

has become a spectacle in this country, and "Man v. Food" is one of the more extreme examples of this phenomenon.

Our standards of "normal" servings of food have reached obscene proportions, and we have probably all experienced this in some way. Many times I have received a small soft drink from fast food restaurants and have had to double-check my receipt to make sure that I didn't get a medium by mistake. I (stupidly) promised one of my friends that I would someday eat one of Kentucky Fried Chicken's already infamous Double Down sandwiches, which consists of cheese, bacon, and sauce stuffed between two grilled or fried chicken breasts. I have yet to follow through on my promise; maybe by the time I get around to it, KFC will have discontinued the item. And I know it's not good for me, but I love digging into Chipotle's overstuffed burritos, bursting at the seams with meat, beans, rice, and cheese. In response to the outof-control portion sizes and calorie counts of our meals, countless diet regimes have sprung up, and doctors are constantly warning us of the dangers of eating too much. Restaurants have added menu items with less fat and sodium to accommodate the more health-conscious among us. But many restaurants ignore doctors' warnings; in fact, they actually celebrate our love of huge portions and high-calorie helpings. For example, the much-criticized Heart Attack Grill allows patrons who weigh over 350 pounds to eat for free. Their menu features items like Triple Bypass Burgers, fries cooked in pure lard, and milkshakes made with butter fat. And every town seems to have that pig-out spot that visitors and locals just have to try. There's no denying that our love of big food is growing, and the trend of extreme eating has spread, thanks to the magic of television.

The Travel Channel, the home network of "Man v. Food," has a few shows that allow viewers to enjoy gastronomic adventures from their living rooms. One series, called "Food Paradise," searches for the best places across the country to pig out on favorites like ice cream, burgers, hot dogs, steaks, and pizza. This show features a few places similar to the spots that Adam Richman visits on his series, places that dish up outrageous portions as challenges for hungry patrons. Even the Food Network, a channel that I've always associated with the preparation of food, has jumped on the extreme eating bandwagon. I would think that the satisfaction of cooking a great dish would outweigh the satisfaction of eating a huge portion of food, but that hasn't stopped the channel from adding shows like "Outrageous Food" and "Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives" that showcase unique and over-the-top dishes. In one episode of "Outrageous Food," host Tom Pizzica visited a restaurant that dishes up a breakfast dish so massive that

it has to be served on a pizza tray instead of a plate. It consists of mounds of hash browns, at least six eggs, every breakfast meat you can think of, a chicken-fried steak, two biscuits, ladles of country gravy, and fistfuls of shredded cheese that come together to create the Mount Everest of breakfast dishes, unconquerable by most people who try to scale its heights.

I am often dumbstruck by these celebrations of excess and glorifications of gluttony. What could be motivating those people to eat so much? Much of the time, the prize for such challenges is something small like a t-shirt and a picture on the restaurant's wall of fame. Sometimes I catch myself thinking, "You moron, why would you do that to yourself for a stupid t-shirt?" But I might have an answer to why shows like "Man v. Food" have become popular and why many Americans feel compelled to eat so much at restaurants, and it's quite simple. You have probably heard many people use the excuse "because I can" when asked why they did something, and I think that's why people choose to go all out when it comes to food. "Because I can." It's not a very good reason, but it works. Sometimes, we don't need a reason other than just being able to say that we finished that plate of pasta or that sandwich the size of our face. It's about bragging rights, personal glory, and being able to point to your smiling face on the wall of fame to say, "See that? That's me. I beat that challenge."

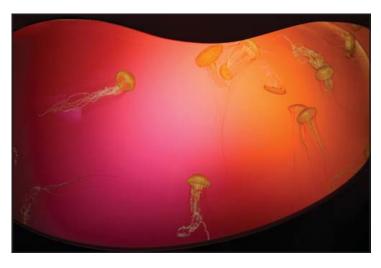
The trend seems very fitting for America. Americans like big things: big TVs, big trucks, big houses, and everything in between. Of course, we don't *need* everything to be super-sized, but so what? Why drive a little fuel-efficient Toyota when you can drive a big Hummer? Why settle for a two-bedroom, twobathroom flat when you can live in three-story home with way more bedrooms than you'll ever need? We pride ourselves not just on the big, but the unnecessary; we buy things for the sheer pleasure of owning them. Do you really need an iPad, or do you just want to be able to say that you own an iPad? I think the same can be said about food. Of course we don't need seven breakfast tacos or four pounds of steak to satisfy our hunger, but if it's being offered to us, why not try it? It might require us to pay more than we normally would for a meal, and it may put us in a food coma for the rest of the day, but if it's there, we might as well go for it. Why? Because this is America, the land of freedom and of big things, and that's often the only reason we need.

Of course, not all of us have iron stomachs or the courage to eat mountains of food, and I think that is a part of why eating shows like "Man v. Food" have become popular. Just as some of us get caught up in the spectacle and competition of sports and live vicariously through our favorite athletes, people like me enjoy

watching others stuff their faces and wishing that they had the stomach capacity to do the same. We like competition. And we like food. We cheer for our favorite team during a football game or our favorite athlete during the Olympics because we want them to win. Why not cheer on someone who is trying to take down an entire three-foot pizza by himself? I'll admit, it makes more sense for someone to idolize an athlete or a celebrity, but food, a non-living, impersonal force, has a strong hold in not only our culture, but across the world.

Food is powerful. It brings us together. Preparing it and eating it gives us pleasure. You have likely noticed that the kitchen is the gathering place for holiday celebrations and the social hub for get-togethers. And just like athletics or the arts, food offers people the opportunity to achieve greatness and to out-do the competition. Many restaurants strive to make the best burger, pizza, or sub sandwich in town, a perfect marriage of our love of food and competition. And it's not just the preparation of food that serves as a form of rivalry; eating food has become a popular "sport," too. Every year, festivals are held all across the country in honor of a single food item, and often, these festivals include—you guessed it—an eating competition. People train for these events, and for extreme eating challenges at restaurants, like they would for a marathon and give it their all on competition day. Just like any other contest, extreme eating gives some of us a goal to strive for, although holding a title that essentially means "The World's Biggest Pig" is questionable compared to a title like "Best Actor" or "Most Valuable Player." I do find it odd that people would try to master eating rather than acting, singing, dancing, playing an instrument, or art. Maybe some people choose eating because it's a rather unique talent, or maybe it's because they feel that they don't have a "knack" for art, music, or athleticism. Regardless of the reason, as long as food is such a strong part of our lives, I think the trend of food competition and gluttony is here to stay. And while I may never be able to eat a six-tier burger or a three-and-ahalf pound chili cheese dog, it's always fun to sit back and watch someone else do it. I'll stick to my single cheeseburger and small order of fries.

ADAM ZALAZNIK



Jelly Bean

EMILY FOSTER

Plaza Mayor

Two lobsters on ice, heads inclined inward like elderly gentlemen in the Plaza Mayor, playing chess in the shade and dutifully ignoring the mutterings of the liver-spotted abuela, the expansive flounder sharing their ice.

CASEY TOVA MARKENSON

Commuting

I hurry down State Street, past two brothers who never have dimes for my banana.

Today, a man with my great grandfather's accent and an auburn apron stands in their place with a fist of furrowed bills.

as suited men turn into fathers and high-heeled women become their mothers.

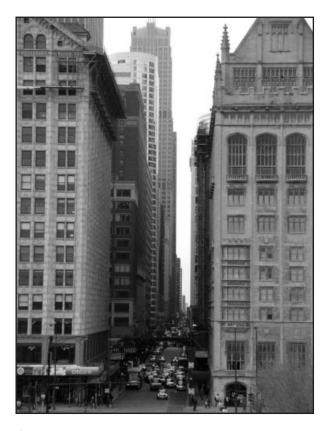
My great grandfather hands out nearly ripe fruit and tallies the week's vegetables on his right forearm.

Today, I stop inside his corner to put on my raincoat and he reaches for a plastic bag.

"No, no I don't need one," I tell his wrinkled eyes, "just an apple please,"

and after pocketing my dollar, he stamps into my palm an apple, two quarters and a plum.

SAMM MAMMOSER



City View

LEAH WOLFE

The 168

Coon the smell of freshly cut grass will carry on the breeze, and Dad will be out fussing in the yard and calling for me to drop what I'm doing and come and help with some project. The dreaded, "Leah, you got a minute?" only means one thing—home repair disaster soon to follow. A summer symphony of mowers, Little League baseball, and the bass thump of teenagers' car stereos will perform its Neighborhood Concerto Number 3 until winter comes back to close everything down. Windows will be sprung open to fill the lungs with fresh air and to replace the god-awful stank, musty smell of cigarette smoke and peoplefunk that hangs in the house. This house. The 168. This nineteen-sixties, drywall and tile, five bedroom, two bath, story and a half, built over forty years ago by my Grandma Jo. My dad and step-mom bought the house from her in '78, right after they said "I do." That's when we moved in. The coldest night in December, and my little arms carried piles of clothes and boxes of crap that are still sitting here collecting dust thirty-two years later.

This house is full of knick knacks and tacky furniture, given to us by my step-mom Susie's customers. She graduated beauty school in the early sixties and has since made a living styling their wigs. Some still come here to her in-home "shop," but most have died of old age, or cancer. My childhood didn't have home-baked cookie smell. Nope, the 168 bouquet was cigarettes, onions stewing in some German-cooking grossness, and home perm solution. Every day one of her "ladies" would come to the shop for a style and a chat, ignoring the purple walls textured with weird pokey stucco that feels rough and sharp like shredded metal. It blends

sublimely with the brown industrial carpeting, now discolored by years of dust and hair and hairspray that coats everything in the room. Final Net: it stiffens sprayed bangs to solid and can hold up in a tsunami. It literally ties the room together.

Hairspray coats the shop like grime, and greasy dirt coats the rest of this house. The surfaces of every room are decorated with patches of black where hands gripped walls and railings to stabilize the climbing of stairs, flick light switches, or open doors and cupboards. Our body prints are so ingrained in this house that a CSI team could piece together the "crime scene" as if reading a play-by-play synopsis.

"Well, sergeant, from what we can piece together, by the dirty dishes piled by the sink, and the crusting food in the pot on the stove, these people died from food poisoning."

Instead of blood spatter there is grease, instead of bullets, there are holes left by nails and pencils, hamsters, fists, darts, and even my sister's shoe where she kicked in the wall by the stairs instead of knocking my twelve-year-old nephew into old age.

"Grandma says I don' hafta go to school," he whined, crawling deep into my sister's last nerve, oblivious to her mounting lack of patience.

"Quinn, if you don't get in the damn car, I'm gonna beatcher ass." My sister stood there fuming at his defiance while arguing with my step-mom that he was, in fact, not sick at all.

"FUCK YOU, MOM!"

The next sound heard was the BOOMCRACKTHUD of drywall sent crashing in between the wall studs and Quinn's feet running to the car. In this house, the screaming match is the whistling report before the bomb explodes.

Our people routines are imprinted in flattened furniture cushions, broken drawer handles, and floor tiles worn smooth from fifty plus years of foot, paw, and walker-wheel traffic. Floorboards and doors creak with overuse, screen doors slam, and stairs groan from the stress of our over-weight. The sounds of this house tell us who's walking where. There is no hiding in this house. It knows our touch so well that it announces us.

This is the house full of more people than it should reasonably hold. And aside from my father, my step-mother and my brother, we have all come and gone; moved in, moved out, moved back or moved on. We've shifted roles and places along with the shifting of our lives. There have been abandoned dogs and children, single-moms working, and high school runaways. We've had great-grandmothers, cousins, uncles, friends, nephews, aunts, grandmas, school buddies, and one of Susie's clients living here at one time or another, or sometimes all at once. And there's always

a menagerie of animals begging for scraps, and taking up too much room on a couch.

My sister moved out at fifteen, came back with two kids in her twenties, moved back out in her thirties, then bought a house two blocks away. I left in a hurry at eighteen, came back for six months at twenty-one, bought my own house at twenty-six, then said screw it and moved to Phoenix. My twenties were spent moving around to shitty labor jobs and second shifts that barely paid the rent on various apartments in various towns. At thirty-eight, I dropped out of the working world and moved back into the 168 to go to college. Grandma Ginny moved in a few years ago and sits all day on the living room couch doing her crossword puzzles and annoying the hell out of my dad. "Pete, do you know a three letter word for donkey?"

The farthest my little brother ever went was crazy. At nineteen, he decided he was Jesus. My parents ignored it until he came into the kitchen, and in his best Linda Blair voice told my step-mom to "Clean this shit up." Then he kicked in the shop door and threatened to burn my sister's house down with his telekinesis. 911 seconds later, he was wrestling Officer Larry in the basement.

Thirty minutes away, I was doing dishes in my apartment when I got the call from my sister. "Leah, there's something wrong with Brother." I jammed my car's gas pedal to the floor and kept it there from the apartment parking lot to the hospital parkade. I made it there in fifteen minutes. My step-mom was on the way to the ER with our new Lord and Savior, and Dad hid from reality in the garage.

This house stands demurely on its crappygrass, suburban corner, across from park and church, as a testament to squeezing the hell out of life. If you could wind its walls around a cylinder, then touch a needle to its grooves, it would play a deep, scratchy melody of emotional resonance. It would sing of Christmas food fights and Thanksgiving brawls, newborn babies, and toddlers crawling. Beatings and molestings of children and adults, flood, and death and debilitating disease. It's our broken hearts that make it pulse. The walls inside get painted every ten years or so. It got new siding and windows last year (olive drab green who does that?), and Dad replaced the sagging deck boards with leftover wood from behind the shed...again. The Sharpie-marker height chart expands up and down every year as the nephews and cousins grow taller, and my step-mom and Grandma Ginny keep shrinking. And I still sit on the back porch smoking cigarettes, plotting ways to kill them all and bury them in the back yard without getting caught. Let's see, I've got duct tape, garbage

bags...does rat poison have a flavor?

All day long this house buzzes with human traffic, and with summer approaching, the sounds of the house will ramp up to a suburban roar of slamming doors, barking dogs, yelling children, laughter, screaming, cooking, fighting and TVs blaring. There is a TV in every room of this house but mine, but I don't really need one. I sit in my room doing homework to the sounds of Dad's detective shows blasting up the stairs. Emily Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death" accompanied by a soundtrack of blood curdling screams and things like "Lung-sections demonstrate marked pulmonary edema with extensive pulmonary vascular congestion." I think if Emily were here, she would appreciate the irony.

"I'm going to stab you with my banana." Wielding my dangerous fruit like an épée, and managing my best fencing pose, I give my brother an "En garde!" as he dishes his supper onto a paper plate. We meet like this on our late night kitchen rendezvous. He spends his evenings in the basement with his billiard videos and cigarettes while I drown in schoolwork. Around midnight, we meet in the kitchen for munchies and whispered silliness while Dad sleeps ten feet away in his living room recliner. If we're lucky, my step-mom comes shuffling in from her bedroom off the hallway to feed her sweet tooth, and write notes to other people in the house. She writes them on paper plates in her weird coded language no one can understand. She left one for my nephew that said "Q-Pills eat Love Grammy." It must have been a special note because she usually signs them "Thx, mgmnt." My nephew has apparently taken up the habit. He stopped in for a visit one day and wrote "BALLS" in the frosting of the cake sitting on the kitchen table. A typical hello at the 168.

This house is a testament to functional dysfunctionalism. It's broken and jury-rigged together with wire and string and bungee cords. (My father could write a how-to of 1001 uses for bungee cords). The dryer vent tubing is stapled to the laundry room rafters, and the silverware drawer opens with a "thunk," its front panel held on by a loose screw that never stays put. The plumbing is wrapped in duct tape, the front porch's bottom step is propped up on blocks, and the room above the garage is detaching from the main house like it's trying to escape. (I can totally sympathize.) But with all of its breakdown, this house is solid. It keeps us warm, keeps us dry, it keeps us together. During tornado season as a kid, the running to the basement was always signaled when you heard Dad and his portable radio on the back porch: "BRREEEP. The National Weather Service has issued a tornado warning for the following counties..." We don't run to the base-

ment anymore, unless it's to play some nine-ball on Jesus' pool table, but we still weather the harshest of storms.

My cousin Kristina, who lived here until a year and a half ago, died suddenly after being diagnosed with cancer. She felt ill and went to the doctor who found the next day that she was riddled with cancer and gave her three days to live. She lasted two. The last thing she did was flip me off and smile. A typical goodbye at the 168.

One day I'll leave this shithole behind, once again, in favor of a clean apartment or house whose yard I can manicure, whose flaws I can fix properly, whose shiny pristineness will be the envy of the neighborhood, and whose insides will smell like freshly opened summer windows instead of stale smoke and memory. I will always return home for one reason or another, because this is where I grew up, it's where I learned to become me. I will look at its walls and listen to it creak the stories of our past, even long after my parents are gone and it's just my brother, rambling back and forth from kitchen to living room in his anti-psychotic, narcohaze. Maybe by then, this house will have offered a safe place to another lost wandering soul looking for a warm bed and laughter.

Until then I'll grimace and groan. I'll whine, complain, and bitch and moan. I'll tolerate this living hell with its constant noise and evil smells. I'll wake during the day, and at night I'll sleep and dream sweet dreams of soap and bleach.

Maybe though, I'll just get lucky and the fucker'll catch on fire so we can move into some place cool with the insurance money.

Who am I kidding? This is the 168. We don't have insurance.

EVAN STICKFORT



Dream House

when hope lived in a ruined mansion

when hope lived in a ruined mansion scrap-booking sundial shadows and false mimosa blossoms praying that time would pass but beauty would remain feeding stories to the birds instead of sunflower seeds those she planted in abandoned cookie jars to fill the dark corners of the future with life she built ladders to far away places and put false bottoms in all the drawers and hid away half-wound bobbins, mismatched chopsticks and cassette tapes. freshly washed locks of hair so that when she lost herself all she had to do was look among the contents of unused tea bags and decks of cards. park maps...dried cherries... and the occasional message in a bottle. these were her 'once upon a times' but she kept them because she knew if she waited just a bit she would live in a castle once again.

GREG WHITE

It Should Have Been Me

Oh. Em. Gee.
I cannot—repeat, cannot—believe I just lost the Homecoming Queen award to Kristi Trilk. Kristi "The-Number-of-Men-I've-Slept-With-Exceeds-My-Age" Trilk. Kristi "Split-Ends" Trilk. Kristi "My-Left-Leg-Is-Clearly-Longer-Than-My-Right" Trilk. I'm disgusted. I'm a wreck. I know how the Clevelanders felt when that Lebron guy went to Miami. I finally know how it felt to be there for 9/11. I want to strangle that fat bitch.

I'm smiling.

And applauding.

I have to. I can't not smile and clap for Kristi. Nobody likes a sore loser, even one who is clearly more attractive and moral than the winner. It's unbecoming.

So I clap. And smile.

The way these eyes are lying, the goddamn mentalist guy on TV couldn't figure me out. I'm an enigma. A mothereffing mystery wrapped inside a riddle wrapped inside a sensationally dressed, beautiful body. Tracy Brookes stands next to me and does the same, so does Amber Hedley—she knew she would never win with a last name like Hedley, so it's no surprise to her that she's not the one putting on the crown—and so does Lisa Abernathy, and Jamie Krug—another loser based on name alone—and Tina Tembers (she had a shot based on alliteration, but her ass is gigantic). We're all so *happy* for Kristi "I-Shouldn't-Be-Wearing-These-Size-Two-Jeans" Trilk.

Because we have to be.

I fake my way through the congratulatory process and

nobody has any idea that I am suicidal. I have never wanted to be more dead than I do at this moment. I feel bad for those little kids in Africa with the big tummies and flies zipping around them, but their pain is nothing compared to mine. They will never be great. I *am* great, so this hurts me more. I walk out of the gymnasium and I see my reflection in one of the giant windows. I look good. No, I look great. I'm the Virgin Mary and the Whore of Babylon mixed into one tasty package. How I lost is beyond me.

I sit in the classroom that has been refashioned into our dressing room. The motivational signs encouraging us to read make me want to vomit. I am on the verge of murdering someone when Tracy makes her way toward me.

"You look beautiful," she tells me what I already know. "Seriously, you should have won tonight! You look absolutely *stunning*."

"Oh, my god, Tracy, *you* should have won. You're so beautiful! And your dress! It's so much prettier than mine," I lie to her painted-on face. She deserved the nomination to court, but only by default. Of the four hundred students in our graduating class, only six girls are masturbatory fantasies for the guys. Tracy is the sixth, and I gotta tell you, the drop from five to six is *steep*. She's cute, but she'll be lucky to marry any guy making over 100K per year.

Me, on the other hand? I'm a catch. I'm the hottest piece of ass this school has ever seen. I didn't need to beg my daddy for a boob job. I'm just a natural goddess. My strut is liquid. I've never met a man my legs couldn't hypnotize. To see me is to want me. I am a paragon of sexuality. My face is perfectly symmetrical. My hair is flawless. I do not have even a fraction of arm fat to behold.

Amber and Lisa mosey on up toward us, and we all lie to each other's pretty little faces:

"You should have won!"

"Oh, no, you should have won!"

Et cetera, et cetera.

Finally, Kristi Trilk—that lucky bitch—walks up to us and we all congratulate her for the ninetieth time. She takes it all in, drinking up the faux adoration and empty calories known as compliments. I mean nothing of what I say, but I'm more convincing than Meryl Streep playing a woman on the verge of tears in Oscar bait.

I didn't want Sammy to come home from college just for this, but mom and dad insisted, so he offers to give me a ride home. I accept big brother's offer because it beats the hell out of listening to Mom tell me how wonderful we all looked and avoiding mentioning how I lost the crown to that *slut* Kristi Trilk.

We get into the car, and before the engine turns over I'm already three drags into my cigarette.

"Don't you say a goddamn word, Sammy," I preemptively warn him.

"You lost, sis. No big deal. In ten years, you'll never remember this," he says.

"In ten years, I'll be knocking on the door of thirty, and life will be all but over, asshole," I say.

"Gimme a break."

"The only reason any of the guys voted for her—even like her—is because she sleeps with anyone with a pulse and a penis," I say.

"I gotta tell ya, sis, I can't think of a better reason," Sammy says.

"Shut up."

"She's hot. I'd lay her."

"I know you would. Shut up. Please stop talking. I can't deal with this," I say.

Sammy wisely obeys me and I look out the window as I contemplate my future. I'm beautiful. I'm incredibly smart. I'm nice. People like me. People want to be like me. If you don't know me, you want to be my Facebook friend to at least ogle my profile pics and maybe get some perverted ideas. I am okay with that. I want that, as a matter of fact. I want to be loved by everyone who meets me and envied by everyone else. I need it. I need it like a fish needs water. And I was sosososososo close to having what I needed, but that fucking bitch Kristi Trilk had to screw her way to the crown.

I feel sick.

KATIE GROSS



Dinosaur Cowboy

TAYOR KUETHER

The Factory Worker

Machines clank and whirr soullessly as fluorescent lights hum overhead: mechanical sunlight. There are no windows here, so we don't know what we're missing. Packaging greasy, heavy parts into boxes: fold fold tape, fold fold tape. Nine hours. My thin, bare shins are grey with grime off of the warehouse floor.

This is my summer.

Charles ambles slowly past my workbench. He is an older man with a lusterless grey ponytail, beat up Converse high-tops, and the same pair of faded black Levi biker shorts every single day. Every single day. I like to imagine he rides a motorcycle, but I don't know for sure.

Today his sleeveless t-shirt bares his long, sinewy arms and a guitar brand logo on the front. "Do you play?" I ask in a half-quiet voice; I've never spoken to Charles before. He looks down at his shirt, then at me. A sinister smirk spreads slowly across his thin lips.

"No," he responds in a thin, dark voice that could only suit a serpent. "I'm just a factory worker."

CAROL TYX

What is the Grass?

Mr. Lawrence, whose grass turns tawny in November, waters his golden grass in his undershirt, white belly bulging over his belt, the water arcing. We roll like dogs on his lawn, stubbly, prickled, so different from ours.

Now the hose has fallen, water sliding down the black driveway, and my mother, who is hanging sheets, my mother who always knows what to do, hollers Harry, Harry, and my father, who never runs, runs from the garage across our soft green grass.

My father, who never does anything except shave in just an undershirt, pulls off his plaid shirt and now Mr. Lawrence looks like he is sleeping, his eyes closed, the shirt tucked around him like a blanket, and my father, who always smiles, is not smiling, his arms white as bones sticking out from his undershirt, and I worry when he disappears into the ambulance

that he'll never come back, not thinking at all about Mr. Lawrence, whose lawn is getting stiffer, the water still pouring down the driveway.

ERIN DALY



Rosy Sunset

KATHERINE FISCHER

Collector

I've been a collector all my life. No, not stamps, duck decoys, comic books, Elvis whiskey decanters, or even swizzle sticks. My younger brother Charlie accumulated 563 swizzle sticks by the time he was eight. Some came from our dad's J&B Scotch-on-the rocks-with-a-twist but mostly Charlie would pilfer them from empty Bloody Mary and Vodka Tonic glasses at restaurant dinners with my parents' friends. Summer barbecues at the country club where his greatest cash cows were brightly festooned margarita swizzles.

Charlie was fond of parading the sticks out in front of the pastor who came to our house for tuna fish casserole on Fridays. Little brother lined up the one with the captain's wheel from the marina alongside the belly-dancing one from Trader Jacks and so on all the way down to the last—a palm tree stick with a monkey climbing up its bark. I'm sure when Father Mackin returned to the rectory those nights after dinner he wondered just what was to be done about those Fischers? So many swizzle sticks and their youngest child only eight. Certainly, Father Mackin prayed for us—and returned the next Friday with visions of redemption dancing in his head. Little did he know we prayed the rosary every night in front of the sad Sacred Heart of Jesus painting that dripped blood down over the piano. If that didn't work, nothing would.

I also don't collect coins, autographs, matchbook covers, guns, or horses. My ex-sister-in-law collected horses. She even had a ranch. She got up to six of them. That's a lot of oats. When she and my brother split, she kept the horses and claimed she

was homeless. Did you know it costs \$1,000 a month to keep that many horses? Don't get me started.

Although I own five bushel baskets of yarn, I wouldn't say I collect them. I knit the skeins up and give away the resultant hats, sweaters, scarves, and socks. It's something like Jesus collecting the loaves and fishes and multiplying them. When his followers gathered up the leftovers, there were twelve basketfuls for food the next day. I'd call that stockpiling, not collecting. Then again, I don't work miracles. At least not most of the time.

Psychologists claim that our collecting habits are established by age ten or eleven, but my mother, Tweetie, didn't begin collecting spoons until she was in her forties. At first, these were spoons she'd pick up on trips to Spain, Scotland, or Medjugorje. Spoons were a far wiser choice than oriental rugs or chairs. I'm just saying, try squeezing a chair into a suitcase and explaining to TSA why you're a barcalounger-toting traveler. Eventually, mother's children began gifting her with spoons from our many travels. What else do you give a woman who already has a complete collection of ninety-eight Hummels, eighteen teacups, and eleven children? I sent her a spoon from Japan—no small feat given Asian propensity for dining utensils. After a few years, with all of us spooning her, Tweetie ran out of room on the four racks in her dining room. She resorted to actually using the spoons to stir her tea. "No more spoons," she announced at a family reunion. "Knives?" I asked. No, she didn't want those either. Too dangerous.

Collector burnout must be common. But not in my case. My collection is terribly, definitely dangerous and so addictive that not all the twelve step programs in the universe could cure me.

Some collectors are obsessive compulsives. We only feel safe by surrounding ourselves with the sureness of our collected objects. The more we collect, the more we feel we expand ourselves or some such drivel. Others suggest that collecting is a way of dealing with inner panic and fear. King Tutankhamen collected rocks. President Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark on an expedition so they'd pick up more fossils. Jesus collected souls. My husband is off the psychiatrist hook—or couch, as it may be. As a museum man, he collects for a living. They actually pay him to do it. There's a whole science to acquisitions. My dad acquired corporations. Acquisition editors collect manuscripts. Tell these to your shrink.

After each acquisition, I add the new-found prize to my shelves of increasing collections. I may change their order on the shelf, shift them around one in front of the other and then be-

hind. I make them march two by two depending upon my mood. Occasionally I remove one, but it's never forever. It's all for the sake of color, size, and orderliness. You understand, of course. Here, let me show you.

See this one? This is John, a former teacher I heard about on National Public Radio. He went off the deep end of the chalkboard one spring and never returned to the classroom. Instead, he now runs a B&B south of the Mason-Dixon line, and he cooks. Because he traveled the world in the years intervening between making grades and making beds, he's more oyster and coq au vin than black-eyed peas and chitterlings. Maybe I'll re-name him Jesse and use him as a springboard into an essay about life after teaching—or one about cooking international. I'm not sure yet.

That one in the middle of the shelf—I scooped her up at the symphony before anyone else could grab her. I named her Madame Guinevere the moment I saw her walking through the lobby at intermission. You couldn't miss her—the Prada snakeskin spike heels, the gold lame pantaloons, and that emerald-studded lorgnette! I keep meaning to write her into a story, but so far, the right place and plot haven't shown up. Villain, though, definitely a villain. Unless, of course, I use her as the alt.savior. I never know until I pick up the pen.

Here's one of my favorites. I call her Dottie. I found her one afternoon boating the Mississippi River when I docked at the backwater diner. There she was flipping pork patties and fried onion rings, "Here, have another, hon. You're just skinny-shim and rag-bones." Eventually in real life she left the diner. I hear she lives in town now. She moved on. The diner was torn down and a new one built in its place. But in my published book, she is forever at the diner orchestrating river campers and boaters who drop in expecting sliders and backwater gossip. That's the thing about the published people in my collection. They are set in stone tablets.

That handsome man with the moustache next to Dottie on the shelf looks a lot like young Omar Sharif, doesn't he? Oh, Dr. Zhivago. I gave him thick black glasses and made him a murder suspect in one of my short stories. See the recklessness in his eyes? Don't worry. He didn't do it. I found him one summer before I was even much of a writer. He sat across from me on the hovercraft crossing over from Dover. Another writer might have put him in a James Bond novel I suppose, but not me. He turns out to be a random geeky guy traipsing around the world in search of love. He never finds it. Well, at least he's never found it yet.

Maybe I should give him a comeback? Pair him with Guinevere? No, it would never work. He's too purposeful and she's

Sometimes a prize item just lands in your lap like manna from heaven. I know that's a trite cliché. Some even say manna is just plant lice, but I'm using it anyway. I've got the pen and you don't, at least not on this page. Not today.

Anyway, back to the manna. I was minding my own business writing on the computer one day when what should appear over the screen out my window but the hero in my next story. In real life, the neighbor across the street died. I only knew her by sight, so she was perfect fodder for fiction even if she was dead. Her children were carrying away her possessions. When the hatboxes came out, so did my story. Was she really an ax-murderess?

It's a wonder I haven't been sued.

It's not only strangers who end up on my shelves, however. My mother appears so frequently on the pages I write that in real life she's taken to saying to me, "You can't write about what I tell you next." On occasion, however, she lets me place her on the shelf along with the others I've collected. She should never have told me about naming her dolls "Bread" and "Doughnut." She got them as premium awards because her parents bought so much bread during the Depression. They're going on the shelf. I just can't help it.

My friends, my children, my husband—they all appear on the shelf from time to time. They're quite aware of their roles in my newspaper columns and nonfiction essays. They don't suspect how they're built into fictional characters yet, however. That's why using the possessive pronoun "my" is particularly true when I write My friends, My children, My husband. When I write them, they are Mine. The girl who counts syllables, the lover away on too many business trips, the diva, the easy-going sheriff, the singer, the nature girl, the arguer—they're all there. Of course, they'll read this and I'll have blown my cover. Then again, maybe not. People rarely recognize themselves in print unless you make them empresses or princes. It's the same with reincarnation. No one claims that in a past life she was a scullery maid or he was a bootshine.

Pickle 'em. I considered putting them all in jars on the shelf, lids screwed on tight, but there's really no need for such extremes. For one thing, as soon as I put them behind glass, they can't breathe. Sure, once in a rare while one of them escapes. I try to name him, attempt to insert him in a story or essay, but he rebels. Then when I'm not looking, he slides down the side of the shelf and makes off out the door. What he doesn't know is that I

can get him back. Every time. His attempted escape is part of the thrill. It's part of the story.

Book collectors are called bibliophiles; stamp collectors are philatelists; conchologists can't get enough shells. I wonder what I'd be called? The inventor? The creator? The murderer? "God" has a nice ring to it (although the real one is probably not as ruthless as I am).

Among the rarest in my collection is "Ellen," the shawled woman I discovered patrolling the streets back when I was in college. She had an enormous tapestry bag slung across her chest and pulled a shopping cart behind her. Between swigs of whatever was in the brown paper bag, she regularly dropped in at O'Toole Office Supply on Main Street. I followed her in once and eavesdropped. She asked the sales clerk, "Got any pocket calendars?"

Even though you're not a collector, you have to admit that one was too good to pass up. Ellen showed up in one of my stories later in Alaska as a woman who drops into the parish rectory to convince the young priest that she'd be an excellent bookkeeper. Only in my story, there's no brown paper bag and her name is Bridie—not "Birdie." Pay attention. She gnaws on a chicken leg which she pulls out of that tapestry bag instead. In real life, she'll never know I've included her in my collection and installed her in a story. None of my characters do.

Neither will you for that matter.

KAITLIN KELLOGG



The Things I Had to Learn

ANNETTE MARTIN

A Strange Love Affair

Once upon a Time—I lived all the way Over-Here.
He lived all the way Over-There.

This was not very interesting.

By happenstance, It came it be Halfway ventured each, To Almost-There.

And then it was In my eternal Grace I stumbled— Upon him.

"Forgive me, Sir," said I.
"Don't worry 'bout it," said he.
And then—
I always knew
Mathematicians
Were Magicians—
A pinecone appeared
At my feet.
"It's a gift," he said
And walked away.

"But?" I stuttered—
He'd vanished.
I picked it up—
Mumbling—
"I would have preferred flowers."

Then
Walking
Down the street, I saw it—
His mathematician cape! —
I snatched it.

"Hello, Sir," said I.

"Hey," said he.

"Won't you dine with me?"
Reluctant—he consented.

At first, he refused To speak. "Whence came you?" I pressed. "From Over-There." "Why, I am from Over-Here!" "How grand."

And... silence.

Too much silence.

Until I hit upon a stroke of brilliance. Smiled I trickily— Time to taunt A mathematical genius.

"Now, may I ask"—
"I guess," said he
"Well, you see
I've been thinking—
Is not the first
the
Most Beautiful Of Numbers—
Elegant and whole?"

"The first?" he asked
"But surely not!"
"But why ever not?" asked I.
"What Number, then,
Does hold the claim
of Most Beautiful Of All?"

At that, He smiled— "Well" he said "It's funny you should ask..."

A magical dinner! A mystical night Philosophical enchantment And Mathematical abstraction— A very labyrinth of discussion (And a touch of attraction).

"Well now," he said, "I don't know what to do." "Worry not," said I, "If you would like, we'll meet again soon"—

And with a coy smile, I dropped him a flower; And slipped carefully away.

So it began.

A perfectly calculated series of Incalculable Consequence. A smooth dance of Precise lines...

An exchange of Pinecones and Poetry, Of questions and Carnations,

In the Strange Love Affair Of a Philosophical-Enchantress And a Mathematical-Magician.

CAROL NILLES

Danny Glover

Coming! Oh, he's really coming! Danny Glover's coming. "Class, I want perfect behavior. All eyes will be on our school today."

We filed into the auditorium demurely. My heart was hopping. Third row. Really close. Applause! Ms. Kopf read her poem. And he was crying. He hugged Ms. Kopf! We clapped. We whistled! And then— Danny Glover kissed Ms. Kopf! We screamed! He talked to us so wonderfully.

"Danny, over here. Here I am." But he said farewell.

Danny Glover never touched me. Never hugged me. Never kissed me. Never saw me! But I saw Danny Glover.

Later I climbed the stairs to the stage. I sat in THE chair. "Danny Glover sat here." Ms. Kopf came by. I grabbed the water glass. "I'm taking this home. This is mine. Danny Glover drank from this glass." Ms. Kopf said, "Ok."

EVAN STICKFORT



The Lowly Potato Farmer

CONTRIBUTORS

SEBASTIAN MATHIAS ARMENDARIZ is a freshman at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. As an English major and music minor, he appreciates the aesthetics of harmony and discord and seeks to express that relationship in any of his pieces and/or performances. He is an assistant choreographer for the show choir at Memorial High School in Eau Claire. He plays soccer and basketball, and is always up for watching stand-up comedy. He also likes to put ketchup on his eggs. His family is both his support and inspiration; he owes them everything.

GARY ARMS' first play, "The Duchess of Spiders" was produced by the Black Swan Theatre Company in Asheville, NC. His second play, "Emily Dickinson's Birthday Party," was a finalist in the Mill Mountain Annual Play Contest. His third play, "The Arranged Marriage," was published by the Eldridge Publishing Company and has been performed many times. It was translated into Dutch. His play "The Porn King's Daughter" was one of the winners of the Iowa Play Contest and was performed at the Civic Center in Des Moines. The Princeton Review has published two of his books; the last one won a Parents Guide Award. Gary Arms is a professor at Clarke University in the Language and Literature department.

ELEANOR LEONNE BENNETT is a sixteen-year-old photographer and artist who has won contests with National Geographic, The Woodland Trust, The World Photography Organisation, Winstons Wish, Papworth Trust, Mencap, Big Issue, Wrexham Science, Fennel and Fern, and Nature's Best Photography. She has had her photographs published in exhibitions and magazines across the world including the Guardian, RSPB Birds, RSPB Bird Life, Dot Dot Dash, Alabama Coast, Alabama Seaport, and NG Kids Magazine (the most popular kids magazine in the world). She was also the only person from the UK to have her work displayed in the National Geographic and Airbus run "See The Bigger Picture" global exhibition tour with the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity 2010. She is the only visual artist published in the Taj Mahal Review June 2011, and the youngest artist to be displayed in Charnwood Art's Vision 09 Exhibition and New Mill's Artlounge Dark Colours Exhibition.

EMILY COTTON CRAM is earning a double emphasis in sculpture and drawing at Clarke University. She lives on a small farm near Clinton, Iowa. When she's not busy with school, and that's not very often, she enjoys reading, hiking, riding horses, and playing with animals.

ERIN DALY is a junior at Clarke University from Rockford, Illinois pursuing a B.A. in religious studies and a minor in writing. She wrote several pieces for the Archdiocese of Dubuque's newspaper, The Witness, during her fall 2011 semester when she interned at the archdiocese's pastoral center. She also served as co-editor of this edition of the *Tenth Muse* and is excited to have her work featured in this magazine. Erin has many loves: writing, baking, classic rock music, road trips to Colorado, humor and comedy, Mumford & Sons, chocolate, and the "Stuff You Should Know" podcast, just to name a few. She is a die-hard U2 fan, and she fulfilled her longtime dream of seeing them in concert in May 2011.

KATHERINE FISCHER is an award-winning author (*Dreaming the Mississippi* and *That's Our Story and We're Sticking to It!*) and professor emerita at Clarke University in Dubuque. A featured columnist in various newspapers, her work also appears in magazines like *The Cream City Review, A Room of Her Own, Creative Nonfiction*, and the *Cimarron Review*. She graduated from Clarke awhile ago.

EMILY FOSTER was born and raised in Oregon but now finds herself a senior English major at Carleton College. She is working on her senior project, which is a collection of poetry based on photographs from her travels. When she's not writing poetry, you'll find her reading (for class and for fun), traveling, sewing, learning languages or attending various dance activities, including Competitive Ballroom and Latin Dance Team practice. At home she enjoys taking long walks with her dog around her family's Christmas tree farm.

VLAD FREDERICK is a senior at Drake University. His primary focus is his B.A. in English, with a minor in biology. He is currently an intern for the Younger American Poets Reading Series, which brings renowned modern poets into the Des Moines area to do free readings each month in support of the local literary community. His intention is to pursue a graduate career via the M.F.A. in creative writing, specifically focusing on poetry.

Growing up in MATTHEW GRIESON'S family meant you were thankful for what you had, because if you didn't have it, you probably wouldn't get it. Most of his childhood memories begin while living in an old military hospital turned slummish apartments in the North side of Clinton, Iowa. This is where he moved to Oregon when he was four. Now he's a newspaperman in his early twenties living in what seems like a higher grade of slummish apartments. Most of his time is spent building cigar box guitars, writing, and staring out of his ever-open bedroom window.

KATIE GROSS is a senior at Clarke University who will be graduating in the spring of 2012 with a B.F.A. Currently she illustrates children's books written by a local author.

ELAINE HART is a super-senior at Clarke University, majoring in English and elementary education, minoring in music, and obtaining teaching endorsements in reading and special education. Elaine spent her summer vacation as a counselor at Camp Albrecht Acres from which she drew her inspiration for her piece. Elaine met many unique and memorable campers there and discovered her passion for working with those with special needs. Thank goodness she was convinced by the ever-persuasive education department at Clarke to add an endorsement when she did. Elaine hopes to get a job teaching at some level, in some city, sometime in the future.

CONOR KELLEY is a senior English major and baseball player at the University of Dubuque. He has been featured in The Telegraph Herald, The Finn Valley Voice (Donegal, Ireland), and the inaugural issue of the *Tenth Muse*. Conor is currently a staff writer for The Belltower, the campus newspaper at the University of Dubuque. Originally from Seattle, WA, he is a dedicated Seattle Mariners fan. Conor also enjoys Seinfeld, Calvin & Hobbes, Ernest Hemingway, Lynyrd Skynyrd, steak, and Jack Daniel's.

KAITLIN KELLOGG is from Bellevue, Iowa. She made her *Tenth Muse* piece at the end of her senior year of high school. It is significant to her because, as the title says, it represents the things she had to learn that ultimately result in who she is today. Instead of pursuing art at Clarke, which was heavily weighed among her decisions, she is now a psychology & social work major who continues finding and learning who she is here at Clarke.

WILL KELLY is an American writer, visual artist, and one-time Google Street View star. He studied at Clarke University, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2011. Some of his current interests include Annie Clark of St. Vincent, mint chocolate chip ice cream, and Blu-ray discs from The Criterion Collection. He is currently working on his debut novel, *Sustainability*, which will hopefully be in stores before hoverboards and power shoelaces become a reality in 2015 [citation needed].

TRISHA KENINGER DAY graduated from Clarke in 1967 and lives in Oregon, Wisconsin, with her husband Dennis. She is a freelance writer and the author of *Inside the School of Charity: Lessons from the Monastery* published by Cistercian Publications/Liturgical Press. Trisha is a founding member of the Associates of the

Iowa Cistercians, a group of women and men who strive to apply monastic wisdom to their lives as lay persons. She is active throughout the country as a retreat presenter and speaker.

TAYLOR KUETHER is a junior journalism major at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, hoping to pursue her Masters of Fine Arts degree in writing after graduation. She works as a reporter at the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram newspaper, and in her free time loves to read or ride her bike. She plans to eventually settle in a large city and work for a women's magazine. Taylor's interests include travel, feminism, fashion, and cats.

DANIELLE LENSEN is from Cascade, Iowa, and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in English from Clarke University in May of 2011. She's currently working as a library specialist at Northeast Iowa Community College, and also fills up her time volunteering at Carnegie-Stout Public Library. She also loves spending weekends at the Dubuque Museum of Art as a front desk receptionist because every day sitting at that desk gives her new inspiration for writing stories—"Every Christmas" being one of them.

JESS LEONARD SCHENK is a Clarke graduate living in Dubuque, Iowa, with her husband and their cats. When she's not writing, thinking about writing, or forcing people to read her writing, she enjoys taking ridiculously long naps and yelling into the void. Jess is currently working on a collection of short stories.

KIM LYON will be graduating from Clarke this year with a B.A. in music and another in art, focusing on piano and painting. After spending a semester studying abroad in Newcastle, Australia, she refers to both New South Wales and Iowa as her home. After graduation, Kim plans to continue studying piano, accompanying in the community, and working as a church musician, as well as continuing her art career through selling her paintings and submitting works to galleries.

SAMM MAMMOSER is a twenty-year-old Clarke student, majoring in Communications and Spanish. She is currently studying abroad in Sevilla, Spain, tanning and ramping up her metabolism while eating the delicious foods. She is hoping to have figured her life out by May of 2012, when she graduates, but she is counting on the whole Mayan Calendar business anyway.

As a senior English major at Carleton College, CASEY TOVA MARKENSON is attempting to persuade employers that storytelling is a marketable skill. Originally from the best half of Massachusetts (the West, of course), Markenson begrudgingly admits

that her adopted undergraduate home in Minnesota is a pretty alright place. She didn't realize she was a poet until her work appeared in *Impressions* and *The Manuscript*. One day, Markenson will bake the perfect loaf of bread.

A sophomore at Carleton College, ANNETTE MARTIN is a Southern California native exploring the wonders of rural, seasonal Minnesota. So far, it's been wonderful. She is an aspiring philosopher, chemist, and (very) amateur mathematician. She is an accomplished literary-lover. She enjoys manipulating concepts, pouring over books, and playing with words. In her spare time, she likes to defend the prose of Jane Austen, volunteer at a local clinic, and waltz—be it in a dance studio or under the first snow (note: she likes ballroom dancing in general). She is also partial to stargazing and extended conversations in coffeehouses.

MAX MCNETT is a desperate wanna-be of a writer who enjoys the finer things in life: Jameson Irish Whiskey, the works of Henrik Ibsen, and Nebraska by Bruce Springsteen (among other things, of course). After graduation, he hopes to be employed and have a roof over his head. No joke there, folks; that is a legitimate aspiration. In his free time, he enjoys growing facial hair, complaining about music and film, and trying, in vain, to write songs as good as Paul Westerberg.

CAROL NILLES graduated in 1958 with a major in English and minors in history and elementary education. Carol taught fifth and sixth graders until 1977 when she left Iowa for the big city of Milwaukee. She then used her language skills in composing or proofing letters and brochures in various offices around town. Now in retirement Carol fancies herself a writer and annually attends a writers' week in Green Lake, Wisconsin. She returned to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, her hometown, in 2008.

CARRIE PIEPER is a sophomore English and drama major. Her creative writing career began in the little town of Adel, Iowa, where she began composing stories before she even knew how to write, forcing her older brother to write them down as she dictated them. She would then add illustrations and staple the pages together to form books (it's worth noting that these were awardwinning illustrations; she later won ten dollars for a fire safety poster she made in third grade). This early interest in writing soon bloomed into a passion, and she has been writing fervently ever since.

JOEY STAMP is an avid photographer. This past summer he spent his time as a photography intern for the Dubuque Chamber of

Commerce. Within the last year he completed his yearlong project of taking pictures every day resulting in a 365 final pictures and a massive collection of 20,000 other pictures. When he is not taking pictures, he spends most of his time focusing on his theater major at Clarke University.

GAGE STEENHAGEN is a senior studying for a drama major and a music minor. After graduating he plans to work professionally as an actor, designer, and technician in theatre and film, and ultimately become a director. He began drawing at a very young age and was always in trouble for doodling in class. It became a part of him. Art helps him focus, express, and understand the world. His mother once told him, "Leave beauty wherever you go." He tries to live that philosophy in his everyday life.

EVAN STICKFORT is a senior studio art major with an emphasis in painting at Clarke University. He grew up on a farm outside Garnavillo, Iowa, where he spent the majority of his time hanging out in a dilapidated air stream trailer, painting and playing guitar. He is also very excited to complete his senior show and graduate so he can continue working on his art. Evan's artwork has also appeared in EXPOSÉ: The Finest Digital Art in the Known Universe, and Direct Art Magazine.

CAROL TYX teaches writing and American literature at Mt. Mercy University in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Her work has been published in *Yankee, Sojourners, Pirene's Fountain, RHINO, the Aurorean, Poetry East, Iowa City Poetry in Public*, and a chapbook, *The Fifty Poems*. On any given day you might find her cooking with kale, admiring day lilies, or standing on her head.

KASIE VON HADEN is currently a senior at Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where she is pursuing a B.A. in English literature with minors in Spanish and Servant Leadership. While not in class, she enjoys her work as a resident assistant, a campus tour guide, and editor of the student newspaper. After graduating in May 2012, Von Haden will be attending graduate school to earn a master's degree in Student Affairs Administration.

GREG WHITE is a Dubuque native. He is on the verge of graduating and becoming a real-life adult. This excites him. He enjoys spending time with his beautiful fiancé—a wonderful young lady who Greg believes is insane to be marrying him. When he is not doing that, he reads novels and comic books, watches the NBA, professional wrestling, and horror flicks. He is more than prepared for the impending zombie apocalypse. He also enjoys Kraft Macaroni and Cheese, and, when no one is around, to perform karate on invisible opponents like a madman.

LEAH WOLFE is a suburban misfit born in the wrong place and time. The first thing she will do after graduating is flee the state of Iowa. She was born here, jumped the wall and escaped for a time, and was dragged back here by the fate police. She is still bitter and believes Iowa is where people go to die. She swears like a sailor, and has no problem crying in public because passion matters most. She hopes she dies being smothered by puppies.

ADAM ZALAZNIK is a senior at Clarke University in pursuit of a graphic design degree. When not slaving away on schoolwork, he does a variety of freelance jobs. He is currently interning at the Julien Dubuque International Film Festival and has a lot of other great projects in the works. He currently has a website with some of his work and contact info should you care to contact him. Hey, it's a shameless plug, but why not?: www.adamzalaznik.com.

DR. BRYAN J. ZYGMONT is particularly prone to verbosity and can seldom write anything of note in less than 100 words. He is currently Assistant Professor of Art History at Clarke University. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Maryland in 2006 and is a scholar of American art, history, and culture. He has particular passions for American portraiture, brewing beer, trips to Italy, running straight on a treadmill, cinema, eating breakfast at all times of the day, and bow ties. He believes in the University of Arizona, Atticus Finch, Indiana Jones, Ian McEwan, the sardonic prose of Christopher Hitchens, and the films of Davids Lean and Fincher. He would write more, but it's time to take Romey the Wunderhund for a walk.

