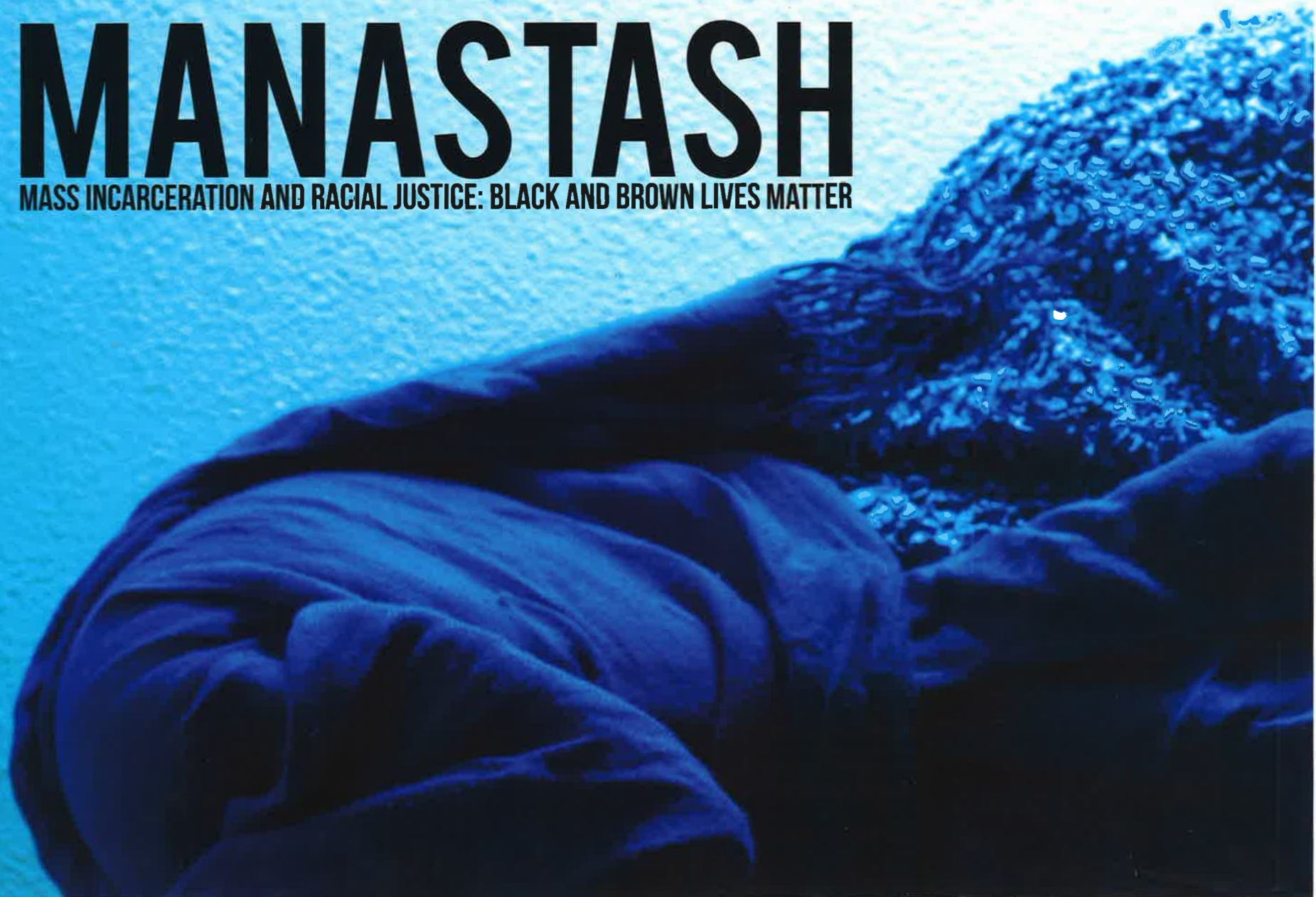


MANASTASH

MASS INCARCERATION AND RACIAL JUSTICE: BLACK AND BROWN LIVES MATTER



Journal of Writing and Art
Manastash

Mass Incarceration and Racial Justice:
Black and Brown Lives Matter

Volume 26 Spring 2016

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Editor's Note

Dear *Manastash* Readers,

This 26th edition of *Manastash* is a response to the phenomenon of mass incarceration and the yearlong dialogue being spotlighted on Central's campus.

We hope some of the pieces chosen reflect the lives of those affected by the systemic inequalities and cultural oppression so many groups still face today. May the stories, poems, and art assembled here serve as a mouthpiece to the injustices prevalent in our society.

As always, thank you for your continued support, and we hope you enjoy this issue.

Thank you for reading!

Best regards,
Malissa Smith, Joanna Thomas, and Casey Friedman
Managing Editors

Cover Art *Blue Mugshot* by Robyn Paul

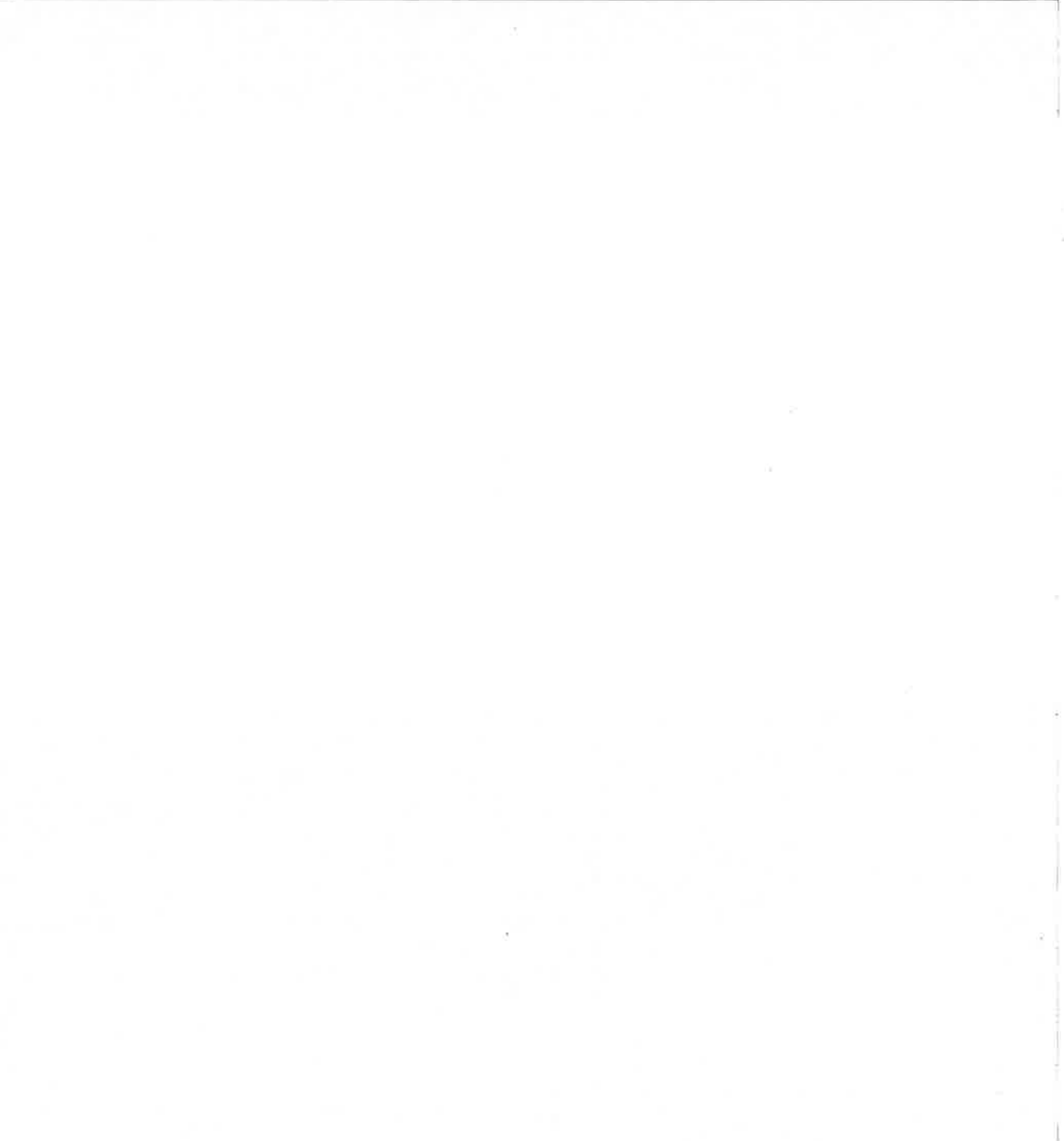
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Dedication

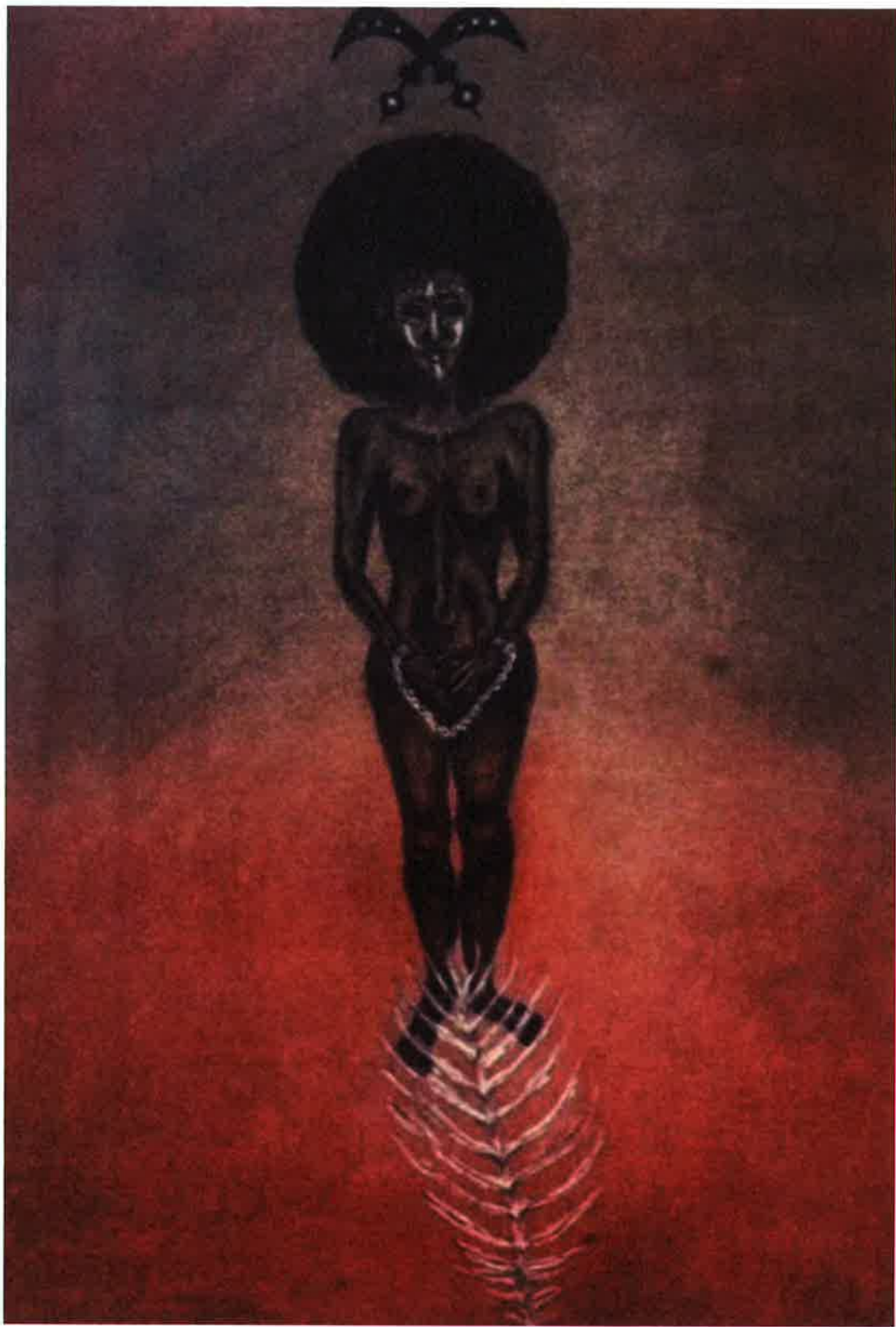
This issue of *Manastash* is dedicated to our Muslim brothers and sisters who continue to face bigotry and hate at the hands of ignorance. We stand by you.

"We, the Central Washington University faculty, condemn in the strongest possible terms the growing bigotry and xenophobia in our country's political discourse and practice, and in particular recent calls to ban the entrance of Muslims into the United States. As citizens and residents of this country, we deplore the undermining of core American values like religious freedom, the celebration of diversity, and providing sanctuary for the oppressed. As scholars, we know well the cost of such divisive and violent language and practice. As faculty here at CWU, we stand with our Muslim students, colleagues, friends and family members and deem threats to the well-being of any members of our community unacceptable."

- CWU Faculty Senate Resolution 15-20
Approved February 3, 2016



Prose



Warrior

Dreams of Kashmiri Snows¹

“Oh, let the sun beat down upon my face, stars to fill my dream”²

¹ Lyrics from Led Zeppelin’s “Kashmir.”

² The honey bees going extinct made it real. Propaganda and lies disseminated under the guise of progress and innovation, no longer casting a spell of illusion upon the masses. Starvation does that to people. It ends illusion abruptly, without question. The sun’s light no longer existed as a warm beacon of prosperity and hope but one of impending death. It was then, and only then, that the world turned to NASA, the ESA, and CNSA for help. It was only then we started seriously looking towards the stars and away from our folly.

I overlook the city of my youth with dismay, once a bustling cesspool of humanity constructed upon cool, clear ocean waters. No one walks the streets. No cars blaring horns or ferries traversing the sound. Just the ever-present dust and lingering toxic fog sifting through decaying buildings, and algae-infested ocean water stretching orange into the distance. The sun beats upon my face, slowly melting what’s left of my resolve to remain a member of the human race. I reflect on the choices made for me by government officials and scientists and geneticists and politicians and other fucking strangers. Who were they to take away my dreams and my future? The stars once filled my dreams now they are just a reminder that nothing escapes time.

After the bees, the fish went extinct. Not just one species, all of them. The scientists said, usually after a dose—a really huge dose—of we fucking told you so, the oceans had gotten too warm, too acidic. The algae blooms were sucking oxygen out of the water. Water that was rising, displacing millions of us. So it goes.

After the fish, the birds went. *Silent Spring* became a reality. That’s when people knew we were really screwed. The explorations started. Ships to the asteroid belt. Imaginations of science fiction writers coming into fruition: coring out asteroids, attaching star drives, spinning them so they would have some gravity, lightwells, micro-climates. World in a bottle. Generation ships. The space agencies became the new government; science was their territory. This was Darwinism. No room for politics, or so they claimed. Testing was set up. IQ and genetics were given priority. Religious leaders, artists, writers, politicians, and people with money were given priority. People like me were not.

I’m not stupid, nor am I really smart. I went to college. I had neither money, nor religion, nor any artistic talent. I was not to be part of this genetic experiment hurtling through space. My wife was. My kids were. I was not. Goddamn cancer.

Cancer was in my genetics. Apparently I didn’t pass it down to my kids. My wife wasn’t anything special IQ wise but apparently her genetics weren’t disposable, whatever that meant. Mine were. Marriage was no longer a sacred institution, not when survival was on the line. She wasn’t given a choice to stay with me. We had

no rights. I was separated, placed on the other side of the fence with some food and a swift kick in the ass to move along. I became the very essence of untouchable. A decision made by some unapologetic computer and interpreted by a robotic man in a white coat with Converse tennis shoes. What makes him so special?

“I am a traveler of both time and space, to be where I have been.
To sit with elders of the gentle race, this world has seldom seen”³

³ We watched the transport shuttles leave for orbit to rendezvous with the space stations from outside that fence. When the smoke trails dissipated, reality sank in and most of us walked away. Those that chose to stay still kneel there, ghastly monuments to grief, their bones gripping the fence. It feels so long ago. The food ran out, the fighting began. Those of us that were intuitive found a place buried in the wilderness and tried our best to survive as the world decayed into violence and dust.

I haven't spoken to another person since that day. I walked away from the fence, found a Range Rover at the nearest car lot, stole the keys, stole enough fuel and canisters to get far away, stocked up at the first abandoned country house I could find, and traveled until the car died. I almost hoped I had died with it. I'm not sure why I didn't. I had no hope left. My life and legacy had left the atmosphere on that ship, heading somewhere far away from here. Somewhere without me.

Sometimes late at night in the dusty hot air, I look up at the sky and pretend I can see them careening through time and space in a cored out rock. I wonder if they miss me as much as I miss them. I speak to them on those nights. Asking them if they did their homework. If they brushed their teeth. Asking my wife if she was wearing anything under that robe. They respond in my mind. I see my daughter smile big enough to show me her minty teeth. My son holding up his paper on Shakespeare. My wife blushing and smiling and laughing as I slide my arms around her, kissing her neck. My voice croaks as I ask them questions. Most nights my voice frightens me, but I'm afraid if I don't talk, I'll regress back to an ape. A scared, tired, hungry, hairless ape.

We were assured by the government and scientists that without fossil fuels being burned by eight billion people—give or take—Earth would rebalance itself. Become livable again. These elders, these wise elders, were full of shit. They left us here to die. We were expendable. Not fit for their eugenics program in an enclosed lab, floating through a vacuum. Breeding a new generation to fuck up another planet with the same processes and policies instituted here. Breeding a new greedy form of cancer to eat away another Eden.

I walk in the shadows of buildings, looking for people, food, signs of ashfall. You learn to avoid ashfalls. It never means anything good. Charred bones and the sickening stench of charred flesh, stacked in a pile, smoldering. The first

time I came across that was also the last time. I avoid ashfalls. It was the closest to another human I had been since the day I left the fence.

Sometimes you could hear screaming. Sometimes crying. You learn to avoid those places as well. Being a hero gets you dead. There are no such things as heroes. Not here. Not now. Heroes are the bones that create the ashfalls. There is no gentle race. These are the people that don't go gentle into the night. Thanks so much for that, Dylan Thomas. Asshole. It's a bloody anthem to these people.

You can hear them laughing uncontrollably, intermingled with blood-curdling screams, when you are near the old cities. Maniacal laughter sifting through the dust. Sometimes singing. Sometimes just the wind. It's fucking unsettling. I hate the old cities, but I need to scrounge for food and supplies.

Why do I want to live again?

"They talk of days for which they sit and wait and all will be revealed.
Talk and song from tongues of lilting grace, whose sounds caress my ear."⁴

⁴ I hear a sound. Could be laughter, could be the wind. Better safe than sorry. I duck into one of the abandoned monuments to humankind's all-powerful ingenuity and press against a far wall, sliding my pack off. I pull out the automatic assault rifle I had grabbed so many years ago from that country house and unhook the strap on my holster for the pistol as well. Thank Christ for paranoid, militant Texans. I clean the weapons regularly, but so far had not used them. First time for everything.

Light filters through the broken casements, igniting the ever-present dust motes with orange. Laughter echoes again. Closer. Not my imagination. I move to get a better view of the door. My eyes are adjusting to the dark. I see that I am in some sort of coffee shop. There is a rusted espresso machine covered in spider webs, broken glass everywhere, and mangled counter ten feet to my left. I crouch and dash behind it. The laughter is closer and...singing. They are singing. Some song I've never heard. Something about tigers and night I'm sure. Goddamn Dylan Thomas.

I see them through the casements. Four of them. Hair in patches, mouths black, skin cracked, and bloody sores everywhere. They carry assault rifles with makeshift bayonets, machetes slung across their backs. They decide to post up on a car outside the windows, laughing at nothing in particular. At least the assholes stopped singing. I lean back and watch through a hole in counter.

They are eating some sort of jerky and drinking water out of dented metal canisters. My mouth waters thinking of the jerky until I remember what it is. I almost retch when that realization hits me. They are talking to each other about some family they had killed earlier today. How the little boy had screamed. All I could think about was who the hell would be reproducing in a world like this? The ships left, what...fifteen years ago?

My mind wanders to my son. He was ten when he left. He would be 25 now. Possibly married. Maybe kids of his own. Assuming the generation ships actually worked as intended. Or maybe he was decaying in a cored-out rock, hurtling through space. He was a boy when he left and that's how I remember him. My mind goes darkside. I stand up. Level the rifle at the biggest Dylan Thomas fan and fire. The report caresses my ear and his head sprays pink mist.

His pals don't move as his blood sprays across them. Another caress. Another dead Thomas fan. This time from a hole in his chest. The remaining two drop their rifles and run down the street, laughing. I vault the counter, post the gun up on the window casement and fire four rounds at the fleeing maniacs. One drops as I hit him square in the back. The other is trying to drag a mangled leg. He's still laughing between high pitched squeals, as he tries to crawl off the street. I aim again.

I pull the rifle down, slide the safety on, and sling it over my shoulder. Checking the safety on my pistol; I holster it and grab my pack. Before I step out into the street, I listen for anything other than the tortured noises from the asshole. Nothing. No movement anywhere in the eyeless souls of the surrounding buildings either. I reach the first asshole and check his gun. Empty. No wonder they ran. I don't bother to check the others.

My paranoia kicks in as I move down the street to the wounded Thomas fan. Crouching, I check my surroundings as I move from abandoned cars to dumpsters to other random, abandoned trash. He's still laughing. What's the point of all this?

“But not a word I heard could I relate, the story was quite clear. Oh, oh.
Oh, I been flying... mama, there ain't no denyin'.
I've been flying, ain't no denyin', no denyin'”⁵

⁵ As I get closer to the asshole, I see I also hit him in the lower back, shattering the spine. So that's why he didn't limp away upright. I do one final sweep of my surroundings and adjust my pack. The asshole is babbling some story incoherently and laughing between squeals of pain. I notice something else. The asshole has breasts, covered by a tattered, bloody piece of clothing. It's a woman. Her teeth are broken and scars mar her face. She looks up at me with her stained, shaved head and glares.

I step on her wrist, wrench the machete out of her hand and squat a few feet away, watching her as I examine the blade. It's crude and not well taken care of, but the edge is sharp. It could be useful if cleaned. She's stopped trying to move and just lays there glaring at me.

“Death's not so funny now, is it?” I run my finger down the machete's edge as I look at her.

She spits in my direction. A giant blob of oil-colored blood that lands well

short. She laughs some more and coughs up more of the death phlegm on the cracked asphalt. So I hit the liver too. I look at the black blood bubbling on her lips.

“Well, you’re fucked. Not going to be much longer now.” I stood up. “Why don’t you tell me where the rest of you are so I can get what I need and fly on out of here without having to kill more of you asshats.”

“Why...don’t...you...fuck your...mother...cowboy?” She was wheezing black spittle bubbles as she talked. “My clan...will...find you...and fry...your cock...for...breakfast.”

Well, that’s just disgusting. See what I mean by these people do not go gentle into the night? Clan? Disturbing thought that. Usually they run in packs of four to eight. Clan indicates something larger. More organized. More violent. Hungrier. Might be time to find another city to use as a resupply.

“You better run, cowboy. When they find this mess they’re gonna fuck you bloody.” She’s straining to look at me as I tower above her, looking down. She’s struggling with dying. I can relate. “We own this city. There is nowhere you can hide.”

“I think I’ll take my chances.” I grew up here. I know it intimately. I’ll have to be more careful. More paranoid. Carrying the rifle—instead of storing it on the side of the pack—may be the name of the game for the rest of this trip.

Her laughing interspersed with gurgling brings me back. I squat again, laying the machete over my shoulder, and stare at her. She stops laughing. So, not completely crazy. Maybe she can be coherent. Or maybe I should stop denying what she really is. A killer. So am I now.

“This is the first time I’ve spoken to anyone since the day the ships left. I can’t say I’ve enjoyed it.” I pause looking for a reaction. Nothing. “I have to ask this one question. What. The. Fuck...is wrong with you people?”

She starts her raspy, gurgling laughter again and then looks at me. “What’s wrong with you?”

Good fucking question.

“Say hello to Dylan Thomas for me.”

She has a confused look on her face as I slam the machete down on her skull.

Will anyone ever be happy again?

“All I see turns to brown, as the sun burns the ground.

And my eyes fill with sand, as I scan this wasted land.

Trying to find, trying to find where I’ve been.”⁶

⁶ I walk in a halo of pallid light from a green glowstick inside a pitch black stairwell. The faded number on the wall indicates the thirty-first floor. Probably high enough for a vantage. My breath comes in shortened gasps. Catching your

breath is a bitch. Especially since the air is stale and cool and has a pungent aroma of mold and damp concrete. I fight the urge to vomit. Being encased in darkness and concrete and steel isn't helping. I need to get out of this well.

I try the door. It doesn't budge. I look around and see a fire extinguisher latched to the wall covered in spider webs, dust, and mold. I pull it off and slam it against the door just above the knob. The noise is deafening. It echoes. I try again and see the door splinter a bit. One more try and the jam splinters and the door lets in a sliver of dying sunlight. It's wedged against something. I push on it and a grating sound greets my still-recovering ears as the door slides open inch by inch. I get it open enough to slide into the hallway. There was a large oak desk wedged against the door. What the hell?

Paranoia kicks in again. I unholster my pistol this time and slide the safety off. Grip it gently as I move down the hallway, my back against the wall. Sunlight glints through the windows. Dust covers everything. There are footprints in the dust on the shitty brown linoleum flooring. Some old. Some new. One thing was constant: the number 12 was mid-sole every print.

Great. Is it an asshole or some scared shitless person? Is there a difference anymore? Dust-covered desks adorn the offices, motivational pictures crookedly grinning on the walls. I silently glide down the hallway looking for the living. Through the mirrored windows I see the sun starting to fade into the west. Going to have to sleep here tonight. Climb took longer than I thought.

The hallway opens up into a large central area with a conference table near the corner of the building. The huge table dominates the room. Canisters of water, boxes of canned food, MRE's, saltine crackers, and...cases of whisky. A supply cache? Where did they find the whisky? A navy green hammock hangs off to one side in front of the window. The prints lead in here. I stop and look, paranoia at full bore.

There's an empty can near my foot. Green beans, long ago eaten. I grab the can and slide low and tight to a wall. I toss it into the room. Its noise echoes as it bounces and tumbles. Nothing moves but the ever-present dust. The can stops against a wall. I check the hallway. What the hell is going on here? What is this? The idea that this is a trap flares my senses to hypersensitivity. Fifteen years of only seeing people from a distance and avoiding them like the plague they are and now I might have two close encounters in one day. The first one was unpleasant. I hate people.

Crouching, I enter the room and half run, half slide to the table. Still nothing. I skirt the table and stop in front of the windows; the vantage is breathtaking. The city stretches before me, slowly decaying into the ocean. The fleeting rays of sun ignite the ground and smolder on the ocean's pontoons of suffocating algae. To the east a brown and orange waste —like glowering sands— fades away to the barren mountains.

What am I doing here?

“Oh, pilot of the storm who leaves no trace, like thoughts inside a dream.
Heed the path that led me to that place, yellow desert stream.”⁷

⁷ I turn from the windows as the last beams of sunlight bounce through the festering streets and nearly drop my pistol. The words “There never coming back” is scrawled on the wall, bright and green. The teacher in me shrieks to fix the grammar. Underneath is a man in a tattered, backwards cap—Mariners stitched across it—sitting against the wall, chin to his chest, a half empty bottle of Tullamore Dew clasped in his right hand. On the bottom of his Converse, mid-sole, the number 12.

Bile rises. I bring the pistol up. Do I shoot first? That’s the conundrum. Is it another Thomas fan or just some dude like me, trying to survive? I kick something near my foot and it echoes. He doesn’t move. That’s when I see the vacuous eyes, the pale skin, death grip on the bottle; he’s dead as my dreams. Poor bastard. I walk over and pry the bottle from his cold hands. Haven’t had a drink in twenty years. The yellowish liquid hammers at my resolve. Screams at me.

I put the bottle next to him on the floor. Later. I squat and look at his left hand. A metallic glint. I pry his stiffened fingers open and a gold coin clatters to the floor. My face flushes. I know it intimately. On its face a “1” reverberates back at me. I gently pick up the coin and place it back in his hand, forcibly closing his grasp around it. My hands linger as I stare at his face.

“Well, Johnny. That’s one way to make this shitstorm end I suppose. You don’t mind me calling you Johnny, do ya?” I release the grasp on his hand. “Good. I suppose I should make sure the bouncer doesn’t let anyone into this party who’s not on the list, eh? Don’t want any assholes wrecking the mood. No. No.” I put my hands up in mock defense. “I’ll pilot this shindig. Don’t you worry about a thing, Johnny.”

The bottle is in my hand, cap off, dusty glass on my lips; the smooth taste of the liquid filters a warmth through my mind I haven’t felt in decades. I’m sorry Annie. I know I promised. Forgive me. I place the bottle on the table and waltz down the hallway.

“Ain’t no one getting past this velvet rope, Johnny! Don’t you worry!” I crack another glow stick and step into the stairwell. I grab the dented extinguisher and toss it back inside the doorway. Leave no trace. I step back into the hallway, shut the door. I hate nights. The liquor pulls me. Gotta hurry.

“Hey, man! I’m hurrying! Hold yer tits!” I slide the desk back tight against the door. I put the glow stick on top of the desk in the darkness. Drag another desk from an office for good measure, wedging it against the far wall. Dylan Thomas fans ain’t invited tonight. Assholes.

I decide to check the floor of the building after a quick chug of Dew and a reassuring nod to Johnny. The elevator is welded shut. How? I pass offices piled

with everything: food, first aid supplies, alcohol, water. The only thing missing is ammunition. How the hell did this guy get this shit here? I find the other stairwell. Door blocked with desks, cabinets, welded. What the hell? This is like winning the lottery. Safe haven. Sleep.

A can of generic chili catches my eye and I use my knife to open it. Something other than water and MREs for a change. My stomach moans. A bottle of Jameson replaces the empty bottle of Dew. Better. Hope Johnny likes it. Of course he does, it's whiskey. "Cheers, bro. This sure beats that desert water I've been drinking."

Where does my path lead?

"My Shangri-La beneath the summer moon, I will return again.
Sure as the dust that floats high in June, when movin' through Kashmir."⁸

⁸ The moon is rising in the east, tinted forever orange by the dust. The bottle of Jameson is almost empty, the stars are splitting. I had washed the grime from my face and shaved with a sharpened straight blade. My weathered face stared back at me in the glass. Most of the hair was gray. When did that happen? The whisky burns where I had cut myself. I sit next to Johnny and stare out across the city at the moon and stars, taking steady pulls from the bottle. A flame courses across the sky and fades into black. Once I used to wish on those. Once.

"Lookee there, Johnny." I elbow his shoulder and point. "A shooting star. What do you wish for?" I look at him.

"Little shy? Alright. I'll go first." I turn my head back to the window and gaze at the night sky. "I wish my family returned to me. Or that I was with them I guess." I snicker. "I know I'm not supposed to tell you my wish. Trust me, I've done this enough times I know it's all bullshit."

"Oh. I have a son and a daughter and a beautiful wife." I fish around in my shirt, pulling out the creased and worn photograph. Leaning over so it's in front of his face. "That's them. The boy is Shaun. The girl there is my sweet little Lillyflower. And the bombshell is Annie. My rock. My stars. My Shangri-La." The last comes out in a whisper.

I look at the photograph as I drain the rest of the Jameson. I slide the photo back into the inside pocket of my shirt and stagger to my feet. "Where's the pisser, man? I need to drain the lizard." I look back at him and smile. "Fine. I'll find it. No need to be all sullen."

The hallway tilts and spins as I stagger through shafts of summer moonlight. A destroyed office becomes my urinal and I relieve myself on a college diploma. Some school out east. I look out the window and see a pillar of smoke and firelight fighting with moonlight somewhere to the north. So, that's asshole central. Good to know.

I weave back to the main room and see the message on the wall again. It's

glowing in the moonlight and the urge comes back. I look around and see the can of stewed tomatoes I had devoured earlier. I grab the can and walk over to the wall.

"I'm gonna fix this for ya, Johnny. Can't have nobody comin' in here and thinkin' we're heathens without grammatical skills." I dip my finger in the can and cross out the "There." Below it I drunkenly scrawl "They're" with my finger and tomato juice. "There we go. That's much more presentable." The can drops from my hand and I stare at the message. I know it's true. Who would want to come back to this place?

I turn around and grab another bottle of Jameson. It makes a satisfying crack as I open it and take a long pull. I pat the breast pocket of my shirt and feel the familiar contents. Satisfied, I sit back down next to Johnny and look out the window. Dust glinting in the moonbeams as it falls to the floor evokes memories of snow in January: me building snowmen while my parents watched, sledding, skiing, snowballs.

"Ya know what I miss? Snow. Seasons. Days without wondering if I was going to survive." The dust wavers with every breath of my words. "I really miss coffee and sex the most, though. Ya know what I mean?" I elbow him again. "Yeah, you do." Another swig of Jameson.

I look at Johnny, stoically silent, a statue in the dustfall, and begin to whistle a song my dad listened to repeatedly as we sat in the car before my baseball games. What was it called? I can't remember. Strange memory to have now.

Should I ever move on?

"Oh, father of the four winds, fill my sails, across the sea of years.

With no provision but an open face, along the straits of fear. Ohh.

When I'm on, when I'm on my way, yeah.

When I see, when I see the way, you stay-yeah."⁹

⁹ The realization that my son will never have the father-son type of memory causes the false joy of safety and whiskey to be consumed by melancholy and loneliness. I gaze at the stars of the Milky Way, a yearning to be dying as we hurtle across space encapsulating my mind. I say goodnight to my family and force myself to look away.

"Whelp, Johnny. It's late. I'm gonna hit the hay. Good talkin' with ya. Thanks for lettin' me stay and the hospitality." I stand up, tip the bottle toward him in salute. The inverted sail of the hammock beckons me, a comforting womb. How the hell am I going to get into this?

I enter the hammock head first and flop the rest of myself in by dolphin-kicking my legs. Once inside I position myself in a way my face is open to the stars. I take another swig of the bottle. The ceiling has been swirling for a while now. Can't drink like I used to. So many stars, they float everywhere. I must be on my way, honey. The stars are all around.

The bottle clinks against my chest. I slide my hand into the breast pocket and pull the familiar coin out. The number “5” glares at me. I don’t need to read the words to know what they say and what I have betrayed. I grasp it in my right hand. There is no more fear. This is safe. This is how life should be.

Are there any real answers anymore?

“Ooh, yeah-yeah, ooh, yeah-yeah, when I’m down...
Ooh, yeah-yeah, ooh, yeah-yeah, well I’m down, so down.
Ooh, my baby, ooh, my baby, let me take you there.
Let me take you there. Let me take you there.”¹⁰

¹⁰ My baby was standing next to the hammock. Her arms were crossed. Not a good sign. Her eyes sparkled, something was off. I couldn’t quite tell what it was. She shook her head.

“Why now, honey? You’ve done so well.”

“It was here. You weren’t. I feel so helpless. So down. You’re never coming back.” I reached out, but couldn’t reach her. “What do I have to live for?”

Her eyes glowered sadness. She reached out and grasped my hand. It was something tangible. Something real. The most real thing I had felt in years. I almost start crying.

“Let me take you there, my love.” She smiled. My fear melted.

I felt ill and then, cold. The stars coalesced into a single point of light.

“Kashmir.” That was the name of the song my dad used to listen to.

How could I forget that?

Confidentiality

I sit at the edge of my bed waiting for the lights to go out. Soft music drifts into my room from the light beneath the door. I feel the violin pulling me towards the door. Each string tugging on the cogs deep inside me. My feet twitch, but I stay firmly planted. I can't get in trouble again. A piano enters the mix and I close my eyes. The keys pull on my skin, making me dance inside my head. I can do it this time, I promised Momma. Waves wash over my feet—frigid. My eyes shoot open. Black water flows in gently from beneath the door. The piano music amplifies and I jump on top of my bed. The bed begins to float forcing me to the ceiling. Closer. Closer. I take a deep breath as I'm pinned against it. It's not real. The water stains my white nightgown and freezes my body. Screams erupt from my throat before I can stop them. My fists pound against the ceiling as the bed smothers me against the plaster. Harder. Harder. I hit the ceiling with all my might, a crazed cat call spilling from my mouth.

The door with the little window lurches open. I fall to the ground and begin to sob. Dr. Lenny surges forward finding me on the floor. As blood trickles from my knuckles, he examines the part of the wall that I had been ruthlessly punching—three small holes lined with blood. His warm hands move from the wall to massage my shoulders. Yellow stains run up my dress, wreaking of iron and spoiled milk.

"I'm so sorry Dr. Len, I'm so sorry..." my head shakes side to side. "I couldn't do it, I promised Momma I'd be good, but I just couldn't do it. DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?"

Dr. Lenny stays quiet. He examines my face and wipes the tears away.

"What did you see, Daisy?" His hand pats my hair, plastering it to my wet neck. I stare into his muddy eyes, searching for something. Anything. I burrow my tearstained face into the folds of his indigo dress shirt.

"Water. It was black. Filling. Filling up the room. I couldn't breathe. I just couldn't—" my body convulses and wiggles, my fists shoving into my cheeks. "It was all over me! I had to. I had to. I had to escape. I couldn't escape!"

"Shhh, it's alright. The water is gone. Let's get you all cleaned up." Dr. Lenny grabs my hand and hoists me up. I teeter, holding onto his waist like a child. His chocolate gelled back hair glares in the fluorescent light.

Nurse Ryan pads in lazily. Her curly ginger hair pulled back by a gold butterfly. I watch the small creature buzz around her freckled face as she looks between us. Her clear blue eyes glance between myself and the yellow puddle behind me. She grabs a mop from the hallway with her manicured hands that remind me of Momma.

"Again, Daisy? Girl, you need to learn how to hold your water." The nurse mumbles. "Fourth time this week." She pats the top of my head gently and the butterfly returns to her hair. Dr. Lenny glares at her and leads me to the hallway away from her. His Chiclet teeth gleam as he gives me a reassuring smile. The room with

the baths lurks closer.

"I'll give you something so you can sleep tonight. How does that sound?"

"Sounds good." I murmur kneading the back of my neck.

I sit at the coloring table, because my Momma deserves a present. Maybe she'll let me out of here if I make her something special. Fred grabs the chartreuse paint in front of me, sticking out his tongue. I imagine him choking on it and falling to the floor. Fred got here just after I did. I was only ten then. We used to play with Legos before he started to try to eat them. He dumps the sticky liquid over his paper, spilling on himself and the floor. He's ruining our playtime just like he did fifteen years ago.

"Stop it, you're going to get us in trouble," I hiss. I grab a few of the paints and put them on my piece of foil like Nurse Ryan showed me yesterday. I take Fred's hand and show him how to dab at the paint from the piece of foil, then I dab at the rouge with my finger and draw an oval. Fred is only allowed to play with me, because I usually stop him from getting out of control. Today looks like Fred is going to have another bad day. He dumps the chartreuse onto his ginger curls. It dribbles down his long crooked nose to his green scrub bottoms.

"C'mon Fred. Look what you did." I spit. One small green drop lies in the middle of my crimson circle. "Now I have to use green!"

"Green." He murmurs. "Green, Green." He swirls the paint into his hair more, then his chest. Around and round in circular patterns. "Green, Green, Green, Green, Green."

Nurse Ryan hurries over to Fred with a wet towel.

"GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN, GREEN!" Fred flails his hands in the air like he's just received the largest present at Christmas.

Nurse Ryan catches him as he jumps up to try to run around the room to spread the mess. She smothers him with the damp towel rubbing his face, then his body. The towel slowly begins to turn a pale mint. Nurse Judy runs from the medicine room with another wet towel and practically tackles Fred.

I roll my eyes and add more colors. Golden rod. Parisian Blue. Arabian purple. Dr. Lenny's hand touches my shoulder. I jump up from my picture.

"I told him not to, Dr. Len." The nurses still struggle with cleaning Fred behind the doctor. "I didn't do anything, I promise." I wring my hands.

"You obviously did something." He points to the picture I painted. "It's a beautiful sunset, Daisy."

I squirm as he stares at me—his eyes moving up and down. He places his hand on my shoulder and squeezes firmly.

"I'm proud of you. Fred still has a way to go, but you're improving."

Nurse Judy sticks Fred with a small syringe. I start to feel bile rise deep in

my throat. Fred's body lays there completely still, his eyes still rolling back and forth. My hands start to shake. What have they done to you? I push Dr. Lenny's hand off my shoulder and I run at the two nurses.

"Leave him alone!" I scream kicking and punching at Nurse Judy. The doctor grabs my waist and pulls me off of her. I rage and scream again, and again.

"Calm down, Daisy, it's alright." Dr. Lenny squeezes me tighter against his body. His muscles tight against my back. "She just made him relax, that's all. Like I make you relax, Daisy."

"Let go of me!" I screech, kicking as hard as my body can muster. I feel my skin start to crawl. I imagine bugs dripping off my limbs and onto the floor. Len holds my head to the side roughly and Nurse Ryan stabs a short needle into my neck. Her ginger curls begin to blend with her porcelain skin as my eyes droop.

"Just, relax..." Dr. Lenny whispers into my ear.

My eyes burn as I blink, over and over again. Red, then black. The room is pitch black. Why can't I move? I try to massage my pulsing head, but straps hold them down. My hands feel like giant gloves—straps too tight. I try to breathe evenly. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. In. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Out. The straps begin to tighten more. I pull against them. They begin to slide and slither up my arms, choking me.

It's not real, Daisy. It's not real. Cross your fingers and it'll go away. More snakes slither around my body. Tightening. Squeezing. Bruising my torso. *It'll go away.* I cross my fingers tightly and the snakes cover my mouth—constricting. Red. Purple. Blue. Black. Red. Purple. Blue. Black. My body starts to convulse. Up and Down. I twist and turn trying to lift my hips. I pull as hard as I can against the restraints. My skin tears, blood oozing. My head pounds harder and harder.

"Somebody help me!" I scream biting the snakes hard. "Help me!"

The snakes disappear and the door with the window slams. I breathe hard. *In and out, that's right. In and out.* I shiver, the room is freezing. Sweat drips from my body and something feels off. My stomach hurts down low. My muscles continue to spasm harder. I turn my head and vomit onto the floor. My legs bend—squirring. *Something is wrong. Where are my panties?*

"Nurse! Nurse Ryan! Please!" The door with the window slams open. Whiteness sears my eyes.

Momma sits next to me in Dr. Lenny's office. I lean back into the fluffy leather couch trying to disappear. Potted plants rest behind Lenny's mahogany desk. A fern. A cactus. A daisy. The light from the bay window filters through the plants. Momma stares at her red manicured nails as she waits with me. I smile at her. Maybe she's decided to take me home. Her smile back is crooked—wrong. She pats my head and examines my long black locks. Momma tucks it behind my ears and strokes my narrow jaw.

"Have you been being good, Daisy?" Her eyebrow lifts, quizzical. She pulls

her loose blond strands back into a ponytail as she waits for me to answer.

“Yes, Momma. I’ve been going to bed on time and I even painted you a picture.”

“What picture?” her eyes narrow. I reach into my teal sweater, unfolding my sunset. I hand it to her waiting for a big smile.

“It’s from when we went on vacation. The sunset over the ocean. You know, when Daddy was still alive.” I mumble. A tear rolls down her cheek to her plum lipstick. Maybe it wasn’t such a good idea to remind her of Daddy. They used to fight about my imaginations. Daddy always wanted to keep me home where they could take care of me. When he drowned, my imaginations only got worse. Momma couldn’t handle me on her own, so Grandma suggested this place—Danvers State. Dr. Lenny comes into the room before Momma can answer. He holds a thick folder in his callused hands. He offers his hand to Momma.

“Nice to see you again, Mrs. Withers.” He smiles at Momma. She stares blankly at him waiting for him to speak again. “I called you here so that I could get your approval on a new treatment that might help your daughter.”

“I thought she had been good?” Her eyes wander over to me, and I stare at the ground.

“Well she has, but she has been having some pretty intense episodes lately. She hasn’t been able to control her bodily functions during them.” Dr. Lenny rubs the back of his head as he watches me.

“So what is this treatment?” Momma looks back at Dr. Lenny, eyes narrowed. She pulls me close to her, but her movement is stiff. I haven’t been this close to Momma since I was back at home.

“It will basically restart her brain, so that hopefully it will go back to having normal functions. The treatment has a slight risk of memory loss, but I have never experienced it with any of my patients.”

He points to words on a paper as he talks. He glances at me every few words and my tummy starts to hurt. Restart my brain? Memory loss? Why would he want that? I nuzzle my face into Momma’s chest.

“Momma, can I please go home with you?” I plead, refusing to look at Dr. Lenny. Her emerald eyes scan my face then retreat back to Lenny.

“She should be able to go home if this treatment is successful.” He smiles, his Chiclet teeth showing.

“What is it called?” She asks, ignoring me.

“Shock Therapy.”

“Is it safe?” she looks back to me looking worried. That’s right, Dr. Len. Momma doesn’t want to restart me. I lean into her more, but I can feel her back away. No momma, don’t do it. I just want to go home.

“It is the safest treatment we have.” He smiles widely. Momma smiles back and my stomach feels even worse than before. Len grabs his biggest fountain pen and uncaps it handing it to Momma.

“Where do I sign?” The doctor points to the bottom line of the paperwork and Momma signs my life into his hands.

Nurse Ryan leads me into a room full of machines. A metal table sits in the center of the room like an altar. She takes off my cross gently—fingers shaking. Ryan buttons up my sweater all the way so I won’t get cold.

“Are you sure about this Daisy? If you don’t want to do this, I will stop Dr. Lenny.” She flattens my hair around my thin face looking into my eyes. I can see the reflection of my green eyes in hers. I see the hollowness of my cheeks. How the skin is pulled a little too tight over my bones. My eyes look crazed as I look back to them, and it scares me.

“Yes, I’m sure. I don’t wanna be crazy anymore, Nurse Ryan. If Momma is convinced, then I’m convinced. I just want to go home.” A few tears run down my cheeks.

“Daisy, you’re the first person he has wanted to do this treatment with. Now, I know your mother signed off on it, but I’ve seen what this treatment can do to people, Daisy. They’re not the same person afterwards.” Nurse Ryan wipes the tears from my face.

“Nurse Ryan, look at me. I can barely stand here and talk to you. I’ve been crazy all my life. I don’t want to be crazy anymore! I have to do the shock therapy. I don’t want to be crazy anymore.” I breathe hard staring straight into her eyes.

Nurse Ryan gives me a weak smile and helps me onto the table as Dr. Lenny comes in. They both lift one of my arms to secure a leather strap around my wrists. I test their strength, but my arms can barely budge. They repeat on my ankles and I start to sweat. *Breathe Daisy, just Breathe. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.* I remember the snakes again. *1, 2, 3, 4, 5.* Nurse Ryan gently puts a large rubber puck into my mouth. Tears leak out the corners of my eyes. Dr. Lenny brings the machine over and puts a paddle on each side of my temple.

“Ready to get better, Daisy?” Dr. Lenny smiles. I see black shadows all around me coming closer. Their arms reach out, clawing at me from every side.

Sparks fly, and a small trembling starts in my toes. Then my legs, arms, torso and head. Convulsions yank and lurch my body away from the table hard. My body heaves. My body trembles. My body chucks forward. I can’t breathe, and I feel water flow over me. I feel hands around my throat, squeezing too tight. Another flash; I see a dark shadow on top of me—lurching and thrusting against me. I feel the pain in my stomach, my pelvis, and my thighs.

The trembling stops. My heart continues to speed faster. Nurse Ryan grabs the paddles from Dr. Lenny yelling at him. The sounds don’t register. There is heavy pressure in my ears and a white noise crashes against them in waves. Dr. Lenny pushes Nurse Ryan out of the way. *It was you. It was you.* I feel the words on my lips but my body shakes hard again. The lights from the ceiling begin to fade. I can feel the violin and piano again—pulling me deeper into sleep.



Molokai Flowers

The Lobster Tank

THUNK.

“Why ain’t they movin’?”

THUNK.

The bony knuckles that rap the outer glass of the lobster tank are connected to fingers stained zombie green from stacks of gaudy costume rings. The nails that tip the fingers are acrylic talons, one and a half inches, in Las Vegas neon pink with zebra stripes and plastic diamond dots. Left hand’s middle fingernail is missing, popped off in a beer brawl beach altercation two nights ago. Its absence gives the curled fingers of the left hand a lobster claw lack of symmetry.

THUNK.

At Captain Nemo’s Seafood Bonanza, located in a gloriously tacky strip of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, there is a tank of lobsters. On this fateful day, its crustaceous dwellers number three. One has its face in the corner like a truant child, blending with a barnacled boulder, atop which perches a moldy mermaid that was only included for aesthetic purposes. A second lobster idles peacefully, unaware that he is destined to be divided amongst back-of-house staff dinner plates, being too small to attract the appraisal of hungry diners. But lobster number three is special. We shall call him Merv, for no particular reason at all.

“I want that one!” Fingernails flails a pointed gesture squarely in between the beady black eyes of our hero, Merv. Merv is enthralled. He has but a single day of tank time. He has remained with his pinchers plastered to the inside glass of the tank the entire time, his invertebrate brain whirring with the stimuli of the cloudy, colorful, upright, and two legged creatures bustling back and forth across the vista of his sight line. The dirty salt water warps the images of waitresses, busboys, and plump vacationers into a melting kaleidoscope of novelty. What an unimaginable life for a lobster! What excitement, what adventure, for a lowly kid crustacean from the wrong side of the reef!

A stout man with suitcase-leather skin that glistens with a sheen of sticky sweat emerges from the kitchen. He wears a dingy apron splattered with fishy smelling kitchen grease.

“Ya’ll pick a lobster?” Kitchen Grease addresses Fingernails.

“The lady wants that fat fucker right there,” answers a man, in a booming voice with trailer park twang. The man indicates Merv, and miraculously, Merv waves, clapping a chubby claw against the glass. Hello, he seems to say, or some approximation thereof, translated into red-blooded American English from lobster language. Lobsters have a limited lexicon.

“Look hun, it’s movin!” Fingernails squeals.

“It knows it’s ‘bout to get ate,” says Trailer Twang, though in reality our hero is aware of no such thing. Trailer Twang grabs a clutch of backside cellulite connected to an ass, connected to a torso, connected to an arm with a hand with obnoxiously adorned fingernails. The two twitter before they turn back toward

their table, taste buds tingling in anticipation of lobster flesh.

Kitchen Grease swipes his calloused hands over his desperately unsanitary apron before diving in for the capture. The briny water of the lobster tank soaks his bushy black-haired arms up to his elbows. He deftly seizes Merv by the midsection and spirits him up and away, from tank, from mermaid boulder, from inadequately filtered water filled with feces, and from his very last lobster friends.

Now here is a moment that, were lobsters intellectually evolved enough to partake in the tradition of oral story-telling, would be long lauded in lobster legend. This would be termed the Choosing, and it would be that special time of destiny, after the trap or trawl, the culminating climax after the trip away from tepid mother ocean.

Do lobsters believe in God?

Does Merv believe he's been hand-pinchd by the benevolent He, that crustaceous deity of many claws that scuttles all-knowing across the sea floor in the sky?

Do lobsters feel emotion?

Is Merv perplexed at this sudden flight, at this up and down galumph as he is carried off by Kitchen Grease through this atmosphere of blistering dryness, through this dissonance of suspicious aromas, to this noisy humid room full of clangs and bangs?

Lobsters have no word for kitchen, or butter bath, or lobster house bib. There are no all you can eat clam bakes in the universe under the sea. Lobsters have no word for stock pot, or paring knife, or lemon wedge, or parsley garnish. Regardless, Merv apprehends the latest chapter of his journey with wide-eyed wonder. Wide eyed, until droplets of searing steam collide with his tender ocular bulbs, as he is lowered, lowered...

Do lobsters feel pain?

Kitchen Grease, the cook, keeps his lobster pot at perpetual boil. Merv descends, and splashes down, roiling bubbles of death bursting in his wake.

Do lobsters feel pain?

Merv is frightened. It is so hot in this big silver pot. Merv is terrified. The burning...the burning. Merv is screaming at an octave too high for human ears to hear, and Kitchen Grease is reaching for his hidden flask of rot-gut whiskey behind the economy sized Old Bay seasoning on the spice rack, and Kitchen Grease is tapping Merv on the back to keep him under the fiery water...

Do lobsters feel pain?

If Merv had words, he would say, I'm boiling alive, I'm boiling alive, I'm boiling alive.

Do lobsters...

I'm boiling alive.

feel...

I'M BOILING ALIVE.

pain?

How to Love the Color Purple

Meet him somewhere strange and daring—the bar mitzvah of someone neither of you know. He comes with a friend. Never tell him why you're there. Dance with him. After all, you don't want to seem out of place and he looks cute in that jacket. Leave the bar mitzvah together and crash a party next door. Finally, exchange names behind a trash can as you both try to avoid the cops called in to bust the party. Laugh in the police station after you fail. Make sure to smile and crack a joke about what he is in for. He will laugh, though your voice is awkward and your joke is flat.

Make sure you get his phone number before you part. He has already heard you verbally fall over yourself, so be bold. Make him laugh again. He will write his number on your palm with a purple pen. Don't wash your hand for a week. Let the ink seep into your skin and merge with your blood. This is the first mark he leaves on you.

Later, tell everyone the story of how you met. They will laugh as well (they always do).

Don't call your second meeting a "date." Dates are bad luck. The last time you went on a date, your boyfriend told you he was gay. The time before that, your girlfriend told you she was straight. When he walks into Starbucks a few minutes late, pay attention to what he orders and wish you could tell sexuality by drink choice.

The day will be awkward, but he will laugh. This is a good sign. Allow him to draw swirls on your hand with his purple pen. Tell him about the time you almost ran into an owl on the highway. Try a new drink together. Argue about whether to throw it away when you both gag. Don't feel too bad when he doesn't kiss you, there will be plenty of time for that later.

Wait until the fourth meeting to take the initiative—if he won't, you must. Feel him laugh against your lips. Remember his taste—lip balm and tooth paste and vanilla latte. Start calling your meetings "dates" after that, but only to your friends. It is then that you two will feel official, like you suddenly have permission to refer to yourselves as a pair.

Sneak into the abandoned car lot at night to kiss. Hold his hand as you watch the stars on that forbidden concrete. His grip will be strong. Try to talk to him about life after college. He will shrug and say, "I'll get there when I get there." He will say this a lot.

Get drunk together at Chelsea's party. He will leave a mark on you that night but the purple will not be ink. Try to wash it off in the morning, scrubbing obsessively with a rag. Cover it with long sleeves. Shrug when your friends ask you about your choice of shirt in the swelling heat. They will frown in concern. Do not worry. You will get better at this.

Accept his apologies. What else can you do?

"I didn't mean to hurt you," he will say, arms outstretched. "I love you."

You cannot reject the apologies of someone who loves you. The world will teach you this, year after year.

You will finally come to terms with calling him your “boyfriend” when he hits you again. This time he is not drunk, only angry. Adjust the painting you fell against and accept his apology as he tells you that he loves you. Watch him smile like a puppet.

Rinse, repeat.

Sometimes he will bring you flowers—poppies, roses, lilacs. He will draw purple loops and swirls on the paper. Notice when he begins to carry that purple pen with him. Watch him fidget with it, twirling it between his calloused fingers, bringing it to tap against his chin. These days his fingers will be continuously smudged with purple. This seems like penitence. Perhaps he will think that if he has purple marks as well, everything is okay. It evens out.

Become an expert at hiding bruises. It is easiest in the winter, when no one bats an eye at long sleeves and scarves. Your medicine cabinet will grow full of skin-toned makeup. Bruising below clothing is simple, but you will have trouble explaining split lips and black eyes. Your friends will grow concerned. Laugh them off. If they persist, drift away. Do not let them too close. You will miss swimming sometimes, but there is no good way to hide bruises in water.

Soon the wounds will become proclamations of endearment. “I love you” will become the cry of purple along your thigh. “You are my everything” will be the coo of the red line across your chest. Your jaw will ache with his affection. Pity the other girls with their unmarked bodies. They have no evidence of love, just memories of words and lips.

For a time he will apologize when he hits you, but soon he will stop. Instead he will proclaim his love. At this point, there is no point in begging him to stop. Let his palms bloom flowers of pain across your skin. Let him form a tapestry of red and purple.

One day, a friend you have not seen in months will hand you a book titled *Evidence of Abuse*. She will not speak. Stay silent as well, but take the book when you leave.

Leave it in your dresser; it has no place in your life. He loves you too much.

Buy him purple pens for his birthday. He will go through them rapidly, scribbling and fidgeting and cracking them open to let the ink spill through his fingers. The day after his party, he will ask you to move in with him. It’s an old apartment on the other side of town. Accept. Your parents will urge you not to leave, not to go to him, but you will have drifted from them as well. It will be easy to move, even so soon after graduation.

Leave the house very little, except to work. You will have nothing to go to. He will come home drunk sometimes and on these nights he will touch you less, scribbling on the walls with that purple pen of his. He will not yell. He so rarely ever yells.

One night you will argue. It will be of something trivial, you not locking the door at night perhaps, or him always leaving dirty dishes on the counter. Leave him seething on the ratty purple couch and eat dinner at the faux-country restaurant. You will be the only one alone. Briefly consider dialing up an old friend, someone you have not seen in months. They will tell you that this is a sign, a warning against the man you love. Order a slice of chocolate cake instead.

The door will be locked when you return. Knock. No one will come. Your keys will be sitting on the coffee table inside, so just sink down against the door and text him a litany of apologies. Until a few hours later, when the door will quietly click open, and startle you from a daze. He will not apologize. He will, in fact, act as if nothing occurred. Purple scratches will mar your bedroom wall.

Think of chocolate cake.

Read the book. Do it in small bits—before he wakes up in the morning, during your lunch break at work, when he goes to the bathroom. Your need for secrecy is, perhaps, what will drill your eyes to the page instead of dismissing the book entirely. He will be angry if he sees it. Why? You will have no reasons, only a gnawing instinct that a deep part of you thinks is self-preservation.

Notice that he does not laugh anymore. Remember the times he did, back when you never had to eat dinner alone in a faux-country restaurant, but now he only smiles.

Finish the book.

Call him into the living room one night, weeks after you hid the book in the bottom drawer of the bedroom dresser. Make sure your hands are empty. He will come when you call, he always does, and sit on the couch with you. He will fidget with his pen, threading it through his fingers and tapping it against his knuckles—tap, tap, tap-tap, like an uneven heartbeat. His hands will be smudged with ink. Reach out an arm, carefully and smoothly. Take his pen. He will smile quizzically, his brow creasing. Smile back.

Jab the pen in his eye.

End up in the hospital with him, just a few rooms apart. The book will preach temperance and careful patience—tells you that allies are only a phone call away, but you have never been one for listening. Trace your fingers over the last proclamations of love he will even leave on your skin. Cry alone in the hospital bed so loud the nurse rushes in. Tell her the story of how you met your boyfriend, somewhere strange and daring.

Tell this story often. Do not forget. If you forget, you will start to forgive.



Water in the Creeps

Fickle Folk

Inspired by Lucas Farms Logo, The Logo Show, Sarah Spurgeon Gallery, Oct. 2014

“Ouch,” I say, “ouch.” But the cutting machine and the man astride it continue on their way, splicing through earth and root all the same. The dandelion, growing at another of my feet, snickers. It thinks I am too slow for retaliation but then weeds are notoriously simple of mind. I rearrange my limbs, shade it off from the sun. I know trees are supposed to be gentle, wise, and patient. But even the oldest cedars grow tired of the antics of weeds. They are a fickle folk.

The man and his machine turn full about at the far end of the field, this field that was once forest. At first, it only grew stumps, slowly rotting away under rain and sun and snow, slowly joining the soil once more. I stood alone then and continued to do so as this field became residence to corn, wheat, and barley. The chickadee who nests upon my head each spring has told me that, farther off, the trees have reclaimed a part of this land. But that chickadee also insists that these trees are all the folk who bear fruit in early autumn, and, furthermore, that the fruit of these trees, instead of dropping to the ground for the rabbits and deer, simply disappear before the trees are even finished with them. So I may only conclude that my feathered friend’s mind has seen better days.

The angry rumble of the machine approaches again. We’ve been through this before, every damn year. It’s become apparent to me that both are either deaf or cold-hearted to ignore my warning shouts and cries of pain. They keep on chugging along, ripping at my roots, not so much as feigning an apology. I’ve cursed them and begged them, hurled dead leaves into their faces by the dozen. And still they continue, brushing away the crumbling orange petals, letting them settle instead on their shoulders and feet.

They’re coming again, and I’m shouting again.

“Stop, you fools, stop! Can’t you see I’m standing here?”

The machine narrowly misses hacking away at yet another root and instead mulches the snarky dandelion, who has maintained bitter silence until now. Now, its screams of horror ignored, it surrenders to an anguished cry and a stifled groan. I know trees are supposed to be gentle, wise, and compassionate. But even the healthiest firs won’t suffer a weed’s presence for long. Secretly, I am pleased.

The machine moves off once more, and in the new bout of silence, a bee interrogates me:

“Have you any flowers?”

“No,” I tell him, “I’m afraid not.”

“And you haven’t any clue of the whereabouts of any, perchance?” This bee spoke with such a curious dialect; he must have traveled far from his hive.

“There haven’t been any flowers here for months, aside from the deceased at my foot.”

“I see,” the bee said simply, and flew off. He would be back in a few minutes to repeat the conversation. Bees are such a fickle folk.

The machine loops around again, but it has never made more than two swipes at me. One would think a being with such a methodical nature would be more easily reasoned with, but the machine, I've come to know, thrives in complexity, in contradiction. Even the spider who's taken up residence among my upper boughs agrees with me here, and she is notoriously difficult, as every mate of hers has told me.

I have lived here longer than man or machine, than spider, bee, or bird, than dandelion, clover, or every grain who thought so well of itself to take up this entire field. As much as I despised the trees who stood here with me back before all of this, their branches and roots always seeking to outgrow mine and cut me off from sun, earth, and water, I now find their company missed. Trees, you see, aren't just gentle and wise; we are sturdy, reliable, respectable folk. Not complicated like the machine and his rider, not difficult like the spider, not so easily thrown asunder like the bird, not simple like the bee, not crude like the weed. We are not such fickle folk, you see.

The Best 9 Reasons to be Single in College

The worst has happened, you and your boyfriend of six months have broken up. It's your first quarter of college, and you don't know how to face it alone. The center of your world is gone, and now you must follow girl breakup protocol; bring out the Ben & Jerry's, turn on the chick flick marathon, and hide yourself in the biggest sweats and sweatshirt you own (Problem? They're both his). Is this the correct reaction though? Does being single mean lonely nights hiding from the rest of society, mourning the loss of a relationship that wasn't going anywhere in the first place? Not at all! You've been convinced that being in a relationship is the ultimate goal in life, but when it comes to college, there are plenty of perks to the single life.

Reason Number One: Everyone needs friends

You may think you're fine cuddled up in your cheetah Snuggie, marathon watching "The Walking Dead" with your cat, but really you need some human interaction. Your boyfriend might've come over three times a week and become a couch potato with you, but he couldn't possibly be your only friend! Interacting with one human is not enough, and the sooner you realize that and embrace the single life, the better. According to the Mental Health Foundation, "Friendships are a crucial element to protecting our mental health." College is where you make the friends you will keep forever. Unlike high school, you actually have more than five cliques to choose from, and can find genuinely awesome individuals that will not judge, belittle, or act like 85-year-olds and stay home every night doing the crossword puzzle (unless you're into that cause then that's cool).

Reason Number Two: Boys are like candy...you don't know your favorite until you've tried a few

You know we've all dated the hipster, the jock, the player, the stage five clinger, the one that ended up switching teams, and let's not forget the one who says "I love you" on the third date. Skittles, Sour Patch Kids, and Jolly Ranchers, you've tried them all, made an assessment, and decided which one you like the best. Think of boys in the same way, if you hadn't dated the jock, you never would've realized that you can't date someone just for their biceps. If you hadn't dated the player you never would've learned that you should steer clear of the boys with diamond earrings far too big for their ears, and catch phrases like "what's good baby girl?" But all joking aside, going on dates with an assortment of men is important to finding the kind of person you would one day actually want to stay with. Ella from Bellevue says "I think dating around is really important. I once dated a man I thought I was in love with, to later find out he liked men as much as I did." Dating different people helps you learn not only about them, but yourself as well. What kind of attention can you handle? Are you a one phone call in the evening type of gal, or do you prefer constant texting throughout the entire day?

Do you like to debate, or do you avoid confrontation? Would you rather stay up all night and sleep in till noon, or rise and shine at six AM? Dating is a learning experience, but there's only so much you can learn from one teacher.

Reason Number Three: It's time to grow up and figure out who you are

After conquering high school, moving out of your childhood home, and buying your own toilet paper (which is the most depressing thing to do, let's be honest), you probably feel incredibly mature. In truth, you have got a lot of growing up to do. As far as the rest of society is concerned, you're closer to being a toddler than an adult. Lucky for you, college is the perfect place to mature and learn how to survive in a world full of big, scary grownups. Why is college such a good place to grow up? Because your parents aren't there to tell you what to do anymore, you have to rely on your own judgment to make intelligent decisions, and sometimes learn from dumb mistakes (one ply toilet paper is never the smart choice). If you bring a boyfriend into the mix, the reliance on your parents just shifts to him. How can you really become yourself, and grow up if you're still stuck trying to be the person your boyfriend fell for when you first met? Your brain is still developing into its adult shape into your late twenties (Real Clean Science), making this an imperative time for your growth and evolvment. Instead of taking your cues from the fascinating world around you and shaping your own views, you simply start to reflect his.

Reason Number Four: Homework, stress and more stress (and a little more)

It's 8:45 PM on a Wednesday night, and your five page paper on the individual's obligation to obey government is not done, neither is your Power Point presentation for micro biology. Let's not forget about the ten chapters you still need to read for English 366, or the fact that it's all due tomorrow. Now let's add in a boyfriend, one that wants to see you so badly, and just wishes you could put that homework off a little longer (insert puppy eyes here). Keep in mind, the only reason you've left all this homework until the last minute, in the first place, is because you wanted to spend more time with your boo boo bear. While having the support of a loved one can be beneficial to some when it comes to homework, many seem to excel when given some privacy. Renown sociologist, Eric Klinenberg, says singles are more likely "to get much needed alone time", and that this solitude can be "restorative", and even help you be more focused when you reenter the world (Forbes). Instead of trying to read the mile long text from your cutie patootie, you can focus on reading your textbooks. The purpose of college is to learn, and if you're doing poorly in your classes, chances are you aren't progressing much. Finding time to study, and get engaged in your classes should be the goal right now, not getting engaged to be married.

Reason Number Five: The gym can be a very beautiful place

Admiring handsome men in muscle shirts, while you run on a treadmill is a great motivation to avoid the Freshman 15...or the Sophomore 20. Being in a relationship can be cozy and comfortable, but it can also be detrimental to your waistline. Over two-thirds of couples surveyed by NDTV Food admitted to having gained weight together, and listed eating out and watching television together as their main activities. Settled in with your sweetie pie, there doesn't seem to be much need for self-improvement, especially gym time. If you're single you get to have more time to yourself, more time to yourself means more time for the gym, and more time at the gym means more gorgeous man gazing. Beware, if you happen to be so distracted by the eye candy around you that drop your cell phone on the treadmill, it will rapidly shoot off the belt and fly into the person behind you.

Reason Number Six: You only have to share with you

Boys eat a lot of food. You think they have stuffed themselves with so many nachos that they may possibly burst, and then they inhale an entire chicken. The recommended caloric intake for men is between 400 and 600 calories greater than the amount recommended for women (WebMD), they're actually supposed to eat like baby dinosaurs. You never get to eat a whole meal, because at least a couple "nibbles" (aka gigantic mouthfuls), mysteriously disappear from your plate. On top of that, food is expensive and cooking for one makes the bank account look much nicer. Boys are also enormous furnaces that will hog the bed, and think it's cute to smother you with their huge arms. It may seem very intimate, or even sexy to shower with your boyfriend, but in reality the water will just bounce off his ridiculously tall chest, and spray you directly in the eye. Sharing is not always caring, and it definitely isn't always fun.

Reason Number Seven: Get the crazy out

I'm not saying you need to go all Neighbors on everybody (featuring Zac the heartthrob Efron!) and teepee any lawns or make an office chair explode, but I am saying there's a place for everything, and that place is called college. Whether its dancing till two AM with your best friend in your dorm, singing bad karaoke at the local bar downtown (no, you can't pull off singing "I Will Always Love You"), or finding the biggest frat party and kicking all those boys butts at beer pong, college should be legendary. On your fiftieth birthday you don't want to look back at your college days and say "Gee, I'm really glad we stayed in all night and watched Sleepless in Seattle for the hundredth time." Neuroscientist Jay Giedd says "It's a good thing that the 20's are becoming a time for self-discovery", and goes on to discuss the human brain's continued development into your late twenties. Take advantage of the freedom (and free time) the single life provides, and embrace all the classic, yet exceptionally true, clichés. Carpe diem, live life to the fullest, life

starts outside your comfort zone, life goes by too fast to just sit back and watch, and life isn't about finding yourself, life is about creating yourself.

Reason Number Eight: You can be selfish

Taking extra time to make sure you get that perfect shade of gold eyeshadow, stopping to pick yourself up a peppermint mocha from Starbucks (don't be ashamed, we're all basic), or lounging in a bubble bath for a couple hours may all go under the category of spoiling yourself. And there is nothing wrong with that! We all want to feel special, and making yourself feel treasured is a perfectly acceptable option. Being able to make yourself happy is one of the truest forms of independence there is. To ever be truly happy with someone else, you need to learn to be happy on your own. If you get into a relationship before you are happy with yourself, your unhappiness may resurface and be destructive to your relationship (Elite Daily). You need to know how to take care of yourself, whether that entails consuming a healthy supply of white wine, Whitney's Chocolates, or maybe just time to read a good book. The options are endless and these are the years to find them.

Reason Number Nine: You have the rest of your life to be with someone

Saying you want to be single in college does not mean you never want to be in a relationship, it just means you have some experiences to enjoy before you get there. Snuggling up to someone on the couch, while the fireplace crackles and "Let it Snow" croons over the radio is a magical picture. Taking a spontaneous trip to the zoo and laughing as the walruses wave at you and your loved one is something you'll never forget. These are moments that should indeed be cherished and looked forward to, but you still need to stop, look at where you are right now, and enjoy your surroundings for that they are. While some may say that college is the best place to meet a diverse group of people in your age group, it is also good to keep in mind that you are better equipped to make important life decisions in your late twenties, than earlier in the decade (Real Clean Science). This includes life decisions such as picking a serious boyfriend, or husband. There is plenty of time to find Mr. Right, but for now, focus on your studies, make lasting friendships, and create memories that will last forever, and most importantly, become the person you've always hoped to be. This is the time for you.

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Does the Past Show?

*What was the point in just being hurt on the inside?
It should bloody well show.*

—Astrid, *White Oleander* by Janet Fitch

**

College: Old students. Young students. Poor students. Rich students. Native American students. Curious students. Nerdy students. African American students. Outgoing students. Introverted students. I might fit here.

**

Staring at chipped purple nail polish spackled on my toes, I wonder—is there something wrong with me? Why don't I paint my finger nails every day like other girls? I chew my nails. Why don't I starve myself like other girls? I crave tastes. Why don't I chase after boys like other girls? I like girls, too. Why don't I want to be like other girls?

**

Ice cream, a famed Band-Aid for fractured hearts: Could mint chocolate chip sooth or save my broken faith in love? I tried to give her a balloon as a birthday present, but my hope for romance was shattered when she turned, blank-faced, and walked away. The balloon was apparently only a cute idea to *me*. I was left staring at where she'd been standing like Ben Affleck in that car after being slapped in *Chasing Amy*.

**

Lime green earbud headphones plug my ears. They're hooked into nothing, just tucked into my pocket. No one realizes my family's too poor to afford the luxury of an iPod, or anything of that sort. My disguise is complete with a dark grey hoodie and black eyeliner. No one will approach me today. No opportunity to fail at social interaction.

**

Ring, ring. My brother is trying to explain what might be wrong with my Jeep Cherokee. "Hey, can I call you back in fifteen minutes? My boss just showed," he asks. We hang up. Three days later, I call him back. When he answers, I point out, "Wow, that was the longest fucking fifteen minutes ever."

**

In the passenger seat of my parent's barely running Dodge, I stare out the window as Dad drives. Another silent ride. We both know who he was before his depression, before his mental break, before his medical discharge from the military, but neither of us say anything. We used to fish nearly every weekend. Sometimes we watched black-and-white horror movies together. Now, silent drives are the only time we seem able to stand being so physically close. We both know I am not the Daddy's girl I was. Mental clinics change everything.

**

The sacred geometry of a well-defined plan: cut my forearm, hide the wound, be

super obvious about it by wrapping it in a bright purple bandanna, then get attention and eventually get help. Simple, especially as I pretend that attention is my primary motivation and that the slices have nothing to do with all the pressure of going unheard despite attempts to show I exist. No one notices.

**

Sitting at the dining room table, I whine, “Come on, Mom, let’s do something! I’m fuckin’ bored. We could play cards?” She groans, “Sweetie, I’m busy cooking dinner, and you know I don’t like playing cards ‘cause of your Grandmother. She’s sucked all the joy from that with how competitive she is.” I sigh, wanting to throw something, anything across the dining room in frustration. Mom continues, “Pumpkin butt, can’t we just enjoy that we’re both here... quietly?”

**

*A penny for my thoughts, oh no, I’ll sell ‘em for a dollar
They’re worth so much more after I’m a goner
And maybe then you’ll hear the words I been singin’
Funny when you’re dead how people start listenin’*
—The Band Perry, “If I Die Young”

**

The moon looms golden, like a peach ready to be plucked. Our chanting, like a whisper from the lips of god in the night air. The delicate dance of the Beltane fires on votive candles. Hands clasped as we form a circle. The Priestess’s voice guiding the tune as her hands lift with ours to send positive energy from our unity to all of Ellensburg under the closest moon of the year. I might fit here.

ALTER SCOTT, ERIC GARNER, MICHAEL BROWN, TAMIR RIVERA BLAND, NATASHA MCKENNA, JANISHA FONVILLE, TANAYSON, REKIA BOYD, WALTER SCOTT, BERNARD MOORE, LAMAR, JONATHAN RYAN PAUL, JAMIE CROOM, TERRY GARNETT, JIQUE JENEE DECKARD, JAMES EARL RAY, WILL ROBINSON JR., TYRONE LAWRENCE, JAMES EARL RAY, ANDREW ANTHONY WILLIAMS, DEWAYNE BRUNSON, FREDARIUS WILLIAMS, E HENDERSON, JAMES EARL RAY, THOMAS CHARLEY LEUFERT, JAMES EARL RAY, VIL, SHAQUILL BROWN, KENDRA BROWN, JAMES EARL RAY, JONES, DARRELL, JAMES EARL RAY, SHERRON, JAMES EARL RAY, NTE FLETCHER, JAMES EARL RAY, WIS, CALVIN, JAMES EARL RAY, TIANO MERRITT, JAMES EARL RAY, ALMES, A'DON, JAMES EARL RAY, WASHINGTON, JAMES EARL RAY, GRANT, ASK, JAMES EARL RAY, TS, DEWAYNE BRUNSON, JAMES EARL RAY, THEODORE JOHNSON, JAMES EARL RAY, DRICK LAMONT BROWN, JAMES EARL RAY, ERENCE D. WALSH, JAMES EARL RAY, SHA FONVILLE, JAMES EARL RAY, JONY BESS, DESMOND, JAMES EARL RAY, ER SR., JAMES EARL RAY, JANISHA MCKENNA, HERBERT, JAMES EARL RAY, MARKELL ATKINS, KAVONDA EARL PAYTON, RODNEY WAINTE SOWELL, MARIO A. JORDAN, ARTAGO DAMON HOWARD, JAMES EARL RAY, IDRE LARONE MURPHY SR., MARCUS RYAN GOLDEN, BRIAN, JAMES EARL RAY, KETT, HASHIM HANIF IBN ABDUL-RASHEED, RONALD SNEYD



Silenced

Shelter

When I was fourteen we lost our house. No, that sounds like it went the way of my car keys and half my socks. When I say we lost it, what I mean is we ran out of money for the mortgage—medical bills versus home loans, the new American dream—and moved out to keep one step ahead of the sheriff. The house was our first. My life until that point had been spent skittering back and forth between cheap apartments. My parents had scrounged for years to buy the three-bedroom ranch house—fighting impulse and inflation to afford the down payment. A few years after we moved in, we got so far behind on the mortgage that there was no coming back. My parents had been crumbling for months and the night they realized the house was gone, they disintegrated. They fought for hours in the darkened driveway I could no longer call ours. In the eye of the storm, I clung to the phone and begged my grandfather to do something about the knife in my suicidal mother's hands. We moved to a friend's basement.

In the years that followed, we explored squalor and depression. My mother stopped getting out of bed, my father stopped coming home, and I began daydreaming about houses. Whenever I entered a new house, I would memorize its layout so later I could walk down the halls in my mind. I would imagine the kitchen cupboards, the guest bed, and how the light would stream through the curtains in the morning.

I was not drawn to mansions or grand estates but to comfortable two stories in the suburbs. I craved the sanity required to roll out a throw rug and wash the dishes after meals. I loved vaulted ceilings, but what I really wanted was vacuum lines in the carpet—or even carpet at all. My family had a knack for destroying flooring; it was inevitably torn up, exposing cement floors underneath. We always said we would install something better but never did, leaving feet to freeze in the winter when the heat was off.

I become obsessed with making a home. When we moved out of the worst of the squalor, I spent time cleaning each day—polishing the old wood furniture with Orange Glow until my hands reeked of chemically enhanced mandarin. The margins of my high school notebooks were crammed with to-do lists: dust the bookshelves, unpack the boxes in the dining room, set-up all the lamps, clean the kitchen. These weren't chores from my parents, but little victories for me. Each item cleaned was one bite of relief from the anxiety, one sandbag against the riptide of terror that had swallowed me and my family. If I could clean enough, my parents might come out of their nightmares and return to me, grateful and proud of the job I had done keeping us all afloat.

I don't memorize homes anymore and I think it's because I've spent a few years

living in those kind of places I used to daydream about. You would not be impressed by my college apartment; a friend recently described it as “70s Bavarian” and she was trying to pay me a compliment. But if I could lead my fourteen-year-old self by the hand through the clean hallways, if I could show her my bedroom with sheets on the bed and books on the shelves and not a hint of squalor or depression waiting to maul her in the night, she would whisper “This is mine?” With all the wonder of a child discovering Christmas morning, unexpected and unbelievable, “This is mine?”

Contact

I was awoken by the *ding* of a new text message coming from somewhere inside a pile of what had once been clean laundry, but had been acting as bedding for the past week instead. When I finally exhumed my cracked iPhone and read my mom's text, I barely attempted not to roll my eyes. "Call me when you have a chance. Susan found someone with your dad's new number and address."

This was a familiar drill. The man in my life who has barely earned the title of "Dad" frequently just vanishes. It happened for the first time when I was eight years old, and I must give him some credit here: He has only gotten better at it over the past fourteen years. The thing about improving your skills in a vanishing act is that you have to reappear every once in a while, and because he is very committed to this performance, he has always managed to do that, convincing the audience that there's a chance he'll stick around this time. But he never does. Each time it happens, it's a similar feeling to that moment when you could've sworn you put your keys on that hook when you got home last night, but now you have to be at a job interview in ten minutes, and they're nowhere to be found; it's mildly irritating before the anxiety becomes overwhelming. I'd call him one day, and the phone number I had saved under his first and last name would be answered by an automated voice telling me it was disconnected. I'd drive to the house I last visited him at, and a new family would be doing something cliché like building snowmen in the front yard, or having a meal without any drunken yelling on a Tuesday evening. I'd receive monthly "Hear anything from him yet?" texts from my brother and, less frequently, similar ones from my mother. It was almost like the ultimate game of hide-and-seek within the family he left behind, and the prize for finding him first was immediately being asked, "Well, is he sober?" I was the reigning champion of this game. But apparently, it was now more than just a family affair and had been extended to my mom's friends; Susan won this time—beginner's luck.

Listening to the low, humming *riiiiiing* of an outgoing call, I found myself walking to my laptop and exiting out of the Kittitas County inmate roster, which had been left open in a tab for the past few days where it became well-acquainted with the refresh button. With no hesitation, after hearing a cheerful "hello" on the other end of the line, I put forth a valiant effort to convince my mother to call the newly discovered number first. She feigned consideration for a moment before I received a firm "no." I hadn't expected any other response; she had been released of any need to contact him once he was no longer required to pay child support—which, apparently, is a hard responsibility to keep up with when you're occupied with perfecting your disappearing act. Disappearing doesn't generate a very steady income.

It's odd, I know, to be this absorbed in the search for someone only to finally have the opportunity to talk to them and not want to. There's probably some psychological term for the genuine fear I have of his voice; it's a very loud, often

enraged voice and now frequently echoes in my mind, reminding me about things like my cheeks are chubby and there's just something about the way that I am as a person that "makes it hard to be a proud father." After three days of building up the courage to hear this voice, I called the number and almost hoped this one would be disconnected too, so I could put this off for another year or so. As I again listened to the low, humming *riiiing* of an outgoing call, accompanied by the sound of my heart trying to punch its way out of my chest, I found myself walking into the bathroom and kneeling next to the toilet. I hung up at the sound of a slurred "yeahhello?" on the other end, pressing that bright red button just in time to prevent him from hearing any retching.

One month later, I found myself behind the wheel, pulling into an unfamiliar driveway. I sat in the August heat building up inside my beat-up Toyota Corolla and stared at the chipped white paint on the front door. It really complemented the chipped white paint covering the rest of the house. I knew I was about to be stuck behind those walls for a few hours, so I reminisced on some of our past visits to get myself pumped up. I prepared myself to see him answering the door, unsmiling, slightly swaying side to side. I prepared myself for clenched fists and drunken yelling; I prepared my body to collapse into itself, making me as small as possible, hoping to be overlooked. I told myself the same thing I always told myself before one of these visits: "You just need to see that he's doing okay. Nobody else will do this, so you have to."

My feet, which were suddenly made of brick, landed on the gravel outside my car. They were trying to convince me not to walk toward that door and to walk literally anywhere else instead. "Let's walk to Mexico. We should be in Mexico right now," they said. "Let's walk to the nearest gas station, douse ourselves in gasoline and strike a match. That would probably be more fun than this." They were making some excellent points. My hands were shaking and searching for a pack of cigarettes in my pocket before they remembered I had quit two years ago. "That was stupid of you, you really need one of those right now," they said. They also made an excellent point. My mouth was dry and telling me I should just get drunk *with* him, which I considered briefly before being interrupted by the chipped white paint of a door that was now directly in front of my face. "This is our last chance. We know where the gas station is," my feet said. I knocked three times.

He looked older, greyer, more wrinkled, and slightly less intimidating. His blue eyes that matched mine were behind a pair of reading glasses, which he removed from the bridge of his nose and held in his massive right hand. *I could probably get louder, angrier, and meaner than you now, old man*, I thought to myself. He was wearing a black t-shirt, dirty blue jeans, and work boots—his usual attire. He was breathing, which was a relief, and he seemed to be sober, which was a shock. "Hi," he said with a small smile. "Hi!" I said, louder and peppier than my usual tone of voice, startling myself while he remained unfazed. I wondered why I

never sounded like myself when I talked to him; I wondered when that had started. We side-hugged as if we were once good friends, but now were just acquaintances and didn't quite know how to go about greeting each other. I noticed he didn't smell like booze—very promising. Maybe this time was different, and I had been worried about nothing. Maybe he had changed. Maybe he was finally sick of chasing oblivion.

I spent the next five hours sitting on a secondhand, tattered brown couch, hearing the familiar *pssshhh-ka* of cans of Budweiser opening while I picked at my nail polish and nodded occasionally in response to whatever this man found necessary to say. It was easy to zone out, since he spent almost the entire time talking about himself, only pulling me into the conversation when an opportunity came up for him to offer his critiques on one aspect of my life or another. I thought more about Mexico, about the gas station, about those cigarettes, about the beer in the fridge that I could probably just go grab without him saying a thing. I thought about how I should stop leaving piles of clean laundry on my bed and falling asleep on them. I wondered what my dog was doing, and I decided he was probably sleeping on a pile of laundry. I mentally watched a video I had recently seen of Led Zeppelin performing “What Is and What Should Never Be” in 1970.

“I should go, I have a lot of laundry to do,” I blurted out, surprising both of us and abruptly ending his rambling. We mechanically stood up, and he stumbled over to give me another side-hug, using me for support this time. “We really shouldn't go so long without seeing each other,” he said. “I'm not going to be around forever, you know.” I bit my tongue to stop the “you're barely around now” that was trying to make an escape. I nodded, picked at one final speck of nail polish, and looked at the door. “But you're going to have to be the one to keep in contact with me,” he continued. “That's just the way it is.” My head snapped up to look at him, searching for some sign that he was joking. I thought back to four months prior, when I had run out of ways to try to get a hold of him after over six months of trying, and I had accepted that the next time I saw him, he would be in a body bag. I thought about when that mental image brought on an anxiety attack in the waiting room of a dentist's office, surrounded by the scent of sanitized equipment, rubber gloves, and fluoride that I inhaled deeply while I tried to steady my breathing. I wanted to tell him, “You're going to have make it possible for me to keep in contact with you. That's just the way it is,” but I couldn't bring myself to. I didn't want to deal with his anger that was sure to result from that. I didn't want to hear him lie and tell me that he would. I just wanted to get to the other side of the door. So I clenched my jaw and nodded again.

I walked to my car on feet that moved faster than I thought possible. Once I pulled out of the driveway, I breathed deeper than I had in fourteen years. I didn't look back to memorize the house numbers; I didn't prepare myself to have to go back there looking for him. It hit me like an empty bottle hitting pavement: The whole reason I put myself through this hell was in the hopes that, someday, I

wouldn't have to. I had been playing a continuous game of hide-and-seek for fourteen years thinking that, eventually, I would look behind the right curtain and find a dad who wanted to be in my life. But that wasn't going to happen, and I couldn't keep searching for someone who didn't want to be found.

Cognition

Are giraffes kosher? Does my dog think I'm boring? How do differing atmospheric temperatures make air move so fast? What would our ancient ancestors think of gyms? Why is it socially unacceptable for a woman to go without a bra, and what's up with beauty standards these days? Is selective breeding of domesticated animals following the misguided ways of ancient Egyptian royalty?

Why can't I cry at funerals; am I not close enough, or am I really some kind of over-rationalized robot? Why do humans think they're the shit and that nothing else matters outside our survival and domination? Why do women need men, men need women? Why do we think we need someone else to be whole? At what point are we too P.C.? Why are professional athletes treated like gods, allowed to be horrible people, and then forgiven? And why are those in the professional sports industry paid like we can't live without them, as if they hold the world together?

Why has the use of hand sanitizer become its own epidemic? Can anyone truly "invent" fire; isn't that just like "discovering" a populated landmass? Speaking of which, why are we still glorifying Columbus? Why did the guy who almost mowed down my neighbor's car continue to mess with his phone? Is a guarantee of safety from a wildfire like a guarantee that a ship will never sink? How does a trombone work? Aren't Indian reservations counterproductive? Why do people pronounce random female pedestrians as "bitches" out of car windows, and why do cyclists run stop signs and red lights when they're the ones not encased in metal? Is clean always better than dirty?

Why do some police officers feel the need to be Machiavellian princes? Why has it become a social taboo for strangers to speak outside of necessity? Why did my high school government teacher think all opinions were invalid but his? Why do my neighbors let their cat pick fights with other cats, and why do they laugh about it? Why do people get animals and stick them in backyards to be forgotten, or treat them as decoration on the other end of the leash? And why do people treat plants like inanimate objects?

How smart are elephants? Should we be wary of these cars that drive themselves, machines built for faulty humans by faulty humans? Did Dickinson and Frost really want their art picked apart, "beaten with a hose" in classrooms everywhere? Is it possible to successfully teach something you don't understand? Why do people think immortality would be a good thing and that it would work? Do plants like to be petted?

Why should everyone's future include marriage and children? Why are we so obsessed with cheap nowadays; what happened to our priorities, and quality? Why are some women okay with being repressed? Are we for real—taking art away from artists, making it all about us, the readers, interpreters, viewers? Why do we need a god to fulfill our sense of purpose; what if there is no purpose, or worse yet, what if there is? Why does my life seem to be a long list of accusations for things I didn't do? Is there such a thing as a stupid question?



Flora

Under The Radar

“If you keep going down this path, your heart will stop beating in a month’s time.” My doctor frowns and carefully observes my reaction.

Well, this is a wakeup call. I am 18 years old.

My mom whimpers, and a muffled cry escapes her raspberry red lips in the corner of the pale blue hospital room. My dad’s eyes brim with tears, but he restrains them from cascading down his cheeks. He is almost always put together and rarely shows too much emotion, until this past week.

That’s why I’m here. Last week I collapsed in the bathroom, and he caught me before I hit the floor. I was weak from malnourishment, and fainting had become a normal occurrence, but neither of my parents knew. The charade was up. My secret was out. As I lay there momentarily unconscious in his strong arms, he could feel how frail I was through my winter attire. That should have been their first clue. Who in their right mind wears sweatshirts and sweat pants in 85-degree weather? It was the only way I could keep my secret concealed.

“I’m not that skinny,” I mumble.

I am silent on the car ride home. My parents contemplate my different treatment options—either in-patient or out-patient care. Neither option sounds appealing to me. I pop my headphones into my ears, turn up the volume on my Justin Timberlake playlist, and tune out the rest of the world. It’s better this way. I feel safe in my illusion.

When we pull into our driveway, I rush into the house, shuffle down the hallway, lock myself in the bathroom, and slowly strip my clothes, revealing my naked body—bones wrapped tightly with dry, pale skin. I gingerly step on the scale, and I glower at the blinking numbers on the tiny screen. They taunt me. My heart sinks into my stomach as the numbers stop at 88 pounds.

“Dammit. Once I lose 10 more pounds, I’ll be happy.”

I say this every time I lose another five pounds. It’s never enough. I yearn for the numbers to become zero, mirroring my longing for an escape from this world.

I tentatively inspect my exposed body in the mirror. *What are they talking about? I’m not anorexic. I’m obese!*

For the seventh time that day, I examine myself. It has become an obsessive ritual, one that consumes my thoughts, and even my nightmares. I can’t remember the last time I’ve had a peaceful night’s sleep. Then again, I take a Benadryl every night because I’m too damn hungry to fall asleep. Maybe the drugs give me nightmares.

I study my sunken face—my hollowed cheeks and my big, sad blue eyes. My lackluster hair tumbles down my flat chest. I carefully sweep the chestnut brown strands over my right shoulder with my bony fingers and scrutinize my protruding collarbones. I can count each and every one of my ribs. My stomach

concaves, and my skin clings to my hips in an unnatural way. My ass is bony, and my arms and legs are twig-like. It is amazing to think that just a few years ago, I was a strong athlete. Now look at me. Still fat.

Hot, salty tears stream down my face. Not because I'm slowly killing myself, but because I don't care. I'm sobbing because the doctors are going to force me to gain weight. I'm weeping because I'm fucked up in the head. I'm bawling uncontrollably because I'm going to be forced to figure out why I am this way.

I don't want to know.

No Easy Options

According to my parents, I have two choices—either enter an in-patient treatment center where I will be monitored 24 hours a day, live with other girls with eating disorders, and be force-fed, or see a team of three specialists three days per week for the next six months, to start. I choose the latter. I figure this way, I can deceive them into believing that I'm eating and getting better. It will be easy to tell them what they want to hear. I've been doing it for years, after all. Hell, my parents had no clue I was abusing myself. How hard would it be to convince a few doctors that I'm on the mend?

Therapy is unnerving and unsettling. I reluctantly discover three things: 1) I am in an abusive relationship, 2) The torturous bullying I endured as an adolescent has etched a permanent scar in my soul, which has led to the destruction of my self-body image, and 3) My parents' tight leash, constant nagging, and 10 p.m. curfews suffocate me, which contributes to the reason why I'm starving myself. My shrink also helped me understand that food is the only thing I can control in my life. I can put it into my body, or I can choose not to. I never realized how powerful I feel every time I abstain from food.

However, I'm not in the right state of mind to follow my therapist's advice. I begin to spend less time at my parents' house and more time with my on-again-off-again boyfriend. One night, he tries to rape me. He is angry when I say "no," and he forces himself on top of me. I struggle, scream for his roommates, and kick him in his tiny nut sack with my once-muscular soccer legs. Although I'm not as strong as I used to be, I somehow manage to find enough strength to save myself from losing my innocence in his hot, musky room. As he rolls off me, he tells me I'm not worth it anyway.

Later he apologizes, and I almost believe him. Logic tells me to run, but my heart is conflicted. Part of me feels like it's my fault that he hurts me because I don't give in to his desire for me. But I'm not ready. He convinces me to stay the night, and like a fool, I listen to him. When I arrive home at 6 a.m., my dad is waiting for me in the living room, and he angrily storms toward me until he is screaming in my face.

"How can Mom and I trust you when you sneak out of the house in the middle of the night? Where were you? Were you drinking? Were you with a boy?"

Why can't you be more like your sister? Answer me!"

I hold back my tears, run down the hallway, and slam my bedroom door shut without saying a word. This is the last thing I need right now. I lean back against my door and slowly slide to the floor. Dad pounds his fists on the door and tells me I'm a disappointment. *What's new?* I press my fingers into my ears, squeeze my eyes shut, and bury my head into my knees. *Why do I let people treat me this way?* My shrink is right. It's because I don't feel worthy of any love or affection. I told her I let people hurt me because I don't know any other way. I sit on the floor, rocking side-to-side, humming Christina Aguilera's "I'm Okay," and realize I've hit rock bottom. I don't want to do this anymore.

I look up to see my reflection in the closet mirror. Jet black mascara lines my cheeks, and red lipstick is smeared all over my face. My ratted hair from a restless night's sleep is carelessly placed in a low ponytail. I am a hot mess. *Why me? How did I get here? When did I start allowing people to treat me like shit?*

Deep down, I know why. I think back to the days when I was bullied in junior high, when my self-esteem first started to plummet. My ex-best friend called me a fat cow in front of *Mrs. Roxbury's Language Arts class during my freshman year. I was 102 pounds. She wasn't the only one who publicly shattered my fragile heart. For three years, a group of boys who hated me told me I was stupid, ugly, and worthless. After a while, I started to believe them. *Braden, the instigator and head of the pack, convinced me that no one cared about me. He encouraged me go home and kill myself, and the rest of the boys eagerly agreed. Every. Damn. Day. I don't know why they hated me so much. Maybe they could smell my fear, like wolves that prey on a weak lamb. Perhaps they could sense my insecurity. I guess I was an easy target.

They were probably right. I do deserve to die. I reach up to grab my pink pillow off my bed, curl into the fetal position, and cry myself to sleep.

It's been three days since my now off-again boyfriend tried to force himself on me. This isn't the first time. We have been dating for almost a year, and this is the third time he has attempted to steal my virtue away from me. He knows I'm insecure and assures me I can't do any better than him, so I might as well forgive him. I know I'm essentially rewarding his bad behavior every time I come back, but I feel trapped in this vicious cycle. I honestly don't know how to get out. *When will I learn?* My bruises are slowly fading to yellow, but I still feel dirty and violated. I wonder if I believe him when he tells me it will never happen again. I've heard that one before. He says he cares about me, but he continues to hurt me. I don't understand.

I feel more out of control than I've ever felt in my life. To cope, I start running more. I'm running from my thoughts, from myself, from my life. Soon, I find myself working out three and a half hours per day. Two hours of cardio and ninety minutes of weight training, seven days a week—a different form of anorexia, although I don't know it yet.

In my bi-weekly sessions with my dietitian, she makes me feel guilty for not eating, but I feel as though I am betraying myself every time I consume a meal, no matter how big or small. I can't help myself from meticulously calculating each macronutrient and planning my subsequent workout following each meal. Three quarters of a cup of Honey Nut Cheerios plus precisely half a cup of non-fat milk equals a five-mile run to expend the calories consumed. No mercy.

Starting Over

I am 24 years old. It has been six years since I was diagnosed with anorexia. I started developing excruciating pain, radiating throughout my entire body, internally and externally. I cry in agony from joint pain every time I have to walk up and down a flight of stairs, and I don't have enough strength to open my own water bottles. My entire insides scream with inflammation. My body needs massage therapy two days per week just to keep the pain at bay, and the days in between are unbearable.

I am sitting in the waiting room after an amazing massage on a hazy, summer day. My massage therapist gracefully walks over to me and carefully places a book by Louise Hay in my hands. Jen has become a dear friend and mentor. I have been seeing her for two years now.

After all I've been through, I struggle with a negative mindset, but Jen has a calming effect on me and is working with me to adopt a positive outlook on life. Jen is beautiful and wise beyond her years. She is one of the only positive influences I have in my life and one of the few people I trust with my true thoughts and feelings.

Her warm, reassuring brown eyes settle onto mine. She urges me to trust the words on the pages. I gaze down at the rainbow-heart-infused title page: *You Can Heal Your Life*. A spark ignites my soul. Hope creeps into my subconscious for the first time after reading the first few pages of the book:

"It is imperative for our own healing that 'we' release the past and forgive everyone. I forgive you for not being the way I wanted you to be. I forgive you, and I set you free. This affirmation sets us free."

I realize I've spent most of my adolescent life hating my body. After 14 years of struggling with my relationship with food and self-worth, I hesitantly welcome the idea of loving myself. Something I have never before thought to do.

I tiptoe into the unknown. I search for my truth. I dig deep into my past, to places I don't want to go. I work diligently on healing my relationships, traumas, fears, and regrets, and practicing positive mantras. The night I move into my new apartment in the small college town of Ellensburg, Washington, I begin to create my own affirmations:

"I love and respect my body. Therefore, I will make a conscious effort to choose healthy foods for my mind, body, and soul."

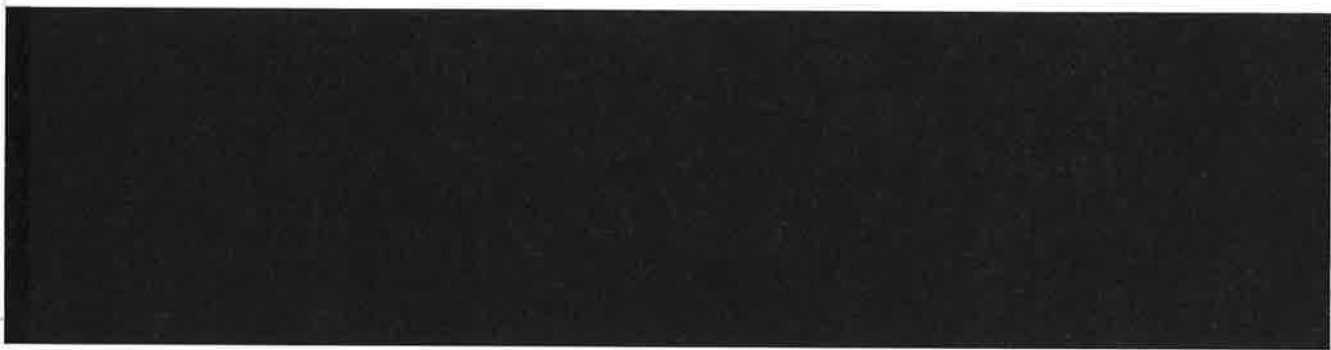
I stare at my reflection in the mirror of my new apartment, and a gasp

hitches in my throat. I am 89 pounds. But this time, it's not on purpose.

My body no longer has the ability to process food correctly, a consequence resulting from years of abuse. Evidently, 14 years of starvation, laxatives, and excessive physical activity has destroyed me. The doctors tell me I have developed Crohn's disease as a result. Ironically, anorexia is a complication to the disease.

I silently vow to figure a way out of the hole I have dug myself into. For the first time in 14 years, I don't want to die.

*Names have been changed for privacy reasons. I do not wish to expose the real names of the people who bullied me. I have forgiven them in my mind, heart, and soul. I am at peace, and they are set free.



Poetry

Column Poem

Where could you be?

Freezing in Colorado,
confined to a single tent,
swaddled in a barrage of
blankets, trying to
survive tomorrow.

How have you been?

Trying to stay satiated
even as slabs of deer meat
torn from a
carcass doesn't seem to be
enough

What do you look like?
Frostbitten and
emaciated, barely able to
rise to confront the vast
blankets of snow laid out
before you.

The wolves' den is a
formidable environment,
you don't own them, they
own you.

Will I see you again?

Sunday night out at Zig-
zag without a care in the
world, but I'll catch you
in that barista apron at
eight.

You've just moved back
from the god awful onion
fields, searching for more
in this life

Remember we would lay
on the porch swing, our
bellies about to explode
from your mom's famous
pulled pork

Do you still care?

Fantasizing about a toasty
sub sandwich and a Bud
Light

Fear defines a man. It
turns him into a wolf or a
sheep.

That long beard look
doesn't flatter me

What are you thinking?

I've gotten lost three to
five times in this forsaken
forest.

I don't know what to do
anymore

I still think about you,
your letters in a
misshapen pile at the foot
of my bed, folded twice,
thrice, even four times
over

Our first date was a crispy
fall afternoon, you gave
me your coat because we
needed to walk around
to find a burger joint you
knew about

I hated the insects that
swarmed the fields back
home. Remember we
would run around inside
them. I had hoped to find
you out there somewhere

I can't, you died three
months ago.



Environmental Incarceration

Waydown

Eddy was burned way out and peeled fresh
off the Furthur bus up way down from country faire.
Eugene. Oregon. Our first encounter.

“Going further?” he brimmed through hip-lifted
eye-lids and leaned out a wing-folded window
to bum a paper from a rando and spare a light.

Now, Eddy off-loaded in an eight-leg shenanigan spill
with a sparkle-pony horn screwed into his dome.

“I got this hat pin, man,” I heard as I slid by, and Eddy
laid a patchwork on the pavement of the parking
lot, slipped a foam tray from a jewelry case and sat.

Now, I’m fresh off a renegade, blissed way out
and walking sideways when Eddy asks me my sign.
“Wait. Saturn in Capricorn. Jupiter.” He snap-
smoothed a crinkle in the rug and smiled at me.

But I don’t say anything. He just says.
And looks at me. But I don’t say anything.

So I side-walk, headspace rolled over,
and sit on a corner of his corduroy
rug and examine a piece of blue fluorite.
Yeah. Blue fluorite. Heady Eddy, lifted steady.
Say you met him at Burn? Small movement.
Big dance floor. Our paths crossed further on
state line Hwy 97, way out back Bend-Town.

Our van was getting dry with no time to peddle flowers.
So we left it in the parking lot, grabbed our empty bags
and a sprig of lupine off the lawn and we furthered west

with Ed, manipulated the soak way out
Terwilliger, where open eyes did not lust
over naked breasts in sulfur-fed springs,
but welcomed us instead.
We headed further on,

dropped microdots on granite pedestals
at Secret Garden. Laid way out between that dilapidated
watermill and the garden wall as it faded into ivy—

shit's way out—a green-tide of tentacles wringing
out the place, where dials do not catch sun,
birds do not fly, and time does not pass further on.

Now, the bus arrives up the way, down Broadview Lane
at a Safeway outside Gresham—up-wrung and ready
to get sprung, turnt on turn-tables and cosmic funk.

He don't even say hi. Not Eddy. Not one for wasting time.
But he does recognize my third-eye pinecone I traded
for a wine-bottle filled with lavender oil and a malachite—
one I scored from a washout near Copper Lake.

“That Lapis. I've seen it before. We heading North?”
For B.C., Heady Eddy. Shambala way side. Heading
for Red-Top, first—out to lift a few garnets. Then further
on down to der Town to rinse off at Scenic on hillside rise.

“What a way,” said Heady Eddy, “I want you to have this, friend,”
and he hands me a cabbage. “Fruit of the Earth,” he said.
“Take it in. Take it in. It will heal you.” Eddy blessed it,
smudged a cork of Paolo Santo.

We bowed our heads and bit deep into the cabbage,
grabbed our empty bags and leapt to out-reached
hands as the bus lumbered further on with thirteen
Heady Eddy's all screaming “Cabbage, Cabbage, Cabbaaaage!”

Fifty Three Hours (In response to Julio Salgado)

Chelsea DuChene

On the night I arrived in America
my cousin whispered to me the story of
an octopus, who had been brooding her eggs
for fifty-three months –
without food, without movement.
If that's not love, she murmured,
I don't know what is.
Three years later,
I sat on the church steps,
listening to the hum of hymns
and the Father's daughter,
who told me of an atheist
that she had met the night before.
How the godless girl's tongue raked between
each knot of her spine like the Devil's serpent.
Not one did she pause for my input,
unable to fathom the possibility that I,
a man of religion
with dark skin and an assumed
limited knowledge of the English language,
could possibly understand.
Still, I swallowed each and every one
of the words that spilled from her mouth
as though they were gulps of Holy Wine.
I think back to the innocence
I had upon first setting foot in this country,

how desperate I was for it to be different,
and yet, when I smiled
at the first sight of two men walking
hand in hand without any harassment,
they clutched each other tightly
and hastened across the street,
spitting the word immigrant
the way your father did gay.
I miss the smell of tangerines in your hair
and how your mouth always tasted
of creamy avocado.
I miss that worn tool shed out in the fields,
whose walls you'd slam me up against,
my spine rasping against the creaking wood.
I still can't figure out if you were hoping
one day the walls would collapse from abuse
or if you were trying to break something in me
you couldn't in yourself.
I can still taste the dust the truck kicked up
as I watched you fade away,
whenever I think of what my father said
to me that day,
another love with come,
and it will be better.
Each year, on the anniversary of the day
I left you behind,

I fast for fifty-three hours,
because if that's not love,
I don't know what is.

Chelsea DuChene

Manastash

61

Max the Monorail Driver Narrates the Post-Apocalyptic American Rehab

Here in Floridaforntia, we keep our dead junkies ^{upstrung},
hung,

like a pair of stolen Nikes, over powerlines,
 their hollow wind chime bones banging,
 bodies like empty,
dirty,

cotton poly blend t-shirts, hanging,
 drying out with the military efficiency
 of an antiquated laundry line wet dream.

All together stitched, their arms make floating
 gardens.

Hibiscus,
abscess,
heroin blossom blooms
 bursting forth from the meat sack soil
 of their silly putty skin.

Look!

At their mangled pallor
 the yuck-sad color
 of every shade of play-dough smashed together
 by your bratty brother
 into a bezoar of up-chuck.

In Floridaforntia, we keep our dead junkies ^{hung} in the alley

Between the *Ronald Reagan*
Yes By God By Holy Fuck We
Finally Won the War on Drugs Memorial statue

And the First International Donald Trump
 Bank and Casino

And in the dirt beneath,
 the organ pirates
 play kidney-cutter keno.
 And Bob the Bone Collector catches
 their caramelized ketamine teeth

As they drop

like spent moths.

their fuzzy, trembling bodies
giving up the ghost in
a last gasp cough.

Kimii Kalamity

Manastash

63

No Pairing Off

Pairing Off
verb phrase

1. A term commonly used in drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities to describe two consumers who engage in emotionally and/or physically intimate behavior that may severely compromise the integrity of their treatment and recovery in the long term (outside of the palliative routine of the institution).

Slang Usage

1. **Rehab Romance:** a romantic or sexual relationship that begins in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility; mocking, incredulous in tone.
2. **13th Step:** a term used by members of the Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous 12-step support groups to describe sexual relationships between members, particularly between newcomers and veterans. A play on the terminology: *"Instead of completing all 12 steps, those crazy ass bitches skipped straight to the 13th!"*
3. **Broken Cookies:** A term used by chemical dependency professionals to refer to a pair of addicts who become intimately involved with one another before they've begun to fully recover.

Synonyms

1. No cop or paramedic would see that dollop of hot, wet crimson on my cheek and know what you had done,
2. divorced from the *palliative routine of the institution*,
3. two months after the relapse, when we were homeless together, booze-addled Bonnie and Clyde, sucking down 40's and snorting Ritalin in that filthy Econo Lodge pit off of North Tryon.
4. "If you put together *two broken cookies*, all you'll end up with are crumbs!" they said, but I was an unbeliever
5. until that day, when touch turned to grab, and grab turned to choke,
6. and the siren screech seemed to burst forth from inside of my (lacerated) skull...
7. We baked chocolate chip muffins for breakfast that morning, the day that you tried to kill me,
8. you slurring curses with one breath and muttering prayers to St. Christopher with the next.
9. A thumbprint of blood on the screen of my cell phone (my blood).
10. The recollections
11. are gouged and scratched
12. the memory
13. skips.

The Penitent

The nutrients in their bodies are a potlatch, a feast, a gift.

- From *The Art of the Possible: Restoration Science on the Elwha River*

The flesh of the Penitent

crumbles

like human sediment

afloat stagnant
on filthy caverned mattress

lifeless raft bobbing in hollows
below Purple Mountain's monastery

unmoved majesty

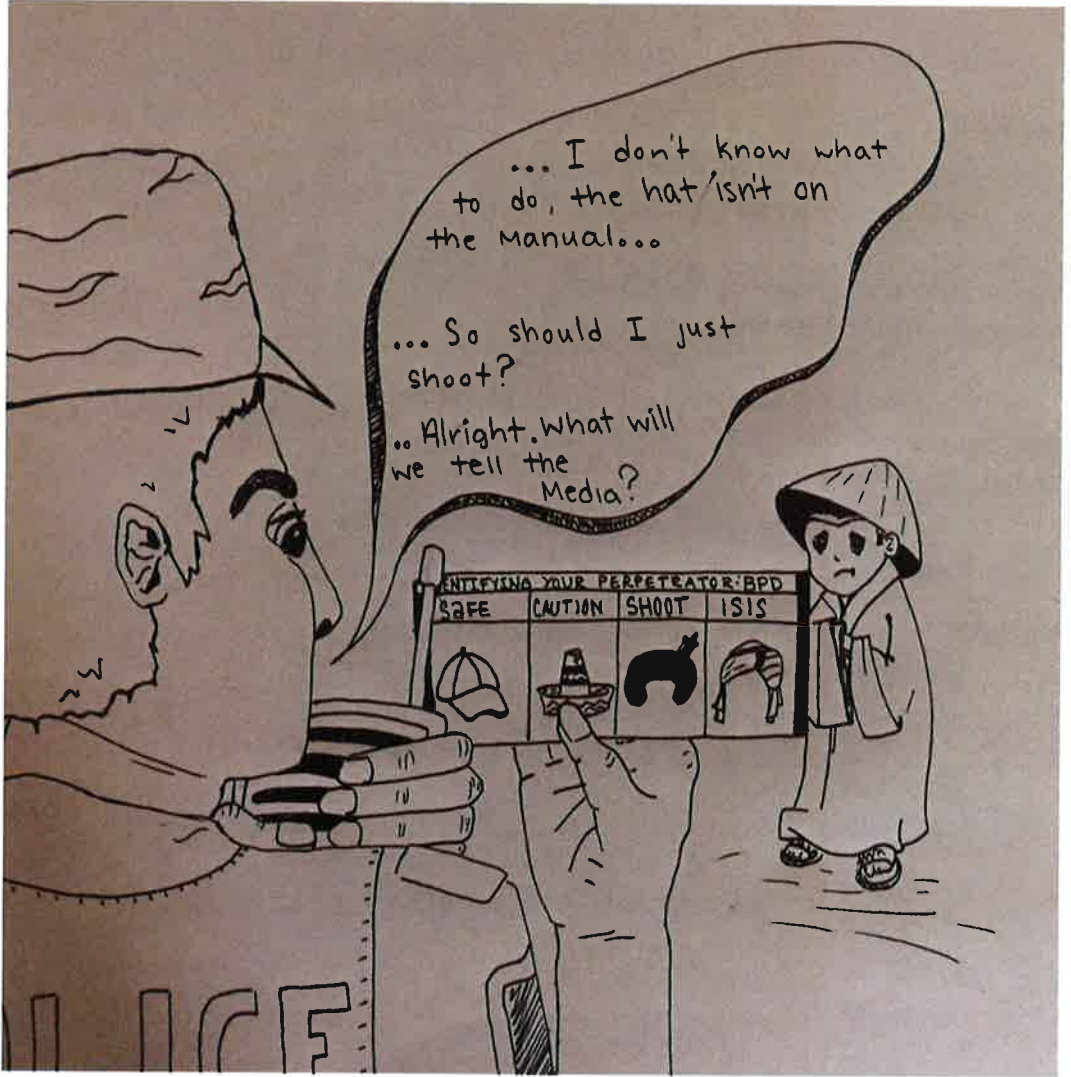
The mouth of the Penitent is

dirt dam dumb

parched cobble-clogged
gaping maw
tongueless cavity

barren writing desk
empty drawer splayed prostrate

begging beneath the Eye of God.



Taking Orders

This is not a stick and a rock

The e
and h
and t
are
in
but e
our h
is t
in
is it
of
is it e
and h
all t
you
in
in my
are
Can
you?
in my
or
in
a
t
o
m
s

left
right
top bottom
palpable entities, **they exist**
colors reflected not-so-**bright**
discernable, bounced into
irises **through** transparent **atmosphere**
thing a thing? Are objects only pictures
head-space scenery? Untenable? **Untouchable?**
a K-C-O-R and a K-C-I-T-S? **brains make** back-flips
lightbeams, are there **reality** translation blunders?
paper and scissors or proto-paper
scissor-smasher? If we turned out
lights, would **I still see** you
potential actual **object** things, floating
perfect **replication** between synapses
brain meat? And what
these **concept words?**
I powder you and snort
Are you the spec
neighbor's eye
the plank
mine? Will your
protons electrons
molecules evoke
smell, sight
taste touch
sound?

A Response to Okpilak Glacier 1907-2007

a supple breast one could grope
a liveliness to aid my coping
deeply grooved lines of white

cocaine
a spice
power in white and brown

there is no gradient to say
this starts to merge
but solid chunks

of living
breathing
a lack of words to describe
a blast of beauty in real time

but moons pass
and I see you weeping

gradients
dripping away

you no longer breathe
no
you sigh into stone
a photo
only

What Starts with

What starts with F and ends with U-C-K?

Firetruck

What starts with P-R-I and ends with C-K?

Prioritizing all the wrong ideals so we can live under a rock

What starts with B-I-T and ends with C-H?

Bits of our cultural mentality shine through when we normalize rape and murder on TV but two consenting adults is too much

What starts with C-U and ends with N-T?

Curry favor with the PTA for strict adherence to the dress code when the constant sexualization of children is what's truly abhorrent

What starts with D-A-M and ends with N?

Damaging gender roles that arbitrarily define masculinity and femininity are glossed over because we're too busy being afraid of condoms in sex education

What starts with S-H and ends with I-T?

Shallow reasoning more concerned with appearances than mental, emotional, and physical health is what leads so many teenage girls to force themselves to vomit

What starts with A and ends with S-S?

American ignorant bliss

FAT

I am fat.
F-A-T, *fucking fat*.

I am size 20,
stretch marks,
chub rub,
body jiggling
fat.

I am not husky or chubby or “just a little bit bigger.”

Thunder claps between my thighs when I run.
Buildings quake beneath my feet when I jump.
My fat rolls down the street like it’s hot shit.
And stairs do, in fact, leave me a little bit winded.

So, yes, I am fat and I don’t need your
patronizing
placating
bullshit
to know that I’m fucking perfect.

Because you know what’s more insulting than being called fat?
Being told that fat is offensive.

Every time someone tells me,
“No! You’re not fat!”
what they’re saying is that they think fat people are
Lazy
Stupid
Ugly
and knowing that is why I’ve hated myself for most of my life.

Knowing that this is how the world thinks of me
is why some days I can’t look at myself in the fucking mirror.

And it’s everywhere.
It’s on TV,
it’s in movies,
it’s rolling off my own mother’s tongue,
and it’s in my head..

Congratulations world!
I got the message.

I am too fat to be loved.
I am too fat to be liked.
I am too fat to be fucked.

And while I appreciate the
condescending,
self serving,
holier-than-thou
“support,”
I eat plenty without being fed your bullshit.

I love who I am and I love what I look like.
I don't just love myself inspite of my weight,
I love myself for it.

I will never settle for a person
that “gets past” my body.

And by all that is good and right
in this fucked-up world,
I hope you never do either.

Because they don't deserve us.

Now, excuse me,
because my fat, jiggling ass
could use another slice of pizza.

Grace Lindsley



Floral Feminist

72 Manastash

Are You There God? It's Me, Haley

A white-pawed kitten bats at a red yarn intestine of Sarah Palin, from which birth control pills fall to the floor with a thud along with a newborn baby screaming.

"I DON'T WANT TO BE HERE!
I WAS GIVEN NO *CHOICE!*"

RuPaul sells his ladybugs for a penny a piece from a cardboard box outside of a nuclear power plant. He flits his rigid tongue at the passing men who say,

"Mermaids only exist because men forced them to breathe under water."

A young girl, locked in her room peels back the yellow wallpaper to reveal a black cement wall and the last trapped girl's etchings which read,

"I crave the rocks in your throat
and hope they make you float
to the tops of my ovaries
where you belong."

The ghost of Sylvia Plath fucks the ghost of Allen Ginsberg in the ass with a flaccid white strap-on dildo.

They burst into black glitter when they cum in unison from which

*I rise with my red hair
and I eat men like air.*

Vile

America you; unfavorable, the roads you pave
 Unjust contradictory teasing blind torture unkind and
 Vile

The buildings; corrupt distinguished appealing immoral confusing

Dark walls dark bars
 Dark chains dark souls
 In a, light, world
 Vile

I have a hollow shell of a family
 Empty house with empty rooms empty closets with empty shoes just
 Vile

Lies

Same shoes same clothes
 Same views same thrones
 In different capacities all
 Vile

I've been told to speak but underwater either
 I open my mouth water rushing filling lungs no escape fruitless struggle I drown
 or
 I stay quiet and die slowly

Lost hope, lost son
 Lost faith, found numb
 Lost in cruelty
 All for vile

Admirable lovely darling everlasting joy awe undying audacious caring
 perseverance devotion hankering
 And none at all vile

Favorite meal crackling outer-shell exposing
 Salmon and ivory insides drenched
 Sauce and butter, succulent and desired
 Worshiped and admired
 The meat

Assorted meats raw and cooked sautéed
Eggs vegetables with undertones
Of kitty litter and slightly abrasive B.O. all of
It covered by an American made vanilla scented candle
The words not enough
Speak louder no softer no more no less
Doesn't matter I don't hear you anyway, kill yourself
My ears are preoccupied swimming in a vast sea of all that is
... vile

Tranell Mayfield

Manastash

75

Black Men Drowning

Look!
 black men drowning in bloody pools of
 Court Charges and Handcuffs
 like rats, they rush from one temporary solution to the next:
 gym towel - toothbrush - gray mush - soap
 choked inside
 Chrome, Clearly-defined Zones,
 Surveillance Cameras are 88 dollar-a-day
 "Homes"
 White Walls
 wipe away the sparkle in their eyes
 a daughter's 3rd birthday and pink tricycle rides
 how a candy-coated
 Christmas
 turned into
 "OH SHIT, Carissa! the Cops!"
 and he's caught:
 a blood clot in the catacombs of "corporation-first"
 America
 Land of the Free, Home of the
 black men drowning



Crime for Color

1942 Jungle Book: Mowgli and Shere Khan

You see
 lips curl
 prophesize
 brew
 betray like the stain of faith a hazy place.

You see
 teeth
 taper barter hone

Digress.

don't question the nature of a smile smile.
 don't burn a stranger drown him. drown
 men don't throw Stones
 they throw
 teeth teeth.
 to hell with Jungle

Law
 come
 down. down.

Come down to hell with Jungle Law.

show me surrender: the birds—
 give me pain
 give me fear wear it on your face
 like a mask.

You once asked me what I was afraid of Mowgli.
 You asked me if
 I was scared.

not of stones Mowgli
 not of man not of metal wood fire ruin
 not of water keratin

bone.

what are you afraid of Mowgli

Smile.
 Smile.
 Smile.

Fresco in Cell
Eastern State Penitentiary

Muzzle rusty
whisker-blood waffled
wafered to wall.
Broody cathedral
muffles
hummed hymns of
Ella Fitzgerald.

Fox full-bodied
time lapse photo on
poxed plaster.
Baroque fresco primes
inky imagination
decayed pigments
share my
oatmeal
howl jazz at
foul nights.

Skylight's eyelid
lifts
forty lashes
vixen blinks
freedom in
ultraviolet riff.

Jaws sing
ringlet of
pebbled teeth
paws in
tempo
my heartbeat a
bracelet.

Back When Santa Were a Boy

he done some real stupid shit like the tattoos
all over his bod like the leaping reindeer
carved over his heart, its forelegs curled to
clear the ribbon banner emblazoned with the
name Cupid rhymes with, yeah, stupid back
then he wore dark denim, that crimson hoody,
black leather boots with cleats on the heels
that rang out like church bells whenever he
strode along the pavement then there's all
them stoplights that changed from green to
red, and him roarin' through 'em on that hot
Harley Fat Boy, shiny chrome aglitterin' in the
moonlight and, yeah, there's that time he
jimmied the padlock off the back door to the
Cedar Tavern him and his pal Frost with
the rusty crowbar and all they got outta the
cash drawer were a coupla rolls o'
nickels--them Jefferson heads all lined up
neat in the wrappers a siren shrillin' into the
silent night the sheriff's badge a silvery star
and, oh, yeah, all them hubcaps, bootleg
DVDs, tape decks, stupid shit I'm tellin' ya
so's he finds himself in Juvy--high windows,
cinder-block walls, concrete floor a
steel-framed bed with stark white sheets and a
pillow cresting like new fallen snow--his
bunk lookin' forlorn as a sleigh stuck at the
North Pole so's he learns to knit, weave
potholders, bake cookies, coax barbed wire
into wreaths, force amaryllis . . . then, once
he's out, he makes him some lists thinks
maybe he oughta stuff some stockin's 'til
they're fuckin' lumpy with coal

Picky Princesses Personal Advertisement

"I can be part of your world"

Courageous red seeks handsome prince,
Open to happily-ever-afters, singing for
All occasions, and unusual hair grooming methods.
Good with dogs, great swimmer. Fin fetish encouraged.
Must not be intimidated by strong father figures,
Or plethora of would-be sisters-in-law.

"Let's run the hidden pine trails of the forest"

Old spirit with a young heart hunts love around next river bend.
Fellow adventurer should be vivacious painter, monumental singer.
In touch with nature, and respect ancient trees.
Preferably blonde, patient with raccoons, godly body,
With biblical name such as John.

"Give me a library and I'll give you my heart"

Bold beauty looks to share something more than average provincial life.
Partner should be open to anger management counseling,
Employ extensive staff, be turned on by intelligence,
And never decorate with antlers.
Seeker willing to look past chest hair, back hair-
All unwanted or excessive hair.

"I'll make a man out of you"

Girl worth fighting for pursues noble warrior.
Applicant must have the strength of a raging fire,
Be mysterious as the dark side of the moon,
And not scared off by occasional cross-dressing.
This female fighter don't want none unless you've defeated the Huns son.

"I am a damsel and I'm in distress. I got this"

Romantic with reluctant heart seeks wonder boy.
Candidate should be accepting of sass, sarcasm,
Shady past, ulterior motives, and mortality.
Preferably with rippling pectorals, a white winged pinto,
Powerful family connections, super strength, and a personalized vase.

And It's So Cold When Your Heart Freezes Over

i drank gasoline
from a two liter bottle
and dropped a lit match
down my throat
i wanted to set
my soul aflame
to burn it to the core
but the fire didn't catch
wasn't even a spark
and the chill
brought me to my knees
turned my finger tips to ice
and any words i had left
they froze on my tongue

Mass Incarceration
A Crown of Sonnets

#1

I'm lovin' it
Art is organized Chaos
Banner crown pink purse
Two women hold orange banner that
Says "Black Lives Matter." There middle
Six black men white clothing who stand
By cement walls.
Black white photo prison with TV
Privileges.
I believe education should broaden.
Woman on right who wears pink
Shirt, skirt, purse.
I believe every human entitled to
Laugh

#2

laugh
black men stare
into the white-washed walls of failure
chrome spells – "high capacity cell" - geometric square
definition: "restore vibrancy to human life" they say
but these are humans: boiling brains of feel and thought
rushing from one temporary solution to the next
waiting – will the sun rise for them? to thrive on awe-inspiring idea we've taught
potential
a word with coattails and a cabinet of fine bourbons.
how to inspire students to make future
that doesn't end in jail sermons
The Picture that I Believe is NOT:
rushing from one temporary solution to the next

#3

Rush from one temporary solution to next
 Expose greenery buildings on posters with blue
 Backgrounds splayed legs slouch sneakers not new
 Sandals on linoleum god-awful orange chairs look down linoleum specks
 Attached to desks older than me covered in text
 Hands hang out bars fluorescent lights try to push through
 Uniform design placement bars fans whose truth is true
 I believe education should allow to flex
 The brain anyone that wants I believe education
 Should prepare people for future and open the gate
 Hands hang out bars fluorescent lights falsified scandals
 White shirts against dark skin 6 men an abdication
 Of humanity Orange orderly rows chairs sitting straight
 Splayed legs slouch sneakers sandals

#4

Splayed legs. Slouched. Sneakers. Sandals.
 Men hang from metal beds. Locked. Guarded.
 Eyes hug the ground. Disregarded.
 Sunday chapel. Wax drip. Burning candles.
 God is dead. Carved. Vandals.
BLACK LIVES MATTER...? Still discarded.
 Crowd behind. Bombarded.
 One more day. Another fucking scandal.
 My name is creased white sneakers.
 Truth is no salvation now.
 Black men. Wear white. Await reapers.
 Lights. Bars. Isolation. Disavowed.
 Black now gray. Growing weaker.
 Black men. Orange jumpsuits. Bowed.

#5

Black men orange jumpsuits bowed
Their life of music and culture is a right
Black men, their shirts of white
Afraid to look at a camera, cowed
Hope of absolution not allowed
Polished concrete floors refracting light
Into faces of men seeking respite
We fail to give them this education endowed
I saw them every day, it was my job to teach
And these are the ones I failed to reach
Chairs for lefty and righty packed in tight rows
Slender skylight shows a future not far
Orange black white bright windows
Closed jail cells hands through bars

#6

Closed jail cells, hands through bars.
Mistakes are made, dreams shatter.
A repeated phrase, "Black Lives Matter".
The land of freedom with its stripes and stars
And yet here we are burning scars.
Broken bones, broken dreams, a broken body clatter,
Streaming tears and blood shed splatter.
That time is over, life is ours.
Locked away, so much skin
Dark complexion their only sin.
Malcolm and Martin called for liberation.
Why are we so absurd?
Our brothers and sisters, afraid of retaliation
We all love the written word.

#7

We all love the written word
 even if it's from our jail cells
 because education is how we excel.
 If we are caged like exotic birds
 then it doesn't matter if afterwards
 our bodies are expelled
 from the Earth into Hell
 despite what we have learned.
 We are flesh waiting for instruction.
 We are cloth held by a child.
 So let us take
 the prescription of our destruction
 because even in a world so vile
 entitlement is fake.

#8

Entitlement is fake
 careful warm-hearted intelligent
 people banner
 Hello my name Yan I believe in true love
 Enqi
 Hello my name Yan
 I believe men are born equal
 We should have equal opportunities
 black men wear the same
 I believe mother should be optimistic out-going nice frank
 careful warm-hearted intelligent
 I see a crowd of people
 unfamiliar friendly
 confused excited

#9
Confused, excited.
We drift through steel bars, down shiny floors that never end.
My friend, I have nothing more to pretend.
Education should be righted,
not oppressive fluorescent lighted.
I used to believe in education. I used to say it should bend,
stretch, not enclose, trap, hinder, or rend.
Education, I said, should be respected. But no, now, smited.
We all seemed happy: a smiling crowd—
We went from office, to hotel, to kitchen.
Now, I believe only in the unknown—bowed.
But guess what? Even this is not allowed.
So now I sing: seeing things not as they are, but as they were when I saw them;
Employ more mothers, not fewer than.

#10
Employ more mothers not fewer than
can keep these fatherless sons out of state-funded cages,
from shirked orange shirts, inhaling post-traumatic rage
behind concrete blocks stacked against blue-sky mornings.
Inside, his brain matter is splattered on acid-wash floors.
Outside, voices march for loose change in audible waves—
White to black to black-white-gray
limbs scattered on concrete walls and revolving doors.
A bootless skinhead beat this boy's black daddy dead
in a bathroom stall. His last breath choked alone,
gasping his son's name through the bloody knife.
All this before closed eyes and back-turned heads
in black threads paid in fist-pack quarter rolls.
Black lives matter not only to black lives.

#11

Black live matter not only to black lives
 My mother Forced & Guilty but necessary
 Believe every human entitled missionary
 Freedom thought without survives
 Judgment in this day age arrives
 Small orange sign states sing to her canary
 "Black people matter" there woman you carry
 I, the child hold the sign he cries
 Woman red hat
 My small khaki shorts where I sat
 Fly again to one hope you're mine happiness
 Black tip the company that made
 Caring stern she should show liveliness
 Freedom thought without concave

#12

Freedom Thought without
 Warm, their pencils stir, but I was to late to save
 Momma cries for me, seeking god in the nave
 In the pews they sit, mourners to numerous to count
 Chips on their shoulders, a grief none should tout
 I lay in a cold street the founding fathers pave
 God faith and Humanity just stow away in a cave
 My mama cries need and want, her words a shout
 Humanity should outweigh the color
 My name joins the nameless, I'm now called victim
 Warm, their pencils stir, writing the speeches
 They say my life was lack luster
 My mama's tears dry bitter, a new symptom
 Life lived without fear of media leaches

#13

Life Lived without Fear
Hopeful partner. A small beacon. Unscrutinized Gem.
Cornerstone. Architect. Shield from Mayhem.
Unended Supply of much needed peanut butter.
Red Hatted woman with red bag. Hold her.
Wait. Words. Pointed Fingers Stem.
From hand of change. Hide them.
Joy. Flutter.
Movement. A Lifestyle. Disarm.
Hands reaching out for something more.
Sentences should more than an old piece paper causing harm.
Fingers stretching for anything more.
The hell she wants to be. Alarm.
I believe a mother should be whatever.

#14

i believe mother should be whatever
nurture love anger honesty
empty space pushes out humanity
many pins pierce laughter
i hope the roof holds this shelter
kindness and joy sparks creativity
but not where there is no amnesty
every life has to matter
six black men on white stone walls
random bottled cage
flowers out of focus
where time moves slow and innocence falls
where young men come of age
help helpless

#15

help helpless
 young black men know they are screwed
 Lives Black Matter brute
 force orange banner white-hot hands necklace
 of echoes echoes echoes inattention smirks jerks toward chaos
 sadness without bicycles grief without fruit
 hands reach into hell no space for crude
 symphonies black boards moan ballads not white heedless
 fugues arms thorn in mourning tired floors shrink from bloodless feet
 education should should should should scald
 popcorn balls of resignation young black men know they are left
 behind lullaby of twisted air inattention rocks raw boys to sleep
 wake as wasting men hollow hands reach into hell lewd burlesque
 of justice striptease of kings fingernails shudder poetry bugs crawl.

#16

Poetry Bugs Crawl
 over a caution cone banner, scream-in-orange of **BLACK LIVES MATTER**.
 Foreground: red-stressed Momma's tears **SPLASH** vicious into the spatter
 of dead baby boy's puddle-blood, a dirge poem hysteric in crimson scrawl.
 Background: black male faces congeal into human prison cellblock wall,
 their scream-in-orange uniforms squeezing their flesh into invisible dark matter.
 And their extremities, in tatters, flop forth from a nightmare of Escherian shatter.
 But what do I believe? That their stolen enlightenment holds them in thrall?
 And do I believe that my small words will twist their abyss into a foster?
HELLO. MY NAME IS WHITE GIRL POET IMPOSTER.
 This is a Crown of Sonnets about black mass incarceration,
 written by a poetry class with no black students among them.
 I wonder what the Penitent believes when he imagines education?
 Syllabus? Jack-booted thug? Stomp on my brain stem?

#17

Syllabus jack-booted thug stomps on my brain-stem
Look—white walls
Watch students escape, and crawl
Hear Tick Tock CONDEMN
Olivia, its mayhem
People should be treated equal
Boys Men lethal
DIRTY cement walls repent
White cloth; scattered spots of blood
Cold bars cage
Be able to move through mud
Uniform of orange men on stage
Colored men fall with a thud
Repeat history and go back a page

#18

Repeat history and go back a page
Turn the clock--tick, tock, tick, tock
Roll your eyes and roar with rage
Find the key, or break the lock
Sardines are packed in, tail to head
Metal scrapes along concrete,
Night holds terrors, despair and dread
Flail at bars--dodge fists that beat
Heads hang low, shoulders sag
Remember Mama, sugar, milk
Remember jazz and blues and rag
Remember peaches, spring and silk
I hold a memory to keep me sane
Pinto pony--ribbons braid her mane.

#19

Pinto pony ribbons braid her mane

Living in poverty

As waste property

Cardboard speech speaks shame as two white men

Drain soaking silk from Liberty bell's veins

Or so be it shiny floors reflect empty-

ness fills hands holding hands through bars slightly

We wrote the book with their blood stained

Mother's face slips from her black face as blue men

Shoot shiny guns at two black skinned men

In the ambulance, mother with son looks across a bay

CNN reporters on scene reads television prompter skit

Ambulance speeds drives under billboard read "Have it Your Way"

Cut to commercial the monthly special rings "I'm Lovin' it"

"Mass Incarceration: A Crown of Sonnets" is a collaborative project by:

- #1 Sarah Wicorek
- #2 Timothy Mitchell
- #3 Grace Rathjen
- #4 Grace Lindsley
- #5 Shaylynn Gould
- #6 Cassey Mullin
- #7 Emily Bongat
- #8 Yan Zhao
- #9 April Radke
- #10 Donson Curtiss
- #11 Travis Higdon
- #12 Kory Hollingsworth
- #13 DJ Haskin
- #14 Tyler White
- #15 Kathy Stancik
- #16 Kimberly Glenn
- #17 Daisy Perez
- #18 Joanna Thomas
- #19 Tyko O'Donnell

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RYAN BAILEY graduated from Washington State University with BAs in photography and communication. He graduates this June with a MA in literature with an emphasis in creative writing. His main focus is prose that deals with environmental and societal issues mostly through science fiction, horror, and fantasy.

EMILY BONGAT is flying a kite.

STUART CODD is currently in his junior year at Central. He is majoring in professional and creative writing, and his goal is to become a published novelist.

LAUREN COOPER is a senior, dedicated NPR listener, and Anne Boleyn enthusiast. Come June, she plans on combining psychology and human resources to take over the west side.

DONSON CURTISS is gone fishing.

CHELSEA DUCHENE, mother of cats and fictional pirate, is a much-encumbered Ellensburg hippie who tries to fit in writing between binge watching Netflix and kitty cuddles.

MEGAN EPPERSON is grounded.

CASEY FRIEDMAN is a writing specialization major and has been writing for as long as she can remember. She is originally from Olympia, but currently lives in Maricopa, Arizona.

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SHAYLYNN GOULD is a junior in the music department. She is majoring in choral music education and minoring in creative writing. She aspires to be a music history professor. Aside from music and writing, her major interests are horseback riding, swimming, and the pursuit of a relationship with God.

DJ HASKIN is a graduating senior in the Professional and Creative Writing Program, and is trading in his life as a happy-go-lucky English major to become an undercover poet in corporate America.

TRAVIS HIGDON is swimming the English Channel.

KORY HOLLINGSWORTH is on a hot date.

EMILY JAMES is tearing up the slopes.

KIMII KALAMITY is a post-apocalyptic/dystopian confessional poet, a Pokemon trainer, and a Hello Kitty aficionado. A refugee from the Southeast, Kimii is overjoyed to no longer be living in a state that writes legislation about public bathroom use.

GRACE LINDSLEY is a graduate of Central's professional and creative writing program. She is just beginning her career as an editor and graphic designer. Grace frequents poetry slams, comicons, and Indian restaurants.

HALEY LINDSLEY is a surrealist, wine/dinosaur/cat loving, lesbian poet hailing from the Yakima Valley. She aspires to be an elementary school teacher and teach her students the importance of being inclusive to all people...and also that poetry is legit and doesn't "suck."

EMILY MANCINELLI feels that making art is the only time she can be completely free to be whoever, say whatever and feel however she wants without being judged. Wild be she, the wolf.

JENNIFER MARSH is a junior in the creative and professional writing program. She loves good writing, spinach smoothies, coffee in yellow mugs, and adding books to her reading list.

TRANELL MAYFIELD is baking a souffle.

TIM MITCHELL is a senior professional & creative writing major and News Central radio host on 88.1 The 'Burg.

CASSEY MULLIN is riding her hoverboard.

TYKO O'DONNELL is a senior in the professional and creative writing program at Central. Tyko's name is sometimes auto-corrected to "typo." Tyko intends to pursue a master's degree abroad so he can travel the world writing down things he hears on the metro.

ANN-GWEN ORLEMAN is at Central to discover if an English degree is more fun than commercial fishing in Alaska. Debate still rages between the sea and dragons on the page.

JESSICA PADDOCK is on an eternal quest to see how weird her stories can get before someone tells her to stop. She spends her days thinking about dragons.

ROBYN PAUL grew up in Eastern Washington and became interested in the art of photography when she started attending Central. She is a studio arts major and plans to continue photography after she graduates in the fall.

DAISY PEREZ has completed her writing specialization major and is now working on her second major, public relations.

MISSY PITS slept in late.

SARAH QUARTARARO is a geeky book junkie with ambitions of finding a career in writing or becoming a crazy cat lady.

APRIL RADKE is a senior professional and creative writing major and religious studies minor from Oak Harbor. She loves dogs, spiders, and sci-fi. After graduation, she will pursue writing and copyediting.

GRACE RATHJEN is daydreaming

LEXI RENFRO is hiking Manastash Ridge.

KATHLEEN STANCIK freelanced for newspapers and magazines, but two years ago, discovered poetry as the love of her writing life. She also enjoys music and acting.

JOANNA THOMAS is a writer and visual artist living in Dogtown, an Ellensburg neighborhood on the wrong side of the tracks. She received a BA in Humanities from Central in 2008 and has been hanging around as a post-baccalaureate ever since.

KAITLIN VOELLER spends her free time writing, singing, and recording music. After surviving an eating disorder, she decided to finish her degree. She hopes to bring hope and healing to others through writing.

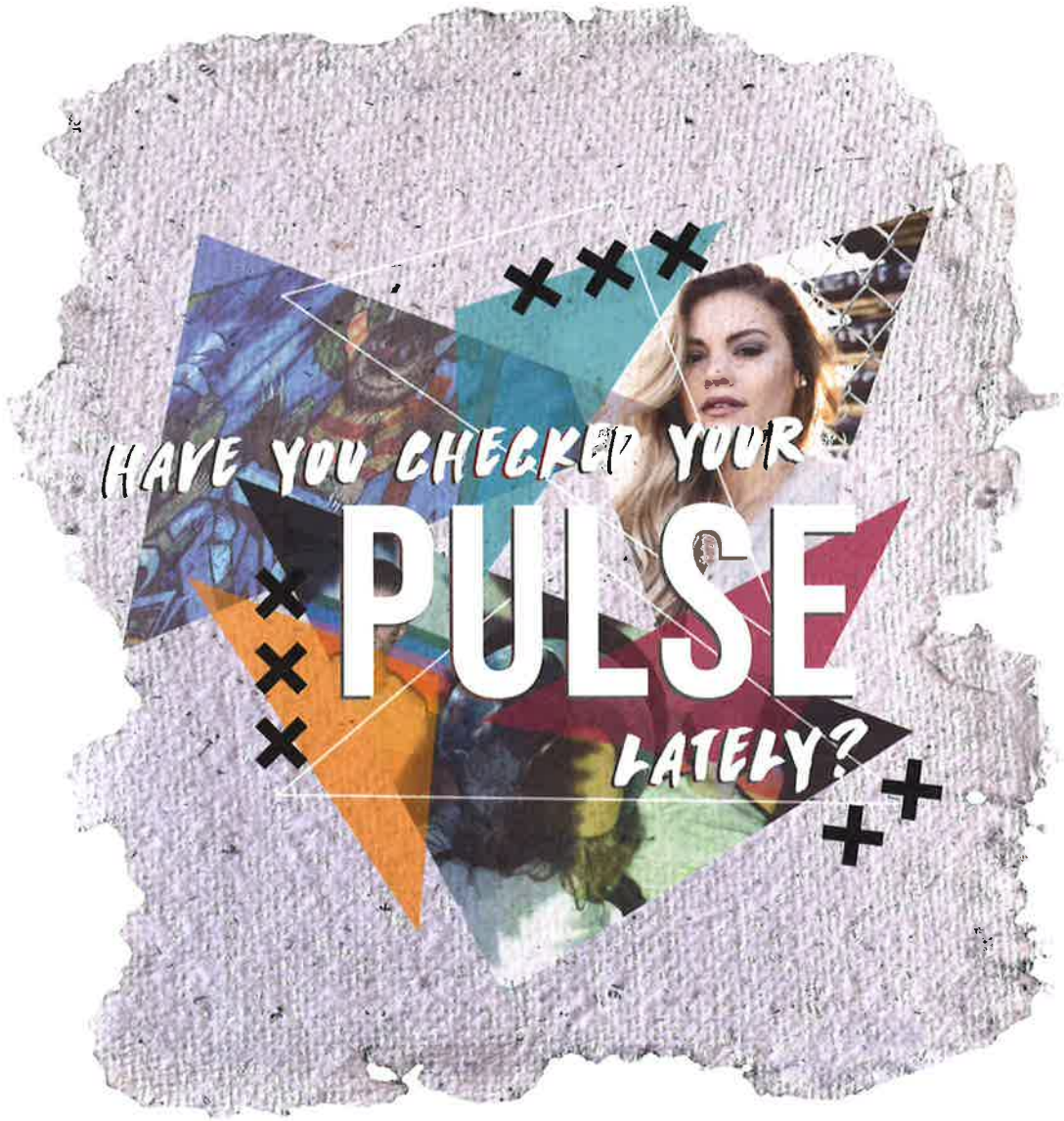
TYLER WHITE is imaginary.

SARAH WICOREK is a dyslexic who can't spell worth a darn and whose greatest pet peeve is grammar. She is currently working on a creative writing degree.

AMY WILSON's favorite thing about writing is making both herself and her readers laugh along with her stories. Her dream job would be writing a humor column for a newspaper or magazine.

R. YORK is a junior at Central and a part of the English language arts teaching major. She plans to teach English as a foreign language overseas following graduation.

YAN ZHAO came fifteen minutes late with Starbucks.



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