Welcome to the Quiver. We are happy to have you with us. If you have not already done so, please stow away your carry-on luggage, fasten your seat belt, and make sure your folding tray is in its full upright position. At this time, we request that all mobile phones and pagers be turned off for the full duration of the literary trip, as technology is known to interfere with artistic experiences. We would like to remind you that this is a nonsmoking trip. We ask that you identify the nearest exits in case of an emergency, and we hope you have a pleasant ride.

The Quiver is a literary and artistic journal organized by students and faculty members of the St. Sebastian's School. We accept many types of submissions, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, scripts, and all styles of visual art. Though the publication is lead by members of the St. Sebastian's community, entry is open to all high school students who wish to be featured. This year, we received submissions from across the country, including students from Massachusetts, Oregon, Michigan, Louisiana, and South Carolina. The Quiver is expanding each year, and we look forward to even more interest from out-of-school students as well, as St. Sebastian's students, in the future. We appreciate your time and interest, and we hope that you enjoy the work of all the writers and artists that contributed to this year's issue.

Sincerely,

Joe Kerwin
Edgar Escobar
# THE QUIVER

2015 Issue  
A St. Sebastian’s School Publication

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**Cover by Christian Locurto**  
**Back Cover by Casey Kelly**
Something Better
Andrew Elcock

I sit on my porch with a beer and stare at the man on the beach. He roots around in the sand and long grass with his hands. His eyes are too far away to see, but I imagine them wild. His coat is torn and his skin is wrinkled and brown from the sun. I would have offered him a sieve, but I know he would refuse it.

For a moment I feel a flash of anger. The man will never find what he’s looking for. It’s not here. I want to tell him to leave but I am too tired to move. I cannot remember the last night I slept for more than three hours.

Besides, I know what it is to search for something no sieve can help find. When I was younger, we had lived next to a fen and once I found a man sleeping in the mud. He was tall, nearly seven feet, and had a beard. Around his neck was a red scarf and beside him lay an empty bottle of whiskey. I had poked him and then skittered away like a bad radio signal.

I had watched the man wake from a safe distance. He didn’t do it all at once, like most people do. It started in his legs and moved up his body in waves. After he had fully woken, I asked the man in the fen what he was doing there. He said he was searching and looked at me hard. When he spoke, dirt fell from his beard. I asked what he was searching for, but he just looked at me with confusion in his eyes. Then he smiled and his teeth flashed through the tangles of his beard. They were rotted to a sickly brown. He told me to leave him in peace and I had complied without a second thought. When I got home, my mom was on the bottle, so I waited until the next morning to tell her. She went to look for the man as soon as I told her, but he was gone. My mom had bought a shotgun the next day. I spent months searching for him in the fens. I felt sad for running away and wanted to know what he wanted to find. I never told my mom what I was doing, though she asked.

Months later I found a red scarf hanging on a branch near a pool of water, the type where you think it’s only ankle deep but when you step in you sink up to your neck. It wasn’t his, I know it wasn’t. But I kept it anyway.

I still have the shotgun. It hangs above the mantle beside an M40 sniper rifle, both as old and worn out as its owner. I think of Chekhov and wonder if I will have to use it soon. I smile at my joke.
A surprise: smiles don’t come easy any longer.

I take a sip of my beer. It has been years since I last saw a fen. Perhaps I will see one again, in another life. It has been too long, but there’s too many bad memories I’d rather leave behind. Sometimes I think I moved to the sea so the salt will help me forget the smell of a fen. It’s an earthy smell. It never left my hair, I think, not fifty years later. The water turned red when the sun set, and I used to think it was the blood of the earth. When I was ten I had cut my finger and dipped it in the water to get some fen water inside of me. That sort of thing doesn’t leave easy. It sticks down deep, with the scars of years gone.

I drop my beer. An accident of a failing body with shaking hands.

I yell a curse at the sky. The man on the beach looks up at me. I wave him over and he trots toward me. As he nears I can see more of him. His hands are weathered and wrinkled. On one finger is a ring. His eyes are calm and his face is cleanshaven. When he arrives, I say, “Wait.” He doesn’t respond. I stand up, my legs trembling. My cane leans against the wall but I ignore it. I return to the porch a minute later with an army jacket and red scarf.

Behind the man the sea roars like a helicopter. I have a sudden urge to flee but I push it down. I toss the jacket to the man and he lets it hit him and fall to the ground. I still hold the scarf.

“For you,” I say.

He frowns.

“Yours is ripped.”

He doesn’t say anything. Instead, he picks up the jacket and hands it back to me. I take it from him.

“What are you looking for?” I pray that he doesn’t look confused at the question. Another surprise. God is a stranger these days.

“My wife.” His eyes make it clear he is not joking. I let out a sigh of relief. He smiles and walks away.

“What happened to her?” I don’t know why I care. I have never cared before. Maybe I’m bored, or maybe thinking of the fens made me ask.

He turns, but cannot meet my eyes. His voice is sad as he says, “Sometimes the ocean takes what you love out of jealousy. It can’t bear being replaced.”

As I watch him disappear over the dunes I think how much the same can be said for fens. At last, I realize that I am still holding the scarf.
Out of School Award Winner

My Body Is
Daniela Muhleisen - Senior at Walled Lake Northern
White Lake, Michigan

my body is light
raindrops are sticky seeds
scraped off mountain tops
and bent like crystals
my body is glowing
---
surface tension on a lake
my body is a lake
my lungs are rocky terrains
or canyons ten thousand half lives old
and these canyons can hold you under
these canyons can make you taste
the powder in rain
these canyons are ten thousand half lives old
but they can’t feel erosion

my body is painted red
it does not glow in the dark
it does not enjoy discomfort
it enjoys fluffy bubble baths
it tried to eat a candle once
it is painted red like radishes
yes earthlings my body is
the color of root vegetables my body is
a big lake-canyon-vegetable isn’t that rad
---
if my body evaporated
there would be seeds

if my body cried down from the mountains
there would be hail like bony fists
there would be angels doing jumping jacks at the speed of light
if my body is light it must be the speed of light
it must be old
so old maybe older than the milky way
---
my body is so fast I can feel it
St. Sebastian’s Writing
The day was Saturday. The day sun was bright as it cast golden rays over the forest, creating moving shadows on the ground as the leaves danced in the wind. The sky was a brilliant blue with barely a cloud to be seen. Jared was whistling as he walked from his cabin on the wood’s edge to the heart of the labyrinth. He prided himself on knowing every twist and turn, every tree, every shrub, every small detail of the place. He remembered where he had laid his traps, hoping that they had managed to catch him his dinner. But to his dismay, as he walked from one to the next, he found each empty, without a trace of an animal even coming near it. Deciding, however, that he still wanted to dine on the succulent juices of a rabbit, or perhaps a bird, he began to walk back to his cabin to retrieve his shotgun. As he walked along the winding path, Jared couldn’t help but feel a constant gaze upon him, following him. When he was almost halfway back, he thought he heard a slight cough and turned around immediately, hoping to catch the culprit. But as he looked around nothing out of the ordinary presented itself to him. Shaking it off he turned around trying to convince himself that his nerves were just getting to him. As he reached his humble abode, he was relieved more than he would have expected. With more speed than usual he snatched up and loaded his gun, preparing himself to go back into the wild.

As soon as he stepped out of the door the feeling of constant surveillance was back and he couldn’t help but think that it might be safer to stay inside, but knowing that he couldn’t live his life in constant fear, walked onwards. He soon came to a pool of water where he suspected to find some poor creatures attempting to quench their thirst. As he cast a glance around he saw two deer drinking the water. He hated to slay such beautiful creatures, but fearing for his own safety decided that the best course of action would be to kill one of them, as it could be a long time before he found anything else. He carefully took aim at the magnificent head, and shot. At the noise the other deer bounded off into the thicket of trees hoping to escape the fate that had befallen its comrade.

Jared walked over to the deer and tied it up as blood gushed from the wound. He slung the body over his right shoulder and started to walk slowly towards his home. As he walked through the darkening woods he once again thought he heard a slight noise. He whipped around, trying to catch the perpetrator off guard, but as he turned the deer slipped to the forest floor. Jared jumped three feet off the ground from surprise, but then realized that he had simply stepped on a twig and dropped the deer.

Jared was terrified out of his wits; he had never felt so much fear in the woods he had once thought of as his sanctuary and home. He couldn’t explain the fear, it was just manifesting in his consciousness, as if he had a sixth sense that was trying to warn him.
of a danger preeminently. His eyes darted back and forth rapidly, trying to find a clue that would prove he was not, in fact, going insane.

He screamed out to the forest, “Who are you? What do you want with me?” but like a typical, environment the trees did not respond. He grabbed the deer and started dragging it back to his cabin as fast as he could, but tripped over a root in the process. He swore angrily, cursing the root that had appeared to rise out of the ground in the moment he wasn't looking. He got up off of the ground and brushed the dirt from his jacket, stomping on the root as he did so. Grabbing the deer once more he started to make his way back once again, but couldn't even keep his mind focused on such a slight task anymore. He tried to walk forward, but every time he did he would see a gigantic shadow looming in front of him, and imagine some sort of foul monster come to kill him.

Jared lay on the ground with his hands over his head whimpering, hoping that the torture would soon come to an end. He lay there for hours, attempting to recollect his thoughts, and tell himself that it was all a dream. By that time night had fallen and darkness shrouded the forest. All that he could hear were crickets chirping and owls hooting. He felt a wet sensation on the side of his head, as if he were being stroked with a warm washcloth. He looked up timidly, and saw a deer. The deer was acting quite nonchalant as it licked his head inexplicably. Slowly Jared reached up and started to pet the deer, and soon started to scratch it behind the ear. Standing up he brought up his other hand to scratch behind its other ear, but when he touched the face, he screamed.

The deer looked at him as if puzzled, and meandered away looking for something else to do with its time. Jared brought his fingers up to his eyes though, and saw blood. He had stuck his fingers into a hole in the side of the deer's head. He had just pet a dead animal, that had miraculously come back to life to lick Jared's head.

“Oh my god, Oh my god, Oh my god, Oh my god, Oh my god, Oh my god…It, it, it was, it was dead, I saw it, it was lying down, it was there, it was bleeding out, what the heck is going on here, WHAT THE Heck IS GOING ON HERE?”

Jared was unable to contain himself any longer, he started to talk to himself, trying to make sense of this dead creature come back to life. “Maybe, maybe it went through the cheek, yeah, yeah, yeah that could have worked, and ya know, the thing just fainted from fear. I mean, who wouldn’t if they got shot in the cheek? Heh, I mean, it was really loud. Or maybe it was a different dear that had uh, I dunno, cut itself on a branch, and uh, some bear or something dragged mine away, yeah, that’s it.”

He was panting heavily, the adrenaline was rushing through his veins as his head was swimming with theories of how he was woken up by a dead animal licking him. Jared turned around in circles, looking around, trying to take in everything and find out how a dead deer had come back to the land of the living.

He started to repeat to himself his old theories in an attempt to stay sane, “Okay, okay, it went through the cheek, or, or, or it was a different dear. I mean, I saw another dear earlier, right? Right? Well, there have got to be dozens of them in this forest alone, and I mean, I guess I was asleep and a bear, I mean a, a bear could have dragged it off to some cave or, or something. Ha, ha, ha, what am I talking about? Of course that happened. I mean, it’s not like deer can magically come back to life. That’s, that’s crazy talk, for superstitious fools. I, I know more than them. They think a volcano erupting is the earth popping one of its zits.”

He managed to talk himself back to sanity, but it was a forced thing, he was forcing himself to believe his own ridiculous theories, even though he knew that he was lying to himself. He knew that there would be blood on the ground if the deer was dragged off by a predator, and he knew that his aim had been true, and had gone straight through the poor animals brain. Suddenly, he had a thought, maybe he was being watched, and someone else was intentionally trying to destroy the last shred of sanity he had left. Someone had taken away the deer while he slept, and had taken a knife to another deer. He suddenly felt nothing but glee. He wasn't insane. He was perfectly fine. It wasn’t him. It was some malicious monster that wanted to hurt an innocent man.

“Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha, so you thought you had me, huh? Well I’m too good for you! you thought you could break me down, but I’m up, I knew I wasn’t crazy! It’s you! Your the one that’s insane, trying to hurt a poor man that never did nothing to hurt no one. So what you got say for yourself? Think you’re better than me? Well, I caught you, so why don’t you show yourself? No use in hiding any more, just come out here and tell me why you did it, okay?”

Jared had yelled it throughout the woods, but no one answered. He waited, and waited, but all he could hear was a slight echo of his rant. The silence was disconcerting, after all Jared had figured it out, right? Hadn’t it been some jerk playing a trick on him? So why didn’t he come out of the shadows?

“I’m not afraid of you, no matter what you think, so just come out from those shadows now and no one will need to get hurt,” Jared said, hesitantly. Suddenly, Jared saw movement from the shadows as a pair of arms started to come towards him. But strangely, the arms were bent as if broken, or boneless. He heard an immense thump coming from behind him, and turned around suddenly, but things seemed to be the exact same, so he turned back around. As soon as he turned around he heard the noise again, but this time a little louder. Turning again, he could tell something was different, but he couldn’t put his finger on it. He turned back around, but instantly turned 180 degrees once more to catch the noise in the act, but nothing happened, so looking back at the arms he tried to get a closer look, but suddenly, he was grabbed from
behind!
“Let go of me, you freakin’ psychopath!” Jared screamed. “Get off me or else, or else I’ll shoot ya!”
But he was being choked from behind with a branch. When Jared turned his head backwards though, no one was there—no one that is except for the tree that had not been behind him moments ago. The terror of being attacked by a tree almost caused him to pass out, but he managed to stay awake, after all, why not die knowing it’s happening. Soon the tree wrapped his entire body with branches and vines, so that Jared was entirely incapable of moving. Despite the cold night air he was sweating over his entire body, utterly terrified, because why would a tree attack him? What could he possibly have that it wants? He looked for help from the man holding out his arms, but as the tree that held him tight slowly pushed him forward, he realized that the arms were actually branches of yet another tree. He looked into the the center of the giant tree in front of him, which was amazingly opening its own center, to reveal multiple skeletons, all of which had a gun with them. Realizing his mistake Jared attempted to plead with the tree, begging forgiveness, trying to say he would give up the gun, but to no avail. Slowly, but surely, he was inserted into the tree, and was able to see the moon, as the trunk closed up around him, cutting off all vision of the heavens.

Target Practice
Cam Aldrich

One string,
One chance,
Two arms,
Two senses,
Three fingers,
Three fletchings,
And release.
The rain was heavy that night; the drops pounded against the windowpanes as he rested in bed with his apartment and windows locked. The solitude of the dark usually helped to ease his mind, but the flashing red and blue lights outside didn't help. Fidgeting his hands and flicking his toes, he smiled, staring intently at a photo resting on his side-table of a beautiful young woman. Staring at the image from under the lamplight, tears formed in his eyes and slid down his cheeks. As his smile started to waver, he whispered, “Dear God, what have I done...?” “Come on, we’re gonna be late!” Jennifer moaned, her long, lush locks well washed and curled. Her large brown eyes were worried and flustered by what stood in front of her: a half-dressed, half-awake slob with bedhead so wild a twister would think it was already hit. She and Richard had planned an outing that day which would take them all about the city. However, the two of them had promised a long time ago to tell each other everything, and recently, Richard had broken that rule on a number of occasions, all of which involved sneaking off to the bar to inebriate himself.

That night the city was alive; the sea of flashing colored lights burned in the night. The steady beat of techno-music, along with the buzzing chatter of the crowd, drowned out Jennifer and Richard’s thoughts as they waded through the crowded streets of the Jersey Shore. Stumbling over themselves as they moved, each held a red Solo cup in both of their hands. Eventually, Jennifer ended up meeting with an old college friend. As she and her old colleague caught up, Jennifer ended up ignoring Richard who, after gulping two shots of tequila, unintelligibly tried to hit on another attractive young blonde. However, after a speedy rejection followed by a sharp smack across the face, Richard, with his senses almost completely numbed and confidence pretty much shot, waited for his girlfriend to return. When he saw her on the dance floor with her school friend, Richard grabbed her by the arm and forcibly dragged her out of the club and back to their car and headed toward their apartment. Confused and infuriated by Richard’s sudden outburst, Jennifer shouted at him, pleading with him and trying to explain her behavior.

Richard’s head was pounding, partially due to Jennifer’s bickering. As he was speeding down the road, he saw the colorful shapes of the night blend together in a vibrant swirl of light. Richard tried to ignore Jennifer’s yelling, while a cold, sickly feeling overcame him. Sucking in deep breaths of air to keep himself awake, he tried to focus on the road ahead of him, when suddenly, a blinding white light and blaring horn awoke Richard from his daze, but only for a moment until his head dropped to the steering wheel.

The next thing Richard heard was the wail of sirens drawing near as he winced while opening his eyes. “What the hell happened?” he thought. He scanned his totaled vehicle, and gazed over to the passenger’s seat only to find Jenny slumped forward, her head resting in the deflated airbag. That cold, sickly feeling returned at the sight of her crushed skull, and he jumped out of the vehicle, staggering to keep his balance. As the sirens’ grew louder, Richard turned back toward his girlfriend and his car. His eyes widened as he falls to his knees. It had started to rain, and Richard was violently shaking his head from side to side. Then, without any idea of where he was, Richard stumbled to his feet and limped home blindly through the night.
The Deep

Owen Finnegan

My world is narrow and dry
What is life if it is not worth living?

Stare into the wide ocean
Feel the salt sting your skin
Slip away from all emotion!
Wash away your fears! Your sin!

They said to me
Look into the foam long enough, and it will spell truth
But I found much more

Imagine leviathans as I stood in the shallows
And I had become large, filled to the brim with multitudes
For they shared the same water as I
The same soul, I was more than one

I need not wrestle with water
I need not fear the deep
To be sanitized by salt! Baptized by brine!
The underwater shrine
Exists only as long as my breath doesn’t

And yes, my body can exist without
Likewise, can’t lighting strike without rain?
It needs both to be a storm
I need both to be whole

Waves & Cigarettes

Edgar Escobar

Her lips fell on the white line, her lungs inhaled, and she breathed out the grey cloud of toxins. Her green eyes – or perhaps they were blue, scanned the sand and the foam covered water.

“I’m homeschooled, you know?”

“Well, that explains a lot.”

“Wow,” she squinted her eyes, then threw her head back and laughed, “Thanks.”

The wind pushed her hair to and fro, resting for brief seconds at equilibrium, at the midpoint of her back. She continued to scan the beach, noticing the rain falling onto the water. She listened to the plops caused by the clash of raindrops and tree leaves above her. The beach was quiet, and for once in days, no words escaped her mouth. She had no name – at least, to me she owned no identity. I had not asked if she had one.

My arrival to the camp was by chance, perhaps by miracle. The fact that I would concentrate my entire time on one person was also by chance. The fact that that one person, having avoided moving to California just a few weeks prior, arrived to the camp at all was another segment of chance’s lengthy chain. For some time, our meeting that week of camp seemed to be freedom from any chains, but as we would soon discover, the circumstances of our friendship would fetter us, thousands of miles apart.

I had not planned to attend the summer camp, but after being offered free admittance by a few friends, I decided to spend the July 4th week at the camp in New Hampshire. I had been avoiding this camp for over four years. I avoided succumbing to the payment of hundreds of dollars to join, and, most importantly, I evaded the hours of sing-alongs. I had not evaded the singing this year. I soon found my early-summer-tanned body slouching on the van. The van was bringing a group of others and me from Boston to Plymouth, New Hampshire.

New Hampshire was, in its seriously limited beauty, littered with trees. However, the state was a miraculous sight compared to the hideousness that had been brewing within me the weeks before. The school year forced me to write, and I was blessed to be forced because once I
had begun to write anything remotely creative, my mind encountered infinite energy and an exhumed passion. Summer began and my energy and passion were replaced with anxiety and frustration. I could not write anything that kept my attention longer than a minute or two. The anxiety, not out of not being able to write, of not knowing what I was doing was wasting my time writing during that summer was ripping me apart from the inside. In a less dramatic interpretation, writing had, for once, become associated with boredom during that summer.

Now, she—she came along during some casual soccer. The camp leaders had succeeded in leaving a bag of soccer balls and footballs right where we had been dropped off. When the sun set and the moon rose, boredom decomposed. So, I followed suit with the others in running away from boredom and ran towards the bag and grabbed a soccer ball. I called over boy from Boston to pass the freshly stitched ball around, but soon enough he stopped. I was hit from behind—metaphorically of course—by the fact that the boy had been jumped on by a shrieking girl. Her long brown hair, as she jumped onto his back, swung over and covered his face. Awkward.

The boy was blinded and the girl, in her fit of excitement, clearly missed that I was even there… so the moment became prime time to escape and find some other Boston kids. So, I did. That night the camp gave its introductions in an assembly that nearly exploded my brain into many pink, bouncy shrapnel. The assembly frustrated me simply because of the never ending amount of sing-alongs. I could not even recall walking to my room that night to sleep, so I assume I had passed out during the singing, rushed back home, and that I had dreamt the remainder of my time at the camp. I did indeed dream something that night.

She was in my house. We were playing hide and seek. “Behind the couch, that’s where she’ll be” I whispered to myself. These blue—no, perhaps green eyes were peering at me over the couch. She giggled and threw herself over the couch. She then seemed to be asking me a question. Nothing but some fuzzy static reached my ears. I tried to ask her what she was saying but there was a lump in my throat. Not even air could fall out of my mouth. I wondered if my restraint was some form of infatuation. “Edgar, when I leave, are you going to come visit me?”

“What’s your name?” she asked the following day at the lunch table. Everyone at the table that day would not stop laughing, but I kept zoning out, thinking about my dream. I don’t believe I laughed even one time at lunch. ‘Serious Edgar’ she kept calling me that week. “Who is this girl?” I’d keep thinking. Last time I had been at the camp was over four years ago and I could still remember so many faces, but I could not recall this girl. She was tall for a girl, slightly above my height, and the tallest girl at the camp. She had long brown hair… she commented that her hair color was like the color of dirt. Rarely did she have her hair down, always tying the ‘dirt’ into a lengthy ponytail. When she’d tie her hair into pigtails, however, she’d instantly turn into the Wendy’s girl, with freckles and all. When she smiled, her cheeks were full and prominent, and when she’d laugh hard enough, she’d gasp two times, attempting to bring air back into her strained lungs. She’d make plenty of crude but hilarious jokes that even had I, ‘Serious Edgar,’ cracking a smile.

Oh, smiling in front of her was a mistake. At our table were six boys including myself and two girls. The other girl sat at one end while she, who at this point I could describe in minute detail but could not put a name to her, sat at the other end. With all the boys around her, she stopped in the middle of one of her jokes, looked over at me, saw me smiling, and practically yelled, “Oh! You have a nice smile for a serious guy.” Not even air could fall out of my mouth. I didn’t even feel the lump in my throat this time; there was nothing in me but astonishment. She was fearless, she’d speak without hesitation, but as a result, her words and the truth were in sync. I could, because of some mysterious understanding, trust in all she told me. For some reason, this tall girl gripped me, gripped my thoughts, and gripped my dreams. It was not attraction, I would tell myself, but a sheer fascination.

Three days after seeing her jump on top of that kid from Boston, I had finally taken action to satisfy my fascination. I was determined to bring a dream into reality; I was determined to ask the most vital question a man in this situation could ask.

After lunch, I went up to another boy from Boston and whispered into his left ear, “Hey… What’s the name of that girl?”

“Uhh… I think her name’s ______. She’s from Florida, you know?”

I hadn’t heard the name. The boy had already run off before I
could ask again. And so, she was nameless. She had no identity. Perhaps, she would become a generic girl, a lost thought, representing the 'girl of my dreams.' She would not become anyone in particular, just a stranger who would possess many traits she may not have actually had at all, because time has control over not just what will be but what was.

I unwrapped the War Head candy from its plastic pouch and, as my tongue salivated and tingled, I threw the little ball into my mouth. I scanned the girl as she pulled out a cigarette. I thought of all the days I had just seen her, and I still knew nothing of her. In my dream I had an overwhelming feeling that I had known the young lady so well as if we were merely reflections in a mirror. She too was scanning. She was scanning the beach and the water crashing further in land and slowly receding back. We were afraid.

We were strangers. We did not really know each other. We were afraid of crashing into familiarity like a great wave, reaching an apex, but hopelessly receding back into unfamiliarity. Would our friendship be like a cigarette? Would we inhale, enjoy, but embark on a toxic addiction? Would the story between us be a dream and nothing more? Would our story only be metaphor and comparisons, waves and cigarettes? Who—what in the world were we? What was our purpose? What was this overbearing necessity to ask question after question? What was the necessity of our bodies to be consumed in anxiety and frustration? Could our problems not be simpler? Couldn’t she live close by? Anything?

“Edgar, when I leave back to Florida, will you come visit me?”

“Yes,” I murmured, not really thinking, not really believing. I had told plenty of people before who had asked similar questions before that I would, but this time I was actually considering the idea. But, why... why had I felt like our conversation went instead like:

“Edgar, do you love me?”

“Yes.”

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The Old Puppy
Sam Gordon

When I was young, happiness obscured the truth smoke in my face, distracting and lying

Pup was young, his eyes green as moss
I loved Pup's eyes, convexing the noise

He sat in the back, me in front
My parents didn't like him much

He grew old, my parents wary
His liked to bite
the things I liked to hate

We ran away
Into the woods
Away from the
things he would bite

We dug out a hole
and lived in it

I always loved
that old puppy
August 1, 1700 2:30 pm

A pleasant cool breeze blew into the sails, keeping the boat moving at a fair pace of five knots. The captain assigned me to the worst possible job: washing duty. There is nothing that I detest more than washing duty, and having to bend over on my hands and knees and wash the pools of blood off the deck from yesterday's encounter. Yesterday we took some casualties when we crossed paths with a merchant ship. Before we were able to board them they got off a broadside, damaging our hull and killing a few mates of mine, including Kenny. He and I were taking cover behind the railing when, out of nowhere, a cannon ball came splintering through the wood, ripping his head off. I still have some of his blood stained on my favorite white shirt. Despite the losses, we were rewarded with a substantial amount of treasure. After I slaughtered the treasure guard with a punch of my sword through his gut, I was the first to enter into the lower deck and grab a glimpse of the loot for myself. Boy, was it a sight! There were pearls and enough silver dollars for us all to buy copious amounts of rum. Anyway, the sun gently warmed the back of my neck as I kneeled on the deck and scrubbed at that damn spot of blood. I wish I got John's assignment. He was fishing over the bow, talking to the guys who were patching the sails that got ripped in the confrontation. It was hysterical when the Captain saw that Anthony had fallen asleep while patching up the sails. The Captain sped over and slammed the hilt of his sword against the poor guy's head. But, when the Captain saw that Anthony had fallen asleep while patching up the sails. The Captain sped over and slammed the hilt of his sword against the poor guy's head. But, what can I say, the old geezer had it coming. He can barely even stay awake now for five hours. I already made a bet with the cook that he dies in the next month. But, anyways there is a rumor of a mutiny about to happen. What can I say, the old geezer had it coming. He can barely even stay awake now for five hours.

August 2, 1700 3:30 pm

We walked up onto the deck today and were greeted by Johnson, swaying in the wind with his head tilted sideways. A crow was perched on his shoulder picking and scraping the flesh off of Johnson's skull. As I walked past the man, the crow took its beak and wedged it in Johnson's eye socket. After a temporary struggle, the crow popped the eyeball loose and flew away with its meal. It leads me to think about how quickly a man's luck can change out here. One moment you are about to seize control of a ship and become a captain, the next you are swinging from a rope. Today we were given our rotten breakfast before we started the day. A stale biscuit and a measly amount of rum to wash it down. However, the Captain indulged himself on a feast of eggs and ham. Today the Captain assigned me to navigation duty. As I went to the Captain's quarters, I overheard him saying to the first mate that we were chasing a Spanish treasure galleon. Pretending that I had not heard anything, I nonchalantly knocked on the door and asked for the coordinates. Having received them, I went back to the wheel. That's pretty much how the whole day went. Crappy meals and getting coordinates from a nasty captain.

August 3, 1700 12:00 pm

Today dark clouds loom on the horizon, the waves are starting to increase in size, and the wind whips at the sails, pulling us along at a fast pace of ten knots. We can all tell that there is going to be a relentless storm within the next day. Everyone is running around in a panic trying to patch up all the holes that were left unattended, as well as tying all the cargo down in the bottom of the ship. Howard and I are hastily patching up some relatively small holes at the bow of the ship by taking extra pieces of wood and nailing them in over the holes with our hammers. Once this is all done, we return up deck and do another six hours of grueling preparation. Finally, the bell rings, tells us it is time for dinner, and we lumber below deck to grab our hearty meal of meat: a tradition before every approaching storm. After we have dined on the tough, overcooked meat, everyone goes to their quarters to get some sleep before the storm hits. I lie swaying, on my back, full of anticipation of the storm to come.

August 4, 1700 2:30 am

The violent ringing of the bell abruptly rouses us from a deep sleep. I hastily grab my boots and shove them onto my feet, and run with the others out onto the
deck. You can hear the wind whistling through the air as the rigging flails about wildly. Immediately I am ordered with a few other unfortunate souls to go up and tie down the sails. Quickly, we climb up into the dark sky with the rain stinging like little pellets slamming into our backs. Once we reach the sail, we pull it up and begin to tie it down, but, out of the corner of my eye, illuminated by a flash of lightning, I see Howard slip and plummet to his death. Finally we manage to tie the sail down and slowly make our way back onto the deck. There I see Howard’s body, a mangled heap of arms and legs, being thrown over the side of the boat by two other crewmates. For six more hours we work tirelessly, tying down rigging and other loose items as the waves surge and crash onto the deck, making us slip and fall as we run about and leaving us drenched to the bone. After hours of that miserable work, the rain stops, the waves calm down, and the sun bursts forth from those dark unforgiving clouds, blessing the ship with its merciful glow. Tired, I lie down on the deck and let the sun dry my miserable, exhausted body.

August 5, 1700 8:30 am

Today I was assigned to watch duty, and the Captain told me to keep an eye out for any sails on the horizon. It was around noon when I caught a glimpse of a sail on the horizon and I shouted down to the Captain that I had seen a sail. All he did was call the whole crew to their stations and told us to go full sail after it, for he and I knew what it was. We quickly gained on the ship and I was told to go below deck and man my cannon. A nervous tension ran through all of us; we knew that any second now we could be dead. As the two ships drew abreast, the sound of cannon fire ripped through the air, bursting our eardrums. Soon it was my turn to fire, I lit the cannon, and it shot a cannon ball straight into the hull of the other ship. However, the cannon across from me fired at the same time, blasting through our hull and straight through my gunner’s chest. As another ball ripped through the hull, splinters shot into me, sending unfathomable pain up through my body. It soon became evident to me that we were fighting a desperate battle. As I looked about, everyone next to me was dead. I ran to the top of the deck and jumped over. Once in the water, I found Anthony’s body and used it as a raft to help me swim away. Too bad I cannot collect the money owed me because the cook is dead. Killed by a knife straight through the heart.

Hardly Awake
Sam Gordon

She told me one Sunday
that I would be great

“just try,” she would say

I tried, with really no choice
so that I would be great

“you’ll be great,” she would voice

She helped, assisted
but never asked if I
was happy.

Hardly. But success
that’s what she wanted.

Now I lie here in a ditch
away from that
hardly awake.
Cost of Survival
Blake Hailler

There's two ways outta here, prison or a coffin. Either way, I'm bound to be locked up in a box. I don't sell cuz it's cool, I don't do it cuz my dad did it, and his dad before me, I don't sell cuz everyone else does, and I sure as hell don't sell cuz I want to.

My mom's sick. She's all I got, and I'll be damned if I let her die because I couldn't get together enough money to cover the bills. What would you do for the woman you love? I'd do just about anything.

Where I live there's two ways to make money fast, and they're both illegal. You can either take it, or you can sell rocks. I chose to sell because, well, look around. There isn't much money to steal, and what little money people do actually have, they give to me in exchange for a few minutes of freedom.

"You got something for me?" A voice behind me asks. Without looking I extend my right hand. The voice is familiar, Jerry is a regular customer, his addiction alone might save my mom. In one swift motion two rocks go into his hand, and forty bucks into mine. He walks away and I wait for my next customer. By 3 A.M. a classmate, the cashier at the 7-eleven, two homeless guys, an ex-cop, and a pregnant lady all come by my corner, most of them more than once. I make my way home with a pocket full of money. I'm just that much closer.

I enter the apartment my mother and I share. It's small, only three rooms, but it's better than nothing. My room is closest to the door. It used to be my mom's room, but after a couple guys robbed an apartment on the floor below us, I told her to switch rooms with me. If anyone wants to mess with apartment 318, they gotta go through me first. I reach under my bed and pull out my sneaker box. I put my day's earnings in the box.

"Where'd you get all that?" A frail woman's voice behind me says.
"Don't worry about it Momma. Go to sleep, you need the rest." I quickly slip the box under my bed, but I'm relieved to hear her voice. I can't imagine my life without it.

"Young man, I've been around this Earth long enough to know what a seventeen-year-old coming home early in the morning with a pocket full of tens and twenties means. I might not have much time left, and Lord help me if my final days are spent in a courtroom or worse, the visitation room in a prison, knowing my son followed his father's footsteps."

"Yeah, well, it's paying the bills so you'll get used to it." I walk up to her and hug her, "Night, Momma. I'm not gonna let that liver take you from me. I don't care what I gotta do. I love you." I close the door and turn off the lights.

"You know this isn't good for the baby, right?"
"Boy, I know what it does, but I need it, like you need money." The pregnant lady handed me my money, and reluctantly I gave her the bag.
"I mean, at least give it a shot, the baby." My last attempt to stop her was fruitless.

"I'll see you later." She smiles and walks away. It's times like these that make me hate what I'm doing. I'm preying on people who can't help themselves, they can't control their problem. And that means a payday for me.

"Hey kid." The raspy voice belongs to Jerry. "I need some more." He's doing this thing with his hands where he brings them to his mouth, blows in them, then rubs them together close to his face. Like he's fighting for survival in a January snowstorm in Alaska. It's the middle of summer in Florida, what the hell is he cold for?

"I gotcha." Like clockwork, the drugs and money are exchanged and Jerry walks away. I'm done for the night, I'll have to re-up tomorrow. My six-block walk back to the apartment complex normally isn't much. I keep my head down and walk fast. After a night with fiends, all you want to do is be in your own home, quiet and solitary. I got to get up early tomorrow morning; my mother has a doctor's appointment to see if the cancer is spreading. I've been saving up for this scan, hopefully we can get some good news and the doc can tell us he can take it out.

The walk to the bus stop is a tense one. In just a few hours I'll be told whether all of this has been worth it. If there's even a chance that I can save my mother. We don't say much, she just keeps saying, "no matter what news we get you, know I love you." We get on the bus and take two seats by the window. The bus doesn't get more than three blocks before I see the lights and the crowd of people. The yellow police tape is cutting off all access to the building. The Coroner's office van is parked front and center.

"What happened here?" It's not rare to see a scene like this, but it is odd that there is a crowd, and that the crime scene appears to be inside the building. Most of the time when someone gets killed, it's out in the open on the streets, and for that matter, during the night. My mom is shaking her head.

"These gangs are killing all the youth out here. When are these kids going to realize a gun gets you nowhere?" She's doing this thing where she thinks out loud, like everyone is dying to hear what's in her head.

"Oh, you didn't hear?" A stone faced man sitting across from us says, "This wasn't gang violence. This was an overdose. I'm a police officer. We got the call a little while ago. Real shame, her neighbor went to check on her because I guess she was pregnant. Found her unresponsive with half a rock of crack on the floor." I'm going to pretend I didn't just hear that.
“I’m sure they’re looking through the place right now. We’ll catch whoever sold it to her. If the baby dies too, that’s double homicide, and the killing of child in Florida requires an automatic death penalty. This will go to the top of our list.”

Death penalty? Murder? Okay, that I can’t ignore. I should’ve never sold her anything. So many thoughts run through my mind as we pull up to the hospital. Should I just turn myself in now? I can’t, that would destroy my mother. I just got to play it off cool for a little. Take a week off. Let things settle down. I can tell you one thing, a hospital is the exact last place I want to be right now.

We check in at the cancer treatment wing and quickly my mother is whisked away from me and taken to the back. “It’ll probably be around two hours,” the nurse told me with a jubilant smile. Stop smiling.

“How, mom I’ll meet you back at the main lobby at 10?”

“Sounds good, I love you.”

I walk to the only place I can think of. August’s place, he’ll know what to do. He made the stuff. He’s more of the killer than I am. It’s only a ten-minute walk from the hospital to his apartment. I run up the steps, and knock. No, punch, his door until it opens.

“We’re screwed” I blurt out before he can offer up the proper greetings.

“Get in here and don’t say another word.” He pulls me into the apartment and throws me on the couch. “Shut up. Just shut up. Whatever you’re going to say, don’t. Just keep things quiet and it will all blow over.”

“Well, she died…” I have a feeling he doesn’t understand that gravity of the situation.

“That’s perfect! That means this stuff works! That means we’re selling the potent stuff, the good stuff. Do you know how many more people are gonna come to you now that they know you have the best stuff?”

“She was pregnant.” I look at the ground, tears welling in my eyes.

August puts his hands to his face. “Okay… now that’s a problem. The cops will be buzzing for a while. When’s your mom’s scan?”

“Right now.”

“If it goes well, when’s the surgery?” August is pacing back and fourth in front of the TV.

“I’m sure they’ll want to operate as soon as possible. My guess is if it’s operable, they’ll go in within the week.” I sprint out of the hospital with my mother in tow. I’m relieved that there’s a chance, but now the scramble for money starts.

“Mom that’s amazing! We should get home. You’ve had a long day.” I almost faint out of the hospital with my mother in tow. I’m relieved that there’s a chance, but now the scramble for money starts.

“Good news! Your mom’s cancer is localized just to her liver right now and hasn’t spread anywhere. We’ll want to operate as soon as possible to remove the tumor.” This damn nurse just keeps on smiling.

“Mom that’s amazing! We should get home. You’ve had a long day.” I almost sprint out of the hospital with my mother in tow. I’m relieved that there’s a chance, but now the scramble for money starts.

“So you’re telling me she has a chance?”

“August is at the stove, but he isn’t making food.

“Yes, she has a chance. They want to operate as soon as possible, they said. She’s going in tomorrow for a consultation. She only needs a partial removal.”

“My eyes are glued to the shockingly beautiful reporter reporting from that pregnant woman’s house. “Man, I’d turn myself in if it means she gets to interview me.” I’m joking…kinda.

“Oh, Tonya? Surprisingly good reporter. She gets to the bottom of things. I’m so happy they’re starting to give her the major stories now. She’ll ask the tough questions, let me tell you that.”

“This, ladies and gentlemen, is my crack supplier. The man’s wearing an apron and baking gloves while he takes crack rocks from a microwave.

“Uh, yeah I guess. I don’t really watch the news.”

“Maybe it’s time to change the channel.”

“How do you keep up with what’s going on in our community?”

“I don’t. I just cause the problems.” I change the channel to ESPN.

“Doesn’t have to be that way.” August can talk in this condescending voice like he’s some angel, when last time I looked, he was the one making the lethal crack.

“Where are we gonna sell this stuff anyways? I can’t go back to my corner. The cops will have that place boxed up all night.”

“You tell your customers, I’ll get a few more, and they can come here. We’ll just move the operation here full time. But after your mom’s squared away, I’m outta this. And you should be too.” The microwave beeps again and he takes out some more coveted product, but he’s serious about this being his last time. He’s right, it should be mine too. “Now go out there and tell your people about the location change.” I walk out the door.

“We’ve been at it for three days non-stop. How much money we go?”

August’s voice is sleep deprived and slow. His eyes are drooping, and his mouth is constantly open. I can’t possibly look much better.

“Uhh, lemme get a quick count,” I say, counting the pile of money on the
table. “Today we took in a total of five thousand dollars. That brings me to forty-two thousand in all. That should be enough!” My aching body suddenly receives a shot of adrenaline. I did it. Close to two years of drug dealing, sleepless nights, violence, even deaths, is all over.

“I told you, man. We could do this. Go home to your mom. She has a big day coming up. Take the money home with you. Give her a hug for me.” Tears are building in his eyes, probably out of happiness that he gets to sleep.

“Thank you, August. You’re my brother forever, I love you. Anything you want you got from me.”

“Just go home. Tell me when the operation is, I’ll come over and wish her good luck.” I leave the apartment in a daze. This is all over now, I can finally live again. My mother can live.

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“Mom, wake up. It’s time. We got to get you to the hospital soon. They want you there at six-thirty.” I turn on the lights and open the blinds like my mother used to do for me when she would beg me to go to school. My mother gets dressed, and we walk down the three flights, over the stairs, slowly but surely.

“I’ll tell you, I have never been so happy but scared at the same time. I just want you to know that even though this surgery will help greatly, it’s not a sure fire bet that I’ll beat this thing. It could still take me.” Talk about a deflating statement.

“Positive thoughts, Momma.” That’s all I can think to say.

“And I love ya, you know that. Forever and always.” She grabs my arm and squeezes it tightly. She’s wheezing heavier than usual going down the stairs. We walk outside to the sound of sirens and the sight of flashing red and blue lights. My heart is in my stomach.

“They got me,” I think to myself.

“What’s all this for?” My mother asks.

“I dunno, Momma. Let’s just keep walking.” I look into the back of the first squad car, empty. The second, it’s also empty. We walk by the third and my world shatters. Sitting there, looking out with big eyes and his hands behind his back is none other than August. I run up to the nearest officer and ask him why my best friend is seated in the back of a police car.

“A neighbor complained of a gaseous smell coming from his residence, we went in and found drug paraphernalia. Arrested him a little while ago walking up the steps to this apartment complex.” It’s the same police officer that my mother and I met on the bus just a week back. “He confessed to selling the crack to that pregnant mother a week ago. Says it was all him.”

“Can I say goodbye? Please officer?” He shrugs.

“I don’t see why not.” He opens the door of the squad car.

“You alright?” It’s the only thing I could think to ask that isn’t directly in-
The Quiver

36

THE QUIVER

37

Home
Sam Gordon

The
greetings
thicker than warm air
Dogs jumping in a furious tangle
Creaky door, cream walls, fire carpeted halls
Food eaten always, communion of love
Screens spark to life; laughing together
More than the five of us; numbers don’t
Define us, but we work, we break,
Brothers we play Crash at night
and repeat. The one reason for
us to stay: warm love. Home we
do stay. Snow melt fire start. We stay

The Dark Court
Kevin Boland

“Hello? Anyone there? Where am I? Please help me!” yells Joseph. He has just woken up and is startled by the handcuffs ensnaring his hands to the chair.

Lights go on. “Hello, Joseph, welcome to the Dark Court!” says a man sitting what looks like miles above. Joseph can hardly see the man because of an engulfing light, only able to make out an immense book on his lap. All around Joseph sit many patient, unconscious beings, forming a silent crowd.

“What do you want from me? What are all these people here for?” cries Joseph. “Why am I handcuffed to my chair?”

“My Joseph, oh Joseph. Do not worry. The cuffs are only temporary, unless you would like them to be permanent,” laughs the man from above.

“What do you mean, ‘Unless I would like’…” The man interrupts, “Ah Joseph, let me ask the questions from here on. What type of questions, you ask? Well, life questions, of course.”

Joseph looks up once more, immediately covering his eyes because of the brilliant light. “Okay, I can answer some questions,” agrees Joseph. The old man begins to descend.

“How do you know about my divorce?” asks Joseph, now irritated.

“How do you know all of this? Have you been stalking me?” yells Joseph.

The old man, now only a couple feet above Joseph, asks, “What do you believe your purpose on earth is?”

Joseph, extremely aggrivated, says, “I don’t know, old man! You seem to be the one with all the answers, what do you think?”

Ignoring Joseph’s comment, the old man asks again, “Joseph, what do you believe your purpose on earth is?”

Moving wildly in his chair, Joseph screams, “I have no purpose! Why would I? No one does anymore!” Joseph finally sees the man clearly as he lowers his face to his own. Looking him straight in the eyes, Joseph screams, “God damn you, old man!
Take me out of these handcuffs!"
   The man takes a deep breath and says, “If you want to be freed, then bow your head and apologize for what you have done.”
   Joseph, full of rage, growls, “Go to hell, old man!”
   The old man pulls out a golden gun, aims at Joseph’s head, and says, “No, Joseph. You go to hell,” before firing straight through the center of his head.
   The old man ascends, and makes an “X” in his big book. “Next!”

The Face of Time
Tyler Wijk

If just a moment more did pass,
Time enough to make time last,
This memory might not fade so fast
In haze that clouds the distant thought.
For life that does not live the past
Does look not there for memory sought.

I guess, in truth, that is to say:
What is no more, no more can stay,
Regardless how in each own way
We kill ourselves to bring it back.
The moment leaves and leaves dismay;
That moment then do our lives lack.

For time does all but cease to be,
Just moving like the constant sea.
We hold it still for quick reprieve,
And in that moment it seems too slow.
The mind can then have time to see
That face we ever hope to know.

If this is true, then what’s the chance
In lost past dreams to make our stance,
To freeze forever one lasting glance.
But suppose that’s mind’s power over all:
No matter time past happenstance,
To mind, that image of youth we call.
Business Adventure with Bonaventure

Cathy Kelly

John Bonaventure built the flourishing economy of this city, but left it to crumble on its shoddy foundation a short while later. Bonaventure acted as a man like no other. He had a unique sense of swagger that was rivaled by no man, and a certain pizzazz that dazzled and enticed anyone into investing their hard-earned money into his schemes. Believed by many to be a hot-shot entrepreneur, he played the part with his checkered suits and brand-new 1927 Mercedes Benz SSKL. Before him, this city was little more than a lonely fishing town on an island just off the coast.

Bonaventure was not a native to our quaint city, but a man who appeared from the darkness bearing light. Many questioned his arrival at first, until his charm and promise of fortune captivated the minds of our simple fishermen. Bonaventure assured us that with his help, we would be able to become the financially elite. Many were hesitant, but he won us over by cautioning that his business ideas that promised fortune could be brought elsewhere. Thus the gullible civilians, myself included, created a seemingly unconditional trust with a stranger.

Once the trust was gained, Bonaventure’s schemes were put into action. He had a plan that seemed foolproof to all of the unsuspecting fishermen. Every man, woman, and child was oblivious to his deception, and all of us had faith in him. He was able to convince us that our city was special, assuring us our city had an overwhelming amount of gold shortly off the coast. Bonaventure explained that due to the path of currents, all of the gold drifting in the sea is dragged toward this island. As a result of none of us having ever seen any gold on the island, we were doubtful at first. Our greed produced questions as to how we could extract the fortunes from the supposedly sparkling shores, but Bonaventure persisted in telling us not to prospect. Then, he explained our options to us. He said, “We have two ways of approaching this fortune. First, we can mine it, but if we mine it our previous businesses will be neglected. Those who abandon their companies would be leaving no safety because not everyone will strike it rich. As a community we could all benefit if we spread word of the gold to family and friends. The people who have been unfairly punished by this depression deserve a chance to dig up a fortune, and you can give these people that golden opportunity. How would this benefit us? We would receive an abundance of support for our businesses, since the droves of prospectors will need places to eat and sleep. We are the backbone of this town, and we deserve to become the financially elite!”

His plan was foolproof. We all thought everyone involved would benefit from this blessing. As a result, all the citizens invited friends and family foreign to the city, promising a chance to strike it rich. A new era had begun; our sorry city had now become the hub of financial promise in an economically depressed country. The flocks of people provided an unbelievable amount of business for all the companies native to the city. Bonaventure sold the permits and plots for mining. Denying them from mining until every plot was sold and every permit was pulled, the prospectors urged more people to come. The city was flourishing; it was an economic oasis in a desert of depression.

About a month after the initial rush, the last plot was sold, and thus Bonaventure had become an incredibly rich man. He had made hundreds of thousands of dollars by selling hope to the hopeless. He was a hero in the eyes of many, until he vanished from our once sad and sorry city after allowing the prospectors to mine their plots. The island, however, did not have shores glittered with golden dust. Due to the fruitless business venture, our city’s once flourishing economy returned to a state worse than ever. Those who spent their money on plots and permits were now in an inescapable debt, and the businesses that relied on these miners were never to be paid. The deceitful John Bonaventure sold people an illusion of hope that proved to be nothing more than a mirage sitting forever in the unattainable future.
Rushing onto the shore,
Its foam spilling across the sand,
The powerful wave hits.
It breaks as all watch in wonder
As it rolls over itself
Like a pipe one could walk through.
Finally it tumbles to its end with a whoosh
That one will hear until they fall asleep.
It slides up the beach
Only to be dragged back out for another go.

Waves
Marty White

He always pretends a bear is chasing him when he runs, so it came as no surprise that he was strangely nervous as embarked on his morning run. Nevertheless, it was as normal of a day as possible: same loop, same breakfast, same everything. Running gave him an opportunity to let his alternate conscious come out.

Thick forest shrouded the perfectly flat road. His legs felt a little heavy, but he kept cruising along through the crisp spring air. He could smell the life coming back to the area with the flowers budding and the leaves filling the trees again. Everything was so perfect that he didn't even seem to sweat, or at least he didn't notice.

All of this was disturbed when he came across a deer carcass. It lay in the middle of the road with half of its skin peeled off. The car must have accelerated through the collision with no remorse. A lot of deer have been hit lately and crews didn't come until days later to pick them up. The deer's head was a pancake on the asphalt, and the protective antlers were shattered on top.

He couldn't stand it. The gore, the death, the smell. Blood and death choked the air. But there was nothing he could do except run on.

It was unusual as a dream because it was full of smells, and he never dreamt smells. There was the smell of smoke from the barrages of bombs everywhere, and the smell of blood that snaked down the open battlefield in little rivulets. Blinded by chunks of dirt and shrapnel flying by, the soldier sprinted to escape the strafing run. He had to dodge the bodies of his dead comrades. It was too horrible to be real.

A bomber came flying at him from the side, and one of his fellow soldiers lying on his side to guard himself from the destruction screamed, “Watch out!”

He started running much faster and forgot about his form. He relinquished the side of the road and started running along the woods for some reason.

A boy strolled by, and this alarmed the man. The man screamed, “Watch out! Didn’t you hear the guy! Seek shelter!”

The boy retreated and stared at the insane man. “What are you talking about?” the boy asked.

Right, it was just a normal run. He realized how nice it was to be out on a run, out in the fresh air safe from everything, unlike those animals.

He was coming into an intersection with a small side street. ATV engines roared in the woods, muffling every other noise. The noise was unusual. He didn’t recall those residents having ATVs; in fact, they seem more like quiet indoor people who would be more likely to sit down to a book than shred around on dirt bikes.

As he entered the intersection, an 18-wheeler Mack came bouldering at him with its shrill blare. He couldn’t do anything about it. It was going too fast. He just stood there like a deer in the headlights.

A Run
Paul Keady
The grill with fang-like bars stared him down and attacked. He was too focused on avoiding the shots behind him, but dangers were everywhere. He had no idea the bomber was coming. A menacing red mouth was painted on the front. The bombs were tearing up a line of craters that led directly to him.

He sprinted up the battlefield to avoid the line of destruction, but the plane was already upon him. Powerless, he looked up at the belly of the monster as the mass of steel plummeted to the ground right next to him.

He flew through the air in a cloud of dirt and smoke. His face looked down into the earth.

He thought that maybe an ambulance would happen to drive by, or the man who picks up the deer would help. As he regained his mental faculties, he saw the dirt, and he saw the shrapnel. He felt the blood and the pain. He smelled the smoke and the death. It was all so real. In the infinite lie of the absurd dream, he lay safe on a cushioned stretcher; in reality, he lay face down in a pool of his own blood inside of a rocky crater.

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**The Unknown Angel**

*Matthew Blue*

To the splendid soul I never knew
The days are dark, the sky is blue
The world continues on and on
Forgiving and forgetting, from dusk until dawn

I never knew your beautiful face
Your kind soul or your elegant grace
I only know of you what I’ve heard
But I need something more than word

I want to know what you love
As I look towards the heavens above
I want to know who you were
Not just the obituaries to which I refer

Not even a picture can capture a soul
Or a life too short, in whole
All of the things left undone
Will forever mourn in the sun

But we must not resort to dismay
For we will see you again some day
Let us not fret over how the world harms
Your angelic smile waits with open arms
Call of the Void
Andrew Elcock

I first met James Canon at a lecture on the nature of infinity, the contents of which I understood not a lick. I had been dragged there by a math major I was seeing named Allie, with whom I have since parted ways, and sat through near two hours of Dr. Canon discussing the size of infinity and the exciting (or so Allie assured me) new proofs composed by a German mathematician of the name George Cantor, a concept which, I admit, I could not grasp. While I did not particularly enjoy the presentation, Allie was quite enthralled and insisted we meet the Doctor for drinks to discuss Cantor's theorem. Several times early in the evening I tried to slip away, and would to God that I did, but the end of the night found Dr. Canon-Jimmy, he insisted; I ignored his entreaties and myself to be engaged in the quiet and passionate talk, the subject of which I cannot for the life of me remember, of men who have found a new friend, Allie quite forgotten.

In the coming months, the good doctor and I met several times, first at a bar and subsequently at his house. He had all manner of foreign objects, from a crystal skull claimed to have been found in a cave-in in Mexico to a whale-bone carving of a giant squid that the doctor had acquired from a native tribe in the north. The vast arrangement of artifacts he had in his abode fascinated me, but I was in those early days after our meeting still too shy to ask about them. However, in the sixth month since our meeting I at last asked the doctor, and it was perhaps here above all else that our downfall began.

“You see,” the doctor started, “I believe fervently in the existence of another, a greater evil than yet seen.” I, sadly, was quite intrigued by such a confession, as, you must remember, this was before the Great War, and I had not yet seen true horror; thus, the idea of something as exciting as an otherworldly evil seemed far more, shall we say, romantic, than it would a mere ten years hence. “It is, perhaps,” continued the doctor, “part of my profound interest in the infinite, my logic being that even the infinite cannot be truly infinite, for it is a law of nature that a vacuum cannot be—indeed, I use floor in place of ground due to just how smooth it was. Even the rocks, one of which I picked up and examined, were smoother than any I had seen before; curious, I stuffed it in my pocket for later inspection. Of course, I understood every line of reasoning, it seemed to me, and even myself, a graduate of Yale’s school of philosophy in 1899, was incapable of checking his thoughts for more than a moment. Moreover, he possessed a gift for humor I have yet to see repeated, though one that rarely shown through; when it did, however, it was a sight to behold, both most intelligent and most witty, while never mean in spirit. He smoked endlessly, often lighting his next cigar—cigars, never cigarettes—from the sputtering remains of the last, though he also had a lighter by his side at all times.

Much of our discourse over the coming months had the backdrop of the woods near his house, as we wandered through the chill New England air and verdant beauty of nature. We carried on in this manner for another six months, until the two of us both knew the woods as a craftsman knows tools. It was on the 12th of October, very near one year since our first encounter, that the next seminal moment in our young friendship occurred.

The air was brisk and a slight wind blew, but the sky was clear; the moon had just begun to rise. The two of us meandered through the forest, discussing some topic or another, when all at once it began to rain like I had never seen before, nor have seen since. The wind picked up to a fearsome degree, and all at once the evening sky lit bright as noonday.

The doctor yelled something impossible to hear over the storm and took off running back toward the house, and I followed at a sprint. The two of us ran for almost ten minutes, and yet made it no closer to the house. Indeed, by the time we came to a panting stop, we were both thoroughly lost, and the storm still raged around us. The doctor motioned toward a cave near us and together we hurried for it. As soon as we entered under the overhang of the cave, the storm seemed to dim by a magnitude of ten, so drastic was the change. Indeed, the floor of the cave, even that near the entrance, was perfectly dry: not a drop of water, even propelled by the fierce wind, penetrated into our humble shelter, and neither did the wind itself, for the air was still. The floor, moreover, was smoother than the floor of any cave I had seen before; curious, I stuffed it in my pocket for later inspection. Of course, I did not raise complaint, for I was overjoyed to escape the wet and cold of the storm; the doctor, however, was interested to a great degree, and pulled out a quite damp notebook and commenced taking notes. For my part, I retreated to the back of the cave, for fear that our peculiar protection from the elements might suddenly fail and the rain and cold wind come rushing in.

However, as I reached the back wall, I noticed that the cavern extended farther on at a sharp ninety degree angle, and furthermore that this new extension was ever more unusual: its walls were a stark white, and the floor was so smooth as to be almost tiles. I stepped into it for a mere moment and immediately felt a pull forwards,
slight and not in the least bit physical, as if there were an emptiness and it called to be filled. It is, I believe now, the same instinct that compels the unwary climber at the summit of a mountain to step entirely too close to the edge and gaze into the abyss before him, even as a strong wind pushes him tumbling into open air. I, perhaps needless to say, hastily stepped back and would have been content never to return, but for the urging of the doctor.

He had by this time completed his inspection of the cave and had joined me at the back of the cave. I only heard him utter one word, “Fascinating,” before he set off at a brisk walk down the hallway, his natural curiosity undoubtedly augmented by the queer call I had felt pressing upon me. I had no choice but to follow him, for the storm continued unabated and I had no wish to remain alone in this cave, which by this point had become vaguely threatening. The pair of us, soaked to the bone, walked for a quarter of an hour. On the walls, paintings appeared, first in the form of three lines—blue, yellow and red-twisting and weaving, overlaid on five parallel lines, then in a series of drawings portraying the world being peeled back like an onion, and the only remainder being a hole of pure black. The drawings were incredible in their detail, and every time we came across one the doctor stopped to sketch it.

As we walked on the pull became nigh unstoppable, and for the last stretch the doctor and I began sprinting. A light in the distance appeared, but we drew no closer until at once it leaped on us and we entered a great hall. The floor was tiled a stark white, stretching forward until it disappeared into fog. The hall was filled with an ambient, dim light despite no source being seen. The place was massive and empty, far larger than any mountain near the doctor’s house, but still the pull of the void called at the back of the cave. I only heard him utter one word, “Fascinating,” before he set off at a brisk walk down the hallway, his natural curiosity undoubtedly augmented by the queer call I had felt pressing upon me. I had no choice but to follow him, for the storm continued unabated and I had no wish to remain alone in this cave, which by this point had become vaguely threatening. The pair of us, soaked to the bone, walked for a quarter of an hour. On the walls, paintings appeared, first in the form of three lines—blue, yellow and red-twisting and weaving, overlaid on five parallel lines, then in a series of drawings portraying the world being peeled back like an onion, and the only remainder being a hole of pure black. The drawings were incredible in their detail, and every time we came across one the doctor stopped to sketch it.

In tandem the doctor and I moved further into the great hall. If we had walked down the previous hallway for a quarter hour, our current trip must have consumed half a day, so long was this great hall. The place had a deadening effect, so that any sound died before it had travelled fifteen feet, any attempt at conversation made it scarcely past the opening five words, and even thought, fatigue and hunger faded into a sort of dullness that no vigorous effort could overcome. The doctor at one point, maybe an hour into our adventure, lit a cigar, but the flame sputtered as if a strong wind had buffeted it, yet the air was perfectly still. Sight penetrated no more than a yard-and-a-half, composed of only three notes that seemed to undulate and twist themselves into unnatural combinations. At long last, unable to bear the fearsome music of the void, I took hold of the doctor and dragged him and myself out of that endless cavern.

Yet our voyage was not over, for there was still the great hall to traverse. I was buoyed with fear and necessity, but even terror cannot push the body beyond its limits, and though I felt no fatigue due to the numbing effect of the hall, I nonetheless collapsed after an hour or more of walking, the doctor, still comatose, tumbling on top of me. The two of us lay there like bodies in a grave for countless hours, until I at last roused myself and began tearing my clothes into strips. That done, I moved onto the doctor’s, until the two of us were stripped of our coats, shirt, hats, socks, shoes and vests, all piled onto the ground. I then rummaged through the doctor’s pockets and acquired his lighter.

I tried to light the pile of clothes, but like before the flame died as soon as it was born. Undiscouraged I tried again, and again, and a fourth time and a fifth, until a hundred times had gone by and the lighter refused to create any more flame. And so I retrieved the rock I had picked up from the cave’s floor many hours before and dashed
it against the floor until my hands were bloody. But even that wore away, perhaps aided by the peculiar effect of the great hall, and I was left with only rubbing my hands together, in search of some warm beyond the lukewarm air of the hall.

At last, I realized it was hopeless, and I screamed, a hoarse, raw, painful thing imbued with all the emotion the awful numbness had stolen from me. And all at once the pile of clothes burst into flames, hotter than a forge and brighter than the sun, burning into the tiled floor, burning into my skin and restoring some semblance of warmth, burning into the fog that covered everything. I hauled the doctor onto my shoulders and ran, the flame behind me growing ever larger. Almost immediately I saw the same light that the doctor and I had sprinted to so many hours ago when we were still in the first hallway. The call of the void held no allure any longer, and I threw my body and the doctor through the opening, and felt the sun on my back.

At last, freedom. We had emerged from the woods to the doctor's house, and lay in a jumble on the lawn. The storm that had driven into the cave had dissipated. I felt a surge of hope and turned to the doctor, but felt my optimism dashed in an instant. His face was still stuck in that slackjaw look from when I had first looked at him, and I doubted he would ever recover.

The police questioned me, both about the doctor's newfound condition and our disappearance for three days, but I pleaded amnesia and the investigation died out, but still the question remained: why had the doctor fallen to insanity while I remained sane, if shaken? I believe the answer to be this: that day in the cave, suspended above the void by only a slab of rock, the doctor and I had witnessed true infinity. If I had but taken a step and entered into that void, I would have fallen forever, joining the ranks of the very monsters the doctor had once studied. I had not been able, and still am not able, to understand it, but the doctor, having dropped his watch into the void, had grasped it as easily as he had the math surrounding its very existence, and that understanding had driven him insane just as my ignorance had kept me from the same fate.

The bank auctioned off his collection to cover the debts he had while alive, and I attended the auction. While there, two objects caught my eye which I had overlooked when we had discussed his collection six months earlier: a ring from the class of Yale 1899 and a beaten pocketwatch, both found alongside the crystal skull from the Mexican cave-in that had caught my eye.

I visited the doctor in the asylum today, and the doctors there informed me he had cancer of nearly every organ, and that he would die soon unless a treatment was discovered. I had not visited him in nearly a decade, too ashamed of what he had become under my watch, but the news came as no shock. I had a similar condition. Like the globe from the drawings in the cave, the void had entered into us, lurking beneath the surface. We had escaped it once before, fifteen years ago in a cave behind his house, but in the end it had claimed us too. Like then, I will go out on my own terms; I am not a slave to the void, no matter how it calls me. The fire is built beneath me; it requires only a spark.

Goodbye.
Out of School Writing
It was cold because it was early. Cold in the way that makes you tremble slightly, even though it is not in fact cold enough to merit trembling. A dull grey light which would have passed as shadow at noon came through a window onto the floor. It was cold and still dark and I wore a fleece. I was sitting at the wood stove, though I hadn’t lit a fire even if I wanted one. Instead I just sat there, shivering slightly and occasionally sighing. I could still feel a slight dizziness but I’m not sure whether it was a remnant of the drinking from the night before or purely a symptom of lacking sleep. The latter is more likely, though in the end the cause is worth less than the effect. My hair was stiff so that I was always aware of its presence. I contemplated standing up and walking to a faucet to soak my head, but I coughed and then forgot… My fleece was checked red and black and the inside was lined with fake sheepskin. And God it was comfortable. I had slept in jeans because I had gone to sleep drunk and I was still in those jeans. And I was wearing a hat which I’d got at a store in town a few days before. I was wearing the hat and it pressed against my stiff hair. The living room was mostly windows, and beyond was a lake. Because it was early September, when the lake water is still slightly warm and the air is cold, a thin fog had formed over the surface, and the fog rose and collapsed and entangled and drifted with the occasional breeze. There was something hypnotic about it. I found myself staring at the fog over the dark water for a period of time I could not specify. I coughed again. I looked up. I sighed. And then with effort I walked to the door, blinked several times, and taking a rifle walked to the car.

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I left the car just off the road in the disturbed space between the tar and the forest. The ground was mostly crushed pine and smelled of crushed pine. The woods sloped away to the left so that I could see a river through the brush. And I could tell that the river would have roared if I were closer, but because of the density of the trees or because I was tired I could not hear it. Something about the distance made the current look slow and laborious as if it were an enormous task to move such water.

The pine depressed faintly under the pressure of each step so that each step was completely silent. Occasionally a twig cracked. And I glanced towards
the decaying and decayed carcass of some no longer identifiable animal nestled in the leaves beneath the trees to my right. The scent of death had for the most part dissipated, but there were still traces of rot commingled with the pine, which must have been why I looked at it in the first place. The bones were a yellowed brown from the dust and the whole body seemed to almost sink down within the leaves and the pine needles as if that would suffice for its burial. It was not apparent how it had died. The barrel of my rifle caught on the low branches.

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There were, in fact, some signs which read no trespassing on the edge of the forest, but I figure that there is a limit to how much control one can exert over pure land.

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I'm not sure how long I had walked but there was a slight lightening now. Which is to say the grey light had a muted blue tinge. And the thinner pine saplings which had thickened now to something like a grove filtered the light deliberately so that there was a haze throughout the forest. And in the haze the trunks seemed to fuse to a point where passing between them appeared impossible. So, as I walked through those saplings, I was engulfed— the trunks melded behind me and merged before me and I felt something similar to submersion.

Thus, I didn't know the field was there until I broke through the last of the pines and slowly perceived its presence before me. To say I hunted is dishonest, I think. To hunt implies to seek; whereas, I was simply waiting. The field seemed grayer than the woods, somehow, for it was still not light and everything remained indistinguishable. The pines and the grasses and the sky formed an emaciated blur of monotone so that only sudden movements were discernible against the constancy of the background. Everything swayed slightly in a thin breeze, and I could see thin birds moving in a smooth motion overhead, but even with this swaying movement there was a stiffness to the whole landscape. Each movement was so slow and created with such tranquility that eventually I saw everything to be still. So I laid down in the grass which was stif and dry because it rarely rains in September and laid my rifle beside me and looked through binoculars. It was still nearly as cold as it had been in the earliest part of the morning but in a different way. Raw is a more precise word for how it was. The wind and the ground and the mist were raw in the way that an open wound is sensitive to the touch— a volatile sort of cold.

It was raw and cold, but I did not shiver or tremble. No, my focus was so intent through those binoculars and everything I saw through the glass seemed so incredibly vital in the truest sense of the word— that is, relating to life and death— that shivering seemed unthinkable. I had spent several minutes trying to obtain a clear image of the distant line of trees, but I realized the blurriness was an inevitable result of the dim light and the billowing grey of grass and leaves. And so with all my focus I examined nothing.

And then, I knew there was a thing there in the distance, for I could detect the movement against the static landscape, even if I could not make out a defined form in the grey blur. If anything the thing — the walking or grazing or wandering thing — seemed browner and just noticeably darker than the forest and the grasses. I should describe the country more clearly so that you may see what I saw. A field of grasses neither long nor short, all mostly withered, stretched some distance to the woods, which in this light simply seemed a continuation of the field. It looked more as if there were an enormous plain stretching to a distant horizon than a field bordering a forest. I looked through the grasses.

The butt of the gun was smooth and wooden and well oiled and the barrel was blackened steel. It was not intricate but it was heavy. And the trigger was heavy. And the trigger was still rough because I had only just bought the gun. I must’ve watched it for a quarter of an hour or more, and because of the way it lingered there I felt no impulse to act. Instead I let the shape stretch and distort in the lens of the scope, and noted the way its legs moved separately but cohesively. And how its dark eyes lost their wariness with a dangerous rapidity, as if they were sure nothing could fracture the wholeness of the dawn. I noticed the way it leaned its neck and head together to the earth. And I noticed the patches of dampness upon its back and side from where it had lain during the night. I breathed and it looked up for a moment.

My eyes were sore. I could have gone to sleep in the grass had the deer not been there. They felt as though they were just on the verge of closing, but torturously prohibited from doing so. Even my eye in the glass seemed to wander and every blink felt unnaturally long. And my throat was slightly sore and my stomach held a dull pain less from hunger than from fatigue. When I breathed the second time it was more of a shudder. I closed my eyes for a moment. And then opened them. And then tensed a single finger.

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The deer didn't die when the bullet hit it. I know this because I could see the deer's leg twitch and I could see blood seeping rapidly into the grey fur, as it remained...
there in my crosshairs. But I could still see its eyes flicking and I could still see its
breath forming small clouds. And I heard this noise, and I call it a noise because there
is no word specific enough to convey how horrific and anguished… The sort of noise
which is deeply primal, and could only ever be summoned in death or unimaginable
pain. Not shrill. A hum almost. A hum or a moan all the more hideous because it did
not reveal any fear or resistance, only a relinquished agony no human music could ever
express. It was quiet but echoed across the field so that I could hear it clearly. I ran
forward, and the deer collapsed on its side, its hind leg giving out there in
the center of the field.

When I came close I could see the convulsions of the legs on the grass from the
edge of my vision and I tried not to look. But I could see that as the legs scraped
back and forth they were gradually tearing the grass from the earth, dust rising up
slightly above. The fringe of the forest was still shadowy behind me.

I realized that from where I was standing, beside the deer which was with-
ing, I could make out the river. And I could finally hear it from where I was standing:
the rush of collision between water and rock and soil, the silence of trout somewhere
in the curls of the current—all this swelled and entangled with the moans and the hum.
I tried to hear everything of that river. To hear how the wind and the scent of pine
and the foam on the water formed something beautiful. To hear how the songs of
the birds transformed as they flew above the river, as if altered by the very presence
of such unadulterated force. I imagined how it would be to lie in that river, how you
would gasp from the cold, and how the cold would overwhelm you when you got in
and how the warmth would overwhelm you when you climbed out. I wished I could somehow bring the deer there so that it could feel the water and the
cold and the movement of the current. But then I remembered how the blood would
form nebulous tendrils of scarlet and spread through the river. And I imagined the
tROUT moving through this blood and how it would be horrifying and magnificent
and corrupted but beautiful.

I could have and should have simply shot the deer then and there—placing a
bullet just behind its left ear. But something seemed horribly frigid about that. About
the abruptness and the quickness and the coldness of such an act. And from such a
close distance I could no longer disassociate the bullet from the death, and when you
cannot disassociate, something so stiff seems intolerable. Instead I wanted contact. If
I were to cause such agony, I wanted some form of closeness. Something which would
in some way vindicate if not entirely redeem what I had wrought. In the moment,
what I did seemed like the highest epitome of vital love.

Because I could hear the river, and because everything was still so grey, I
could almost make out some beauty in the way the blood began to stain the butt of
the rifle. In the way the wood absorbed the blood and the darkness of the wood grew
infused with scarlet. And the way my hands and the rifle and the very ground beneath
me shook with such deliberate rhythm as the butt of the rifle and the deer’s skull
collided repeatedly. And the way the blood began to soak into the dirt which was dry
like the grass, and congeal and coagulate. And I knew how horrific it all was—I was
sobbing and the salt of the tears commingled with the blood on my fleece—and I al-
most turned the rifle on myself. And now I was shaking horribly again. But still, there
was some beauty there.

The wind came up from the East, blowing off the river, and the air grew
suffused with salt and thus I learned that the river led to the ocean. Even if the coast were some two
hundred miles distant, I knew the same water flowing in this river would reach the
open sea within a few days time. And knowing this was beautiful and horrible.

Painstakingly I dragged the body. The weight left a thin path in the grass
all the way down to the river shore. And my arms began to ache because the cracked
antlers often caught in the soil and I had to stop to vomit on three occasions. The sun
had risen at some point and now everything was bathed in a faint pink which almost
masked the blood in the grass. There was still salt in the air and I thought faintly of
the ocean and Cape Cod and then of August.

When I dropped the carcass in the river I still could not differentiate between
reality and unreality. So I almost didn’t believe how the fur turned darker and darker
and absorbed more and more water until fully saturated. And how the blood formed
those very clouds of scarlet I had imagined before. There were pines on both sides
which framed the river, and one side was illuminated by the rising sun, and the other
was silhouetted against the lightening sky, and the river bent away and to
the left in the distance where it was still dark. And behind
all that there were mountains and the first snow had already fallen on
their crests—early this year—and I knew this because the thin layers
of white shone more brightly in the sun. And beneath the white was
blurred lavender blue mixed with violet and, beneath that, dark swaths
of trees again. And the sky wasn’t cloudy, but there was a front ap-
proaching from the South which would probably bring warm air and
thick rain in the coming days. And the scarlet slowly dispersed in the
current which did not stop. And I knew eventually that scarlet would
flow into the sea.

The body remained stationary. The water passed along the
motionless legs and back and neck and then moved forward again unaffected. And for a while I simply stared at the water and tried to understand
the way it passed around the body, as if it had already forgotten or
never recognized its presence. And I coughed a couple times, and slowly my violent shaking grew less fierce. And then I sighed—my feet were wet—and slowly turned away.

More
Joshua Winograd
The Roxbury Latin School
West Roxbury, Massachusetts

Her words don’t say the things he knows,
He knows again, what she must say.
Goodbye is clear as friends turn foes.
The sea appears as clouds give way.
Away he melts, she won’t break down
So freezes, lest a selfmade storm.

Alone but now the same, watered down,
United in that lonely form.
Why must these be broken? The core
Of lucky ones are mostly fixed.
We only get one heart that’s pure,
Why dilute the heart by such a risk?
The beastly storm knocks on my door,
I’ll open it, expecting more.
What is adventure?

It is the sand in my hair as I ride the Atlantic waves
A feeling of escape - I am free from being slave.
The rush of adrenaline as I fall from sky unto Earth
This feeling of elation we all seek from birth.

Imagine gazing from the ocean floor to see dancing moonlight
Or even surfing the snow on a cold winter’s night.
It’s as much running a marathon - why don’t you sign up today? -
As it is swimming with fish, gliding the sand in midday.

Swinging on a hammock while a breeze kisses your face
Is as good as a road trip through the country, free of any pace,
As good as New Year’s kiss in the middle of Times Square
As good as Fourth of July barbecue, watching fireworks shatter the air.

Hearing dolphins sing while you hold one's slimy fin
Is twirling, swirling on a roller coaster, left right out in,
Is floating on the air in a colorful, prancing balloon
Is sailing through the wind on a white parachute.

The gun that signals a 200 meter dash
Giving it all you’ve got and not coming last.
That moment you feel a song embrace your soul
Kicking that ball and making the winning goal.

It is the feeling that overwhelms you as you begin to write
Abel Dodson’s Music Room
Jamie Hawkins
Isidore Newman School
New Orleans, Louisiana

The stairwell banister is coated with dust...or maybe, it’s spider webs. I’m not sure, so I just don’t touch. As we walk up the stairwell, I pause and admire the old wooden framed photographs —some in vivid color and some in aging sepia. I ask who the people are. They are the musicians in her family. Her father is playing a cello with his eyes closed. His facial expression looks very funny. She points out her grandfather, who is situated behind a microphone, looking rather dapper in a suit and bow tie. His outfit matches with the other four young men standing beside him. “They won a Grammy that year,” she remarks, proud of her grandfather’s accomplishment. We reach the top of the stairwell, and in an instant, we are in another world. I think Abel’s music room must be at least 100 years old. It certainly looks that way. The dark maple floor boards creak as we trudge across them. The room is dimly lit by two overhead lamps. There are records and old posters that look as if they are the glue that is holding the walls together. There is so much history. So much beautiful history. I see a boom box and Walkman from the 90’s and CD’s much older. There are microphone stands and cables; speakers and stereos. I only wish I could be as passionate about anything as she is about her music.

Abel sits down at the grand piano. It is white and as old as everything else in the room. She unfolds the crumpled papers that were in the left pocket of her faded jeans and places them onto the music stand. I stand by the window taller than myself that looks out over the city. “Tell me what you think.” I will.

The sky looks so wonderfully busy. I find pictures in the clouds, and avoid looking at the sun. Her father calls from downstairs. Abel. Abel. Her agile fingers glide across the ivory keys, and I listen. Taxis zoom by. There are horns, and sirens, and suddenly, a beautiful melody. And it builds. Tree branches dance in the wind to the tune. Their leaves are a vibrant green. And it builds. The birds chirp along, and the sky grows a richer shade of blue. How can you play so quickly? Abel please answer me, he calls. But she continues. Did you write this? The music is slower now and so calming. She plays each note, one at a time. The baseline, like a dripping faucet; the treble, a ticking clock.

I hear a rhythmic thud. And another. And another. They are getting louder as the footsteps get closer. Your grandfather is on the phone. Abel is still playing. Can she even hear him? I feel her father’s glance on the back of my head. The song is not quite finished. He takes the phone away from his ear. He taps it, and I hear muffled sounds. The phone is now on speaker. She is about halfway finished when sudden-ly, the keys display a dissonant chord of jumbled notes. The trance is over. The sky doesn’t look any bluer. The leaves on the trees are just a regular shade of green.

Her pages, covered in staffs, tumble to the floor with the swipe of her strong yet gentle hand. Her pen clicks and clicks, but ink never flows. When it finally does, spirals of quarter rests, half notes, and more unfold onto a page, and then a bird’s nest of ink on top of them. Her father looks impatient. She tries again. We wait several minutes. Hesitantly, Abel begins to play the newly written measures. Her lips move only slightly as she quietly sings through the ending. When the music stops, there is a brief comfortable silence.

“It’s not finished.” She anticipates my response. She thinks I will criticize her, but I think it was marvelous. I don’t have to say it though. He says it through the phone. She sees her father, his cellphone in hand. She never noticed him before, but he looks so proud. He passes the phone to her. When are you going to record it? What is the song called? “Hi Grandpa.” Are you still going to be my friend when you’re famous? “I don’t know. I hope so.” Have you played it for Charles? There are so many questions in my head. “I love you too.” You’re almost there, her grandfather says. If you just keep writing a little bit each day. If you keep working with your instrument. You cannot give up if this is your dream. I believe in you. Your father believes in you. She is nodding. I believe in her too. He thanks her for sharing her song with him, though it was not voluntary. I cannot wait for the holidays so we can all play together. Her father nods and smiles in agreement. I notice the clock, and after those few seconds, she hangs up the phone.

Abel will win a Grammy one year. And when she does, she’ll be on the wall right next to her grandfather.
The Oldest Child’s Patience
Daniela Muhleisen
Walled Lake Northern High School
White Lake, Michigan

Right now I am still waiting to be saved by a tree

Everybody says
don’t you know trees don’t have time
for matters of mortality

This is always the part nobody understands

Right now I am still trying to be saved by a tree
but I am a girl wearing my father’s shirts
because nothing else will fit right
I am like layers of oak somehow growing
I am seventy nine rings all around

suddenly I know more than my mother did
I wish I could never know
more than my mother did

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Moments of mercy
do not come to those who age beyond their years
moments of mercy are swift and bright and unchangeable
but I am changing faster than the seasons now
when it comes winter
I realize I am too old for that which is white

I am still trying to be saved by a tree
because nothing else understands the burden of time

Right now I am bathing in the leaves of November
crimson like brick homes in Providence
I am stroking the roots of this big maple
and begging

Tree knows I am still waiting
Sugar-Spun Stars
Rona Wang
Lincoln High School
Portland, Oregon

Jia-Wei wakes up with the fleeting dream still in her mouth, crumbs that glisten with oil, which helps her forget the constant gnaw in her stomach, but only for a moment. When she sits up, there’s a cockroach like a black tar coin, scuttling across her toe, and she watches it disappear into a crack in the wall half-hidden by the foot of her bed.

Ning’s fairytale book of smoke and glass is still tucked underneath her thin pillow, the faded corners poking out. Jia-Wei runs her thumb across the cover and remembers her mother’s light, her smile, sweet and inevitable like spring dew. Maybe if she squints, she can taste Mama’s pork dumplings, savory and soy sauce, so she tries, but can’t.

***

Once summer wrestles its way in, the orphanage girls make the four kilometers down to the lake, all teetering and swinging and fluttering on hummingbird legs that crack easy and bruise ash-gray-purple. Jia-Wei sees the swaying trees, shimmery leaves dribbling down branches slung high, silhouettes of the other girls bent and deformed like they’re all trying to hide.

She has been reading too many fairytales, and she imagines a glittering castle is hidden here, pearly and pulsing with a vitality that draws moths and young girls with no parents and lofty silly dreams. She wants a prince with hair like wet sand. She wants to be saved. She will never admit this, because she is already eleven and too old now to desire the impossible.

Anyhow, the lake is not a jewel, emerald or sapphire or other sorts of pretty things. It is not reams of silk or satin. It is the color of coarse dirt in between toes, with patchy places where sky ripples across the cheap-denim surface. What Jia-Wei likes, she likes that the lake has no spider vein creeks flowing in or out. She likes its loneliness and its seams, so she does not have to think about the rush of water into another smog-lit city. In a thousand years, the lake will still be here, isolated, and she knows she’s a fool for believing that since the lake has as much control over its existence as she does over hers. In a blink, a crash, life splintered through, over. Getting flung around haphazard. The government could decide to build a new highway over this place and that would be that.

The other girls are yelling for her, come on, jump in, it’s warm and sweet, so she swallows her breath and falls in, submerging herself up to her eyes. Adrenaline, electricity, a shock of cold, mud squishing beneath her feet soft. Blurred vision.

For a second, she’s content in the flicker of the moment. If she stays completely still, she can pretend that it’s Father teaching her how to swim again, and so she does, holding her breath and forgetting that he wasn’t the one who showed her the front stroke and butterfly, but a neighborhood boy whose name she’s lost. She wants it to be Father.

But then shrieking begins, shrill, pinchy, and it shatters the memory. Jia-Wei peels her eyes open. She sees flailing arms, kicking, the girl can’t breathe.

She does not plunge into the murky depths, towards the panic. She does not race to play the hero. Her entire body feels rigid, iced through, and she watches frozen as Ning and the twins pull the sputtering girl out onto the bank.

Jia-Wei leans, wet hair in her face so none of the others see the tears, because she wishes she could play the hero, but she can’t, and she didn’t.

The girl’s name is Lu, quiet and low around the edges. Abandoned because she got unlucky, fifty-fifty chance, wrong lot drawn. Even though the roads here are slim like the ruler Teacher uses to slap palms, even though the air is wilted and empty, Jia-Wei is supposed to believe that China swells. She is supposed to believe that the roads and
the air erode into restless cities with too many stars that are streetlights or people, and this leads to a cluttered nation, which leads to have one child only, which leads to pick one child only. Families, they always pick the boy anyway, and that’s how Lu ended up nearly drowning here, today.

***

In winter, an unwanted chill slams through the place, and with it brings visitors. A man with skin the color of unmelted slush on February streets, eyes blue or green, Jia-Wei can’t decide which. A woman is with him, and she reminds Jia-Wei of a candle, rosy-colored, waxy.

They are from somewhere that is not here, she knows that much, but forgets the exact name of the country. She’s in the kitchen, scrubbing the dishes until her hands are red raw peeling, and the couple appears in front of her. The woman says hello. The man nods. Jia-Wei shakes like a leaf clinging onto a branch in the last whispers of autumn, and she is silent.

Later, she finds out that Ning, Ning with the ears that stick out and a wide mouth and the books, she’s going with the foreigners. Not now. It takes months. Summer is burning grass into rust and Jia-Wei and Ning watch the sun dip somewhere below, somewhere closer to wherever Ning will be going.

Jia-Wei asks, are you scared?

Ning smiles slow. She points at the deep ink sky. The stars are starting to glitter pale and glassy. See all of that? That’s not even a millionth fraction of the entire universe. We’re infinitesimal, you, me, this place. There’s something much, much more beyond a tiny orphanage in China and I want to find that.

And Jia-Wei nods, although everything Ning’s said frightens her.

She wonders if summer where Ning’s going means crimson, if it means gold and violet and other colors she’s never tasted. That’s how she imagines foreign places, in shades and hues like a painted sky edged with charcoal, because it’s easier than thinking about all the people, faceless crowds and shadows and the clank of too many bones.

In a couple weeks, she tries to give Ning the fairytales back, because she is twelve now and she shouldn’t be silly anymore, but Ning won’t take them. You need them more than me, Ning tells her. Where I’m going, there will be many more books.

Then Ning is gone, black hair swinging over one shoulder, big strides, and she’s really gone.

***

It is two summers later when the night breaks wide open. Jia-Wei’s listening to Lu the next bed over breathe, taking in hissing quick fistfuls of air like the girl’s afraid it won’t always be there, when the shouting begins. There are flames, blazes reaching the sky, acrid smoke charcoaling everything, and Jia-Wei bolts out of smoldering falling devastation into the cool rush of twilight.

A glint of light soars across the sky, an airplane maybe. She realizes that from up there, the chaos down here must be impossible to even see. Lives fracture and never even make a sound. The orphanage is gone, all gone, Ning’s book is scattered ashes.

Lu’s getting shipped off to Xi’an, a city of buildings teetering on stilts. The twins are going to a rice paddy field where boys with crooked blackened teeth will leer at their pretty moon-lit eyes and soft curves. But Jia-Wei, she’s fourteen, which means she’s on her own.

***

Jia-Wei is fifteen and she spends twelve hours each day stitching together luxury bags in a dizzyingly humid factory, squashed in between two other girls. Several elbows away, a ten-year-old droops and then wilts.

Some teenagers giggle, or giggle as much as anyone can when the sweltering gnaw of stilled air threatens to swallow her whole, because
the overseer who comes over to examine the damage is somewhat good-looking. Broad shoulders. Prominent nose, which means prosperity.

The kid who fainted, her pay is docked. The woman next to her has to make up the work.

Min, pushed up so close next to Jia-Wei their sweat might mingle, sighs, these girls are ridiculous. Haven’t seen real men before.

Jia-Wei doesn’t know what to say to that, and Min continues. You know Western men? Bronze skin. Sultry dark eyes. Get yourself one of those, girlie. He’ll treat you right.

In the blur where she can’t figure out where her fingers end and the cloth starts, she sees the creases of a watermelon-slice smile, pearly teeth, skin the color of a dying sun.

***

Some weeks after that, it’s September, and in the mornings through the high window Jia-Wei can sometimes catch a glimpse of schoolchildren pounding the concrete pavement, an army of brightly colored backpacks and squeaky sneakers. She remembers when she was just as carefree.

Now, she tries to picture herself in ten, fifteen years, but can only see the inside of this factory, chalky walls, flies circling overhead like buzzards, fingers raw and bruised and still sweeping with a needle, always.

She asks Min, what if I want that Western man?

Min smiles with cracked lips that bleed at the corners and replies, girlie, you’d have to get out of this cage first.

***

So she does.

She manages to switch to the night shift, and every morning when the clouds are damp and blue-gray and the sun isn’t quite all there yet, she runs two kilometers to the nearest bookstore. Spends hours studying until her eyes feel like sand, and it turns out that the world is enormous, much, much bigger than the fence around the factory or the gate in front of the orphanage that doesn’t exist anymore, and she has to know most everything about how it keeps spinning.

Calculus is the hardest, but math is over half of the exam, so she memorizes until she finds herself tracing integrals onto the grooves of the zippers of bags.

She’s twenty-one and sits for the college admissions exam. She’s not going to Tsinghua or Peking, no way, not somewhere brilliant. But she does go somewhere, and in an era where the government pays for students’ tuition and arranges jobs for graduates, this makes all the difference.

***

In ten or fifteen years, she might have visited a string of cities and countries, all brightly colored tacks peppered on a map, and there could be a man as well, but that doesn’t matter as much. She can remember Los Angeles streets that breathed guitar twangs, Tokyo crystallized buildings that smoked around the edges in the lit midnight hours. And when she leans back, she can see spun-sugar stars like glass, and she remembers all the people who left footprints in her heart, and she hopes they’re seeing the same ebony silk sky.
it feels like a waltz
   back
and
   forth
   along your tongue.
   ca
li
   bri
it's quiet and unsure
like those water drops on a car window that
don't;
   quite know where to go before
   they're
gone.
   ca
li
   bri
it has no tradition like venerable courier new
(who hasn't missed a day of church in his life and doesn't plan to start now)
and it doesn't have that bouncy
~Im-mA_CHUR*ree*TEE
   of comic sans.

it's no rigid times. new, roman, and no high and mellow wingdings
(that crazy old bat who comes
   ringing in at
4 A. M.)
Artwork
Branch and Leaves
Sam Gordon

Work in Progress
Jordan Barros
Buddah In Piece
Sam Gordon

Sunrise
James Driscoll
Crosses
Christian Locurto

Rain
Amber Blomgren
Farmington High School, Minnesota
Lazers
Audrey Thorne
New York, New York

Free
Christian Lazurto
Spanish Poetry
Soy la cavidad oscura en el mundo.
Soy el alma perdida que está buscando ayuda.
Soy la última esperanza.
Soy la desesperación que no está buscando a nadie.
Soy el sufrimiento silencioso.
Soy el mundo loco alrededor de mí.
Soy los dos amigos cercanos que tratan de ayudar.
Soy los padres que espero que todo esté bien.
Soy la última llamada para decir adiós. Soy las familias destrozadas.
Soy los gritos incesantes y la desesperación eterna.
Soy el suicidio.

Soy El Miedo Oculto
Conor Masterson
Cada Día

Matt Eldridge

Cada día
Despiértate a las seis
Termina la tarea a las siete
Ve a la escuela a las ocho menos veinte
Trabaja por seis horas
Estudia por seis horas
Escribe por seis horas
Corre a las tres
Practica por dos horas
Comienza la tarea a las cinco
Haz la tarea hasta la medianoche
Acuéstate a las uno menos cuarto

¿Te gusta lo que haces cada día?
Es la única manera para tener éxito ¿no?
¿Por qué desarrollaron los seres humanos el sistema de aprender y competir?
¿Por qué nosotros no hacemos las actividades para ser felices?
Nosotros no nos necesitamos castigar
Podemos encontrar la excitación sin la escuela
Sin los negocios
Y sin el estrés
Debemos hacer lo que queremos hacer
Cada día

La Primavera

Miguel Espinosa

Es la estación de vida
y es lo que cada persona querría.
Blanco llega a ser verde,
Dice “Adiós” a la muerte.
Los días extienden,
y nuestras almas son alegres.
¡Oye las aves!
El alba está aquí
Las flores nacen,
y los colores entran.
El olor del césped,
y la manta de polen,
No puedo pensar en un mejor tiempo del año
que la primavera.
Soy el chico blanco privilegiado
Soy la fuente de años de racismo
Soy el chico que siempre tenía derechos
Soy la persona que ve los movimientos civiles desde mi sofá
Soy el chico que siempre está alimentado
Soy la persona nunca sospechada
Soy el chico con estereotipos inofensivos
Soy la persona que cree en los estereotipos dañinos
Soy el chico a quien nunca vieron dos veces
Soy la persona que nunca está en la minoría
Soy el chico que irá a la universidad
Soy el hombre que cambiará todo esto

Soy la pobreza con millones de niños sin lugar de vivir
Soy la polución que contamina el aire
Soy el racismo en los medios de comunicación y entretenimiento
Soy la brutalidad de la policía
Soy los trabajos con salarios muy bajos y sin salida
Soy el sistema de justicia penal que favorece a los ricos
Soy las enfermedades infecciosas nuevas y peligrosas
Soy la falta de médicos seguro
Soy lacaída de la calidad y el sistema desigual de la educación pública
Soy el calentamiento global
Soy la extinción masiva de especies
Soy el terrorismo afectando a las gentes religiosas
Soy la Tierra

Soy El Blanco
Daniel Beam

Soy La Realidad
Maynel Fuentes