When the first issue of The Cauldron debuted in the Spring of 1962, it was comprised of eighteen pieces by fifteen students, cost a mere thirty-five cents a copy, and with the exception of the cover and odd page, was duplicated via mimeograph. Like most everything else, save a passion for the arts, The Cauldron has evolved with time. Over the past decades, The Cauldron has steadily grown in size and ambition, inspired by and seeking to maintain the goals upon which the magazine was originally founded. In the premiere issue’s introductory letter, The Cauldron’s founding editors asked “What of the future?” Cauldron, which has many untired possibilities as a channel for student work, invites both student and faculty suggestions for a still uncertain future. Until then, however, why not turn the pages and see what the present offers? While in 2011, we are confident in The Cauldron’s future, this would not be the case without your valued readership and support. We thank you for picking up this year’s magazine and in doing so, taking part in a Kalamazoo College tradition. We urge you to follow our predecessors’ wise advice: turn the pages and see what this generation has contributed to an already rich history.
the
CAULDRON
2010-2011 Volume 31
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We would like to thank….

The Office of Student Involvement for valuing this magazine and providing the funding to make it possible. In particular, we would like to thank Brian Dietz for his continued support and his much appreciated advice in navigating finances.

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Chad Sweeney, a visiting professor of poetry, for his willingness to read all of the pieces included within The Cauldron and for selecting this year’s winners of the Divine Crow Award.

Director of Publications, Lisa Darling, for all her help in designing and compiling The Cauldron. Without her guidance and enthusiasm, and the tireless effort put forth by her student assistant, Shoshana Schultz, the magazine would be lost.

Our faculty advisor, Di Seuss, for inspiring an interest in and commitment to The Cauldron. For years, Di’s passion for and support of the publication has been unwavering, as has been her support of The Cauldron’s staff.

The Cauldron staff, for reviewing each and every submission with the attention to detail necessary for making selections from such a rich and diverse pool of work.

Dianne and Robert Vibbert for their continued generosity and support of The Cauldron. This magazine continues to honor the memory of their daughter, Stephanie Vibbert, for her commitment to creative writing and political and social justice.

The readers. Thank you for your interest in The Cauldron and for sharing our excitement.
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AWARDS

*The Stephanie Vibbert Award is given to one piece of writing in the magazine which most exemplifies the intersection between creative writing and community engagement. This award honors Stephanie Vibbert, an English/Psychology double major who died in a car accident, returning from a peace march in Washington D.C., in her senior year at “K.” Stephanie’s life was passionately devoted to both creativity and community service. This award was created to encourage Kalamazoo College writers to use their creativity to reflect upon and explore issues of poverty, human rights, sexual orientation, race, class, gender and cultural diversity.

*The Divine Crow Awards are given annually to three outstanding pieces in The Cauldron, regardless of genre, and are judged blind by a visiting professor. This year’s Divine Crow judge was Professor Chad Sweeney from the Kalamazoo College English Department.

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On the cover of this year’s Cauldron is Margy Brill’s photograph “The Looking Glass.” In the photograph, we see the city of Chicago’s skyline from the Skydeck, a glass balcony extending from the 103rd floor of the Willis Tower. An anonymous girl is featured in the lower corner, experiencing a moment of panic. The photograph has the composition of a painting: a background, a foreground, and most importantly, a point of convergence. In this year’s issue of The Cauldron, we have constructed a venue in which multiple perspectives, genres, and meanings can co-exist, finding significance in their relationships to one another.

To assume that each of these pieces falls under a predetermined and unifying theme would be doing a disservice to the individual composition and artistry of each piece. When asking for submissions, we did not strive for this type of formal compilation. However, like the blending of buildings and color in the background of “The Looking Glass,” the pieces have found a space of convergence where they can fit into themselves, foster a connection between authors, and create a relationship with the reader.

In Hannah Daly’s “Mirror Images,” we are forced to confront issues of perspective and identity that can be traced through
The Cauldron’s pages. The relationship described in “Mirror Images” shows the perils of familiarity and desensitization in loving relationships. As time passes, the man “prefers to look at her reflection wherever he can find it,” rather than her true image. This distortion of perspective reflects the fragility of our own beliefs about love and romance, and consequently, the fragility of our own identities.

Along with creating new perspectives, the works featured in this year’s collection create new meanings for existing concepts. In her poem “Strawberries,” Rebecca Staudenmaier constructs a new meaning of femininity through an artful comparison of menstruation to fruit. We end The Cauldron with Rachel Dallman’s “Cathedrals,” where she constructs a new meaning for an established place and redefines the notion of a sacred space through her association of wombs with cathedrals.

As you thumb through the pages of this issue of The Cauldron, we invite you to construct your own meanings of what you consider sacred – whether it be family, place, or love. We encourage you to deconstruct what you think you already know. You may be surprised by what you find.

- Co-Editors Maris Cohen and Hallie Hinkhouse
The night I didn’t go to the psychiatric hospital

KIM GRABOWSKI

was the night of the hailstorm that destroyed the church.

_Thunder, that’s just the sound of angels bowling_,

even angels play games, sometimes, even angels play

a sort of bobbing for apples, their teeth gnashing

at the siding, taking bites of the rotten wood and rolling

silos from one side to another, how tricky it is to get

a hold of those things to pull them into the sky

where they belong, oversized cigarette butts stubbed

into the earth. It’s just a game, don’t take it too seriously—

the windows sound like they’re breaking but it’s only

God, he’d never take it too far.
I dream of your miniature not-hands
chained in a void of sleep, and wake all sweat
lathered, pounding
breasts. My only milk is
waxy, smeared
near the roses. All the irony
stagnates: I tried not to look
at the blood chunks, but couldn’t
ignore how they resisted,
or how they resembled
clumps of pomegranate seeds. I’ve begun
avoiding flowers that seem bloody,
and the ones vaguely vaginal, too. Which leaves
a garden full of nettles this time of year.
UNTITLED
SARAH ALLIS
It was this morning, when the cranes came.
My mom’s head was down, my dad pulled us all together.
We couldn’t hear him. The chainsaws revved and cut and cut.
Dad finished when the cranes, lifting half our house, flew away.

Mom’s head was down, I thought dad held us together.
Nine-year-old jaws chewing on gum and ignorance.
Dad was finished and the cranes, holding half our house, came to rest across town,
each half drafty, one to see the sun rise, one to see the sun set.

Nine years old, jaws chewing my gums and ignorance.
Nailing army men to the dying tree, melting and cut in half,
each half drafty, one to see the sun rise, one to see the sun set.
Back and forth and back. I got extra textbooks.

Back nailing army men to the dying tree, melting in halves.
Every year, it’s double the presents; still me, my brother and sister are halved.
Back and forth and back. I got extra textbooks.
The three of us, divvied up—“you get them this weekend.”

Every year, it’s double the family, still me, my brother and sister are halved.
I get a new mom and dad, in steps of course.
The three of us divvied up—“I get them that weekend.”
All my clothes, sitting on the kitchen table—at the other house.

I got a new mom and dad, in step of course,
she folds my shirts weird, kissing my dad on the lips.
All my clothes, sitting on the kitchen table—at the other house.
He drinks sometimes and doesn’t pick mom up from the airport; she cries.

My mom folds my shirts right, kissing him on the lips,
renovation and time partly completes the two drafty halves,

(continued)
he drinks sometimes. He sent the limo for my mom; she cried in the back. Getting older, I still wish I had worn that shirt in my other closet.

Renovation and time partly completes the two drafty halves, I have two rooms, two lives; still sawdust coats my bookshelves. Getting older, I still wish I had worn those pants in my other drawers. I can still hear those brutal chains cutting my room in two.

I have two rooms, many lives; sawdust still coats my bookshelves. We couldn’t hear because the chainsaws revved and cut and cut. I can still hear those brutal chains cutting my home in two. It was that morning when the cranes came.
UNTITLED

CIERRA GILLARD
I remember into the basement,  
the scratchy berber stairs into what-I-didn't-like.  
I remember green-white or buttery-bright-yellow lighting  
one in a tube above the pool table  
and one in an uncovered orb,  
a bauble dripping into the grody vine,  
a shoelace pull-string.  
A soft, hollow metal bell at the end, muted by a knot,  
something to hold onto.  
I can't walk into dark basements.  
I remember the fat plastic world. A kitchen,  
a tool bench, the vanity, the cash register  
in the corner.  
I remember where they put my turtle,  
and the computer, when it was secondary,  
on an old writing desk of wood and tin and paint splatters  
I remember finding a mouse in the tall-tin-cylinder  
garbage can. He had a sucker stick in him,  
a fear of mice and sucker stick litter.  
I can't listen to Smashmouth,  
because I remember a headache on a car ride to ice-cream  
and an allergy sun. Plus toosweetsick.  
I can't like summer some days,  
because I remember  
things being too bright. Glowing grass and blue and white  
hurts the roots of my eyes, and they retaliate  
by putting black spots in everything: my dad gardening  
in tanning oil dripped dirt, lying in the back yard withabeer.  
I remember dancing to country music on the back porch,  
from the basement speakers and the sticky wetland critters' noises. And hot.  
I can't eat taco salad because of the one hot night  
that I threw it up.  
I can't like Tupperware on the counter, because I remember
the same stomach flu,
the color of the light bulb in the basement,
the raw-ing scratch of berber beef.
I can't say the word beef.
I can't lose control,
because I remember
that one time I did,
And it kind of made me feel gross.
How to Piss Off Mom

KAMILLE CROSS

Draw you standing just to her left,
barely reaching her belly button,
fingers sewn together,
matching tidal wave eyes,
her hair sharply clasped with
the tea set clip,
yours warmly cupping your face
in orange swirls. Try
a nightlight yellow
shirt for her, change it to
blue because you rolled in the grass
together.
Bruise your shirt with shades of purple and
black polka dots.
Complete the drawing with
upside down rainbows below
your eyes.
Be sure to use the markers
Dad bought you for your fifth birthday,
on the pink couch.
My dad is sitting on the stairs in back of his old yellow house. He is bent over his German Shepherd, Milo, running his fingers down the dog’s face rhythmically, the way he said he used to do for me when I was a baby. Milo is panting and smiling. His head turned up toward my dad, all quiet and grateful.

His fingers touch Milo’s face calmly, unhurried. They sweep rough hairs away from the dog’s eyes, smooth the stray hairs straight. I’ve missed my dad. For a few years now, actually, but I didn’t have the strength to come see him until recently. He is such a difficult man to deal with, and I didn’t inherit my mother’s patience. Part of me wonders why it took her so long to leave him, how she could stand through bruises and how she could hold up his heavy arms. And sometimes, I get the urge to ask him these sorts of questions. Dad, who’s gonna hold you up now? You’re looking mighty low.

But I don’t mention my mom around him because he still hates her. After all, I imagine his memory has it written down as quite the betrayal. Following twenty-six years of companionship, she left him for a white man. Skin pale as a painter’s canvas. But my dad, he only tasted other women; he never took them all in.

I look away from my dad and put my hands to my lower back. I’m only twenty-three years old, but I can’t stand still for more than five minutes. It’s funny, I can walk for hours, but when I’m still, it makes my back cry out. And still, I’m standing here, for him. We are looking out over the backyard now, and it’s breaking my heart. Once delicious and alive, now my mother’s yard is a tribute to the ovine: all round and graying and bored like a shepherd’s flock. It meekly follows Dad wherever he leads, which is nowhere good and nowhere green. Old, sad clouds hang over dried bushes; white, furry, rotting dog shit sits tucked between uncut grass; and the vegetable garden is peaking into teardrops and old age. I remember yellow squash and striped watermelons—sweetness connected to the earth through umbilical cord roots. Not brown dirt, but rich soil. I remember this yard, all steady and alive. He does not.

My dad is a pen running out of ink. His mind does not write down everything and sometimes he blots out what he does not like. As much as I want to, I don’t trust his memories and I think he hates me for it. I don’t blame him, but I don’t blame myself either. I turn back toward my dad, and he is quiet for once. Not the

(continued)
way I remember him. He is still petting Milo, but his eyes are looking at the yard, all overgrown and wild—even in all of its stillness. The stairs my dad sits on spring from the unfinished deck into the beginning of the yard, and his nice black Nikes are buried in the grass. I think about telling him to put on his work boots, but his face is calm and unworried. For some reason, it reminds me of those cabbage patch kids—all round and thick.

“Dad, what are you trying to show me?” I ask. He looks up to me casually and sweeps his hand across the air like he’s smoothing sand.

“I need help cleaning this shit up.”

I turn my head away and breathe in deep like I am about to say something profound, but what I have to say, I can’t. Pick up your own shit, old man. You let it get this way, you should be the one fixing it. But I know that it doesn’t work this way—not outside of my father’s house, at least. People are almost never bigger than the problems they create; we all need help. That, that I’ve learned. I take another breath and smell the mixture of dog shit and soil. Fertilizer, the scent of a living garden. For a quick second, I almost take up the shovel to start cleaning. But I am my father’s daughter.

“Dad, you’ve already sold the house. And this’ll take all day. Really, it’s not worth it; let’s go fix your new yard.”

“I don’t have a new yard, Gina.” I keep forgetting. He is giving up his first house to move to a cheap apartment. “And I don’t care. Help me clean this shit up. That’s all I need.” He is a stubborn man. I can handle toddlers better than I can handle my dad, and he knows it. So he doesn’t wait for me to respond; he just says, “the mower needs gas,” and goes to the door to grab a big, ivory-looking bone for the dog. My dad loves Milo, but he won’t admit it. He needs this dog more than water, I think, and he would shrivel and wilt without him. I picture my dad all small and dried up like my mom’s roses at the edge of the yard, and I sigh.

“Fine. What do you want me to do? You want me to cut the grass only? Or do you want to plant—“

“Everything, Gina. I need to get everything done.” He has a sharp tone now, and it makes my stomach burn. I shake my head and pull my hands to my hair. I throw my hands down, quick and hard, and moan. But I remind myself: he’s all I got left
now. My brother is a military boy, gone for years. And my mom is following her heart in Florida. A few years after you, I think, she left me too.

“Okay. Well, fine.” Now I am short and sharp, and I want to be. I want to see my words crackle on his skin. I want to see them burn blisters and scars. Right now, I want to see him cut down. And I could cut him down. I could cut him down and make paper out of him, write out the truth, show him that he doesn’t have a right to be sharp with me. But we’ve been here before, and I know where this leads. Growing up with a force like him, I would be dumb not to know how this whole afternoon could play out: It starts in the pit of his stomach, right there on the insides of his thick belly. His lungs distend, his stomach squeezes. And it climbs up his torso, swelling his muscles, pushing his arms and chest out like a violent, angry bird. Hands clench, eyes bulge and bleed, until that boom blasts his lips open and fury spills out like vomit. Like always. Yelling won’t build anything, so I try my words again.

“Fine, Dad, I’ll start mowing.”

He nods, and grabs a pair of leather work-gloves, the texture all too similar to that of his hands. I grab the gas and kneel down to the mower. Behind the tall grass, I feel like I am almost completely hidden, though I know my head and back are clearly visible. From this level, the yard is more alive. This foot and half of grass is like a forest. I open the gasoline and start to pour it down that dark tunnel, like I’m feeding the mower, giving it life. But the smell of chemicals and pollutants smothers my senses, and the scent becomes almost unbearable. I screw on the cap, wipe the tears from my eyes and look away from the machine.

All at once, looking through the tall grass, it feels like I’m in a wide field, and I start to watch him. My dad is short, but sturdy. His skin is tan and red like the color of a deer, but I’ve only seen him freeze once—the day my mother and I walked out. He stood in front of the TV with the remote still hanging loosely in his hand. So still. Lips barely opened, eyes wide like the world was ending. And I didn’t say a word to him. No goodbye. No nothing. And he just froze. Like a pillar of salt outside of Gomorrah—looking at us like we were the fire God sent to destroy his city. But now it looks like he is repenting for that weakness—replanting the garden of a woman who broke his heart.

I press my fingers into the ground for support and I’m thinking about his face on the day I left. I was just a kid, it seems. But that was only five years ago. I know I was old enough to say goodbye, but so was he. And he’s the dad. I’ve never
thought about the day we left like I am now, crouching in this grass. I feel the wetness of the dirt between my skin and fingernails, all cool against the sun.

I am still watching him make his way across the yard. He stops near the fence, closes his eyes and tilts his head up to the sky. He is a solid man with a mean face, but his face isn’t the same right now. His lips are slightly opened but his eyes are no longer wide. I see them move, them lips. He is praying to God, I think, and I can’t remember the last time I called out to God.

My dad breathes in and settles behind the grass at the end of the yard and I stand up so I can watch him pulling weeds away from the flowers. He uses his whole body and winces as he yanks them out of the ground. He makes it look harder than it is, and it makes me suddenly love him a little more; but I scoff. His strong arms tighten and bulge, and when he accidentally pulls out a dead daisy, he swears. Twice. My mom loved daisies.

Rage presses small tears into his eyes and it makes me want to cry too. I can’t stand to see someone’s physical pain—and it’s almost like he accidentally yanked himself from the yard. Milo lies next to him and my dad breathes in again. He looks around the backyard, past me and up to the sky, pretending that he’s just checking the wind or something. Who knows, maybe he is.

But as I watch him now, I think I see him mouth the words thank you up past those teardrop clouds. And I can almost imagine sprouts shooting from Dad’s tongue. I can almost see his lips blooming into petals. Man, it’s hard to watch him try to pull himself together. I wonder if he is embarrassed now.

Then he looks right at me and I am embarrassed. But I can’t take my eyes away. I think that if I even blink he’ll be gone. He tilts his head and waves at me, the daisy still dangling between his heavy fingers. And God breathes the pain away from Dad’s face. Still looking at me, Dad takes his big hand and sets it down, real slow, on Milo’s head. I’m standing here in the same yard with him, but somehow, seeing Dad’s softness makes me miss him like he’s gone. God, I miss him so much that my stomach almost hurts. I feel my eyes going blurry and watering over, but I don’t want to close them. He looks completely calm again.

“Here,” he says, wrapping his palm around the other daisy stems and pulling up, “these are for you, Milo.” He tosses the flowers to Milo, who wags his tail and lifts his head up to Dad.
WHAT SEEPS THROUGH
BRIANNA FOWLER
Her name was Geraldine but the newspapers called her Black Widow. They also called her Mojo Voodoo Queen, and at first I thought she was a song. She looked like she could have been my grandmother, but she wasn’t. Her hair was white and her face was doughy, lumpy and shapeless. She did not look mysterious or deviant or insane. She had five husbands and killed them all.

My father was the man who put her in prison. I was ten and watching Law & Order with my mother every night and I was convinced that I was the next target. It was never the State’s Attorney who was murdered, I believed, but his ten-year-old daughter. My faux grandmother was going to murder me, or hire someone to do it.

“I need a police escort to school,” I told my mother, and she laughed. I told my father and he blinked, silent.

“Your father solves murders and I check out library books,” my mother said. She laughed. “And all we ever talk about at the dinner table are my overdue fees.”

She was referencing my father’s silence, his harboring of the dark within himself. He didn’t talk much about anything and when the Geraldine Parrish case was over, there was a book with a whole chapter about him and the words he never said. The author, who shadowed my father for months in order to write about him, began a chapter with a description that was simple but immeasurably true: “pale and wire-thin, with spectacles and curly blond locks.” I would always love this description because it was, despite its frankness, incredibly kind. My father was blond only on his best days, and under a very soft, specific light. He was albino and had a body that caused my mother to continually refer to him as an Auschwitz survivor. It was a horrible reference, but mostly horrible in its truth. He had scars on his face from various surgeries, and one particularly poignant slice on his left cheek, where the cancer was just beginning to ravage him. Later, I would write a poem about my father’s skin looking like deli meat, pink-white and carved.

The book’s final description of my father occurs when he’s at a graveyard, waiting for a body to be exhumed. I like this picture of him: summoning a body from the ground like he’s some sort of god.

The author calls my father “a good man.”

Geraldine Parrish was with me for months. She was at my kitchen table as I
ate dinner, and she was still there when I went to sleep. My father didn't bring her there; it was usually my mother who did. And sometimes she just sat with us, without invitation or acknowledgement. Sometimes she just sat with us like some uninvited guest, there to put an anchor in things.

“Tell me a story about her,” I said. Back then I loved stories. I didn't know yet that I could make them up or weave them together. All I knew – in the singular, firm way that a child knows everything – was that I loved them, and that they always seemed to be forming around me, like spider webs. My mother smiled. She loved when I was curious because she was too.

“She told everyone she was insane,” my mother began, her eyes widening. “But Daddy knew she wasn't.”

“How did you know?” I asked my father.

He gave me a hard look. “I just knew,” he said.

“He knew – ” my mother interjected, “because she was a liar. She killed those men for the money they had. That makes sense, doesn't it?”

I nodded. Money had always made sense to me. My father said nothing, eating the turkey-burger that he made for himself every night and reading the paper. I remember thinking then that my father was the most boring person I knew. My mother was the flash of color, the one with warm hands and wild stories. My father was the one who picked me up from school and counted to one hundred with me every night. I often had trouble falling asleep, and my father would sit with me until one hundred came. The numbers tumbled out of his mouth like facts, hard and firm.

His only flirtation with drama occurred in the courtroom. Later, years after the Black Widow case, I heard of how my father proved that Parrish's insanity defense was a sham. She testified that she did not understand the significance of money. A dollar was just a dollar to Geraldine Parrish; she killed because she had an abusive father and to her, all men were predatory, ravenous and sharp-toothed. My father, pale and wire-thin with spectacles and curly blond locks, held a dollar in one hand and a quarter in the other. He asked Geraldine, Mojo Voodoo Queen, if she could identify what each object was, and she did. He then asked which one she wanted. She pointed, without hesitation, to the dollar. Reflex. She was later found guilty;

(continued)
sentenced to four hundred months in prison.

I wasn’t in the courtroom at the time of my father’s triumphant victory, but I could have been. I like to imagine it as a stand-alone moment, frozen with drama. A hushed quiet settling on top of the crowd, like a curtain being drawn.

Geraldine made him the do-gooder, the quiet hero, and I love her for that. She became my reflex. As I grew older, my father did too, and he stopped counting for me every night. I had to find other comforts to fall asleep to. The comfort that I created was a vision, one that I could tattoo on the inside of my eyelids like a footprint. It was a vision of my father, sitting downstairs in the kitchen with Geraldine Parrish in a brown stack of folders, furiously scribbling words on his yellow legal pads, tracing her life with his hands. My father was writing a story.

Later, when my father died, Geraldine Parrish would appear in his obituaries before I did. Mark P. Cohen, known for prosecuting the high-profile Black Widow, who married several older men and later had them killed in order to collect their insurance benefits. Later: Mark P. Cohen, beloved husband of Cheryl. Later: Mark P. Cohen, beloved father of one.
She fed them to me
cut into slices
colored sunrise red—
the kind sailors shrink from.

She dragged them through sugar
and pushed them in my mouth
while I lay in bed
with fever.

I remember they were cool
and tasted tart
pinched between teeth.
But they felt—oh
they felt like flesh
on my swollen tongue.

Sliding, half chewed down my throat,
they felt like me, like my own
sliced tissues—thick and saturated
with red juice.

I’d already come to know
how my uterus looked
when it peeled off in layers
and stuck in the tub
like bloody leeches
in the pond mud.
But I understood then,
chewing the berries in a daze,
how my meat felt.

I knew what it was
to devour, to be
devoured.
MATERNAL BEING
KELSEY SMITH
They are called 17-year cicadas because that is how often they emerge from the ground. They sprout and cover every tree with their thousands of moving, buzzing bodies, singing their love song to the world. Most consider their romantic ballad an annoyance, their constant racket day and night causing headaches and limiting sleep. They do not recognize the beauty in a creature that sings and sings and sings its entire life until it dies. In the summer of 2007, I was sixteen, and the cicadas sprang from the earth and cried their song to the world.

The living room of my grandparents’ house, like the rest of the house, is kept in perfect order by my grandmother. Czech figurines and old family photographs line the shelves that my grandfather installed into the house he built. Our shoes sit in front of the fireplace, removed immediately after walking in the door so as not to track any dirt onto the faded yellow carpet. Above the mantelpiece is a painting of my father arguing a case before the Supreme Court. Two maroon chairs sit with their backs to a bay window that faces out over the front yard. On the other side of the room, facing the window, my grandfather and I sit on opposite ends of a floral patterned couch.

My grandpa is not allowed to drive anymore, so his car was given to my brother. But he crashed the car not long after he borrowed it. Though he walked away unharmed, the damage done to the Oldsmobile could not be fixed. I can’t tell if it’s because my grandfather is 89 and doesn’t understand that his car is gone, or if he just wants to be difficult about it, but he won’t speak to my dad now. Having been the one to break the news, my father received the blame for what happened. There is a tension in the house caused by my grandfather’s anger. Or maybe it’s just the stifling summer air.

The front door is open to try and let in the warm breeze. A chorus of the cicadas’ song permeates the screen, filling the room with the chi chi chiing of their love. Together they try and break the silence.

“I’m mad at your dad right now.” My grandfather tells me.

“Yeah, I heard,” I reply. Torn between the loyalty towards my father, and the satisfaction of being the current favorite, I don’t really know what to say next. I try to change the subject.

“Those cicadas are really loud,” I say.
“I can’t hear them,” he replies looking up at the door as if he might see the sound he cannot hear.

“Oh.” Silence.

“I can’t do much of anything anymore. I can’t really go outside. Or work in my garden. My body aches.” There is a slight pause. “It’s not really living anymore.”

Silence. I look at my grandfather, a loving, caring person who has become an old man. And I begin to realize what that means. He sits there, every second growing older, moving farther and farther away from the life he used to live. It occurs to me that my grandfather is dying, and my young mind wrestles with the idea of mortality. While he most likely reminisces about life when he was young, I fret over the inevitable. Lost in our thoughts, there is nothing but silence. Silence in a room filled with so much noise that my grandfather cannot hear.

In two weeks’ time, the cicadas are gone, spreading a calm back over the summer nights. My grandfather will die a year later. As I walk through the piles of dead cicada shells blown onto the sidewalks, listening to the crunch of their hallow lives gone now with their song, I grow older. Since I can’t stop what is coming, all I can do is follow their example and love. To sing my love. And sing and sing and sing.
You walk like someone twenty years older
would, like the flame has begun to smolder
within your fine form. Bob and weave under
the yellow streetlight: Kentucky wonder.

I watch the snow slap your bare cheeks, cut
small, stinging furrows in your face. Chestnut
locks fall across your forehead, framing the
eyes I imagine naked. Unhand, unclothe

me good sir—make me feel young again. Just
let me feed on your moist young stem, flax rust
blackened by winter. This frosty drought warns
of yesterdays not yet forgotten: warm

quiet of your corn field, earthy smut spore--
raven’s delicacy. I can’t abhor

my only salvation. Let the cold wind blow,
let the blizzard kindle your frozen glow.
PAIRED VESSELS II
JACOB MONTZ
He can’t seem to remember the color of her eyes. He remembers telling her they reminded him of the Red Sea. But he had never actually seen the Red Sea, let alone knew what it looks like. And anyway, when he told her he had really just been trying to get into her pants.

Twenty-six years later he still hasn’t seen the sea and she rarely lets him get anywhere near her zippers and buttons. He remembers when he used to love her, used to leave work early to pick up marigolds for her bedside table and the mushrooms she had asked him to grab for his stroganoff. He remembers when she used to plan bike trips on backroads with no real destination. But by now, the tires on their bicycles had lost their breath and he was too tired to care.

It was silence that changed them. Too many neverminds had made their way into their dresser drawers. Long ago they started taking showers made of sighs and shrugs. A few too many “I’m fines” had found the cracks in their floorboards and now every time they stepped onto the wooden ground they could hear the creak of feelings left behind.

Because of this, he hasn’t looked directly at her face for several months now. He can’t seem to face what he knows is missing. In the mornings, he pretends to wipe the sleep from his eyes, walking past as she gets dressed, making his way to the kitchen. It’s been easy, avoiding her glances. He isn’t even sure if she has noticed. They don’t speak much, and both consider themselves reserved people, so avoiding things comes easily to them both.

Now, he prefers to look at her reflection wherever he can find it, rather than actually look at her. It has become an obsession he can’t seem to wrap his head around. Her existence is merely a game he is playing, and he can’t tell if he’s winning or losing.

He catches glimpses of her in the silver plate she keeps on the top of their windowless china cabinet, the one her grandmother left for her after she died last January. He hasn’t ever seen her use it, but she frequently cleans it using an old toothbrush and a mixture of vinegar and salt she warms up in the microwave. Whenever she does this, he sits at the kitchen table and sips his coffee, pretending to read the weather section, even though he doesn’t believe in weather forecasts. He stares at her as she leans over the sink, her hips pressing into the counter, and likes

(continued)
how her skirt changes to a darker shade of blue when water splashes up, soaking the front of her clothes. She hums off-key as she gently scrubs the dust from the surface. She wears red rubber gloves but her hands still smell when she pulls the sheets down on their bed. The stench of the vinegar lingering on her palms reminds him of the cheap Easter egg dye his mother used to buy.

He looks past tomorrow’s predicted rain and watches her image in the reflection of the silver. It’s muddled and covered in suds but he can still make out the curve of her chin and her small pink lips pouting as she dips the toothbrush back into the cup, making sure the salt has dissolved and isn’t just sitting at the bottom.

He sees her sometimes in water, in potholes filled with rain, in the man-made pond at the park where they sometimes stop to watch children skip rocks. He likes to look at her as she passes by convenience store mirrors and sometimes when he times it right, he can vaguely see her features reflected in the glass casing that holds their apartment’s fire extinguisher in place.

But he likes to find her most when she stops next to a window. Something about looking out but only seeing her. She’s become a distraction. He has stopped noticing the dust gathering in the corners of the sill on the bathroom window. He stands behind her as she looks into the mirror, delicately putting mascara on her short, light-colored eyelashes. He places his cold hands on the top of her hips and wraps his fingers through her belt loops. But he always turns to look at the window instead of looking at her or even her reflection in the mirror. He squints through the morning sun, trying to make out her high cheek bones and the color of her eyes, ignoring the crack in the upper panel that he’s been meaning to fix.
MATCHING NIGHTGOWNS
MICHELLE SABOURIN
Bloody Cajun Spices:  
a square dance  

STEWARD FINNEGAN

Bow to your partner, bow to your corner.  
Avoid eye contact and mumble a greeting.

Handhold.  
Focus on the wall.

Allemande left!  
Break your rule about eye contact.

Promenade on the two by two,  
involuntarily glance at her chest and shudder when you think she noticed.

Get it on back that's what you do.  
Attempt small talk when she's looking away.

Now swing your partner,  
when she asks you to repeat it, say you forgot

Do sa do!  
Forgo small talk in favor of silence.

Now Allemande left!  
Forgo silence in favor of nonsequitur about salamanders.

Balance!  
Have no follow-up prepared for her response.

Ladies chain.  
Return to silence, wring hands.

Allemande left!  
Notice she's glancing at the clock.
Centers in!
Picture scenes of graphic torture.

Promenade on the two by two!
Wring hands more, pretend to text.

Allemande left!
Notice that she’s texting as well.

Bend the line!
Make joke.

All around the left hand lady!
Shudder.

Do pa so!
Return to texting.

Allemande left!
Notice you’re actually rather hungry.

Allemande left!
Fantasize about slashing own soles and stomping through large piles of Cajun spices.

Allemande left!
Dig feet in said spices, grit teeth, entertain illusions of manliness.

Allemande left!
Open wounds and rub spices to ensure maximum discomfort.

Allemande left!
Take bloody Cajun spices and mix them with ground beef.

(continued)
Bloody Cajun Spices: a square dance (continued)

Allemande left!
Fill pot with stock, turn stove on low and slice onions.

Allemande left!
Involuntarily glance at her chest again.

Allemande left!
Stir chili slowly for ten to fifteen minutes.

Allemande left!
Smell distinctive scent of cayenne and bodily fluids.

Allemande left!
Bring to a boil and wrap arms around pot.

Allemande right!
Submerge head.

Break handhold!
Consume.

Now bow to your partner.
Not half bad. Consider a bay leaf.
When it snows I like to think something good is on its way. These tiny white flakes are encrypted with messages from another world: “Hello down there! Stop all of your fighting!” But lately all these scornful things do is just bring me down.

It is grey and arctic in London today. I sit in the library surrounded by pretty girls who, had the sun been out and my vitamin D restored, I would surely ask out.

Every single one of them. I could approach each face differently, each encounter being my first, my last. But the dirty slush just brings me down.

The cold brings everyone indoors; it is what made me decide to go to this gloomy library in the first place. Now I am here writing this instead of chipping away at my Sense and Sensibility essay. Distraction is a drawn-out game. Sometimes it is amusing to observe what other college kids are really doing at their study tables. These wooden surfaces provide excellent space for sleeping, rolling cigarettes, flirting, daydreaming, counting money, Internet browsing and short story writing.

Typically, I work best when well-caffeinated. Three cups is the perfect amount of coffee to send me soaring into productivity. I move up in the world with every shot of espresso I ingest. But these fat snow-clippings just bring me back down.

And, I guess, the fact that my girlfriend recently broke up with me. I had seen it coming, you know, being abroad in London and all. I was just hoping I would be the one to do it. Be the one to meet an auburn-haired English girl who giggled like fear was extinct. She would love cooking and Modest Mouse’s old albums. She would float through hallways in midnight-black dresses.

But, sadly, the old ex beat me to it and now I am struck by how much catching up I have to do in the world of singles. How often to give a girl “the look,” how to get phone numbers, when to flirt, and how to even go about flirting are but secrets locked in Casanova’s cabinet. I want these hidden secrets to emerge and show the way, exposing the game I used to have.

But lately, my game is creepy at best. I sometimes get caught looking at a girl across the study table from me. This forces me to look away at the ever-captivating bookshelf behind her as if I am studying what to read next. And it goes.

I crank my head around and fall in love with every girl I see. The world exposes its beauty to me, and subsequently, my pants begin to tighten. Right there in
Cold Cures Lust (continued)

the library.

If only it wasn’t two degrees Celsius in this city. All the yearning, young bodies could flee the library and dance in circles in the fresh grass outside. The girls would glow in summer dresses and I’d throw my name around, letting each feminine breath receive it and grow to know it. Every girl would fall in love with me and desperately request my full attention, always. My calendar would be so completely filled with romantic outings that I’d have not a second to myself. I would forget how to breathe.

But that’s only if the sun had shined. I guess I’m glad it’s snowing outside.
TAXI STORYTELLER
BRIANNA FOWLER
Versailles breathed. It breathed in frenzied, whispered wheezes, made frantic by concern, quiet by discretion. To be there on that humid night was to feel its breath around you, dancing on your skin as fog, at the corner of a mirror, thin and fleeting and laying claim to your neck. Exhaling inward, inhaling inward, stale air rushing through the halls and into its most untroubled recesses, its crumbling marble corners, its dark capillaries of muted sobs and unheard sighs. Versailles breathed, and so did he.

The lamp did not go out. He changed the oil himself, though servants rapped on the door to his chambers with food, with wine, with bedclothes and wax and worry. He did not answer them, chin buried in his neck, fingers twisting in the metal, eyes coated in the glow. He hummed.

The tumblers fell apart easily in his palm, laying there cold and loose, his eyes intent on their dull, speckled surface. The King of France was, if nothing else, good with his hands, and he cobbled together the locks with an offhand skill before deftly sliding in the pick. As he worked, he bit his tongue, a habit of his father, that man of mounds, fleshy and amorphous. The lock tensed, for a moment, then yielded to his touch in a single steel shudder.

“Louis.” It was Marie. Her voice was firmer than the servants’ and more familiar; it was enough to pierce the door, softened as it was by heat and weariness. “Louis, come to bed.”

There was no answer. Though his eyes were not transfixed on the locks, his fingers were feeling for the taut pull of the cylinders and that neat flow as metal loosens from metal. It opened and Louis swiftly disassembled it, letting that be his response.

“Louis,” she said, half threat, half beg, neither sufficient to mask the exhaustion. “Louis, come to bed. Please.”

He stood reluctantly, as if to walk towards the door, but instead gazed at the timid flickering of the lamplight, watching it flit over the buck trophy adorning his study, making tiny, wild pupils in the beast’s quietly intelligent eyes. His fingers ran idly over a few spare parts, feeling the coolness of them, the deferred heat of the flame, the compression of the palace around him, the pinprick scent of smoke.
and sweat, the animal’s stare. He could see his frame in that stare, rotund, dusk-orange, still.

“Louis.”

“Let me finish my diary,” he said simply, softly, in danger of being inaudible to any but himself. “It won’t be long.”

He accepted the silence as approval and sat, pulling out the leather-bound journal, gold leaf stretched across the cover in tasteful spirals. Some pages were blank, others torn, still others dotted with detailed descriptions of hunts and feasts written in the beadiest of script. He went too far, flipped back, arriving on July 14th.

“One must always consult popular opinion,” he said to himself, head turned sharply towards the desk, back curved, paunch splayed. “It is never wrong.”

“Louis, I’m coming in,” she said, quietly determined.

And he wrote. Coaxed by Versailles, breath turning to caress, he filled himself with the fires and the shouting and the pell-mell scatterings of death. He filled himself with the glint of Marie’s perfect teeth, the curve of his son’s twisting spine, the sharpness of the bones pressing against his skin. He filled himself with his blunders in their molten form, and with the sea. He filled himself with the woods, with the hunt, with triggers’ give and his visible breath. He filled himself with his locks, and he wrote.

He wrote a single word: rien. Nothing.

And with that, he opened the door. He did not speak to Marie, simply put out the flame, leaving the buck’s eyes to the darkness. The door was closed, latched, and as the two walked away, seemed to shudder.
Sestina for a Fisherman
a poem for Delp

EMILY F. TOWNSEND  DIVINE CROW WINNER

We didn’t know much about work, prayer, or fishing
in the beginning. We believed rivers to be a physical thing, not a being
that swam through our animal souls, carving
away at the detritus, man’s malice—searching for an outlet to the sea.
We didn’t know that our daydreams of the idyllic human body
was really a nighttime drowning and reawakening as a trout in the hands of
a fisherman.

It was the fall of 1998 when he came into our classroom, a fisherman
as freshman English teacher, dressed like 1963 Newport Bob Dylan, smelling of fish.
A hand locked in his pocket, he wrote, with the other, a single word in chalk: Be—
The Buddha’s last word, he told us. Everything he told us was a story carved
by the blade of facts and smoothed over by the sandpaper of legends from the sea.
Stories were river secrets that seeped between his waders and filled his whole body.

He told stories from Tibet, Woodstock, and out west, stories of aching boy’s bodies
in Alberta, Michigan staring through Bait&Tackle shop windows at the Fishermen’s
daughters—sacred bored cashiers. Stories of stolen smokes, grinding clutches, fish
caught the size of a toddler. It did not matter that he hadn’t been
to all of these places. He was like the story of the wooden canoeist figurine, carved
by the Chippewa teen, placed in a melting creek, bound to Paddle-to-the-Sea.

It wasn’t until the second week of school that we realized he could not see.
That Friday he lectured the Dharma and explained the impermanence of the body,
the bell rang and he lifted his aviators. We saw a lost gaze, his eyes an unclean fish
bowl, creamy and weak, bits floating across faded spheres. We knew that he must be
a prophet who came to class late and sat in his office, hunched over his desk carving.

He caught us and took our hard heads, inflated chests, and carved
away fear: of our parents, the future, of cold woods at night when we could only see
our breath’s ghostly apparition for a moment before it left the body
entirely. The next school year we did not notice the fisherman’s
absence. Sophomore year, our heads were clouded by a constant fishing for something, someone that could make us feel like we were just being.

In a dream I have been having, I walk to his river cabin north of town, my bare feet carving away the mud from the path. As I get closer, fog fills my vision. I arrive and can’t see at all. I wade into the water and feel comfort, sense another body—The Fisherman.

My arms are upturned and allowing to his gift, a throbbing Brook Trout fish.

I’m pulled into the fish’s streamlined skin. Now it is all I desire to be when I sleep, carving away the human skin, shadows and insects is all I see. My body caught, dragged, held, and worshipped in the callused hands of a fisherman.
PANDA IN THE CITY
SAMANTHA GROBBEL
Am I satisfied? What an odd question to ask. I admit that I had envisioned a more noble curvature, but the overall effect on you is pleasing. I was watching for your reaction as you ascended the silver-banistered escalator to meet me in the atrium. I saw your face turn as white as the tiles and your body fall towards the railing the first time you gazed upward. Yes, I am satisfied. Once your stomach has settled you will appreciate it as well. You asked for a building that would inspire and I gave you a building that was celestial. Remember, you approved the floor plans.

How is it you feel nauseous on the ground floor? That is a phenomenon I attend to with pride. There is no challenge in making a stomach swoop when looking down from above; any precipice will accomplish that. When peering up towards the forty-seventh floor—there are only forty seven, no need to overdo things—you will notice that each floor has a different arc, curving out in pulsating waves of white and gold railings. I assure you, the world is quite stationary.

My source of inspiration? I should think that was apparent by now. You have been swallowed. Did you not notice how the revolving doors were pearl teeth, the first escalator was a slender throat, and here you are now, standing in a ribcage of balconies. See how each floor, each rib, curves round to join an ivory spine elevator. That elevator, I will have you know, accelerates at a rate comparable to nerve signals. It will shoot you up to the cerebellum, a glass roof and the source of that distant white light.

The human body? Celestial, I told you, celestial! This building, sir, is a life-size model of God.

This is merely a hotel? Oh no, never think merely a hotel. Think instead of how your guests will marvel, how they will feel they have entered not just another building but another paradigm. People will travel to this city just for the chance to stand where we stand now. I tell you the future of this place is glorious, and you will be praised and applauded by others of creative genius. No need to thank me. Though you are quite welcome.
FATIGUE

CHRISTINE REBUHNN
Hipster [HIP-ster]
noun 1. A skinny, effeminate looking male or an unkempt, annoyed looking female… wearing tight jeans and thrift store/vintage clothing and accessories. The hipster is a subculture without a cause. They have no ideals or values except trying to shun the mainstream and appear as unconventional as possible by advocating the independent.
   –Urbandictionary.com

a hipster born,
and thus i’ll stay
with clumsy glasses
minus frames,
and the starving bend of
bony spine
serves to make me
more divine.
i can’t relieve my
craze for shoes,
of which i never
buy in twos
since matching colors
isn’t cool,
say women bound by the
hipster rules.
so pack your
men in skinny jeans
that could be worn
by female teens.
forget the comb cause
mess is edge,
that’s what i’ve learned
from the hipster pledge.

(continued)
work sounds grueling,
s’not for me
i’m just a Burroughs wannabe.
a latte-sipping Langston Hughes,
an artist’s girlfriend,
i’m his muse.
these vintage shades, they blind my eyes,
yet must be worn to complete the guise of a girl that’s artsy, smart, and chic,
who can vomit lines with.
  a.
groovy.
beat.
it’s my mission to listen to bands all day whose words i couldn’t bear to play if i were not a hipster born, and a hipster’s oath i’d never sworn.
CLOSETED
KELSEY GORDON
Body hair. It’s gross. And having spent my last three years on a campus that prides itself on its (pseudo) hipposness, unkempt hair included, I’ve found that even the dirtiest of hippies draw the line somewhere when it comes to, y’know, pubic hair. That being said, I have had actual conversations with friends who tell me (straight-faced) that refusing to take razor to bish is part of Female Empowerment 101.

Okay, whatever. Maybe it’s because I grew up within major city limits, or maybe it’s the rash (no pun intended) of men I’ve invited into my life, but I can’t get over the idea that no hair down there is the only way to go.

Which leads me to the infamous—and with good reason—Brazilian Wax.

Now before I detail the horror that is dropping trow and at least partially consenting to the torture of having hot wax dripped over your privates (okay, that’s not the awful part) and then having it ripped out (bingo) at great force by a relative stranger (added bonus), let me say, “Yes, I have explored the alternatives.”

Shaving leaves stubble and razor bumps and is so temporary that you might as well not even bother. I don’t know if it’s possible to thread your vag, but even the idea sounds plain wrong. And as for Sally Hanson – that silly witch should try her own Nair-wannabe-cream because I don’t know a single person who’s ever had anything nice to say about it. As if I really need to say this: Nair, also pathetic. So in fact, other than throwing in the towel altogether and resigning yourself to hairy beast status, waxing is the only option.

Yes, Brazilian is extreme and there are lesser treatments, like a basic Bikini Wax, but really as far as I’m concerned getting a Bikini Wax is not only wimpy, it’s like getting an American flag tattooed across half of your back instead of the whole damn thing. Pubic waxing belongs to the “Go Big, or Go Home” category of phenomena we endure on the daily.
And more importantly, nothing says, “I like you” like a Brazilian wax. Today when I arrived at the all-natural herbal salon where it went down, I was vaguely aware that in fact there is nothing natural about wrenching naturally growing hair from your body through extreme heat and force. But that’s beside the point.

My waxing technician (is that even what they’re called? I sure hope so) greeted me with a smile, knowing full well that toothy grins would be on short supply in only a few minutes. After the obligatory small talk, she seemed as relieved as I felt when I lied and told her that of course I’d done this before. Enter the truth: prior to today, I belonged to the wimpy category of bikini waxers mentioned earlier in this rant.

Pants down, legs spread and teeth clenched, I thought this must be what it feels like leading up to giving birth to a child. Before I could give play to that fantasy (read: horror), my new friend distracted me with the chatter that all women in her profession are so well trained to entertain. She asked me about where I’m from (how’d she know I wasn’t a native, damnit?) and where I go to school. Relying on a well-rehearsed line of dialogue, I told her about study abroad and she caught me off guard, telling me Dublin was a silly word, asking where’s that funny place? When we’d recovered, she asked about my boyfriend, which, uh, was where the metaphorical cookie crumbled and the conversation faltered.

Trying to tell the woman waxing your you-know-what that you don’t have a boyfriend so much as you have a boy is only made more difficult by the fact that she has just spent the last fifteen minutes telling me how much I remind her of her daughter. Well, whoops.

So anyway, legs up, legs down, spread ‘em, close ‘em, and finally, finally I was finished. I’d done the whole psyching myself out thing, but that’s part of the experience. Is she judging me? Worse, is she judging my vagina? After what felt like forever, I’d had a more intimate—in many ways—conversation with Melanie the Waxing Technician than I’ve had with my mother since she responded to my “Can we talk about sex?” question with, “Sure, don’t do it.”

(continued)
Nothing Says I Like You Like a Brazilian (continued)

Having left Melanie a tip and signed for my services, I walked (like a cowgirl) out the door, satisfied with the grown up I’d suddenly become. But just as I put my key in the car, the salon door flew open and Melanie appeared, rushing toward me. Had I forgotten my underwear? No, she wanted to give me a hug. It seemed during the hour we spent in that dimly lit closet of a room she’d bonded more than just my hair to tiny strips of fabric hell.
Blood oranges bleed into blue-rimmed glasses
set on pockmarked dining tables
imprinted with scrawl leaked from a dozen hands
while peaches plunge to the pool’s depths
soaked in chlorine water
like fingertips and toes,
skin shrinks into wrinkly, cellophane folds,
between rounds of marco polo
when cousins scatter like pinballs
ricocheting in random directions
like the flight patterns of
the neighbor’s carrier pigeons,
fluttering bursts
akin to monarch butterflies
splotched in black and orange and white
beating paper wings over and over and over
again, like whispers
and other secrets tangled up in
defaced mountainsides,
sailboat hulls, kumquat rinds,
and rabbit holes
pursued by cackling coyotes
and overnight they yowl,
terrifying yips and yelps
till a scream and then nothing –
curled under a comforter cocoon,
ivory knuckles clutching sheets,
all I can ever wonder –
did the rabbit escape?
like horses dodging

MAX WEDDING

Firestones don’t hold up forever, and neither do
the mobile homes: an empty plot and an oil barrel
filled with black widows; a slashed mattress over three
water-damaged books; hundreds and hundreds
of mosquitoes. The cholera isn’t far.

Saguaro arms lick up every sixty years. This forest grows old
and thick with fruit that drops at the pat of a stick
or the talon of a crow scraping for seeds. Beads of eyes
reckon the black, dodging bullets and border patrol
like horses dodging the coyotes that band against them.

We creep through the moonlight, skirting the prickly
pears that wear spines like bones in search of bones
who search for other homes in other places; we drink
little and speak less, and before the morning swallows
the slowly browning mountains, we are gone.
LOLLIPOP CATTLE
KELSEY SMITH
Wesley walked into the diner and sat at the far right end of the counter. It was 6:07 in the morning and the place had just opened. He grabbed a menu from a holder that contained three or four others and glanced at it before turning his head to survey the other customers. There were four – an old couple sitting on the same side of a booth at the other end of the restaurant, a short man with a bulging waist in a booth behind him, and a kid of sixteen or seventeen four stools down the counter. He turned back around as a waitress emerged from the swinging doors that led to the kitchen. She wore a blue uniform, the skirt of which fell just above her knees. Her nametag said Harriet. She grabbed a pot of coffee and walked around the counter to the old couple’s table. They accepted the coffee but said they weren’t ready to order. Harriet overturned the china cups on their table and filled them. She then went to the man seated behind Wesley.

“I suppose you know what you want, Sam,” she said.

“Stack of pancakes, eighteen count. Eight strips of bacon, four sausage links, four patties, three biscuits, and some toast. It don’t matter how much toast.” His speech was slow and his breath heavy.

“Anything to drink?”

“Biggest chocolate milk you got. Extra syrup.”

“Yeah.”

Harriet came back around the counter and handed the order to the cook through the little opening where the prepared food was placed. She turned to face Wesley.

“For you?” she asked.

“Orange juice.”

“Don’t you want nothing to eat?”

“I don’t know yet.” He looked back at the menu. Harriet turned to the juice dispenser and grabbed a glass. She filled it and put it on the counter.

“You need a straw?”

“No.” Wesley looked at the drink. “Is the pulp soft?” he asked.

“What?”

“If the pulp isn’t soft, I can’t drink it.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t like the way it feels in my mouth, makes me feel like I’m drinking food.”

“I don’t know. I don’t drink the juice.”
“Can I get my milk?” the large man said.

“Yeah,” the waitress replied. She turned to get milk, syrup, and a glass. Wesley held the juice up and looked down into it. He poked the pulp with a knife. Harriet placed a glass on the counter and filled it with two-thirds milk and the rest with chocolate syrup. Wesley heard the man applaud. The waitress stirred the mixture and walked around the counter.

“Good work, dear,” the man said as she put the glass down.

Harriet came back behind the counter. “Why don’t you drink it?” she asked.

“I hate hard pulp.”

She looked at him and grabbed the glass. Wesley watched as she tipped it into her mouth and then put it back on the counter.

“Soft as can be,” she declared.

“Why’d you do that?”

“Because you wouldn’t.”

“I would’ve eventually.”

“We’re ready to order,” said the old man. Harriet pulled out her pad and made for their booth.

Wesley looked down at the glass. Her lips had left a smear and a small trickling trail of juice. He took a napkin from a dispenser and wiped the area around the rim.

“She ain’t got nothing you can catch,” said the kid down the counter.

“What?” Wesley looked at him. He didn’t look back.

“Harriet, she’s real clean. You’re wiping that glass like it’s got a disease.”

“I’m just leery.”

“You better not use words like that in this town. People won’t like you much.”

“Words like what?”

“Leery, or whatever the hell it was. It’s too unusual. We don’t like unusual.”

Harriet returned and handed the cook the old people’s order.

“Terry, quit talking to my customers,” she said to the kid.

“I’m talking for you. This man thinks you’re unclean.”

“That true? You think I’m unclean?” she asked, turning to Wesley.

“No, I was just wiping where your lips were.”

“You see? He was just wiping where my lips were,” she said, turning to the kid.

“Now don’t talk anymore.” She turned back to Wesley. “Sorry. He’s my sister’s. I’m

(continued)
watching him while she finishes her rehab. Do you know what you want yet?”

“I want to talk about this situation we have.”

“Situation?”

“You drank juice from my glass.”

“You haven’t paid for it yet. It still belongs to the restaurant.”

“What kind of policy is that?”

“It’s the one we’ve got. Besides, you wanted to know about the pulp.”

“It doesn’t mean—” Wesley stopped as the large man from the booth appeared in his periphery.

“I like to think about my food before it comes to me, makes the time I get to eat it much more enjoyable. I can’t do that with all the noise you two are making. Give me the juice. I’ll drink it and pay for it. You can get the stranger something else,” he said.

“What do you think about that? Shall we let Sam have the juice?” Harriet asked.

“No, we shouldn’t let him have the juice. His organs will slow even more.”

“You calling me fat?”

“Sir, you’re immense. Or is that another word people don’t use in this town?”

The bottom of Sam’s palm came up under Wesley’s nose, sending him across two stools and down onto the floor.

“No, sometimes we use immense,” Harriet said as she bent over the counter and looked at him. Sam came next to him, bent down as much as he could, and picked him up by the collar. Wesley felt the blood trickle out of his nose and collect in the corner of his lips.

“You get up and you leave,” Sam said. He put Wesley down and walked back to his booth. Wesley looked up at Harriet. She emptied all the napkins from a dispenser and handed them to him.

“Take these. We don’t need you dripping all over the parking lot. There’s a hospital seven miles or so up the road.” He accepted the napkins and held them around his nose. He stood and turned to leave. Outside, the first bit of the day’s light shone in the east. The blood seeped through the napkins and some dripped onto his shirt. As he reached his car, he thought of ham steak. That’s what he would’ve ordered if he was still inside.
WHERE THE SUN NEVER SETS – REYKJAVIK HARBOR 3 AM
MILO MADOLE
The prostitutes in Amsterdam look like secretaries

MAGGIE JACKSON

and not the sexy ones in skimpy skirts
that the American white collar male
gets a boner for.
Even the ones dressed up like secretaries
to give the American white collar male
a boner look more like
the woman at your orthodontist,
counting the minutes until she can watch her
Lean Cuisine rotating in the microwave and escape
from the tedium of rubber bands and popped brackets,
of moaning and clutching the sheets in an
ecstasy like the false veneer on a graying tooth.
They stare out from behind plate glass windows
into streets full of men with lust in their glares
and swollen pants,
into waiting rooms full of kids with food in their wires
and swollen gums.
Sucking on a stranger’s cock like a lollipop
(those are supposed to be for the patients) and
staring through every second of the ticking workday.
Waiting for 5 o’clock.
Waiting for midnight.
Considering amidst the cum and the glue,
the lingerie and the scrubs,
the downside of being a people person.
RACCOONS
SAMANTHA GROBBEL
Stop by for a high life at 615 Toulouse. My brick face smiles when swinging doors open to my paisley wallpaper & black leather booths. Ya can't miss me. The stores flanking my peeling jack of hearts decals sell Brees tees & leftover Mardi-Gras beads, 3 dollars a strand. I got Fast Times 80's Night every Thursday, where my PC bleeds New Order and 20-something white boys wearing Ray Ban Wayfarers and Tom's canvas loafers pretend to dance & know the words, or talk about dropping bombs in my bathrooms to impress sober flirts. They'll run up their bar tabs with vodka-Red Bulls for girls with powdered noses, just hoping for a sloppy hook-up but instead they're turned down & lean low against my walls, drinks in hands like security blankets. Their stretching palms, eyes for the drunk stumbling through the obscurity of my dim chandelier-light and bizarre love synth jabs repeating impatient on ears. I frame a remembering of what everyone is trying to escape inside me – it appears when you blink between falling notes, aligning like stars or Cosmos; the harsh humid air outside that chokes you, the potholes & poverty, the shoreline's marsh leisurely drowning, the decaying past that surrounds the Quarter like a bed sheet tucked tight around the corners. So don't blink, just swallow each lulling downbeat.
Killing one isn’t like killing other spiders. Other spiders, the kind you find in corners of your bedroom and behind the toilet, have nondescript tiny brown bodies, supported on spindly legs as they scuttle across the ceiling or floor. When you squish them, you don’t have to see it. It is a private experience. The spider dies alone, wrapped in a white cloud that slowly contracts around its fragile body until, with a pop, its life is gone.

But the garden spider, no, its experience of death is a public spectacle. It is probably the most terrifying non-poisonous spider in existence. Its body is one to two inches in diameter, striped yellow and black, with orange or yellow bands on the legs. The sight of one is enough to startle even the arachnophile. They typically live in meadows where they string their webs between the tall blades of grass like slingshots stretched by the breeze.

I killed one once with a pair of pruning shears. I was plunging my hands into the long stalks of perennials, the tiger lilies and hostas that had lost their petals at the beginning of September. The stalks were slippery with dew in my left hand as I hacked at them with the shears in my right and threw them behind me. Then I saw it, sitting in the center of its web between two hosta stalks, its great, fat marble shooter body bouncing as the gossamer moved with the wind. I shrieked and stabbed at it with the shears, slicing open the striped body. Its guts came out in one solid ball and landed on the mulch with a wet plop. My own heart pounded with the shock of seeing the huge spider there among the leaves; I watched its last moments in fascination, like an emperor absorbed in the gladiatorial slaughter. I imagined the spider looking up at me, the huge giant that had ended its life with a cry and a sharp jab, wondering what I was even as I faded away. The garden spider crawled frantically deeper into the leaves of the hosta, dragging its deflated body until it finally died and fell out of sight.
THE YELLOW SPOUTED VASE

JACOB MONTZ
Because she is a Kikuyu
he cannot bring her home
to the dry red deserts,
to the dusty cows with big horns,
slow as they are in the afternoons by the river,
to the naked babies who play safe
at their hooves, to the mothers washing
knee deep with their skirts tied up,
and to their breasts,
loose, long, solemn
milk makers skimming the soaking clothes,
their dark round moons kissing the water
when they bend low
enough. Because she is a Kikuyu
she won’t sit there with a big
baby belly soaking
up sun, smoothing dung on
a house, cooking, cleaning
for her lover and his brothers
with their solid shoulders and
dead goats for roasting. She’ll sit somewhere
else, alone, straining like a bag of beans,
her sides sewn together with
thin yellow thread.
UNTITLED
CIERRA GILLARD
Some believe that they can control their fate. If they follow moral codes and submit to religious doctrines then a great and good force will be on their side. They will not suffer and if they do it is merely to receive fortunes in the next step of the journey. Others take comfort in the equations and theories of chemistry and find solace in the unmistakable reliability of gravity. Death isn’t frightening because science is like a mother: unwavering, solid, and determined. But the truth is, fate isn’t something that comes from an almighty and it certainly doesn’t rest in exponents and logarithms. Nor is it something that is left to three old virgins, humming the songs of dances they never attended while they spin, measure, and snip. And the truth of that truth lies at the bottom of a lake where all things die.

If you go below the mountains and trees and look beneath the soil and the bedrock you’ll find the lake tucked between the folds of the earth. It isn’t full of hot liquid and burning rocks like they tell you in school. It looks like any other lake you could imagine: clear, calm, and deep. It is here where the arms and hands of four stone throwers determine death. They throw the stones one by one into that deep, cold water. And each stone represents the life of someone living in the world above. The stone throwers are not supposed to question their task. They simply throw and throw. They are supposed to know nothing but stones and water and what happens when the two meet. And they will be there until the earth ends whether by heat or cold or an explosion.

Some think it is the act of throwing that initiates death. It isn’t. It is the stone falling to the bottom of the lake that signifies the end of an earthly life. Sometimes the stone will soar for what seems like forever. It’s a beautiful sight down there by the lake—all those sparkling pieces of the earth floating through the air. It’s an odd sort of reality, things moving at such an extraordinarily slow speed. It seems like years down there while the world spins through its days. Everything looks and feels like it is treading through thick air when the stone throwers stop for a second to breathe.

Claude stood on the south edge of the lake and knew he was condemned to be there. He had once sought immortality when such stories still existed. He had upset the balance of the universe and all the forces that were greater than him with all those attempts to find hidden caves in remote lands filled with the power of

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eternal life. He was sent to the lake to throw stones. As much as he knew this was all a punishment for going against the natural order of the gods and humans, he wanted to believe that he was secretly special—that he had the ability to carry out an important task on behalf of those greater powers that sent him here. He yearned for redemption with every stone he threw.

Claude picked up the stones carefully. Each stone told a story and he liked to hold onto them for a while to see each one. As long as he was holding onto the stones he could see into the world above; he could see what life looked like and he could see the face of the person who would soon die. He had held and thrown stones that belonged to politicians and mothers. He had seen the faces of the very elderly who were just hoping for it to end soon, and he had seen the faces of parents around their sick child praying for it to not end at all.

Claude wanted to believe that his body contained some sort of extraordinary ability beyond throwing stones. Comfort often lies in the arms of familiarity. It is easy to become what you do. Claude was beginning to feel like he was losing something in this mindless task; he had only the smallest fragments of memory from his previous life. He frequently closed his eyes, holding the stones in his hands for what felt like hours. Piece by piece, life by life, he had constructed an idea of what the world must be like. He loved looking into someone else’s life; it was thrilling and terrifying and lovely. When he opened his eyes again, he could see distant figures of the other stone throwers on their respective shores. They looked like tiny, moving figurines stuck between fog and mist.

He picked up Lisa’s stone by mistake. It had to be a mistake. She was too beautiful? She was too genuine? Claude couldn’t put his finger on it. She wasn’t exactly attractive; he had thrown the stones of far more beautiful models and actresses into the lake. Lisa was not young and she was not old. She was past the age of drinking and one-night stands but too young to think about social security checks and Medicare. She was at that in-between stage. That space where you’re supposed to have figured yourself out and should be living the life you’ve always imagined. Some choose children, savings funds, picking out paint colors, and dinner parties with other like-minded folk. And others choose adventure in the great big world or the practicality of balancing a checkbook or some simply settle
Claude watched her. He was drawn to her slow and precise movements. He watched her walk to the fruit stand where she worked and he watched her leave in the evenings. He watched her throw one soggy microwave dinner after another onto her dining room table and he watched her ignore her phone every time it rang. He watched her throw her answering machine against the wall and he watched her try to fill the empty space she was feeling with books and movies and the physical gratification of sex with an ex-boyfriend.

Claude didn't feel sexually attracted to Lisa, not exactly. It was more like a yearning to be touched by her. He wanted to feel her hands on his skin and more than anything he wanted to embrace her and feel the weight of her body pressing into his. He wanted to mold his body around hers so that he could feel her back expand and contract with each breath against his chest.

He set her stone down and picked up a different one. He threw it before he had a chance to see to whom it belonged. He threw blindly and aimlessly the rest of the afternoon. When he fell down at dusk, Lisa's stone was still haunting him. It stared at him from the pile of stones next to his head.

Often times, Claude would walk towards the western shore where Sam stayed. Sam usually helped Claude settle his mind. The two would talk or sit quietly on the soft sand. Claude liked the company. Sam was a different kind of friend than the stones were. He didn't let Claude into his personal thoughts very much, but at least he was an actual, physical presence. Sam said he couldn't remember if he had ever been anywhere else other than the lake. Sam had met the other two stone throwers and had advised Claude not to go seeking them out. “They're detestable creatures. No sense of restraint, throwing in twenty stones at a time. Truly, Claudius, I don't even like being around them," he had said when Claude asked about them.

Claude went to Sam's that night but found that he was already sound asleep. He wanted to talk about Lisa's stone with him. He wanted some sort of guidance or direction. Instead he walked back toward his shore, dragging his feet the whole way.

Claude thought about the stones too much. Rather, he thought about the lives that each stone represented. Lisa wasn't the first. Claude had been captivated by the

(continued)
lives of many other people before. He sometimes held onto their stones for a while. At first it would only be for a few hours or maybe a day but lately Claude had been holding onto stones for weeks at a time. Whenever he felt lonely or unsatisfied, he would hold onto their stones. He found comfort in the routines of their lives like old friends find comfort in silence. Sam told him that he should just throw slowly and methodically. He should just let the lives glimmer past—he should let them stay blurry and distant, but the next morning when Claude tried to throw Lisa’s stone, he struggled. He looked toward the sky and looked toward the trees, wanting this feeling to go away, this problem to go away.

He spent a week trying to reason his dilemma. His routine was rehearsed. Claude had tried convincing himself long ago that the lake below was far better than anything the world above could offer. He told himself that Lisa’s wasn’t any different from any other young women’s stone he’d thrown into the lake before and she wasn’t any different from the women that would come after. He told himself that this was the way things had to be and that he simply could not change the fate of someone living in the world. Claude stood there yelling at himself and then tried comforting himself. He kept his eyes on the little island in the middle of the lake the whole time he fought with himself. He knew that when the world ended, the island would sink to the bottom of the lake and he wouldn’t exist any more either.

He got into the habit of holding onto Lisa’s stone when he lay down at the end of the day, so that he could see how she spent her nights. He watched her go over to Don’s house. Lisa continually retreated to Don. Claude watched them watch shitty movies together and then have sex on the living room floor. Lisa usually slept there but stayed awake much longer than Don and spent those quiet hours sitting on his balcony looking at nothing in particular. But sometimes Don would wake up and stare at Lisa. Caught between intimacy and convenience, he was never sure how to treat her.

Don stared at Lisa’s sleeping body. She curled herself up like she was still in her mother’s womb. Don reached out to stroke her hair but pulled his hand away at the last second when she moaned and moved her body into a tighter ball. He looked up at the ceiling instead.

Lisa rolled over to look at him. She didn’t smile and she didn’t frown. She just
looked at him.

“Should we go out to breakfast in the morning?” Don asked, putting his thick arm behind his head.

“I don’t know,” Lisa said.

“Well, we don’t have to. I just thought it might be fun. Like when we were younger and stayed out really late and then went to brunch in the morning.”

“Yeah, but we’re not younger anymore. We’ve done all the things young people do. We’re on the other side of younger now,” Lisa said, sighing.

“What happened to you?” Don asked, turning to look at Lisa’s face.

“What do you mean?” she said, avoiding his gaze.

“I mean you don’t talk to your family anymore. You always ignore their phone calls. You’re moodier too.”

“Don, not everything that happens in my life is your business.”

Lisa walked over to the chair in the corner of the room and started pulling on her clothes. Her body had begun to reveal her age; muscles that were once tight started to loosen and the skin around her lips was starting to develop fine little creases that she had no way of smoothing out.

“It just doesn’t make sense. You just always seem like you have stuff under control.”

“Accepting things and having them under control aren’t the same as living the way you want to,” she said.

“I guess,” Don said, unconvinced.

“Don’t you get it, Don? We’re just lying here. We should go make something happen. Something new. We need to get rid of all the shit in our lives that brings us down.”

“I just don’t understand why not talking to your family is part of this.”

“I’m making a change, Don. I can’t be around them right now.”

Lisa slipped on her worn loafers and grabbed her purse off of the floor. She tried to walk loudly towards the front door of Don’s apartment but the thick carpet muffled her steps. When she got to the front door she paused for a second, listening to see if Don would call out to her and ask her to come back. When she didn’t hear anything, she opened the heavy door and stepped out into the dimly lit hallway.

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Claude rolled over and stared at the pile of stones resting next to him. There were so many. He wondered how the world continued to carry on with so many people dying. He sat up and decided to walk over to Sam’s part of the shore.

Sam would always greet him the same way, “Hi-ya, Claudius,” Sam said quietly but enthusiastically.

“Hi Sam,” Claude said, throwing himself to the ground next to where Sam sat.

“What seems to be the trouble?” Sam said, picking at his teeth with one of his fingernails.

“I’ve been holding onto a rock for awhile,” Claude said quietly.

“Listen, Claude. You’ve got to let them go. If you picked up their stone then it needs to be thrown into the lake.”

“I know but I just feel so bad about it. I watch these people trying to figure out their lives and sometimes they start to do it. You know? Then I’m supposed to just let that go—let them go. I keep wondering why I have this kind of power.”

“You’re not supposed to be deciding these things, Claude. We’re supposed to just throw. This is not power. We don’t have the ability to change anything.”

“Yeah, I know. But don’t you ever wonder why you’re here? Do you even remember where you were before you were here?” Claude looked at Sam intently.

“No. But I’ve been here the longest. I do know that.”

“Well, what happened to the other stone throwers who were here before? It’s not like we can just pick up and leave.”

Sam looked out toward the water, toward the small island in the center and didn’t say anything.

“Right? We’re stuck here?”

“Listen Claude, the world above is so messed up there’s no use thinking that you can change anything about it. Keeping two or three measly stones out of the lake for a while isn’t going to alter the course of everything. It’s merely a knick in a very large and very strong machine, something that has no intention of slowing down or reversing directions any time soon. It’s better if we just throw.”

Claude felt like crying for them—all those people up there—trying to reason death and life. People tell themselves that they’re good and that should be reason enough for them to keep living. They pray to gods and the universe to keep them...
moving and breathing. They pray not to become a human incubator for some terrible disease at the age of thirty and they pray that their plane doesn’t crash into the ocean. See them stomp their feet and pull out their hair. There are a million little tragedies that occur every single day and they cannot be reasoned; people are going mad trying to figure out why things unfold the way they do. But wait long enough and perhaps they’ll figure it out. Maybe they’ll let go of all that stale air they’ve been holding in their lungs and maybe they’ll leave their apartment in the middle of night and forget about the man they’ve been sleeping with. Maybe they’ll relearn what it means to be alive.

Sam interrupted his thoughts and said, “Claude, I’m sorry. I don’t mean to upset you but really, think about it. It isn’t worth your trouble.”

Claude thought of Sam standing in front of a crowd of people from the world above. He imagined all of their frightened faces watching Sam speak. In Sam’s mind things were absolute. You can kick and scream, go down fighting, or simply throw in the towel. It doesn’t matter. Just watch the throwers let all the stones go. Let the stones fall where they may and pray for nothing. Let the waves wash over the bodies and still pray for nothing. Miracles do not exist in any world. They are simply the consequences of stones thrown awry—thrown too high or too far. They may skip along the surface for a while but those stones will fall rightfully into place eventually. Everyone will just become sand and dust at the end of it all anyway.

When Claude had returned to the south shore, he picked up Lisa’s stone again. She had walked to the edge of her city and was staring at the ocean. Big waves toppled into one another and she just stood there watching, not caring about her empty bank account or her greasy, disheveled hair. She was breathing in the sting of the salty air and that felt like the most important thing in the whole world. Claude fingered her stone gingerly between his dirty fingers.

Claude was uncertain as to what he should do. Certainty is a luxury and mysteries are a dime a dozen. The trees would continue to grow their rings through the years and there would always be words hanging in the air. The big mountains would continue to shift and people would keep slipping in and out of love. The wind will never be able to blow away all the frightening secrets, but the seasons would always change. The sun and the moon would always share the same sky. The earth would always tilt and twirl to its own rhythm and everything would go

(continued)
The Stone Thrower (continued)

on and on until it stopped. That was a miracle. Claude was certain of that.

See him there, standing at the edge of that lake trying to figure out what to do. He thought about swimming and swimming until he could no longer keep his body afloat. He wondered if he could make it to the island in the middle. See him holding onto that stone, as if he were to squeeze it hard enough and long enough, the secrets of the world might slide out and cover his fingers. See him pacing back and forth. See him crying for every stone he wishes he hadn’t thrown and every stone he will have to throw tomorrow and the next day and the next day. See him hold onto everything and try to let it go.

He swam. He swam for Lisa and he swam for the bits and pieces of other people’s lives he had come to love. He swam for everything he had felt he’d lost in both of his lives. His body slid through the water with ease; his arms steadily pulled him forward stroke by stroke. He wondered if the other stone throwers could see his great body moving through water. Claude could feel the thousands and thousands of stones at the bottoms of the lake watching him move faster and faster until he had reached the edge of the small island.

As he climbed the steep terrain he wondered why it had taken him so long to figure out that his stone was on that island. It made sense now, of course, but as he climbed upwards through the gnarly green branches and pushed his way towards the highest point, he felt like a fool for not realizing this sooner.

He found them there, at the top, four gleaming stones that he could only conclude were his and the other three stone throwers’. He could feel the rhythm of his heart speeding up as he approached the stones. He extended his hand forward to touch the first one. As he rested his fingers on the cool surface, he could see Sam whistling a song that Claude had never heard and throwing stones to its beat.

Claude removed his hand and moved it to the next one. He saw himself, at least he concluded it was himself, because whom he saw was not standing on the shore but in the exact place he was. He felt like he didn’t recognize the face, though. He wondered how much he had changed since he had come here, how the stones and the water had rubbed away the man he had once been to leave a body that looked far too strong and a face far too weathered.

He didn’t bother to touch the other two stones that lay before him. He stood and thought about throwing all four in the water with one great heave. He thought
how he could end all this but as he stood there he realized that he couldn't decide that. And he thought about Lisa's stone, across the lake resting at his abandoned south shore. He smiled, quickly, at the thought of her walking through the night, chasing the salty air and the sound of her solitary steps on the pavement.

He felt the muscles in his legs tighten and relax as he bent over to pick up his stone. It felt as though every sense in his body had been heightened. He could smell the trees and he could taste the iron in the dirt. He stood at the edge of the cliff and looked into the water below. Sucking in a gulp of air, he leapt out beyond the edge. He needed those stones—needed to be with them. He needed them more than they needed him. He wanted to feel the weight of the stones on his chest, on his legs, under his back. He wanted them to cover him completely. He wanted to drown under a sea of stones. He wanted to become stone. He leapt into thin air and waited for his body to drop. Oh what a sight it must have been, those great big arms hugging that tiny stone as the two fell towards that deep, deep blue.
ANOTHER

CHRISTINE REBUHN
The insides of cathedrals are like a womb, 
and I’m not looking to get born again, 
but sometimes it’s nice to feel new.

I went to Notre Dame to be held, 
and I cried in St. Peter’s when I remembered 
what it was like to fit somewhere.

God, or Someone, stood beside me, 
and I wondered how it was those domes 
could hold a space bigger than existence 
under their jewel box hands, 
wondered how they could hold me, 
sitting in-utero for a second time.

How heavy does the whole world feel to a mother, 
when she carries it inside her belly? 
Can she feel the way the spires soar, 
from hip bones to clavicle? 
How the sculpted ceilings 
seem to graze the stars, how pipe organs 
make vibrations between ribs and wooden pews?

I flew a thousand miles only to find her there again, 
floating through stained glass light 
and vaulted skies, 
carrying me, 
even from across the sea.