

Some Things  
We Wrote  
That Spring

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To the Writer's Craft Class  
Spring 2009  
AHS

The thoughtless elegance of young birch trees:  
Long-limbed, firm-muscled, peach-skinned, tossing heads  
In April weather. By turns, silent and shy,  
Shivering perhaps, then boisterous as foals.  
One has wandered into dark maple and beech,  
To bathe, come summer, in green shadows.  
Three confide, lost in the murmur of the world,  
Birch sap rising, unawares, in spring sun.

What if I heard over gravel roads  
Grating chariot wheels, and heard the god's lyre  
Sounding like thrush song in the deeper woods;  
Saw leggy birch bow with catkins' weight,  
Stretching their limbs in the rising sun,  
Saw Daphne startled in sap time, in spring?



# Some Things We Wrote That Spring

Nick Fernandes

Tucker McLean

Taylor Garbett

Kat Milcke

Devin Knox

Morgan Pulchinski

Abigel Lemak

Ben Slimkowich

Julia Maneris

Cameron Smith

Will McEachern

Reem Taher

Christine Wood



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## Foreword

GOOD writing gives us many pleasures. The intimacy of hearing a new friend's voice, right there somehow inside our heads. Our excitement when a fleeting experience we knew firsthand but have struggled and failed to express and have lost forever is returned to us, caught in the net of sentences. That moment when the page falls away to reveal a fictional world that compels belief. The tense energy of a poem that binds together so many meanings that it can only mean itself. Laughing at the play that mirrors our foibles to our faces.

As you read the selections in *Some Things We Wrote That Spring*, I trust you will enjoy some of these pleasures. I can imagine myself as you, reading these pieces for the first time, surprised perhaps at how much fine writing comes out of one semester's work in Writer's Craft. Well, almost. As I write this, I can't forget what you do not see. I see the thick piles of draft, the revisions and revisions and revisions, the fraught negotiations between editor and author, the dark bags under the eyes of students fuelled by coffee. But let these be the mysteries of craft that writers keep to themselves. The reader doesn't need to know the making. The sources of the imagination run deep, and let the reader suppose these pieces spring forth naturally, without any effort.

Regrets that I could not print everything, in particular the long fictions by Nick and Reem. Thanks to old friends: Craig Millage, Willi Lottering, Doug Heaman, all believers in creative process, however messy and unpredictable; William Laurin and Glen Davis for offering students their professional insights; Rosie Baker, Rob Hughes, Deb Paterson, Dave Steep, Esther Terra, Kristine Toms, Maxine Walkes-Thompson, and all the others who encourage all of us by reading EWC students' work for sheer pleasure. Thanks to Ginette Denommé for prompting me to publish this anthology. Thanks above all to the Writer's Craft crazies for making it necessary.

I. R. Lindsay  
August 2009  
Toronto



Non-Fiction



Taylor Garbett

## Development in Queensville

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF NEWMARKET, nestled in the heart of East Gwillimbury, the village of Queensville is set in rolling fields, haystacks and cattle. Occasionally tractors trudge down residential streets. In the 2006 census, the village was home to 632 people. Today, most of Queensville is forest, stream, and nature. Mother of two, Brenda Forhan says, “I moved here for the privacy, the quiet, the small town feel that Newmarket and Aurora have both lost.” Aurora and Newmarket, neighboring towns, have indeed lost that feeling as they develop. Subdivisions sprout on every green acre.

Has Queensville the same fate? Since the late 1980s developers’ plans have peppered village talk. This talk and these plans came to no conclusion until April 1998 when the Ontario Municipal Board took the final step and approved further development. Queensville, the OMB decided, would expand. The OMB says Queensville will grow to a population of 30,000, with the initial phases of the plan creating a community of 20,000 persons by the year 2021. The town has also planned for over 7.4 million square feet of industrial, commercial and institutional development, to generate over 12,000 new jobs.

Hearing this, Brenda Forhan replied, “It’s a real shame; there aren’t many towns left quite like this one. Historically and land wise, this town is quite unique.” And so it is. Queensville dates back to the early 1800s when the local public school was first built. Of course, many historical buildings will be restored and used as stores, some few even remaining homes. However, Leslie Street will soon be considered the ‘old’ Queensville, just as the corner of Kennedy and Yonge is considered ‘old’ Aurora.

Queensville’s new town centre will be located well outside the present village. This town center will cover approximately 125 acres of farmers’ fields and forest and will accommodate over 500,00 square feet of commercial development – including retail stores, department stores, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants, professional offices, medical offices, what have you.

Ken Williams, retired, third generation resident of Queensville, is outraged. “I have lived here my entire life, and before that my parents and my grandparents. These changes will destroy the peaceful community that has grown over the past couple of centuries.”

Donna Walters, who recently made the move to Queensville from Bradford, however, finds the development beneficial. “With the development in Queensville, and the size of lot that I now own, the value of my house will definitely have a dramatic increase.” Residents living now on properties that range from a half-acre to hundreds of acres will see values skyrocket. The increase will begin as soon as highway 404 reaches Queensville this coming fall. But citizens like Ken Williams and Brenda Forhan wonder whether increased house values and profits are worth the destruction of such a close-knit community, turning fields of green into a polluted bustling town.

The OMB argues, however, that one of its most important goals is to create assessment balance in the community of Queensville. This means that the Board has planned development of a balance of industrial and commercial and residential areas. Today's village of large property lots and Victorian houses can expect the coming of more compact singles and townhouses, and low-rise apartments to a maximum of four storeys. As Queensville's population surges, seven elementary schools and two high schools are in the process of being planned for development. The existing six-room elementary school will not suffice.

This quaint village will grow to become a commercialized town: however, the plan does include the preservation of some of the natural environment. Over 500 acres of land will be conserved as open space for leisure use, and existing walking trails and bicycle paths will be improved for residents' use. Brenda Forhan thinks that is a fair trade. "We can't change what is to become of Queensville, so it is nice that they will take into consideration the trails and land, and preserve at least some."

Others, such as Ken Williams, will never be pleased with the development, even if the effort of preservation is present in development.

Tucker McLean

## Dive

I STOOD AT DOCK'S END, shivering in the cold air. I could see hundreds of burning blue stars, clustered like clouds in the dark sky, clear as I ever saw them. The sky perfectly mirrored in the dark water of the lake, two giant basins of sky, the tree line separating the halves. I floated in the middle of space, a dock at the end of the world. The water near motionless, lightly slapping the wooden boards. I dipped my foot in the water only to whip it back out, wrapping it in my towel. It was going to be cold, there was no denying that. There were four of us, standing there on the dock in complete darkness except for the sky. I turned back to see the dim light of the cottage bleeding through the branches of the forest. I yearned to be back indoors, surrounded by warmth and light, comfortable. The lake air stung the skin of my arms and legs. I draped my towel around my shoulders. We stared at the star stippled lake, waiting for something to force us into the water, anything. No one wanted to jump.

Earlier in the year I was forced to choose the course that would become the next year of my life, my life after high school. How was I expected to plan out my future when I'd barely even lived? Making decisions that would define who I become, without any conception of life.



The pressures of my entire final year of high school: everything around me influenced my judgement, my friends, my family, yet nothing seemed to be of any help. I couldn't expect much guidance from anyone. Forced to make a decision I didn't want to make, one with a fast approaching deadline.

In the night air we sat scattered around the dock, lying in old patio chairs, paint peeling off their sides, knowing we hadn't come this far for nothing. I couldn't take my eyes off the stars. I forgot about them living in the city, you couldn't make them out very clearly, not like up north. As far as the eye could travel the stars hung on the canopy of the sky, into the farthest distances of night. They weren't just chance arrangements; they were small fractions of much grander constellations, although ones I didn't know much about. Staring up, transfixed, I forgot about the cold breeze twisting through the dock, against my bitter skin. We'd been seated for a while, all anxious to make the jump, but nervous enough to hold back. No one was going to volunteer; someone would have to muster the confidence to go first, to jump into the unknown. It wasn't going to be me.

I remember going to the Metro Convention Centre the previous September. Colourful stands and advertisements, eager representatives passing out information packets, parents dragging along their respective teenagers. There must have been at least twenty schools all from different corners of the country, all vying for people's attention. I felt overwhelmed, there was so much to see and ascertain and I didn't even know if I wanted it. After the car ride home, filled with uncomfortable and indecisive discussion with my parents, I sat alone at my kitchen table. I fanned out the stack of school brochures on the table, as if the choice should somehow become easier. Staring at their titles, recalling their reputation among students, things I'd heard, opinions expressed. That

one's in a good location, this one has great facilities, the neighbouring city at that one is fantastic. I felt no shame in saying that I really had no idea. My friends were all headed off in different directions, going to school, working for a year, taking another semester of high school. I knew my decision shouldn't be founded on of what my friends were doing but I couldn't help but be affected by their choices. Choices I'd have to start making while still in search of direction.

I sat staring out at the lake, wishing I could somehow gather the nerve to jump and get it over with already, start getting warm again. Something held me back. I just sat waiting for someone else to show some direction to follow. I could see the moon, edging above the distant tree line, and below in its watery reflection. Once again I found myself staring into the basin of skies, back and forth between the two moons. I had completely forgotten what time it was. it had been a while since we left the cottage, warmth and comfort. I sat at the end of the dock in uncertainty, something I decided I didn't want to bring upon myself anymore. I was going to have to change. Staying in the same state of mind, the same place, never got anyone anywhere, and it wouldn't help me either. Maybe I wasn't ready for university, but I don't think there's necessarily a way to prepare for such a radical change, it hits you no matter how you prepare, it's how you accept the blow. I accept that I'll have to move forward, out of my comfort zone, that I have to learn to cooperate with change, cooperate with life, grow up. To make changes for the sake of making changes. Sure I'd still be unsure of my future, of my path, but at least I'll take a step forward, who knows what direction.

It was time to jump. There was no more need to stall. I had to jump for jumping's sake, simply because. I had spent enough time being comfortable, it was time. I started running down the length of the dock, heading for the edge. My feet bounded over the wooden boards as I

stepped into my final pace. I leaped into the air and over the lip of the dock, into the starry basin of sky and water. It didn't matter how I hit the water, only that I jumped.

Reem Taher

## ECHO

SADLY, ONLY EVERY THIRD SUMMER I GO TO EGYPT. Not only for vacation, but to see my family, and I always stay at the villa of my mother's parents, my second home. The only place I feel truly comfortable and relaxed.

Although I have enjoyed the odd time where I can just say my grandfather's name to get out of any trouble, I have never abused his name. If I mention that I am his granddaughter, people who look down on me suddenly respect me. Anyone harassing me turns away in fear. But I can't abuse this man's name. He is too good a person to take advantage of. I love him dearly, yet up until a few weeks ago, I knew very little about his life. He fought in a war sometime ago, he built a few hospitals, and he was a philanthropist. And that was all I knew.

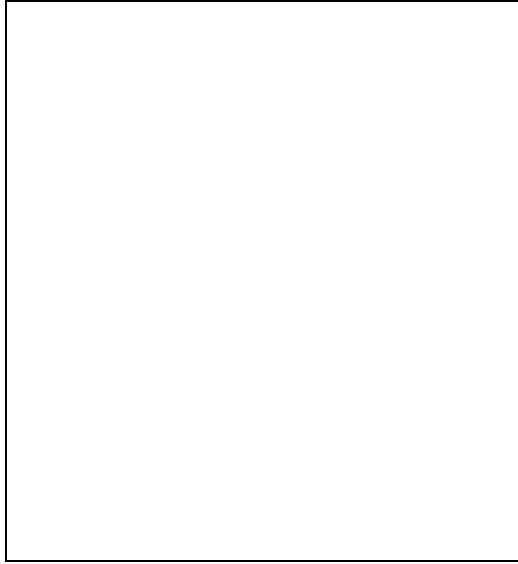
My grandma's chauffeur drives up the Mercedes into the stone driveway of the villa. Sallah takes my shopping bags out of the trunk and carries them inside. I step out. I see this ten-bedroom white villa on three acres, the extensive garden, and the poolside full-service guesthouse for those – wait a minute. My mother and her family live this lifestyle. How did I end up here? I walk around. I have an afternoon alone to explore, to figure out anything.

I continue to walk through the gardens. I leaned on a palm tree that faced the pool listening to some Arabic pop music. I have a sudden urge, to find out anything about my grandfather. I decide to go hunting for information.

I run around the villa. I know only one place that would have any sort of information, and that is my grandfather's room. I open the door. Normally I would knock, but no one is in the house today. I notice only one closet door is locked, so I figure that might be it. I find keys in a drawer and open the door. On the left hand side hang most of the medals he has collected over the years. I looked at one of the medals. The inscription is in Arabic. I don't know how to read proper Arabic, so I put it back. I don't know the name of the decoration, its meaning. On the right hand side hangs his old uniform, worn and grey. In the middle are pictures and a silver plaque. I know how to read my mom's family name in Arabic, so I know it was dedicated to him. I pick up one of the pictures and dust it. I smile. I begin to know about his life.

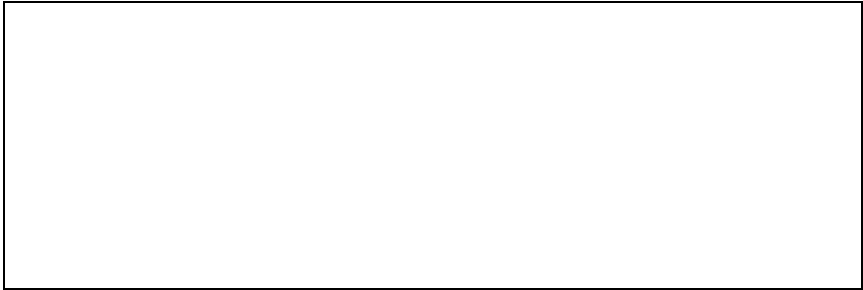


July 1940. A young boy stands in the middle of a dry field beside a cow. His left arm rests on the top of the cow's head; his right hand holds a balloon. Today is his tenth birthday. His father, who owns this farm in Salaka in the town El Mansourah, will take him to the Nile to fish. The boy does not know that in five years, his father will pass away. The father leaves the land to the boy and his brother and sisters.



May 1954. He stands in the middle of a field wearing a graduation cap and robe. He's smiling widely and toothily. He's ecstatic. 'This degree is awarded to Mohsen Sedki from the Ein Shams University Faculty of Engineering in Cairo.'

His family drives in from El Mansourah to celebrate. "Congratulations!" He thanks them all generously. "I couldn't have done this without you." Three of his sisters wore floral dresses with cinched waists and two-inch heels. They have short bobbed hair and extravagant makeup. His other sister wears a floor-length skirt with a long-sleeved button-up shirt. Her hair is covered by a hijab. His brothers, all ambassadors or government ministers, wear expensive dark suits.



Cairo, 1959. Mohsen Sedki marries Mervat, a baccalaureate in French literature from Sacre Coeur. He wears a jet-black suit to match his thick, gelled hair and full black moustache. He links arms with his new wife. She smooths down her dress with her other hand. She is wearing a Victorian-style white wedding dress that cinches her tiny waist, making her even leaner than she is. The train of the dress flows for miles. Her hair, dyed with henna, is a thick, wavy auburn bob. In the middle of the living room of her father's house, they both stand on top of a circular dais. Her father, a chemistry teacher, stands beside her afterwards and whispers in her ear, "You found the right one." She smiles and gives her father a hug. She turns to her new husband, to whom she has been engaged for only four months, and says, "One day my little girl will know I've found the right one." They give each other a small kiss. Traditional Arabic music fills the house. Women holler and give the newly-weds hugs and kisses.



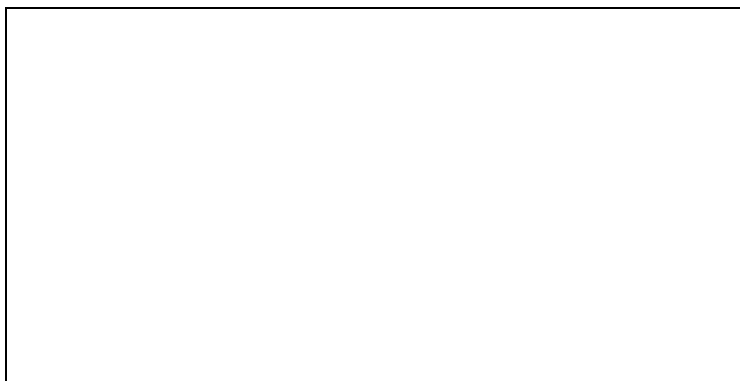


January 1977. Mohsen becomes a general in the Egyptian military at age 40, one of the youngest generals ever. He poses for a photograph. He wears a grey uniform with three badges, four stars, and five medals. One gold badge is shaped like the bow of an arrow, another is the red, white, and black flag of Egypt and the last badge is the goldeneagle. The four golden stars on his shoulders represent his status, and the five round medals represent his status, honour, loyalty, and patriotism. He keeps smiling while the cameraman takes more pictures than required.



April. The year is scratched out, but it looks like 1979. Mohsen stands among men in the same grey uniform. Generals who later retired just as Mohsen did in 1987. On the back of the photo is an inscription in Arabic. “El Hay’a Endesaya.” Engineering section. 1979 is the year Mohsen founded the Engineering section of the Egyptian Army.

Behind the photo there are letters, each typed in English inviting Mohsen to the annual celebration of El Hay’a Endesaya. I notice more pictures of him in later years at these parties. People come by to thank him for his dedication to engineering. “It’s my life,” he proudly answers.

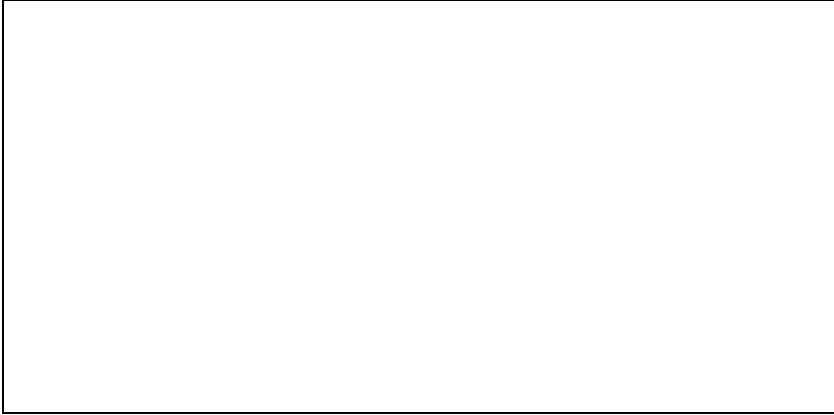


1984. Mohsen is standing by a sign saying ‘El Shrouk’, which is one of the large towns he built for the youths entering into the army. Behind an apartment complex, there is the top of the local mosque and the bell tower of one of the many schools he built. These large towns today are known as the Cities of the Youths. It is four years after he has been appointed Minister of Housing.

Behind this picture is another picture. He positions himself in front of an off-white building which currently stands beside the heavy grey bridge flooded with cars and taxis. He wears a grey suit, a maroon silk tie. He tells his construction workers what to do next. He’s been through it before, having built many versions of the same hospital. Today it is known as the Armed Forces Military Hospital. He smiles as he sees the success of his bridge, remembering that he also built the Suez Canal Bridge during the war between Israel and Egypt.

“Where did these parts come from?” asks one of the construction workers.

“I had them shipped from Germany. That’s where the best come from!” he replies with a smile.



Today, Mohsen is recognized as being one of the youngest and greatest generals of Egypt. In a glass case in the Egyptian National Military Museum, alongside busts of other great military leaders in Egypt's history, is a bust of Mohsen. This honors his founding of El Hay'a Endesaya, the Engineering section of the Egyptian Army.

His son, Khaled, has been recently promoted to sergeant in the Egyptian police force. He follows in his father's footsteps, he serves his country. In this photograph we see Khaled sitting before the glass case which exhibits the life-sized bust of his father. The bust is carved in green marble. The lighting here is serene. Red velvet ropes on brass stanchions stand in front of the glass case. Lean forward, and you can look into Mohsens' face.

Julia Marneris

## It's The Mess That Feels So Right

3:20 P.M. ON A SATURDAY, standing in line waiting to be let in to the most waited for event of the month: The Academy Is... concert. It's the end of November in Toronto, and although it hasn't snowed yet, it's freezing, winter jacket weather. A really big girl walks by with just a skimpy tank-top that says "William your hips don't lie". She is either *really* desperate for attention, or all of the blubber keeps her warm.

Here comes one of the scalpers, looking to buy tickets he can sell later on at twice the price.

"Tickets! Buying or selling tickets"

A guy in front snickers. "Yeah, because I'm totally willing to sell him my one ticket. The one I bought to get into the show. If I had extra tickets, I'd be trying to sell them myself, buddy."

Silently I agree with him. A group of young girls in back are giggling away for whatever reason, maybe it's the new surroundings of being downtown, or being out at night for the first time without their mothers. If you didn't know any better, you would think these fourteen-year-old chickies were older than us legal-agers.

Ten minutes later another scalper vultures around, scouting the vicinity, and one of the boys calls him over.

“How much?”

“Forty bucks”

“I’ve only got twenty to spend”

“Thirty”

“I only have twenty.”

You can buy them at the door for twenty, so he is not going to get more than that for a ticket. I mention this to the guy.

“I know. I’m not giving him any more than that. Whatever.” And that ends our conversation. The girls behind us start giggling again, proving that they really aren’t as old as they portray themselves to be.

These girls wear way too much eye-makeup for their age, raccoon eyes surrounded by the blackest-of-black Shoppers Drug Mart kohl. Not one of them stands out in the crowd. Skin-tight jeans and grafted on hoodies. The eye-catching accessory is what tells them apart: the lime-green shoelaces, or the chartreuse headband. They look at everyone with all of this sex in their eyes, all of this “experience”. The fan girls. The ones that only like the band for their looks and only come to the shows to see if they can lose it to the member that they’re “in love” with. But I digress.

The line starts to move, and it’s already 4:40 p.m., the doors were supposed to open at 4:30. The line shifts, and we end up stuck behind a pair of girls, and that’s when I notice her pants. HA! She and my brother are wearing the exact same purple pants. I tap her on the shoulder,

“He likes your pants.” I point down at my brother’s.

“Oh.” She looks away and keeps walking.

Inside security frisks us. They confiscate my bottle of water, yet somehow, someone managed to get in weed because that’s all you could smell in the air. It’s probably those boys over there with the hair in their

eyes, covering their bloodshot whites. Party in the front, business in the back. Actually, now I recognize one of them from the Greeley Estates show last month. The Opera House started out as a Vaudeville stage in 1909, as a main entertainment venue presenting a variety of acts. Singers dancers magic animals plays skits cabaret music comedians acrobats athletes celebrities impersonators short movies. Every night, featuring an array of talented performances to keep people amused. Now, the Opera House is more famous for concerts rock emo screamo alternative shows bands battles head-banging yelling mosh pits. Not the same sort of fun you would find in 1909. The balconies which used to hold the higher class guests are now used as diving boards for the band members, and the old velvet seats have been ripped out to make room for the mosh pits.

I'm watching from the very back of the club as the show starts, one of the opening acts playing. Then another band goes on. Then another one. An inconspicuously dressed man walks by. The only thing giving him away is his mountain-man beard. The drummer of the headlining band The Academy Is...,

What? No one notices him as he walks past us, so is it really him? I tap him on the shoulder to make sure, and it is him! Oh my GOD it's "The Butcher"! He can't hear me yelling at him for a picture, so I make a clicking motion with my fingers, and we get a picture together. That is so going on Facebook. After that people started asking him for pictures. They must have finally noticed once they saw the flash from my camera that he was someone important. I didn't notice that he smelled like alcohol and cigarettes.

Between sets, in the bathroom, girls are fiercely scrubbing their hands, trying to remove the black X that has been drawn there. Everyone too young to drink got X'd at the door. Scrub your hands equals drink like the band.

The Academy Is... finally comes on, and the night is made. Girls are screaming louder than the singer, and I can't hear myself think, never mind my friend trying to scream in my ear. Bass bounces up from the floor, bathed in sticky liquids. Arms flailing, hitting everyone around. Cameras filming favourite songs. Electric bliss. Perfection.

Blackened eyes blackened hair straightened hair straight jeans purple jeans skinny jeans skinny girls scary boys loud noise violent passion memories history screaming vocals hard bass pretty faces hard drinks harder drugs crossed hands scrubbed hands vultures needers treasure seekers lights doused the Opera House.



Will McEachern

## Jumping In

“HEY, MOM, CAN ME AND IAN GO FOR A SWIM?” After she nodded and cautioned us, Ian and I flung open the cottage door, raced down the swerving dirt path to the deck, jumped the small flight of stairs to the dock, and were still running as we dove. I curled up into a cannon ball, wanting to make the bigger splash. I hit the water first. Under water I saw Ian pencil dive straight to the bottom of the lake, the water only about ten feet deep off the dock.

I floated back to the top of the water first, giving my head a shake to get the hair off my face. I looked around for Ian, I couldn't find him. I stuck my head underwater and looked for him there, nothing. I looked around the surface of the water again, still I couldn't find Ian. I started to get worried, I thought he might have gotten sucked further down the lake. I called out his name. “Ian! Where are you Ian!” Then I was pulled underwater. Flailing around I tried to find what had grabbed me, screaming all the while. I found my attacker, Ian was at the surface laughing at me while I screamed and flailed. I rose to the surface, and told him it wasn't funny. He kept laughing, so I dived under him and grabbed his legs, trying to pull him down.

We fought under water for a while, a slow motion fistfight. After we both got pretty tired we decided to stop and called a truce. He said he

was going to get some rocks from the bottom. He was going to try and sink the dock. I told him I'd help by sitting on the dock. He dived down, and I swam to the ladder. I sat down in one of the Muskoka chairs, and let the sun dry me off. Just as I closed my eyes, Ian broke the water's surface, struggling with the rock he had picked up, at the dock's edge. He told me to take it, so I sluggishly got up, walked to the edge, knelt down and grabbed the rock. I lifted it up and placed it on the dock.

"Gonna need more," I said.

"I know," he said, looking at the same dock. With that he dove down, and I returned to my chair. He rose again, a few metres from the dock, I asked him if he got one. Nope, close though, and he dove again. He rose and dove a few times as I sat in my chair. I just told him to call me when he needed help.

I closed my eyes, drying off under the sun. I thought he called me, so I looked up and I just saw him splashing the water a few metres from the dock's edge, yelling something. I thought he just wanted to get me to jump into the water, to help him with the rocks. His head was barely above the water, and it kept dipping under, the splashes he was making were getting smaller, he wasn't yelling anymore. I realized he wasn't trying to get me to help with rocks.

I dove in and swam to where he had been, but he was underwater now. I took a breath and dived under looking for him. I saw him about six feet below the surface, trying to swim back up. I dove down to him and grabbed him with one arm. I kicked and pushed with my free arm, trying to reach the surface. The struggle was starting to hurt, but we were only three feet below the surface now, I kept kicking, but I felt him stopping, his kicks and paddles were slowing down, he was barely moving. I kicked harder, and swam with all my strength. With one foot left, I gave a huge kick and broke the surface. I inhaled a huge breath, Ian didn't. I started to

swim over to the dock, we were still about two metres away. I was pushing and kicking, trying to get Ian to talk. His eyes were closed, he wasn't breathing, he wasn't doing anything. Kneeling at the dock edge were his dad and mine; our moms were standing back. Ian's dad pulled him up, and started giving him CPR. I swam to the ladder and climbed out. I went to kneel by Ian. After Ian's dad gave him a few breaths, Ian spat up a lot of water.

The parents carried Ian back up to the cottage. I just sat in the Muskoka chairs, shaking. I was confused. My daze was only broken when my dad put his hand on my shoulder. I looked at him, my eyes welling up. He gave me a hug, and we sat like that for a while, my dad rubbing my head, and telling me it was O.K now. I was still shaking.

Terrified as I was, I knew things would be different now. I'd learned caution; I wouldn't be reckless. I knew things would slow down, my childhood was ending. But I also knew that my experience with the chaos of the real world would never make me regret jumping in.

Abigel Lemak

## Licking Wounds

INSTEAD OF TRYING TO AVERT THEM, we spend so much of our time healing wounds. Most wounds never truly heal. They are only forgotten—covered in makeshift bandages. We smile and laugh, nod our heads, promise everything is all right. We lie compulsively, almost shamelessly. Nevertheless sooner or later every child realizes that everybody lies, people lie to others or lie to themselves. The reasons are always carefully considered and rehearsed—often repeated in the obscurity of the night, a lonely whisper, desperate to offer some form of comfort.

A man, late one dim August afternoon, decides to take his two kids out for one last boat ride before they retire to their stuffy tents for the night. He promises them ice cream, and they accept gratefully. For their mother's sake they wear their lifejackets. On their way back their father, confident in his knowledge of the lake, is eager to get back before the mosquitoes come out to feast. The sunset is reflecting strange coloured lights onto the water and into their tired eyes. Somewhere in between, they hit a rock. The young boy flies. The silence of the lake is piercing, the cry of the young girl soundless—all stands still in that moment of flight. Somewhere on the docks their mother is cleaning the fish they caught earlier that day. Under the ash tree the family dog is

sniffing the air intently, his body tense and alert. The young girl soaring in the boat turns her head just in time to watch her brother tossed into the lake. Their boat lands on the same spot moments later. Her eyes grow with worry as the water became still.

Her orange-buoyed brother bursts through the surface, arms wet and flailing, voice frantic with fright. He is terrified of open water. His father swims faster as he remembers. To hold his son, his miraculously unscathed boy, floating in uncertainty. Both wounded yet unharmed; he looks to his father with new recognition in his heart.

The girl was ten years old when she stopped believing in invincibility.

I think that was the day I lost my sense of childhood; I was the young girl sitting in the back of the boat, never imagining any harm to come. As long as Daddy is there we are *safe*. Her world was no longer a land of harmless fantasy—the demons were emerging. Adolescence was around the corner. Demons—they surround us all; hiding in closets, lurking under stairs, haunting every footstep then disappearing into smoke, into thin air—gone, but always there. We breathe them in, cough and cry them out—the car doors are locked, windows sealed; there is no way out.

She's crying again, frantic. Trying hard to hide her face from him. From us. He's angry now cursing shouting cigarette ash flying from his hands, covering his shirt and pants. The girl is watching him, hoping that all of that ash will swallow him up, bury him until he is reborn—soft-spoken and calm. He is still smoking, taking angry puffs, forming a dark halo of smoke around his head, poisoning the air. His voice is filled with anger but his eyes shine with pain—he has no more love with this woman anymore. I remember the warmth in his hands, the smell of smoke on his shirt and the sandpaper kisses he would frequently plant on my forehead.

Daddy rarely smiles anymore and sandpaper kisses are replaced with sour ones. Alcohol on his pants and shirt—reeking. He awakens the young boy from his innocent slumber, who peers around groggy and startled. Anger suddenly subsides from the man's face. The villain is replaced—a hero reborn. Quiet and solemn he picks the boy up, and carries him in to his comforting bed—too young for blackened dreams and lingering smoke.

Though tears dry, and bleeding subsides, our scars remain. They are carried on through memories of smothering waves and tainted blood. The boy's eyes are no longer innocent but doubtful—I think this is what they call growing up. Parents are both hero and demon. They are meant to both hurt and to heal—how else are we to learn how life really feels. Our wounds may still itch, from time to time. Who knows how long they will remain in our lives. Though they seem almost tolerable now—I do not resent them anymore.

Will McEachern

## Ode to Road Hockey

ON 21 NOVEMBER 2001, in Aurora Ontario, the NHL All-Stars played the greatest game ever.

“Gretzky receives the pass! He’s all alone in the offensive zone! He’s on a breakaway! He lines up for the shot, fakes left! Shoots Right! He shoots, he scores! The crowd goes wild!”

“Graham, stop the play-by-play.”

“Not my fault, it just happens when I’m on a breakaway.”

The road hockey season started as soon as the snow melted off the roads, and ended when it returned. From March to December, any day could be a road hockey game. And every game was great, played with friends, family and NHL all-stars, no referees to break the flow. Played until the street lights came on and the sun set. In the fall sometimes we could even play under the moon while it was still light. We would play until our fingers were so cold we couldn’t let go of the sticks we held so tightly. Running back and forth, up and down the angled street was the only thing that kept us warm. And all the while we played, our moms would be calling, telling us our dinner was getting cold, while our dads would sit back and watch the game. And we would just ask for five more minutes, over and over and over again.

Almost every kid on the street had a favourite hockey player they would be. Graham was Gretzky, Chris was Orr, Alex was Richard. They would narrate themselves on impressive breakaways, or immaculate defence plays. It didn't matter whether you were good or bad, every one still played, and every one would score goals. No matter how good the goalies were, nothing seemed to stop a lucky slap shot. And there always were slap shots in every game, until someone got hit by one below the belt, and we would have to stop the slap shots. But the slap shots were back the next day. We all tried to pretend it didn't hurt that much, but once we were home we wouldn't move from our couch or bed for any reason.

The only thing that would ever stop the game, was when someone would shout "Car!" No matter what was happening, or how close to scoring you were, every one moved to the edge of the road. The goalies would bring their nets, shuffling over, covered in goalie pads made by their dads or neighbours. Then as soon as the car had passed, we would all rush back out into the play.

Running shoulder to shoulder towards the curb of the street, where the ball lay idle. Jamming sticks at the ball, trying to get it out of the other teams reach, shoving back and forth, or pushing onto the grass, until the ball popped back out into the middle of the road. Then the one kid who had stood back waiting for the ball would get it and run straight for the net. From four feet in front, he would shoot it as hard as he could. And miraculously the goalie might save it. Everyone was amazed when he did. Everyone hated playing in nets, because we couldn't score as much, and mostly because we were terrified of taking the shots. And still, everyone took a turn being the goalie, the crazy goalie.



We all loved the game, no matter what the score was, nor the teams, nor anything else. We all just loved to be out there, in the game, just playing the game.

This October, I was cycling west on Kennedy Road towards Yonge. I got hit in the head by a tennis ball that had ricocheted off a car window. A slap shot gone wild.

“Sorry! Sorry! You OK?”

He was eight years old, snot ran down his nose, and the blade of his stick was ground down to a splinter.

“Just watch out for cars, OK?”

I cycled off. I didn’t look back. There’s no going back, except in memory.

Kat Milcke

## On Living Without A Mask

ALBERT CAMUS FELT THAT HIS EXPERIENCE IN SPAIN was uplifting, eye opening, a life experience. In his essay 'Love of Life', he seems to revel in the fact that he didn't understand what the people around him were saying. I somehow understand his love for the mystery. But having been in his situation, instead of feeling happy, I felt scared. Instead of uplifted, overwhelmed. Instead of free, caged.

Having only ever visited and lived in countries where I knew I could communicate fluently in the native language, I had felt safe. I adjusted to the masks that one seems to develop when speaking a language. One starts to feel comfortable. One's face moulds into the mask, and one is unwilling to change back. I had made my peace with the mask that I wore while speaking German. I was a harsher person, I'll admit. Colder, even. I'm still mostly myself when I speak it, but my voice goes deeper. I speak slower, in a more raspy voice. Yet I can still change my mask. I've grown accustomed to two masks, which is unusual. I can remove the mask. I can take it off, and wear the mask of someone slightly different. My voice softens. My words flow easier. I am quieter, more subtle, more in the shadows. This is English.

Up until that moment, the one that opened my eyes, I was safe. I could talk, I could communicate my needs, desires, thoughts, without hesitation. I understood what was going on around me.

Then, this past summer, my mother and I travelled to Paris. Paris is a wonderful city. Truly mesmerizing. With its old architecture, colorful houses, extensive history and romantic atmosphere, it is certainly the ‘most beautiful city’ in the world. I stayed there for four days, right at the base of Montmartre, below Sacre Coeur at the crest. Montmartre is the artist’s part of town. On the hilltop plateau are cobblestone roads, quaint cafés, and many artists, artists sitting even in the middle of the streets, drawing on their easels. Walking up the six flights of stairs to the crest, I was surrounded by green. There were bushes on either side of me, some with small purple or pink flowers, other just plain. The bright sun almost blinded me the further I walked up the stairs. Toiling up the flights of stairs, Montmartre was not so strange. It looked like something here in Canada could. Yet standing on the second to last step, I was overwhelmed by the people. Artist after artist, lost in their own worlds, drawing the models perched on stools in front of them. It was summer, the air was warm and a slight breeze was stirring the skirts of the women walking around, avoiding the masses. People were sitting in the cafés, cooling off with a glass of ice water, or enjoying pastries. At first it was a picture of serenity, and then I started listening. From all sides I was bombarded with chatter in a language I couldn’t understand. That’s when I realized that even though a place may look the same as home, it isn’t. Just because something looks the same, doesn’t make it the same.

I had taken French already in high school, had suffered through it, and gotten satisfactory marks. So I knew a small share of French. But nothing could have prepared me for the rapid chatter that flew at me from all sides. All of a sudden I felt lost, and unprepared. I was alone. My

mother had decided to stay in the hotel to rest after the journey. I had no one with me to tell me what all these people were saying. Standing there, and hearing all these people talking, yet not being able to understand, made me panic.

I reached the top of the hill and couldn't breathe. My teeth wanted to clench, but I couldn't quite bite down. It was like I was biting on something. Something hard. Even if I had tried to talk, this thing wouldn't have let me. It seemed to be stuck in my throat, as well as my mouth. I couldn't breathe. I felt claustrophobic, like I needed to get out. I know that in his essay Albert Camus says he felt thirsty for this experience. To experience not being able to know what's going on. Like standing in front of a door, and not having a key to open it with. The way he talks about the experience, how mesmerizing the experience was, how much he loved it, you'd think that he didn't want the key. He didn't want to learn Spanish in order to be able to communicate, other wise he would have. I, on the other hand, thirsted for knowledge. I wanted to know what was going on, I wanted to understand. I was so lost, and I hated that feeling. I now knew what my friends felt like at home, when I started to speak German around them. At that moment, hearing the French, I felt helpless and jealous. Helpless, because I couldn't understand, and jealous because I wanted to. And I knew that if I really wanted to, I could somewhat communicate, thanks to my education in French. But something stopped me. My shyness about trying something new, my self-consciousness, hindered me from trying to speak. That stone in my mouth, that obstacle, stopped me from talking. I couldn't talk around it, and I'm sure I couldn't have, even if I had tried.

While Camus reveled in the light that he couldn't touch, the door with the lock that wouldn't hold his key, the mask that he didn't wear, and the feeling of helplessness that gave him a new perspective on life, I hated

it. I wanted to know what was going on. At that moment I wished I could talk. I wished that I could conjure the nerve to speak. In the end, I didn't. It takes a lot of courage to speak around the stone, to rattle at the door handle, even if you don't have the right key. To try and speak the language, even if you only know a few words. At that moment, I resolved to learn how to live without a mask, without the comfort and safety of being able to speak, and understand what was going on around me. I resolved to be more confident about myself, to believe in myself and my abilities. To try something new. Not be caught behind the safety of the mask.

Christine Wood

## Over thinking

DO YOU THINK A LOT? I think a lot. Why do I think I think a lot? Because I never stop. Is that a bad thing? Is there something wrong with me? Should I see a doctor? No, there is nothing medically wrong with thinking. Am I an idiot for thinking this? What makes a person an idiot? Do they not think? I think all the time so I cannot be an idiot. But what if I am? I should ask my friends. But they might lie to me because they want to tell me what they think I want to hear. I should get new friends.

You and me have something in common, we both have brains. You probably have million of thoughts go through your head daily. Some useful, some not. I see your thinking average, and raise it. If you want to be like me, ante up. I think all day long. I have an abundance of thoughts. Some useful, most not. Trivial tasks take me forever to finish because of the amount of thought I put into them. You caught me in a bluff! I want to think like you, not vice versa.

I am going to use your strategy. Take a simple task and just do it, not think of the million ways it can be done.

I put my brain to the test. I tried to think of a way to limit my thinking. I sat in my bedroom quietly waiting for the next useful thought to pop into my head. Like a lion about to pounce on a wildebeest, I am.

But this lion keeps getting distracted by the mice around my feet. Among my distractions is my father. He bumbles into my room like a mindless meerkat, forgetting what brought him here. He is a limited thinker, but an artful one. I ask him for advice. He suggests taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test. It might give me some insight about how I think. So I did.

According to Kathleen and Isobel—Myers and Briggs to you—I am an INTJ. Introverted, iNtuitive, Thinking, Judging. My problem is built right into my personality: I am a natural thinker. I have been naturally doing this for seventeen years, practicing and perfecting thought. I also learned that INTJ's are classified as “masterminds”. I am a mastermind. I have a master mind. Knowing this, I cannot attempt to limit my thoughts. Would I give up my amazing talent merely to perform simple tasks? Gosh! Limiting my thought might dry up creative juices, and stop me from creating anything masterful. Then what kind of mastermind would I be?

After the temporary halt and the slight boost to my ego, I realized that I would always be a mastermind. I assume I shall always be INTJ, so controlling my needless thoughts would not harm any future possibility of my becoming a professional mastermind. If anything, controlling excessive thought can only help me to become a more effective thinker. It is not as if I am stopping any ideas of real importance, only the thoughts that have me pondering which way I should butter my toast. Or should I take the advice of T. S. Eliot and suffer through my buttering thoughts before the taking of a toast and tea. It might prove useful. If I let my mind be a wasteland of thought, one of the pieces of scrap metal might be the cure for HIV/AIDS or the solution to world hunger. This, I think, will be a battle of the consciousnesses. The unconscious, which will always conjure thousands of thoughts and bombard me with them every hour, and the

conscious, which will battle the thoughts and filter through the ones of importance.

In the next months I need to pick my battles. Thinking versus Doing. In recent years I have noticed Thinking seems to be the champion. For example, I go to Susan's house and I ring the doorbell, but I do not hear the doorbell ring inside. Typically, if one were unsure, she would ring the doorbell again. But I do not. Standing on Susan's doorstep the chemical reaction in my brain ignites, and my head floods with thought. I stand on her doorstep and debate whether to ring the doorbell again. Five minutes standing in the cold I decided to ring the doorbell once more. Thought prevailed. If Doing won the battle, I could have saved myself stress from the decision.

Stress. The major side effect of "decisions of little importance". This pill is not lethal, but when combined with my other meds, "stress from important issues", it makes my life hell. I now have a stronger motive. I will start to self-medicate. I will purge myself of "decisions of little importance", and practice doing daily tasks efficiently. I can now enjoy the high of a relaxing life from minimized stress.

So how will I control thinking? I will focus on the outcome, not all the possible ways I can get there. That sounds easy enough. From now on I will not think for an hour how I will do the project, I will just do the project. I will not spend ten minutes listing the pros and cons of wearing my blue sweater. If I like the blue sweater I will wear the blue sweater. I am going to go through a self-adjustment to make myself be the ideal thinker. I will think when needed and do when supposed to. I will live a happy life with less stress. I will un-clutter my brain to make room for the ideas that are truly masterful.

Problem solved. Now I can take a toast and tea. But when I take it should I butter my toast from left to right or vice versa? Crap. Another



useless thought. Maybe my problem isn't solved. It has to be, because I have a plan! Maybe it won't be successful. I need to think of a new plan. That will require some thinking.

Ben Slimkowich

## Terrors of the Night

WE SAY A PICTURE TELLS A THOUSAND WORDS. Not all the words in the world could tell us how those young men in the photo felt before they were sent to the gas chamber. We've seen their faces, they lie in the bunks at a concentration camp, their skin hanging off their hips, raw and limp. What did they think the future held for them, and for us? In their faces is naked fear. Later they lay toppled naked on top of friends and strangers. The showers were emptied, and long after the stench was gone, the silence remains. Their silence lingers in the chamber, their silence echoes piercingly through time and speaks all the dark hours of man. The echo of their silence speaks to me, it speaks to us all. Perhaps the darkest of all eras, the twentieth century: with our technological advancements we have found ourselves on the brink of self-destruction. The First War and the Second War and the Holocaust and the Cold War. Men and women fought for their lives and died for the lives of others. The others waited on the brink of destruction, love in their hearts, unable to help, how useless they felt. Fear strikes life down to the core. The Wars were over, the arms race was declared a draw, but evil doesn't sleep. Never has the world

seen such inhuman devastation. Or perhaps these events are more human than we would ever like to think. Perhaps between every rational word is a stillness, a silence that should speak.

As a child I experienced night terrors, nightmares of horrible perplexity. They would grip me in the night. I would shake in fits and scream out. My mother, crying, holding me tight, would imagine the things that I saw. Most of my experiences with night terrors cannot be explained in words, they resist rational thought. Their forms come to me in shock: jagged and perplexed lines, scribbles that claw in the periphery of vision. Like all dreams they seem to exist only in recollection. But why did I experience these night terrors in childhood? I never experienced fear or devastation myself, I lived an innocent and sheltered life. These dreams are all the terror I have ever encountered firsthand. Truth be told, what I saw I couldn't understand. So what then? Do I seek a psychological cause? Are these hallucinations and deep sleep terrors a product of early emotional stress, a chemical imbalance in the brain, or perhaps the workings of an overactive mind? I'm not satisfied with such explanations, for I fear what I encountered was what cannot be understood, the material substance of evil. I believe I felt the echo of the evil that had taken place in the century before my birth. The silent fearsome thing that stands on the doorstep, and with a knock reminds us how small we really are in the face of terror.

Let me draw upon the work of the psychologists to say what I mean in a different way. The psychologists tell us that sleep is complex, and they divide it into five ordered stages. The first stage is a state intermediate between waking and sleeping, called *praedormitium*, 'foresleep', or *hypnagogia*, 'conveying to sleep'. In this stage, the muscles relax, the conscious mind relaxes and begins to dissolve. Unbound from

the contingencies of everyday life, the mind is free to link ideas and images, unconstrained by logic or self-doubt. Some dreamers report their sense of exhilarating freedom in this realm. Poe identified the hypnagogic state as the spring of his creative vision; Edison drew upon it for new inventions. But for some the hypnagogic state is the realm of the night terrors. The mind is equally open to nightmarish hallucinations, the dreamer's body seems paralyzed and unable to escape or defend itself. The dread of the night terrors is that one cannot flee them, cannot act. The dreamer is trapped in the terror, unable to wake up out of them.

Awake, the conscious mind suppresses the unconscious; as we drift to sleep, it is unbound. In the hypnagogic state, we are open to whatever comes forth from the thoughts behind our thoughts, from the unconscious mind. Now the conscious mind passively interprets what the unconscious actively invents. Which of these two minds, the conscious or the unconscious, is more truly our "selves"? Is the self this awareness that carries our thoughts from moment to moment? Or is the self this creature within us whom we suppress while we wake and who runs free as we sleep. In Golding's novel, the *Lord of the Flies* reveals to Simon that the beast they fear is inside of them, and will drive their every action deeper into savagery. "You knew didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" Simon counters that this "pig's head on a stick" is no Beast, and resolves to tell the boys that there is nothing to fear. But when he descends the mountain, he finds them in the grip of the Beast, caught in a nightmare of terror, violence and hatred.

Falling asleep into the night terrors is my metaphor for waking up in the twentieth century. The ordinary criminals of that century may have simply unleashed their unconscious desires. The nation states they created were real, but nightmarishly mad. Their victims woke up into terror,

paralyzed, unable to escape. What they saw held them captive, for what is seen cannot be unseen. They witnessed mass murder. They feared time itself because each second brought one closer to death. They feared what was known and what was not. They feared what was taking place and what was to come. Unable to prevent it, numbed into mere awareness, their chains were the beating of their hearts, their eyes and ears were openings for the torture of their souls torture of the soul, their love was agony and despair.

My mother used to comfort me at night after a terrifying nightmare. "It's only a dream," she would say, "only a dream, now it's over." As a child, I could trust my mother that, no matter how vivid the experience of terror and paralysis had been, it was not real. If I spoke now of those evils I know are real, I would bring her to tears.

Whatever the cause of the night terrors might be, they seem to be inherited. In childhood my mother suffered them; the sensitivity of her sleeping mind was passed on to me. In sleep I have seen what the subconscious mind can imagine. I pray that the night terrors stop with me, that my own children will be spared them. I imagine holding a child tightly, a child in fits, screaming, and trying to comfort her. "It's only a dream, only a dream, now it's over." But how can I protect this child from the real evils of the world? What if her waking up into reality will be waking into terror and paralysis?

The souls of these children to be are waiting in the silence. Their souls are like all those who waited upon doom during the Cold War, who waited for the bombs to fall, the bombs which never came. What remained was the fear, and such a fear, how can it be shaken off? So let us speak of the silence, and what resides in it. Let us bring the unconscious into the light. There is stillness, and a silence that envelops. It exists between every word and has so far been left unspoken.

Morgan Pulchinski

## The Power of the Wind

A SUBTLE ODOUR THAT I CANNOT DISTINGUISH. Unfamiliar texture at fingertip. Unfamiliar rhythms of speech, of mind, of being. My senses are disarrayed. Panic. Where did the familiar go? Where is my family? I blink, so I shall arrange the world, simple and normal, in perspective. On the cobblestone street, a car horn beeps an odd pitch. The streets are too narrow. Here, the postcards come to life. Only a six-hour plane ride away from home, I am uncomfortable. I am not home.

Here, everyone drives stick. The car pulls up to a house fenced in by gates and vines, my new home for the next month. I thank my host family for the ride but the simple words do not come easy: “Tha...Merci beaucoup.” I peer to my left. A red, moss covered well and lush fields. I take in the sweet, sun-kissed air and as I exhale, a gust of wind puffs by me, an alien wind. To the right, is that a doghouse? “C’est un four a pain.”—a bread oven. Here, everyone bakes bread.

In the Jura of France, the cows, fields and old churches outnumber folk. The Jura is gritty; the Jura is dirt under your nails. Nothing in the Jura has been conventionally developed. The Jura was made by hand. It is also beauty illustrated, the rivers and streams cascading down the hills, bringing the earth to life. The constant hum of active farm

life and the quiet sound of human existence. Tranquility. The remains of long ago times, soaked with stories and history. Still, underneath it all, I feel alone. I long to be in a place where I can share the whirl of thoughts in my head with people like me, where I can share my sense of humour, my culture. I want to be embraced and loved. This family that I haven't known more than a week can't embrace me yet.

Within my comfort zone, I crave excitement and adventure. I love to play sports and I'm much too competitive. I enjoy travel but I am much more partial to it when I'm alongside the people I know and love. I detest long, boring walks and I cannot yet appreciate architecture and old churches. My hand brushes an ancient stone of the "church of the day", St. Hymetière. I look with glazed eyes at the ancient stained glass windows and listen to the voice of the spitting tour guide, absorbing nothing. My thoughts wander and I start think of the presence of a friend here, with me. What would she have to say about this right now? Together, we would probably be making fun of the tour guide's mop of red clown hair or else taking pictures of each other posing with a statue. But what about just me? Just me with no one else? I begin to strip away, layer by layer my own culture, to reveal neutrality. A blank slate. Just me.

Is a person defined by her experiences? By her upbringing? Or is she born a certain way and her experiences are merely a test of herself? She can be swept away by her surroundings or she can stand firm and be her own person. I believe that I have been swept away. But only here, in complete seclusion, with no preconception or bias can I see who I truly am.

I am looking through my own eyes, and I am finally able to appreciate my surroundings: the detailed pattern engraved in stone on the archway of an old building, the remarkable history of a dead man, the red and brown moth with a wing pattern I have never before seen. I feel a

thirst for discovery, to find out why the streets are so narrow, to discover why there is an image of a lamb and a sea monster painted on a stained glass window. The food tastes sweeter, the music sounds fuller, the ground feels more still. I understand the world, and the world understands me. I am being reborn and I am experiencing everything for the first time.

Imagine yourself alone on the earth, what would you do? Would you mourn your loss of comfort or embrace your gain of isolation? I am the first person on earth. Free of anything but my instincts and feelings. There are no rules, no justice, no meaning of words like success or failure. It's just me and I can make life whatever I want it to be.

Back at the country home, I look across the farmland that I would once have called desolate. My heart smiles as I see a cow feeding her calf in the shade of a crooked tree and beside them a dark bird pecking at the fertile ground. Even the uncouth flies carry a value. The trickle of the river reminds me how everything here is somehow connected, including me.

But I am afraid. I am afraid of returning, of being swept up again into the vast muddle of a vacant way of life in Aurora, where my surroundings overpower me and I am not free to be myself. I refuse to let it happen.

Now, not only am I learning about my surroundings, but I start to understand myself. Being secluded allows me to be alone with my thoughts without any interruption. I learn that I enjoy the odd Classical piece, although I had always been strongly opposed to the genre. I discover my love for reading and writing. My dependence on screens starts to diminish and my love for nature and fresh air arises.

What will happen when I go back home, will I be able to keep my feet planted on the ground? I hope and I hope. Why is society's impact so strong? Why do we let the wind pick us up and whisk us around pushing



us back and forth, up and down, like a dead leaf, shaking us from ourselves, from our inner souls? Maybe we will never know, but at least I can say that I questioned it.

My senses are in disarray and I embrace it. The odd, warped and painfully beautiful sights have become my new home. When I am back in my place of familiarity, can I be the one with my feet glued to the ground? Can I be the person impenetrable to even the strongest? No I can't. One must be in a state of isolation for that to happen. I return home and mesh once again with my milieu wondering to myself where I will travel to next.

Hearing Pachelbel's Canon, watching the ripples of a fallen leaf in a pond, feeling the grainy walls of a long ago edifice built from time gone by, smelling a freshly baked pastry, bring me back to who I really am and who I will never truly be.

Tucker McLean

## Weathered Impressions

THE TOUR BUS TRACED THE THIN RURAL ROAD through Ireland's backyard. Thatch roof cottages dotted the landscape, light smoke rising from their chimneys. Irregular fields under mist and fog. Livestock resting under trees and awnings, escaping the dripping rain. In the overcast morning the world seemed empty and depressed, or maybe it was my feelings masking the scenery outside.

My mind fought with my eyes. As my heavy head started to slide down the plastic headrest of my seat I caught myself once again in an attempt stay awake. I looked out to the rapid river of countryside rushing by. An ocean of fields. Guarded by century old hedges, enclosed by worn stone walls. The troughs and hills of each incoming field, flowing through the countryside merging with the choppy waters of the coast. A green ocean leading into a blue one. Rain pattered the windows, trees and shrubs rattled in the thick air. Darkness consumed the late morning sky. My clothes and hair made me irritable, damp from the last "Photo Op" of the tour. I had heard of awful UK weather, and now I had encountered it head on. Even then I wasn't completely miserable.

I usually enjoy rain. It fills me with joy to see darkened skies, swaying trees and rustling leaves. It inspires me for some reason, I don't

know entirely why, but when it begins to rain, my imagination soars. I feel isolated in an overcrowded world, but pleasantly so. I have time to think. Just me and my imagination. My problem hasn't been imagining though, it's completing ideas. Anyone can create an idea, only a few can develop them.

This world was untamed. A wild beast, fighting every advance of man. Short, stubby grass grew between tire tracks on dirt roads, vines twisted around iron gates, and weeds poked through cracks between stone fences. There was history here. Nature was here before man, and everyday man had to fight to persevere. To survive. These plots of land, they belonged to men who, centuries past, worked through hardship to build a life for their families. Men died for those causes, friendships were broken, and lives were changed, some for better, most for worse. Each stone in those rock fences, collected from fields and pastures, hauled through countryside, and carefully laid, set to stand the test of nature. Hard work and perseverance built those fences, nothing less.

The screech of rubber tires on pavement signaled arrival at our next stop. After a quick reference of the guidebook, I read a passage describing the next destination. *The Cliffs of Moher*. Rain washed across the bus. My stomach felt nauseous from the foreign food; after all, one can only consume so many potatoes. I was breaking down from the trip, my patience wearing short. "Break for thirty minutes," the tour guide repeated. People began to shuffle sideways towards the aisle. My gut decision was to listen to my aching stomach, so I decided to remain on the bus.

Seated in silence in the back of the bus I tried to close my mind and rest, but I was too drained to even do that. I checked the display at the front of the bus to see only five minutes had passed. "Sorry bud, I gotta close up the bus." The bus driver was looking at me, an unlit

cigarette in his grinning mouth. I figured there was no point in pretending to sleep. “Thanks, fella,” he mentioned as I dropped on to the grass beside the parking lot.

I could always write the beginning of a story, that was never my problem, creating a middle to an ultimate end was always what stopped me. One great idea isn’t successful on its own; it demands hard work and countless hours of effort to mold it into something far greater. But without a glimpse of a potential end product, I was doomed to procrastination. I was uninspired by tireless striving for my work, hoping something worthwhile would materialize from it. The circle of nothingness began, leading nowhere, going nowhere.

With no other option, I began to climb the soaking slate steps, looking up to see what end this climb rewarded. Step after step I ascended the grassy hill, with dwindling interest, my concentration on getting back to the hotel and sleeping in another bed that wasn’t mine in another city I didn’t call home. Comfort isn’t the first word that comes to mind, but I was jetlagged enough not to care. A bed was a bed. My stomach churned, I felt a cramp and began to wince. The rain surged on, glistening on the steps of the hill. Rainwater collected in crevices and craters. I turned to face the foot of the hill. I could see elderly tourists browsing for coffee mugs, postcards, and fridge magnets behind the streaked glass windows of the gift shop. They weren’t interested in the climb I guessed. They were comfortable with showing a postcard to their friends, to show their triumph of visiting the cliffs without actually making the journey.

The rain poured down. I wanted relief from my discomfort but I couldn’t see it happening anytime soon. Was it worth it? Was this climb worth it? I debated: I was already halfway up and couldn’t go back to the bus. Might as well keep going. I could see puffins gliding over the scene,

soaring in the moist breeze. At least they're enjoying themselves, I thought.

I guess I always expected that one day something would just hit me and I could finish a story. Just some experience or idea would click and everything would work out. I thought I was just one big revelation away before I could develop my ideas, so I waited. I continued to start ideas, start stories, and then I left them, abandoned. I don't think I figured some force would intervene I just thought that one day I would get that one idea, the one that I could sculpt and shape with ease, and make a story worth showing off. But each idea was as short-lived as the last and my will to create eventually slowed.

As I reached the last step I looked out to see the Cliffs of Moher. Jagged cliffs, at least six hundred feet high. Jutting out from the mainland, fading into fog rising from the Atlantic. Rough, rushing water surged against the stone walls. Intense white foam with each approaching wave. Layers of sediments, sedimentary rock, building up from the sea floor. Under pressure of overlying rock, black and tan layers of shale and sandstone, formed from fine grain sediments and clay, resting upon each other, climbing. Through culmination of time and pressure, the muddy sediments lithify into rigid sedimentary rock. Layers on layers. On layers. Or strata rather. The oldest at the foot of the cliffs, the earliest beds of rock. Growing at the crest of the cliffs were legions of sea pinks, thin green stems leading to light pink bells, mingling with tall blades of grass.

As the rain pounded my body, the breath retreated from my lungs, my heart slowed. My mind collapsed in a wealth of inspiration. These shale and sandstone giants, withstanding centuries of wind and water, were as defiant as they were breathtaking. The chilling venture up the cliff steps, no longer seemed a burden. The cold rain woke me; If I ever wanted to see my ideas develop I had to make the effort. Every story

needs a foundation, body, and ending. Without the foundation, no structure builds. Without my own ambition behind me I would be doomed to repeat the same path with little fruition. It wasn't a realization in the sense that I suddenly knew what to do, but I knew that if I didn't work for my art, then I wouldn't have any. The men that had built this country built one stone at a time. Dedicated their lives to developing the land, against the will of nature, and through depression and famine they carried on. Stone fences a metaphor for determination. Each stone in the fences carefully positioned, resting upon the one below it, supporting the one above it. Just like any story, needs a foundation, to support anything built upon it. A starting point. Did they always know what form the wall would take? The better question is did it matter? Perseverance and effort creates something. Trying is more productive than not. The act of building what matters. Those people in the gift shop, they didn't bother to make the effort, but I didn't feel resentment, I felt sympathy. Mohar would be unknown to them, just another stop on the tour. The climb had taught me it was more than that, more valuable than I'd imagined.

As I gazed out to the ocean I could see the faint silhouette of the Aran Islands, tens of miles from the coast. There it is, I thought. Now I just need to build a boat.

Taylor Garbett

## What makes her run?

AIR RUSHES INTO MY LUNGS and stabs at every inch, seizing them. The freshness of the piercing frigid wind in the winter and the sweltering fierce blaze in the summer; it aches and burns whichever season. Gasping for air no matter the ache of the burn—I need it, and crave more. My chest becomes heavier with every breath and it too scorches. My arms are bricks. With every stride my muscles stiffen. Yet somehow the lower half of my body continues to pull me further, my legs eager for more pain. Push push push. Calves hard as stone, dripping in mud, sweat, or moist from new fallen snow, then each flake freezing into ice – ice like a smoldering burn, then melts away. The anguish I suffer, for what?

Why do I run?

Late November. The snow in transition to ice. The sky fallen early dark. Not a star above. At the top of the steep hill three lights fail to illuminate the entire field. They overlook soccer posts and bleachers empty till the summer. Spruce trees line the contours of the field, cotton snow over the needles, pricked and ruined, unharmed. The ground soft and mushy under the hard broken ice, crackling, liquid mud flowing and sinking into our shoes. A river of snow turned arctic water pools at the bottom of the hill, nestled against the upward slope. A passerby looks

closer into the dark to see a huddle of people listening to their coach. I stand in this group, tights clinging, constricting my slender legs; I can still feel the tinge and itch of the dry cold air seeping beneath my skin and attaching itself to my bones. Layers of dry-fit long sleeves cover my chest, but once a breath is taken – all is lost and the air rushes into my lungs, stabbing and seizing every inch.

I am trying to focus, concentrate on what my coach is saying. I catch every second or third word. Nationals are fast approaching and he is discussing strategies for the beginning of the race. There will be hundreds of girls there, from coast to coast and the starting line is very narrow, there's a sharp turn less than one hundred meters into the cross country five kilometre run. The conditions are to be very icy and the footing a mess. I really do try to listen intently to his pointers; however, my mind drifts off. I'm falling behind in school, problems with friends, fights with parents and then the dreading reality of life—I am leaving next year. University is fast approaching, the pressure is rising. And my concentration on one thing doesn't last long. My head is spinning in circles and I can't sort out priorities or when I am going to have time to do all I need to have done.

The first interval, my coach explains, will have us run from one soccer net to the opposing one, around the spruce trees with the cottony snow, through the arctic frigid water nestled at the bottom of the hill, then up the hill around one of the three lampposts, then back to the starting line. This loop, I estimate, is around a kilometre long. Still my mind is clouded and as I start the run with my teammates I drift off once again.

It's a pace interval, which means we run one kilometre at the pace we would for a five kilometre race. I finish a little out of breath, pained from the cold, but otherwise not bad. My mind is clearing and I feel a little more relaxed. We repeat that same interval. However this time I am able



to concentrate on my form – my arms, turning bricks, are loose from my shoulders and drift comfortably back and forth slightly touching my hips with every swing. I can begin to feel the pain in my legs and am as well now aware of the wet on the back of my calves from the melted snow. My feet sink into and collapse the ice beneath me, muddy water rushes like a tide into the pockets of my shoes – swooshing in between my toes, freezing all.

This interval feels freeing and I begin to let my worries slip away. Endorphins could be why I feel a little calmer. A runner's high—a natural high. But that is not all that I feel. I can now sort through my thoughts.

A few more slightly changed intervals and then the last. My coach explains how we will be running the same loop as the first, yet this time it will be at a quality pace, which means we leave it all on the field, hold nothing back and run the hardest and fastest we can.

The start is a slight downhill and my shoes, lined and clumped with ice frozen from the water at the bottom of the hill, are heavy; my feet numb and sore from the cold. I slip a little the first few steps and then instead of following into rhythm as I normally would, I reach deep within myself. My breathing becomes faster—the piercing frigid wind burns my throat as it descends to my lungs. My arms pull me further and I move them with more force, breaking the bricks that held them captive to my side. Ice sprays up behind me. I pull myself from the crowd. The throbbing I feel pushes me further, then suddenly it is as though a weight is lifted and I am walking on a cloud. My body still aches and gasps for air, burning with every stride; but I feel free, completely and utterly free – like nothing can touch me or hurt me. This is where I belong. I can focus, and I know that with all the pressures in life and all the tedious things I need to get done, it is going to be okay.

So why do I run? Why do I put myself through that sort of agony? I know that I am not the fastest, that I am not at the top of my league. But I run because it frees me and allows me to clear my mind of everything. I can concentrate on what's important and become relaxed. It helps me get through the pressures. It reassures me. And it is my escape.

Will McEachern

## Yendt

ROBERT YENDT. NOT A NAME YOU'VE HEARD BEFORE. An average middle-aged man, with a wife and kids, not someone you would think was exceptional on a national standard.

At the age of forty-five Rob Yendt had never been a serious athlete. He hadn't even really thought about it. He was a typical North American dad, he worked, spent time with his family, went to the gym. One day at the gym his friend and his sister started arguing about who was more fit. They eventually challenged one another to a Duathlon. Rob's friend turned to him and asked who he thought would win. To both their surprise Rob said 'I would'. And with that Robert Yendt's inspiring journey began.

After the Duathon (which he didn't win) Rob started running more regularly, he discovered a passion for running. After a year and a half of running he registered for a half marathon. Twenty-three point one miles later he felt done, satisfied to have achieved a solid half marathon time. Rob took three years off of competitive running, thinking he was done. He still showed a passion for running, and his friends and family took notice. They urged and encouraged him to run a full marathon. He was eventually convinced and registered himself.

Rob knew this would be harder than a half marathon, a lot harder. He paced himself wanting only to finish. At the thirty seventh kilometre, he hit The Wall. The Wall is the point at which a runner is completely depleted of energy. Once a runner hits The Wall it's almost impossible to continue running the race. Rob had to walk to the end of the marathon, high fiving medical staff along the road. These high fives were anything but congratulatory. If he couldn't slap a high five, the paramedics would have taken him out of the race as a safety precaution. Rob finished, but not how he'd wanted. He didn't get to run past the finish line, exhausted and barely able to stand. Instead he hobbled over, tired and disappointed.

After his first marathon Robert Yendt stopped competitive running, again, for a year and a half. But Rob was still determined to run a full marathon. He registered for a second marathon, promising himself he would finish running. After three hours and forty minutes, he ran across the finish line. An official came to tell him his time, and to Rob's surprise he had almost qualified for the Boston Marathon! One of, if not *the*, most prestigious marathons in North America. To be within five minutes of qualifying was enough to make him want to try again, to push harder, give just a little more.

His third marathon was in Mississauga, Rob arrived at the start line feeling good, stretching, preparing himself, both physically and mentally, to beat the three hour thirty minute qualifying time. The official walked to his position and raised the starting gun into the air. He fired.

Three hours and twenty-two minutes into the race Robert Yendt crossed the finish line. He'd qualified for the Boston Marathon, *the* Marathon. This feat placed him within the top fifteen percent of all marathon runners in North America. But Boston was still a ways off into

the future, and Rob wanted to be ready for it. He tightened his training schedule, and even ran another recreational marathon, to stay fresh.

Eventually, April came round and Rob lined up for the Boston Marathon. Even from the starting line it was clear that this marathon was different. Every marathon he had so far competed in had been flat or downhill, usually headed down wind. This was different, the entire marathon was covered in hills, and the wind was not always at your back. This is way the Boston Marathon was so highly revered. Unlike the marathons used to qualify for it, it was not designed to be as fast as possible, it was a test of will and determination. And yet, no matter how daunting this was to Rob, it was less so to a friend of his, also running the marathon. He had been running a fever recently and not feeling on his A game. He knew it and Rob knew it.

Rob ran the first eight kilometres with his friend, knowing the impact it would have to his time. After eight kilometres his friends couldn't continue, exhausted and weak from his illness. He told Robert to finish the race strong, which is exactly what he did. Rob finished strong, feeling good about himself. This was partly due to completing the Boston Marathon, but also due to re-qualifying for the Boston Marathon in the same race. Something only thirty five percent of the Boston Marathon runners did, only five percent of all marathoners in North America could accomplish, he did.

Robert Yendt continued to run competitively, participating in another marathon before rerunning the Boston Marathon. Unfortunately, his second attempt at the Boston Marathon was met with a strong headwind, severely impeding his time. He didn't end his running there though. He ran another marathon, for which he again qualified for the Boston Marathon, and plans to run it again come the spring of 2010. This

will be his third time running the Boston Marathon, a feat almost unheard of for a man of his age.

Robert Yendt is a man who can inspire and amaze, through sheer determination and will. He is a average North American dad, and an everyday hero.

“Wow.”

“Is that OK? Did I miss any details? Anything you want me to put in there?”

“Nope, you got pretty much everything.”

“OK good. I have to read this to an auditorium in about five minutes, so nothing missing?”

“Thank you for doing this.”

“Thank *you* for letting me tell your story.”

“I had never thought of my running like this before. I always just ran because I liked it.”

“Well I’m glad you did. It inspired me and I hope it can inspire others.”

He let out a small laugh. “Well I just can’t believe you saw so much inspiration in my running. I really am thankful to you.”

“I just wrote the speech. Not like I ran the Boston Marathon or anything.”

He let out another small laugh. “No, though I suppose that’s why I am here.”

“So what was it like, running for three hours at a time?”

“Well, it gets really hard near the end. The only way I ever finished any of them, was because I would dedicate myself to someone or something, and their love and support would help me go the extra mile, as it were. Without the support of my friends and family I wouldn’t be here today I guess.”

“And that is why this is such a great example for inspiration. You didn’t run these for fame or greed. You ran these marathons for the people you loved, not to prove anything but to try and make a difference. As they did while you ran, you do while they undertake hardships.”

“I never thought about it like that.”

“That’s why I’m here, Uncle Rob.”





## Fiction



Taylor Garbett

## And Still He Says He Loves Her

IN THE DAMP EVENING THE FINE HAIR around the girl's forehead has curled into little ringlets. Her face is pale, the bones of her cheek and jaw are gaunt. Her chin is sharp. Her eyes, the blue of seas in storms, look flatly out of the orbits.

The girl walks behind a man. The man walks fast, leaves the girl behind. His strides are long and angry. He enters a park, four strides later she enters. In the distance stands a post office, the only building in sight. Fields of hay and soybean roll on behind the edge of a fence. A rusted wire fence, pulled down by rotted cedar posts, in tangles. A fence that fences nothing, nothing worth having.

“Sit,” says the man.

The girl sits. She sits on a wooden park bench. One leg of the bench is out of joint. The bench is out of square. It slants.

“Katelyn Elizabeth Austen,” says the man. “Where did I go wrong? We raised you to be a respectable young woman.”

The man's voice is ice. It turns the breath in her chest to ice. Her voice is frozen in her chest.

“Everything that I have worked towards in life has been to better yours. But you don’t care, do you?” the man asks. “You always make the household tense, you stress your mother and make her unhappy. Don’t you think it is your responsibility to see that she is happy? We put a roof over your head and food on the table. Isn’t it the least you can do? No. No, I don’t think so. Would you like to know why young lady?” The man’s voice is taunting. “It’s because you are a failure. A failure as a daughter. A failure as a student. Do you really think I’d be happy having a daughter who achieves a grade of seventy-five percent in one of her classes? I do not think so. Do you think I am proud to stand on the track and watch you come in third? No. It’s an embarrassment. A failure.”

The man stops speaking. He takes a breath and looks down at the girl. The girl has tears streaming down her cheek. She hiccoughs them back and gulps air to regain her breathing pattern.

The man walks over, stands inches from the girl. He bends down and with his hand, the man cups the girl’s chin, forcing her to look him in the eyes.

“With the shame you bring to this family, I cannot stand having you living in my house,” says the man. “Everything you have ever attempted has been a failure. You are worthless. Saying that, I will give you a choice. You either walk back and get into the car with me, knowing how much of a disappointment you are as a daughter, and as a consequence you change. Or you stay here and never are you welcome to return, not to collect your belongings, not for anything.”

The man lets his hand fall to his side, turns around and leaves. His steps make large prints in the sand.

As the wind bellows in gusts, the girl watches the man reach his car and open the door.

The girl's friends say her father is not right. That he is not a good father. "Katelyn, my father would never, ever say that," said Mary. Sitting on the bench Katelyn is unsure. Couldn't a good father have a bad girl?

The man starts the car as rain pours from above. The girl stands. Her ringlets tighten. Her clothes cling to her wet body. The girl's hip bones crease the damp sweatpants, hip bones jutting under her tiny waist. Her ribcage presses out against her sunken stomach.

She walks to the car, past the rusted wire fence. Her broken spirit fleeing fast.

Abigel Lemak

## Brilliance

THE MAN APPEARS OUT OF THE FOREST. He reaches the top of a small hill and pauses for a moment, suddenly very aware of his surroundings. Behind him the sun has just started to rise, the warm light spills through the trees, over the wet grass and onto the little house waiting at the curve of the road. Modest and content, nestled between the ash and oak the house remains still. The warmth spills over the house, momentarily captured in the leaves gently swaying in the morning breeze, windows brilliant in sunrise. The man smiles to himself, though his eyes are full of a certain sadness, a private appreciation for the beauty of light brings to the earth, often swept away by the night.

Inside a mother is hovering frantically over her child, trying to fight back the fever with cool water, cloth and soothing words. Confined to the prison of sickness, the girl tosses in her discomfort, frail bones pressing on her skin, stretching. Around her room are discarded dolls, abandoned with their permanent frowns and torn dresses. A wooden tray rests untouched by her bed, bread gone stale and tea cold. The mother rests on the edge of her daughter's bed and watches her struggle. Eyes lost and full of fear that she will lose her this time. A call from the yard draws

her attention. Rising, bones heavy with grief and stiff from prayer she leaves to answer her husband's call.

The man enters the quiet room of the young girl. He stands by the edge of her bed and quietly stares—she is asleep, carefully breathing. Her small chest rises and falls as she takes in short raspy breaths, fingers tangled in her mated yellow hair, palms hot and sweaty. Her frail features struggle against the fever as she tosses and turns in her bed, tangling the cotton sheets in between her thin legs—constricting.

The window is open and frayed flowered curtains sway as a cool breeze rushes into the bedroom whispering, beckoning. The morning wind carries the smell of autumn with the mustiness of the decaying leaves, the withering flowers in the garden and the dampness of the earth. The young girl shivers in her sleep, reaching around aimlessly for her covers—eager fingers stretching. The man moves closer as he gently covers the dying girl, bringing comfort and ease, softening the troubled creases in her skin. The wind returns, stronger this time, pushing the branches of the ash up against the window, reaching, knocking. Impatiently, the dark man walks across the room and closes the window, returning to her bed. With a solemn expression he checks the time and glances back at the girl's face, with a careful hand brushes away a few strands of hair. She smiles.

Suddenly in a raging fit, coughing she rolls onto her side, clawing at her sheets, grasping, spattering her clean sheets with angry red. Exhausted, she collapses into her bed panting, tears streaming from effort. Finally, she sees him standing there, a shadow in the room, waiting. Concern fills his face as he sits down onto the edge of her bed, gentle hands cupping her face, inspecting eyes, cool hands running over her skin, checking lungs and throat. "There, there." He whispers, pulling out his handkerchief, dabbing the beads of sweat from her brow. Curious eyes

find his familiar face, confused but inquiring. His eyes return her stare heavy with responsibility and regret. She rubs her purple eyes sleepily before another spasm of coughing fits. His grip on her arm tightens, kind eyes soothing her pain.

Outside the child's bedroom, the woman hears the coughing. She begs her husband to go calling on the doctor. The man carefully covers the girl with the white sheets, and with a reassuring smile watches her take her final breath. He gets up and walks to the door slowly. After a short pause the man turns to look back at her bed. The room is silent, still warm with the memory of life.

With a smile the man looks out the bedroom window and sees the valley glow with morning brilliance, light pouring in without end. Lines appear on his weathered face as the smile reaches his eyes.



Morgan Pulchinski

## Catching Up

CARLA STAYED FOR A SECOND DRINK after the interview ended. He'd been charming and Gallic and expressive, and frankly, a pain. An expert on the *Caisse de Dépôt*, and statistical economics, and the most obvious leech. The downside of business journalism—too many men think they'll get into your pants; the women too often present themselves as queen bitches. So a second Manhattan in the bar seemed like a good idea.

It had been a while since her last visit to Montreal. She had forgotten the feel of it. Even in the Ritz Hotel bar, the air she breathed was thicker, filled with an air she could only describe as historical, maybe European. An eruption of laughter cascaded from around the red pool table where five men were playing. This seemed to happen at least every five minutes. The bar was dimly lit but warm and welcoming. While some talked business, others talked love and friendship; it was a place for mingling.

Carla toyed with the swizzle stick and read over her notes. Tomorrow a meeting at Hydro Quebec, and lunch with Gaetan Belhumeur, an old friend from CBC days. Something itched at the back of her mind. Her father-in-law's birthday? No. That was in two weeks. Her uncle's anniversary? No. That wasn't for another five days. She felt

the Manhattan like a slow wave breaking over the hum and babble of the day, a wave of calm. Carla's Blackberry purred. Yes, she owed Mr. Denton an e-mail about a misprinted quote in her last article.

"Why, hello," came a voice from behind her.

Carla politely turned her head. Was it an old, horny man who wanted to buy her a drink or else someone who thought she was someone else. Maybe even a fan? The man standing behind her sent a jolt to her stomach but she couldn't place a name to the face. He smiled at her inquisitively. She continued to gape. Carla searched his face for more hints. His face changed from a smile to a grin, his eyes lit up. A shot ran up her spine and into her brain. The eyes set in crows' feet had once belonged to—

"Rod MacFarland!" she exclaimed, delighted.

Memories swept through her. They had been passionately in love—or as in love as two hormonal eighteen year olds could be. Could this really be him? His young face started to emerge as Carla continued to observe him. His cheekbones had filled in; his hair was greying at the sides. His once skinny chest and stomach had firmed out. His eyes remained the same despite the creases. His smile was still perfect. "You look phenomenal!" she said.

For a number of years, Carla had not thought about her physical appearance, save for the occasional party or special occasion, but now with his eyes on her, was her gray and black pantsuit too drab? Had she put on enough perfume that morning? Were her forty eight year old breasts supported enough in that bra?

"No way. Look at you! You haven't aged a bit!"

Carla had always loved his modesty, and moreover his gush of compliments.

"What are you up to here?"

“And you?”

“Business trip,” they both answered.

Carla blushed and laughed. He laughed too, and bits of his younger, free laugh crept their way in to his new, brooding one. Carla watched as he waved to the bartender and asked for a scotch on the rocks with a twist.

“Let me guess,” he said coyly. “You’re covering the C.N. train derailment in Alberta.” Carla eyed him, smiling.

“I just guessed since that’s the kind of thing you do,” he continued. “This is a pretty big deal, and so are you—in terms of journalism, I’m told.”

Carla was, in fact covering that exact issue, interviewing all who mattered in the terrible chemical spill. Over five oil tank cars had tipped over and the fuel inside had spilled into a cottagers’ lake. Carla was trying to prove how C.N. was negligent in the clean-up process.

“You always did know how to flatter,” Carla managed through her smile. “Have you honestly heard of me?”

“Of course I have. My wife and I read your articles all the time. They are just fascinating!”

Rod mixed his drink with a smooth shake of his hand and took a sip. It was odd to Carla that the last time they had been together; they were both under the legal drinking age.

“Why thank you! I’m so glad to hear that my articles get read. Sometimes I worry that I’m the only one who reads them,” Carla laughed.

She was glad that he had heard of her. Carla was not one to brag, however when old friends were catching up, she didn’t want to leave anything out.

“And yourself? What is Rod MacFarland up to these days?” Carla asked.

“Well, I’ve been asked to investigate that oil spill. The Toxins Watch Society asked me to come in and talk the officials into cleaning it up.”

Carla put down her drink

“I’m an environmental engineer”, he continued. “But, you know what, Carla? Enough about work and business. Tonight is my night off. I can’t believe I ran into you like this! What are the chances? Last thing I heard, you married that famous architect from the U.S. At least that’s what I heard through the grapevine... My mom.”

They both laughed.

“Yes, I did marry him. Happily married to this day. We find time for each other, what with our jobs and the kids running around.”

Carla gazed at a stray spider web that hung from a light in the bar.

“That’s great Carla, I’m so happy for all your success. You’ve done really well for yourself,” Rod said. “How many kids do you have?”

“I’ve got three. Two of them are off at University and the last one is still at home.” Carla said with an edge of sadness in her voice. “It was sad to see them go. My last one, Troy, is struggling a bit in school. He’s mildly autistic and doesn’t like to focus in school. But tell me about yourself.”

“Well, you probably won’t believe this, but I just recently married Julie Samson. Remember her?”

The image of a small girl rushed into her brain. Blonde, adorable, and pretty much a toddler when Carla was sixteen. Carla had been Julie’s babysitter through high school. So, Rod had married a younger woman. A much younger woman. When Carla baby-sat Julie, she would envy her already too-perfect features, but never thought that the child who had barely been toilet trained would end up marrying her boyfriend at that time.

“Wow!” Carla managed, “It’s crazy how things turn out isn’t it?”

Again, she started to think about her own physical appearance. The last time they had seen each other, she had been perfectly slim, with everything pointing in the right direction, and now, with this man’s eyes on her, she realized how much she had changed. Her hips bulked outwards, her face was creased with age and her was stomach lumpy. Carla took a large sip of her Manhattan as she thought about what Julie must look like today.

“It’s really great to see you again, Carla. I thought maybe we would never see each other again the day we both went off to our separate schools.”

Carla’s mind drifted back to her eighteen year old self, held tight in his arms, crying as they said their goodbyes. She remembered he had told her he loved her. Carla looked at Rod, who also seemed to be dreaming. They caught each other’s gaze, smiled and looked down at their drinks.

“You too, Rod, I mean, It’s been so long. What has it been, like thirty years? My god. Life flies by doesn’t it?” Carla peeked up at Rod and looked him in the eyes. In them she saw the eighteen year old him return. He was there, buried deep, but still there. Carla’s hand reached up to touch his. She stopped herself and blushed, resting her hand casually on the table. She had thought that those emotions had vanished long ago, with maturity and marriage.

Rod took her hand from the table in his and like any two friends would, they enjoyed the connection. Everything they needed to say to each other was conveyed through touch.

“I can’t believe it’s really you,” Rod said simply.

Carla smiled and dropped her gaze. She almost jumped when she heard a sharp, buzzing sound. Rod fished for his phone in his pocket and

looked at Carla. "So sorry, this should just take a sec." He walked to the exit and plugged his left ear, with the phone on his right. The way he stood, slightly hunched, his frame masculine yet soft, had barely changed. The way his eyes lit up when he was passionate about anything still made her a bit weak in the knees. He wasn't like any other man she had ever known. When he returned, he smiled and mumbled something about a business meeting being delayed.

Carla listened as Rod spoke of his divorce and the beginning of his new life. She talked passionately about her job and her children. So much to say to each other but so little time. Finally, Carla dared to glance at her wrist-watch.

"Is it already 11:30? I'm supposed to be getting up early tomorrow for an interview," she said, disappointed.

"Can we do this again sometime?"

"I'd love to."

"Dinner tomorrow night? It can be on me," said Rod as he placed some bills on the bar table.

"Sounds great. Bistro le Beau Rivage here at the hotel? It's really nice." Carla kept her eyes locked on his face. She stood up and, feeling very self conscious, she walked towards the exit. She knew it wouldn't matter to him what she looked like, but still she wanted him to think of her always as she once was.

As she walked away, she felt sorrow for missing out on so much time together. Her satisfaction in seeing him again put the smile on her face.

As Carla made her way to her hotel room, she couldn't help feeling younger, immature, dramatic, as all teens are. Her mind wandered to old times they had spent together, loving each other, being young together.

CARLA found herself looking in the full-length mirror on the sliding closet doors. Her reflection was blurred from the steam of the shower, but she was thankful. She could let herself believe that her eighteen year old self had returned over night. How would she do her hair? Why did it matter so much? She tried to gather her whirl of thoughts, *Ok Carla, you've already seen him once, he has seen you, what does it matter? Why are you getting ready for this dinner two hours in advance?* She sighed aloud and bit her bottom lip. *Because this time we both know what the occasion is. We are dressing up for each other.*

Carla loved her husband dearly; her kids were her whole life. She knew there was no chance of being unfaithful to her family, but she still wanted to look good for him. She owed it to her younger self. Something tugged at the back of her mind. *He isn't expecting anything, is he?* She knew the thought was completely out of the question, but she still had to consider the possibility. They were both married. Even if he was married to Julie Samson. They were just old friends catching up. Carla had a fervent desire to hear everything about his life since they had last seen each other. She also felt as though she wanted to tell him all about her life. She just wanted to be in his company.

She considered calling her husband. Why was she hesitating? She knew he wouldn't be angry about her dinner with Rod, but it was better for him to just never know. Simpler.

Carla had decided to wear a light turquoise V-neck blouse and a beige knee length skirt. Again the mood in the hotel seemed gay and chipper, almost old fashioned. Despite the mood, Carla couldn't help but feel nervous. How would they greet each other? A handshake? A hug?

Rod was waiting on a wooden bench in front of the entrance to the hotel restaurant. He looked up just as Carla spotted him.

"Hey Carla!" said Rod as he stood up to greet her.

“You too!” said Carla as they hugged.

*The awkward part is over*, Carla told herself. She glanced at his outfit. He wore a suave but casual black jacket with a white collared shirt underneath. It suited him. Carla caught herself imagining what was underneath. She shook her head and blushed.

Unlike the night before, Carla noted, it wasn’t a freak coincidence. It was planned this time. Why did that make things so different?

“You look great!” said Rod, smiling his perfect smile.

“Thanks! So do you!” Carla said, smiling.

The waitress led them to a table for two, lit up with candles. It had been so long since she had gone to dinner with a man who wasn’t talking business. It was nice. Still, despite Billy Holiday songs in the background and the candlelight, Carla didn’t feel any feelings of love for this man. Just friendship. And attraction, she had to admit. A good friend derives from good conversation.

Carla ordered a Greek salad and Rod ordered eggplant parmesan. The red wine they chose was particularly lovely.

“Do you remember the time when I took that bottle of wine from my dad’s cellar for Tristan Hugo’s party?” Carla said with a laugh.

“You and I both hated the taste, but it was all we could get our hands on!” Rod chuckled.

“That was the same night that Jimmy Maitland decided to try and kiss April Roberts!” Carla recalled.

“He got slapped in the face!” Rod almost yelled, and whispered “Sorry” to the people who were staring.

Carla shook with laughter. This was much like how it had been when they were dating. Them against the world. Other people staring and judging as they just sat there and loved being with each other.



"Time hasn't changed you a bit, Rod McFarland," Carla said after the laughter died down.

She sipped her glass of wine.

"I thought I had. You make me feel young again," said Rod.

Carla dropped her gaze and smiled into her lap. "I know exactly what you mean."

As the night wore on, the conversation ranged from past to present to future, never resting for too long on a certain subject. There was too much to cover and not enough time. A pause in a conversation about Julie allowed Carla to look around her. The restaurant was empty except for a waiter who was cleaning tables. *How long had they been there for?*

Carla felt so excited and at the same time calm. In her forty-eight years, she had never known emotions like these. Love? No. Most strongly, she felt happiness; underneath she felt sadness, desire, maybe even jealousy.

"Well, you have an early flight tomorrow, I should let you get to bed."

"You're right, I'd better go," said Carla, again feeling sorrow and satisfaction.

Rod walked Carla to her hotel room. The beige walls seemed to merge together as Carla realized that she might never see him again. Would they go out of their way to do this again? Somehow, she doubted it.

"Well, this was lovely," said Rod, looking her square in the eyes.

"It was wasn't it?" she almost whispered. "I really hope that we bump into each other again. Goodbye, Rod."

Carla smiled and closed her hotel room door.

Christine Wood

## Collisions—What You Left Behind

LYING IN BED, my room in complete darkness except for the digital clock and the dim sunlight shining through the edges of the curtain. I cannot sleep. I am extremely tired but no matter how long I close my eyes for I cannot drift to sleep. I have worked the night shift at the hospital for almost two months. I thought my body would be used to this by now. Time to count sheep.

One sheep, two sheep, three sheep... the damn sheep don't work. I am too concentrated on counting. I should call Josh. Maybe he can bore me to sleep with talk of his accounting job. That would bore me to sleep if I was wide-awake. My hand searches for the phone in the bedside table and in the process knocks over a glass and picture. My hand dials the number from memory. The phone rings twice before he answers.

"Hello, this is Josh Andrews."

"Hey, babe."

"Hi, Nancy."

"I can't fall asleep."

I hear a sigh and then silence.

"You can't call me every time you can't fall asleep. I have a day job with work to do."

He's annoyed. He's annoyed a lot lately. I didn't think I was calling him that much at work. Maybe my sleeping problem is more severe than I thought.

"Please?"

"I'll call you later, Nancy."

He hangs up. I'm surrounded by silence.

I can't leave things on such a sour note. What time is it? Eleven o'clock. Perfect. I'll pick up some lunch, a bottle of wine, and surprise Josh at work. I'm wide-awake anyway. I might as well do something.

I push my comforter off my legs, swing them off the bed and place my feet on the cold wood floor. I turn on my bedside lamp and walk over to my closet. What should I wear? I grab my brown skirt and a yellow shirt to go with it. I put on black undies and a pushup bra. Nothing can happen at his office, but I want to feel sexy, I want to boost my self-confidence. I pull a large bag from the closet for me to stick lunch in.

In the bathroom I quickly apply some eyeliner and mascara and a fresh coat of lip gloss. I throw my hair up into a ponytail; not enough time to tame it with a flat iron.

In the kitchen I grab some plastic wine glasses and the last bottle of white wine in the fridge. Note to self: buy wine today. From the front closet, I pull my purple coat off the hanger, kick around a pile of shoes trying to find two that match, grab my purse off the floor and leave.

I walk down the hallway. In the elevator, I press G instead of P. I press P, twice. Leaning against the elevator wall I close my eyes. When the door slides open on the ground floor, I keep my eyes shut. The elevator lurches again, and the door opens in the parking garage.

The Pontiac Sunfire is a piece of junk. It takes three tries for it to start. I swear one day this car is going to have me stranded in the middle

of a highway. The engine will fall out or a wheel will fall off. I should invest in a new car.

I pull out of the parking garage and drive down Crawford Street. It's overcast. Maybe it will rain soon. I hope so. I always sleep best falling asleep to the sound of rain. Hopefully it will hold off until I get home when I try to sleep again.

On my way to Josh's office, I stop at his favourite restaurant. It has its own little grocery section with fresh veggies and prepared meals. I buy him some meat lasagna and a mixed salad. I grab myself a small chicken Caesar salad, and an individual apple pie for Josh and me to share.

Josh works in a building at the edge of town, only six storeys, but wide. I press 4 in the elevator. I press it again. The door slides closed. I perk myself up. The door slides open.

I open the glass doors and enter the office. Here is a blond secretary sitting behind a large wooden desk. She greets me with a big smile and a cheery hello. She has to be a ditz. I walk up. Her pink sweater reveals too much cleavage. Apparently she is a slut too. I won't judge her. I have a boyfriend, I don't need to pick on her to make myself feel good.

"Hi, I am here to see Josh Andrews. Can you point me into the direction of his desk, I can't quite remember." I ask her.

"Are you a friend of his?"

"Girlfriend, actually."

"Oh, that is so cute. He is such a great guy. He makes me laugh all the time."

She puts on another big smile. Why is she talking about Josh this way? What are her intentions?

"Sorry, where is his desk?"

“Walk around the corner and make a left down the second aisle, the accounting section is against the wall.”

She would know that off by heart. She probably visits the accountants frequently. But I will not let her ruin my day, I am just going to ignore her.

Before I leave her desk I glance at the clock mounted on the wall behind her. Eleven fifty, perfect timing.

I find him right where the secretary said. He is facing his computer so I sneak up on him. I tiptoe up behind his chair, lean over his shoulder and whisper in his ear, “Surprise!”

He jolts in his chair and lets out a yelp. I back up so that he has space to spin his chair around.

“Nancy, what are you doing here?”

“I thought we ended things on the wrong note over the phone. I realize that I have been annoying you with all those phone calls when I can’t sleep. So I thought I should make it up to you. I came to apologize and I brought you your favourite lunch.” I hold up my big bag brimming with food and grin. He’s going to be so happy.

“Could this wait until tonight, Nancy? I’m at work.”

“Yeah, but it’s your lunch break and I thought this would be a nice change from your normal sandwich.”

This was not the reaction I was anticipating. He looks annoyed. He stands up from his chair and grabs my hand. He pulls me through his office, out the glass doors to the hallway with the elevators.

“Nancy, you can’t just pop up here out of the blue. I have stuff to do.”

“But it’s your lunch.”

“Yeah, but I have plans.”

“With who?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Who is it?”

“You don’t know her.”

Her? Her! He’s going out to lunch with a woman. A different woman than me, his girlfriend! I came all the way down here when I was trying to sleep to surprise him and he doesn’t appreciate it. He is in some deep shit now. Let’s see him work his way out of this one.

“Oh. And what does *she* do for a living?”

“She works in the office.”

I turn my head and look through the glass door to the blonde secretary. It has to be her. She was going on and on about how Josh is such a great guy. She would only know that if she has talked to him numerous times, and the talking probably happened over numerous lunches. I knew she was no good the moment I laid eyes on her. Josh has always preferred blondes. Being a brunette has always put me at a disadvantage.

“It’s the secretary isn’t it?”

“Tracy? No. Why would I have a business lunch with her?”

“Cause she is pretty and blond, more attractive, an air head who won’t annoy you.”

“Nancy I can’t stand your jealousy anymore. Last month my friend Carole and now Tracy. Do you know how ridiculous you’re being? I am going to lunch with Brenda, she’s in charge of accounting and she wants to go over some stuff. That’s it, that’s all I’m doing.”

“If that’s it why didn’t you tell me in the first place?”

I got him now.

“Just leave me alone Nancy. Leave, go. Once you decided to grow up and get over this jealousy thing you can give me a call. Otherwise don’t contact me.”

He walks away, pushes open the glass doors and disappears into his office. He's gone just like that. I'm alone in the hallway. I look at the clock again hanging behind Tracy, twelve o'clock. My eyes drift down and land on Tracy. She's been looking at me, but once our eyes meet she looks away. She starts to blush. She must have been listening. I feel the tears start welling behind my eyes. I can't start crying here, I have to get to my car.

I get to the ground floor and start speed walking to the exit. I open the door to feel water soak my shirt. It's raining. I start crying, the raindrops will cover the tears rolling down my face.

I throw my purse and lunch in the back seat. I get into the front seat and start the engine. I wipe the tears from my eyes and try to stop crying. It doesn't work, I cry even harder. I pull out of the parking lot as quick as possible and get on the main road.

Driving home is getting increasingly difficult. The rain keeps pouring and my windshield wipers can't keep up. My tears start and stop, my vision is blurry. I am also tired, tired, tired.

I'll go home to bed and sleep forever. Sleep until all my problems go away. I'm speeding, going seventy kilometers an hour. I'm in the residential area now. The limit must be fifty, possibly even forty. I don't care. I just want to go home.

I feel my right tire hit the curb and drive over it. There is a lamppost. I slam on my brakes. The last thing I see is a break in the clouds and the blinding sun washing over me.

Christine Wood

## Collisions—FML

I'M AT MIKE'S HOUSE. We skipped second period to come here and play some Halo. It's intense, dead aliens everywhere. But after an hour it gets boring. It's time to move to the next game.

"Let's play some Nazi Zombies in Call of Duty."

"I'm down," says Mike.

Mike sticks the game in the 360. The game pops up on the television screen and I select Nazi Zombie mode and we begin.

"Man, we've got to get past level eleven this time." Mike says.

"All right, I'll cover these three windows, you cover the ones over there."

We are barricaded in a house and zombies are attacking us through the windows. They are the most disgusting things I have seen in a videogame. They're wearing green jumpsuits that are wrinkly and torn, covered in mud, just completely disgusting.

Mike and I are the American troops. The zombies don't have any guns, you would think that would be an advantage but there are hundreds of zombies. And when they get too close they eat you and they like it. It's really cool.

There are a million choices of guns, but my weapon of choice is the shotgun. In the higher levels, once you've killed lots of zombies,



you're given money to buy new weapons. One time I bought this flamethrower, it's the best weapon in the game. It shoots fire and burns the Nazis alive. I'm getting back at them for killing my great uncle. Bastards.

"Shit. They killed me. Revive me, Mike, or I'll be kicked out." I shout.

"I've got like five zombies on me, I'm coming."

He's never going to make it in time, we have basically failed the level. I put down my controller and take out my cell phone to check the time. Shit, class starts in ten minutes.

"I've got to book it or I'm going to be late. Peace."

I get up off the couch and put my cell phone back in my pocket.

"Aw, you gotta go now? Why?" Mike asks.

"My mom will flip a shit if I skip fourth period too."

I walk up the stairs to the main floor, slip on my shoes and open the front door. It's pouring rain.

"Mike, do you have an umbrella?" I shout to him in the basement

"No. But you can stay here and play another round of Nazi zombies until the rain stops."

"Can't. See ya."

I pull my sweater over my head so the back of my t-shirt is showing and walk into the rain.

It's been less than a minute and I'm drenched. I have ten more minutes to go. I won't be able to sit through two periods in wet clothes. I'll change into my gym shirt, at least some part of me will be dry.

What am I going to tell Mom when she finds out I skipped second period? She knows I have lunch third period, she knows my science test is next week so I can't say I was studying. She doesn't believe me anymore when I say I was feeling sick. I'll just convince her that I was

really there and my teacher made a mistake. I'll re-date some of my old handouts for proof I was in class.

Fourth period is math, boring. But Mr. Keets made a new seating arrangement yesterday and now I sit beside Ruth. I can't believe I forgot that. Now I can't change into my gym shirt. I can't be smelly and wet sitting beside Ruth. But I want to be somewhat dry. Maybe I can sit beside Tim today. He won't mind if I explain. Don't know if Mr. Keets will be down with me sitting in a different spot right after he made a seating arrangement. I'm going to be late for class anyway; maybe Keets will leave me in the hall until he's done teaching the lesson. I'll have time to dry so I won't need to change into my gym shirt and Ruth won't be repulsed by me.

Ruth, that name sucks, I feel sorry for her. What were her parents thinking? That's like a ninety-year-old woman name. On the bright side her name will suit her when she's ninety, unlike the name Brittany. That could never fit an old woman. Ruth's name might suck but she has a hot body. She's an athlete so she's nice and fit, not an ounce of fat on her from what I have seen of her arms and legs.

I'll ask her how her volleyball game was, that will start the conversation and she will be able to see how easy I am to talk to. A man of words. Doesn't that sound attractive?

I can see my high school off in the distance, I'll be there in two minutes. I look both ways before I cross. It's a busy street, lots of shitty high school drivers. Crossing here will save time because then I won't have to wait for the crossing guard to walk me. It's difficult to see in the rain and I almost start crossing butt then I hear the sound of a car engine. Half a second later a Pontiac Sunfire comes zooming down the street, going really fast. It would be more fun to watch if it wasn't a Sunfire. A Viper, I would like to witness a car like that at speed.

I look both ways again. I watch the Sunfire drive over a curb, slide across the grass and hit a lamppost. A loud crash then silence.

Fuck.

That didn't just happen. I am not here. I should just keep walking to school because nothing happened. School is two minutes away. Where I can learn math and sit beside Ruth.

Is there anyone else around? Anyone? I look up and down the street but there is not a soul. I cannot move. Inside me my heart is pounding and bones are shaking but I cannot move a muscle.

I need to call the police. My hand shakes, I can hardly hold the phone. I press the 9, the 1, the 1.

"911, what's your emergency?" a woman answers the phone.

"There's been a car crash on, on...." Jesus, where the fuck am I?

"It's okay, sir, calm down."

"It's on Walter Avenue, close to the high school."

"We're on our way."

What should I do? I have to stay, right? I'm a witness so I have to stay. I can't go to school and sit with Ruth. What I would give to be soaking wet in a smelly gym shirt sitting beside Ruth right now. Oh god, what if that person in the car is still alive and needs help? I can't help them. I have no idea what I'm doing. I must do it. I can't let them die there by themselves.

I run across the street to the car wreck. I approach the driver's side but don't get too close. I see the woman slumped over the steering wheel, the air bag deflated. She is bleeding out her left ear and she has cuts on her face. I can't help her and I can't stand here and look at her.

I feel sick. I drag my heavy feet away from the crash. I walk around the trunk of the car and puke on the grass. I move off the road onto the sidewalk and walk a little further. I sit down on the sidewalk,

wrap my arms around my legs and rest my head on my knees. I stare off into space. The rain has let up, it's become more of a drizzle. Right now I wouldn't mind if it started to pour again.

Sirens in the distance and then within seconds the police are here, then the fire fighters. A minute later the ambulance arrives. I don't look at them. I just sit and stare.

A police officer comes and kneels down beside me. I don't acknowledge him. He is going to have to start the conversation if he wants to talk to me.

"Hello, I am Officer Roberts. Are you the boy who called 911?" he asks.

"Yes."

"What is your name?"

"Colin Phillips."

"Did you witness the car crash?"

"Yes."

"There is a couple of questions I would like to ask you, is that okay?"

I bury my head in my arms. I'd rather not.

"Yes." I reply.

He starts asking me questions. Where did the car come from, what was the driving like, how did it crash. He asked me where I was going, what I was doing. I don't want to tell him I skipped class, luckily the questions never get that far. Not that it would matter that I skipped one class. There has been a car accident and a death. That seems a lot worse than missing a period.

Officer Roberts finishes asking his questions and goes to investigate the accident. My job is done but I do not move. I am not going back to school. It should not be expected of me. I am not going

anywhere. I am going to sit here until the shock wears off and I can function properly.

A tow truck comes to the accident to take the car away. I don't watch them try to unwrap it from the pole. I keep staring into space.

When everyone is getting ready to leave Officer Roberts walks back over to me. "Colin, you did a good job today. You're a responsible young man. I am not going to let you sit here the rest of the evening. Can I offer you a ride home?"

I slowly turn my head to look up at him.

"Sure."

He holds out his hand and I grab it. He helps pull me up off the ground. He walks over to his cruiser and I slowly follow behind him dragging my feet. He opens the door for me and I crawl inside. It's the first time I have been in a police car and it's not for doing anything bad. It's because I am too traumatized to pick myself up and walk home. Lame.

The rains starts up again as we are driving home. He pulls into my driveway and I get out of the car. I walk up to the front door and take my house key out from my pocket. Officer Roberts waits in my driveway until I enter.. I walk inside and close the door behind me. I look out the front door window and watch Officer Roberts reverse off my driveway and drive down the street and around the corner.

I walk up the stairs and go to my bedroom. I open my window and close the curtains and the door. I pull off my clothes and flop on my bed. My room is dark except for the digital clock and the dim daylight shining around the edges of the curtain. My clock reads four thirty. My mom will be home in a half an hour. I'm going to fall asleep to the sound of rain, and maybe when I wake up all my problems will have washed away.

Christine Wood

## Collisions—Erasing My Memory

I HAVEN'T SEEN AN ACCIDENT like that in a while. We were doing so well, minor accidents, fractures, bruises, concussions. But her body was mangled and the car wrapped around the lamppost. The nightmares are going to start again. I need to brace myself.

I don't want to go home, I'll drive a little longer. I'll try not to wrap myself around a pole. Julia will be able to tell the second I walk through my front door that I'm not right.

Jumping out of the fire truck I ran to the crash site. I found the lamppost leaning over and the front of the car wrapped around the pole. The windshield was shattered and sprinkled over the crushed car and wet grass. The woman was slumped over the steering wheel, the deflated airbag stained red. From one look I knew this woman must be dead.

I turned away from the wreck and saw a boy further down the sidewalk. He was sitting in the middle of the sidewalk, his arms wrapped around his legs, head resting on his knees. He looked pale and he was staring into space. A police officer approached him. He bent down and started talking to the boy. He was the witness. He was traumatized. He was way too young to see something like that. I didn't envy the next months of his life.

The EMT arrived when we were taking the Jaws of Life out of the truck. They pulled a gurney out of the ambulance, a defibrillator, and some other medical supplies that could do nothing. All they needed was a body bag.

We used the Jaws of Life to remove the driver side door and any other metal in the way. We were hoping for the best, for her body not to be too mangled so we could pull it out in one piece.

The door came off and I saw her legs tangled with metal, bones jutting out, blood splattered everywhere. This woman would come out in two pieces, probably with bits of leg left behind.

The EMT were the first to leave. They brought the remains of the body back to the hospital. The police would contact them once they determined who she was.

A tow truck came to take the car to the pound. Before it was towed away the police searched the car for identification. There was a purse on the floor of the backseat, no damage to it. Her driver's license read Nancy Pellegrini, twenty-seven years old, an organ donor. Her organs were ripped to shreds, no use to anyone now.

From the police investigation it looked like she hit the curb and drove over it, slid over the mud soaked grass before hitting the pole. They said she was driving at high speed because of the amount of damage done to her car. If she was going slower the damage to the car wouldn't have been as severe, she might even still be alive.

Driving has not helped. I wanted it to clear my mind but it has cleared it of everything except the images from the accident. I guess I'll go home, pour myself a scotch.

I walk through my front door quietly, Julia has the ears of a bat. "Charles, is that you? You're just in time for dinner. The pizza man

delivered the pizza two minutes ago,” she shouts to me from around the corner.

I stand still at the entrance. She enters the front hall before I can do anything, I watch the big smile on her face vanish when she looks at mine. “How bad is it?” she asks.

I cannot bear to answer, I brush past her and head for the kitchen.

The first thing I do when I get into the kitchen is head to the liquor cabinet. I pull out a bottle of scotch and get a glass from the cupboard beside it. I would drink it right from the bottle but my daughters are sitting at the table.

Charlotte is fourteen, she has light brown, long curly hair, she’s petite and resembles her mother more than she does me. Rebecca on the other hand is the female version of me. She is seventeen, with fiery red hair that goes to her shoulders, and she plays rugby.

I grab my glass of scotch and the bottle and have a seat at the table. Charlotte and Rebecca are already half done their pizzas.

“Hello, girls, how was your day?”

“Fine,” they reply in unison.

Julia comes and joins us at the table. We sit in silence for a while, the girls chewing their pizza, me sipping on scotch, and my wife boring holes in the side of my head with her eyes.

“Dad, can I have the car tonight?” Rebecca asks.

“No.”

“What? I asked you this morning and you said probably. I told all my friends I could drive them to the movies.”

“Well that was foolish, Becca. I said probably, not yes. You cannot have the car.”

“Fine. Sarah can probably drive, I’ll ask her.”



“No, you’re not going anywhere. You’re staying home tonight, Rebecca.”

“What the hell, Dad! Why can’t I go out? This is so uncalled for. I have been so good for like the past two months. You live just to make my life miserable.”

I lift my head to look at my daughter. She doesn’t understand. Her body bloody and beaten, locked in a metal cage. Her red hair burned away, her green eyes flat.

“Mom! You can’t let him do this! You know how unfair this is.”

My wife stares at me and I stare back. The room is silent. Julia is trying to persuade me to give Rebecca the car using her eyes. I want Becca at home, and Charlotte too.

“Rebecca, take my car. Go have a fun night with your friends at the movies. The keys are in my purse,”

I can feel the blood pumping to my head, my face is hot, my skin red.

Becca quickly leaves the kitchen. I hear the garage door open and close. Rebecca has left in a car.

“Charlotte, honey, can you give me and your father a minute. He’s had a rough day.”

Julia wants me to share my feelings. I want to drink my scotch.

“Honey, what happened? I haven’t seen you like this in four months,” she says in her most soothing voice.

And as lame as it is, it works. I calm down, the blood drains from my head.

“It was a car crash. I’d rather not talk about it. I am trying to get it out of my head. So let’s just not talk about it okay? Or at least not right now.”

Julia comes behind me and wraps her arms around me, resting her head on my shoulder. I lift my hands to my chest to grab hers. I let my head drop. I can feel the tears welling behind my eyes. I don't want to cry, I want to hold it back. I close my eyes, silent tears roll down my face. And we just stay there.

Julia kisses my cheek and whispers in my ear, "I am going up to our room, I'll be there if you need to talk."

She slowly lets go of me, rubs my back, and exits the kitchen.

I'm by myself. I look at the bottle of scotch and the empty glass. Drinking by myself is not the answer, but I also can't sit alone. I can't go to bed because I'll have nightmares. I stand up from the table, grab the bottle in one hand and the glass in another. I put the bottle away back in the cabinet, and the glass in the sink.

I walk up the creaking stairs to get to our bedroom. I don't want to talk about today, but I need to talk about something.

Tucker McLean

## Eagle's Nest

THE HIGHWAY BOBBED UP AND DOWN over every hill and valley. To the left were a few small businesses, a Tim Horton's, a Home Hardware, piles of fallen rock resting directly behind them. The car swept through the scenery, blowing dead leaves across the roadway.

"How'd ya like Bancroft so far?" Miles said from the passenger's seat.

"It's definitely a big change from Toronto."

"I can't imagine living in such a big city. So much going on all the time. I've only been a few times for Leafs games but it was still crazy." Perry fiddled with the window control.

"Perry, stop screwing with the window, it's about the only thing that works on the car. So don't break it." Greg was staring at the curving road, one palm leisurely rested at the crest of the wheel. "So Kevin, why'd you end up movin' out here anyway?"

"My Mom got offered a job as a manager for the Ministry of National Resources. We ended up moving here so she could take it."

"I figured as much. Not many people would move out to Bancroft for any old reason. It's just too sleepy a town."

“Mind numbingly dull,” said Perry.

“Of course.”

“Regardless, I’m glad it’s Friday. I totally blew my English mid-term today; I really should have studied more last night,” Miles said.

“Yo, did you guys see Laura today. Man she was lookin’ fine. I think she likes me. I’d ask her out if Jordan wasn’t all over her 24/7,” Perry said.

“I heard they were over, heard it ended before the summer did,” Miles said.

“Well if that’s true than I’m definitely makin’ a move on Monday.”

“No you won’t, you don’t have the stones,” Greg said.

“Coming from you that sure means a lot.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Greg said turning to face the backseat.

The car abruptly stopped. Lurching forward Kevin grasped the back of the driver’s seat for support.

“Easy there!” Perry said shuffling back into his seat. Greg hoisted the wheel left, turning them to an isolated side road barely visible from the highway. The car transitioned from weathered pavement, to rough dirt. There was no light here, only the headlight beams to guide them. Greg knew where he was going; no one could navigate in this darkness blindly.

“So any girls you’ve taken to your liking, Kevin?” asked Greg.

“Well there is this one chick in my third period class, she’s pretty hot.”

“Yeah, North Hastings has some pretty sweet babes, of whom I claimed quite a few,” Perry boasted. He ran his hand through his hair.

“Ha ha! Get over yourself dumbass!” said Miles. “What does she look like Kevin?”

“Well she’s got brown hair-”

“Ha ha Kenny’s a brunette man...”

“I think her name is...oh what is it, I just had it...Rebecca!”

“Hey I think I remember seeing her at a Huskies game, I think she’s new too, isn’t she?” Miles asked.

“I’m not sure, I haven’t talked to her yet,” Kevin said shrugging his shoulders.

“You can’t be nervous with girls in Bancroft, they’re like any other women, only a little more bored if you know what I mean,” Greg said.

After a few moments the car entered a clearing, a vacant parking lot. The car lurched forward and hastily stopped, inches before the metal barrier marking the edge of the forest. The muffler was the only sound in the clearing, piercing the warm, calm air. “Don’t forget your bag, Perry,” said Greg wiggling his keys out from the ignition.

“Thanks Mom,” Perry said.

The forest was thick, birch and maple, illuminated by the dwindling headlights. Miles and Perry both grabbed flashlights from the backpack on Perry’s shoulders, shining the streams in each other’s faces before wiping their eyes of temporary blindness. “Where are we going?” Kevin asked.

“Ah. dude you’re in for a treat. It’s this sick cliff overlooking the valley. It’s quite the view,” Miles said patting Kevin on the shoulder.

“It’s quite exceptional, I’ve seen it myself,” Perry said mimicking Miles.

“I hope there’s a better view from the bottom, for your sake.” They passed over the thin metal barrier into the woods. Greg killed the engine, the headlights died and the parking lot became quiet once again.

The forest floor was flooded with dry leaves, crunching under foot. Intruding branches on the path began to obstruct Kevin's vision. Kevin's only guides through the foliage were the shadows of the figures in front of him. "Are we getting close, Miles?"

"Yeah, we're pretty close," Miles said swaying his flashlight haphazardly.

Miles led through the woods, swiveling his flashlight left to right, emphasizing rotting logs and rocks. Kevin was a moment away from telling Miles to knock it off when his right foot wedged snugly under a tree root arching from the ground. Halfway through his next stride, he fell forward. Kevin's scrambling arms tried to grasp the trunk of a tree but came up short, grinding his face on the rough bark instead. The scratches stung his cheek. Miles spun around, hearing Kevin's mumbled shout. "Oh, you gotta watch where you're going out here, Kev," Miles said offering his hand.

"Yeah...right," Kevin said stroking the scratches.

Ten minutes through the edges of the woods came a clearing. The moon hung over the scene. Perry began lifting amber bottles of beer from his knapsack, setting them down. Miles and Greg stood silently, staring out at the horizon. Kevin joined them, and retreated a step. He was standing on the edge of a rocky cliff, very high above the York River valley. The base of the cliff was barely visible but he could still see for miles in the distance, even through the thick night. The York River snaked its way through the valley below. Soft water washing through the countryside. Dark shades of trees resting on banks. It was much colder at the top of the cliff. The air had a light sting.

"Jesus, we're high up," Kevin said.

"Welcome to Bancroft's biggest attraction," Greg motioned to the valley. "The view from the top, 'cuz the bottom ain't too interesting."

They sat in a semi circle facing the valley, among drifts of fallen leaves. They collected kindling and started a fire in an old fire pit. The twisting flames warmed their backs; their long shadows reached for the edge of the cliff. Greg opened his jacket to produce a pack of cigarettes from his Mickey pocket. He pulled two out and tossed one to Perry. "You smoke, Kevin?" Greg said from the corner of his mouth.

"Um, no. Thanks anyway." Perry and Greg both lit up, their faces dressed in shifting light.

"So what'd you use to do for fun in Toronto?" Miles asked.

"Well, we got wasted a lot of time just like this."

"Goes to show," Perry said.

"So you watch a lot of hockey, Kevin?" Greg exhaled a cloud of smoke.

"Well I'm not really a hockey guy, per se. I'm big on basketball though."

"You don't like hockey? You serious?"

"Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, Perry." Miles rotated the neck of his bottle between his thumb and pointer finger.

"But, man, it's Canada, everyone loves hockey."

"Obviously not," Greg said. "So you're a Raptors man then?"

"All the way, been a fan since I was like six years old," Kevin said. He stared at the moon through his amber bottle.

Greg finished his smoke. Placing the butt between thumb and finger he flicked his wrist. The spark spiraled through the air, over the edge. Miles downed his first beer, swishing the residue in his mouth before heaving the bottle as far as he could to shatter two hundred feet below. The boy's gaze followed the bottle as it disappeared over the ridge of the cliff, no sound returned. The shards of glass would join hundreds

of others, tossed away by countless numbers of teens. Kevin finished his own and grabbed the neck of the bottle. He hefted it, beer spilling through the air. He couldn't keep his gaze off the bottle as it twisted in the night.

"Good throw. I'd almost think you've done this before" Greg said with a grin.

"I've had some practice," Kevin said. He grinned.

"What kind of music do you like, Kevin?" asked Perry. He twisted off a bottle cap with his shirt.

"I like rock mainly, the new wave stuff I mean. I'm big on Radiohead. What about you?" Kevin asked.

"I'm big on the classics, Zeppelin, Maiden, you know. That stuff."

"I actually can play some Zeppelin on guitar," said Kevin.

"Oh nice. I play some guitar too, mostly because my Dad forced me to when I was a kid, but I've gotten pretty good now," Greg said.

"Pretty good? You could challenge Clapton!" Miles said.

"Yeah maybe if I had another arm," Greg said.

In the shadow of the moon, after draining a case, the boys were finally silent. The fire had long since died. The wind passed through the forest trees. They lay on the ground, hands behind heavy heads. Their gaze turned to the dark night sky. Clouds of clear blue stars in the sky. Orion's bold outline was clearly visible in this autumn night. They traced the shape of the Hunter; standing attentively, ready to strike, challenged only by the moon hanging in the distance. Kevin drew his image with his eyes, imagining the tip of Orion's blade at the uppermost star down to his feet at the southern most light, in position to pounce. Kevin felt protected under the watch of the Hunter; he could let down his guard. Kevin closed his eyes and slept.



Then they left the Eagle's Nest. They stumbled through the trees, stopping to piss. Greg, Miles and Perry forgot where they were at least twice. Kevin of course had no idea. He just stumbled along behind them. They found a worn trail and they started moving again. They found the car not much later.

The car was filled with silence, but not an awkward one, they were simply tired. Perry slept in the back seat and Miles' face was pressed against the dashboard. Greg sat wiping his eyes as he kept a single hand on the steering wheel; the night was wearing on him. Kevin rested his head on the cold pane of glass beside him, watching passing road signs, not a thought in his mind. Along Highway 62 they traveled, where to, Kevin wasn't exactly sure. Perry's cell phone went off. Perry stirred out of sleep, fished the phone out of his pocket and after much deliberation found the talk button. "Hello?"

"Ok, lemme just ask the boys," Perry said, cupping the phone with his hand. "You guys up for a party at Jordan's house? It's apparently jumpin' over there."

"Kevin?" Greg asked looking into the rear view mirror. "Whaddya say?"

Cameron Smith

## Elevator

OUR STORY BEGINS WITH A MAN on an elevator. He's an attractive man, well built and tall, handsomely dressed in a dark suit. Professional looking, his thick brown hair carefully tousled, his expression confident. The Man is alone. This elevator, door open, faces the main floor entrance. This man doesn't know it, but he is about to be joined by some company. A young woman approaches the elevator just out of the sightline of the Man. She is slender and fashionably dressed, in a light white blouse, plaid skirt and tights. The Woman hurries towards the elevator, doors are sliding closed. Without looking inside the woman steps on just before the doors closes behind her.

A man and a woman on an elevator, hardly unusual. Yet, my dear reader, what is an elevator if not an unusual venue? Where else can one be within two feet of someone without acknowledging his existence? Most close-quarters situations demand some degree of small talk, but not an elevator. Eye contact is to be avoided at all costs, the optimal distance between occupants must be maintained, and no conversation should be permitted, for that risks a dreaded "awkward silence". Therefore, there are few things in our society quite as unusual and unique as an elevator trip,

and thus the tale of a man and a woman sharing one becomes quite interesting.

The Man notes the woman in his peripheral vision. He is careful not to change his body position lest she become aware of his observing her. Even out of the corner of his eye he sees she is attractive, and his body fills with desire. Years of social conditioning forbid the Man from looking at, or even acknowledging her, but he searches for some non verbal way to make her aware of his desires. Vaguely, he recalled once being told how distinguished he looked when he was thinking. The Man decides that by looking serious and contemplative is the best way to win the Woman's attraction .

Of all the languages, body language might be the hardest to speak fluently. Everyone has different dialects and different meanings for theirs, and this can lead to much confusion. The Man believes his “distinguished-contemplative” expression is dashing. But to the Woman, looking at him cautiously, it looks as if He had become disgusted with something, maybe her? She hoped not, for he appeared to be very handsome. His tall frame, his muscular chest, he looked like an athlete, perhaps a swimmer.

The Woman's destination is the forty-third floor, and as she moves to press the button, she realizes it was already glowing. That means they were going to the same floor. So we know, dear reader, the Man and the Woman are on this trip for the long haul.

Other places in society, averting eye contact is easy. In the subway, there are advertisements opposite to the viewer which to occupy us for many minutes. In a bus, there is the scenery flashing past the window. But what of an elevator? This rectangular box on pulleys has no distractions other than the person opposite. The elevator The Man and The Woman ride is floored with rich red carpet, wood paneled below the

handrail. Above the handrail on both sides is a dark mirror. Its brown tint makes the occupants looked tanned, a pleasant little deceit.

In this mirror the Man observes the Woman. Although slender, she is ample in the bust, and the Man debates risking a glance her way, for her image in the mirror is far away and slightly distorted. He shoots a look toward the button panel just as the number 13 lights up. What could a glance hurt? What are the odds of her noticing? The Man shifts his position slightly to get a better look at the Woman. He runs his eyes along the carpet, slowly making his way to the Woman's shoe. A glossy black heel. The Man takes note of a run in the Woman's stocking. Slowly he draws his eyes up her toned thigh past her waist. Through her white blouse he can see the faint outline of her bra. His eyes make their way up her long, dark, almost black hair until they reach her face. And the Man finds himself looking directly into the Woman's dark eyes.

But the Man is not alone in his silent observation. Just as he is appraising the Woman using the mirror, she appraises him. Two people observing each other mere feet apart, neither noticing. The Woman faces the same predicament as the Man. She wishes to get a better look at him, but fears awkward eye contact. In the end, she decides have a glance, for he seems preoccupied with something else, what are the odds of him noticing? The Woman tilts her head slightly to better appraise the Man. The firm jaw is darkened with the shadow of his beard in the late afternoon. His skin is even, and he looks like a man of business, perhaps a lawyer? The Woman's mind drifts, crafting a story about this swimmer-lawyer beside her. When her vision refocuses, she finds herself peering directly into the startling green eyes of the Man beside her.

Ah, awkward eye contact. Trying to fulfill your curiosity, you chance getting a better look at someone. They notice and turn to meet your eyes. What do you do? You can quickly look away, pretending you

never looked, but you're fooling no one. You can hold eye contact, maybe smile, but you run the risk of appearing creepy. You can make it seem intentional and try to start up a conversation, but this might only lead to the much worse awkward silence. Awkward eye contact is indeed a tricky situation. In this case surprise leads both the Man, and the Woman to hold each other's gaze. To the Man it seems like an eternity. He feels himself flushing, and tears his eyes away, focusing on the button panel, now glowing "26". The Woman, who chances a smile, is sadly disappointed. The Man looks away before seeing it.

Now both the Man and the Woman rack their brains trying to find some way to break down the wall that society and etiquette has built between them. The Man searches for a conversation starter. The weather maybe? Too contrived. A local sports team? He didn't watch sports. The Man remained silent, and the glowing button shifted to 30.

The Woman also wanted conversation to be started. But she wasn't going to be the one to do it. That was a man's job! She should persuade him to say something. He could talk about the weather! An easy enough topic, especially with the recent heat. The Woman fanned herself in an obvious fashion, pretending to be hot.

The sexual tension is quite high in this elevator. Both parties are physically attracted to the other, neither are particularly shy, yet silence remains. The button lights up at 35. The Man clears his throat softly. Now at 36. The Woman turns slightly to prevent her best angle. The Man opens and closes his mouth once. 40 glows. The Man makes a pointed glance at The Woman. She meets his gaze. They smile.

With a ding the elevator stops. The doors slide open to reveal an empty hallway. The Man and the Woman hesitate. After the slightest of pauses the Woman breaks eye contact and steps out of the elevator heading left down the hallway. The Man takes one last look around the

elevator, then proceeds right, never to see nor talk to the Woman ever again.

Kat Milcke

Emily

HER

I never wanted him to jump. I couldn't bear that. But he did. And that's how it started. It was breathtaking. Watching him fall. I couldn't watch. Yet I couldn't look away. I couldn't tear my eyes away from his falling form, his leap powerful and graceful. His hair blowing back in the wind, his arms out at his sides for balance. Only when he landed did I notice that I had been holding my breath.

It started out innocently enough. I was a tenth grader at my school. I wasn't well liked, but I wasn't hated. I had a few friends, and hung out with them at lunch, and once in a while on the weekends. But I liked being alone. I was happiest when I was with my guitar. Just one with the music, the notes flowing through me. When I play, it's like I'm somebody else. It's like I can be anybody I want to be. Like I can do anything. I love that feeling. It's better than any drug I could ever imagine. It gives me a smile, and a secret glow on the inside that only I know exists. It gave me hope. It got me through the day.

I never much cared for guys. They were always around, but clearly in the background. I had seen what my mother had gone through with my father back then, and there was no way I wanted that way of life

for me. You see, my dad left when I was young. I think I was four. He randomly got up one day— like the old stereotype, ‘went out to get cigarettes’—and never came back. I remember my mom cried for days. She couldn’t believe that he would just leave like that. But he did. Believe me, though, their marriage was far from good. I was often woken up late at night by their yelling. It was so hard to take. I didn’t have any brothers or sisters to go to, either, so I was all alone. But I took it, I got through it, but I promised myself to never end up like my mother. I promised myself to never let a guy mistreat me.

I was going through life fine, until that day. Until the day he jumped. And then my life was never the same.

HIM

I wanted to jump. I wanted to sail down that wall. To feel the wind rush through my hair, feel it against my face. Feel that at least something is real. I could feel her eyes on me, as I flew through the air. But I didn’t care. Who was she to me? I didn’t know her. I’d probably never see her again, except in the halls. I didn’t care. I just wanted to feel that moment of freedom. Feel that rush. Because that’s all that mattered. That’s all I had. My life wasn’t really easy. People were always looking at me for answers. Problem was, I had none. My parents were always on me about taking care of my siblings. But I never wanted to. My brother was eight years younger than me, and it was hard to be around him. He looked up to me, and tried to do everything that I did, but he couldn’t. He was too young. So he just ended up being annoying. And my sister was three years younger than he was. And she was so spoilt by my mother, that it made me sick to even look at her. You try looking after those two. It was hell. At school, I kept to myself. I didn’t like being around people, they made me uneasy. I’d rather be by myself, and not be judged, than be around



people who judge me for every move I make. It was simpler to be alone than being with other people. That was a fact. Another fact was that people only caused pain. One last fact? I was going to be alone forever. I knew that, and I had accepted that. For me, people only wanted something from me. And they were nice to me, until they got what they wanted. And then they dropped me, broke me, abandoned me. People never failed to show me how worthless they thought I was. So, I would stay alone. Forever. Until I met her. Until I jumped.

I landed gracefully, I always do. That isn't boasting, it's the truth. I somehow had the ability to spread my weight around my feet, to keep my balance when I finally touched solid ground again. Like a cat. I began to slowly walk away. I thought I heard her crying, but I didn't turn around to look. I still didn't care. I had caught a glimpse of her face before I jumped. It was only a split second, but from that glance, I gathered three things. One, she was older than me. Two, she was unlike anyone I had ever seen, and three, she was beautiful.

That night was my turn to babysit the children. I was distracted the entire night, so needless to say, the house was a mess when my parents got home. I was grounded, got yelled at, was forbidden to use my cell phone for the rest of the week. Not that that was a problem, considering the only reason I really had it was to give my parents a way to contact me. I didn't use it.

As I sat in my room that night, I only thought about her. The way her hair fell into her face. The way I knew she was there, even though she had never said a word to me. The way her eyes widened when she realized I would jump. Brown eyes, outlined in black looked at me before I jumped. The only time I had really looked at her, she had seen right through me. Her look haunted me for the rest of the night. I couldn't stop thinking about her. I just didn't know why.

## HER

I couldn't stop thinking about him. The way he had jumped. I sat in my room that night, and strummed my guitar. I let the music wash over me, heal me, make me forget. But I couldn't. It's strange, how he haunted me. Everywhere I looked, I imagined that I saw him. The tall, dark figure with a mess of black hair. He was behind me in the mirror when I brushed my hair. He was behind the door when I brushed my teeth. He was hiding in the shadows when I went to sleep. Why was I seeing him? I had only seen him once. I didn't know who he was. I didn't want to know. Except that I did. More than anything, I wanted to get to know him.

I thought I was crazy. I thought I was actually going insane. It was Sunday, and I had seen him for the first time on Friday. I wanted to see him again, yet I couldn't wait until Monday. I had to go back to where we met.

It was right behind our school. Actually, it used to be part of our school, until they tore it down. A ten foot concrete block that used to be a wall until half of it collapsed. It was relatively easy to get up onto, if you knew what you were doing. It had collapsed about 8 years ago, and no one had bothered to take care of it, covered in vines, with bushes growing all around. It wasn't a dangerous place to climb up on, it was just dangerous to jump off of.

Sunday afternoon I took the public bus to my school. From there it was only a two minute walk until I reached it. It stood towering above me, intimidating me. I looked up at it, and was nearly blinded by the sun. I realized that I had no good reason for being there, and that I shouldn't have come. It was dumb. So I turned around, and that's....

## HIM

And that's when I saw her. She was standing in front of the wall. I was walking towards it. I didn't even know why I was there. I just had an urge to go back. It had been sudden, this powerful feeling that I was meant to go back. I didn't even quite understand it. I went anyway though. I kind of figured it couldn't hurt. Besides, I didn't have anything better to do anyway.

I was listening to music, with huge headphones. As I approached her, the song suddenly changed. It was now, 'Emily'. The song often haunted me, late at night. I would have nightmares, gruesome nightmares. I dreamed about seeing myself die. About seeing myself cry. About seeing my family shun me. But even in the darkest moments, someone would save me. A light would shine, and the lyric, 'There's no one in the world like Emily', would float into my head. I never understood. Until then.

HER

He was there. Why was he there? My heart suddenly started beating faster. He stood in front of me, a tall looming figure, with stunning ice blue eyes. He fixed them on me, with a gaze that made me shiver. I couldn't explain why he had such an effect on me. But I couldn't move. Even if I had wanted to run, I couldn't have. I was stuck.

'Who are you?' I asked, hoping that he could understand me through the headphones that were on his head. When he slowly took them off, I realized that he hadn't heard, so I repeated my question.

'Jake,' he said, with a voice that gave me goosebumps.

'Why did you jump'

'Why did you care?'

'I don't know.'

'You shouldn't.'

'I know. But I do. I'm Emily'

HIM

'I'm Emily'

That sentence took my breath away. Was she my light in the dark? Was she here to save me? Would she want to? Was I not going to be alone anymore? My heart started beating faster and faster in my chest. And the world seemed to spin. What did it all mean?

In the moment, I didn't know what it meant. What I did know, was that I would never scare her away. I would do all I could to keep her. To keep her around. To have her care about me. To make her love me. She was hurting as much as I was, and together we could heal each other's pain. As crazy as that sounds, I could feel that that was what was going to happen. After all, there's no one in the world like Emily.

Julia Marneris

## Fate in Faith

LOOKING DOWN THE BARREL OF THE SHOTGUN I realize I have a choice to make. “No” lets me avoid death, at least for the moment. But I’m dead if I say it anyways. God would never forgive me. It goes against everything I have learned in the past two years, going to youth group.

God loves each and every one of His children, but He does not respect traitors.

It is today, April 20, 1999. I am in the library during my lunch period to finish my Macbeth paper. I am sitting at a table with Shelby, a friend, and we’re discussing the note I wrote to her yesterday. I wrote that I would do anything for God, that I want to live completely for Him. It would be scary but worth it.

It is 1997, I am fifteen years old. Today is my first day in high school. I had finally convinced my parents to let me transfer here. I begged them for months and months, pleading to be changed so that I could help people the way that God helped me. Because I wanted to share with other people the same discovery that I had found in God that I gained on March 8<sup>th</sup>. My turning point.

I am fourteen years old. The beginning of the end. The darkest time in my life. I remember writing letters to my best friend Mona, talking

about all of the drugs we had been doing, the séances we had been trying, and joking about killing my parents. But my mom found one of Mona's replies to me, the one that read:

*"Well then Cassie, you shouldn't let your parents keep harassing you the way that they are. You need a life too, they can't CONTROL you. This needs to stop now. They've gotten to the point where you can't even breathe without them questioning you! I think your idea of killing them seems pretty reasonable. I liked the idea you came up with the other day, when you said that we should just buy rat poison and slip it into their morning coffee. Hababa, or maybe we can call up some evil demons' spirits and get them to do it for us ..."*

And that's when they started ruining my life. Obviously I wouldn't have actually killed them, but they took away all of my freedom! They wouldn't let me leave the house, or see any of my friends. They wouldn't even let me call Mona, or else there would have been a restraining order set against her. Oh, and then they put me into a Christian private school. Like that would help. But I guess I understand now that they were doing it to help me. I was a wreck. I joined a youth group at church, and made some friends. March 8<sup>th</sup> changed my life. I went from that tortured girl into an inspired one with just one song at a campfire on a trip with the group. The song changed my life, and transformed me into the girl that I am today.

After some major begging, I was allowed on a weekend trip down to Westcliffe with my church group where we went to a youth group conference. My new friend Allie was the one who finally convinced my family that I should go on this trip; that it would be very beneficial to my recovery. So I packed my bags and set out on the two hour drive down to Horn Creek. When I got there I thought it was a big mistake. I only wanted to go to get away from my family for a while, but being around all of these religious kids wasn't much better. But that first night, as we sat

around the campfire, people started singing songs. When the guitar was passed to one girl, Sarah, and she started to sing, nothing else around me mattered. I felt like she was singing directly to me, and I don't even know what the lyrics were, but the way they were sung to the music just felt so powerfully magical; I will never forget that moment.

I am five years old. We had taken a family vacation to Disney World, the best day in any child's life. My mom had bought me a new dress for the trip, yellow with sequins just like Belle wore in *Beauty and the Beast*. And our room looked out over the park, and we could see Cinderella's Castle. I longed to live in the park forever, carefree, in Cinderella's Castle, the icon of my vacation. If I could have just been Cinderella; with all of her beauty and riches. And her perfect prince. She had all of her animals helping her with her chores, it all seemed so magical. Now, seventeen, I wish that my wish had come true; all of the enchantment, and flawlessness of Cinderella and her romantic Castle, once she is saved by the prince and never has to see her evil stepmother again...

I am twelve years old. It's my birthday party, celebrating my last year as a child before I become a teenager. But daddy says I'll always be his little girl. Mom kisses me on top of the head, and I squirm away.

"What's wrong sweetheart?" she asks. I quickly avert my eyes. I don't want to talk to her. She wouldn't let me have Mona my best friend over for my birthday, even though she's the only person I would actually want to talk to. My birthday is the one day of the year I should be happy, and sitting around with my family talking about how much I've grown up is not making me happy. At least I got a cat for my birthday, someone who can keep me company in this mess of a night. The cake is brought out, and in one swift blow, the candles snuff out. Now I can't remember my wish, but I know it was something worthwhile, I never wasted my

wish on something meaningless or impossible. As the last of the smoke billows away, I open my eyes, and a smile touches my lips.

I am seventeen years old. It is April 19<sup>th</sup>, and I am up late finishing my English homework on Macbeth. I hate this play; it's so angry and malicious. I hate all of this sinister and death-oriented stuff. Lady Macbeth makes me feel sick every time she comes in a scene, especially the scene where she calls upon the demons; that goes against what I believe in now so completely. I would rather be reading something else by Shakespeare; I love his work, but not when it is this depressing and with so much devil worship. But I have to do the work. Maybe I can finish it tomorrow at lunch in the library, before I have to hand it in fourth period...

As we are talking about this, Seth and his friends walk in to study, just like they do every other day. Right after them, Mrs. Nielsen comes running in, saying that there are boys in the hall with guns.

"Senior prank. They're just paintballs," Seth jokes. But Mrs. Nielsen is pressuring us to get under tables, and no one is listening. Then a boy walks in with blood stains on his shoulder, and we all dive under the tables. I see the boy crumple to the floor, not too far from the doorway. In walk two seniors, fierce smiles on their faces. I start to pray out loud, for God to save me, get me out of this chaos.

It is the morning of April 20<sup>th</sup>, and I am rushing to get to school. My mom is lecturing me about all of the chores I have to do before school, and I tell her they will be done when I get home. The cat can clean himself until 3:00. I grab a quick breakfast and run out the door.

"Bye Cass, I love you," my mom yells after me.

"Love you too mom." I run to school, which is only about a hundred yards away.

A chair beside the desk I am under is kicked aside.



“Peek-a-boo,” one of them smirks, sticking his head under the table. I continue to pray, louder. He pulls me out from under the desk.

“Do you believe in God?” he asks me. I can see the insanity filling his eyes. I contemplate the answer...

I have made my decision, it was there all along. I open my eyes.

I say: “Yes.”

He asks: “Why?”

He does not let me respond, he pulls the trigger.

Christine Wood

## Forgotten

I HAVE A FEAR OF BEING FORGOTTEN. I constantly remind my friends and family members where I am at all times, so if they need to locate me or pick me up, they will know where to find me. I provide the same courtesy back, I always remember where everyone is, and if I ever am responsible for picking up someone, I always remember and arrive on time. Always.

My fear of being forgotten began when I was young, seven years old. My father forgot me at Wal-Mart. He drove all the way home before he realized that he put all his shopping bags in his car, but missed his child. I stood at the entrance of Wal-Mart crying, until the manger came and collected me and brought me to Guest Relations. She called for my dad over the speaker system. He didn't come. She called again, and again, and again. They were about to call the police when my father ran through the front doors screaming my name, "Clara! CLARA!" He ran right past Guest Relations down the aisle. I assume he figured he would be able to find me faster if he searched the aisles, instead of asking a manager if I was in the store. The manager had a brain, and went back on the speaker system, "A forgotten daughter, Clara, can be found at Guest Relations."

My dad bolted back down the aisle and slammed into the desk and fell over. He quickly stood back up, grabbed me off the counter and squeezed me in his arms and started to cry. I was too furious at him and traumatized to say anything. I gave him the silent treatment all the way home. I would have gone for the whole day, but I was thirsty and wanted water, and the only way I could get it was through my father.

From that day on I constantly remind everyone where I am throughout my day.

Today though it seems my reminders have failed me. My mother has forgotten me at school. My field trip returned at five, it is now five-fifty. She better have a good reason for this, like being held at gunpoint or the engine of her car being stolen.

I do not know how she could have forgotten; I must have given her three reminders this morning. When she came to wake me up, the first thing I said, before I opened my eyes was, “I am going on a field trip today and you have to pick me up from school at five.”

By the time I opened my eyes I saw the back of my mother leaving my room. I heard her grumble “Good morning to you too.”

When I finished getting ready I headed to the kitchen for breakfast. I sat down at my kitchen table and my mom handed me a bowl of porridge. “Mom, you make the most delicious porridge, nice and creamy. And don’t forget to pick me up from school at five o’clock tonight.” I even put a big smile on my face so my mother would know I was being sincere. Her thanks for the compliment was to stare back at me with a blank face.

When she was pulling up to the school this morning I turned to her and reminded her again, “Bye Mom. Don’t forget, five o’clock. I’ll be waiting.” I opened up my car door, hopped out, slammed the door, smiling back at my mother to see a look of annoyance, and headed toward

the entrance of the high school. Even with all the constant reminders, she still forgot.

I am sitting on the front step of my school, leaning against the railing, staring down the road waiting for my mom's blue, ten year old Volkswagen to come speeding around the corner.

I can put up with the waiting, but this is getting awkward. My science teacher, Mr. Ruby, is leaning against the front door a few meters behind me. Mr. Ruby is a strange man. I assume he is in his mid-thirties, there is no wedding ring on his finger, and he makes really bad jokes. But to be fair, he has really great dark brown curly hair. He is waiting just as eagerly for me to be picked up so he can go home. It has been twenty minutes since the last kid was picked up, leaving Mr. Ruby and me alone.

We have yet to say a word to each other.

I hear a slow drag of feet across the pavement. I glance over my shoulder, pushing my bangs out of my eyes, to see Mr. Ruby slowing walking toward me, a bit unsure of himself. Once he sees me staring at him he picks up a normal pace and comes and sits on the steps beside me. He glances at the corner I have been staring at, and turns back to me and asks, "Have you tried phoning home?"

What a stupid question, of course I phoned home. After five minutes of waiting I called my mom at work. She didn't pick up. I phoned my house. No one picked up. "Yeah." I reply, "No one picked up. My mom is probably stuck in traffic. She works a half an hour away." I smile feebly.

"Are you hungry? I have an apple in my bag."

I am starving, but it would be too weird taking food from a teacher. "No, it's okay. I'm not hungry. I ate the other half of my sandwich on the bus."

And at that precise moment, my stomach grumbles. It isn't quiet either so that I could cover it up somehow. It sounds like a thunderstorm in my stomach, so loud the neighborhood could hear it. I blush. Mr. Ruby has caught me lying.

"Here, eat it." He takes the apple from his briefcase and hands it to me.

"Aren't you hungry? Don't you want to eat it?"

He shakes his head. "Thanks."

I stare hungrily down at the dark red, delicious apple. I can feel the saliva filling my mouth. I bring the apple to my lips and take a bite. Crunch. The perfect sound for a perfect red apple. I can taste the sweet juices seep out of the apple as I chew it to mush. Swallow. Heaven.

I eagerly devour the rest of the apple, hardly taking breaths between bites. I get to the core of the apple, stare at it contemplating whether or not I should eat it. I am starving after all. I stand up and chuck it across the front lawn.

The apple core is in mid air when I remember Mr. Ruby sitting beside me. I sit back down, fix my bangs, and look at Mr. Ruby and worry about what he might say.

He smiles at me, "If that was a wrapper of a candy bar I would have made you go pick it up and throw it in the trash. But it is biodegradable so..."

I look down at my feet, happy that Mr. Ruby isn't appalled by me. I turn my head and look at the corner again, still no Mother. I look at my watch. Six o'clock. It has been an hour.

"What time is it?"

"Six."

"Oh. It's getting late."

“I’m sure my mom won’t be much longer.” Where is my mother? An hour late. This is unusual.

We sit in silence for another minute.

“I could drive you home.”

My jaw drops, my eyes bug out of my head. There is no way I can let a teacher drive me home. I compose myself to reply. “Um... well...ah...” Is that even legal? There must be a law that doesn’t allow teachers to drive students home. Then he would know where I live. He could personally drop off tests to my parents when I fail because he knows where I live. But how am I supposed to get home? And I need nourishment. I am about to die from starvation, and an apple can only fill me for so long. “I...I, I guess.”

He grabs his brief case, stands up, walks down the steps and heads for the teacher parking lot at the side of the school. I begin to follow. Dragging my feet, walking as slowly as possible, giving my mom as many moments more to get to the school.

I glance over at Mr. Ruby and see he is putting his brief case in the trunk of his car. I glance at the corner once more. No Mom. I keep walking. I get to the passenger door, open it. I glance at the corner. Look at the passenger seat. Glance at the corner. Put my left foot inside the car. Glance at the corner. I sit down, slowly placing my hand on the door handle.

A ten year old, blue Volkswagen speeds around the corner and skids into the parking lot. I bolt out of Mr. Ruby’s car and race over to my mom. “Thanks anyway, Mr. Ruby,” I shout over my shoulder.

I open the car door of the Volkswagen to hear the familiar creaking. I sit down on the comfortable, worn leather seat, place my feet on the mud stained carpet.

I start to turn my head, composing the meanest face possible, so my mother will know I am angry.

My eyes finally meet my mother's and my angry face slips away. Her hair is not in the same neat ponytail it usually is in, there are strands of hair fallen out of it. Her eyes are red and puffy, there are light black streaks running down her cheeks. Her hands are slightly shaking. All my anger disappears.

"Thanks for picking me up, Mom."

We sit in silence. My mom looks at me, waiting.

"You're welcome," she whispers.

She pulls out of the school parking lot and starts driving home.

The ride home with my mother is awkward. We sat in silence the whole way home. I didn't know what to say to her, she said nothing to me. I was afraid to ask her what was wrong because I didn't want her to start to cry, I wouldn't know how to handle that. I have only ever seen my mom cry during movies or when someone else is crying around her so she feels compelled to cry.

When we pulled onto the driveway I saw my dad's car sitting there. He's already home. And if he is already home why didn't he come and pick me up? He is one lazy father if he made Mom come and get me when she is falling apart.

I walked inside my house and walked straight to Dad to say hello, ask him how his day was. But before I got the chance to even open my mouth he shooed my brother and me upstairs so he and my mother could have "a talk". So that is where I am now. I am lying on my bed covered in sheets decorated with large pink flowers, staring at my bright pink walls.

I am supposed to get my room redecorated soon, and it is about time too. Mom said as soon as she gets her bonus she has been waiting for from work we can pick out paint colours and start to look at new beds.

My little brother Robbie enters my room with a stack of board games in his hands. “I couldn’t find Life, so I brought Clue, Monopoly, Guess Who, and Scrabble.”

“Monopoly.” I choose this one because I know I will win.

And I was right. After ten minutes of playing the game I win. Robbie is awful at managing his money. Somehow he finds a way to spend it all before the game starts.

Robbie starts setting up Scrabble while I put the Monopoly in the closet. I hear some grumbles from Dad and sobs from Mom in the kitchen below. Mom is still crying. This is making me nervous.

I come back into my room, plop myself on the floor and lean against my bed. I start to arrange my letters, trying to find words that will give me lots of points. “What do you think Mom and Dad are talking about?” Robbie asks.

“I don’t know. You being an awful child?”

Robbie mumbles something under his breath, probably about hating me, but I get a kick out of teasing him.

Robbie goes first and spells the word “hate.” I follow with the word “hippo.” Robbie follows cleverly with the word “you.” “Okay, Robbie,” I say. “I got the message. Let’s play a real game of Scrabble.”

I have always wanted to play a challenging game of Scrabble, showing my true intelligence through the difficult words I spell. But neither Robbie nor I can spell anything that is more than five letters long so the game ends quickly.

This time Robbie puts Scrabble away and when he returns we just sit in my room. I lie on my bed and Robbie lies on the floor. Neither of us say nor do anything. We are listening intently to the noises below, trying



to decipher what our parents are saying. I start to lose my concentration and drift off to sleep.

I wake up twenty minutes later to a quite tap on the door. “Clara? Robbie? Your mother and I are done talking. You can come out now.”

Robbie bolts out of the room right past Dad. He doesn’t say hello or inquire about Mom. He is probably desperate to go watch TV.

“Hey Dad. What’s wrong with Mom?” I ask

“She’s on her way up to talk to you, you can ask her.” My dad responds, and turns to leave the room.

Two minutes later Mom is knocking at my door. “Hey sweetie, can I come in?”

“Yeah. Come on in.”

My mom’s eyes are still puffy and red but she has washed all the makeup off her face. She has let her hair down out of her usual ponytail, and has changed into black sweatpants and a blue sweater.

“Are you going to tell me what happened, Mom?”

“Let’s not worry your pretty little head about the details of my day.”

“Come on Mom. You were an hour late picking me up from school. You’ve never been an hour late. And I want to know what happens in your life. You know what happens in mine. And I’m not so self centered to not want to listen to your problems.”

“All right, fine.”

We sit in silence for a minute. I wait for Mom as she organizes her thoughts.

“Clara,” she begins, “I am extremely sorry for being so late to pick you up. I didn’t forget about you but it was in an important meeting with my boss that I just couldn’t leave.”

She ends there. I stare at her, signaling her to continue on, I can see the reluctance in her eyes.

“To get right to the point, I was fired from my job.” She inhales and exhales slowly before she continues on.

“Supposedly I was not performing at high enough standards. I knew the presentation I did yesterday at a meeting did not go as I hoped, it was actually terrible, but I thought I would just be scolded for that. I didn’t realize that I have been performing at low standards for the past five months. A little notice would have been nice. Like ‘Hey Carol, you are slipping in your tasks, try to pick it up a bit.’ But instead my boss decided to fire me today. It was completely unexpected. I’m sorry honey. I would have been on time but my boss called me into his office at four-thirty, right when I was about to leave to get you, and didn’t excuse me until quarter after five. And then I got stuck in traffic. The whole day has been a mess.”

I see the tears start to well in my mom’s eyes. She starts to wipe them away before they have a chance to roll down her face. I don’t know what to do, so I just hug her, and she hugs me back. I hear quiet sobs come from her, she can’t hold back the tears any longer.

Wait a minute. If Mom got fired today, would she still get her bonus?

“Mom, even though you’re fired you still get that bonus you have been waiting for, right?”

“No sweetie. My performance level was poor so no bonus for me.”

“Aw man. Now I can’t get my room redone. How am I supposed to bring my friends in to this bedroom that has been decorated for an eight year old? What if I get a boyfriend? He can’t come in here. My life sucks.”

I look at my mom and she has a small smile on her face. “I thought you told me that you’re not completely self-centered any more.”

“Oh, right. Your life sucks too, Mom.”

Through her sniffles and sobs she lets out a small giggle. I can take credit for brightening my mom’s day that has otherwise been covered by clouds. And thinking about clouds triggers another thunderstorm in my stomach.

“Come on, Clara, let’s go make some dinner, you must be starving,” my mom says.

“I am. The last thing I ate was Mr. Ruby’s apple. I definitely need some nourishment. “

I get off my bed and help my mom up. We leave my room and head for the kitchen.

“And Mom, this was a one time thing right? You won’t be late picking me up again?”

“It looks like you handled being forgotten just fine. It’s a good learning experience.”

“But it won’t happen again, right?”

“We’ll see.”

I freeze at the top of the stairs, fear of being left alone with another teacher. The thought doesn’t seem to bother Mom. She keeps walking to the kitchen, focusing on her own problems.

Kat Milcke

## Horst and Eva, 1956

“AND THIS PIECE SEEMS TO BE from the mid 1880s, a gold plated rim, a beautiful make. Hand-crafted, the blue would have been painted on by hand. I would price it tentatively at around €90 per plate. Congratulations, you have a real gem on your hands.” The TV blares in front of us, as my granddaughter and I sit in the living room. She stares at the screen, very bored. She is only watching this to appease her grandmother.

“Essen!” Eva calls from the kitchen. Eva my wife since 1956. As I sit across from her at the old, solid dark oak table, I still remember clear as day, that Friday morning when we got married. It was very rushed, We hadn’t had much time to plan it. We had so little money, we had just moved from East to West Germany. It wasn’t technically legal at that time, so we couldn’t take much over the border. We had just brought our necessities, a toothbrush for each of us, a few clothes, and a little money. We were living in our first apartment, and it was *cold*. The walls were thin, and we didn’t have enough money at that point to afford a proper heater.

Our wedding party was just us two and a close friend as witness, at the Standest Amt, which wasn’t very traditional, but we didn’t need it to be. We were so deeply in love that all we really needed was each other. And fifty-eight years later, here we are. Still in love, the love of a couple

old in marriage. Sitting at the dinner table, just her, my son, my granddaughter and me. Rare occasion, since both my son and his daughter live in Canada, so very far away from this very small town in the south of Germany. I look at my son, and think how proud I was of him.

He lives in Canada because of his job. He originally started out by working at Siemens, a multi-national conglomerate today. The same company where I found my first job, right after I got back from the war. I got back a year late: a prisoner of war first in America and then in France. That is how I had met my present best friend, Rudolf. We met as we were getting aboard the train in Leipzig to go to training camps, and met again in the prison. Life is ironic, is it not?

Meanwhile, my son has switched companies over the years, and then decided to permanently live in Canada. After all, he had found the love of his life there. He now lives with his new wife, and her daughter, and his daughter. The same daughter that is now sitting across the table from me. She is not exactly what I had pictured my granddaughter to be like. Her hair is multicoloured, to say the least, and she has a hole in her lip that shouldn't be there. Yet, she works hard. She is now in university studying to be a vet. She works a few jobs in order to support herself through University. She is dating a guy that I have only heard about. In the tales she tells, he is charming. Her father approves, I think.

As the meal goes on, we converse. My granddaughter talks about school, how she is halfway to her goal. My son talks about the trip he has planned – he wants to travel to Vancouver with his wife. Eva talks about her retirement home plans. She has wanted to move into the retirement home nearby for ten years now, yet has always found a reason to stay in the apartment. I understand, we have lived here for nearly fifty years.

It is a beautiful apartment. Very spacious, with quite a few windows. Here is the entrance foyer, which passes into the kitchen if you

turn left. Here also is my bookshelf , with all the artefacts I collected over the years. Pieces of shrapnel from the war, and many, many books I brought back from my trip to America. Eva added many things too, after it all happened. If you turn right, there is the bathroom, the only one in the apartment. Straight ahead, there is the living room, full of light, and windows opening on the balcony. My balcony: I may , sit there for hours on end, looking down into the busy street. My son calls it ‘spying on the neighbours’. I guess I do. I see Frau Holz leaving her apartment every day at 1:04 sharp, to catch the 1:07 bus. She has not failed me once in the past twenty-eight years. I sit there every day, now. The rest of the apartment consists of the spare bedroom, which used to be my son’s room and our bedroom.

My son’s bedroom still has the little bed, the one that he needed to grow into when we first got it. I remember he was so little, that when he fell asleep, he was curled up into a little ball. He looked so small. So frail. So vulnerable. He always slept with his bunny. He had grown into the bed of course, and lost the bunny. In the end he was too big for the bed, and his feet hung over the side a little. He somewhen figured out that sleeping diagonally would give him more room.

Our bedroom is still painted white. There’s is a border all round of wallpaper, all pink roses, under the cornice. If you sit on the bed, you can still see the top left corner where it isn’t quite even. The ladder wasn’t long enough to reach , and I had to do it on my tip toes. I slipped, in the corner, after Eva startled me. I suppose she has never had the heart to fix it. In the middle of the north wall, across from the windows, is the bed. Lying next to her so warm. In the cold winter nights, I curled around her. My own little oven.

Last is the dining room. It is too small, I confess, too cramped, like some rooms are, but has a great view of the town. You can see all the

way to the little church where my granddaughter was baptized twenty-two years ago. A beautiful ceremony, I stood behind Eva, who sat right in the first row. Her eyes shone with tears, she was so proud. After all, it was her first, and only, real grandchild.

I get up from the table to go into the living room. I want to sit on the balcony for a while, for it is already 12:58. But as I go into the hall, I feel something is wrong. I can't quite explain it. When I look up though, I see a slight fog. Very thin, almost invisible visible. A slight smell of smoke. What of it, though? Maybe Eva left the balcony windows open, and someone underneath us is smoking. I step to the balcony. Ah, the windows are closed. Something is wrong. I rush into the kitchen, and see a pot of potatoes is burning, the element is cherry red. Eva forgets sometimes.

I promised Eva I would watch over her always. She didn't believe me, always a little cynical. I never break promises though. Here I still am. Watching over her. I just hopes she knows.

The potatoes are about to catch fire. To warn them, I decide to knock something over. Sometimes, if I concentrate hard enough, I can almost touch something. The best bet is the silver vase on the bookshelf. It won't break. I concentrate with all my might, what would it feel like to touch the vase, to feel the cold, smooth silver underneath my fingertip, to run a fingertip over the engraving that reads 'Horst & Eva, 1956'. How it would feel to be able to tip it over with a fingertip. My eyes screw shut, and I concentrate. My finger feels very cold, and I can almost feel the metal. The silver vase clashes on the floor. Their conversation stops. Eva has been talking about the meals in the retirement home. My son rushes over immediately sees and smells the smoke, and hastens to take the pot off the stove.

“That was lucky,” he murmurs, picking up the vase. I follow him back into the dining room.

“Your wedding vase fell over. A bit of luck. You forgot the potatoes on the stove. They were about to catch fire. Real lucky, I tell you’

“That is lucky. You know, your father always took care of the potatoes. When...”

“When he was still with us?” my granddaughter of the rainbow hair asks.

“Yes. The potatoes were dad’s specialty. The meat was mine and the salad Grandma’s.”

“I wish your father were here,” my Eva said to her son. She gazes with longing out the window, out onto the sky line, but also onto the little balcony, onto the little chair.

“Me too,” say the young lady who has matured so much.

“Me three,” says my son, my son I am so endlessly proud of, making the girls chuckle.

But I am always here.



Abigel Lemak

## Hotel Lobby

AS SHE SAT IN THE FRONT LOBBY of the Gellert Hotel waiting for her father, the young woman inspected her hands. They felt different, removed from her body. As she wiggled her fingers and felt the texture of her skin, her hands felt detached. They couldn't possibly belong to her. Clumsy hands, the kind of clumsy she could usually predict, often control. In her lap she saw two hands, finger long and slender, elegant looking in their poise. Had her hands grown up, leaving the rest of her behind? She failed to notice the rest of herself. Her nails had grown out long since she had stopped biting them and now gleamed of chipped purple polish. She stared at her hands.

The ding of the elevator, people piling in and piling out. Almost a year had passed since she had last—She sat in the rear of the lobby, partially hidden by the floral centerpiece, flowers that tickled her allergies. Give herself enough time, ready herself. She sneezed, muffling the sound in her arm.

Beginning to stick to the black leather where the skirt had moved, her calf and lower thigh damp with sweat. Her shirt clung to her skin, she hadn't quite adjusted to the warm weather. Magnified, the sun shone through the stained windows as the sun's heat seeped through the doors. Lingering on the skin of the crowd. People kept piling in and piling out, tightening the air in the room. She reached into her bag and pulled out a bottled water. Empty. Where had it all gone—she sighed. Looked around the room, searching. Her eyes quickly darted to the front of the lobby looking for the time. Then she remembered she was wearing the watch her father had given before she left for school. She stared at it. Forgetting how to read time, lulled by the ticking of thin black hands dictating the motion of time. She was early, as usual, and he would probably be late.

She had been in Budapest for almost a year now, studying history and architecture not quite sure what to do with herself. Unwilling to return home, waiting to grow up. Her father had decided to come and visit today and have lunch, as he was already on his way to Germany for business. Though she emailed and called her mother from time to time she had somehow managed to lose touch with her father. Nervous about this whole father-daughter lunch meet—more like a job interview if anything. Does he approve of life in Hungary? She gets up, peeling herself off of the seat. Looking up, as people force their way onto the crammed elevator as others rush to get out—a man emerges.

She did not have to see his face to know who he was, he held himself in quiet defiance as he walked. Slight waver in each step. A shaky hand ran through his silvered hair then readjusted his glasses, looking around the room—his eyes passed over her. She stood, waiting for him to realize. Finally their eyes met, he smiled.

Sunday mornings growing up, he took her for breakfast. She sat across from him in the restaurant. That place had become their usual place

for breakfast whenever they felt the need to let her mother sleep in. Her father always got the same thing, two eggs over-easy with a side of bacon and sausages buried in potato wedges chased with a cup of coffee, black. She on the other hand made it a point to always try something new, that day was scrambled eggs with buttered toast and jam with a cool glass of orange juice; the blueberry pancakes would be taken home for her mother to enjoy. On most Sunday mornings they would just sit there, stuffing themselves happily, watching people pass by, listen to others as they take their orders, wondering what their lives must be like. Occasionally glancing at one another, they share a smile. It was his smile, that's what she loved most about her father. His wonderful ability to make her smile, her mother smile and through them it would seem the entire world.

He crossed the lobby, the smile pulled over nicotine stained teeth. Eyes milky and opaque. It was him, walking with a slight limp, coming to greet her—but not quite the same. Where had all of those wrinkles come from? She felt the leather-like texture of his skin as he leaned in to give her a quick kiss on the cheek. The sandpaper quality of his beard and the lack of strength in his embrace. She felt a pang deep within her stomach, a sudden nausea, an uncomfortable lurch. The same light now turned his skin even more transparent, not quite there. She reached out and held him close for a moment longer, then pulling away. A smile played on her lips that convinced neither of them.

He knew what the wide-eyed look on her face meant, though his impression of her was more of awe. The two stood there for a moment, just staring at each other, wondering if the other was really there, running through countless memories of breakfast, birthdays and camping trips. With a short squeeze of her shoulder he took her hand as they once had, so long ago it now seemed, and led her out into the light onto the bustle of the streets, searching for a place to eat. They found a café nearby and

took their coffee, tea and biscuits outside. She noticed the waver in his hand as he raised the cup of tea to his lips. She saw the dullness in his eyes as he tried to meet her gaze. He was tired, the circles under his eyes more pronounced from the hollowness under his brow. Skin seemed to clench to his frame as lines formed, sketching a map on his face. She raised her hand and gently traced the one from his eyes to his chin. He looked up, a sad smile. Took her hand from his face and held it to his lips. She stared at their hands. Her flushed skin against his grey hand. She held on tightly.

Reem Taher

## Jules

THE GIRL IS SITTING; a man beside her asks if she is okay, but the girl doesn't answer him. He wraps a blanket around her. People surround her. People crowd the place she was found. There is a loud noise in the background, louder and louder. Someone keeps talking to her, but again, she ignores her. She couldn't have answered her anyways. The sound coming out of her mouth sounds like nonsense to her. She can't make out anything. The girl stares at the wreck in front of her. About five people are around it trying to get into the passenger's side of the wrecked car.

At the wreck, there are two ambulances, three police cars, and a fire truck. Firemen come but there is no fire. Waiting for fire to appear out of nowhere.

The girl scrunches her eyebrows. Someone is screaming a name over and over again. The sound of sirens grows louder and louder. The girl starts to cry. A woman in a uniform asks her if she is okay.

"I'm all right... I have a headache."

"You have more than a headache. You have a concussion," the woman says.

The girl grabs the back of her head and she feels it throbbing.

"Is she okay?" the girl asks the woman.

“I don’t know yet. It doesn’t look good, though.”

The girl weeps. She shrugs the blanket off of her. The girl gets out of the ambulance. The woman tries to stop her. The girl tells her she is fine. The girl walks towards the wrecked car and sees a man in a uniform pull another girl out.

They place the other girl on a gurney and load her into the other ambulance carefully. Her head starts hurting more and a pain in her right shoulder torments her. The girl takes her left hand and places it on the right side of her head and feels something moist. The girl’s hand is red when she removes it. Her eyes widen and the woman from the ambulance takes her into the ambulance and they send the girl to the hospital.

The girl returns from the emergency room with eighteen stitches in her head, six over her right knee cap, and four in her right shoulder. The girl also has an arm sling, she broke her collarbone. She thinks about how insignificant her injuries are compared to the injuries Jules has.

The girl is sitting in a white room. The TV is on, but she is paying no attention to the nonsense on the show. The girl keeps staring at the beige metal door, hoping someone will open it to tell her something about Jules. She is also getting hungry. She hears the sound of a latch opening and the metal door swings in. A hefty man walks in carrying a maroon tray with food on it. The girl smiles at him and he smiles back. Her smile fades quickly and she stops the man from leaving the room.

“Wait!” The girl calls out. “Do you know anything about my friend Jules?”

“No, I’m sorry. I can call one of the doctors for you, though,”

“Can you, please? That would be so nice of you,” the girl begs.

He nods and leaves the girl’s room. *Well, it’s not my room. In fact, it’s not anybody’s room. It’s just a room they put me in to focus on Jules.*

A doctor opens the door. The woman is Indian.

“Hello, you must be Kylie.” The woman has a British accent. The girl asks her about Jules. The woman’s smile fades. “Unfortunately she’s not doing so well...”

The girl begins crying. She doesn’t understand how Jules and she got into this situation in the first place.

She can’t remember much. The girl lies in her bed eating her pudding as she tries to remember the events. The girl’s eyebrows scrunch together; she looks like she is in pain. The girl closes her eyes.

It was raining. The windshield wipers were sliding back and forth as fast as they could. The car’s high beams were on, but they weren’t enough. She could barely make out the names of the streets. The girl was distracted by the music. It made her drive faster than she should have been given the weather conditions. She was singing along.

*Dream when you're feeling blue.*

*Dream, that's the thing to do.*

*Just watch the smoke rings rise in the air,*

*You'll find your share of memories there.*

*So, dream when the day is through.*

*Dream and they might come true.*

*Things never are as bad as they seem*

*So dream, dream, dream*

There was the sound of crunching metal and glass breaking. The girl’s camera hit her head and her cell phone flew to the other side of the car. Her head jerked violently towards the window on her left and her head broke the glass. There was a pedestrian screaming and running out of the way so as not to be hit by the car. Finally, there was the sound of

the walking signal fitting and a loud horn blasting through the once silent street.

The girl's mother tells her to see her physician today. Her mother thinks the best thing to do is to do as much as possible with her so she couldn't dwell in the past. The girl has no energy to leave her house, but her mother insists she go see her doctor.

The girl is sitting in her mother's car while thinking. *I killed someone. I shouldn't be allowed on the road.*

But the girl's mother isn't having any of this. "It's not your fault, Kylie!"

"Mom, I wasn't watching the road! I killed my best friend!" The girl begins to cry. "How can you think everything is going to be okay?!"

The girl sobs. Her mother pulls into the nearest parking lot, turns off the engine, and hugs her tightly. She presses her daughter's torso into hers. She kisses the top of her daughter's head.

She feels guilty for what she had done. If she had waited until there was a red light or pedestrians, or something, she could've avoided this whole disaster.

When the girl woke up that morning, she wanted to tell Jules about the worst nightmare she ever had. She had a nightmare that Jules died.

The girl is sitting in the physician's office waiting for the doctor to come in. The girl's mother leaves to pick up her sister from her play date. Her mom goes on with life even when Jules is dead.

A man walks into the room. She calls him her uncle. They both know he isn't. The man is the girl's father's friend and has been since both men were boys in high school struggling to keep themselves interested in studying. The man is wearing a white coat over a brown shirt and black



pants. The man closes the door behind him, sits at his desk and writes something down. He looks up and smiles.

“Hi, Kylie.”

“Hi, Uncle Jonathon.”

“How have you been feeling?” the man asks. He knows the answer before she replies.

The girl hesitates to answer. She isn’t sure how she feels. “Pretty crappy.” *That seems appropriate...*

“How intense have your headaches been?”

“They’re pretty bad.” She rubs her forehead. The man then asks her if she remembers the car accident clearly. If this session goes quickly he can join his wife at a restaurant. The girl scrunches her eyebrows. She tries to remember that night in July and tells him what she can only recall, which is very little.

“Have you been having loss of memory lately, Kylie?” the man asks. Again, he already knew the answer. The girl combs her hair with her fingers, a habit she can’t break.

“Yeah,” the girl softly replies with a hoarse voice. The girl clears her throat. “It’s like as if I can only remember the actual crash and me sitting in the ambulance.” It doesn’t help that her only recollection of the accident is of her colliding into her friend. The only memory she wants to forget.

“Yes, your concussion is pretty serious. But I take it that your headaches are not as painful as when you first noticed them?”

“Oh, definitely, they’ve gotten better.” The girl replies too quickly. Both the man and the girl know she is lying. Her head throbs viciously as she begins to doze off in the man’s office.

The girl wakes herself up with a jolt. The man is writing things down. The girl convinces herself that he didn’t notice.

“I’ve also...” The girl hesitates to include him. The man’s fifty-year old eyes look at the girl with concern. “I’ve also been having loss of appetite and I’m constantly crying. Is that the concussion?”

“You know, Kylie, it could be, but I have a feeling that it’s something else. Something that I can’t help you fix.”

She decides to walk home. It isn’t the smartest idea, but the girl is stubborn. *Something I can’t help you fix.* It is ringing in her head.

She tries to figure out what he said, but she already knows.

One year after the funeral, the girl returns to the cemetery. The girl carries with her a picnic blanket and calla lilies – Jules’s favourite.

The girl neatly places the blanket in front of her friend’s grave and sits down, legs crossed. She gently places the lilies in front of the stone. The wind makes the soft scent of the flowers waft.

The girl sits and looks at the stone for a while. She doesn’t know what to say at first. She finally decides to speak.

“Jules,” she starts, “next year I’ll be walking around campus rushing to get to class. I’ll probably be wearing those brown boots you hate so much! Next year I’ll be learning things about the human anatomy that I’ve never known before. I’ll also be partying a lot and doing stupid mistakes that I’ll regret the day after, but laugh about when I grow up. Sometime in the next year I’ll be dating someone I think is absolutely perfect and then cry about how imperfect he really is. Sometime in four or five years, I’ll be wearing the long black graduation gown, throwing my hat in the air in amazement that I somehow passed. I know in my future I’ll meet the perfect guy, marry him, and have children, if nothing happens to me, God forbid.” The girl stopped talking. She had to think of what to say next. After a small silence, the girl spoke softer. “I’ll be doing all these

things that everyone should be doing in their life, but you can't. I took that away from you. I'm sorry. I always will be."

The girl rises slowly. The girl grabs the blanket and begins to fold it into a square. The girl's hair blows in the wind and she combs her hair with her fingers. The grass is brown from drought, and crimps under her feet as she leaves.

Tucker McLean

## The Pond

OH HERE WE GO AGAIN; you gotta keep bringing this up don't you....

It needs to be brought up or else you'll never get around to it.

Can we just have a single morning without this please?

Well when else are we going to talk about it....

Are we even really talking anymore?

Oh that's nice, you're the innocent one right!

Marvin stirred the cereal in his bowl, soggy loops swirling in a sea of skimmed milk. He watched the loops bob over and under the surface, drowning in the wake of his forceful spoon. He tried to block out their clatter. They'd work it out. Marvin looked out the window to his right, fog under a grey sky. His parents squabbled as he left his dishes quietly in the sink and walked up the worn carpet runner of the stairs, silent as he could. In his room Marvin pushed aside most of the toys in his toy chest, digging for something, determined to find it. He found an orange compass, a plastic one, one that maybe didn't work, but for him it worked. He closed the toy chest lid and glanced out his bedroom window. Fields of goldenrod and grass as far as he could see, fog hanging in the distance, surrounding the farm. Marvin scanned the valley until he spotted the

pond, nestled between the banks of two separated fields. He grabbed the compass, the fisherman's hat resting on his desk, and made his way out into the hallway.

I can't handle this right now....

When can you handle it then? When are we going to work these issues out?

You can't just fix this, it's not that easy. You can't fix what was always broken.

Well aren't you just being terribly clichéd, you're not even willing to try.

I see no point in trying; it simply wastes more of our time.

A waste then? That's what it is?

Forcing his feet into each of his green rubber boots, Marvin grasped the brass door knob and twisted it with both hands. The door opened to a brisk wind lash. Marvin grabbed a coat from the rack beside him. He shut the door behind him, shut out the voices of his parents, and started to walk out into the field of grass swaying in the wind.

Marvin took the compass and held it out in the light, which direction would lead him to the pond. The needle swung and then lay still, pointing to Marvin's right. He shook the compass until it pointed more or less towards the direction of the pond. He couldn't see much of the surrounding mountains in the fog, there wasn't any rain yet, but it was coming, he knew it. He began to wade through the muddy field, avoiding sink holes. He jumped over a one large hole only to slip his feet into another, hidden by a tuft of grass. His boot sunk half a foot, dropped his compass a few feet ahead of him. Marvin tried to turn his body and look at his foot but he started to uncomfortably twist his leg so instead he tried

to move forward and pull his foot out. He took two large handfuls of grass and pulled with all his might, crawling forward over the ground. He heard a pop and felt his leg free, but his boot was stuck, fixed in the mud. He turned and made his way towards the hole, careful to stay on its fringes, and grabbed the boot with both hands. He pulled with all his weight but the boot was still fixed in the mud. He yanked the boot again and it sprung free, flying through the air, kicking mud and grass into the wind, and Marvin fell onto his back.

He lay on the grass then sat up to look around. He saw his boot lying a couple of feet away and reached to grasp it. He tried to stomp off the clumped mud from the bottom of the boot. He found his compass and tried to wipe the mud off the lens, smudging it. The mud dried onto the face of the compass, but Marvin used it still.

He came to the edge of the pond, surrounded by thick green tall grass and bending cat tails, unable to support their own weight. Not so large the pond was almost completely covered with algae. A bug buzzed and he swatted around his head. He saw it a few feet in front of his face, a deep blue dragonfly hovering in the breeze. His eyes followed the dragonfly as it flew around the edge of the pond. It wandered around the surface of the water aimlessly. Marvin lost track of the dragonfly as it passed through some thick weeds, he returned his attention towards the pond itself.

He moved around the border of the pond staring at its dark surface. The pond was a mystery, what lived under the surface, in its depths, he had no idea. Perhaps a giant alligator twenty feet in length or the head of some horrible sea creature, much faster than he could ever hope to be. The pond attracted him, the mystery of it. He paced around the pond, only stopping to glance up towards the sky sensing the rain to come. Looking upwards he stumbled and fell into a thicket of cat tails

losing his grip on the compass. Marvin rolled out of the thicket looking for it. He saw it sinking and it disappeared. It was gone. He turned back towards the house for help. But would he remember where the compass sank? He had to find it himself.

He took off his boots, hat and coat. He stepped into the water, through the algae. The pond deepened quickly, to his knees, then his waist. When the water level hit his shoulders his feet left the pond bottom, and he began to tread water, his feet beating against growing weeds. The water was thick and felt oddly unnatural to swim in. Marvin wanted to go back. Some animal could be swimming around below him. He thought this was where the compass had sunk. He tried to touch bottom. He would have to dive.

Diane cleaned the dishes scattered around the sink, rinsing the milk from the bowl with a sodden sponge,. From the kitchen window she could not see far into the fog. Where had Marvin got to, she had forgotten about him while she and Mark were arguing. How could she let him get to her like that? She had to keep her composure in front of Marvin, be strong on the outside at least.

The kitchen door opened. Diane spun around to see a boy plastered in grey mud weeds and grasses. He stood in the doorway staring blankly, mud running down to the floor, holding something in his hand. Diane stood there gaping. She let him simply wander off alone. She could have lost him. Marvin was shivering.

She knelt and their eyes met and she stared. She wrapped her arms around him. They embraced before the open door, wind blowing in from the fields. There were no voices to shut out.





Verse



Morgan Pulchinski

## The Guitar Man

(after Picasso, "The old guitarist")

My arms curve round the curve of memory,  
Fingers poise on strings, against your wooden skin.  
I sing to hear again their voices rise in mine,  
I strum the sounds of times before these times.

The songs of barricades, of trenches deep,  
The militia's march, the beat of boots in dirt,  
Ballads of children under the Legion's bombs  
Humming the *Asturias*, the *Internationale*.

Three ships sail forlorn on black waters:  
The cries of passengers transform to song.  
A long darkness lies upon the land,  
A long forgetting, long silenced tongues.

My curved arms bow to your wooden skin  
As you utter the sounds of fear and Spain.

Will McEachern

## Odalisque

*(after Manet's "Olympia")*

Ignoring flowers presented by her maid,  
She offers herself upon a silken shawl.  
Her pale perfumed flesh, the vivid orchid,  
The golden band on her elegant wrist.  
The black ribbon round her neck, her calm pulse.  
She lies still, waiting for this night's lover.  
Patient, dutiful, exquisite, aloof,  
She lounges. The cat stretches, yawns, and sleeps.

The door opens, he enters without a knock.  
He does not speak his name, the maid's dismissed.  
He walks around to the end of the bed,  
Her eyes follow him, watching him disrobe.  
She does not smile; he does not ask a smile.  
In silent hauteur, the cat cleans its feet.

Devin Knox  
Sestina

L'amour  
echoes  
freedom  
as ages  
bequeath  
the dawn.

To dawn  
sur l'amour.  
bequeath  
echoes  
to aged  
freedom.

Freedom  
dawns  
for all ages.  
Love's  
echo,  
I bequeath.

Bequeath  
freedom  
to echo  
A new dawn  
d'amour  
for the ages.

Ages  
bequeath  
l'amour  
for freedom  
to dawn  
in echoes.

Echoes,  
ages,  
while dawn  
can bequeath  
freedom  
pour amour.

Bequeath freedom  
to love's echoes  
before new ages dawn

Devin Knox

## A Shopping Cart in the Road

Where are you, my gin soaked lover?  
Roaming the streets with train-track arms,  
Pimping out bag ladies and collecting tin cans.  
Come home. I'll give you a roof to drink under.

This vodka. These cigarettes.  
My mind is a drunkard smoking outside a church.  
The sins I've seen. Cast stones that can't be absolved.  
How could I go back to TV dinner & the 6 o'clock news?

The call keeps cutting out on your end  
And I always hear death in that dull click.

Just don't ship me off to Betty Ford,  
I'd die in your arms but I won't die sick

The soup kitchen's closed. Motels cry 'No vacancy.'  
"How long have you been out here?" "Won't you let me in?"

Nick Fernandes

## Sonnet

*(after Massacio, "Expulsion from Eden", Brancacci Chapel)*

They've no idea where they're going, do they?  
His face covered to contain a tide of tears;  
Her mouth agape, to beseech the winds;  
Children in adult shapes, stumbling out  
From God's green eternity to the umber wastes.  
Aloft the cherub with steel conviction  
Wields the burning sword both West and East.  
They bear the first strokes of sorrow and mortal shame.

And they shall inherit the fertile earth,  
Walk bleak fields, neither compass nor craft,  
No shield of divinity, nor saving grace.  
On umber fields they make their own designs  
And so die. With every curse, a blessing,  
With every fruit, a labour; and so they begin.



Kat Milcke

## Through The Looking Glass

*(after Picasso, Girl before a Mirror, 1932)*

So like me but not me, this other me,  
My curves flattened to shadows and light.  
Her cold eyes study me, mine question hers:  
Yet she spins, I spin. She turns and I turn.  
In this other land, she occupies my place,  
My brow and eyes a reflex of the moon mask.  
If we crossed over, all gravity would shift.  
She looks up; I look up, pulled by a string.

She lives a lie, I tell the truth. How still  
Can we live like such opposites? She walks  
So I must walk. Though so I do not choose,  
She does. She chooses to look at me.  
I tell no lies. Yet all she believes is not truth.  
She turns her back on me, she walks away.



# Drama



Nick Fernandes

## Enforcers

SET: *A bar with a pool table and small tables with chairs. There is an entrance and exit through the audience.*

HAROLD: *A Mob enforcer*

OWEN: *A Mob enforcer*

BERNARD: *A bartender*

RUFIO: *A bar patron*

*Harold and Rufio are playing a game at the pool table while Bernard stands at the bar.*

HAROLD: 8 ball, corner left pocket [*sound of clacking pool balls-*] BAM!  
Ahh. Rufio, unlucky as always, I'm afraid that's four wins, and twenty dollars, to me.

RUFIO: That's no fair man. All the stripes were clumped together. I couldn't get off a shot!

HAROLD: Yeah? And? I still won. I would've won anyway. You've got, what, five freakin' balls still up!

RUFIO: Whatever man.

HAROLD: Achh. Stop whining and rack em' up again. I still feel lucky.

OWEN *walks between the aisles in the audience towards the stage.*

HAROLD: You know, Rufio. These are the good times. You stick with me buddy, and you'll go places.

OWEN *walks in.*

OWEN: Uh, hey guys.

HAROLD: Owen! How ya doin' kid? Here, let Bernard get you a drink, on me.

*[HAROLD walks over to the bar and takes a drink from BERNARD and gives it to OWEN.]*

OWEN: Thanks man, I could use it.

HAROLD: No problem man. That's what friends are for. Don't worry. *[Turns to RUFIO.]* Whatta you still doing here? I already bled ya dry! Get outta here, you louse!

RUFIO *exits*

HAROLD: Goddamn parasite. Now Owen! What's going on with you?

OWEN: Ah. Nothing really. Been a bit tired lately. Been goin' to that night school thing you told me about. Learning how to fix engines.

HAROLD: Hey! That's good! It's always good to learn.

OWEN: Oh, I've also been doin' some thinking.

HAROLD: Thinkin'? That's good! Especially for you, I'd think. You know how it is. *[Beat.]* Well... what've you been thinkin' about?

OWEN: Nothing much. Been thinking about work, you know, what we do and all that.

HAROLD: Ahh, work. Not been much business lately. Not since our last "Client", who was he, Horowitz? Gnucci? What was he, an engineer?

OWEN: I think he was an architect or something. I looked at some of his models, they were pretty good. No idea why he can't get any money.

HAROLD: Yeah an architect! Hard business to get into, no matter how good you are.

OWEN: I've been thinking about what I did with that guy you know?

HAROLD: *[interrupting]* You did fine man! I mean, I think I scared him more you see. All that psychology stuff I learned way back when. But you.

You were rather effective I say. Made it look like you mean business, hurt but not too much. That's good. People don't say good things about guys like you. All brawn and no brains they say. But those guys pull in the cash too. I mean, look at the Schwarzenegger guy they got running the show down in California. The man can barely speak English but he's built like a Panzer tank. There ain't nothing wrong with that.

OWEN: Uhh, yeah. I guess so. I mean, I work out a lot. But I didn't do good in school anyway.

HAROLD: Ah. I did bad in high school either until grade 13 or something, then I hauled ass and got into college, got myself a diploma.

OWEN: College? You? I mean. If you went to college, what are you doin' here?

HAROLD: Well. What do you mean by that?

OWEN: Well, you went to this prestigious college and got yourself a fancy diploma, but you're still here in the inner city. Workin' for this Big Figure guy.

HAROLD: Hey, I do what I gotta do.

OWEN: We broke that guy's fingers, Harold.

HAROLD: What does that have to do with anything?

OWEN: We broke that guy's fingers and he's an architect or something, he needs to draw.

HAROLD: Hey! We did what we had to do! Man! He borrowed money from the Figure, we place our trust in him to deliver, and he betrayed that trust...

OWEN: We broke the guy's fingers because we wanted money out him. But he can't get money if he can't draw. Doesn't that kind of, you know, defeat the purpose?

HAROLD: He'll recover!

OWEN: I don't know much about medicine. But I don't think he'll be recovering anytime soon, not before we gotta come back for him.

HAROLD: Like I said, I do what I gotta do. I may not like it but it's either him or me.

OWEN: What you gotta do is get yourself a career, man. You're working for some scumbag you've never seen!

HAROLD: Hey! I seen Big Figure! Don't assume that I don't have any regard for my future just because you don't!

OWEN: Whaddya mean regard for your future? You're a goddamn mobster!

HAROLD: Exactly, I'm on the fast track to the big leagues. While you're back here breaking people's digits because you don't know your head from your hindquarters.

OWEN: Yeah. Because I'm in a big hurry to be top scumbag among scumbags.

HAROLD: Why do you gotta be like that, kid? Here, I'll buy you another drink. Hey, Bernard! (*Whistles and points quickly to the table*). Now, look, you're the one who broke his fingers.

OWEN: Well. You told me to!

HAROLD: Hey. I call 'em as I see 'em. I mean, it may not have been a smart move in hindsight. Like you said, he can't exactly make no money if he don't got fingers to draw. But ultimately, you're the one who chose to do the deed.

OWEN: That's your problem man, you never take any responsibility...

HAROLD: Okay, hold up. Just hold on a minute here. Yesterday you were Owen the Terrible, and now you're a damned hippy. Answer me, why in god's green earth did you choose this as a career path. Why in the named of Christ did you go from high school drop out to hard drinking inner city enforcer. Why?



OWEN: Well I don't know, it was like 12 years ago...

HAROLD: Just answer the question, I buy you the beers, you answer the freaking questions!

OWEN: Well. I dropped outta school, left home with no money or experience. I guess I watched few too many crime movies. I don't know man. Bottom line is that I regret the decision.

HAROLD: *Bottom line* is that you weren't doing anything worth doing when you came here.

OWEN: This crap is worth doing huh?

HAROLD: Yeah! Free enterprise! It's the way things work! It's the rules! It's human nature and if you don't like it you should of never become a part of it!

OWEN: Yeah. The rules. Like baseball and Texas hold'em right? You're full of it.

HAROLD: Listen Owen. You're missing the point I made earlier. He borrowed money from the boss, and he failed to deliver his end of the contract. I didn't want to scare the guy. But that's the chance you take when you screw around on your debts. It's called free enterprise, Owen.

OWEN: What?

HAROLD: You know! Free enterprise and the free market! The kind of stuff that makes America great.

OWEN: We make America great then?

HAROLD: Sure! Well, not directly, I mean. But it's the whole system that made our country what it was! The market regulates itself, you know? None of that socialist commie euro trash garbage. The wheels of business turn, and if you want to survive you gotta do a day's work for a day's pay! The same thing that works up in Wall Street and the whole damn country works down here in the damn pit of the city! You know man! Micro-economics. It's all the same! Isn't that right, Bernard?

BERNARD *shrugs, shakes his head dismissively.*

OWEN: You, know, Harold. That's what I don't get about you.

HAROLD: What? What don't you get about me?

OWEN: Like I said earlier, you know all these concepts and big words and shit. But you stay down here and shake down middle aged architects for a few thousands cause some guy we've never even seen told us too.

HAROLD: What's not to understand? Idiots borrow money from us. We get back the money, we use the money to buy the drugs, we sell them to junkies. Everybody benefits man. The junkies, Big Figure, the Columbians, even Horowitz—a handful of broken fingers is a lesson learned, you see. Hell, we didn't come by his craphole apartment with a bagful of Benjamin and tell he had to get that back to us in a week. No! He borrowed that money by his own free will and he chose to go against the great trust and understanding between us by being a week— A WEEK—late with our payment. That's not our fault! That's him, it was all him, and I can't for the life of me comprehend why you can't get that through your head.

OWEN: You keep on saying free market economy. I'm no economist or something but I don't think those words mean what you think they mean.

HAROLD: Well, I... it's just the thing... You're right. You're not an economist. You don't know a damn thing about it!

OWEN: I may not know much but I know enough to see a dead end when I see one.

HAROLD: Listen you numbskull. I don't make the rules. I don't tell Big Figure how to do his business. I just know that that if we don't do it then some else will. If we don't do it, idiots like Horowitz wouldn't even stand a chance. Not with no money. Not in this city. If we don't... Aw goddammit! Look at you! You're a college drop out! You've got the brain the size of a pea! What would you possibly do that someone like me can't?

OWEN: I don't know! I could become a mechanic or something!

HAROLD: A few nights of worksheets aren't going to help you install a muffler!

OWEN: I could go back to high school!

HAROLD: Ha! At your age?

OWEN: Become a boxer!

HAROLD: [*sarcastic*] Oh, right. Become a boxer and live happily ever after mashing out people's brains *legally*! Listen kid. I don't care if you're a boxer, a grease-monkey, or little Billy Thornton from Chestnut Avenue. This kind of crap isn't some thing you can escape! It's everywhere! This is what the city is! It's just a big torrent of heroin and broken bones and there isn't a damn thing you can do about it! You either go with the flow or you drown. Sink or swim. There's no choice and there's sure as hell no backing out.

*Moves away from the table, frustrated.*

It's free enterprise!

OWEN: You really believe the swill coming out of your mouth, don't you?

HAROLD: Don't give me that.

OWEN: You know, all this time you were blabbering your mouth off about all this crap but you still haven't answered my question. Why the hell should I do this? Why should I break a man's hands for sixty bucks?

HAROLD: Well, uh,...

OWEN: No. Don't say it. I'm out, I'm done with this. No more mobsters, no more broken bones, I just want to do something else.

HAROLD: You're crazy! Where are you gonna go?

OWEN: I don't know! California, back to Maine, I don't care. I just want out. Enjoy your torrent, you can swim or go fishing for all I care.

OWEN *leaves*

HAROLD: Hey! Don't be like that! [*Scratches his head. Beat.*] Get me another beer, Bernard.

*BERNARD hands him a bottle. He starts drinking from it.*

HAROLD: Hey. Hey. Rufio! Rufio! That greasy rat has my money.

*HAROLD leaves, BERNARD washes counter.*

*Curtain*

Reem Taher

## Health Class

SETTING: *A small classroom. There are four desks stage right. SARAH and BRITTANY are sitting together and gossiping. CHRISTINE is sitting a little further away from Brittany and Sarah. There is an empty desk beside CHRISTINE where CAITLIN will sit. MS. HERRING stands stage right.*

BRITTANY: *Grade 10 student, fashionably but inappropriately attired*

SARAH: *Brittany's friend*

CAITLIN

CHRISTINE

MS. HERRING: *Health and physical education teacher*

BRITTANY: [*Laughs*] I'm telling you, she was wearing the most hideous skirt I've ever seen!

MS. HERRING: [*She yells over the class*] All right everybody! So congratulations to everyone on finishing the health projects. I will give you your marks back by the end of the week.

SARAH: We totally did an amazing job on that project!

BRITTANY: Duh! I worked on it!

MS. HERRING: So I want to put all of your ideas together and apply it to a real-life scenario. Can you all push back the desks and allow room in the front? Thank you. Now, I need two volunteers.

BRITTANY: Wait, what are we volunteering for?

MS. HERRING: We're going to act out how it would be like for a girl to be pregnant at this age and –

BRITTANY: Oh my God! I have to be the lead! I am such a gifted actress!

MS. HERRING: Oh, okay. Thank you, Brittany. Sarah, do you want to volunteer?

SARAH: Sure, I guess.

MS. HERRING: Great! Now, Sarah, you're going to be the girl in this relationship and Brittany, you're going to be her boyfriend.

BRITTANY: Can I have a name?!

MS. HERRING: Uh, okay...you can be...Ralph!

BRITTANY: Ugh, I hate the name Ralph. I'm going to be Jack.

MS. HERRING: All right! Okay, so here is your scenario. You two have been going out for about a month now and Jack here, that's you Brittany, wants to have sex with you, Sarah. You're afraid, but you say okay in the end. I'm going to be sitting at the back of the room and watching.

CAITLIN: Sorry I'm late! I had a dentist appointment! [*Sits*]

MS. HERRING: That's all right, Caitlin. Are you girls ready? [*BRITTANY and SARAH nod.*] And action! [*Exits*]

BRITTANY: [*Lowered voice.*] Yo, yo, yo baby girl! I missed you, boo!

SARAH: Aw, I missed you too, bear!

BRITTANY: Anyways, uh, let's cut the noise. I wanna have sex with you!

CAITLIN: Brittany, I don't think guys would be so forward like that...

SARAH: Yeah they are! [*Beat*] Um...

BRITTANY: Excuse me! Can I please finish my scene! I'm the star here, Caitlin, and I want to do this scene the way I'm doing it right now, so talk to the hand! [*She raises her hand so her palm faces CAITLIN*]

CAITLIN: Okay, sorry!

BRITTANY: [*She lowers her voice again*] You hear what I said, baby girl? I wanna make love to you!

SARAH: I don't know if I'm ready, Jack... I mean, I've only known you for a month...

BRITTANY: So? That's like...forever in the dating world! I promise you our relationship will be twenty times better than it already is!

SARAH: Are you sure? Because people tell me it only ruins relationships...

BRITTANY: Baby, what we have is something special. Nothing can ruin that. Come on, now!

SARAH: But what if I got pregnant?

BRITTANY: Girl [*she laughs*], you ain't gonna get pregnant! I got protection, don't you worry!

SARAH: Are you sure?

BRITTANY: Yeah, and if you do get pregnant, I'll be there for you, don't you worry!

SARAH: I don't think I'm ready, Brittany.

BRITTANY: [*Normal voice*] Holy shit, Sarah! You can't be a virgin forever, you know!

SARAH: Yeah, but I thought that sex was for something after marriage?

BRITTANY: Oh my, gosh, you're going to listen to that crap?

SARAH: Well, I don't know...

BRITTANY: Sarah, let's look at it this way: let's say you think you found the perfect man.

SARAH: Okay...

BRITTANY: And then you get married.

SARAH: Okay...

BRITTANY: Then you go have sex with him.

SARAH: Okay...

BRITTANY: And it's *terrible! Terrible sex!* Terrible sex till death do you part, Sarah!

SARAH: Till death do I part?!

BRITTANY: What'll you do then?!

SARAH: [*Confused.*] Well, if I've never had sex before, how do I know it's terrible?

BRITTANY: You just know, Sarah! Like, think of it this way –

CAITLIN: I don't think anybody should sleep with someone just to lose their virginity. [*Rises up from her desk*] That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard!

BRITTANY: Are you calling me stupid, Caitlin?

CAITLIN: No! I'm just saying that it's Sarah's choice. I mean, God intended that we save ourselves until marriage.

SARAH: Don't get me wrong, Caitlin, but I'm not a very religious girl. I mean, I'm spiritual, but I don't go to church.

CAITLIN: That's not my point. What I mean is you shouldn't just give up your virginity just because someone tells you to or because everyone else is 'doing it'. You should be the boss of your own body. I mean, I could never imagine sleeping with someone before marriage... I mean, what if you get an STI or something?!

CHRISTINE: Caitlin, you can get an STI even after you're married.

SARAH: What kind of STI?

CAITLIN: Yeah, but at least the person who loves me will take care of me. Your 'boo' won't do anything to help you at all!

BRITTANY: Just who do you think would be giving you the clap, Caitlin? Your holy husband – unless of course you're a slut and sleeping around!

SARAH: What kind of STI?

CAITLIN: Well, you could get syphilis, or herpes, or pubic lice! Which are like the silent killers!



SARAH: Ew! I can't get a cold sore! Those things are disgusting!

CAITLIN: There's even worse stuff too, you know.

CHRISTINE: Oh crap! Can you just get on with it?! I don't care about whether you should save yourself. I just want this thing to be over and done with! Jack, knock her up. Sarah, your eggo is preggo. Upchuck!

BRITTANY: Fine. [*CAITLIN returns to her desk*]

SARAH: Hey, Jack.

BRITTANY: Hey, baby girl, what's up? What's happening?

SARAH: I need to talk to you. It's important.

BRITTANY: Girl, can it wait until after school? I'm going for a bite with my homies...

SARAH: No! No, it can't wait! You see... ugh, I'll just come out with it now... I'm pregnant.

BRITTANY: You what?!

SARAH: You heard me... I'm pregnant.

BRITTANY: Impossible! I used protection!

SARAH: I know, but obviously something happened!

BRITTANY: That's impossible! Condoms are supposed to prevent pregnancies!

SARAH: Well, there's like...a five percent chance you can get pregnant, even if you use a condom...

BRITTANY: What? I didn't know that! Why didn't you tell me!?

SARAH: Well, that's not the first thing I think about when I'm about to have sex for the first time!

BRITTANY: [*Normal voice*] Ooh, what do you think about before you have sex?

SARAH: I wouldn't know. I've never *had* sex before!

BRITTANY: Well, we'll take care of that, Sarah! Tell you what, tomorrow night at Ryan's party, I should totally hook you up with his older brother! His name is Derek and –

SARAH: Brittany! I'm not going to have sex with Derek!

CAITLIN: Brittany, have you heard a single thing I said?!

BRITTANY: Guys! What did I tell you about that religion crap!

CHRISTINE: I hate you all. Can you just stay on topic?

SARAH: Not until Brittany stops harassing me!

BRITTANY: Not until Sarah loses her virginity!

SARAH: Well, then, that's going to be a while, isn't it?!

BRITTANY: No, it's going to be Saturday!

SARAH: No! It's going to be in a couple of years!

CAITLIN: No! It's going to be in fifteen years!

SARAH: Why that long, Caitlin? Are you trying to make me feel worse?

BRITTANY: What if you never get married?! Then you'll always be an *old* virgin!

SARAH: I will get married! Some guys like the idea of a girl saving herself!

BRITTANY: Yeah, sure.

CHRISTINE: I swear, if you don't finish this stupid dramatization, I'll punch one of you in the ovaries!

CAITLIN: That would hurt a lot...

SARAH: Talk about a painful contraceptive...

CHRISTINE: No. Now finish this goddamn play.

SARAH: Fine.

BRITTANY: Girl, I'mma tell you right now... I want nothing to do with this little shindig right here. It probably isn't even mine.

SARAH: What?! You're the only person I've ever slept with!

BRITTANY: You're a virgin!? Why –

SARAH: I might get an abortion...

CAITLIN: What?! No, here is where I draw the line! You cannot do that!

SARAH: Caitlin, I can't raise a baby. I'm clueless.

CAITLIN: It's a beautiful creation from God. You can't kill a living being!

CHRISTINE: Caitlin, she's not really pregnant. So Jesus doesn't need to know.

BRITTANY: Boring! I'm bored! Bad ass things happen when I'm bored!

*Bell sounds end of class.*

SARAH: I'm going to finish this play, okay? *[Brittany shrugs]* I hope you're happy, Jack! Because of you, I can't finish school until next year! Are you happy?

BRITTANY: Girl, why are you stalking me? Are you still in love with me? I told you it was over.

SARAH: No, but you've got to accept part of the blame here. You and I are the reason why I'm pregnant.

BRITTANY: Fine. I got you pregnant. Now will you please go away?!

SARAH: No! You got me pregnant, now you need to help me!

BRITTANY: I don't need to help you, girl! You help yourself!

CAITLIN: Help herself? You're such a –

SARAH: No! *[Everyone is silent]* I've had enough of this! You said you liked me, you loved me, that you'd take care of me and here I am, wanting all of what you promised me and you're giving me nothing! I hate you! I never want to speak to you ever again! You're a jerk for doing what you did! I have to suffer for our stupid mistake – no, sorry, *my* stupid mistake because I even let you touch me! I allowed you to convince me that sex was right for us! Well, like I said before, it makes relationships worse!

CAITLIN: Good for you, Sarah, for –

SARAH: And you! Stop speaking for me! I can speak for myself! I don't care about what your religion says on sex or pregnancy or whatever. I can decide for myself.

BRITTANY: You just got served, Caitlin.

SARAH: Oh, and you! You with your obsession on making me lose my virginity! You do not control my body or my mind. I will decide on when I want to have sex and it won't be decided with you. You're always controlling whatever I do or say and I won't let you control this. I'm sorry, but find someone else to brain wash! [*She looks at her watch*] Oh my god! I'm late for English! I'll see you guys later!

*Curtain*

Julia Marneris

## Heartbreak and Handshake

SETTING: *Basement. Couches stage left and right. A small kitchen table and chairs centre stage.*

SHELBY: *A preppy high school student.*

ADAM: *A high school jock.*

WILL: *ADAM's older brother.*

ALEX: *SHELBY's best friend.*

*WILL is sitting on the couch stage left, working on a newspaper crossword. ALEX is reading a magazine. SHELBY comes in ALEX's house, closes door, walks to couch and melts into it, just as ADAM walks in his house, slams door. Completely different locations, but side by side on the stage. WILL is doing a crossword puzzle, ALEX is filing her nails on the couch in front of the TV.*

ADAM: *(Yells.)* Dude! I just scored one with Shelby! Cha-ching.

SHELBY: *(Dreamy eyed.)* I just had the best date ever.

WILL: *(Distracted with crossword.)* Yeah? What happened?

ALEX: Oh my GOD! Dish! *(puts feet up on couch).*

ADAM: Well, I mean, it started off kind of weird; she wouldn't stop talking about her food and nutrition class. *(Gesture, talking with his hands.)*

She just kept going on and on about how to make the perfect soufflé. Whatever.

SHELBY: (*Perky.*) Well. First, I was really nervous, right? I mean it's our first date. So I guess I was talking a lot about class and stuff. But once we got to the restaurant it was okay, I had calmed down a little bit. Because he's really nice and not like, judgmental, and he wasn't making it really awkward.

ALEX: That's nice. Especially since I know how much you can talk when you're nervous. Okay so keep going...

WILL: (*Looks up from crossword*) And this was a *good* date?

ADAM: Let me finish. So yeah, she wouldn't stop talking, but then once we got to the place and we ordered, she said she didn't like shrimp, and I was like "I don't like seafood either!" so we started talking about how gross it is. Those lobster things really creep me out with the claws.

ALEX: But wait, weren't you at Pizza Hut?

SHELBY: Duh. But now you can get shrimp on your pizza, and I was like "Nuh – uh, I am not having those things anywhere near my plate" and that's how we got into it.

ADAM: And one topic led to another...

SHELBY: We closed the place down! Like, we stayed there until it closed; we were the last customers. (*Giggles loudly.*)

ALEX: Shh! Keep it down my parents are sleeping upstairs. So what else did you guys talk about? Other than your mutual dislike for shrimp...

SHELBY: Well,

ADAM: Her favourite movie is *The Notebook*. (*Makes a disgusted grunt.*) She expects me to love this cheesy chick flick, but she hasn't even seen the new Batman! Honestly, who hasn't seen *The Dark Knight*?

WILL: (*Looking back down at crossword.*) I don't know man –

SHELBY: Well, we started to talk about *The Notebook*; you know how much I love that movie. He agreed that Rachel McAdams was his favourite character –

ADAM: I only like Rachel because she's hot. There's that one scene where he's ripping off her dress (*looking up, imagining*) ...WOW.

WILL: (*Looks up shocked*) Did you tell *her* that?

ADAM: Hell no! I can't say another girl's hot while I'm on a date! God, WILL, even I know that.

(*ADAM turns on the TV to watch basketball highlights. WILL concentrates really hard on his crossword.*).

ALEX: So the Bulls beat the Raptors today 112 to 88.

ADAM: Damn it can't we win one effing game?

SHELBY: And I care why?

WILL: Calm down man it's only pre-season. Relax.

ALEX: Maybe your new *boyfriend* likes basketball. Don't you think he'd be really impressed if you showed him you knew something about sports, something other than just *The Notebook*? It's Adam Ross, I'm sure he just said he liked the movie just to get into your pants.

ADAM: If we can't win pre-season, how the hell are we going to make it into the playoffs? I won't get to watch many games if this keeps up and they keep losing!

WILL: (*In a mocking tone*) You should have invited her to watch the game then. That way you'd have been on a date, and watched the game at the same time.

SHELBY: First off, he's not my boyfriend yet. Second, that didn't get him into my pants. And third, he doesn't care that much about sports, since he only mentioned that there was a game on tonight. He didn't go into it, so ha.

ADAM: Yeah right. I mentioned that I was hoping that the Raptors would come out with a win tonight, and I saw her face cringe. She is *not* a basketball person.

ALEX: If he mentioned it, it's more important than you think it is.

WILL: (*Sarcastically*) Not a basketball person? Wow, what girl doesn't like basketball? Shocker, Adam.

ALEX: So after you "closed the place down" where'd you guys go?

WILL: Yeah, doesn't Pizza Hut close at 12? (*Suggestively.*) What have you been doing for the past 2 hours?

ADAM: Well, we drove around for awhile...

SHELBY: In his mom's Malibu.

ADAM: (*Proud*) She digged the Chevy.

SHELBY: There were chip crumbs all over the floor.

ADAM: (*To SHELBY.*) The crumbs were my sister's from that morning! I told her not to eat them in the car. Damn it.

(*Pause*)

(*WILL crumples up the paper and throws it at ADAM.*)

ADAM: (*angrily at WILL*) Hey!

SHELBY: Anyways... So, the car wasn't the coolest thing, but on the bright side he can drive me around. I mean, how awkward would that be if his parents had to drive us everywhere?

ALEX: Pretty awkward.

ADAM: Seriously though, what chick doesn't love a guy with a car? To get her in the backseat...

WILL: Yeah, so you can play chauffeur...

ADAM: Shut up! It's not like that.

SHELBY: Oh it so is. So now I have someone to drive me to Molly's party next week!



ADAM: What the hell? So that's all I am to her? Her driver service?  
(*Change voice*) "Good evening, madam, where to tonight?"

SHELBY: Oh and the free meals too. Don't forget about that...

ALEX: (*disappointed*) Wow—

ADAM: Whatever. She's hot. Next time we go out, I'll take her out where people I know can see her. Then they'll really know that I can still get the hottest girl, even after Christine dumped me.

WILL: Could you guys be any shallower?

ALEX: Could you guys be any shallower?

(*ALEX and WILL stare at each other for a minute. Then break out laughing.*)

WILL: I'm sorry Adam, but shouldn't you go out with someone you actually like?

ALEX: Really, Shel, can't you find someone with a car that you would actually want to date because you like them and they like you? Ha ha.

WILL: As if you could find someone like that, Adam.

(*ALEX and WILL laugh.*)

ADAM: You know what? I don't appreciate your pessimistic attitude.

SHELBY: Alex, you're being kind of a bitch.

ALEX: (*Simultaneously with Will.*) Only the truth. Because I love you.

WILL: (*Mockingly, simultaneously with Alex.*) Only the truth. Because I love you.

SHELBY: Aw, I love you too sweetie.

ADAM: If mom wasn't asleep in the next room, you'd be face down on the floor right now.

WILL: Oh don't worry little bro, someday you'll find a girl who actually likes you. Someday in the very distant future. (*Laughs and messes Adam's hair*) I'm going to go and get some chips, you want something?

ADAM: (*Pathetically*) I want to know what Shelby's doing...

(WILL *waves him off, picks up his fallen crossword, and slowly starts walking up the stairs*).

SHELBY: (*Thinking*) I'm going to call him.

ALEX: What? But you just got home from your date... Whatever, I'm going to and get something to drink and some fresh air. These nail polish fumes are giving me a headache...

(ALEX *walks upstairs as SHELBY calls ADAM*).

ADAM: Hello?

(WILL *and ALEX meet in the kitchen*)

ALEX: Oh, hi.

SHELBY: Hi, is this Adam?

WILL: Hi.

ADAM: Yeah...Shelby?

ALEX: Hey, aren't you Adam's brother?

SHELBY: Hi! (*Nervous and rushed.*) I was just calling you know, because... how are you?

WILL: Yeah, and you're Alex, Shelby's friend right?

ADAM: I'm fine. Just hanging out with my brother. Watching basketball highlights.

ALEX: Yup, we were just discussing "the date". She came home so excited, then she started thinking it was a bad idea –

SHELBY: (*Disappointed*) Oh. Yeah, I heard that Chicago won. That sucks.

WILL: Yeah, seriously, it didn't sound like they would be good together.

ADAM: I know! Come on we can't even beat the Bulls? (*Angry*) What kind of teams does Toronto have?

ALEX: And then she decided that she had to call him.

SHELBY: Ha, ha ,ha, yeah they suck at everything!

WILL: You're kidding! No way...Yeah right before I came upstairs Adam said something about wanting to talk to her...

*(Awkward silence)*

ALEX: Well, you know what, if they want to start something, let them go right ahead.

ADAM: So, what are you up to?

WILL: I guess. *(Jokingly)* So what about you? Are you in an unconventional relationship as well?

SHELBY: I'm talking to Alex. We were supposed to hang out today, but as you know I was out with you.

ALEX: *(Sarcastically)* Ha ha ha. Not right now. Why? You interested?

ADAM: *(Thinking)* Well, maybe you should make it up to her.

WILL: Well I thought, you know, maybe since your best friend will be occupied by her new boy toy for a while, what are you going to do with your time? I'm just thinking of what's in your best interest...

SHELBY: And what would you suggest?

ALEX: Sure you are... And that's a great way to talk about your brother, calling him a boy toy.

ADAM: How about I take you out again, and you bring Alex and I can bring my brother—

WILL: He'll get over it.

SHELBY: *(Excited)* Like a double date?

ALEX: Sure, why not. But for now we should just let them have their spotlight, and we can keep this quiet. For now.

ADAM: I guess. Yeah.

WILL: I couldn't agree more. Plus, they're too into themselves to notice.

SHELBY: I think she'd go for it.

*(WILL grabs his chips, ALEX grabs a glass of water, ALEX and WILL both walk away laughing, back down to their original scenes, WILL leaves his crossword on the table upstairs).*

ADAM: Cool. Umm, so, I'll talk to you tomorrow?

SHELBY: Sure! Okay, bye Adam!

ADAM: See you. *(Hangs up)*

ALEX: So how was your conversation with Adam?

ADAM: Shelby just called.

SHELBY: We were trying to set up another date...

WILL: *(Feigning disinterest)* Huh. What did she have to say?

ALEX: And what did you decide?

ADAM: We're going out again.

SHELBY: This time it's going to be a double date.

WILL: *(Sarcastic)* Really? I wasn't expecting that.

ADAM: And you're coming with us. To act as Alex's date.

ALEX: What?

SHELBY: Yeah, it's to make up for not hanging out with you tonight.

WILL: That doesn't sound very good. It doesn't look very good if I have my younger brother setting up my dates.

ALEX: Oh don't worry, I had a great night, you don't have to make up for it. Really.

ADAM: Whatever. I was just asking.

SHELBY: Whatever. I was just trying to be nice. It's better than spending another night home alone.

WILL: Really, don't worry about it.

ALEX: Yeah, thanks for the offer, but I'm okay. Anyways, I think I'm going to go to bed, it's kind of late. I'll see you tomorrow.

ADAM: I'm going to go to sleep. Today has been a very long day.

SHELBY: Okay, goodnight. I'll just grab a quick drink and then leave you to rest.

WILL: Goodnight buddy.

*(Lights turn off except for the one following SHELBY upstairs into the kitchen. She goes to get a drink and when she puts her glass on the table she notices the crossword WILL left there. She picks it up to study it).*

SHELBY: Who's is this?

*Curtain*

Tucker McLean

## Sofa Bed

SETTING: *Upstairs hallway of a house.*

TIM: *Recently divorced from Jerry's sister*

JERRY: *Helping Tim move his furniture to new apartment*

*Enter two men carrying an old-fashioned sofa bed, very heavy and awkward,*

TIM: Little to the left.

*Jerry grunts*

TIM: Left, I said left!

JERRY: Whose left?

TIM: My left!

JERRY: Why your left?

TIM: Because it's my sofa and I say to move it left,

JERRY: So that gives you the right?

TIM: Yes, your right, and my left.

JERRY: I wish I never left my apartment this morning.

TIM: All right, set it down, set it down.

*Both men drop the sofa bed*

JERRY: Man, I can't believe you're so cool with this whole situation.

TIM: Situation?

JERRY: The split.

TIM: Separation.

JERRY: Division, break up, whatever you want to call it.

TIM: I want to call it separation.

JERRY: What does she call it?

TIM: Doesn't matter what she calls it.

JERRY: I thought marriage was a two way street.

TIM: And I'm moving to a one way .

JERRY: Is it really a one way?

TIM: I was speaking figuratively Jerry; it's this place a little closer to my work.

JERRY: An apartment?

TIM: I call it a bachelor pad.

JERRY: Well, if you call it your 'pad' you'll be a bachelor for quite a while.

TIM: All right, smart mouth, let's try lifting this thing again,

*The two men pick up the sofa again.*

TIM: Hey, easy, easy, easy!

JERRY: Higher on your end, c'mon, c'mon.

TIM: Lower on your end then.

JERRY: Man why is this thing so god damn heavy?

TIM: It's carrying years of emotional turmoil.

*They drop the sofa again and sit on it.*

JERRY: It's comfortable, I'll give you that.

TIM: Sure.

JERRY: Not bad cushions, comfortable head rests...

TIM: Yup.

JERRY: Clean too, except, ewww...what's this from?

TIM: That? I think it's spilt wine from when you and Mary came over to play charades a few years ago.

JERRY: Oh yeah, I think I remember. I was a little over exaggerative wasn't I?

TIM: And you liked to hold your wine glass at the same time.

JERRY: Yeah, sorry bout that there, Tim.

TIM: Well it wasn't that big of a deal, the sofa was worn down anyway, and the wine, well, let's just say the sofa is a lot older.

JERRY: Ha, ha, yeah. Good times.

TIM: They were times anyway.

JERRY: Ow! I think I'm sitting on something, what the hell is it?

*Jerry reaches into the cushions to surface with a disfigured booklet*

JERRY: What is this? Or better yet, what was this?

TIM: Well, I think that is a potato chip [*picking the chip off the book*], and this is an instruction booklet,

JERRY: What's it for?

TIM: The sofa, I think. Yup, it's for the uhh "*Comfort Master*, prototype of luxury and style."

JERRY: Luxury and style? What about mobility? It weighs like 300 pounds. You need six guys the size of Schwarzenegger to lift it out of here.

*Both men slowly turn their heads to face the other side of the stage*

JERRY: So, how the hell are we gonna get it through the door?

TIM: I guess we'll just unscrew the legs, take off the cushions, lock in the bed springs. That'll make it easier.

JERRY: For us or the sofa?

TIM: Hopefully, both.

JERRY: Frankly I think it's easier just to leave it here.

TIM: I'm going to need a bed in my apartment and I'm not exactly bathing in money right now. I can't afford a new one. I couldn't even afford to hire a moving company.



JERRY: Well that's what friends are for. Am I right?

TIM: Friends?

JERRY: What? You don't think we're friends? We've been brothers-in-law for fifteen years!

TIM: Well we didn't exactly pick each other, we kinda got stuck together.

JERRY: Well then, Mr. Popular, why didn't you ask one of your legions of other friends to help you move?

TIM: Because...well...I don't have any nowadays. I lost touch with all of them after college.

*Beat*

JERRY: I'm sorry Tim, I didn't mean it like that. But c'mon, I think we've become pretty good friends through the years, for brothers in law I mean.

TIM: I guess so; I dunno, I just figured you'd be on her side for everything, even through this.

JERRY: I'm not on anyone's side; I'm a neutral party, like Switzerland

TIM: Maybe Nazi-occupied Switzerland. You're related to the Axis Powers. You're blood for god's sake!

JERRY: I'm still your friend Tim, but I gotta be a haven for both sides, keep my borders open.

TIM: I know. I'm sorry for getting angry Jerry it's just...there's so much tension right now.

JERRY: It's okay man, I accept refugees of any kind. From French to Polish or anything in-between...

TIM: Enough with the World War Two metaphor, Jerry.

JERRY: Sorry, I just thought it was rather clever.

TIM: Yeah, was.

JERRY: Hey, Tim.

TIM: Yeah, Jerry.

JERRY: If you don't mind me asking, what exactly happened between you and my sister?

TIM: I do mind and I don't want to talk about it.

JERRY: I'm just curious; I don't mean to be intrusive.

TIM: Let's just move the sofa bed so I can get out of here.

*Tim stands up getting ready to lift his end*

JERRY: Really, you can trust me, I'm an understanding guy.

*Jerry stands up and moves to his side.*

TIM: Just help me move this.

JERRY: C'mon, just tell me, c'mon...

TIM: Maybe it's because she didn't move my furniture enough.

JERRY: Hey! That's my sister your talking about!

TIM: And my wife!...Ex-wife. It just fell apart okay. We both changed when we ran into money problems after the kids.

JERRY: I didn't know you guys were having trouble with cash. You could have asked me and Mary for help anytime—

TIM: We didn't want to let anyone know. It just turned sour after that, bickering every night, it just came to one point where I couldn't stand it.

*Beat.*

JERRY: So how are you guys divvying things up?

TIM: Well she gets the house, I'm taking some of the appliances, some of the furniture. *Tim gestures to the sofa bed.*

JERRY: And the kids?

TIM: Oh yeah, them. Well it's joint custody.

JERRY: I always thought it was funny that the court system talks about kids like that, like they're a coffee table or something.

TIM: You'd only want a coffee table for alternate weekends?

JERRY: Depends how good the table is. A solid table is hard to find.

TIM: Well, it just makes everything harder, doesn't it? Now I gotta go pick them up every other weekend, drive all over town, through rush hour traffic.

JERRY: It's worth it though isn't it?

TIM: Absolutely, but that's beside the point,

JERRY: How are the kids handling it by the way?

TIM: As well as they could I imagine, they probably knew it was going to happen long before it actually did, we just ended up fighting so much.

JERRY: I think they'll get over it around Christmas.

TIM: And what makes you say that?

JERRY: Isn't it obvious? Double the presents. Santa comes to visit twice.

TIM: I'm sure that's not the first thing running through their heads.

JERRY: That's exactly what kids think about. Of course, they're sad over the fact that their parents don't love each other anymore, but after that it's all about the rewards.

TIM: Jeez, Jerry, that's a little cynical.

JERRY: It's just how a child's mind works; at least that's how mine would.

TIM: Well maybe you're just a son of a bitch.

JERRY: You know, I have been called that before.

TIM: I think they're taking it pretty well, better than I did when my parents divorced.

JERRY: Were you about the same age when your parents split?

TIM: Yeah, around that age. Man, I promised myself that I wouldn't be the same as them. That I wouldn't make the same mistakes. I was so worried about trying to avoid their choices that I walked right into the same hole.

JERRY: I don't think it's something you can just plan for, it just happens. It's what sometimes happens between two people.

TIM: Yup, marriage is a two way street after all.

JERRY: What?

TIM: What do you mean “what”?

JERRY: You were just complaining about that same expression like five minutes ago.

TIM: Well, now I think it applies.

JERRY: Oh, never mind.

TIM: Ready to try lifting again?

JERRY: Yeah, yeah, okay.

TIM: Maybe if we angle it, we can get it out of the door...

JERRY: We might as well try.

*They pick up the sofa bed again,*

TIM: Okay, okay, slowly turn it clockwise.

JERRY: Your wise or my wise?

TIM: What the hell are you talking about?

JERRY: Your wise, or mine?

TIM: Huh?

JERRY: What direction is the clock facing?

TIM: Why does that matter!?

JERRY: Well I don't know which way to move it.

TIM: [*Grunts*] It's facing me, it's facing me, hurry up .

*Both men turn in opposite directions trying to turn the sofa bed. After many attempts the sofa drops to the ground.*

TIM: I can't do this anymore.

JERRY: What?

TIM: I can't keep doing this, it's going nowhere, there's no point.

JERRY: You're giving up already? You haven't even been trying that hard!

TIM: Excuse me, but I tried just as hard as you, if not more!

JERRY: Well, that's just like you anyway, to quit when the going gets tough.

TIM: Well, you're the one that doesn't understand the concept of working together.

JERRY: Because you're always bossing me around. You think since everything revolves around you, you can treat me however you feel.

TIM: Try to understand what it's like from my perspective.

JERRY: You just said it's about teamwork! It's about two people working together, you're just being selfish.

TIM: I'm being selfish! I'm being selfish! Suddenly I'm the bad guy right?

JERRY: Tim-

TIM: What!

JERRY: What the hell are we talking about?

*Beat.*

TIM: The sofa?

JERRY: Yes, yes. The sofa

TIM: God, I just need to grow up. Put on a brave face through this whole thing, at least for the kids.

JERRY: I can understand Tim, you're going through a difficult transition right now.

TIM: That's no excuse to break down.

JERRY: Sure it is, your life's changing, things are shifting around.

TIM: I need to change, get on with my life.

*Beat.*

JERRY: So what happens now?

TIM: Now my sofa becomes a bed, for who knows how long.

JERRY: I'm sorry, Tim.

TIM: It's all right; I was tired of sleeping in that position anyway.

JERRY: You mean like on a real bed? Sprawled out all comfortable, stretching around, lots of covers....

TIM: Yeah, I think my point had something to do with that.

JERRY: Well, I'll be there to buy you some pillows.

TIM: Thanks, Jerry.

JERRY: So...you up to... uhh?

*Jerry points to the sofa*

TIM: Yeah, let's take another crack at it.

*Both men hold up the sofa*

TIM: And Jerry...really, thanks for being here.

JERRY: Let's just hope you've got some beer so I stick around, or some wine rather.

TIM: Very nice, let's try this again...

*Both men slowly walk off stage shouting directions at each other.*

*Curtain*

Cameron Smith

## The Study of a Savage

SETTING: *The early nineteenth century. Somewhere in the Pacific.*

CANNIBAL 1: *a middle-aged cannibal, suitably attired.*

CANNIBAL 2: *his friend, likewise attired.*

SAILOR: *working-class Englishman wearing coal-stained rough clothing.*

CANNIBAL 1: When are you starting dinner? I'm simply famished.

CANNIBAL 2: In a bit, the fire's not hot enough yet.

*Pokes fire absent-mindedly with stick.*

CANNIBAL 1: Well you could at least clean and butcher it first. (*Offers a stone knife.*) How does he look anyways? Tasty?

CANNIBAL 2: Hold on, I'll ask him. (*Exits and returns dragging SAILOR, tied up, and removes his gag.*) Hey, back home you took care of yourself right? Ate healthy? Exercised?

SAILOR: (*Morose, given in to the inevitable*) Yes, I ate well, and got lots of exercise. I shoveled coal at a factory twelve hours a day.

CANNIBAL 1: Shoveled what?

SAILOR: Coal. Chunks of black rock that power steam machines and such.

CANNIBAL 2: Ugh, sounds barbaric! For twelve hours a day? What compelled you to do this?

SAILOR: Well...it's my job you know. I have to. To make money and earn a living, how else would I buy food?

CANNIBAL 1: You BUY your food? Why not just grow it and hunt it like a civilized person?

SAILOR: I live in a city. Buildings everywhere, surrounded by brick, no real trees, or anywhere to grow food for miles.

*Cannibals sit in shocked silence for a moment.*

CANNIBAL 2: That sounds...

CANNIBAL 1: That must be...

CANNIBALS 1 and 2: Awful!

SAILOR:(*Perking up slightly*) Well, it's not all bad you know. There are high points! I have a nice home

CANNIBAL 2: Is it near the beach?

SAILOR: Well, no...

CANNIBAL 1: Do you have a kiwi tree?

SAILOR: No, but...

CANNIBAL 2: But you have nice weather right? Lots of sun?

SAILOR: Not exactly....

CANNIBAL 1: That sounds absolutely terrible.

CANNIBAL 2: Just dreadful.

CANNIBAL 1: But you said you ate well? Lots of tasty people where you come from?

SAILOR: Oh God no! I would never eat a person!

*Cannibal 1 looks at Cannibal 2 and rolls his eyes.*

CANNIBAL 2: So you don't eat people?

SAILOR: Heavens no! That's awful!

CANNIBAL 1: Actually they're rather tasty.



CANNIBAL 2: No finer meat than a person.

SAILOR: (*nauseated*) That is disgusting.

CANNIBAL 1: (*shyly*) You'd think he's tasted your cooking.

CANNIBAL 2: Keep that up and you'll be eating fruit for dinner.

CANNIBAL 1: Oh, we can't have that. This one looks tasty, even for a savage.

SAILOR: (*moans pitifully*) Oh God...

CANNIBAL 2: God? As in one?

SAILOR: Yes, everyone knows there's only one God.

CANNIBAL 1: One God? For everything? The stars, the rain, the sun, the night, the trees, life itself? Hardly plausible.

CANNIBAL 2: Quite fantastic. Quite absurd.

CANNIBAL 1: Anyone civilized knows there's a god for everything, a god for everyone.

CANNIBAL 2: One God... (laughs to himself). Imagine me sharing a God with you, or you with me for that matter! It's claustrophobic.

CANNIBAL 1: What a strange culture.

CANNIBAL 2: Not to mention their clothes...look what he's wearing,

CANNIBAL 1: Covered from head to foot he is. Doesn't it get hot wearing all that back home?

SAILOR: Well no, you see it's quite a bit cooler where I come from, and some months it even snows...

CANNIBAL 2: Snow? Like in the mountains?

SAILOR: Yes, but all over and for several months.

CANNIBAL 1: (*looks perplexed*) Snow...all over...

CANNIBAL 2: Sounds...

CANNIBAL 1: Must be...

CANNIBAL 1: Terrible

CANNIBAL 2: Terrible.

SAILOR: It's not always cold you know! We have a lovely summer.

CANNIBAL 2: Oh really? Sunny all the time?

SAILOR: Well no...

CANNIBAL 1: Beautiful flowers where you live?

SAILOR: Not exactly...

CANNIBAL 2: But you must enjoy the bird migrations?

SAILOR: I can't, you see...

CANNIBAL 1: Miserable.

CANNIBAL 2: Just horrible.

*CANNIBAL 2 moves some logs and adds a couple more to fire*

CANNIBAL 2: Nearly hot enough I'd say.

CANNIBAL 1: Good! I'm really getting quite hungry.

SAILOR: You're really going to eat me aren't you?

CANNIBAL 2: Of course! Couldn't ask for a better cut of meat.

CANNIBAL 1: Tender, but not too tender. Sustaining really. Much like a mild flavored pork, with ample texture. Not too stringy of course, especially if it's simmered or broiled ...

CANNIBAL 2: Oh now you have my mouth watering.

SAILOR: You people disgust me.

CANNIBAL 1: Disgusted? Why, what do you eat?

SAILOR: Nothing beats a plate of bangers and mash, a dish of sausage and potatoes, a fine meal indeed.

CANNIBAL 2: Sausage? What's that?

SAILOR: Well...I dare say it's the, you know, 'left over' meat from the pig. Ground up and wrapped in intestine

CANNIBAL 1: You EAT that?

CANNIBAL 2: I'm almost afraid to ask what 'potatoes' are.

SAILOR: Well they're little round roots, you dig up and you can cook them in a number of ways...

CANNIBAL 1: Roots? And pig leftovers? You consider that a fine meal?

SAILOR: Well yes...

CANNIBAL 2: How barbaric.

CANNIBAL 1: I'll stick to eating people thank you very much.

CANNIBAL 2: How awful it must be to grow up in that society.

CANNIBAL 1: Your children must be miserable.

SAILOR: Of course not! They have a fine life! They go to school and...

CANNIBAL 2: What's a school?

SAILOR: Well it's a place children go to learn, and read, and...

CANNIBAL 1: You don't teach your children yourself?

SAILOR: Well no, we have teachers for that. But they quite enjoy it...

CANNIBAL 2: How long do your children stay there?

SAILOR"" Pretty much all day...

CANNIBAL 1: And you don't see them?

SAILOR: Not exactly...

CANNIBAL 2: Poor children.

CANNIBAL 1: How savage.

SAILOR: How else would they learn about the world and nature and math and reading?

CANNIBAL 2: Can't you take them out and show them nature yourself?

Teach them what you know and have learned? What else is a parent for?

SAILOR: Well I'm so busy with my job you see, I never have time...

CANNIBAL 1: No time for his own children even .

CANNIBAL 2: What an awful existence.

CANNIBAL 1: What are you doing here anyways? You must be far from home.

SAILOR: I took a job shoveling coal on a ship. You know, get a change of pace, see the world...

CANNIBAL 2: Even HE got tired of his existence.

CANNIBAL 1: Who wouldn't? It sounds terrible.

*A contemplative silence.*

CANNIBAL 2: I should probably relieve myself before dinner. (Walks to nearby bush, squats.)

SAILOR: Eugh!

CANNIBAL 1: What's the matter?

SAILOR: Relieving yourself in the bush...how undignified.

CANNIBAL 1: Why where do you do it?

SAILOR: Oh we have places to do it in our homes called...

CANNIBAL 2: You relieve yourself in your home?

CANNIBAL 1: Absolutely filthy.

CANNIBAL 2: Highly unsanitary.

CANNIBAL 1: It's just not civilized.

CANNIBAL 2: What a strange and awful culture.

CANNIBAL 1: It makes you thankful you're not one of them doesn't it?

CANNIBAL 2: Oh yes, quite thankful.

CANNIBAL 1: The fire looks about ready.

CANNIBAL 2: I dare say it does.

*Cannibal 2 casually picks up nearby stone knife and slits Sailor's throat.*

CANNIBAL 1: What a sad and strange place he came from. Works all day, only has one god, never sees his children, relieves himself indoors...

CANNIBAL 2: Sad and strange indeed. We really did him a favor.

CANNIBAL 1: Certainly put him out of his misery, didn't we?

CANNIBAL 2: That we did. This time I get the liver!

*Curtain*