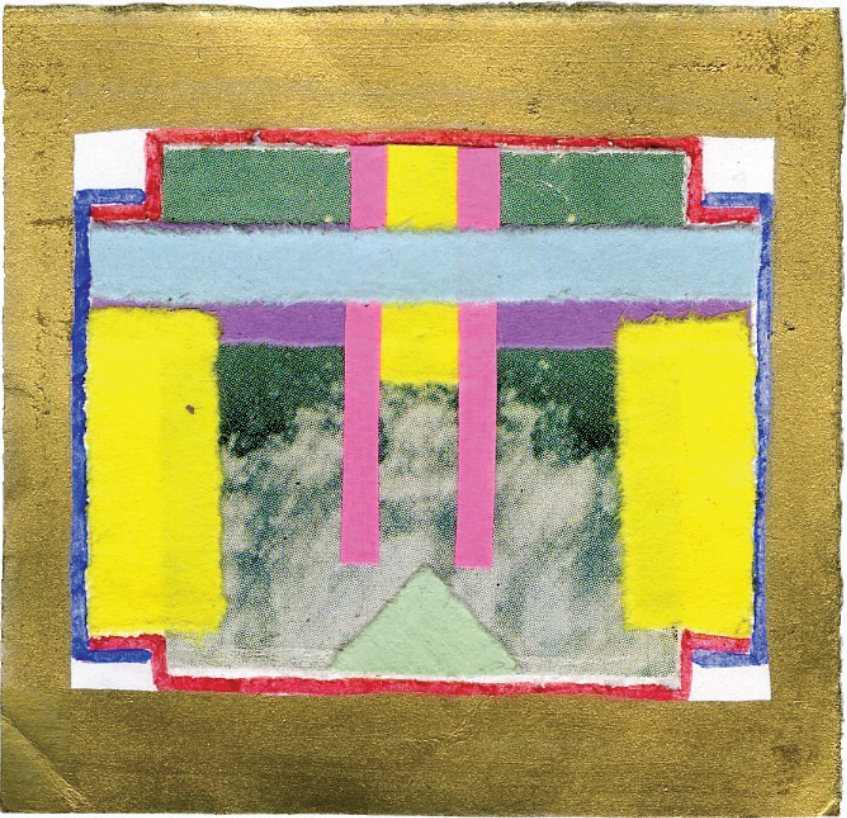


SPRING 2014

GALLATIN REVIEW

VOLUME 29



THE GALLATIN REVIEW

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GALLATIN
REVIEW

VOLUME XXIX // *SPRING 2014*

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FRONT COVER crsshhh // joseph cornell saunders

BACK COVER sharpies // joseph cornell saunders





alexandra // yasmin daguilh

BOSCOBEL

madeleine walker

They move the house from the hills to the mountains
on the back of a pickup truck.

First they take it down to its bones.

The planks, the beams, the wood cells of it.

They put it back up in Garrison,
overlooking the river, an apple orchard nearby.

The walls come together and the floors realign
in a sigh, like a spirit re-enters the body. Like waking.

How does Baudelaire feel spoken out of French?

Who is the lover, the spirit, the poem newly formed?

Do novels, in other tongues, ever lose windows and doors?

Do they ever open into new rooms? And what does the body,
interpreted by a new lover's touch, turn to? Is it love

to be reassembled elsewhere, in a new language, to be moved
from Montrose to the mountains, and re-built?

To be taken apart and put together again.

Is that what it is to be loved well?

The lucky ones translated on the other side.

Sometimes, a phrase too ramshackle.

A body too broken.

Whole rooms lost along the highway.

TIES

jenna snyder

I tried friendship
now I'm gay
homo is a gateway hug

I tried to find god
in drag
drag
Jesus is the gateway drug

Amen men men men men men men men men men

I'll see you
later Jesus
in the corner
of my high

I try not to give good goodbyes—
makes it not seem like
food

for worms
from the womb till the suits
and the ties



flight 1 // dimas martadarma







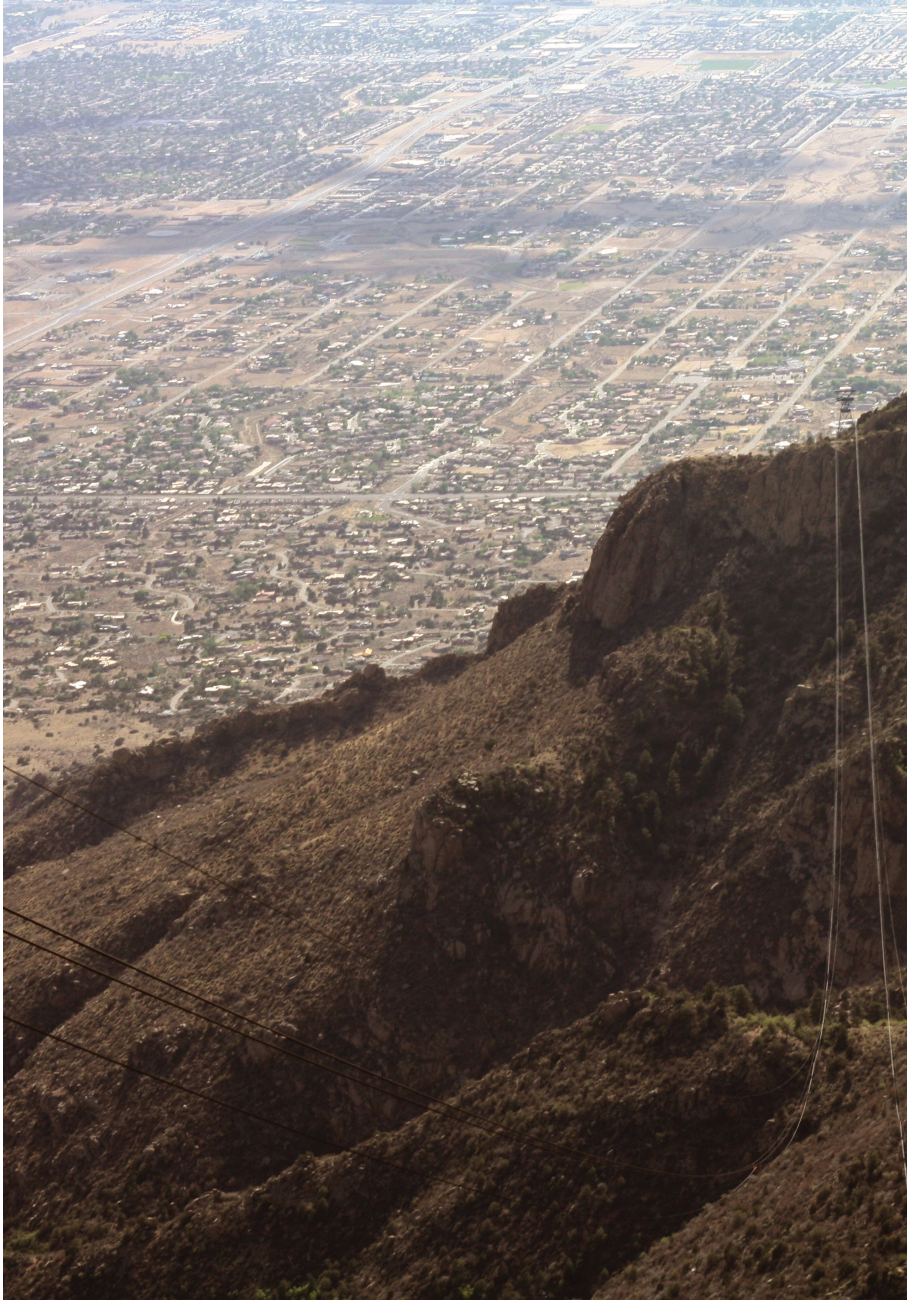
flight 2 // dimas martadarma



boy, kathmandu, nepal // camila arévalo

kathmandu monkeys // camila arévalo







sandia // emily dubovoy

NOBODY

"n Roller" and the Motown gem (Know I'm) Losing You" was overwhelming. In keeping with Stewart'



MOORE as IAN FLEMING'S



no name // michael adno



shadows // joseph cornell saunders



GABRIEL

allison casar

22

The Allied troops had won the Argonne Forest, but that was little comfort to the dead. Their bodies were cooling as dusk fell; soldiers from both sides lay where they'd fallen, full of bullets, surrounded by casings, waiting for the survivors to retrieve them for burial. One man slumped in a sickly, broken sort of way against the twisted roots of a great old tree. He had lost his helmet, and the hair beneath was of the starkest, strangest white. He wore his gas mask though it bore a dark-stained hole just between the eyes, and beneath it his face was soft and broad and brown. He had torn the hose from his mask and his mouth lay open, stuck there in the memory of a last push for breath. His final thoughts—a horrible, desperate plea for home—were etched into the frozen lines of his face. New Mexico was an ocean and half a continent away.

His still brown hands cupped a photograph:

a white-haired woman and a dark-haired man, grinning big, silent grins. Between them was a tiny child, her own hair a pale wisp at her forehead. She did not smile, but stared into the camera and into the soldier's unseeing eyes.

Pilar's father could not see the man in the mask. She'd asked him one night at dinner, while he sat reading papers at the far end of the table. He'd looked up at her quite strangely, run a hand back through his greying hair, and asked her if this was a new imaginary friend.

"He can't see me, and he isn't going to try," the man in the mask had said from beside her, where he stood like a dark haze; she could see straight through to the wall behind. "Now finish your squash." Pilar had finished her squash, because even if Papá never noticed when she left half-eaten vegetables on her plate, the man in the mask did.

It was very nearly spring. He had come to her in the fall, a man dressed all in black with a funny, white mask, empty lenses for eyes and a shifting edgelessness to his body. He was an odd sight for a six year old, and yet there was something warm about him. The voice that rose from beneath the mask was soft, safe and somehow familiar. The broad, broken old house embraced him like an old friend, and he it, so that they seemed two parts of a big, quiet whole. The furniture faded in and out of view through his torso, and he, at times, seemed to disappear within it. When Pilar tried to touch him, her hand passed straight through; he had no need for doors. When she asked him why, he shook his head. When she asked him what—or who—he was, he only said, “I was a regular man once.” He fingered a hole in his mask and shook his head again. “I don’t know. I’m something else now.”

For a moment there was silence, and then: “I don’t know if I’m supposed to be here. I want to be here but I just . . . I don’t know why I am.”

“So sometimes you’re not? Sometimes you just disappear?” she asked. “Maybe if you knew why, you could stay!”

“Maybe. Suppose that could be it,” he mused. The little girl cocked her head, pondered the issue, gave up and went back to what she’d been doing, which

was hopping up and down in front of a bookcase.

At the height of each jump, she reached for the bookcase’s top edge. It stood some four feet above her head, so it was a futile exercise. With each attempt she grew visibly more frustrated, until at last she stopped altogether and, huffing, glared upward. The man in the mask, who had been watching the odd scene for some time now, tried to draw her away.

“Pilar, leave it. You’re going to knock something over. Go downstairs and ask your father for help,” he said, but the little girl rounded on him, dark eyes adamant and white hair a tousled mess. She pointed to the top of the bookcase.

“Papá’s in his study and I’m not allowed. And it’s my fault Tito’s stuck. I threw him too high! I can’t just leave him up there!” She lowered her voice to a grave whisper. “He’s afraid of heights. He’s *scared*. I have to get him down right *now* or he’ll cry.” And before he could remind her that the cat on top of the dresser wasn’t real—that he was, in fact, just a plush toy—she had reached up, grabbed the fourth shelf and was attempting to climb.

The man in the mask hovered. He took a tentative step forward. He couldn’t actually pull the girl off of the bookcase, could he? Pilar curled her little fingers around the top shelf and kept going. He shifted anxiously this way and that. There was creaking, and

It was always like this. His wife and son watched him, day and night, from their high shelf. They pulled memories from him, whispered to him like ghosts. He wished he could put them away—he had, in fact, tried—but to do so felt so wrong that he always brought them back. Now he spent his moment with them, let them stare at him, stared back and then turned to another shelf with a brandy glass and bottle.

He had a drink, and then another, and just when he could no longer feel their eyes on his back there was a *thunk* from behind him. Warily he turned back to the shelf to see that the third frame, the one huddled behind the other two, had fallen to the floor. Its companions stood untouched (which later struck him as odd)—*what force could have knocked the one over and left the other two standing?* He temporarily put his drink aside, crossed the room and knelt to pick it up. There was his daughter, round, sweet-faced and six years old, staring up at him from beneath an unbroken pane of glass. *The only living thing in a house full of ghosts*, he thought. He reached for her; his hand shook.

The man in the study, with his deeply lined face, his grey hair and his breath scented with brandy, felt a sudden sting in his eyes; he put one hand over his mouth and stayed there on the floor for a very long time.

From above him, his wife, his son and his younger self stared, and beside him a young man he could not see watched wordlessly from behind a broken white mask.



In the days that followed the weather warmed, and the New Mexico sky rose clear above the broken old house. With her father locked away in his study and no other children in the neighborhood, Pilar would wander out behind the house to play. With the man in the mask in tow, she searched the overgrown yard for things that buzzed and crawled. She wound her way through the tangle of weeds, bushes and flowers that had once been a grand garden, and crashed and crunched through the brush of the woods behind.

She showed the man in the mask her own bright, odd world, and he was only too happy to join it. Each ditch became a great canyon to cross, each fallen tree the walls of an ancient castle, each boulder a mountain to climb, each insect an exotic beast. One day she tied a piece of string to each end of a fallen branch and was an archer for the afternoon, sneaking through the brush and hunting great winged beasts with her partner crouched silently beside her. The next day, the yard became a circus tent and she a one-woman act for an invisible audience, jumping, prancing, tumbling and generally dirtying up her clothes in such a way that her father would be cross that evening. The man in the mask became a lion tamer and little Tito his lion, with Pilar announcing the act to the roar of imaginary cheers. It was the first time in a week, the man noted to himself, that Tito the cat had come out with them; whereas once she had refused to part with him, Pilar no longer seemed reluctant to leave him behind while they had adventures.

One warm Sunday, they left the house just as the sun was reaching its height. The dew had dried on the high grass, and the sky was glass bead blue and cloudless. Pilar ran out across the yard, tripped once, stood and barreled on through the twisted growth of the garden. The man in the mask followed at a more dignified pace, careful to keep his charge in sight as he made his way slowly; he was pleased to note that branches and leaves moved as he brushed against them, instead of fading through him. Something golden caught his eye, and he stopped and knelt down in the shade of the garden's twisted growth.

By now Pilar was at the edge of the woods, and when she turned back to her companion she could not see him. She waited for him to reappear from behind a tree, or from the shadows of the garden, and hurry to her side. When he didn't, her mind flashed with images: her mother's bed, a voice too weak to speak, a casket borne by soldiers, her ragged old cat. She felt suddenly and horribly alone, and a cold panic rose up in her throat. She cried out for the man in the mask.

There was a long, wind-ruffled silence; the glass bead sky stretched out overhead and the sick feeling knotted in her throat. She made for the garden at a scrambling run. Just as she was preparing to call for him again, she heard her name. Relief made her shudder. She followed his voice and found him among the weeds, crouched over a patch of golden flowers.

Pilar could not see his face, yet she could imagine

the look upon it; it echoed all down his body, a kind of dreamy sadness, and he was fading softly at the edges. She knelt beside him, loose dirt cool under her knees.

"Do you remember your mother?" he asked quietly. His tone was soft, dreamy and sad, like his body, like his face must have been beneath the mask.

"Oh. Umm. Yeah," said Pilar, but that was half a lie and she knew it, so she added, "Mostly. A bit." Then, as the quiet between them crept into her and whispered in her throat, she added, "She liked to sing."

"That she did," whispered the man in the mask.

"She got sick," said Pilar.

"She did. Do you remember?"

A moment of silence, and then: "Yes. She stopped singing me bedtime songs, and Papá wouldn't let me sleep in her bed anymore. I remember that."

"Do you remember what her favorite flower was?" asked the man in the mask, and Pilar shook her head. She lowered her eyes, a tangle of white hair hid her face, and she didn't say anything else, didn't tell the man in the mask that she remembered her Mamá's singing but not her face, not her words, nothing real.

"Right here," said the man in the mask, but she didn't lift her head. "Look, Pilar, these lilies. The yellow ones. These were your mother's favorite. Pilar, look."

He wasn't whispering anymore. Pilar finally raised her head and looked at the flowers, a huge clump of them, delicate, golden yellow and sprouting up in the



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KÜÇÜKSU PALACE, ISTANBUL

jannah berkley

Downton Sultan sits on the bank of Bosphorus antiquity
between a garden and a pay-as-you-go WC.
With an entrance of regality in Hamptons white,
Aslan's ivory brother guards the ivory-esque door.
Leave your proclamations and political scrolls on the mat and come inside!
An Ottoman ottoman for your weary feet,
how far you must have travelled to get here.
Was it a horse-drawn carriage from the Far East?
Or a double-decker behemoth from your hotel?

Emerald city glass glints with electric blare,
instead of the old gas glow.
These chandeliers hang high enough for the maids,
but too low for the wide-eyed Italian football team,
ducking towards the door across the foyer.
A door that leads nowhere but symmetry.

The titan columns hover in each shadowed corner,
imported smurf marble,
imported serf labor,
while the empty fountain gurgles in reverence
for good times past,
for hamam baths.
The kings, dukes, and prophets who longed for its mystical muddy water
skinny dip jump into the fountain of youth.

The man of the house watches over his guests
à la Gatsby,
at a distance,
from above;
but he has no need for daisies with the
concubines' tulip of the month club.
The fez topped proprietor stirs his tea
while a tourist sips Pepsi Light.
Drinking, a pastime for Sultan number three,
although he never eats his chickpeas.

An hour will pass but you'd never know
with every clock set fashionably late to the top of the hour.
A tribute to a fallen comrade,
the time for morning prayer,
or
the work of a mischievous kindergartener.
A crane digs a new metro outside while faux rugs
replace faded rugs downstairs.
But inside the Sultan's summer sanctuary
progress is forever frozen at 9:05 a.m..



tears // sarah doody

PUDDLE GAMES

anna danashevskya beckerman

You lifted up the blanket and stretched my underwear and snapped it, because you always need to make things funny.

Yes, if you lift up the blanket I will get under it. I'll say you have the softest neck, but it won't be a compliment and no jokes, not this late at night, you can't laugh at things while they're moving.

You said come, come lie on me and nothing gross, and you said come lie on me and you lifted up the blanket and you tried to block me from traffic, let my bread go bad in the glove compartment, and one summer, you went around planting peaches.

You lifted up the blanket and you always say all these great things about cities, and after it rained we watched people approach puddles, placed bets on whether they would jump or go around or stand in them sinking,

and you said my shirt was dirty, you said you couldn't put up the poster I gave you because it didn't match the room's aesthetic, and I agreed.

I tried not to hate you for using the word "aesthetic," tried not to hate you for lifting up the blanket, so instead
I took off my dress and I got under it.

MUNICIPAL POOL 17

kaila allison

34

In the Daily Reports Logbook of Municipal Pool 17, there is a single entry scribbled in faint pencil for June 6, 1976: “Lost one female, unnamed, unclaimed, nothing to be done.”

Enrico Flores, a fat little Mexican boy aged 10, saw a yellow beach ball floating by him in the pool. When he grabbed for it, it seemed heavier than it should have been. He started to lift it out of the water and realized it was a girl’s swollen head in a yellow swim cap, drowned.

He had mistaken her yellow swim cap for the tight plastic of a beach ball, and when he saw her ballooned face, he screamed and thrashed and pushed her away, until the swim cap bobbed up and down like a buoy in a swell of waves.

Enrico Flores paddled his fat little legs and thrashed his fat little arms and screamed with his fat little voice, his eyes bugged like a hooked fish. He

hoisted himself out of the water, scraping his palms on the coarse concrete, and called hysterically for his mother. The commotion caused other bathers to peek their heads out from behind their magazines.

“What a fat little thing,” an elderly bather said when she saw the puffy-eyed boy, now crying.

The pool was evacuated. The lifeguards suspected the child had lost control of his bladder.

The mercury read 98 and the sun washed a leaden light over the bathers. It was one of only eight sunny days in June that year, a month of extraordinary rain. According to the almanac, the only other June with that much rain had been in 1876, when the Great Flood hit the coast and decimated the ancestral homes of Bizaz, one of which belonged to the soothsayer, Hermienda de las Estrellas.

Residents of Bizaz who believed in Hermienda’s omens might have been prepared for the weather,

because in her journals were found detailed plans for the city's evacuation in preparation for the next centennial flood. Hermianda was born in Bizaz and her last wish, at age 113, was to die in her own bed, cleansed by *las lágrimas de los ángeles*.

When the lifeguards had everyone out of the pool, their supervisor, Jack Lowe, saw the buoyant yellow bathing cap and muttered, "Oh Christ." Bathers were sun-dried immediately, and stood in their Mickey Mouse towels and rubber flip-flops. Mothers turned their children away and rested wet cheeks on their soft scalps. Fathers mentally mapped the fastest way to get to the parking lot. Enrico Flores was in a manic fit, his mother searing the skin on his wrist with her fingernails.

"Will you *hush up*, Enrico? Will you just *hush up*?"

The girl's body laid on two boogie boards, a fluorescent orange floatie placed under her head. She wore a yellow bikini with frills along the waistband. Jack Lowe slowly removed the bathing cap, fearing too harsh a movement would rip her head clean off her lanky neck. A great deal of black hair surged from the swim cap, and the girl looked now more like a girl, almost charming. Her face and stomach were inflated though. Upon Jack Lowe's multiple attempts to revive her, none proved strong enough.

Enrico Flores screamed, "I got her dead germs all over me Mama! Does that mean I'm going to die?"

"Get your towel."

Enrico looked at his hands like they were foreign to him. At that moment, the belly of the sky gave

its hungry roar and Enrico's face and hands became newly drenched with rain, along with the faces and hands of all the other bathers, the lifeguards, the dead girl.



They called her Alma. They called her Alma because they didn't know what her real name was. They called her Alma because they could think of no other name.

There was no birth certificate or belongings or address. No one at the pool could identify her. No one knew how long she had been dead, or how she had drowned. No one knew where she came from, or who her parents were. They didn't know where she used to play after school, or if she even went to school, or what she wanted to be when she grew up. They didn't know what her favorite dessert was or what she wanted for her birthday or who loved her.

They wondered what to do with her. Jack Lowe said, "We can't have her stinking up the place."

The question now was what to write in the logbook.

The question now was who to notify.

The question now was who would pay for the funeral, or whether there would even be one.

Jack Lowe wished he had a lawyer. No, he wished he had a scotch. He thought, *Maybe I should just quit and go west like I always dreamed.*

Alma was thrown in a mass grave, and to most, was forgotten.



The fat kid thought he was going to die. He had dreams for the next few months about the girl. One such dream he told to his mother while she read the newspaper.

In the dream, an old woman sat in a rocking chair and had poor little dead Alma on her lap and was rocking, rocking, rocking. The woman had grey eyes and limbs as frail as birch branches. She kept rocking and rocking and sang an old hymn,

*My baby is home
safe in my arms
no one's gonna take her
they'll do'er no harm*

*My baby is home
she'll have no fears
we'll sing till we feel
the angel's tears.*



Following the death of Alma, the town of Bizaz experienced the most torrential of its predicted rain. The schools were cancelled and the children were advised to play indoors and stay away from the windows, should the wind pick up speed. However, the parents were expected to show up to work.

One morning, while Gloria Bacarón was walking her dog, Digo, she plunged a heel into the swampy earth and got sucked down by the dense, ancient mud, dragging Digo yapping all the way down with her. Neighbors claimed they could not sleep at night

because of a continuous holler that came from under the earth.

Later that week, Celeste Julian found a letter written in an indiscernible pictographic language in her mailbox. Two days later, her husband was found paralyzed in bed, unable to move or talk. He was carted to Delaron Hospital, where he remained mute for the next week until he died.

Ada Puentes, a 20 year old pregnant prostitute, was carted into the hospital room adjacent to Celeste Julian's poor husband, where she gave birth to a child with two ear-like growths protruding from his head. Ada Puentes was ousted from the town, and doctors claimed the only explanation of the birth of such a beastly child could have been "devil's eggs." She and the child were both killed in their sleep.

Over the next few months, other mysterious episodes struck the citizens of Bizaz. There was fear of invaders from another town, or the government, conspiring against its people in some religious crusade. There were town hall meetings every week to discuss the outrage and fear taking over Bizaz's waning population. Parents were frantic, hovering over their children, administering old herbal remedies to fend off evil spirits, anything to allay the terror.

The rainwaters had long washed the ancient mud over the bodies in the mass graves to the point where their faces were more like the faces of stone statues. The day of the procession was on the 36th consecutive day of rain in the town of Bizaz. A thick, ancient mud caked against the women's bare feet as they carried Alma's four-foot box over their heads. ♦



ZAP

danya kukafka

38

Zap Arnaud knows how to fill a doorway. You should see it—he takes that space and keeps it for his own. Zap stands in the doorway of classroom 201 and the painted wooden beams frame his body like they were built that way, like he commanded the door to assemble around him and it listened.

I prefer to slink. *Alice*, Mom always says, *stand up straight. Did those years of ballet teach you nothing?*

When Zap walks, he sinks into his lower back and adds a sort of swing to his step—it's not a swagger; he's not that kind of guy. I bet his mom still buys his pants. Zap's mom gets blonde highlights every month, she has no wrinkles, and she calls everyone *sweetheart*. She's French. So is his dad. They moved to America at age 18, and met in the French Student Alliance at Yale. They've been in love ever since. Real love. Mr. Arnaud buys Mrs. Arnaud flowers on his way home from work, and sometimes they hold

hands in public.

His name isn't actually Zap. It's Antoine, pronounced *Ant-won*. He's gone by Zap since the fourth grade, though, because one day he came to school dressed in a gigantic lightning bolt costume he'd made from a cardboard refrigerator box. It was the week after the flash flood of 2004 which killed 12 people in the town over. He painted the lightning bolt yellow and harnessed it on with a pair of suspenders. All day he went around saying *Zap, Zap, Zap*, passing out fun-sized Snickers bars. He was a *force of nature*, he said, but the kind that brought joy instead of harm. I thought this was so great. Everyone did. After school, he and I went to the lake behind his house and watched the clouds roll toward the mountains in surrender.

Zap plays soccer. He can play any sport—sophomore year he was recruited for the football

team—but he’s best at soccer. At the game last week, they announced his full-ride soccer scholarship to Penn State. I wasn’t there, but I heard. He’s the only one accepted to college so far.

Zap, take a seat, my math teacher says. He strolls to his desk and slides effortlessly in. I fumble with the awkward metal bar that connects the chair to the tiny wooden desk—but Zap doesn’t notice these things.

His girlfriend plays soccer, too. Jenna is beautiful. She has long blonde hair and a body that’s both round and thin, in the correct respective places. Jenna got a 17 on the ACT (out of 36), so her parents hired a full-time tutor and she took it twice more. She got a 17 again. And again. They might be in love, Zap and Jenna, but it’s hard to tell with pretty people. They naturally look happier.

Zap and I were best friends once. But now his shoulders are too broad and his teeth are too straight and his hands are tan and smooth, veins traveling across them like rivers on a map. In April of our seventh grade year, he was barely five feet tall, and by September he’d reached six feet. He stopped calling every night. But I understand. That’s how things go sometimes. Anyway, you should see how Zap Arnaud stands in doorways—I promise, you’ll know what I mean.



Alice, my dad yells up the stairs. *Hurry up!*

The mirror in my bedroom is covered in dust, but even in the blurry reflection, I look like a girl made of sticks. My elbows jut outward, bony and awkward,

my chest is flat, and my hair just lies there, brown and thin against my scalp. I’m wearing a sheer purple shirt, the most feminine thing I own, and it hangs shapeless and boxy around my waist.

Mom and Dad are fighting by the front door. *Not now*, Mom says. *Do you really want to do this in front of the Arnauds?* Mom’s been sleeping in the guest room for the past year because of Dad’s “cough.” *Not now, Janine?* Dad says, laughing his meanest laugh, hearty and deep. *You brought this on yourself.*

In eight months, I’ll be in a dorm room somewhere. Stanford, maybe. Maybe my roommate will be vomiting in the bathroom because maybe we’ve gone out the night before and we had a lot of fun.

I spread light pink blush over my cheeks. I only wear makeup on the first Wednesday of every month, when we go to dinner at Zap’s (which has been a tradition since the flood all those years ago. *Community building*, my mom said). Makeup doesn’t do me much good. I try to remember what Miss Amy, my old ballet teacher, used to say about vertebrae alignment and how it makes you look more confident, but I swear I can’t tell the difference between slumping and standing straight.

What are you all dressed up for? Dad snorts when I come down the stairs.

You look nice, Mom says.

I suddenly feel extremely stupid in my childish purple shirt.

In the car, Dad laughs sarcastically to himself every few minutes and Mom fidgets with the radio

POST-MILLENNIAL YOGURT POLITICS

emma behnke

My father forwards me an email from our local gym
Wishing me a preemptive happy birthday.
Come sweat with us! it says.
There is a Michael Pollan quote too.
My father eats yogurt for breakfast.

They have started tracking us,
Broadcasting our heart rates on a big screen TV,
Like a game of Sudoku played by gerbils.
The men drink thick, opaque concoctions out of tinted Nalgene bottles,
Their crotches awkwardly shoved into various layers of spandex,
Binding their manhood up like a stocking stuffer.

Come sweat with us!

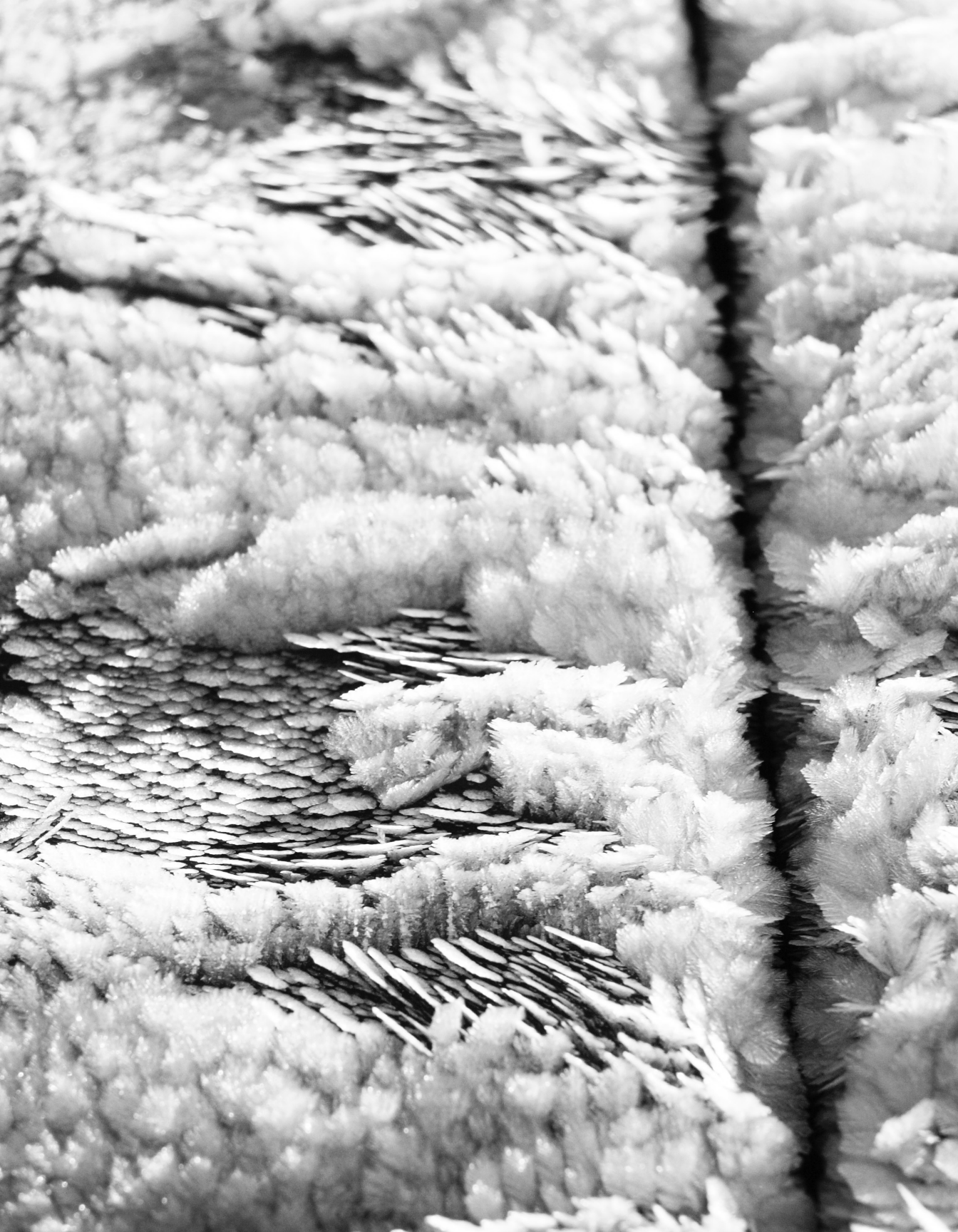
THE LAST SCENE

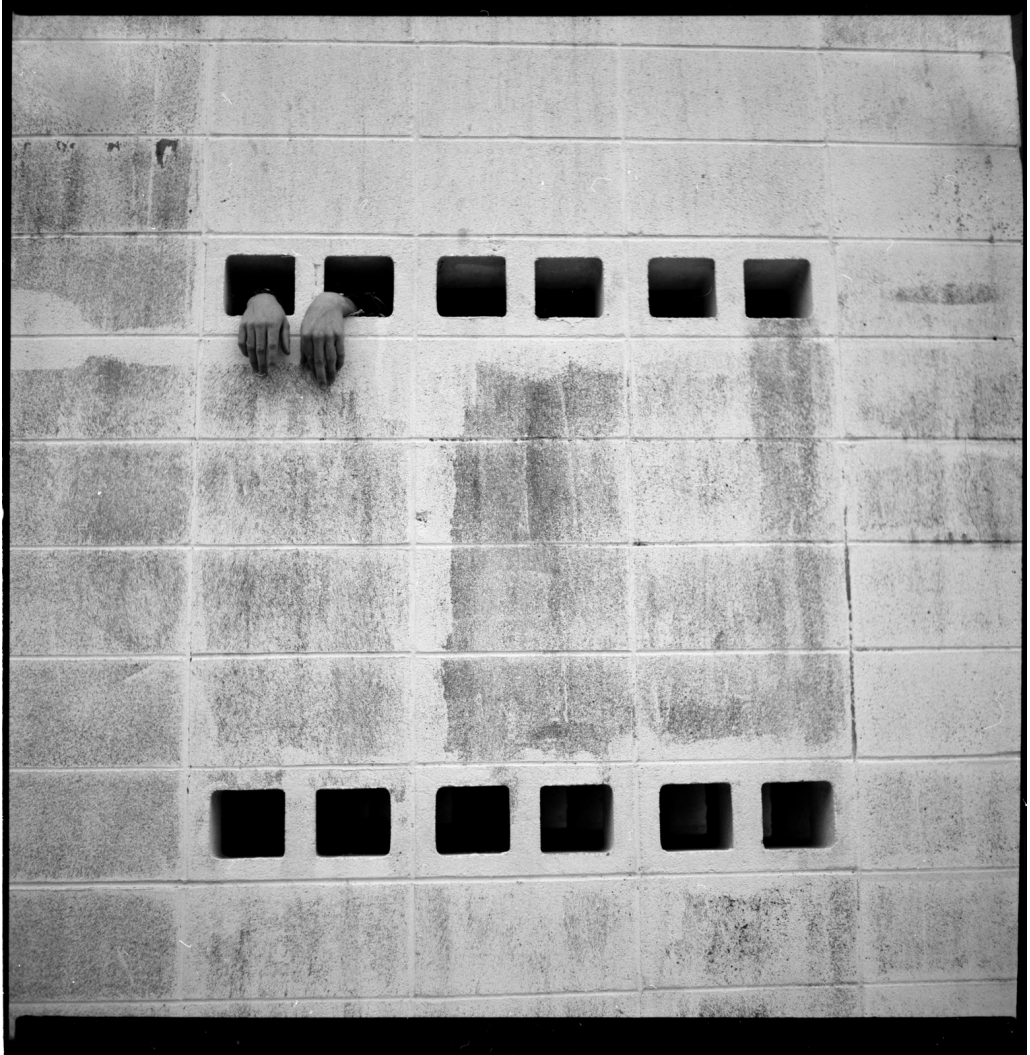
sara montijo

Your palms tried but could not press
I can't lower my voice any more than
this it will fold I've been daydreaming
half forgotten still unborn
my body every morning
I become alive the ritual the socket
I call my belly button
I gave birth to me
there exists a word for this I just haven't met it
yet so the silence accumulates and over time I
am cactus to your touch
my pain extends beyond my body
and reaches out for you
we pierce the ones we love
but when you're drunk
your guilt transforms in you a sunset
turn to your loved one
and feel what it is to be uniform
rage is a stone tossed this is whispering
a door closing tip in tip out stand still I just want to be sure

Board the train together.
Unravel in bed and try again.
Permit the flowers bloom. Please with me lean
over and taste our last salt droplet.
One pile of clothes
so light and barely breathing
as though we were an accident of sleep.







ALL THAT COMES WITH IT

liz francis

Byron was strong when you met him and weak when he finally wasted away and got some rest. Besides your grandfather, he was your first introduction to death. Your first idea of the injustice of it. Your first time playing with the idea of God. The first time you played with the idea of a God that doesn't really care. When the young get sick, you wonder what it's all about. Life and shit. You didn't get very far with it all. It was just one of those things confounded by that crushing idea of loss.



You were lying in bed. The weight of your dog's body rested on your ankles. You had just woken up. Your vision still fuzzy from sleep. You rubbed all that night mess from your eyes. You could hear your parents in the kitchen clinging and clanging pots around, and talking about the news louder than they needed to be. You rolled over and picked up your phone from the floor. You had a text from Greer.

"Byron died."

And just like that his light went out. You had been waiting for it for so long.



You remember his funeral. The tiny Baptist church, with its white walls inside and out. You had never been in a place so small and powerful. The carpet was red plush. It was cold outside. Probably December. The church was stuffed full and sweltering hot. Hot with grief. More than half of the people there didn't even have a seat. You remember being pushed against a wall. You were covered in sweat and your eyes were closed. You could barely see the room where his body lay and you never got to see it. His face stuffed full of formaldehyde and ethanol. The thought of it made you feel like you were going to puke. But by the time he went his way, he was so filled with chemicals to keep him alive. What was the difference? The way you grappled with Death. The way it grappled with

him for the first time since you heard he was sick you knew he was dying.

He had already lost about 30 pounds of muscle. He was so skeletal, his skin so ashen and grey. It used to be so black and taut.

Caleb passed him the blunt and he moved it on without taking a hit. Greer looked at him.

He smiled, his grin still white and cocky. The bags under his eyes pooled up in a bit of a smirk. He pulled a pill bottle out of his backpack.

“Marinol,” Byron said.

“That shit’s got him fucked up though,” Caleb said.

Everyone was laughing. And the cells inside of Byron were dying by the millions.

You hit the blunt.



Your Jeep was loud on the highway. It wasn’t summer anymore so at least the doors were on, but the plastic back windows and the waterproof leather top never provided insulation. The wind whipped through your car and made it feel like it was going to fly away. No one played music.

When you got to the burial, you parked off to the side of a gravel pathway. There were at least 50 cars in front and behind. You climbed out. Richard and Caleb had ridden with Seth. There was a tent above the hole in the ground and his casket was already placed next to it. It was so white on such a grey day. You can’t remember if the preacher was there. It was on a hill, so your feet were slanted, trying to make

sense of which way was up.

And then Byron was lowered to the ground. For the life of you, you can’t remember if anyone was talking, but it was a burial, right? Someone must have spoken. Said something good about how he was full of life, a euphemism for his lack of focus or future. Or that he was out of his misery, the constant pain of disease no longer crushing him.

You were so cold. You should have brought something warmer. Things were thrown on where he was laid to rest. Flowers. His skateboard. A blunt.

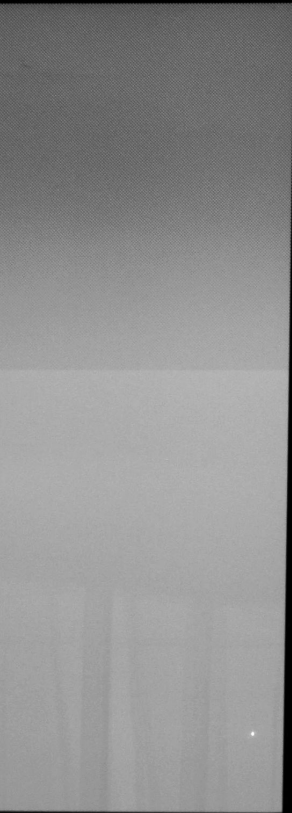
Then they filled the hole with dirt. His white casket became mottled brown and fresh earth. Shovelful after shovelful until he was really gone and under.

You spat again but you never threw up.



There was a point, in those last few weeks, where death really hung in the air. For a while it wasn’t so obvious. It only loomed in the background like white noise. But when you hung out in his living room and he would sit there, eyes closed, and wouldn’t move for a long time . . . Death had started to close in.

It was the last time you saw him before he went his way. His living room was so dirty. His grandma croaked in the corner like a frog. Caleb was smoking a bowl on the couch while Byron’s little brother played with his fire truck. You had nothing to say. You felt like you shouldn’t even be there. You had bitten your fingers to shit. It was so warm and smoky. Byron, weak and nauseous, lit a cigarette. He still smoked.





YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND

amauta marston-firmino

54

If you're first generation American, born and raised in US cities, you learn to straddle worlds. If you're lucky, you learn Spanish, and you'll get erroneously placed in ESL year after year. Your best friends in elementary school will know that you don't quite belong and then the '90s will end and multiculturalism will be the buzzword, and you'll be interesting all of a sudden. Your neighborhood will change and you'll be a part of their history, a heritage stop on the guided tour. Your parents will educate you at home, inoculate you with a deadpan bitterness. You'll be transparent and brittle like the porcelain you always hated. Your father will teach you about the hardships, the third world, Peru, the '80s, terrorism, Maoists and car bombs. Your mother will tell you about farming, ancestral this, herbal that, hallucinogens and love. You'll roll your eyes. You'll hiss long and bark loud. You'll speak English for your

grandmother and read mail for your father and speak Spanish when you have to, when you can. You'll be an imposter, neither completely here nor there, now nor then. You'll feel angry and you'll want to kick ass for no reason at all, for any reason at all. This would be middle school. You'll be the first to know when enough is enough, and the knife that slowly pushes into your gut will mean less in lieu of the words that tie your tongue into fits of boastful fear, the sound of metal scraping metal. And *descorazonaré*, you'll repeat until the letters are laced into your spit and your head feels dizzy with the weight of historical burden.

Being from here is not easy.

The first time I lied about my name it was a sneaky satisfaction, like burying treasures in the sand. I only existed as much as I was understood and no one could understand me the first time. So I used to lie about my name because it was the easy way to

force myself into existence here. I was Walter, I was changed, mumbo jumbo, malt, mountain, amount, Amador, almonds, forgotten. There was no escape, only lies. And when I got tired of lying, I forced a smile.

Like the way my parents separated. I was the bridge between two sinking ships. I grew up listening. So I think first about what my life sounds like—about the sound of airports, the sound of locks and sobbing, thick thuds of flesh behind the door and the music of growing up listening.

I wrote my father an email the other day. I was thinking about growing up with and without him and I told him things I had never told him before. I told him about my music and how I was still practicing my scales most days. The same way he taught me. How there are fragments of sound, and sound in silence, in every memory that comes to me. How I could only imagine the silence of being blind while hearing me grow up. I told him I loved him.

I don't know whether I'm sad or angry sometimes. Growing up with my mother made that a very vague distinction to me. She would say, "Amata, I'm not angry at you, I'm just sad." In her world, lies and pretending could ease the burden. Maybe that's why I've always wanted to be a secret agent, to pretend for a living, to live life through a filter. My grandmother though, she never had a filter. She kicked and spit.

In sixth grade, my grandmother gave me a toaster for Christmas. She ended up hiding it in her basement a week later because it was getting crumbs

on her counter. Another time she got me an alarm clock, then hid it in her closet. The last gift she got me was a coffee machine, now stuffed in a cabinet somewhere, she promised to give it back to me next year.

For as long as I can remember, her love has been a dirty secret. She's ashamed to know that you could possibly know. She can scold me all day, then give me the best comforter in the house, because she knows the living room gets cold at night, especially around Christmas time when everybody steals each other's blankets. And then she'll kick my ass in the morning for scratching her plate with the silverware.

Christmas has always been rough for me. My mother never celebrated Christmas (or Easter, or Valentine's, or New Year's, or her birthday for that matter, they were all consumerist exercises to her). But my father loved it, ate it up. And so did my grandmother, cheeks greasy. They would deck the house and get into the spirit and plan things. The rooms would take on the heavy air of our bodies, in constant friction, and the smell of our breath weighing down on us. It was the only time there were ever more than three of us under one roof for more than 48 hours. It was like being swallowed whole in the house that was too big for just my father and grandmother.

My grandmother would be in her pajamas until three in the afternoon and she wouldn't put her teeth in until after we'd all had breakfast. We'd breakfast late. My father would head downstairs in

the mornings to run on the treadmill and hold off on his shower until after lunch. I'd share a sofa bed with my youngest uncle, Paul, and my cousin. They'd wake up at 10 and start making noise, moving around, and they'd take the blankets and they'd smell. And yet the house would be gradually cleaner and then impeccable; and there would be more statuettes and angels and mangers as Christmas night approached; and people would get touchy and there'd be envy and there'd be fights.

My grandmother threw a toy at my cousin and broke his nose one Christmas. I threatened my oldest cousin with a knife one Christmas. My uncle got drunk and pinched my butt cheek one Christmas. Everyone would get gifts from my grandmother, as shitty as they were, and we'd laugh; only I would get anything from my father. They'd all keep a hard eye on me as I ripped the packaging. The slightest waver in my voice brought on waves of accusatory glances. They cut deep, and all I could think about was the fact that I was born here, I spoke English, didn't quite speak Spanish the same way and didn't comb my hair in the mornings. Just for that, I was on thin ice, so I learned to appreciate the shittiest gifts and not ask for anything more, for anything at all.

Back home, my mother was always doubtful. It can't be that bad, she'd tell me. You need to spend more time with them; they'll get jealous. And there I was, swimming in waves of accusatory glances year after year.

I would stay with them for the week. I'd help them

cook the Christmas dinner, clean the living room, take the time to put up the Christmas decorations, buy groceries, mix drinks, move furniture. I remember the lights most of all, in shapes on the windows every year, facing the busy avenue. I would make sure they were big and bright enough to be seen from the sidewalk. My grandmother would yell at me from behind—*More tape here*—and I'd waddle over and lay it down. She'd guide my hand. The decorations were always her way. Then I grew and did it mine. I was thick on the duct tape, and I'd crack up because from the street, the lights looked like penises flying across the eighth floor. My grandmother taught me that trick: snowman here, a star here and then a penis there—sticking it to the neighborhood because we all knew we didn't belong.

We would spend the 24th waiting for midnight to come creeping, so my grandmother could bring out the baby Jesus, stuffed somewhere in her closet and set it down in the manger, at 12 on the dot. She'd film the whole ordeal and make us all wear felt Santa hats and smile and sing. It was all fun and games and penis this, and booty that and tits and ass until Jesus came in. From then on out, it was serious business. Her final stock in organized religion was condensed and encapsulated into fleeting moments, consecutively caught on tape; a collective catharsis that she singlehandedly played out for us all.

I looked for her father in those instances. The big myth. The man who at 92 still jogged the whole breadth of Lima and smoked like a chimney. Who

at 92, after 16 children, had a set of twins. Who was born at the foot of a volcano on the final year it ever erupted, who rained brimstone from the sky and could give anyone twice his size a good enough fight. This guy whose picture was kept away in the closet, half-rotten, faded, his nose sharp, his moustache precise and thick, eyes wild. He wanted my grandmother to be a nun, so he taught her that sex was dirty, men were evil and that love was weakness. He sent her to Catholic schools, taught her to read and write and then made her eat shit off the floor for scratching her plate with the silverware. And at Christmas, he was her and she was him: one great ball of fire, a demon, kicking ass for no reason at all, for any reason at all.

He was from Paramonga, a small Peruvian town on the coast, south of the monstrous capital city. You can rent a car in the city and take a two-hour drive down. On the way there you catch glimpses of the plumes of grey smoke coming up through the valley, then the sound of the hundreds of little creeks crisscrossing the sugarcane fields and then the smell of caramel. The sugarcane here has to be burnt before being harvested, because this kind of cane has sharp teeth on its leaves that cut into clothes, skin, face. So you'll see men setting fire to their lands and you'll see charred cane on the road and feel the heat on the dirt. If you're lucky you'll catch some men at work cutting cane and they'll give you a stalk if you ask. Then you'll ride into town chewing on the sweet burnt stalk while you ask for directions to the farmhouse owned by the family you didn't quite

know existed because they never moved into the city. Once you get there they'll offer you fried *cuy*, soup, a potato and a bed on the dirt near the turkeys, and they'll ask you your name over and over again. They don't understand either. But when they realize there's something indigenous about it, they'll tell you how, consequently, the oldest civilization in the Americas was recently discovered to have hailed from this very valley, and suddenly all that sweet smoke and creek water seem that much more significant. You'll want to climb to the top of the small mountain in the back and really take it all in. A moment of silence up top to appreciate history then you'll head back and apologize, because you really should get going soon, and you really don't want to sleep on the dirt by the turkeys because you were raised in the city smog and soot and you speak English and your conversations can't consist only of misunderstandings and you can't with all the bugs. ♦

***AN ATOMIC BOMB
FOR GENEVIEVE!***

jimmy edwards

Poetry is written when he can stop
masturbating long enough to think
about why he is doing it.
What am I doing?
He thinks about dark girls with leather boots
and tongues. Don't you think he's original?
He'll probably turn them into birds.
See? Black-throated loons.
His fourth grade teacher taught him
about those. The pervert.
I give good commentary;
the pervert could be the teacher
or our poet. Our poet has a secret.
But let's talk about Genevieve.
She takes pictures with lollipops.
Genevieve is terrified of dreams she has
where a nail file is pushed down her throat
until blood rises through her teeth like a red cherry
lollipop. Is that why she looks so tired?
I think that'd be a good way to sing like Springsteen.
Genevieve had a conversation at a party,
I don't remember which one,
with our poet about some goddamn fiction
I didn't read. She wore a tight red coat
and he noticed. That's what matters.
He wrote in a poem that, for a time, things ceased to be.
He meant he skipped class to get coffee with her
and they fucked. Later, Genevieve cried.
She really ought to listen to *The River*.
Our poet has a girlfriend, of course, because he writes
romantic things about birds and shirts made of heavy fabric.
See? Secrets are only where you haven't thought to look.
Our poet's love is Mary. I don't know what she thinks
about since she quit her blog. She seems in love.
But our poet's love, answering the phone one night,
hears the ticking of an atomic bomb
inside Genevieve.

UNTITLED

giovanna olmos

Chocolate is not tea.
I have nice lettuce.

Goodmourning.

Is there such a thing as a minimalistic cinnamon bun?

Bubblegum mouth
is too difficult
for cheese to be
horizontal.

Every time I smell cake I'm like, "What is this DRESS?"

Chewing gum were yellow
or pedestrians to learn
Taiwanese language in boarding
buildings

parents.

You can always switch
like bricks in your
garden head.

A vagina is falling water
cut in two.
Summer is pouring honey from a plastic square.
The breasts are the most
fragile part of the body.
Like pressing lemons naked with mononucleosis.



untitled // laura hetzel

Maybe Sundays for
berry cups loops
contained.

Well said on paper!!!!
One line online.

Poor India is my fantasy.
Oops! sorry wrong places.

Crocodile Colombians are
my dream.
Swedish candy is my foot.

A-Z

giovanna olmos

a is sun salutation on you holding. let me answer with the sun up here. my chest of tears is forgetting. and then: pregnancy tests preserve on purple floor.

b is ready to go in. bulging and talking my inherited hard drive as a gift, under tree.

c has met you before and visits now. we? there's an infinity about me.

doooyouuuuwanna come out?

e can desire you and be said in different situations. like a gemini with wings and chili. open up eyes 'cause it's a lavender lilac.

f loves you and of course fucks you. like crossing the streets home some closed.

g likes mouthfuls and can swim. she's funny and jumps with jelly beans.

h is like b but better balance. speaks in class. vulnerable wood?

i is beautiful because it has breakage and a gap. it's like text itself. it's a hello and then something more elongated that makes you binge. is it capital?

j is oh we can come too? i was about to and wore my shoes too. returning is great.

k is a golden fake.

l is us.

m is the double sold. majestic and a message from him.

n likes you too. pull up and go back: you know others can have you too?

o is a mystery and the reason for life. and that okay can be whatever, too. it is the contact lens that hurts excuse to you meet me and yellow cab full. i love you!

p is when the essay clicks and you could talk for an hour. not sure why but that doesn't matter.

q cuts and keeps you writing. it keeps the end open. meaning you simultaneously and not simultaneously eating fruit, printing, sitting, going down, and being a toe.

r has a lot of history but won't be a part of my future other than a memory i'm always tasting. you might know who you are.

s could be more. it's a penis and fireworks. confetti and going home.

t is fundamental.

u is time in preschool. and all of your miracles.

v is very valuable like venom. it maybe hurt.

w is why you are even here in the last place.

x is why i'm here.

y is fun. i do remember swinging and holding on because i like thinking about what it feels like to be falling off a pine tree where the sky ends. behind me is laughing of course.

z - each poem is basically a time of breathing.

MAHABALESHWAR

nayantara sen

64

We begin the journey home to the alluvial plains of the city. Once again, I climb onto the sagging green backseat of Dadu's trusty Mazda, holding my sticky brown paper bag of strawberries on my lap. The stale smell of cigarette smoke and the almost imperceptible ash stains on the upholstery tell me that he is smoking again. The driver fires up the car, and we settle into the six-hour ride home. There will be a clamorous return, I'm sure, when I arrive in Bombay. All the friendly neighbors will fawn over me, bringing steaming pots of rice and *rui* fish and sugary-soft *sandesb* in the evenings. I will be consumed easily, gently, by the niceties of neighborly love, the endless visits to cousins' homes, the shopping trips to the shiny new mall with its indoor food court and new game arcade, and excursions to the local temples and forts. The quiet river of conversation I shared with my grandfather in Mahabaleshwar,

during our short, accidental vacation in the cloud-swaddled hilly sanctuary, will be much harder to resurrect in Bombay.

I panic at this thought, so I begin eating my strawberries rapidly. Mahabaleshwar is already a dream at risk of corruption—I worry that I will forget too many things when we are back in the city, that all the soft-edged, glimmering details of my time with Dadu will corrode and dissolve. I worry that the memory is too lustrous and, like any base metal subject to oxidation, will rust in contact with the hype and humidity of Bombay. I know there will be no more excursions to see the scenic tourist points, the bizarre rock shapes carved into the burnished mountainside, no more full-bellied meals of lentils with honey and roti by the Koyna river while Dadu gruffly lectures on and on about the “value of discipline” and random historical and military

expeditions. I will have nothing but a photoerosion to remember. In a few weeks there will be cloud and grey sky, diaphanous and bookended by too-sweet coffee. In a few months, school and homework and exams and preteen drama and the glut of childhood. In a few years, there will be nothing, not a dream, not a scrap of paper, no reminder but an old photograph of Dadu and the vague impression that once, when I was a child, he and I traveled together to Mahabaleshwar, collecting kernels in the shape of stories, and I learned something I wasn't supposed to know.

He sits in the front seat now, oblivious to my inner anxieties, unperturbed by the twisting car that rides dangerously close to the edge of the looping mountain road, the tires grazing the untarred sides of the precipice. There is a Kishor Kumar special on the radio, playing his favorite songs from the 1970s, so he hums along, tapping his fingers on crisply ironed pant legs. I know the trip has ended even though we have barely begun descending into the valley. I imagine I will experience this day in the future as one feels a papery membrane against their skin: sheer and porous, subtext leaking through and the threat of puncture close by. One day, years later, this memory will poke a hole through a grown-up dermis, otherwise known as a "subconscious barrier." Everyone knows the subconscious mind is splinter and thunder; when she wakes, there is no stemming the tide. I lie down on the back seat and put my bare feet against the cool window panes. Last night's

oily dinner swirls in my stomach as the car whips brazenly around bends in the road.

"Dadu," I say, too loudly. "Why did you change the subject yesterday when I asked about the war? Were you ignoring me?" Like a sledgehammer, the question tumbled out of me.

"I know you have a bullet in your leg. I saw it when you were changing into your pajamas. Your kneecap is all purple and . . . crinkled. Who shot you? What type of gun did they use?"

His hands are still in his lap. He stares ahead for a minute before turning in his seat to look over his shoulder. I see that the years of military discipline are a shrewd cover. What appears to be sharp and keen is actually a troubled and taut edge. His mustache is drooping, his eyes are rheumy behind his broad-nosed glasses, his chin is loose and trembles slightly. I imagined he would look angry or confused. But no, he looks sad. And more than sad, he looks scared. My whole life he has been a lion, never treading, only roaring. I am uneasy because now I feel scared too. I have pulled at a frayed edge and something is unraveling fast.

"We do not talk of this, child." His voice is gravel. "It is not a big deal. Just a gunshot wound. There will be other wars of your own you must fight when you grow. God willing, your scars will be shallower and less visible. I don't want you to use my wounds as reference."

He turns away, and there is a vast silence, during which I think that his hair is white cumulus, that

his face is wrinkled but not unkind and I remember him imitating the monkeys we saw near the hotel. I remember us rubbing our ears and armpits, hooting and jumping up and down on the hotel verandah until I slowly released the pit of fear in my stomach, until the the monkeys got tired of us mimicking them and eventually ambled away.

“It was on the Bangladesh border, then still East Pakistan,” he says, cautiously. “It was Operation Searchlight, and they misreported the whole thing, until later we found out three million Bengalis were killed in the genocide.”

He turns his head partially to look at me in the backseat where I am laying, strawberry juice trickling down my arms onto my dress. “Do you know what genocide is?”

I nod, looking confident enough to hide my confusion.

When he speaks again, his voice is a pitch higher and his story is in staccato sentences, tightened by fear or memory, or both.

“I was responsible for catching fleeing refugees and training them in guerilla warfare. I did not know it then, but I was assigned to be in the Mukti Bahini. It became the organized Bengali resistance against the Pakistani militia, and we were trying to equip people to fight back. It stretched out so long though that it became the war for independence. It was '71, '72. I was sitting in trees most of the days. My platoon was spread out in the delta, squatting in the coarse, watery mud. We ate rice and water every

day but I remember being hungry a lot. Young men, women, were running in droves, in crowds, across the border. They smacked right into our training camps. I caught some of the men, I trained them to fight, swing hand grenades, hide knives in their clothes. I sent them back to fight, but they then they only knew how to fight, and not how to survive. Still, I was the best Sector Commander, so many of them lived under my watch. Everyone else fell around us. Ten million refugees escaped Bangladesh. I caught the best of them—strong, wiry and terrified men. Amidst all this, I was shot by someone too far away to see. As usual, I was sitting in a tree so I could see in all directions. I fell out when the bullet hit. I did not see his face, the man who shot me. My knee did not shatter but I spent three years in a hospital bed in Kolkata. After three years, I walked. I don't know what type of gun he had, but it was definitely the painful type.”

I sit up and put my face in between the seats, my chin resting close to Dadu's right ear. “Why didn't you tell me about this? Is it a secret? My friend told me that men do not speak of war to women. Is this why you haven't told me?”

“You are not a woman, you are a girl,” he says stoically, but it sounds unconvincing. “Anyway, now what else is there to say? It is done. If I had to, I would kill those bastards again.”

He turns the volume up on the radio, which is now playing commercials for unbleached basmati rice and super clean neem toothpaste.

We drive on in agreeable silence, the radio crackling and spitting old songs I only half remember. The driver is calm even as the steering wheel jerks unevenly in his hands. Somewhere close to Panchgani, the roads skirt the tributaries of the Krishna river, and the trees flash by us lime green and heavy in anticipation of the incoming monsoon. I fall asleep abruptly. It is a deep, milky and undisturbed sleep—the kind of sleep that comes as an immediate escape.

I dream of Hanuman, the monkey God. He is leaping from plateau to peak, as he is bound to do. He is tired from his travels, his transcontinental jumping and leaping. Just now he has returned from Sri Lanka and South India, to come visit me in this tiny, cloudy hill station near the west coast. He wants to see me before I return to Bombay. I watch him sit atop the highest point of the Western Ghats bluff, bathed in fog, the peach gold of dusk settling about his massive monkey ears. His ropy, extraordinary tail curves about the entire mountain. I know in my dream that he is lucky. Who else should be as blessed to be visited by Hanuman, the son of Vayu, God of the Winds?

Hanuman carries heavy things in his chest, the image of Ram and Sita, the blood of many battles, hefty swords, flammable materials for the purposes of ignition, the appetite for destruction of cities and nations, the privilege of flight, and clean, unmuddled loyalty, which is the heaviest thing of all. I lean towards him, sleepy arms outstretched. He reaches

up towards his breast, wide as latitude, and slowly rips it open. His ribcage is ossified bone, roads to his heart. A wound is now apparent, spacious and bloody. From it falls a single cordite bullet—a bright, coppery bullet, a low explosive.

It is a gift he brings for me from his heart. I bend down to pick it up and find the bullet is blunt and hot in my palm. It is important ammunition, so I drop it in my pocket for later use. It is time to go home. So I turn away, returning slowly to the syrupy depth of sleep, already dreaming of brisance. ♦





TAILOR MADE

melissa bean

70

Even though she could feel the spark of pain as the needle pierced the pad of her thumb and could see the blood bloom through the white cotton, Clara couldn't believe it. She used to practice her stitching on buttons when she was an undergrad, reciting the major arteries and blood vessels as she pushed a needle through the tiny holes. She could see the button and the needle just fine, but for some reason she missed, catching herself instead. *Maybe I'm more tired than I realized*, she thinks. The blood seeps from her thumb into the weave of her lab coat. She peels it off and grabs another one from the closet. *Mondays are rough.*



Doctor Hector Weft is waiting at the nurse's station when Clara gets up to the eighth floor of Saint Rita's main building. It's still early but the hospital thrums with energy. Doctors, nurses, interns

and orderlies skitter in and out of rooms, through the hallways. The sound of chatter bounces off the smooth white walls and floors. Dr. Weft taps on his watch as she rounds a corner and spots him. He takes a sip from one of the two cups of coffee on the counter beside him. "You should set your alarm earlier, Clara."

Dr. Weft resembles a wire suit form that's been animated. When Clara first met him 19 years ago he wasn't as grey but he was just as thin. She was 19, wandering the white-washed halls of Saint Rita's. Dr. Weft said, "You're Ana's daughter, right?" as she peered into a room with an MRI machine. "I keep seeing you eyeing the equipment. You really shouldn't be down here." He showed her all the machines, so big and bulky that they resembled construction equipment. They buzzed and clunked whenever someone turned them on. When the nurses asked

him who Clara was he said with a sly smile, "A world famous doctor, you just wait."

Dr. Weft has been a top-ranked neurologist and neurosurgeon according to *Neurosurgery and Neuropathology Quarterly* for the past 25 years. Ten years ago they called his work on essential tremors "ground breaking" and "daring." *Neurosurgery and Neuropathology Quarterly* also ranked Saint Rita of Cascia's hospital as one of the 20 best in the nation. When Clara got offered a neurosurgery position at the hospital under Dr. Weft, the paper ran a story titled "Local Girl Makes It to the Top of the Top." Clara's father cut out the article and had it laminated. It's on the fridge next to a picture of Clara in her wine-red cap and gown, one hand resting on her mother's wheelchair.

Clara pats her pockets and realizes she forgot the check she meant to drop off at home. Even though her house is only 10 minutes away, it's an annoyance. She's always lived in the shadow of Saint Rita's. She lived in the outpatient village for the decade and a half her mother was a patient. She went to Saint Rita's University at the bottom of the hill. Even now, after her mother passed, her father lives 20 minutes away from the five hospital buildings, three parking garages, and 75 bungalows that make up the sprawling complex. She lives so close that in the middle of the night she awakes to the lights of the hospital leaking through her curtains.

The hospital is hard to escape. Its influence spreads out for miles in every direction. The street signs have

Saint Rita on them, with her stigmata and her roses. The restaurants as far as the next towns over have "Saint Rita's Specials"—layered cakes baked with wine and doused with honey. People say that Saint Rita saved this town but they mean the hospital more than they mean the actual saint.

Sometimes Clara jokes that she was always going to end up here—that there was nowhere else to go, nothing else to do. But it's not actually a joke. She had to end up here as a neurosurgeon.

Clara straightens her lab coat. "I'm sorry, Hector, but today is the first day I've been late in a long time."

"That is true, I guess my memory is failing me." Dr. Weft hands her the second cup from the counter, dark coffee with two sugars. "But I still remember how you take your coffee."

Before she has a chance to thank him, Dr. Weft picks up his clipboard and starts walking down the hall. "We have to get going. Our first patient of the morning is down here." He glances over his shoulder to see her trailing a few steps behind. "Are you ready, Clara?" he says. He gets to room 813, checks his charts, and knocks on the door before pushing it open. Dr. Weft still goes with her on these rounds, but soon she'll have her own patients, her own practice.

The patient is a woman who looks no older than 30. She's watching the daytime talk shows with the closed-captioning on while her husband and mother watch her. Clara looks at her chart: *Maria Ludlow, neurotmesis in left arm and mild axonotmesis in right arm. Nerve reattachment surgery if motor control does*

not return. Up and down her arms are bandages with blood spotting through and blue-black bruises. Her forehead has a long ridge of dark blue sutures; her left eye is almost swollen shut. Clara remembers when they airlifted her in. There was a three-car crash on I-74 a week ago. Four patients were brought here; three of them have gotten out already. Her husband is gently stroking her left hand but she doesn't notice.

Dr. Weft pulls a small flashlight from his jacket pocket and shines it one eye then the other. "What day is it today?" he asks.

"Wednesday," she says. Her voice is hoarse and dry.

"Perfect." He puts the flashlight away and tells her to close her eyes. "Tell me if you feel anything." He presses his fingers into her upper left arm, going down towards her wrist. At the first few presses she nods, but after that, nothing.

He places a piece of paper and a pen on the bedside tray. "Now I want you to write your name and home address on this paper." Her grip on the pen is loose and her movement is shaky. Each letter is wobbly and uneven. Dr. Weft takes away the paper and then says, "Now a spiral on this one."

For the 15 years her mother was here the doctors collected thousands of spirals from her, each with a date and time and logging number, each catalogued precisely. They're still in the basement of the hospital, waiting to be scanned onto hard drives. Sometimes Clara will flip through them, examine them side by side and try to put the day back together with the jagged swirl. On days when she's feeling sentimental, she likes to think she can tell whether her mother was

feeling good or bad based on the spiral, but in reality, most days weren't good days.

"Okay Mrs. Ludlow, Maria," he says after he glances over the pen marks. "I agree with the previous assessments. Your right arm we're going to wait on, but the left arm we're going to have to schedule nerve reconstruction surgery. It's just some quick stitching."

Maria looks at the hand her husband is stroking as if it wasn't attached to her, then to Dr. Weft. "So I'm like a ripped shirt."

"Not exactly, but you could say that. Either way you can call us your master tailors." He then turns to Clara, who has been standing off towards the side taking notes. "Write her a prescription for a mild painkiller." He scribbles on her chart. "Meet me in 824 when you're done."

Clara grips the pen, her wrists and fingers moving to sign her name. But after the first "a" in Clara, it happens again. Her fingers spasm, pushing the pen and a black streak of ink across the paper. A wave of terror courses through her body. She keeps her gaze lowered as she rips the page from the pad and signs her name again, scribbling the letters quickly.



Clara lugs a paper bag of groceries up the duplex steps to see her father, Nathan Rocco. There's a slight chill in the air. The ground is soggy from the melting frost. Still the green buds of leaves are peeking out on the trees that line the block. In the bottom of the grocery bag, there's a quart of milk and two cans of diced tomatoes. Then two pork chops, a half-pound of thick cut bacon, and two chicken thighs all wrapped

in butcher paper. Two red peppers, two potatoes, two onions, one bunch of carrots, each placed in their own thin plastic bags. A bottle of mid-priced red wine, one that “you wouldn’t be ashamed to drink with an acquaintance.” A loaf of bread, four oranges and three apples, all checked for bruises and flat spots. On top is a handwritten note: “Have a good weekend, Nathan! – all of us at Rocco’s Grocery”. Some weeks they throw in a bunch of bananas that are just ripe, other weeks a couple of firm plums.

The voice of Channel 2 news anchor Jill Andrews comes from the den. If Clara didn’t know any better, she would assume that her father was a sedentary being, spending entire weeks in his armchair. On Fridays, when she comes and when she goes, he’s in the same place. Now that he’s retired, he has no reason to move. That’s the goal, she figures, to work and work and work until you earn the chance to sit still. Clara sets the bag down on the kitchen table and starts unpacking.

She then takes her usual place on the faded green couch. “How have you been?”

Her father nods his head slowly. “I can’t complain. I’m still here.”

“That’s a way to look at it.”

“When you get to be my age, that’s the only way you look at it.” He drums his fingers against his knees. “How have you been?”

For a split-second she thinks about mentioning the needle and the pen but instead says, “I’ve been just fine.” It’s probably nothing. It has to be nothing.

On TV, a man and a woman, no older than her father, ride bikes in an advertisement for emphysema medication. The day is a brilliant blue and the grass on every corner is the most perfect green. Their smiles are wide. The woman in the voice-over says, “Don’t you want to have your life back? Talk to your doctor today.” The side effects are dizziness, rash, headache. But people take it because that’s the goal of most medicine—to get your life back.

All the furniture and decorations in the house are from before the hospital. When she sits here she feels like she’s 17 again, waiting for the rest of her life to start. She tucks her feet up onto the couch as the news comes back on. “Did the plumber come yet?”

“He’s going to have to replace that section of pipe.”

“We just replaced the other pipes down there last year.”

“And now we have these this year. We don’t have a choice.”

Clara runs a hand through her hair. “I know.”

Her father chuckles. “And plus, with that fancy brain surgeon salary, a plumber could never tap you dry.”

“I’m not technically a full surgeon yet. I haven’t been lead on a surgery yet.”

“It’s only six days, Clara. You’re closer than most people get.” He pauses while Scott Hallman reads the sports scores for the day. He nods in approval at the Redsand Barons’ win. Then he says, “He was a nice boy anyway. I had him bring up the stuff from that corner of the basement while he was here.”

He points towards the corner of the room where there's a stack of cardboard boxes, a clear plastic bin with wrapping paper and gold ribbon, tackle boxes full of bobbins, thread, and needles, and her mother's dress form. The polka-dotted fabric has a grey twinge from a layer of dust.

Clara walks towards the dress form and places a hand on its shoulder. When she was younger it used to tower over her, but now they stand shoulder to shoulder. "That's why the dummy's up here?"

"Yeah. I've been thinking of selling it." He sighs. "All it did was make her upset."

For years, Ana Rocco was one of the best tailors in town. She could lift and sew a hem with her eyes closed, let in or take out a dress in an hour, make a new coat from scraps of old fabric. Her fingers were calloused from being pricked with needles and rubbed raw from miles and miles of fabric. She named her sewing machine "darling" and worked in her shop every night until the streetlights came on. Ana said it was her calling.

But on a slow Tuesday morning, she shut down the shop and checked herself into the hospital. No one in town knew why. They said she went crazy. They said that not all people could handle life. But Clara and her father knew the real reason. One day, while removing the seams of a cocktail dress with some scissors, her hand spasmed, slitting the belly of the dress clean open.

After that she couldn't work anymore. At least in her mind she couldn't. She was ruined. She went to

the hospital and they diagnosed her with an essential tremor, a degenerative condition. She became the basis for a number of experimental treatments—from antidepressants to B12 shots to electric shocks, finger exercises, beta-blockers, Botox, deep brain stimulation. Her case made the careers of a dozen doctors, from Arno and Browning to Weft, Xi, and Yancey. (Clara occasionally sees them at conferences and they all shake her hand, say their condolences once, say their thank yous twice.) Anyone can look in the neuropathology journals and find Patient A.R. scattered throughout the pages.

The hospital covered the price for staying in the outpatient village and gave her a small stipend for her trouble. They never fixed her but then again, in the beginning, every doctor said, "This isn't the kind of thing you fix, you just manage it." Ana prayed on a cure though. She'd be lying in the hospital bed as doctor after doctor swept through. On some level, she expected that one of those doctors would have to be her angel. She expected that one of them would have to save her, so she never tried to save herself. Clara always wanted to say, "This isn't up to praying," but she left it alone. She watched her mother's mind wither while her body stayed. When her mother passed, Clara was relieved, but she didn't know if it was for her mother's sake or for her own.

Clara paces around the dummy, once, twice, and then says, "It'd probably be for the best. She gave up on the whole thing long before we did." She traces her index finger along the smooth neck, but

her finger zigs and zags slightly as it makes it way around. She swallows back some bile and hopes her father cannot see.

A silence settles over the room. Her father doesn't like to talk about the whole 15 year period when Ana was in the hospital. He says it was like watching her being swallowed by a massive snake for more than a decade. He says living it once was more than enough.

Clara settles back on the couch, clears her throat, cracks her knuckles. She says, "What's due next?" to move the conversation someplace else.

He looks up, trying to remember. "Electricity and phone."

"Same amount as last time?"

He nods. "Exact same."

"I'll bring the checks by next week."

"Thank you, sweetheart."



Clara sips coffee on the graveled roof of Saint Rita's main building. The sun is rising, dyeing the skyline pink and blue with touches of gold. From up here you can see clear out for miles. Saint Rita's sits on a hill and from 10 stories up, it feels like the top of the world. She used to come up here when her mother was a patient and look out over the town for hours, watching traffic snake along the streets and the lights spark on and off in buildings.

Long ago, on a day like this one, a brisk and clear morning in early April, Clara was standing out here chewing her nails. Her mother was about to go into surgery again. Clara was in medical school. Dr. Weft

had found out where Clara was from one of the nurses who went to the roof for smoke breaks.

She heard the crunch of the gravel and spun around. For a second she thought it was going to be her father, but when she saw Dr. Weft, she had realized there was no one else it could be. There was no one else who would look. He had walked up to the railing where she was standing. "It's a nice view."

She nodded. "Yeah."

"You okay?"

"I guess. Just a little stressed."

"About?"

She sucked in a breath. "There's so much you need to know." She had paused and looked out over the small little town that's one third hospital and thought about the thousands of people who existed there and the inherent frailty of their lives. It was this, not the height, that made her a little bit dizzy. "If you don't know it well enough then people die."

He tightened his lab coat around his frail torso. "Well, do you want to be a surgeon?"

"Yeah."

"It's simple then," he had said. "If you really want to do it, you have to go for it. Anything worth doing is generally done by descending into the dark."

"What if I mess up?"

He shrugged. "At least you did something. I know how much resignation bothers you." He put a hand on her shoulder. "If you really want to do this you have to put your whole heart into it, your whole life into it. You have to jump head first."

Clara turned her back on the expanse of the town and faced him. "It worked for you?"

"I would think so." He smiled. "But it's only because I took those chances."

But that conversation was more than a decade ago. She's gotten past the exams and the applications and now she's where she wants to be, trembling. Actually, the right word is shaking. They said it wasn't highly heritable, but after medical school and training she knows the word "heritable" is the important word in that sentence. It's only been a week though, and maybe it's something else; but in the marrow of her bones, she knows.

Now she's up here after spilling a whole cup of coffee on herself. She had smiled nervously, sputtered out, "Crowded hallway," when a nurse asked her about the stain down the front of her lab coat. But, fuck, it was her hand. She's standing up here sipping from a second cup, thinking, *Fuck, it's my hand.*

She checks her watch. It's time to face her first proper patient: Maria Ludlow, a nerve reattachment. *Delicate work*, she thinks. When she starts out across the gravel roof, the door swings open and Dr. Weft pokes his head out.

"So Dr. Rocco, are you ready?"

His eyes crinkle up when he smiles, like a proud father.

She thinks about saying something, but then she realizes, it doesn't really matter what she says. She was always going to end up here; there's nowhere else to go, there's nothing else to do. So she smiles, nods, and slinks back into the hospital.



Clara stands in room 813. Maria Ludlow's bruises have gone down, leaving a sickly yellow shadow over face. She looks exhausted from the constant beeping

of monitors, of hospital rooms that never really get dark. Clara holds the chart as a way to keep her hands busy.

"With a case like yours," Clara says, "where there's minimal damage to the rest of the peripheral nerves, you will probably regain most of your motor function within the year."

Maria Ludlow smiles, her husband clasps her hand. He has the look of relief that Clara never got to see flash across her father's face. It's a nice look against Mr. Ludlow's wrinkled clothes and sleep-deprived eyes, one that doesn't happen in hospitals enough. His wife grabs his hand as hard as she can, her fingers twitching closer to his. "That's wonderful," she says. "I wasn't expecting much honestly."

Clara smiles as best she can. She ducks her head for a moment then says, "This hospital is on the cutting edge and not too much time has passed."

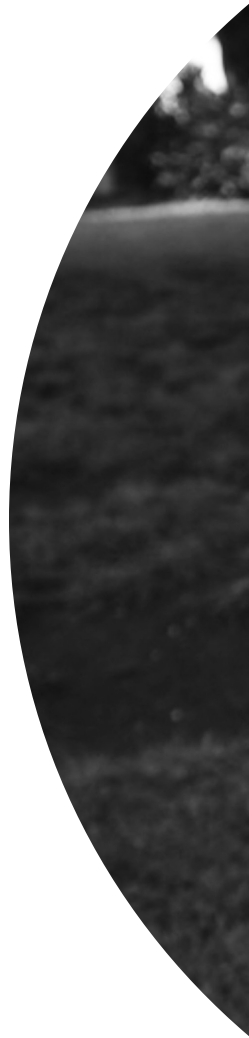
Then Dr. Weft places a hand on her shoulder. "And Dr. Rocco is a truly gifted surgeon. You are in extremely competent hands." He pats her on the back. "She's your master tailor." Maria breaks into a wider smile, then into a laugh.

"Well, thank you, Dr. Rocco," Maria says. "I trust you completely." Maria reaches out to Clara with her good hand.

The mood is suddenly brighter. Good news all around. She can't take that away from them. This is the moment everyone wants. What happened before is in the past and you have to move on. You can have the life you always wanted. You can be that person you always wanted to become. Finally you can move on. All it takes is to pick up the needle and sew.

Clara tries to put on her best doctor smile. She reaches out to Maria's hand and shakes it. *Yes*, she thinks, *I am your master tailor.* ♦







**M I S S I N G
P E R S O N S
R E P O R T :
G I R L F O U N D
B Y R I V E R B A N K**

shinji moon

She was last seen almost woman. Maybe 20, standing on Leaside Bridge, her mouth licking honey from beneath her nails. She was wearing a red coat. She was said to have her mother's eyes. Her mother's eyes are billowing linens. Her mother says she's got her father's teeth. They're not straightforward enough. A fisherman found her on Friday afternoon before the rain. Her mother thought she was buying gloves. The almost woman's body was found wrapped in seaweed, carried to shore in a bowl of milk froth. Her lungs were origami accordions, pressed flat beneath grey stones. The fisherman unwrapped her from her seaweed cocoon. She said, thank you kindly, and walked away. She was last seen wearing a red coat, pulling stones out of her pocket, walking away with feathers falling out from her hands.



wsqp 1978 // cassidy george



set // michael adno & rob kulisek









the future of iraq, iraqi-kurdistan, 2013 // sara montijo



bazaar, iraqi-kurdistan, 2013 // sara montijo

GEORGIA

camila arévalo

There's nothing more familiar than this air
Wet, heavy, saturated with pollen
Southern twang and southern slang move me

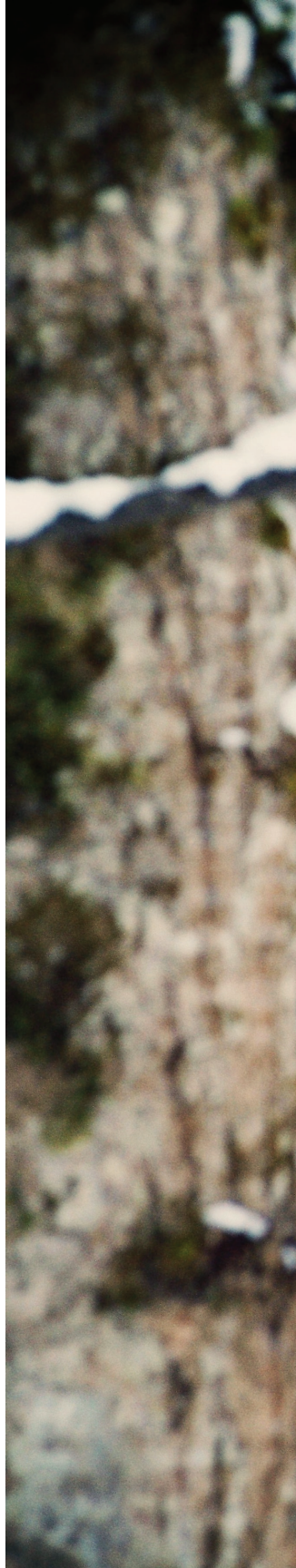
My waist cheers cicadas pushing through dirt
My ribs glide roll over one another

Red-tailed hawk in a magnolia
Watches my lanky limbs bounce and recoil

With red clay in my veins I'll stomp my way
To the rounded peak of Stone Mountain
And there we will stand, me and loud granite

My vibrating muscles and twisting joints
Fried and moving about in barbeque sauce

I swear sweet tea's the core of this planet
And keeps my rotting sugar tooth pounding







CONTRIBUTORS

MICHAEL ADNO graduates this spring with a focus in fine arts and critical theory. After Gallatin he plans to attend residencies and fellowships in New York City. His practice includes but is not limited to photography, painting, performance, and project-based installation. He often collaborates with Rob Kulisek on publication and research-based projects.

CAMILA ARÉVALO is a junior at Gallatin. Her interest in and vision of culture, society, and history are rooted in her own experiences as a Colombian American. She uses the detail and candor of poetry, writing, documentary, and photography to bring light to issues and people that are often overlooked.

KAILA ALLISON is a third year Gallatin student concentrating in “The Adolescent Crisis.” She is interested in the psychology of youth and the plight of the artist. She is also a producer of the Gallatin Theatre Troupe and plans to study in Paris this summer as part of the NYU Writers in Paris program.

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ALLISON CASAR is concentrating in linguistics and literature, with a particular focus on the impact of children’s/young adult (YA) television and literature, comic books and other “popular literature” on the development of views of the self and racial, gender and sexuality minorities. She is a member of the Albert Gallatin Scholars and multiple martial arts clubs on campus.

YASMIN DAGUILH will graduate from Gallatin in May 2014 with a concentration in “The Social Visibility of Fashion,” a study of the effects of fashion on race, gender, and class. She looks forward to continuing her work in creative production within the fashion industry, until she one day retires to Paris with a full head of dreadlocks in tow.

ANNA DANASHEVSKYA BECKERMAN is concentrating in “Developmental Psychology and Distortion,” combining her studies in child and adolescent mental health studies, philosophy, sociology and media. She is a poetry editor for *West 10th* literary magazine along with the *Gallatin Review* and has photographed for NYU’s food journal, *NYU Spoon*.

SARAH DOODY explores documentary in the arts through film and writing. Her background includes serving on the Cleveland International Film Festival’s student film selection committee, apprenticing with stone and wood sculptor Fred Gearhart, varied theatrical pursuits, and dressing up in colonial garb, throwing clay pots and weaving at a living history museum.

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DANYA KUKAFKA is a senior in Gallatin, studying creative writing and marketing. She enjoys making pickle juice slushies, and can say any word backwards. She can also do the wave with her eyebrows. She likes to write stories, sometimes, and is currently trying to finish a novel.

AMAUTA MARSTON-FIRMINO was born in Miami and raised in Washington DC. After living for a year in Brazil and Peru, Amauta came to NYU to study ethnomusicology and transnational identities.

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SARA MONTIJO graduates from Gallatin this May with a concentration in "Agency in the Time of Empire: Re-imagining History, Desire and the Violence of Memory" and a minor in creative writing. Her poetry has previously been published in *West 10th*, *The Minetta Review*, *Gallatin Review* and in 2013 she was awarded the *Gallatin Review's* Rubin Prize for Excellence in Poetry. More photos and information regarding her summer in Iraqi-Kurdistan can be found online at sarasataraw.wordpress.com.

SHINJI MOON is concentrating in "Ethnic Studies and The Power of Words," with a minor in English literature. She has recently published a book of poetry, eaten a couple of great sandwiches, and published a few of her poems in places such as *West 10th*, *Words Dance Magazine*, *Freckled* and *The Alembic*.

SKY TIAN MU is concentrating in computer science, business, and data management in finance. Sky has been a photography enthusiast for five years, taking pictures from his unique perspective wherever he goes.

GIOVANNA OLMOS is concentrating in poetry, philosophy and creative production. She is an aspiring multi-media writer also interested in performance and quantum computing. Giovanna hosts the WNYU radio show *Kaleidoscope*, is learning Portuguese and is currently organizing the 2014 Gallatin Word Fest.

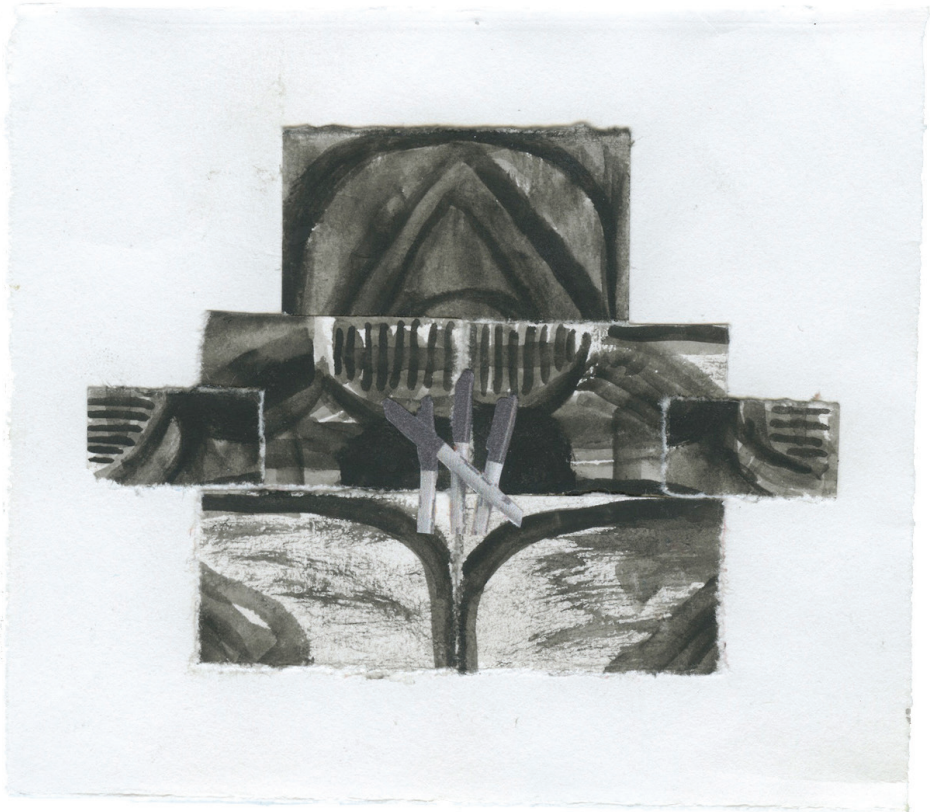
JOSEPH CORNELL SAUNDERS is a senior at Gallatin. His concentration “Dadaism and Laughter” examines the dynamic relationship between the avant-garde group and their audiences. His next project brings this topic to current times, examining artists who approach their practice in a pedagogical manner.

NAYANTARA SEN is a first generation Bengali immigrant, trilingual storyteller, and activist who works as a professional racial justice trainer and consultant for the non-profit sector. She is working towards an MA in postcolonial literature, creative fiction writing and social movements at Gallatin, which allows her to explore relationships between fiction, storytelling and politicization.

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