

The cover of the journal 'Manastash' features a photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, several bright yellow flowers with dark brown centers are in bloom, growing from a cluster of green leaves and some dried, brown leaves. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under a clear blue sky with light, wispy clouds. The title 'Manastash' is prominently displayed at the top in a large, dark serif font, with the subtitle 'Journal of Writing and Art' in a smaller, lighter font above it.

Journal of Writing and Art
Manastash

Volume 25 Spring 2015

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Submit fiction, nonfiction, poetry and art online at:
<http://manastash.submittable.com>

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Editor's Note

Dear *Manastash* Readers,

Manastash has been a staple at Central Washington University for a quarter of a century. For the twenty-fifth issue, we worked diligently to honor the established tradition and spirit of the journal, while bringing *Manastash* to new levels of literary and artistic achievement. We hope this issue both reflects the current vitality of the CWU community and lays a foundation for new ideas and creativity. As always, thank you, dear reader, for your continued support, and we hope you enjoy the issue.

Thank you for reading and supporting *Manastash*!

All the best,

Olivia Hirschey, Alisa Hoag, and Ebonessiah Morrow
Managing Editors



This issue is dedicated to Joseph Powell and Dr. Bobby Cummings for their dedication and inspiration to the creative arts.

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Lions and Hyenas

Mr. Evolve watched in amusement when I walked to the back of the room grabbing a dictionary, instead of rushing to lunch with Rachel, Deucey, Lisa and Phillip. He watched as I wrote most of the definitions down before asking, “What are you up to, Mani?” with a welcoming smile spreading across his face.

“What did you mean by that? Diversity being the key to success, what did you mean?”

“Well Mani, what do you think I meant by that? What does that statement mean to you?”

I rolled my eyes as I slammed the book shut, “What teacher doesn’t know the meaning to his own advice?” I asked with a smirk as I headed to the door, realizing I wouldn’t get the easy answer that I was looking for.

“Iman!” he yelled after me as I made my way down the hall to the student store. I looked back to see Mr. Evolve heading towards me in a pacey walk, almost a jog.

“You and I both know the answer to your question. Share the word. Be the example. You are walking proof. See you in class tomorrow, and make sure you tell your friends Phillip and Michael I’m not cuttin’ them anymore slack, no more Mr. nice guy.”

He handed me my favorite royal-blue, mechanical pencil that I left behind, and headed back to his classroom before turning around to say, “Iman, speak up! Your thoughts are important.”

The King’s English

Grammar does not define my intelligence. Yet before speaking, to myself, I say, “don’t mess up! They wait patiently for your ignorance.” Why does the King’s

Mufasa), I believed a “happy family” meant Mommy and Daddy lived happily together with Baby, in a happy city, with happy people. Everything would just be one big unit of “happiness.” My perspective of a “happy family” changed as I aged. By six, I knew that not every Mommy and Daddy could live happily with Baby. I knew that there was no such thing as a happy city, and people definitely had issues. Most importantly, I knew that things will never be one big unit of “happiness.” Places were *different*, people were *different*, circumstances were *different*, differences were infinite. That is why I knew Mr. Evolve’s last-minute claim was true during history class. *Diversity is the key to success*. It makes the world go ‘round.

At seven, I redefined a “happy family.” Mommy and Daddy’s circumstances no longer defined the meaning of a happy family. Separation between Mommy and Daddy meant I could have two *different* lifestyles, two *different* cultures, embedded in one little me. My mother’s parents are from Trinidad and Tobago, I call them Granny and Grandfather. My father’s parents are from Alabama and Oklahoma, I call them Grandma and Grandpa. My parents taught me two *different* yet valuable lessons, during *separate* occasions. Both occasions took place at the homes of my grandparents.

I was five when Mommy taught me the lesson after she found out that I refused to silent read in Mrs. Alter’s class, because Lisa said reading was for geeks. I love reading.

“Iman, yuh a leader not a follower, do yuh hear me?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t yuh eva forget.”

I focused my attention away from my mom, to the bacchanal coming from the

garage. “Bacchanal” was a word used often in that house. It was a Trinidadian’s way of describing chaos, confusion, partying, and danger. Yes, all of those.

“YUH STCHUPID OR WHA? PLAY DI KISS MI ASS TUNE, NAH? DON’ WAIT FUH DEXTA’ PART! JUS’ PLAY DI DAMN TUNE! AND DEXTA, WHAT DI ASS YUH PLAYIN? I TELL YUH D, C#, D, NOT D, C, D! WE PLAYIN’ ‘CANON IN D’ FOR DI PEOPLE WEDDIN’, NOT ‘CANON IN C!’ YUH MUDDAH ASS!”

My grandfather’s temper got the best of him again. Though an ill-tempered man, with an over-bearing accent, he was a family man, who used his music to bring family from the islands to the states. My grandfather was the *leader* of Caribbean Super Stars Steel Band. As he continued to rage, I imagined myself being a part of the beautiful madness one day—

Fast-forward to a Memory

Trebling into thought,
speeding up in tempo, it
crescendos into existence.
The sun beats
down upon our heads,
as we wait patiently for Grandfather
to find the key that unlocks the padlock.
The metal lever scorches his hand
as he releases our purpose:
The tenor, the bass, the tenor-bass,
the cellos, the double-seconds (two sets),
the black and chrome crate holding
the drum set. The conga bags are handed
to the conga man.
“Stand it up in di sun to re- tune!
Make sure we pan cover,
di people callin’ we on stage soon!”
The listeners scatter across the lawn,
the color of green figs. Scattered
like notes on a music score. Variety:

The E's, F#'s, G's, A's, B's, C#'s, D's.
 The "Accidentals"
 Yes, even the natural F's, Bb's, C's.
 "Leh we go!"
 The feeling of Sheila E. rattling
 her timbales in my tummy.
 Water drips from the tips of Jacka's dreads,
 perspiration pours from the pores
 of Patricia's forehead.
 Poor mic-ing causes Grandfather to erupt
 in rage, "Aye, mic man!
 Just get off di damn stage!
 Mani! Put a mic in front of di pans!"
 Signaling the intimidated mic man,
 "Aye, boss man! Lowa' di kick drum!
 Raise di leads!
 Katrina! Get on yuh double- seconds, *please?*"
 A thumbs up from the mic-man.
 "... The Caribbean Super Stars Steel Band!"
 The listeners rejoice in trills.
 Grandfather glances back at the drummer.
 Rolling up his sleeves, beating his sticks together,
 "1,2,3"
 Instant harmony.
 Children pointing, wide eyes,
 harmonious smiles,
 old couples tapping their feet
 to the steady beat
 of the cowbell, young
 couples dancing as one, hippies
 moving like a bunch of Bob Marleys
 from hell, chords
 that sound like the sight of heaven,
 music that takes you on a sensory
 adventure.
 "Pi Pom Di Dom!"
 "Pi Pom Di Dom!"
 The sweet sounds of memory—

I pictured myself calling the shots one day, being the leader: darting a stick at my drummer, after telling him to pick up the pace for the fifth time; barking at my bass woman, because she is constantly peeking at her phone, instead of paying attention to the music; pounding fists with my tenor player, because she is the only one who is on point with her solo; most importantly, sharing the beautiful sounds of Steel Pan music to the world.

I then began to think about Mrs. Alter's class and my refusal to read.

"Iman, sit up please? Pull your book out from under your chair and read. I am not going to ask you again," said Ms. Alter, peeking at me from behind her computer, "what has gotten into you today?" I fidgeted in my chair, and looked to my left at Lisa who was swinging her legs back and forth at the table, with a mischievous grin. "*Pretend not to hear!*" she whispered, loudly. "Lisa! You are already in trouble! If you want to be a good friend, stop talking to Mani, so she could enjoy her recess!" said Ms. Alter, now rising out of her seat. "Iman Hope, read!"

"Don't want to," I said in the tone of a raisin— I wanted to. I brought *Corduroy*, my favorite picture book, from home. But no, I couldn't give in to my true colors. I had to pretend. Lisa was my only friend since Tabitha, Brittney, and Kristina, were no longer my friends. They decided I was the enemy when Ms. Alter gave me a cupcake for getting one-hundred- percent on the weekly spelling bee.

"You don't want to? Well, you also don't want to be this year's Fawcett Falcon! I will be phoning home, Mani! Very disappointed! No recess!"

"Blilllllllllp Bop Bop" went the drummer on the cutter, cuing Auntie Patricia and the rhythm to begin all over again, allowing me to fade out of my memory. I turned back to my mother who was now gyrating her waist and hips, while helping my granny cut up the dasheen, green fig, sweet potatoes and onions. A Trinidadian

woman can never keep still when she hears the sweet rhythm of the Caribbean.

“Mommy, what do you mean?”

“What yuh talkin’ bout, Mani?” she said as she reached her hands out for me to join her in the dance, forgetting about her duties as an assistant chef.

“Why am I spose to be a leader not a follower?”

“Because yuh what nobody else is, Mani, yuh different. Sometime people are put on earth to lead, to guide di others, to set trends, to pave ways. All dat is you, Mani. Now let me find out yuh not reading in school again, and there will be trouble in di place!”

I was also five when Daddy taught me the other lesson, after I questioned his prior teachings. It was a nice day in the middle of May. I stood next to Daddy on the off-white dock, covered in moss, duck droppings, and fish food. Standing on my tippy toes, I gazed out into the pond, taking note of the water lilies, intimidating cattails, the ripples in the water that indicated vibrant life under the murk. When I spotted the floating orchids, white and fuchsia, I’m reminded of Mommy. I wondered if Daddy and I could go out in the paddle boat and pick one for her, later. Tossing the crust of my peanut-butter and jelly sandwich into the pond, a random question comes to mind:

“If I’m not spose to talk to strangers, why do you, Daddy?”

“Because I’m Mufasa! I own Pride Rock, Mani! I speak to whom I want, when I want! You, on the other hand, you’re Simba. You know what almost happened to him when he wasn’t supposed to talk to the hyenas and he did, don’t you?”

“Yeah. But, Daddy, can I be Nala, instead? That’s the girl.”

“Sure thing, kid,” he said as he handed me a handful of fish food to throw

into the pond.

“VRRRrrrr! vvRRRvvrr! VRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!” Grandpa started up the tractor. The stench from his cigar drifted from the other side of the pond straight into my nostrils. It invaded my nostrils just as the smell of the Port would when Mommy and I used to take Daddy to work. I watched as my grandpa headed towards our direction on the dock.

“You want a ride, Ms. Lady?” he said, stretching out his arm for my tadpole of a body to climb on board.

“We are gonna head back to the house, Dad. Mom said the gumbo is about done. It just needed to sit for a bit.”

“Okay, Kid.”

He tipped his sun hat and vroomed off like he was driving my dad’s drop-top Mustang, instead of his loud, beat up tractor. As we headed toward the house, I heard the deep groaning of the seasonal bullfrogs.

“Daddy, why do you *like* to talk to strangers?”

“It’s always good to say hello, or ask people how they are doing, you know.”

“Why?”

“Because you don’t know what kind of day people are having, Mani. A ‘hello’ can really brighten up somebody’s day, or invite somebody into your own life that could change it forever,” he paused, “in a positive way.”

“What does positive mean?”

“It means good, Nala. Change your life in a great way. When you get older, now I mean really really kick-a-stranger’s-butt older, always say hello.”

“What if they look cuckoo? Like the people we see walking downtown, on our way to the zoo?”

“Never think you are better than anybody, Iman, never. The lions are no

better than the hyenas. In fact, in the movie, I'm sure all the hyenas ever wanted was to be allowed outside of the shadows. An elephant's graveyard is no place for nobody. Everybody is different, but we all deserve to live on Pride Rock."

I stared at him blankly.

"You'll understand one day, baby girl."

It was getting towards the end of the year, when Mr. Evolve told the class about the Bill Gates Achievers Scholarship.

"Do not pass up on this opportunity, boys and girls," he said, holding the applications in his hand, "free money. There is nothing better than that."

At the lunch table Deucey, Troy, and Philly sat across from Rachel, Lisa, and me. Deucey pulled out his mechanical pencil, and began rapping and tapping on the table. Philly attempted to freestyle:

"Yo, I be that nigga fresh Philly. I'm from the shitty Tac City. From that block on hilltop, where gun shots and tear drops, don't stop—"

"So are you guys gonna apply?" I said keeping my eyes fixed on the empty space in front of me, where my lunch tray should have been.

"Are you?" said Rachel as she slapped the mechanical pencil out of Deuce's hand.

"Yeah. Mr. Evolve said we have to get started on the app right away, cause the deadline is comin' up hella fast," I said with my eyes still glued to the empty space, waiting for a response.

"Mani, are you *serious?*" said Lisa before bursting into laughter, "come on! You think you got a shot at it? Ms. Kerule just made us check our GPA's just last week, and you said it yourself. Your GPA is trash. What did you say it was? A 2.3...or something?"

“Yeah, but I know I can raise it. I just have to start focusing.”

“It’s too late for that! Don’t you think?” Lisa said, bursting into laughter again. I could hear the phoniness behind her laugh this time.

“Actually, Mr. Evolve said all I have to do is great on my essay questions and personal statements. Be honest when answering questions, and make sure to show my ambition and potential. And then work on my GPA from now until I graduate. Colleges will see that, he said.”

“Fuck that, cuz. Fuck college. Call me Scarface. Hustling is my career. Come visit me in the hood during spring break and shit, Mani,” said Deucey.

“Scarface? Nigga, yeah right!” Philly said laughing, “more like fucked up face! But I feel you, Mani. Go handle that! I’m not bout to fill one of them apps out, though. Fuck writing. Scouters are coming to my games on a daily. I know I’m in there, cuz.”

Troy reached into his backpack and pulled out one of the Achievers applications. I didn’t even know he waited and got one after class. He turned the pages until he reached to the personal statement question.

“As a future achiever, what are some values, principles and/ or beliefs that you believe are important for academic success?” he said. “I don’t know how I’m gonna answer that, man.”

I instantly remembered what Mr. Evolve said, “I’m gonna talk about diversity. About how important it is. I’m gonna talk about all of us. How it’s important to have different people on your side, if you want to accomplish and succeed in different things.”

“You know, Mani, if I didn’t know any better, I would think you were bonin’ Mr. Evolve or something,” said Lisa with a smirk on her face. “I mean... damn! You just repeated his whole lecture! You believe in that man!”

I calmly snapped. I thought about all the opportunities I passed up in middle and high school. All the C's and D's that I earned when I knew damn well that I could have earned A's with ease. I thought about what my mother had told me in the kitchen, what my father had said to me on the dock.

"Fuck you, Lisa." I exhaled. "I'll hit you guys later. I'm gonna go grab one of those apps," I said, heading towards the exit. "Wait, Mani! I'm coming too!" said Rachel, after kissing Philly on the cheek. "Don't forget about tonight, baby girl," he said, slapping her backpack as she walked away, "I'm tryna spot that big ass pelican at the waterfront. Deuce says his uncle will let us borrow the whip."

As we walked down the hall, I spotted a short, lanky Asian man, wearing fish bowls for glasses, coming down the stairs. He had an awkward limp, like one leg was much longer than the other. Before he passed by, I took a deep breath,

"Hello, how are you?" I said with a warm yet timid smile.

"Oh, I'm fine, and how awe youuu?" he said with a warm, welcoming smile.

"I'm good, thank you," I said, realizing that I'm now in an awkward position. The man has stopped walking and is now giving me his full attention.

"Did you wan' to talk to me about Trio, young lady?"

"Well to be honest, I never heard of it. I just wanted to say hello," I said.

"Ohhh, nevaw hearrrrrd? Trio is a very good program! My name is Dr. Li, advisor of Trio. And you awe...?"

"Iman, Iman Hope. And this is my friend, Rachel."

"Hi," said Rachel as she rocked back and forth, trying to keep her patience under control.

"Nice to meet you, ladies. You two come to my office after school. Trio will be taking a trip to UW this weekend. We visit new college campuses every two weeks. Would love for you two to join."

Probably the only valuable thing that came out of my tenth grade history teacher's mouth was, "Diversity is the key to success." At least that's what I thought at age sixteen. Something about that statement empowered me. Something about that statement shifted my mentality or hammered it back to life. Hammered it like my grandfather would hammer dead, useless, oil barrels, into live musical instruments of Trinidad and Tobago. Hammered it like my grandpa would hammer the campfire-iron into the fire pit, causing the flames to exhale back into life, burning its way through prejudices down at the Port of Tacoma til' a lane was named after him when he retired.—Iman

Orphans

At Kittitas Valley Health and Rehab, in a well-lit, u-shaped room that serves as one of two dining areas, a love song is playing. A man's voice—cheerful, and with obligatory country twang—sings these words:

*I kept my heart hidden
And now I'm wishing that I didn't
Oh, who am I kidding
You weren't even intrigued*

*And I was looking forward to a happy ending
So much for pretending*

This is the soundtrack for KVHR's breakfast hour, which begins at 8:00, and which, at 8:20, is now well under way. Meals—scrambled eggs, cereal, bananas to slice into the cereal—are now uniformly lukewarm. Meals—white and beige, in various stages of disintegration—sprawl over plates, across tablecloths, spattering the faces and clothes of the diners themselves.

The man across from me, whose fine white film of hair seems to hover just above his scalp without touching, thin and soft, like a baby's, looks at the shoals of soggy English muffins, the crumbling eggs strewn before him. Cleverness plays across his face. He mimes patting the front of his shirt, the sides of his hips. "How," he asks me, "can I settle the check if I don't even have a pen?"

Diners sit at tables of two or three or four, making nine in the room altogether. Nine residents to one CNA—a terse blonde woman who can't be more than twenty-four or five, who shuttles between them, picking up dropped silverware, wiping soiled chins.

*And if I could I would
Give you a demonstration
Of how my imagination
Thought it ought to be*

So much for pretending

At one table an unseen force pins a woman's chin to her chest, so that to look at anyone she must roll her eyes dolorously upward. At another, a woman sits with her head lolling backward, her eyes shut, mouth slightly open, as though sleeping. Sporadic, ragged moans escape her.

The man to my left has the muddled speech and lopsided gaze of a stroke victim. He attends his food with dogged concentration. Humped, arthritic hands quaver above his plate, like bats.

A one inch plastic square clings to his left hand, between the metacarpals of his thumb and index finger. It appears pinned there—a round metal nub, like the head of a finishing nail, depresses its center. I ask the man what it is, the square, and why it's pinned to his hand, but he doesn't know. He stares at his place setting, nonplussed. To make the handles of his silverware easier to grasp, they have been sheathed in latex foam tubes, but the tube for the handle of his butter knife is missing. In fact his warped hands have mistaken it for a banana, and he holds it over his bowl, poised to slice.

“Oh you dumb butt,” he scoffs, letting the tube fall.

The man across from me, his cataract of milk-white hair fading to translucence at the edges, like the Earth's cloud cover seen from space, winks. “You'd need some sugar for that,” he says. He wheels away from the table to get coffee.

While wiping cereal paste from the shirt of the man to my left, the CNA notices the plastic square on his hand. She pulls it off with nervous efficiency—it was not held there by a pin after all, only adhesive. I ask her what it is, but she turns and appears headed for another table, as though she hasn't heard me. Then she hesitates. The square is a contact pad for a heart monitor, she tells me. Wires would connect to the metal nub. She doesn't know how it got on his hand.

The song has changed. It is still a love song, still light-country, but now a woman sings, and where the man before her sang of regret for having kept his heart hidden, this woman laments the pain of presently doing so. Respectively, these songs could be titled “What might have been” and “What might be.” These are songs about teenage problems, written and performed by young adults, now played for the elderly.

Or perhaps this soundtrack is intended only for the CNA, has perhaps been chosen by her. It is possible anyway that she and I are the only ones who hear it--this room rings with the shifting harmonics of hearing-aids on the fritz. And then there is the woman with her head thrown back, eyes closed, who continues to moan, loudly. Her mouth barely moves and the sound, which seems to come from somewhere deep inside her, is delirious and plaintive, the sound of a person trying to speak from within a dream. “That's her voice,” says the man to my left, his eyebrows raised as though the fact were a secret, a scandal in a small town.

The man with the halo of baby's hair sits quietly before the beverage cart. Pitchers of water and orange juice tower over him, passive and forbidding as a circle of bodyguards. Behind them the coffee pot cannot be seen.

If we live long enough, you and I will have breakfast in a room like this. *If* we are lucky, if we have saved enough that our families can afford such a place. This room will be the highlight of our days; otherwise we will sleep, or sit in the hallways for hours on end.

But in this room we will drop our forks. In this room we will struggle to bring tasteless, textureless food to our mouths while a young woman rations her disinterest between us, and from a CD player on the faux-wood countertop, people our grandchildren's age pine desperately for the love of strangers.

The man to my left holds a place card in his trembling hand. "That's _____," he says, reading a name and gesturing at the man who sits in front of the beverage cart. Holding the card he squints, mouth open, and points, and repeats the name. But the name he reads is his own.

Killhouse

Staring at the bloody handprints on the door did not help my nerves. I shifted from foot to foot, trying to ignore the sound of gunfire and alarm klaxons. The rifle in my hands seemed to be getting heavier, the armor strapped to my chest made worse by the sweltering Texas heat. My squad, on the other hand, didn't seem to even notice.

"...and that would help with the whole sweaty ball situation, too," Guthrie said, in complete earnest.

"I'm not saying that you're wrong just that no one gives a shit what you think," Van said, smiling. He kneeled over his medic's bag, pulling out its contents.

"Be honest, how much baby powder do you go through? If we had some vents or zippers or something, I could get through a whole day without swamp ass. Seriously, my boys need to breathe." Guthrie said, digging under his armor to adjust himself, juggling his rifle in his other hand.

I smiled and shook my head.

I liked Guthrie. His talent for breaking tension with an ill-timed joke or juvenile comment was fitting; as he was only eighteen and didn't seem to fully grasp what it meant to be in the army yet. More than once the rest of us found ourselves sore and sweating because he assumed our platoon sergeant had a sense of humor.

"I'm sure the Sergeant will let you wear shorts if you just ask nicely," I suggested, smiling. "He's a reasonable guy. Remember the laundry incident?"

Guthrie's expression darkened, "So many socks..." Pulling his hand out of his pants, he adjusted his armor, balancing his rifle in his off hand.

Van looked up from his bag and frowned. "I'd be careful with that. Or did you forget what happened the last time you dropped your rifle?"

Guthrie looked around suddenly, "Why? Do you see the Sergeant?" He straightened up and held his rifle in both hands.

Van gave Guthrie an irritated look. "No, but that doesn't mean *he* can't see *us*. You know he's watching the test through the cameras, and I'm tired of getting smoked because of you." He looked down and busied himself with his bag again, convinced that the right set-up helped with his patient care. It didn't.

Vanvolkinburg, or Van, was a nice guy and a good soldier. Medicine, however, did not suit him. He struggled through the practical exams, overlooking wounds or forgetting procedures. His scores actually ended up tanking our platoon average. What he lacked in book smarts, though, he made up for in strength.

"What do you care if we do a few push-ups? Its not like you'd even notice," I said, looking down at my own arms. "Sometimes I wonder if you hang out with us just so you can get a quick work out when *he* pisses off the Sergeant," I gestured to Guthrie, who feigned innocence.

Van looked up and smiled, “Well I don’t want to get soft out here. And his fuck-ups turn the Sergeant into my very own personal trainer.” His bag was empty now, tourniquets and bandages strewn across the ground.

“What? Its not my fault he’s got a stick up his ass,” Guthrie said, voice dropping as he checked over his shoulder. “Do the cameras have microphones too?” he whispered.

I chuckled and turned to look at the camo-canopy set up nearby, providing the only shade for miles. Our squad leader, Herschel, sat beneath it propped against the center pole, looking toward the Killhouse at nothing in particular.

What’s bugging him? “I’m gonna go see what our fearless leader is up to,” I said.

“Ask him if I can be door man. I wanna kick this bitch in,” Guthrie said, reaching out and pushing against the bloody door, testing it.

I shook my head and turned to leave. Slinging my rifle over my shoulder, I picked my way through the sagebrush and rock toward the canopy.

Herschel noticed me walking over and stood up, nodding at my approach, “Gann.”

I nodded back. “Just checking up, you seem even more grim than usual.” I stepped under the canopy and sighed, relishing the cool shade.

“I’m doin’ fine,” Herschel said, his thick country accent making him sound nasally. “But if I were you, I’d be more worried ‘bout your buddies over there.” He gestured behind me and I turned to see Van and Guthrie whipping each other with tourniquets.

I turned back and shrugged. “They’re just blowing off some steam. Everyone’s a little eager to get home. I mean, after six months all we’ve got is this last test and then we’re gone. Can you really blame them for being a little goofy?”

“No, what I mean is that the third house has a one in four (pronounced “fow-er”) attrition rate,” Herschel said, pausing for effect. “And there’s four of us.”

People often mistakenly assumed Herschel wasn’t intelligent because of his accent, but he had been made squad leader for a reason. He was ten years older than us and a higher rank; but more than that, Herschel excelled at small unit tactics. Thanks to him our squad managed to clear two different Killhouses without taking a single casualty.

I shrugged. “So we’ll have to run a couple miles after this, who cares? Honestly, I’m surprised we made it this far without getting shot.”

Herschel shook his head. “I ain’t talking ‘bout casualties, I’m talking ‘bout somebody failing their practicals and gettin’ stuck here for another six months.” He gave me a pointed look, then went on. “Van failed the first house, and Guthrie failed rescue breathing at the hospital. Two fails is a recycle; and if they fail their second time through the training cycle, they get reclassified as cooks.”

I furrowed my brow and looked back at them, still whipping each other and shouting curses. “I figured Van might not make it, but I didn’t know Guthrie failed one. I thought he knew his shit,” I said, doubt creeping into my voice. I turned back to face Herschel. “Well, if we can double-check their treatments without the Sergeant notice-”

“No,” said Herschel, shaking his head. “I am *not* riskin’ a recycle for those two. I’ve been away from my baby for too long. I’m gettin’ through this and I’m gettin’ home.” He cocked his head to the side, “And besides, what if they ain’t *supposed* to be medics? A bad medic could get people killed.”

Wow. Dick. I looked at Herschel with a raised brow. He held my gaze. After a moment I looked away. “Guthrie wants to be door man,” I said, irritated. “And first squad will probably be done soon.” I turned and walked back to the Killhouse.

The building was completely quiet now, which meant first squad had finished and was being debriefed by Sergeant Roh. In a moment the red light would turn green, indicating that we would have five minutes to prepare a breach.

I came back to find Guthrie nursing a purple welt on his face and Van packing the last of his equipment into his med bag. “I take it Van won?”

“He cheated,” Guthrie said, looking indignant. Van just laughed.

What if Herschel’s right?

I shook my head and pushed the thought to the back of my mind. “Well, we should probably start getting re-” The light flashed green and we all stared at the door for a moment before echoing the call sign to Herschel, “Green Light!”

Herschel jogged over as we readied our rifles, loading them with blanks and switching on the target designators that would indicate whether we hit or missed. Herschel did the same as he led us to the door, calling out our positions in the stack. “Van on point. I’m second. Gann you’re third. Guthrie’s on door.” With practiced ease we moved to our positions and watched the light above the door. We waited with bated breath, each of us covering our danger zones, each of us eager to fight.

Finally, the light flashed red. The muffled sound of alarm klaxons could be heard through the door. Guthrie moved to the front, slinging his rifle across his back. He swept the door frame with his fingers, feeling for wires. Satisfied, he tested the latch then turned to Herschel, forming the hand signs: *None found. Door Locked.* Herschel nodded and Guthrie gave a vicious smile. He leaned back, coiled his leg, and kicked the door in with a loud *CRACK!* The sound of screams and klaxons poured out in waves. I tightened my grip on my rifle and, one by one, we entered the Killhouse.

Shazaam

Pulling up to his parents house, Jacob could not help but smirk. It was located in a manufactured suburb where every other house, except his parents', looked identical to last. The lawn was decorated with an array of nicknacks, garage sale finds, plastic pink flamingoes, enough garden gnomes to make it creepy, and an impressive collection of wind chimes that hung from the patio next to the bench-swing.

After giving both his parents hugs, and listening to his mother mention how skinny he was again, he glanced over at his grandfather, who seemed to be searching his plethora of pockets for an item that would never be found.

Jacob remembered when his grandfather first began to forget. He had heard of his diagnosis, but had figured it was just a side effect of being old. But Jacob finally grasped the gravity of his condition at a Christmas dinner when he asked Jacob what his major was twice before finishing his first serving of mashed potatoes. Now when his grandfather greeted him with a question about his high school basketball team, Jacob sighed. "Uh, Grandpa. I graduated a while ago."

"Uh-heh, yeah, I know, just, um, curious how the old team was doing." His grandfather pretend to punch the air. "By the way, you're looking skinny, you on a diet or something?"

Jacob sighed.

"Anyway, you have a T.V. right?"

"Yes, Grandpa."

"What about a VHS player?"

"I think there is one in the attic."

"Good, 'cause all my videos are on tape. You ever see the Marx Brothers?"

"Yeah, um, we watched one together on you birthday last year."

"Uh, yeah, anyway I used to watch them as a kid, back in Vermont, at an old theater. I used to work there too."

"That's pretty cool Grandpa."

"You can call me Buzz. I mean you're what, seventeen?"

"Twenty-four."

Unlocking the door to the comic book shop was the only part of the job

Jacob really enjoyed anymore. Hearing the ring of the bell that was attached to the door, the smell of a thousand comic books dating back to the 70's, and most importantly, the feeling of the first push on the power button of his store computer. It was never part of his plan to run a comic book store, but things do not usually go according to plan. Also, the job market is not booming for English majors with a minor in Art, or at least that was the excuse Jacob used in conversations at parties. It was a college job that turned into a career when the original owner left it to him. Comic book stores are not typically that busy, especially in a small town. The only "busy" day is Wednesday, when new comics come out, and even then it is not like an electronics store the day before the Super Bowl. Because of this, the majority of Jacob's days were spent sitting on a stool behind the counter on the store computer, placing orders, reading the industry news, and wasting time. Today as he unlocked the door, he was not thinking about the ring of the bell attached to the door. "So. This is your job? This is it?"

"Yeah Grandpa. Er, Buzz."

"Wow, you've got nothing to complain about. You know when I was a kid I used to read a lot of these. During the war, the Boy Scouts used to donate them to the war effort. I was the treasurer so before they got sent off to the boys overseas, I would take them home and read them all." Buzz began to laugh uproariously, his laugh mixed with even louder coughs. "I returned them all of course," he said while trying to compose himself, "but I got a lot of them for free. My favorite was always Captain Marvel. You ever read him?"

"He is called Shazam now. I don't really read superhero stuff anymore."

"Oh, well, he was the best. He was a kid who discovered a wizard or something, he was called, Shazam. The wizard, not the kid. Anyway, whenever the kid, Billy I think, would say the word 'Shazam' he would turn into the full-grown Captain Marvel. I remember these kids one time were beating me up and I kept yelling 'Shazam! Shazam' hoping I'd get some sort of power. It didn't work." Buzz began to laugh even louder at this, which seemed even more undeserving than the first joke. Jacob only really heard about a third of what Buzz said. He was more focused on the computer and occasionally let out a curtesy "Uh, huh. Oh yeah." Buzz shuffled on his stool and glanced over at Jacob. "Yeah, I think I still have a few of those Captain Marvel strips in my storage locker. Pretty old. Probably worth something now." Jacob turned from his computer with a newfound interest in his

grandfather's stories.

Later someone walked into the store, echoing the “ring” of the bell throughout the store's high ceilings. Jacob was organizing the paperback collections near the back of the store, so Buzz swiveled on his chair to greet the short red-headed girl. “Hi. I'm Buzz. This is my grandson's shop. What are you looking for?”

“Uh, hi Buzz. We've met before. I'm Jacob's girlfriend, Mary.”

“Um, yeah,” Buzz swallowed loud enough to echo through the room, “yeah, yeah, I knew that, I was just joking. You know practicing on greeting people, like the Three Stooges, ‘Hello. Hello. Hello!’” Buzz began to cough laugh.

Recognizing Mary's voice, Jacob sprung to get to her before his grandpa could embarrass himself further. “Hey, Mary could I talk to you in the back?”

“You know Mary Marvel was the name of one of Captain Marvel's sidekicks,” Buzz interjected, “I tell you about him? I used to read this comic called Captain Marvel back when I was a kid. When I was a Boy Scout I used to---”

“Yeah Buzz, you told me that. Mary can we talk?”

Mary nodded, and they proceeded to a back room that was sectioned off by a striped curtain.

Mary was a great listener. She belongs to that small group of people who rarely tell their own stories, but seem enthralled with everyone else's. Her big eyes widened at Jacob as he quickly closed the curtain and began saying as if a bomb was attached to his chest, “Okay, so I was talking to him earlier today, and he was telling me about his storage locker, and that inside he thinks---”

“Wait slow down. You mean your grandpa's storage locker?”

“Yes. You know how he was going off on Captain Marvel just then. Well he's been like a huge fanboy since he was a kid, and he has a ton of old stuff now. Valuable stuff. Captain Marvel's first appearance recently sold for over \$170,000 dollars. And if he has a lot of this stuff, that's big money, like retire the shop and start my writing career kind of money.”

“That's cool and all, but it's still his stuff, Jacob. You can't sell it if he still wants it. He sounds pretty attached to his childhood.”

“Yeah I know, I know. But today is your day off, so I think we should go down there and take a look at what he's got. If it is worth something, it shouldn't be in a storage locker, and I'd like to get a better sense of him, you know? Really get to

know the man through what he finds valuable.”

“Yeah, I bet that’s why you really want to go. And if you just happen to find something that is worth something, that’s just a plus right?”

Jacob gave an over-exaggerated Cheshire Cat grin, the kind he used to give Mary whenever she was mad at him. Mary smiled as she shook her head, and punched his arm.

In the car, Jacob drove while Mary fiddled with the GPS. Buzz sat in the back seat and stared out the window while he talked. “You know when I was thinking about becoming a priest, I worked for the seminary newspaper. I did the jobs nobody wanted, like the obituaries. Well one time I got the bright idea to have some fun with the editor. My friend’s horse had recently died, so I wrote him up an obituary. Beautiful stuff. Would have made Stalin cry. I had only planned on the editor seeing it, but somehow it slipped by and made it to the paper. I was mortified. I thought I was going to get caught and be thrown out of the seminary. But next day, all the priest were rolling in the aisles.”

Mary giggled. “That’s pretty funny Buzz. Right Jacob?” She nudged his shoulder.

“Yeah, it’s funny. Do I turn here?”

Mary sighed. “Yes. It should be right here.”

The storage locker lot was less than glamorous. Most of the lockers were tagged with explicit graffiti and the ones that were not looked like they should have been. Jacob asked his grandpa his locker number, but Buzz could not remember. Jacob sighed heavily and Mary answered him by rolling her eyes. So they walked to a small shack, were the owner of the lot was. The owner looked like an old surfer dude who’s face had been eaten away by narcotics. He had long stringy hair that seemed to be designed for catching flies. He had one of the last blond mustaches post-1970, and his unbuttoned Hawaiian shirt accented his appearance nicely.

“Um, do have a directory for the owner’s of the lockers?” Jacob said.

“Boy,” he spoke with a Texas accent, “I got a journal of every name of everyone I ever met. I got a directory.”

“Okay. Um, I’m looking for a Buzz Kilpatrick.”

“Yup, locker 23.”

“You sure? You didn’t look at the book.”

“Believe boy. Locker 23. What’s your name?”

“Jacob.”

The owner proceeded to write his name down in a journal. “Now,” said the owner. “No key, right?” Jacob nodded. “Alright, alright.” He got out of his lawn chair and shuffled in his flip-flops over to the biggest bolt-cutters Jacob had ever seen.

“Don’t you need some sort of identification?”

“I never forget a face boy.” The owner’s long finger pointed out the window at Buzz.

The owner pried open the door, unveiling the remnants of Buzz’s life. The locker was packed with old furniture, an imposing collection of VHS and Beta tapes, old records, newspapers dating back to the 50s, and an old chest in the back. Jacob and the owner started moving stuff out of the way. The owner did not ask to help, but he started moving stuff before Jacob. Buzz and Mary sat on lawn chairs the owner had set out for them. Buzz looked disturbed as his stuff was being moved, so Mary began patting his back. He smiled.

The owner made it to the chest before Jacob. “I’m guessing this is what your looking for?”

“Yeah, heh, can you open it?” Jacob said winded, his thin arms resting on his legs, forming a sort of triangle.

Prying it open revealed even more newspapers and an old book about comics. Jacob flipped through the book and found what he had come for. It was old, all right, but not the kind of old Jacob had hoped for. It was issue #117 of Captain Marvel and Family. The back cover was missing, not to mention three of the interior pages. It had turned an odd shade of yellow, and the edges seemed like they had been chewed away by rats. Retail price: about one dollar.

Jacob ran his fingers through his hair then looked up at the sky. He looked back down at the ground, and blew his lips together like he was making a motorboat noise. He glanced at Mary and tried to grin, but what came out resembled the look he would give his mom after eating a terrible new recipe.

“Is this it Buzz?” Jacob asked.

Seeing the issue, Buzz’s face lit up. “Oh yeah, I remember this one. They fight the giant Scorpion King and Mary Marvel saves the Captain at the end. I probably read this a thousand times on trips to and from the city.”

“Wow. You know, Buzz you have a great memory,” Mary said.

Buzz laughed. “You know, you are the first person to ever tell me that.”

Jacob did not sigh. Instead he smiled, for the first time in a while. A real smile, not a courtesy smile or a laughing smile or a fake Cheshire Cat smile, but a smile that emanated from feeling a genuine, red-blooded, un-cynical emotion. “Hey grandpa. I can probably get you a better copy of that, you know, with all the pages.”

“That would be neat. I’d like to read it again. It’s been ages. But you know, I still like having this old one. It’s been through the ringer and it’s still standing, even if it’s missing a few things.”

The owner shuffled out of the locker. “Hey Buzz, how much you want for all these newspapers. I don’t have most of these. Lot a good names in ‘em.”

Buzz, Mary, and Jacob all looked at one another. “That’s up to Jacob,” Buzz said, “I don’t need them anymore.”

Jacob looked at Mary again, and said with his back turned to the owner, “You can have them. Except there is one I want. I think it might be in the chest.”

Jacob ruffled through a few of the papers looking through the obituaries, when one caught his eye.

“Shazam.”

Shot

Noah needed a cigarette. His hands jittered against the steering wheel as he pulled into his parking spot for the apartment. His brain felt like it was on fire, his skin was crawling with need. He hoped he still had a few left. He wouldn't be able to afford another pack until Monday, and it was only Thursday. When he walks into his living room, Lilah is spread out on the couch, bottles littering the table and floor around her. She looks at him with half-lidded eyes and then turns her attention back to the screen.

“Hey.”

He sits down in the chair next to the couch, pulling the crumpled pack from the table and opens it. One left. He sighs and throws it back onto the table. He'll have to save it for when his cravings are really bad. “Hey,” he responds, lifting his gaze to the TV. “What're you watching?”

She shrugs. “No idea.”

He makes a noncommittal noise, picking up the mail next and rifling through it. It's mainly bills. There's a birthday card for his twenty-eighth from his parents two months too late. There's an opened envelope from Lilah's parents too. He puts the mail back down and gets back up to start dinner, feeling tired just looking at what's due. “Wasn't your appointment today?”

“No. Tomorrow.” She takes a long draught of her beer and finishes it, adding it to the pile. “Noon, I think.”

He nods, preheating the oven for a frozen pizza. The ashtray near the microwave has a half-smoked remnant and he stares at it, frowning. He doesn't normally smoke a cigarette halfway and doesn't remember doing it. “Did you take a cigarette?” he asks.

Lilah doesn't say anything, instead getting up to use the restroom. The pizza is already done when he realizes she still hasn't come out.

He knocks on the door, but there's silence. This isn't the first time she's done this.

She had locked herself in the bathroom a week ago. It had been over an hour since he last heard water running and he had finally realized maybe he should check on her.

Noah pressed an ear against the door and heard nothing. He tried to turn the knob, but it's locked. Fear choked his throat as the realization hit that something's wrong, and he started banging on the door, shouting her name. He was about to give up and call the police when there's a soft click and the door opened to reveal Lilah standing there with red-rimmed eyes.

She swept ragged brown hair, still wet from the shower, out from her eyes and slicked it back. "Yeah?" She glowered.

"Yeah?" he mimicked, his heart thudding angrily in his chest. "Yeah? Seriously?" He should feel relieved she wasn't dead or bleeding, but white-hot fury filled his veins instead. He's tired of this. He's sick of understanding, of watching her decay bottle by bottle, the life bleeding out of her eyes a little each day from an illness that can't be prescribed. It's been a year since she moved in, and he's done. "I thought you were dead. Dying. What the fuck were you doing in there?"

"Just... just leave me alone," she whispered, and her eyes fell, her fingers gripping the bathroom knob.

"I..." he started, wanting to scream his bottled frustrations and make her choke on it, like she deserved. But his resolve crumpled when her expression did, shame written across her face in its misery, and he realizes this is the first time he'd ever seen her weak. Her strength is completely gone, and her body is hunched and

trembling. “You need help, Lilah. If it’s not from me, it has to be from someone. You can’t live like this anymore. I can’t live like this anymore.”

“No,” she shook her head slowly, her body pressing further into the door. She looked hollow, like a shell. “They never help. They just give you pills and tell you to feel better, and you’re not even yourself, and it never helps.”

“Isn’t that better than nothing?” Exasperation took over and he wanted to shake her. “You’re barely even living as it is!”

“No!”

“Okay if not a therapist, then something, there has to be a way.”

“There isn’t one,” she said angrily, strength back in her scowl.

“How do you know?”

“I...” She gritted her teeth. It’s a full minute before she spits out, “I don’t.”

“Okay.” He spreaded out his hands in a gesture of surrender. “Can you at least come sit with me and see what Google says?”

He thought she was going to say no. Her shoulders were shaking from tension, her knuckles were white on the doorknob and her expression refused to soften. But then she let go and nodded, refusing to look him in the eye. It’s a start.

The door opens suddenly in front of him in the present, and Lilah’s eyes are red again, eyelashes wet from crying. “Sorry,” she says quietly. “I didn’t mean to scare you.” It’s still strange to see her cry. She used to never cry.

He sighs and steps aside so she can move past him, going into the kitchen and starting to cut up the already-cooling pizza. “I’ll feel better when you see the psychiatrist tomorrow.”

Her eyes slide to his for a second, then back to the walls, dead and empty. “We’ll see,” she says tonelessly, handing him two slices on a paper plate. She had told him after their last fight that she had seen a psychologist for years as a child,

then again before she had come to live with him. They hadn't helped her at all, she had insisted. She felt hopeless.

But he'd found one that specialized in PTSD, so she had eventually consented.

They watch TV in silence. Years ago, back at their old barracks in Qatar they'd watch bootlegged movies that her parents sent from America and make jabs at them or talk about how much better they could have been. Lilah had been pretty good at impressions.

The silence here is suffocating.

When she goes to bed, he sits on the couch and raises the half-smoked cigarette to his lips, hands shaking. He rarely got panic attacks, not like Lilah did. But tomorrow terrified him. He looks at the birthday card. For his birthday he and Lilah had gone out and drank at a bar. Lilah punched a guy for catcalling and they had had to leave. They went to a 7-11 and he remembers that they had laughed. It had been quiet, but Lilah had let out a small "ha" and he had done the same, patting her shoulder in amusement.

He lit his last cigarette after he finishes the remnant, each inhale a soothing balm to the tension in his chest. It was only after the last exhale and the fire goes out that he stops trembling and can go to bed.

It's hard to concentrate at work the next day. He's a lowly medical assistant, salaried at an *impressive* 27k a year, and he's taking sutures out and changing the dressings on a bullet wound. The teen's face twists into belligerence when someone asks where it's from. It reminds him too much of how he met Lilah back in Qatar, although he has anesthetic this time.

Lilah had stared blankly forward, clenching the bottle of vodka Noah had given her as his tweezers dig into her leg, pulling out shrapnel. He was out

of painkillers. The supply had been low already before the chaos of the morning, when a car-bomb had gone off, killing six soldiers, four civilians, and injuring at least eighteen other people. Yet she had no reaction to the white-hot pain threading throughout her body, and she only took a hard swig of alcohol when he commanded her to, swallowing sharply. He dug in again, this time with a needle to bind the flesh, and she still didn't react, shock numbing her. He gently patted the area dry of blood and cleaning solution and forced her to drink another gulp.

"So... what the hell happened?" he asked her as he carefully wrapped up her leg, pulling tight. Sometimes talking helped.

Lilah said nothing, her gaze empty and wide, her shoulders shaking a little.

He nodded as if she had responded, chucking the remnants of the bullet into the waste bin and then pushing himself up from his knees. "Hey now, you're lucky it was only your leg."

That seems to wake her up, and she pressed her head against the hot wood of the shanty that had been set up as an infirmary, closing her eyes and shaking her head.

He said nothing, taking the bottle of vodka from her fist and taking a gulp himself. He's not the kind of doctor she needed right now. He can't stop the scars from spidering in the cracks of her brain.

All the anaesthetic had gone to those with 3rd degree burns, because they'd writhe in agony at every touch, every breath of wind. Their skin was compromised, bandages the brand they couldn't escape. There were some that he couldn't treat at all, those who'd already bled out or were too far gone in fire, those he had to pass on in order to save the ones who had a chance.

Yeah, Lilah was lucky.

He took another sip and passed it to her just as another eight people are

being ushered into the small house, their groans of pain filling the air. There are shouts that there had been another shooting. As he started to head over, Lilah got up on an unsteady leg, her hand trembling when she grabbed him by the arm. Her eyes are suddenly clear. “What can I do to help?”

“Is there anything else I can help you with?” Noah now asks when he finishes wrapping gauze around the teenager’s side.

“Why do you even care?”

“Someone’s got to,” he replies wearily though he’s no longer sure himself.

When he gets home that evening the bathroom door is shut. He frowns, testing the knob. Locked. He assumes trouble, but his body feels numb and unaffected. He wonders if this is it.

“It should be open,” Lilah calls from within the bathroom a second later.

“It’s locked,” he says slowly, but then he jiggles the knob again, and it opens. Lilah is in front of the bathroom mirror, gloves on each hand, trying to squirt hair dye on the back of her head. “Uhm, what are you doing?”

“Doing something I never could do in the army,” she says, scrunching her nose up in concentration. “Trying to...what’s the word... *disassociate* from it.”

He snorts, shaking his head. “Is that what the doc told you to do?”

She sets the bottle on the counter, shrugging. “Kinda.” When she doesn’t elaborate, he raises his brows at her reflection, and she sighs. “I don’t want to be me anymore.”

The silence stretches for a minute as he tries to decide what to say, staring pointedly at the counter. He looks up, mouth open to tell her she’s wrong, when their eyes meet. He can see the desperation there. There never used to be desperation there. And he realizes he doesn’t want her to be herself either, because this self is a complete wreck. He purses his lips together instead, drawing on gloves

from the box on the sink, carefully picking the bottle up. "I can help."

Those were the words he'd said to her when she had called him at three in the morning a year ago, saying she needed a place to stay. She had tried living with her parents, but her anger kept coming out in spurts.

"They just don't get it," she said furiously. "I've gone to war and back, and I'm only fucking twenty four, and they say, well, you're just a kid, you'll grow out of this. Just adjust. And what the hell am I adjusting to? I get shot and see my friends die, and they tell me to work at McDonald's because that's all my experience accounts for. McDonald's is all that will hire me for my fucking service, for the bullets I took for our country. And they're all so dead inside, numb to the shit around them; they hear about what happens to people like us on the television, they don't get it, they don't understand, I've seen people die, and I fucking killed someone, Noah, and they just don't understand that I don't feel anything."

"I can help," he said. Because he had left the army and all of his medical training accounted for jack and he ended up a *fucking medical assistant* because apparently being a doctor for non-civilians didn't count and he didn't feel things anymore either and he *understood*.

So now she's staring straight ahead as he saturates her hair in a purple mixture that's both wet and powdery. She leans forward so he can better get at the nape of her neck, taking a sip of the beer she had been nursing earlier. It hits him hard as he sits there, focused on the way his hands slipped through the short tufts of hair, making sure that the brown disappears. He hadn't. He hadn't helped her. He couldn't even help himself. He stares at the dye as it slowly drips down the strands of hair in his hands and he feels nothing. How long had he felt nothing?

It catches him off guard when she says, "You haven't been smoking much."

Noah paused, frowning at her in the mirror. Lilah was nothing but

hyper-vigilant, but he doesn't understand why she's bringing it up. The only conversations about him smoking were her chastising him for letting ash drop onto the couch. "It's an expensive habit."

"You need money?" She turns to look at him, her lips pulled down in a frown. "I thought you were fine."

"I'm the only one paying bills around here." He looks at the beer in her hand. He can't believe she never noticed. "It adds up."

Lilah stares at the tile of the bathroom floor, slowly turning her head forward again. "I'm sorry," she says quietly. "I booked another appointment."

Noah combs his fingers through her hair, satisfied that everything was covered. "Good."

She comes out half an hour later after rinsing the dye out in the shower. When she thinks it's dry enough she runs her fingers through it, slicking it back.

"What do you think?" She asks, tilting her head from side to side in front of the hallway mirror.

Noah studies her for a second, seeing the alcohol banished from her expression. "It's nice," he says carefully. "What do you think?"

"It's beautiful," she says, grinning. She turns to face him, and he can see the rays of his former best friend in the light around her eyes.

He finds himself smiling back for the first time in ages. "You look good, kid."

That night, they watch a movie and she makes a joke.

She's doing better every week, within a month she's starting to try. He catches job applications nestled amidst empty beer bottles.

And the next day he falls apart. It's his day off, and she had been gone for an hour, talking to her shrink. He looks around the house, the dirtiness of it, the

bottles and cigarettes and clothes that line the floor and it's like he's suffocating.

He locks himself in the bathroom and he throws up until he cries, sobbing with his head against the toilet. She's doing better and he hadn't helped at all. Because he wasn't able to even save himself.

There's a knock on the door.

He doesn't answer, pushing himself into the fetal position instead. He couldn't let Lilah see him like this. See what he really was- broken too.

He takes a deep breath, letting it shake on its release. He pushes his emotions back through the cracks, sealing them off. "Just a minute," he calls, and he thinks he sounds like he usually does. Then the seal breaks and the cracks open wider, and it's hard to breathe again.

It's another hour before he manages to leave the bathroom floor, tentatively opening the door, back to the world outside.

She had picked up, clothes tossed neatly into one corner, a bulging plastic bag near the door filled with trash and glass bottles. But she was nowhere in sight. A surge of anger takes him by surprise, and he grips the couch. *How could she just leave me here, when I've tried to help her so many fucking times.*

But then he spots it, lying there serenely on the coffee table.

A new pack of cigarettes with a post it note attached. "I can help," it said, with a phone number scrawled at the bottom.

Sunlight crawls through a window that hadn't been open in ages, catching the gold line on the wrapper. It's blinding.

Summer Snow

I was wading in the haunting light of the Lamar River Canyon, navigating boulders the size of cabins. Wet flakes began to cascade in sheets melting silently in the furious water. I continued my rhythmic meditation of flicking a dry fly towards rising trout as the snow encapsulated the world around me in smothering silence. The boulders soon had white hats, sitting silently, judging me, the lone outlier in a pristine moment of time—disrupting the natural harmonies. The falling white flakes of light eddied around my fly line as it sliced through the curtains, mimicking the rhythm of the water and the swirling echoes of feeding trout. In this moment, my vision was affixed on the flakes melting into the water, the canyon walls flickering through swirling snow—cascading water frozen in place—fly line hovering in the falling winter of summer—aroma of cold earth filtering through the snow. Silence washed over me, evoking memories of my father and me when I was seven. His cowboy hat swaying with the motion of his fly cast—he imparted secrets of the Yakima River on a blistering midsummer day.

Abruptly, hard rays of sunlight broke the trance, coursing in shimmering waves across the water and crystalline features of snow—a natural hallucination of music and light—the crushing roar of the river returned, eviscerating silence with a precision only nature can achieve.

Poetry

Ars Poetica in Edinburgh

Claire Hanberg

Poetry cannot be
FORCED

nor
t-e-a-s-e-d,
lured, or
coaxed out of
– hiding –

it will not be
threatened or
bullied or
frightened into

submission

If it is
UNWILLING
then it
shall arrive
in its own
tick-tock-time,

pacing footsteps,
interrupting meals,
treading
the...misty edges

... of...
dreams...

do not look up,
no,
nor seize it with a

wild cry
and shout

“*Aha!*”

For it will
va ni s h
in a

twinkling
laughing at

clumsyaw-kw-ard-ness

amused by
FRUSTRATION.

When one has
s

u
l
k
e d

long enough
it shall return,
but never the same
way twice
way twice.

For verse,
as all art,
is as

f l u
i d

as the
substance

of

s
o

u

l

s

at once, distinguishable,
and again –

a thousand times! –

a horse

of a

different
color.

Manastash

The Sin of Beans and Rice

In Response to Santiago Armengod's "Alto a las Deportaciones de Migrantes"

My people cheer
as I tear the wiry noose from my neck.

The wires of the fence pierce my hands,
and my veins drip blood.

I am my people's pride.
The people in front of me—

Blood falling onto the soil—
onto my soil.

they are angry.
Those people shout profanities and slurs.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Those people are angry.
I feel their words shoving me back.

I can smell dirt and metal mixing,
but my people push me forward.

And I rip the fence apart.
They are angry.

I leave my sin behind—
the sin of beans and rice.

Voices rise from the crowds.
The people behind me—

Against the glory of gold,
I tear the fence apart.

My people—
they are angry.

1980 Subaru Forester

In Response to the "Righeous Dopefiend" exhibits.

Car lights aiming for me,
terror clenches my throat with
needles popping out my arms.

I weep.
I deserve to die, but
I don't want to.

I brace for impact,
street lights stare blindly at me.

Wife screaming,
Me leaving,
Drugs calling.

The bank reclaims our house.
I squeeze more fluid straight
into my blood stream.

Walking into the doctor's office,
watching his lips move,
"Your daughter will be born,

but she will be born dead."
Stillborn they call it.
My marriage ending:

my wife sobbing,
my needles healing,
my wife screaming.

Packing a bag with
one change of clothes
and all my needles.

Ending my marriage
because I could only feel
by plunging a syringe at my elbow.

Starting my 1980 Subaru
Forester needle in hand
route unplanned.

Muffled Moans and Barbed-Wire Bones

I said no,	<i>we were drunk</i>	<i>you liked it.</i>
You laughed.	<i>Okay, I was drunk,</i>	you laughed.
Jesus Christ,	so fucking what?	I said no.
Your fucking laugh –	it's an itch,	your laugh
it carved me out;	I keep scratching	it keeps growing,
Like a pumpkin,	but it only spreads –	it's consuming me.
On Halloween	the memory	you muffling
your fucking laugh –	I still can't tell where	my sobs
started	your laugh ended.	With your moans,
twisting my bones	and my dignity's –	sweating whiskey –
into barbed-wire.	Beginning:	I said no.

Fifty Three Hours (In response to Julio Salgado)

Chelsea DuChene

On the night I arrived in America
for it to be different,

my cousin whispered to me the story of
an octopus, who had been brooding her eggs
walking

for fifty-three months –
any harassment,

without food, without movement.
tightly

If that's not love, she murmured,
the street,

I don't know what is.

Three years later,

I sat on the church steps,
tangerines in your hair

listening to the hum of hymns
always tasted

and the Father's daughter,

who told me of an atheist
in the fields,

that she had met the night before.
against,

How the godless girl's tongue raked between
creaking wood.

each knot of her spine like the Devil's serpent.
you were hoping

Not one did she pause for my input,
lapse from abuse

unable to fathom the possibility that I,
to break something in me

a man of religion

with dark skin and an assumed
dust the truck kicked up

how desperate I was

and yet, when I smiled
at the first sight of two men

hand in hand without

they clutched each other

and hastened across

spitting the word immigrant
the way your father did gay.

I miss the smell of

and how your mouth

of creamy avocado.

I miss that worn tool shed out

whose walls you'd slam me up

my spine rasping against the

I still can't figure out if

one day the walls would col-

or if you were trying

you couldn't in yourself.

I can still taste the

Manastash

limited knowledge of the English language,
could possibly understand.
father said

Still, I swallowed each and every one
of the words that spilled from her mouth
come,

as though they were gulps of Holy Wine.

I think back to the innocence
of the day

I had upon first setting foot in this country,

as I watched you fade away,
whenever I think of what my

to me that day,

another love with

and it will be better.

Each year, on the anniversary

I left you behind,

I fast for fifty-three hours,

because if that's not love,

I don't know what is.

The Opposite of Folgers

Inspired by Jennifer Knox's *The Opposite of Crunchberries*

Karie May

The opposite of Folgers is
old socks left in the laundry basket for two months.
The opposite of old socks is
good books dog eared after being read all the time.

The opposite of good books is
my car running out of gas two miles from home.
The opposite of my car is
having freezer burnt fish sticks for dinner last night.

The opposite of fish sticks is
magnets holding pictures my nephews drew for me.
The opposite of magnets is
finding a T.V. show to binge watch on Netflix.

The opposite of Netflix is
meatloaf for dinner and big fat onions in it.
The opposite of meatloaf is
The best part of waking up, Folgers in my cup.

Tōhoku-chihō Taiheiyo Oki Jishin

I

Shaking in the blue.
Within seconds, cell phones blare
Else, we can't be saved.
Poor twelve-foot walls cannot hide
Tohoku from rushing waters.

II

Shifting the axis
Of the Earth ten inches seems
Mostly harmless, right?
Except when in Japan, where
Ocean chased down innocents.

III

Naoto Kan watches
Eighteen thousand, five hundred
Submerge and be still.
Another six thousand yet
Vie against nature for life.

IV

Evening sets in
Uneasy workers begin
Sifting through the waste
Flotsam, jetsam drift across
Ruined streets where cars lay still.

V

Oil set aflame
Motionless bodies gather
Elsewhere near the morgue
Very few will receive rites
Into mass graves they will go.

VI

Leaks begin to form

A House on Fire

Karie May

A pan of Oil.
A burner left on.
A stove not checked.
An empty house
No one home.
The flames spread
devouring everything
in their path.
The smoke seeps
into the walls.
The crib is scorched
where the baby
laid his head.
Counters now black
Buckle under the weight
of the Fire's fury
Our dog was trapped.
Our stuff is gone.
The fire took everything I had.
Everything except
what matters most.
The kids excited for
new toys and clothes
hardly understand
all we have lost.
I understand
All we have been given.

Manastash

Fallujah

A
camp in Iraq.
Stationed for months
without the use of a real bed.
It was the last place I saw Darren. It
was the last place anyone saw Darren. From
Chestertown, Maryland he came. And there he left
behind a wife and a yet born child. He is but one story of the
many Marines that would never come home. He followed directions
and all the advice given: keep your mouth shut, eyes open, keep your head
on a swivel and remain relaxed. These things didn't help him or anyone else get
home but it wasn't the AK-47 that would be stopping him. Contractors and civilian
truckers worked there too; one fell asleep at the wheel and there was nothing
that could be done. SCREECH! BANG! Yelled the two trucks. The 7-ton driver,
Stephanie, she jumped from hers, tucking and rolling onto the dirt,
but Darren was gunner and strapped in for safety. CRASH!
went the two vehicles rolling down the hill.
FALL-U-SHALL
A camp in Iraq
and it was the
last place I saw
my friend.

Pool

T.J. Tranchell

Casting the movie,
Not of my life but of one event.
Needed: woman: 25-30 y/o “Rosalie”
 woman: 23-28 y/o “DeeAnna”
 (should look 3 years younger
 than first woman)

Sisters, young mothers

Needed: two boys, under eight,
 Should appear six y/o
 Cousins

“Mikey”: blonde/blue

“T.J.”: red/blue

Minor character casting to come.
Let’s get these four parts
first.

Exterior: Southern California
Every house has a pool.
Close-up: music swells
Mikey, tripping,
can’t yet swim and no one there
to save him

Interior: hospital
(or home depending on budget)
Rosalie calls DeeAnna
Not what she wants to hear
No breathing
No pulse
Not just sleeping

Manastash

Failure to resuscitate

Exterior: small white house w/large tree

DeeAnna can't buy T.J.'s grief

With Tootsie Rolls

gooey brown mixing

with salty tears pooling

beneath his lip.

T.J. Tranchell

Manastash

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Black Roses

I

Under the grey sky,
between the wild weeds,
within the City of Raindrops,
uprooted a single, bent rose bush,
containing one black rose. Its shade
as bright as polished Ebony Wood.

II

They still believe that the earth
is flat. The sun panting as it circles
their planet, like a helpless puppy.
They still even believe the history
of “Indian giver”. Simple mindedly,
those nay-sayers say that black roses
symbolize death. Equivalent to evil
and envy. The glad giver of grief.
The visitor before or after vengeance.
Its dark shade standing for the dark side.

III

Like a boy without a father,
you will wonder all your life.
You will try to alter
the pigmentation of the others
to make your very own black rose.
Dye, fire, paint. You will fail.
Black roses can only be created by the creator.
Such beauty, you cannot compose.

IV

Like the pitch-black expanding
universe that withholds all matter,
I am a black rose.

Like the comfort of darkness when you
close your eyes after the world has ripped
you apart, I am
the door to your dreams.

Like the romantic reds, wedded whites,
precious pinks, I exist.
Smell my essence.

Nothing Good Happens After 3 a.m.
Cornered, Captured, Convicted, Crucified:
An Abecedarian Account and Analysis of Afterthoughts

Daniel M. Fisher

Ambulance sirens scream in city streets

Beer and vomit stain taxi seats

Confused college kids crowd hospital lobbies

Desperate, drugged, dreary; dangerous hobbies

Emergency tracheotomies and

Future lobotomies of

Glorified dreams left

Hanging inside of me

Ignore sensation, use imagination

Just close my eyes, imagine vacations

KOA campgrounds and warm destinations

Let reality fade from bloodshot vision

Mentality: stagnant; I'm going to prison

Now what remains is time until trial

On downward spirals and tearful denials

Perhaps the pot was a poor decision, but the real

Quandry to ponder: its distribution

Realize possession lands misdemeanors, but

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Selling that shit leads to derailed futures

Thank the judge for his time, that of the trial

Unusual circumstances, hard to smile

Visualize five-to-ten of this concrete pen

With guards and bars and exercise yards

Xeroxed photos, D-O-C logos

Yesterday's gone, now I fly solo in this

Zebra-striped jumpsuit with zero potential.

Bibliophile

The smell of old books
burns my skin with memory
of us and of you
back when you mattered to me
and I had reason to breathe.

Haley Lindsley

Human Sacrifice

All that's left of you
is your hair on my pillow
and the memory
of the way you held me close
then threw me to the lions.

Haley Lindsley

Manastash

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Where I'm From

I am from the unplugged and overused microwave oven
From electricity and radiation
I am from the blank, white, black, and jagged
The torn down, beaten up
The kids-will-be-kids careless display
I am from coursing magma
The blood of the Earth
So white hot and burning
I'm from hot cocoa and night terrors
From the persistent and punctual
From because I said so and no means no
I'm from the belief but absence of suit
That one day every week
I'm from rural and overseas
Pounds and pounds of chicken and too much cereal
From the split forehead of a trip and fall
The panic and blood, casual reaction, safety so near
Close within reach; imminent.

I AM (feeling much better today)

I am bartender X and con man Y
I am part of a sad woman's failed plan
I am un-daughter, un-wife, un-mother
I am a flicker-face in a single strobe light frame
I am the last lingering drop, the under-bridge bottle
I am kissing smoke marbles and boxes of toxins
I am the taste of aluminum, and sour chemical stench
I am night sweats and heart palpitations
I am a pillow full of screams
I am a habit, not a promise
And I am sure that I'm going to die, but
anyway
I. AM. STILL. ALIVE.

A Beat

Chloe Allmand

The old man's tube socked feet
in orthopedic running shoes tap out
the slowest of melodies on the track,
the beat of the ballad he danced to on his fiftieth wedding anniversary
with the woman who bought him the grey Hanes t-shirt
hanging off his crooked frame.

Two boys gain on him,
Sprinting, laughing, breathing ease and power.
Cut off t-shirts let their muscle
wrapped ribs breathe,
their Nikes pound out the techno beat
from the bars where they grind on girls
on Saturday nights.

The young part around the old
and for a moment their rhythms mingle
as age nods to adolescence with a sigh and a smirk
before the old man is again
left behind.

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No matter how fast those boys run
they can't leave behind what they're running from.

The track is a loop.

How I Knew

Not by all the headlines for our graduating class; in a tiny local paper it
was annual news,

and I had hardly noticed that my time had come at last.

Not by all the many names I'd never see again; Michael, Mitch, and
Madison, the last of whose

days will end in Seaview, never to exceed where they begin.

Not by the borrowed toaster which I Tetris'd in a box, along with thirty
thousand pens

and pairs of wrinkled socks.

Not by all the clothes unpacked and sprawling on the bed; I'd only put
the last away, when

I saw that nothing changed—each item was the same, just in a dorm
instead.

Not by hearing dubstep from the speakers 3 feet high, or rap my
neighbors played

at 4 am, with class at 5.

Not by letters finding me to prove my address change, or the clock's
alarm before the dawn forced me awake;

it was two boys talking on the street who looked to be my age.

Not about the party last night, or how their IDs were faked.

They talked about how much they were intending to get—the tensile
strength

of steel cable

to enhance their project's design.

I knew, right then, I'd arrived.

Hedonism

Tonight, I want romance. I want dinner, dancing, and a deep, penetrating conversation with my wife. What, can't a guy ask for a happy ending like in the good movies? I want to laugh aloud and bend her over in embarrassed laughter at my horrid jokes. I want to stand in the kitchen and bone the chicken for a good fry – the bones would make eating her saucy chicken too much of a chore. That simply won't do. I want to spread her legs and put the meat on top of the noodles, then drown it in white, creamy sauce. Perhaps instead, I might want to thrust my wooden skewers into it and grill it, or pop the meat into the oven for a good crisp? Nah. Skewer it. I want to watch her suck it off and smile when the flavor explodes in her mouth. Why don't we just fuck Alfredo and have some skewered teriyaki instead?

Crypts

If the feeling of heavy wet denim
wasn't so disturbing

nothing would hold me back from

stepping one foot at a time into

this calm lake

and forcing my body

to learn how to

float.

The Lost Poems of Tolstoy #1, 2 and 5

Joanna Thomas

Russians were certain to be beasts and fools, he liked Vronsky, and still more Anna.

"Here, if you please," he said, moving on one side with his nimble gait and pointing to his picture, "it's Pilate's Admonition, Matthew, chapter twenty-seven," he said, feeling his lips beginning to tremble with emotion. He moved away and stood behind them.

For the few seconds during which the visitors were gazing at the picture in silence, Mikhailov too gazed at it with the indifferent eye of an outsider. For those few seconds he was sure in anticipation that a higher, juster criticism would be uttered by them, by those very visitors whom he had so despised a moment before. He forgot all he had thought about his picture during the three years he had been painting it. He forgot all the qualities that had been absolutely certain to him, he saw the picture with their indifferent, new, outside eyes, and saw nothing good in it. He saw in the foreground Pilate's irritated face and the serene face of Christ, and in the background the figures of Pilate's servants and the face of John watching what was happening. Every feeling that with such agony, such blunders and corrections, had grown up within him with its special character, every idea that had given him such torments and such captures, and all these faces so many times reappreciated for the sake of the harmony of the whole, all the shades of color and tones that he had attained with such labor—all of this together seemed to him now, looking at it with their eyes, the merest vulgarity, something that had been done a thousand times over. The face nearest to him, the face of Christ, the center of the picture, which had given him such ecstasies as it unfolded itself to him, was utterly lost to him when he looked at the picture with their eyes. He saw a well-painted (no, not even that, now he distinctly saw a mass of defects) repetition of those endless Christs of Titian, Raphael, Rubens, the same soldiers, the same Pilates. It was all common, poor and stale, and positively badly painted—weak and unharmonious. They would be justified in repeating hypocritically evil speeches in the presence of the painter, and pitying him and laughing at him when they were alone again.

The silence (though it lasted no more than a minute) became too intolerable for him. To break it, and to show that he was not agitated, he made an effort and addressed Golenishchev.

00000003

Manastash

new person would look at his relations with Anna, and for the most part in men, he had met with the "proper" way of looking at it. But if he had been asked, and those who looked at it "properly" had been asked, exactly how they did look at it, both he and they would have been greatly puzzled as to how to answer.

In reality those who in Vronsky's opinion had the "proper" view had no sort of view at all, but behaved in general as well-bred persons behave in regard to all the complex and insoluble problems with which life is encompassed on all sides; they behaved with propriety, avoiding allusions and unpleasant questions. They assumed an air of fully comprehending the import and force of the situation, of accepting and even approving of it, but of considering it superfluous and uncalled for to put all this into words.

Vronsky at once divined that Golenishchev was of this kind, and therefore was doubly pleased to see him. And in fact, Golenishchev's manner toward Madame Karenina, when he was taken to call on her, was all that Vronsky could have desired. Evidently without the slightest effort he steered clear of all subjects that might lead to embarrassment.

He had never met Anna before, and was struck by her beauty, and still more by the frankness with which she accepted her position. She blushed when Vronsky brought in Golenishchev, and he was extremely charmed by this childish blush overspreading her candid and beautiful face. But what he liked particularly was the way in which at once, as though on purpose so that there might be no misunderstanding with an outsider, she called Vronsky simply Aleksey, and said they were moving into a house they had just taken, what was locally called a palazzo. Golenishchev liked this direct and simple attitude toward her own position. Looking at Anna's manner of simple-hearted, spirited gaiety, and knowing Aleksey Aleksandrovich and Vronsky, Golenishchev thought that he understood her perfectly. He thought that he understood what she was utterly unable to understand: how it was that having made her husband wretched, having abandoned him and her son and lost her good name, she yet felt full of energy, gaiety, and happiness.

"It's in the guidebook," said Golenishchev, referring to the palazzo

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was time to look when he reached the Shcherbatsky's steps the second time. In the house they were just up, and the cook came out to get marketing. He had to get through at least two hours more.

All that night and morning Levin lived perfectly unconsciously, and felt perfectly lifted out of the conditions of material life. He had eaten nothing for a whole day, he had not slept for two nights, had spent several hours undressed in the frozen air, and felt not simply fresher and stronger than ever, but utterly independent of his body; he moved without effort of his muscles, and felt as if he could do anything. He was convinced he could fly ~~up~~ out of life, the corner of the house, if need be. He spent the remainder of the time in the street, incessantly looking at his watch and gazing about him. And what he saw then, he never saw again. Especially the children going to school, the bluish pigeons flying down from the roof to the sidewalk, and the little loaves covered with flour, thrust out by an unseen hand—all touched him. Those loaves, those pigeons, and those two boys were not earthly creatures. It all happened at the same time: a boy ran toward a dove and glanced smiling at Levin, the dove with a whirr of her wings, darted away, flashing in the sun and ~~and~~ a ~~bit~~ of snow that quivered in the air, while from a little window there came a smell of fresh-baked bread, and the loaves were put out. All of this together was so extraordinarily nice that Levin laughed and cried with delight. Going a long way round by Gazetny Lane and Kislovka, he went back again to the hotel, and putting his watch before him, he sat down to wait for twelve o'clock. In the next room they were talking about some sort of machines, and swindling, and coughing their morning coughs. They did not realize that the hand was near by. The hand reached it. Levin went out onto the steps. The sleigh drivers obviously knew all about it. They crowded around Levin with happy faces, quarreling among themselves, and offering their services. Trying not to offend the other sleigh drivers, and promising to drive with them too, Levin took one and told him to drive to the Shcherbatsky's. The sleigh driver was splendid in a white ~~skin~~ gaiter sticking out over his eyes, and driving tightly around his ~~strong~~ thick, red neck. The sleigh was high and comfortable—altogether one the likes of which Levin never drove in after, and the horse was a good one, and tried to gallop, but didn't seem to notice

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The Dells of Eau Claire

All that slips turns within a parallax dimension,
collides
with centrifugal force
enough to fracture striations
along alien deposits
of rhyolite schist breaking open coffers
littering
quartz roses
in the placid deep below.

Rings gleam in the tumultuous
plunge through jutting hands,
persuaded from her fingers
down a cataract
as linear as time,
from anvil to anvil
under
torrential
ebb and flow.

All that slips

churns under

vehement vortices, collides with wade

boulders soon to warble as pebbles above

infinitesimal worlds

carried in stride-waters swift alongside the glade.

The Devil's door

opens

a tempest once met the shore

deep thunder

razed the mountain on the day

the world ended.

Some days

the Devil clammers down the bluff

to rest under

the golden canopy of sugar maples—

place bets

abhorred emerald green—he will outlive

the mountain's crushing demise once more.

Eau Claire breathe of river's life
through colossal hands

your slender waters slip
loosed upon the quarry

wielding

the wild

of a vast

ocean's tide.

Springs
forth
the flower

swifts
into the pool

where white-tail drink.

With the current all will flow
reach to drinking lips
wherever channels row.

Beans

We Hispanics are like beans,
one big group
because we look alike.

Steven Dougherty

We don't discriminate, and neither do you
Anglo-American, German/Russian/Frenchman.
We include all of your varieties in a single word:
Gringo.

A look around, and you see us, all our varieties.
Every bean a different bean, but every bean
a bean.

So what are we? What beans
make a bean,
a fence-jumper or a woman
raper?
Who's here to steal your job and your
VCR, because we can't afford DVD's.
Are we from Mexico, or Mexicans
from Haiti? Maybe we're Philipino,
or "Mexicans" for short.
But don't say we didn't give you nothing,
no payment for the jobs we stole
that you didn't want.

Cinder blocks are made in Mexico, by local
Cubans, for the sole purpose of
stealing
wheels, because some beans
ain't no jumping beans, so we drive around the border,
even if the only border we ever knew was the one
between us and the white boys and girls

Manastash

past the white picket fence
between our houses.
Protect your girls, the spics are about,
and you can tell they're coming
when you hear the trumpets,
a regular mariachi gang-rape.
Courtesy of Mexico and your over-active
fear. But hey, it's ok,
we're too lazy to do anything about it, right?
And it's not like you don't give us nothing back,
little nods of
"cultural appreciation"
to show us you know us.

"What the hell is a Mexican Pizza?"
said the Mexican. Tortillas and rice,
all we can afford, aren't enough
for a Pizza.
Maybe it's whatever we can farm or
steal, and
shove onto a tortilla
dripping with queso. Except there's none,
no "quesadilla" like grandma
never made because the cow died and the rotten meat was
stolen, stolen
by neighbors who bathe in the same small stream we dump the dead
chickens in,
right before they steal those too. So we're left with the rice,
the rice, and the
beans.

More Vibration

The world shakes with laughter when she
screams not to use water out of
the tap, because that's how
people get killed.

The world shakes with laughter when she
tilts the video game controller
to make the car in the game
turn harder.

The world shakes with laughter when she
argues until she is red in the
face, then realizes she is wrong,
so yells even louder.

The world shakes with laughter when she
piles the dirty dishes so high
in the kitchen that they topple
over, conveniently creating
more space for dirty dishes.

The world shakes with laughter when she
stares me down over the
last remaining pickle in the
refrigerator.

The world shakes with laughter when she
wears the same socks as the day
before because "fuckit, who will
know?"

The world shakes with laughter when she

brags for hours about NEVER
losing at Words with Friends,
then loses to her Mother shortly
after.

No, that's all a lie.

The world doesn't shake with laughter.

The world doesn't even know.

The world has completely passed her by.

But I didn't.

I noticed.

I know.

In fact,

only I know.

So it's only MY world that shakes with laughter.

At the end of most days, I collapse beside her,

dizzy.



Art

Up on The Ridge
An Interview with Seth Charles
By Daniel M. Fisher

Seth Charles is an artist. Along with being a graduate student in Central's art department, he is also an educator, a scholar, a creator, and a do-er. His philosophies towards art and education embody the values that sustain the vibrancy of life at a university.

"My background is sort of a non-traditional approach," Charles said. "Over the last ten years, I've been in school; really, I've just been trying to figure it out. There's a need for creativity in my life. It can be expressed in any number of different ways. It all ties into this need for fulfillment."

Charles has found a home in Central's Art department, and he spends his time creating works that communicate his connection to the world around him. To him, art is a form of communication, a means of connecting with others.

"What really does it for me," he contemplates, "is ultimately, when the piece is finished, it's appreciated by somebody else. It's making connections with people. Whether it's someone I meet at a crafts fair, and we connect face to face, or



Tea Caddy 4"x 3" x 6"

maybe it's a piece that's purchased online, or from a gallery. I never met the person, but I'm still connecting with them through their use of the object.

“We're using all these objects that are machine made, and it's sort of creating this division between people. There's this increasing distance between people. One thing that pottery does, for me, is I hope to create this connection. I hope that when people use something I make there's a likeness, a similarity about interests.”

Through his immersion in Central's art department, Charles is investing in himself in a multifaceted fashion. He's feeding his soul. He's connecting with his peers. He's developing an inner strength of character that will prepare him to face



Sake Set 9" x 4" x 5"

the tasks and challenges that inherently come with the pursuit of life goals.

“In addition to being a student in the department, I'm also an instructor,” he said with a deserving glimmer of pride in his voice. “I have a teaching assistantship, so I teach one class per quarter. I get to see it from both sides, you know. I see it from the student's side, and I see it from the instructor's side. That's really interesting to me because I love passing on information that I've learned.

I've learned from some really great people who have impacted my life quite a bit."

"Both my parents are artists and educators. I didn't know I'd be following in their path, but here I am doing what they've done their entire lives. I think it



Envelope Form 8" x 4" x 5"

goes back to that need for creativity.

There's a lot of that around the department. It's this infectious energy."

Charles' musings on his ambitions had me reflecting on

mine. I came to college to become a writer, and I achieved that. As I prepare for my exit from the university, I can't help but to consider Charles' perspectives on the unwavering connection between craft and curriculum, between passion and obligation. His gift is a blessing, and his desire to share it and to cultivate the fine artists of tomorrow is admirable. This is why college matters: it facilitates the unapologetic proclamation of "this is who I am and this is why I'm here." We are all individuals, and this world has a place for each of us.

Seth Charles



Ikebana Vase 7" x 8" x 13"



Seth Charles

Soy Pourers



Seth Charles

Teapot and Tea Bowl



Cheryl Ann Eadie

Princess Goblets

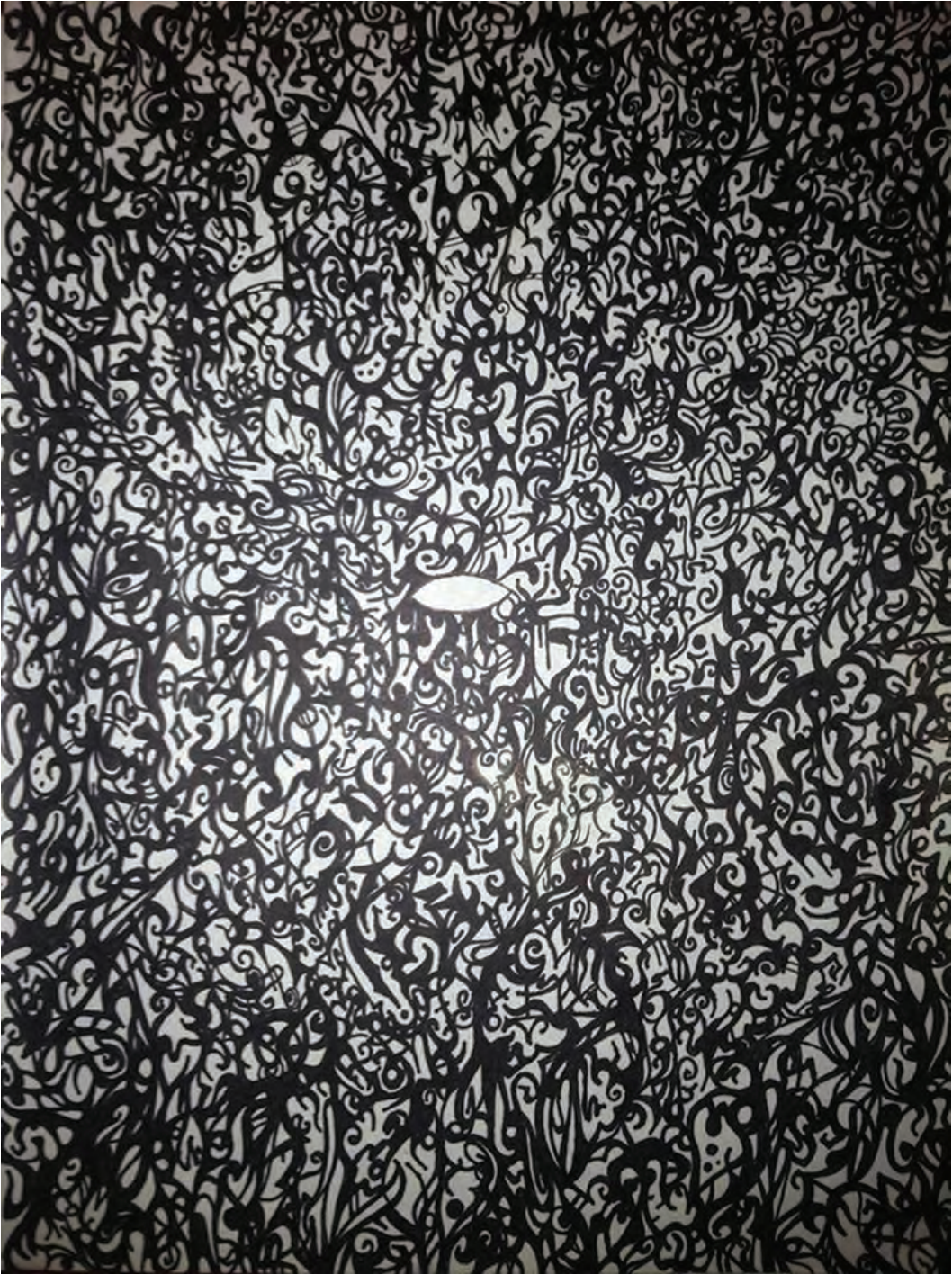
Cheryl Ann Eadie

Manastash



Brittany Victoria Allen

Bright Eyes Reporting



Ruka Wolf

Eye of the Storm

Ruka Wolf

Manastash

89



Caleb Marrs

Waking Up the World



Kaelyn Anderson

Kaelyn Anderson

Lively Pond

Manastash
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Caleb Marrs



Caleb Marrs

Hole in the Wall



John-Paul Mann

Manastash

John-Paul Mann

Color Accidents

Gilberto Lopez



Gilberto Lopez

Aggressive Bloom



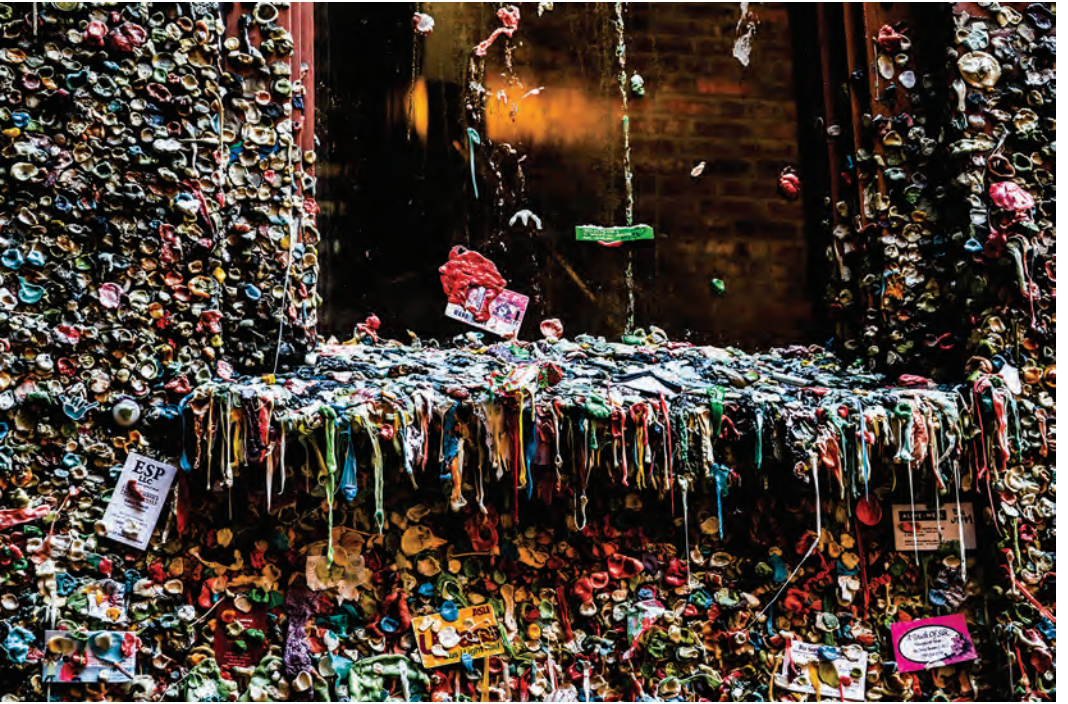
Amanda Dority

Amanda Dority

Untitled Five

Manastash

95



Amanda Dority

Stuck



Amanda Dority

Stagnant

Amanda Dority

Manastash

Cheryl Ann Eadie



Cheryl Ann Eadie

Our Early Morning Moon



Brittany Victoria Allen

Leaves and Ladders

Brittany Allen

Manastash 66



Cheryl Ann Eadie

Letter of Love



Makayla Shepherd

Makayla Shepherd

Famous Cat

Manastash

Contributors

Brittany Victoria Allen

Chloe Allmand

Kaelyn Anderson

Steven H. Castro Jr.

Amanda Dority

Steven Dougherty

Chelsea DuChene

Laekin Dunoskovic

Cheryl Ann Eadie

Daniel M. Fisher

Jacob Gann

Kimberly Glenn

Claire Hanberg

DJ Haskin

Kendra Hinger

J. William Kulm Jr.

BRITTANY VICTORIA ALLEN is from Goldendale, Washington via Ohio. Though she aspires to travel with her career of coupling words and photographs, she still plans to call the Pacific Northwest home.

CHLOE ALLMAND graduated from Central Washington University in Winter 2015, and now works as a reporter for the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin. She loves tea, the outdoors, and oxford commas.

KAELYN ANDERSON is a Graphic Design sophomore at Central Washington University. Art has always been a main aspect of her life. Her photography mainly shows nature and human interactions.

STEVEN H. CASTRO JR. speaks truth and family. He speaks on life, love, loss, and pain. He uses honesty to heal himself and with a bit of luck, heal you too. His paper and pen become a place of safety and of slavery. He sits and invites his memories in, so that they too may learn to live life with laughter and love from within.

AMANDA DORITY recently graduated from Central Washington University with a BFA in Studio Art with a focus in Photography. Her passion for photography started when she was sixteen and has continued to grow ever since. Her work strives to bring out the beauty in natural decay.

Contributors

Haley Lindsley	Luke Thomas Pearsons
Gilberto Lionel Lopez	Makayla Shepherd
Jess Macinko	Joanna Thomas
John-Paul Mann	T.J. Tranchell
Caleb Marrs	Kala Tye
Karie May	Ruka Wolf
Ebonesiah Morrow	
Michael Nichols	

STEVEN DOUGHERTY has gone fishing.

CHELSEA DUCHENE wishes to one day become an English teacher, and hopefully get children to put down their cellphones for a moment and pick up a book.

LAEKIN DUNOSKOVIC graduated from Central Washington University with a BA in Professional and Creative Writing in the fall of 2014. Her main writing focus is poetry and prose.

CHERYL ANN EADIE is a Native American and grandmother of three. She is living her lifetime dream of furthering her education to achieve a BFA. Since 2011, Cheryl Ann has been a dedicated student at Central Washington University.

DANIEL M. FISHER is a senior English major, writer, and journalist. His ambitions beyond college include writing and editing for publication as well as earning his PGA Tour card, which he believes is unlikely.

JACOB GANN is the youngest of three brothers. He was born and raised in Tacoma where he attended the Tacoma School of the Arts with aspirations of becoming a musician. He later discovered an interest in medicine and joined the Army National Guard as a medic to help pay his way through CWU's Clinical Physiology program.

KIMBERLY GLENN is a Professional and Creative Writing student at Central Washington University. She enjoys baking and reading, often at the same time, which sometimes results in sticky pages and burnt cookies.

CLAIRE HANBERG is an intrepid artist, writer, historian, and modern-day romantic. She aspires to one day be a full-time novelist. This is her second published work.

DJ HASKIN, a junior at Central Washington University, is a Professional and Creative Writing major. He is active in the Inklings Creative Writing Club at CWU, along with Alpha Kappa Psi, the Professional Business Fraternity on campus, and he is the intern for the Lion Rock Visiting Writers Series.

KENDRA HINGER is a graduating Professional and Creative Writing major. She specializes in writing science fiction and fantasy, as well as some poetry. Her favorite color is green: a very creative color.

J. WILLIAM KULM JR. is an amateur writer and content creator. He is looking to become a writer in the video game industry by acquiring a screenwriting degree at Central Washington University.

HALEY LINDSLEY is a poet, a lesbian, and a pessimistic cat lady. She is sassy, baby-faced, ambitious, overworked, introverted, a typewriter fanatic, and graduating (finally). She is liberal, 24 years old, and random with a vintage soul. She claims to be the love child of Allen Ginsberg and Sylvia Plath.

GILBERTO LIONEL LOPEZ is 24 years old and originally from Wapato, Washington. He is currently attending Central Washington University and double majoring in Marketing and Economics. He also has an extreme appreciation for nature photography.

JESS MACINKO likes cats.

JOHN-PAUL MANN is majoring in Mathematics and Physics with minors in Philosophy and Astronomy. Not many know that two of his favorite hobbies are photography and hiking; the combination of the two creates some amazing shots.

CALEB MARRS was born a twin on a journey to discover life and is currently studying Mechanical Engineering Technology and Information Technology at Central Washington University.

KARIE MAY is a Professional and Creative Writing major attending Central Washington University. Her time at the university has helped her rediscover her love of poetry. She is currently a senior and will graduate June 2015.

EBONESIAH MORROW's pieces are from her experimental novel-in-progress, *Epiphany*. As a writer, she strives to be a voice for those devoiced by society. She dedicates her work to her parents and grandparents.

MICHAEL NICHOLS considers himself an anti-poet who considers the works of Jennifer L. Knox, Christopher Hitchens, Tim Curry, and Christopher Walken among his primary influences.

LUKE THOMAS PEARSONS is a History/Social Studies Teaching major at Central Washington University. He is a cartoonist and short story writer.

MAKAYLA SHEPHERD goes to Central Washington University to receive a BA in Studio Art with a minor in Apparel Design. She aspires to create costumes and special movie effects.

JOANNA THOMAS is a writer and visual artist living in Dogtown, an Ellensburg neighborhood on the wrong side of the tracks. She received her BA from Central Washington University in 2008, and has been hanging around as a post-bachelor ever since. Someone told her that the best way to avoid dementia is to remain active.

T.J. TRANCHELL is a husband and father. He's working on a serial killer novel for his next big project. The University of Idaho accepted him into their MFA program. Find him online at warning-signs.net.

KALA TYE has always wanted to write for a living. That's why she's a Public Relations major. She loves comics, tabletop gaming, reading, and writing. She's what you might call a nerd, and according to her, nerds rule!

RUKA WOLF feels that art has always been a passion of hers, and her collection of art over the years is her most valuable possession. There is nothing she would rather be doing than creating something with her imagination.

Staff

Jasmine Ackerman	Xavier Cavazos
Ryan Bailey	Donson Curtiss
Richard W. Bidwell III	Casey Friedman
Breanna Blair	Zachary Harris
Darik Brown	Olivia Hirschey

JASMIN ACKERMAN will be graduating this June with an English Professional and Creative Writing degree. She will be pursuing a career in copy-editing.

RYAN BAILEY graduated from Washington State University with BAs in Photography and Communication. He is currently working on his MA in Literature with an emphasis in Creative Writing at Central Washington University. He also teaches English 101 at the university.

RICHARD W. BIDWELL III was raised in Tacoma, WA. Currently working on a degree in Professional and Creative Writing, he aspires to become a novelist. Happily married, he and his wife are looking forward to graduation.

BREANNA BLAIR is a Professional and Creative Writing major at Central Washington University and plans to graduate in August 2015.

DARIK BROWN is a senior and Creative Writing major. He is hoping to get a job in technical writing after he graduates.

XAVIER CAVAZOS is the author of two chapbooks, *Barbarian at the Gate*, (Poetry Society of America) and *La Habana*, (D Press). His debut collection of poetry, *Diamond Grove Slave Tree*, won the Prairie Seed Poetry Prize, (Ice Cube Press).

Staff

Alisa Hoag
Dannah Parsons
Daisy Perez
Ashley Schuknecht
Sarah Wicorek

DONSON L. CURTISS is currently studying English Language and Literature at Central Washington University. An amateur at heart, he is a songwriter, poet, and philanthropist. As a tutor for over four years, his greatest passion is helping students and writers in the interest of learning and creating art.

CASEY FRIEDMAN is a 21-year-old junior at Central Washington University with an English Writing Specialization major and a Law and Justice minor.

ZACH HARRIS is a Professional and Creative Writing major at Central Washington University. He is part of the 2015 graduating class and very upset about the 9:30 a.m. starting time for his major's graduation ceremony.

OLIVIA HIRSCHHEY is a graduating senior double majoring in English and Spanish with a minor in Linguistics. Olivia is passionate about education, cookies, and crossing things off her to-do list. She credits her father with inspiring her love of writing.

ALISA HOAG received her BA in English from the University of Washington. She is currently an English graduate student at Central Washington University, and will receive an MA in Literature in June 2015. She also teaches English 101 at the university.

DANNAH PARSONS is a senior Psychology and Professional and Creative Writing student. She is an aspiring novelist who hopes to finish her first book by the time that she graduates in 2016.

DAISY PEREZ is a junior at Central Washington University and soon-to-be double major in Professional and Creative Writing and Public Health. She aspires to become the next J.K. Rowling.

ASHLEY SCHUKNECHT is a senior at Central Washington University. She enjoys long walks on the beach and a strong internet connection for her online gaming sessions. She also occasionally writes.

SARAH WICOREK is a Central Washington University student who is currently working on a major in Creative Writing and a minor in Art. After graduation, she plans on traveling and writing novels.

Design Staff



Lower staircase-left to right:

Kendra Hinger, Daisy Perez, Sarah Wicorek, Dannah Parsons, Olivia Hirschey, Claire Hanburg, Zach Harris, Donson Curtis, Jasmine Ackerman, Breanna Blair, Steven H. Castro Jr., Richard W. Bidwell III.

Upper staircase-left to right:

Xavier Cavazos, Ryan Bailey, Alisa Hoag.

Manastash Contributors 2015

Brittany Victoria Allen
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Cheryl Ann Eadie
Daniel M Fisher
Jacob Gann
Kimberly Glenn
Claire Hanberg
DJ Haskin
Kendra Hinger
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Haley Lindsley
Gilberto Lionel Lopez
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Luke Thomas Pearsons
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