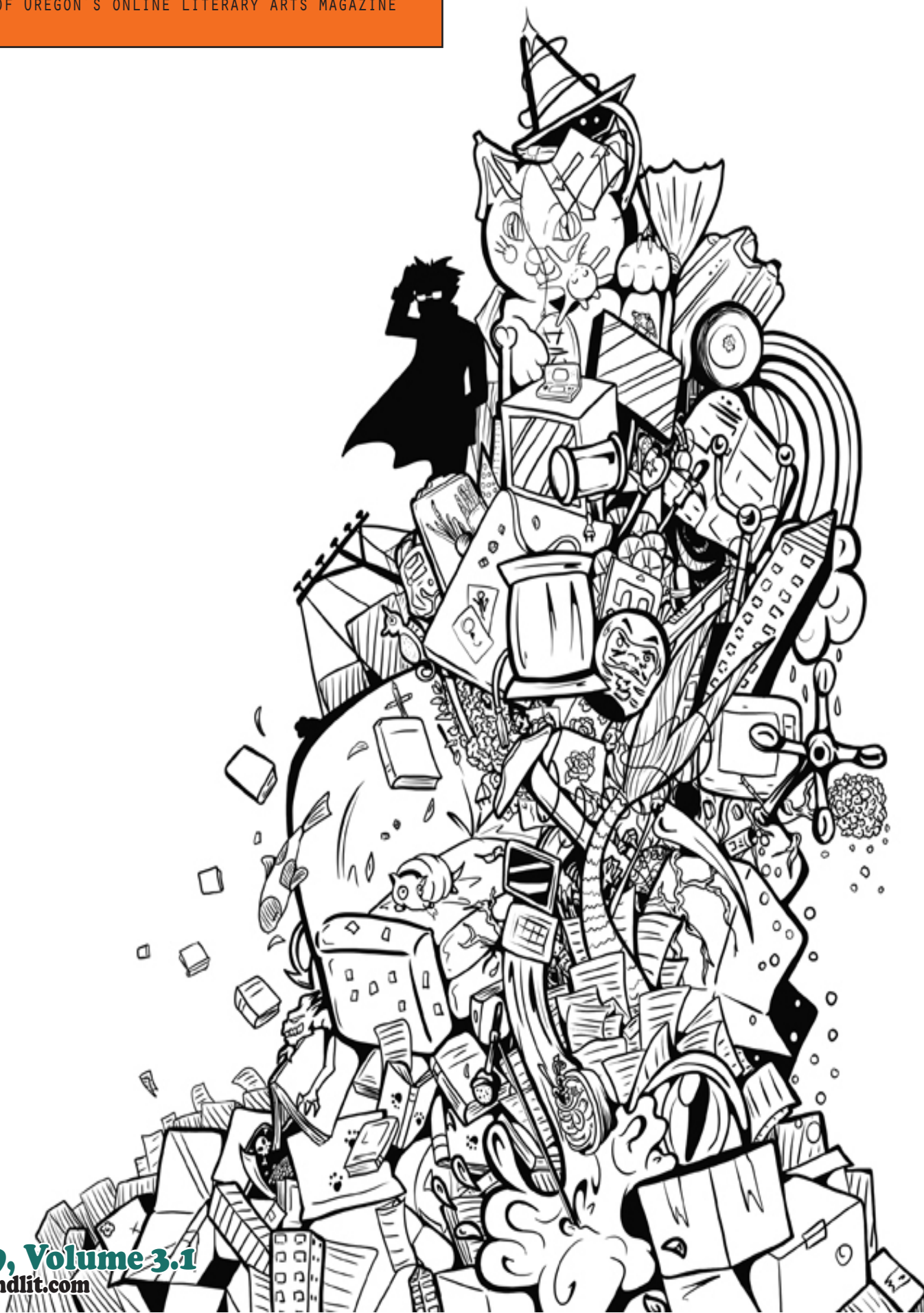


UNBOUND

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON'S ONLINE LITERARY ARTS MAGAZINE



Fall 2009, Volume 3.1
www.unboundlit.com

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Line-by-Line Contest Winners

This Fall we held the first contest in the history of Unbound, which was sponsored by Smith Family Books and the Duckstore. We asked you to show us your best lines. For Fiction, that meant the first line of a story. For Poetry, it was a heroic couplet. And for art, it was a line drawing. All of us on staff were impressed by the amount of submissions we received, not to mention the quality of the submissions; choosing the best was a difficult task. However, after much deliberation we decided on the best lines for each section. We liked them so much, we decided to share them with you. So here are the winners of our Line-by-Line Contest!

Luke Nelson
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Fiction:

“They blew up my car,” Istvan said in a thick, Hungarian accent.

—Kevin Bronk

Poetry:

Unfold the page and mark your dogs quickly,
And write the words he spoke; he’s leaving, sickly.

—Kyle Mangan

Art:

“Imagination Dump“

[This piece is featured as the cover art for this issue of Unbound]

—NJ Huff

o d e t o t h e c r a c k s i n m y h a n d s

As exodus ducks, or
geese call gone for
frost walks behind them,
in the wind, then

get cracks.

I who have never worked a day in my life.
Who have never held the handle
of a shovel but a pencil
or because it meant,
at least, to eat.

Who have never known the grain
nor got the grit of labor
under my fingernails.

But washing anyway,
washing under cataracts, washing under scalding cataracts from scum-splotched faucets washing,
washing into stained sinks to scrub disease the grime off all the layers of grime off washing
under clouds of steam scalding cataracts red bones boiling marrow moiling under
scalding water moiling to scrub scrub scrub scrub scrub scrub scrub and washing away,
and then drying off,
and drying out,
and cracking.

His were:
crackle glaze
pottery
feet and hands
of what was mud
baking
contracting
stuck with
ghost knives
faults
mapping the

splintered nerves
neuropathy
beneath;
These hands become my father's.

And 'and! the where
of rough air cling
against runaveling fin-
gertips spills splits
prints gape to gasping
blood wet rasping pink
shale shed crustacean
dead slough and faults
of flesh and,
and.

An ode because
What used to pray.
What fleece pulls at, or paper brushes.
What touches dry,leaves until next falling.
What never remembering how old the moon or the last time it rained but in these know
nature rustles.
What scratchy speak with the rest of things who don't have ears.

— JEROME HIRSCH

Jerome Hirsch is an English major.



skating around paris

laila bahman
gelatin silver print

Laila Bahman is a senior in English, second language and acquisition and teaching.

m i l k

I wonder if anyone
ever notices
a gallon of milk—

its plodding, soft,
as it is set on the counter;

or the hushed sweat
of its condensation,
respiring in dim, jaundiced light;

or its faint, clean scent,
only present in the moment
before it falls
to your lips,
cold and sweet and tender
to the tongue.

Its handle extends
a lonely reach,
stretching for touch.
But cool hands only hold long enough
to shove it
past the orange juice,
to fashion a new dent
in its middle.

In the refrigerator,
it moves to the back of the shelf quietly,
ashamed and human.

It's important.
Someone else must notice.

— K E L L Y E D Y B U R N

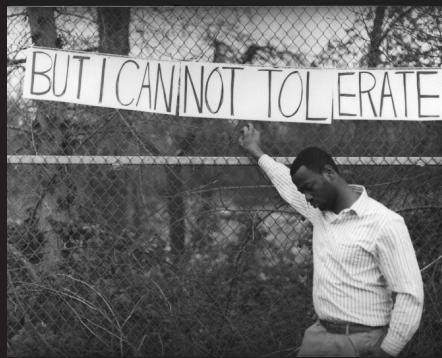
*Kelly Edyburn is a sophomore double-majoring in English and Spanish.
She has been previously published in Unbound and Out of the Blue.*

ismael

weston Lyon
silver gelatin prints



This Ivorian man, like so many, is from a place that once doubled as a home and a prison. Now, he no longer needs to restlessly contemplate his identity under French president Charles de Gaulle, whose words are strewn upon the fence. He recognizes French colonialism's dour agenda and the frustrating predicament of imperial occupation.



Weston Lyon is a senior majoring in Art with an emphasis in photography.

The Broken-Hearted

Today, this morning, he does it again
scratching and huffing at the front door
the paint in the bottom corner
scratched off; it's winter
and everything is swollen
and it takes a few pushes to get the door open

There is no sleep for the tenants
of the Dover Barn House
because today, this morning, he did it again
scratching and huffing
at the arm that dangles off the bed
and everything is swollen
and it takes a few pushes to get up

Mr. Pugsly doesn't use the lawn
I don't know what time he gets up
or if he's eaten yet
because he goes to the bench again
the old oak bench we found
thrown out on the street
he puts his front paws on the seat
heaving and scuffing
it takes a few pulls to hoist himself up

Wilson, the black cat, our only other tenant
joins me at the window sill
we watch Mr. Pugsly
looking just over the hill
where the sun rises
in the absence of night
Wilson doesn't linger long – he's seen this too many times

Mr. Pugsley

—ERIC WONG

Because I remember coming back over the hill
empty handed, save for a spade

Mr. Pugsly greeting me at the front gate
inspecting my grass stained jeans
he licks my eyes dry
everything looks swollen
and he glances over the hill
grunts a little bit
and rolls on his back – expectant

Its been two weeks
and I still haven't gotten him on a walk
he doesn't want to miss her coming home
and when night falls
in the absence of light
he gives up – eats a trifling amount
and goes to bed

I remember waking up on a Saturday
and seeing the two of them lie there
so perfectly connected by the nose
their fawn bulbous bodies
made such a perfect heart
But only half was beating
trembling through snot and slobber
like he was only asleep

She lifted like a scab
pulled much too early
peeling her stiff frame
from the shag carpet
on the old wood floor
her limp weight slips here and there
against her silky fawn coat
it takes a few heaves to pick her up

It's eleven and he's still on the bench
the shade of the porch
keeps the high sun
away – preserving this piece of night
that won't come back

Wilson has been checking on both of us
but only when we're asleep
licking our chins
stirring our sleep
making sure we're still alive
before returning to the small window in the attic
where he stands guard – while Mr. Pugsly sleeps
waiting for her to come back to him

He must be up for a while
before coming into my room
huffing and scratching
because I can hear him pace the house
looking at his food
where the leashes hang

How long does he lie in the living room?
On the shag carpet?
he still doesn't sleep in the middle of the rug
he saves her spot, the faint imprint of half a dead heart
Because tomorrow I'll wake up at four
and he'll still be asleep
and I'll try to move him to the center

he wakes, yawns and looks at me

into me

and it takes a few pushes to get him there

Eric Wong is a senior English major, and he was published in the Spring 2009 issue of Unbound.

j a s p e r p i n e s

CHRISTOPHER BRADLEY

The Jasper Pines Historical Register is a forest green hardbacked volume with the heft of an atlas. This daily log that began on the park's opening just outside Grayling Township, Michigan, on June 26, 1963, peters out by the mid-seventies. But the interim contains enough intriguing entries to keep Isaac awake—sometimes even dog-eared pages and murmuring in interest—during his closing shifts at the Contact Station. At that hour a few other entry-level employees linger to perform routine park maintenance, but Isaac is stuck inside checking in campers and giving directions.

It's his talipes. Staying in the Contact Station shields Isaac somewhat from the public's curiosity, but when people glance at his feet or see him hobble around they inevitably ask about his "club foot." His left foot has hung like a J since birth, and multiple castings have failed to realign it. Often, after a night of particularly vigorous stretching, the J shows promise of straightening to a more socially acceptable I, but after eighteen years Isaac has accepted the illusion of this progress. Short of surgery, which is not fail-safe and which Isaac will never allow unless in a veg-

etative state—he hates knives, hates how they rend soft and hard things and split, always split so there can be no whole—Isaac's foot will continue to hang as twisted as the strands of DNA that deformed it.

He has learned to cope. He has a telescoping cane he keeps inside the breast pocket of his corduroy jacket, and he spells with minimal vexation the Latin derivative "t-a-l-i-p-e-s" to anyone who asks. But coping is no way to move through one's days. Isaac understands how to cherish the good bits of life left to him, such as the alone time the late shift grants. This he enjoys both piecemeal and in its whole, as when he fishes off his dock and each moment of idleness is as much a success as catching a ten-inch bass. He struggles only to find an outlet for the inner productivity he feels. He "should" be doing something, the rangers, his coworkers, his mother tell him. So he reads the park Historical Register. He has read it twice by the end of August, his second month on the job.

This afternoon is a chilly gray Friday that will never breach the sixties if the sun doesn't make a more concerted effort. It hasn't by five o'clock, and Isaac has doubts about a late surge. All

this stubborn gray, according to Isaac's mother, portends an early winter for Michigan. They were only a week into peak heat at the beginning of August when something in nature short-circuited and the furnace began to shut down. Don't be surprised, Isaac's mother tells him, if people start to show up at Jasper Pines with snowshoes.

In work khakis, a long-sleeved polo, and a wide-brim hat like the rangers', Isaac picks at his sack dinner of chicken salad, baguette, fruit salad, and green tea cheesecake. Dylan and Yumi have taken the maintenance truck to pressure-wash the park's signage and giggle to each other. Isaac deserted his post last time to ride with them. The five-foot Yumi, an American-born Japanese girl, seemed to drive the truck by instinct as Dylan sat in the bed unleashing his cannon. He sighted down the nozzle with the poise expected of the most decorated archer in Grayling, and struck every sign in its middle with a satisfying tang that made Isaac shiver just below his ears. But Yumi repeatedly swung into low-hanging pine branches that lanced through Isaac's open window, and at each camp site they passed, Isaac wondered who might be awaiting him at the Contact Station to check them in. After thirty minutes, he requested that Yumi take him back. Nobody was there, nor did anyone come until Dylan and Yumi returned an hour later, her hair possibly more tousled than before.

Headlights streak by on the expressway beyond the park entrance, each car a blur of gray as daylight fails. Sunset is not for two hours, but cobalt cloud banks roll into view outside the station's west-facing panoramic window, blotting out the sun's fall with streaks of rain.

These spears grow thicker with each minute as the phalanx approaches. The West soon disappears entirely, it has fallen off the table, the world is flat, and Isaac too begins to tumble until a set of headlights shines on the Contact Station and steadies him. A messenger has broken through. Isaac chews his baguette, twenty-six times per bite, twice the average, and awaits the news from the front lines.

Isaac opens the park register two centimeters in and reads an entry on the left page, one he has starred previously: June 1, 1968: *Found an owl hanging from a tree this afternoon—snared and debased. Couldn't tell what it was till I got up close. Food had been placed within a slipknot. When the owl stuck his head through... Cut him down with my knife and buried him.*

Isaac sucks in his stomach to escape the violence behind these words, his body tense as the blade saws through the final threads of rope and the slain animal thumps on a bed of pine needles. Its down cushions the fall. No author is listed for this entry, as with most others. It seems from a ranger, but could have been someone like himself, or like Dylan. Dylan carries a knife on his hip, prepared to liberate wildlife, cut back invasive species, or shave late-afternoon whiskers in the reflection of a bog. Yesterday he showed Isaac the black hairs emerging along his upper lip and around a mole on his chin. Yumi must be familiar with these little hairs. Isaac doesn't know if they are having sex but they probably are, if only because Dylan's an archer and "Yumi" means "bow" in Japanese. He sees besides how they act at work together. After the two stalled in first gear for a while, throwing glanc-

es that didn't connect, they suddenly figured out how much gas to give and when to release the clutch and rocketed through the gearbox. Isaac found them last week in the storage room of the Contact Station. They sat apart, but Dylan's left shoe was gone and his zipper half-down, and Yumi looked like someone had just squeezed a ripe Red Haven peach onto her tongue. This is why they go pressure-washing so often, and why they no longer invite Isaac. The polyurethane lining of the truck bed would protect it from stains, and the pressure-washer would take care of everything else.

The door bell clinks and a stooped, bundled man shuffles in. He measures six-feet-two or three and fills the door-frame almost as fully as the door. Still, sounds of a great clash squeeze through, rain riddling the frail aspen leaves and pine branches thrusting at one another like bayonets. The man angles himself and dips his shoulder to enter the waiting area wholly and shut the door. White hair encircles the bald crown of his head like a friar's, but his clothing is new and retains its color: a blue plaid mackinaw jacket is buttoned over his green plaid wool shirt, and brown corduroy pants patched with black stretch to his feet. On a sunny day his clothing would be unremarkable, but today Isaac resents his bringing the darkness in. The man sighs, a whistling release of air, and falls back onto the chair beside the door with such force Isaac is sure its splat will crack, or give way completely like an egg under a cougar's paw. But the chair holds, and after a glance outside the man turns to Isaac.

Once more Isaac nearly tumbles, this time as he stares into the face of

a man with no mouth. How that can be Isaac doesn't understand—he tries in vain to find some other way to think of it—but the face revolts him, and he must concentrate to fend off the semi-digested baguette climbing acidly up his esophagus. In the man's grooved forehead and pulpy nose, and especially in his green eyes, vibrant dragonfly irises that dance about the room, Isaac sees a human; but it is a wonder his features do not slide from his face. Below the nose things become murky, and Isaac is no longer sure what he's looking at. His eyes become lost in the man's vast web of scarring. All he can find amid the carnage to anchor his eyes is a tiny hole the size of a drinking straw. It is so small that, like a distant star, Isaac struggles to focus exactly on it. But its pull is strong. It is a black hole.

Isaac forces down a mushy bolus of something—he must have chewed fifty times, he can't tell now if it was bread or chicken or fruit—and welcomes the man to Jasper Pines. What can he do for him—a reservation? check-in? park tour?

The man's cheekbones lift into his eyes, driving away the dragonflies. It is a smile, one that repulses Isaac. The man belongs in fiction—in the horror stories of Poe, or else the curious world of Sherlock Holmes, someone used to dealing with oddities such as this. Isaac realizes who he is looking at: the incarnation of Hugh Boone, the disfigured beggar from Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Man with the Twisted Lip." The Contact Station has fallen into the Victorian grotesque.

The man raises two broad and gnarled hands to craft something in sign language. But he signs out of hope grown

thin; he has already bent to scrawl on his legal pad before Isaac can erase the image of the man's fingers contorting in the air.

The man's disfigurement draws Isaac's eyes as Yumi does when she sits and tiny curls of fat bloom along the sides of her Jasper Pines t-shirt. What violence has so devastated this man who Isaac might otherwise call handsome—in that respect so unlike the man with the twisted lip? And when? Isaac, though only his mother knows it, has had skin from his buttocks grafted onto his receding gums; surgeons can do anything. But this man has lost his mouth, and the hole left behind bears the mark of primitive medicine. Its black depths whisper of premodern torments and unanesthetized operating, and the pink roots branching toward each ear testify to blazes of rending pain. But the hole has healed. The man can smile, or come close, and were Isaac able to run his finger along the man's face, he would likely find it smoother than his own acned skin.

Isaac's eyes swallow the man a few seconds more before shifting, like a gorged cougar tearing yet one more hunk from a fallen doe, unsure of its next meal. He ought to know better; he wears thick wool socks and over-size shoes to try to mask his talipes. He fails, and people stare. He would show and tell them all they wanted, if it would make them stop, but it doesn't work. People never tire of disfigurement, whether the wreckage of a plane or of the human body. Even his mother stares at him when he watches TV.

Isaac bends to scoop a piece of chicken with his baguette, and when he raises it he sees before him the man in

blue plaid. He nearly pitches backward in his chair. Isaac has become the fallen doe, unresponsive, but still conscious in its last moments of life as impossibly strong jaws rend and tear away. The hole is a knife. Around them, the rain that has triumphed over the trees slashes at the windows. More knives. If Isaac stays in his chair or if he runs outside, he will be cut. Dylan and Yumi are being cut right now on the park's far-flung roads, or maybe cutting at each other in the truck's bed. Dylan feeling the sharpness of Yumi's nipples, she of his erection. Isaac crosses his left leg over his right and massages his club foot. He has never done this—he touches it only during his stretches—but it comforts him. He is safe with his own deformity, safe from the man's.

The man smiles again, and this shifting of his cheekbones helps draw Isaac's eyes away from the hole. When his eyes slip inevitably back down, the hole has softened somehow. It has lips, Isaac realizes. Or rather, they are as one lip, circumscribing the hole thinly and cushioning its impact. This was the enterprising surgeon's finest touch, saving and wrapping the man's upper lip so he could feel the pleasant soft pressure of a kiss on the mouth, that fleshy compression that Isaac has just come to know and must feel again soon, maybe with Yumi. Except, as the man bends to place his note on the counter his face comes under shadow and the round lip turns alien. It wriggles as an earthworm, moving forever in circles. Better to have a bare hole, to show things as they are. Junior year of high school, when Isaac wore increasingly bulky shoes and boots to school to hide his foot, his friend Mary sat him

down, placed a hand on his cheek and said, Please, Isaac, you're only making things worse. The man's lip makes things worse. But then, Isaac does still wear his bulky shoes.

The man's message delivered, he returns to his sentinel duty at the window. He walks briskly, but settles lightly this time when he sits. His handwriting is neat, though sharply backslanting. Isaac picks up the sheet, cocks it and reads:

*Dear Isaac (if you don't mind my glancing at your shirt pocket),
I don't want to alarm you; you seem a nice young man, and I see we are somewhat kindred spirits. I am awaiting my wife, who is driving up from Bay City to meet me so we can go camping. She shouldn't be long. As you might have guessed, I cannot speak, but hear well enough.*

-Harris.

Isaac reads the note a second time. Can a man with no mouth have a wife who looks him in the eyes, his great evergreen eyes, and loves him—loves even the look and feel and taste of his hole? The thought excites him. He flips the note over and grabs a pen. *Dear Harris*, he begins. *Thank you ever so much for writing me.* These words are imbecilic, Isaac realizes too late, and he moves to rip up the man's—Harris's—note and start over. But Harris is watching. Isaac leans back and considers how to proceed more intelligently, as an unarmed, nice young man might. A nice young man might ask about the hole. Not from morbidity, but a cordial interest. Harris has, after all, accommodat- ingly broached the subject—he probably

expects Isaac's question, and wants it. He has a heroic story to be told. Isaac tips forward and writes in tall, scraggly letters:

Fear not; I am at ease. I am pleased to hear your wife is meeting you; Jasper Pines is a pleasant romantic getaway; please let me know if I can help you with a reservation or to check you in while you wait.

-Isaac (like the nametag says)

P.S. If you would like to talk about things, I would be happy to lend an ear.

Viewed at arm's length, it is a tremendous note. Isaac has balanced politeness, sincerity, and tact with the parenthetical humor the situation requires. He wonders for a moment how to deliver it, but then Harris twists to look outside, seeming to sense Isaac's plight. The man has little to look at; it is the same rain sheet, though it seems less menacing over Harris's shoulder. Isaac comes around the counter as quickly and noiselessly as his impediment allows and leaves the note on the man's lap—a breach of manners, Isaac realizes as the note flutters from his fingers, but he cannot grab it back, and there is no other flat surface upon which to place it. He stumps back to his seat and lowers his head to the park register. What has he done? He wrote what—"If you want to talk about things"? Was that supposed to be subtle? Stupid, is what it was. And how many semicolons did he use? Isaac presses his baguette to his forehead and flips through the park log without registering the dates, names, citations, closures. He finishes

the bread and fruit salad and starts on the green tea cheesecake, an experiment of his mother's that he likes but hopes does not taste anything like actual green tea, because he is not supposed to like things like that yet. The entry from June 12, 1971 describes something about a ranger dismissal, but Isaac cannot assimilate the facts. He wants the man, he wants Harris—why does he have to have a name? why does Hugh Boone? are not their disfigurements enough?—to leave his Contact Station and leave him, Isaac, to his tedium. To his talipes.

But Harris has turned from the window and is writing. His hand moves across the paper quickly, as if he has always known what he is going to say. The rain strikes against the windows with less energy, and the trees no longer have battle on their minds. They have settled to a slow sway. The sky has even brightened. It is intermission, Isaac understands. Another fifteen minutes, and the lights will dim again for Act Two. Where are Dylan and Yumi? They should have come back when it started raining. He should call them. He lifts the phone from its cradle, but resettles it when he sees Harris rise.

Isaac flips through the park log, feigning busyness as Harris crosses the eight feet to the counter, then looks up to acknowledge the man with a nod. He tries to bypass the hole, but his eye catches on something new, a string of saliva dangling in a thin vein from the bottom of the lip. It stretches as more saliva dribbles out, snaps when the string becomes too long, then reforms at the lip's edge. Finally Harris swallows and the drool stops. He must have lost his nerves, too; he must not be able

to feel a kiss. Harris winks, he doesn't know he has drooled, then he sits back down. Isaac reads:

Dear Isaac,

Thank you for your help, and I appreciate your being so candid. I do in fact look forward to a tranquil weekend with my wife, even with this ugly weather.

But rain and storms are nothing. Other, much more dreadful things have come to pass in my life. I share this not to burden you, but because you asked, and because I take you and your post script for genuine. I respect that you questioned me about my accident directly and manfully; many prefer to whisper behind my back.

What you see on my face is a mark of war. I served in Korea in the 1950s, which you, if I may hazard my best guess, might associate with Elvis or Willie Mays. But not all in that decade was baseball and rockabilly. Many Americans—many of my friends—died. I escaped an artillery explosion with just this handicap thanks to a courageous and creative medic, who later became my friend. Not all in war is destruction.

I hope this truth is not too much to place upon your shoulders. But I fought at your age; you deserve to know.

-Harris.

After reading, Isaac looks into Harris's eyes until his breath begins to leak out. Those green eyes are the well of his remaining life, still deep and full, and each ridge of pink scar tissue a place where someone or something has tried to tap into his well—each an encounter with death, overcome. His face is not a

web of desolation, but of exultant life, the hole a trophy marking his supreme victory. His surgeon may not have had any other option than to remove Harris's mouth, but Harris could surely have reconstructive surgery now. He wants the hole, maybe needs it. Again Isaac kneads his club foot; it nestles inward like a puppy, or a girlfriend. It is soft. It is the one part of him that has not changed as he has grown, as his voice has lowered, as he has started to get demanding erections that want more than his own hand. Now he is filled with the palpitating, withering heat of the dog days that never came, now, as more rainclouds blow in to darken the sky for the second act. Isaac knows that as he and Harris stare at each other's deformities, Dylan has pulled off Yumi's Jasper Pines t-shirt and is sucking and kissing, working down to her khaki capris. They will both strip and have sex in the truck bed and nature herself will clean up after. They will come back wet, complaining about the wild rains and the touchy pressure-washer. It will likely be another year until Isaac feels this same intense heat, until next August when he will earn fifty cents more per hour doing the same things in the Contact Station, or else become stuffed with Grayling and move to Boulder, Wichita, Indianapolis, Australia. Only someone like Yumi can bring this heat sooner. He turns over Harris's note and sees unknown cities and anonymous breasts in the blank yellow page.

Dear Harris—how to open himself up to a man who has lived so extravagantly, has sought and seized every extreme of life and splashes it across his face for all to see, respect, fear? If only Isaac could have surgery right here be-

fore Harris, to show how little he, too, cares about such things as knives or shrapnel, except in their capacity to display inner strength. But even this thought cools Isaac's ardor. He imagines the coolness of the scalpel on his skin the moment before it plunges through to muscle, and knows they could never put him far enough under not to feel its cutting. Besides, if he had the courage of Harris, he would embrace his foot, show it off, and ask Yumi out rather than fantasize about her. *Thank you for sharing*, Isaac continues:

I hesitate to 'trade war stories' with you, given your past, but I know how tough that is—people staring and wondering, and the tremendous pressure to bear their gaze and your secret or else reveal over and over again that which causes new pain each time. With my talipes (club foot) I feel lucky to have found a desk job. I am not ashamed, but I like the world seeing me from the waist up; I can joke with folks, and we can laugh like normal people. Otherwise, they only pity, and pity is a heavy thing.

-Isaac

Softly Isaac puts down his pen and rereads the note. He has never thought any of these things consciously or coherently, and it shocks him to see them on paper in his messy hand. He nearly cries. Out of pride he almost tears up the note, so he can own these words himself forever, but again Harris is watching. Isaac owes him whatever is in his heart. Harris does not turn away, but Isaac rises anyway and walks across the waiting area. Harris's eyes do not leave Isaac's face, even when it dips along with each

step of his left foot. Isaac places the note in Harris's extended hand, then returns to his seat.

Isaac does not pretend interest in the remains of his dinner or the park register. He stares instead at Harris as his eyes flicker across the note. Far sooner than Isaac expects given the gravity of what he has written, Harris finishes and looks up. He appears to be smiling, his eyes glowing green through their squint, and holds the expression longer than seems natural. Isaac doesn't understand. Harris whistles through his hole, perhaps in laughter, but doesn't reach for his pen or legal pad. He doesn't want to share what is so funny. He has another secret.

Many soldiers and war veterans come through Jasper Pines—just across town is Camp Grayling—and if they aren't too sullen, they chat with Isaac as he checks their credentials for their park discount. Sometimes later as he is doing the final rounds with Dylan the men invite them to the campfire and share stories from the trenches or, more often, of the women they've met on leave. The next morning they're gone, leaving savaged mountains of Busch Light in their wake. These military men are interesting and often fun, but rarely seem real. They lob beer cans as grenades and bark drunken orders, they play war. Isaac wants Harris to be real; it will break his heart if Harris is playing war.

Fresh light streams into the Contact Station as another car pulls off the expressway. Harris jolts and squirms in his seat to see the car behind the glare. The rain has ceased, but this has only decreased visibility; the pounding water gave things shape, and without it

the darkness and everything in it has lost its texture. A woman climbs from her sedan and, despite the lack of rain, runs into the Contact Station bent double. The bell tinkles, a moment of déjà vu except that this new figure in the doorway is diminutive. She is closer to Yumi's size and dressed for spring. She wears a white blouse under an unbuttoned argyle cardigan and khaki bottoms that, due to her height, are not properly pants or capris. They expose two inches of gray, spotted flesh darker than any of her clothing, before white ankle socks pack her skin away and tidy things up. Her face shows life like her husband's eyes, its skin the pink and tan of carnation blooms and peeled beech. And a mouth, thank God she has a mouth, anchored to her nose and the rest of the face by a deep groove that resembles so many of the natural depressions Isaac has seen around the park. She thrusts her arms under Harris's and grabs him about the shoulders, as if about to do a chin-up, and rests her head against the breast of his blue mackinaw. She faces Isaac, her mouth ajar. Her teeth show through, and Isaac wonders if Harris has any.

Harris's wife detaches herself and signs to him. Her gestures are swift, and her face stern. Harris furrows his eyebrows. They are a couple sharing tales of the road, like so many others who come through the Contact Station. Isaac pulls out the reservation book. After a moment they came over, Harris's wife in the lead. She gives Isaac all the necessary information and waits as he brings up their reservation. She also is about seventy, not beautiful, but still cute in the curves of her lips and the little creases running along her cheeks.

She is almost too pretty; a man with no mouth might not think himself good enough for her. But back when they wed, Isaac can see, Harris was handsome as they come. He sold himself with his eyes and claimed his wife not as an insurance policy for war, but out of love. This old love lingers. As Harris hangs back, scanning the room, his hand dances along his wife's shoulders and back like a nuthatch, sometimes hopping to her waist and below. At moments only his fingertips lie upon her sweater, but he maintains contact as she steps forward to sign for the bill. He will not lose her in the rain and darkness again. But she leans back into his touch, and strokes him with the words she speaks to Isaac—*My husband has been waiting so long, my husband is a saint for coming bird watching*. She will not leave him, Harris must know.

Isaac gives her the military discount, and at this she presses her red lips together and tucks them inside her mouth where he can't get them. Not even Yumi has that kind of mouth. What military discount? she asks, confused but wary of giving up a possible deal. Harris's eyes snap back on Isaac, but he can't comprehend them and presses on. The discount for servicemen, Isaac says. Well, she says, I never served, so here's the price in full. Isaac insists on the discount, but she has already finished writing her check, these old ladies are still so fast at that, even when everything else about them slows and droops and drags. Except this one's lips. Isaac accepts the check while looking at Harris, but his eyes are back to flying about the room, alighting in turn on Smokey the Bear posters and fire danger warnings and maps of the area. Isaac must

relay a message to his friend—they *are* friends now—but fears betraying something to the wife. Isaac prints two copies of the receipt—Oops, he says—hands one to the wife, and one, scribbled upon, to the husband as she files hers away: *What about the war?* Isaac has written. *What about my foot?*

Harris will not read the note, but meets Isaac's stare with wide eyes. They are their usual bright green, like an algaebloom, but shaky and pained. Who has he betrayed? Isaac must know, and he lifts his foot and massages it, nearly crushes it. Harris's wife has already left the station, and his nuthatch fingers suspend over nothing. He seems inert as Isaac mouths, *Please*, then Harris waves and is gone. He takes with him his story.

Christopher Bradley is a recent English graduate and current post-baccalaureate student whose work has appeared in the Oregon Voice, Chapman Journal, and Unbound Lit. He is currently studying in Pavia, Italy.



untitled

keillan mennella
acrylic painting

Keillan Mennella is a recently-graduated Digital Arts major.

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The fleas keep coming, the fleas.
Every our deliberate tiptoe
I take

Around look, around word
The fleas keep coming.
They feel

My hot and forget my chilled
and take my blood
and disturb me.

They tariff what freedom,
our deliberate tiptoe, the fleas.
I can't see them.

Where are the eggs?
Which of us spawned them,
Those fleas that keep coming?

Our bodies are marked,
your eyes, my mouth,
We are infested.

— CHESTER CARMER

*Chester Carmer is an Environmental Science major.
He has been previously published in Unbound.*



streetlights

e. austin kornfeld
c-print



sidewalk at night

e. austin kornfeld
c-print

E. Austin Kornfeld is a senior, majoring in Digital Arts. He has previously exhibited in the LaVerne Krause Gallery. Featured in this magazine are two of Kornfeld's analog, night time photographs of an untitled series taken in Springfield, OR.

a lack of sympathy

MORGAINE HALL

Morgaine sits on a black futon, searching for something to watch on television. It's Christmas Eve, and Comedy Central is playing a *South Park* marathon. Since her mother isn't home, she feels free to indulge.

It's her mother's apartment: the walls are a bright white, making the two-bedroom home seem larger, and the place is spotlessly clean. Aside from the clusters of books, an overflowing duffel bag, and three different pairs of shoes scattered between the kitchen, dining room, and living room, that is. But that's how it's always been. Morgaine is secretly glad her sister Mallory decided to stay with Dad for Christmas—cleanliness is a compulsion for her, one Morgaine clearly missed out on.

A tall, rather crooked Christmas tree stands near the television. Morgaine wants to scowl, but the look on her mother's face as they finally got the tree to stay upright makes her smile. Mom spent last Christmas alone, so Morgaine can tell her mother is overjoyed that her daughter has decided to spend the holiday with her. (Even if all Mom does is talk about Mallory.)

Well, not the *entire* holiday. When one's parents are divorced, all holidays are divided. Morgaine often feels like a living timeshare, the negotiator and the property all at once. That's why she's home now, eating a barbecue Hot Pocket and trying to leave some of the sugar cookies for her mother when she gets off work tonight. Mallory will swing by around five this evening and pick her up so she can spend Christmas Eve with her dad's family before returning home.

It's around ten-thirty in the morning when Morgaine's cell phone beeps once—she's received a text message from her sister.

Dad wants to know if u really wana come over?

Morgaine's heart sinks. Even after three years at college, she cannot escape the traps her loved ones spring on her. She envies kids whose family stories deal more with genealogy than discord.

Depending on who she's talking to, telling her family history

requires several lies of omission with interjections of “it’s complicated.” She alternates between a look of solemn seriousness and flippant carelessness, again depending on which will keep them from asking questions. It’s a routine she’s perfected early in life, so ingrained she finds it more difficult to tell the whole truth than to simply gloss over the ugly parts.

But lies only lasted so long—no one said anything about the abject loneliness of never really being found out. Starting her third year of college, she felt like a living mannequin, frozen inside the fantasy of perfecting the world believed she inhabited. That’s when she went to Shelly, a therapist at the college.

Morgaine fought her need to lie as she sat in a red, padded chair, staring hard at a spot on the carpet near her feet.

“So, what’s the story?” Shelly asked, staring at Morgaine through her black-rimmed glasses.

“Dad and Mom get together, have two kids, break up. Custody battle, child support battle, visitation battle. Ended up living with Mom during the week and seeing Dad on weekends.” Morgaine’s voice was as blank as her face, flat, and cold.

Shelly nodded. “There’s more, I assume?”

There was a hint of dry humor in her voice, but Morgaine didn’t feel like laughing. “Dad gets remarried, so Mallory and I have a new mother. Mom quits her job and goes back to college. Dad moves to suburbia and Mom’s drinking becomes a problem. Dad has another daughter and Mom hits me.” Another pause, then Morgaine sighed. “Mom and I waste three years of my life fighting. She won’t let me go live with Dad. Then, one day, I’m with Dad’s family, returning from a trip to Hawaii. There’s a message on the machine. Mom let me go, and I stay with Dad through high school.” Morgaine stopped, her head cocked to the side. “Aren’t you going to ask me how I feel about all this?”

“Believe me, Morgaine,” Shelly said. “You’re saying a lot more than what you think you are right now.”

Morgaine stares at the text message on her phone. She knows that, right now, her words will say much more than she wants revealed, if she’s not careful.

What do you mean? she texts back.

Another beep. Do u want to see them or do u feel obligated?

Oh shit, she thinks. That’s a complicated question.

It’s just a yes or no.

No, it’s not that simple. Morgaine knows that argument

won't matter to Mallory, whose life revolves around what she wants. To her, Morgaine is a means to an end, nothing more.

But Morgaine didn't know how to tell Shelly such things at first. Just keeping her personal narrative honest, not glossing over any painful details, was difficult enough.

"What happened while you were in high school, Morgaine?"

"At first, it was great. I worked hard, was a good student, in several school plays, and even on the cheerleading squad for a while. I was everything they ever wanted." Morgaine fidgeted, rolling the joints of each finger back and forth like a wave.

"Why didn't things work out?" Shelly had her yellow legal pad, but her pen balanced on it.

"My junior year, things were different. I was tired all the time. School didn't matter to me anymore. I slept through my classes but managed to do enough to skate by. I kept feeling as if I had a large rock on my back, pushing me down every time I tried to stand up. By Christmas, it was easier just to give in."

"How did you give in?"

Morgaine was still fidgeting, but her fingers worked faster now, sometimes pinching against thin patches of skin. "I slept all the time. No more homework, no more plays. When I wasn't at school, I locked myself in my room. I kept my music on loud, but I slept through everything. So, by spring trimester, when conferences started, I..."

Shelly doesn't ask any questions.

Morgaine stopped fidgeting, realizing her hands were shaking too hard to manipulate the joints. "At conferences, Dad was confronted by a group of teachers who talked with him about how I had changed that year. Apparently—" There was a hitch in her voice, and she struggled to contain it. "Apparently, they insinuated that the changes were due to trouble at home. When Dad got back, he screamed at me. Said that I was lying to my teachers, trying to make him look bad."

For the first time, Morgaine looked at Shelly. "I had to tell him something was wrong with me. I had to tell him I was depressed. I wanted to die and all he thought about was himself."

Morgaine pressed her hands hard against her eyelids, trying to hide the tears flowing down her cheeks. She hated to cry.

Morgaine's not crying now, but she can feel her apprehension coalescing, a too-tight knot inside her throat. She's rolling her joints again, like she's done so many times before, trying to pay attention to the television when the phone beeps.

Morg they are ur fam. U dont seem to show any intrest to want to come over. U said u were mad 'cause they

forgot ur teeth were getn pulled but do u know anythn anyone has gone through here? Its christmas. Just call dad and talk to him and ill come get u. please.

Morgaine is mad. She had her impacted wisdom teeth removed two weeks ago and was stuck in the recliner for the first week, unable to get a spoon between her front teeth because her cheeks were too swollen. The medication the surgeon prescribed made her want to itch her skin off the bone and did nothing for the pain in her mouth. One evening she was able to get a few hours of sleep, but when she woke up, her shirt was soaked to the skin with blood. Her cell phone, always languishing on the arm of the recliner, never rang. She held it in her hands after she'd changed her blood-drenched shirt and cried. Blaming the tears on the pain in her mouth was easy.

After that first week, the bleeding stopped and she was able to eat again, but the swelling didn't recede until a few days earlier. Now she winces at the thick yellow bruises that start under her jaw and reach to her cheekbones. No one called to check in. It hurt.

She doesn't text Mallory back.

The phone beeps again after a few minutes. Call Dad, it reads. This is like eating him up. Its really upsetting him.

Morgaine clenches her jaw too tightly as she reads and winces, a flash of pain arcing across her face. She can't help but respond to her sister now. This is eating him up? Then why the hell is he texting me through you? I guess he doesn't have to call me, since I'm not really his kid, right? He doesn't have to love me at all.

After she sends the message, Morgaine puts the television on mute. She clasps her hands together, her knuckles whitening. She feels something hot burning just beneath her ribs, wanting to be heard and willing to tear her apart in the process.

A shrill beep fills the silence. What the fuck? U know he loves u! Don't do this shit on christmas. I don't know where ur getn this from but it needs to stop right now.

But she cannot stop herself, certainly not for Mallory's sake.

She calls her father to put him in his place. She wants to prove she's the bigger person by calling him, by standing up to him and risking his displeasure.

"Hello," Dad says, sounding almost normal.

"Hi," Morgaine replies. She waits him out.

"Mallory says you don't want to come over. She says you're angry." His voice is flat and hard, and Morgaine feels as if she's staring up at an unscaleable, cold cliff of granite. "Do you have any idea what I've gone through? Denny died last month."

"What? You mean your—"

“Yeah, my real father. So sorry if I was a little too busy to talk to you.”

The sarcasm in his voice flays her skin like razors and Morgaine begins to cry. “Dad, I—”

“No, don’t bother. Look, I don’t know why you hate it here so much. I’ve only tried to do right by you. But, you’re right, I don’t get you. I don’t get how you can be so goddamn unhappy all the time. And you’re so ungrateful. We give you a happy home and you just throw it away. I used to imagine you sitting alone on Christmas because you were too fucked up to realize we love you. Now, I get it. If you want to be alone, so be it.”

Morgaine is choking on her sobs now, gasping for breath. All the things she wants to say have left her, all the anger lost underneath a wave of guilt so strong it consumes her. She wants to say that it isn’t enough, all the things he tries to give her will never be enough, because they’re just things. She wants to say that, if she only felt like they needed her, then nothing else would matter. She wants him to admit that he hurt her, to apologize, scoop her in his arms like he did when she was small and hug her until her very last tear dries on her cheek. She wants to say that she’s sorry.

But she can’t say any of those things. Taking a deep breath, she is barely able to say goodbye before she hangs up the phone. She bends over, as if a large rock has landed on her back, clutches her knees, and cries.

Morgaine Hall is senior majoring in Comparative Literature with a focus on French. She has previously been published in the Unbound Winter 2009 issue. This piece is nonfiction.



on the go

nj huff
digital painting
7.5 in. x 6 in.

NJ Huff is a junior double-majoring in Digital Art and Japanese. She is featured on the cover of this issue of Unbound, and much of her work is self-published on her site <http://eecomics.net>. She also does poster and lobby work at the Albany Civic Theater in Albany, Oregon and was featured in "Techno Art: Past, Present, and Future" at The Dalles Art Center in The Dalles, Oregon.

c u s p

Silky cascade
down between the blades of the shoulder:
Straw gone smooth,
tucked behind the soft hill of the ear.
From under the yellow sheath,
the nape peaks,
a curve of delicate flesh much too tender,
the fine rope on which my carabiner eyes can barely stand to hang.
Seams of green cling taut but gentle
along the sweet slope of the waist.
Cold riverclean musk runs off the collarbone,
leeward, into the air,
luring me to summit.
A final pass and she reaches me:
glacial eyes, a face to slice.

—KELLY EDYBURN

*Kelly Edyburn is a sophomore double-majoring in English and Spanish.
She has been previously published in Unbound and Out of the Blue.*

KURT SPICKERMAN

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I parked my silver Toyota against the back doors of the community center and went to the trunk. Inside I had the two loaded pistols I'd bought the week before, tucked into the tire compartment, wrapped in one of my mother's blue and white kitchen towels. I hung a bag with four clips around my neck. I put the guns in my waistband above either hip and slammed the trunk. There was an English class in progress, I knew, because it was ten o'clock, and that was when my class had been. I walked to the front of the building and pulled open the heavy glass door.

"Hello, sir," the heavy white woman with the pink sweatshirt said as I approached the receptionist's desk. She had been there every day that I came in, and still she did not recognize me.

"Hello," I said in the same singsong tone. I pulled the right gun free, stretching my arm over the high desk and pointing it at her chest before pulling the trigger. It felt like a firecracker going off in my hand, a vibration rolling like a wave up my arm, making my teeth clatter. Her swiveling black office chair rolled over backward, spilling her onto the ground. The other receptionist—to her left and farther from the door—made a quiet squeak just before my gun spoke, a bullet hitting her stomach at

an angle, sending her spinning to the floor. I pulled out the other gun and held them aimed from my hips, like the cowboys on TV.

In this country, this place of *freedom*, you can be anyone you want, as long as you speak the right language—their language. I was born in Vietnam and moved here with my parents and my sister when I was eighteen. I am twenty now. I took classes at the community center for almost a year, but this language is confusing; it doesn't sound right when I speak it. In English, a speaker must draw out certain vowels or pronounce them differently depending on word or circumstance. I would get so frustrated, and one time—the last time—I broke my pencil and threw it at the chalkboard. The teacher, Ms. Marge, told me I needed to leave.

That's when the police started harassing me. The first time was when they pulled me over for what they said was speeding.

"Where are you from, sir?" the officer asked.

My English wasn't right.

"Binghamton," I told him, and I could see laughter behind his eyes.

"Well," he said, "I'll let you off with a warning. You go on home now."

After that, I could hear their muffled breathing whenever I was on the phone with Ms. Marge, and two times I saw them in the yard, but when I went outside to catch them they were gone—they had altered their forms, running down the street like dogs. It was then I knew I had to be careful whom I trusted.

My family began looking at me strangely. Whenever I got home from my job at the cannery, my mother would ask me where I had been (she knew).

Whenever I left, she would ask where I was going, and my sister would ask to come along. The police had gotten to them, and when I went to my room, I could see where they had been looking through my drawers, searching for my notes. I started writing down every suspicious activity that I saw, the license plate numbers of the cars parked across the street, all the evidence I needed to prove they were after me.

Things got worse. I couldn't walk down to the corner market to buy a coke without being followed. There were listening devices in the light bulbs in my room—I could see them for a split-second when I turned out the lights, black against yellow. Everyone was watching me. Everyone was after me.

It all started with Ms. Marge. She was one of them, priming each new legion of goons, brainwashed and under the government's control. I hadn't gone willingly; I fought their mind control, and now they wanted me back; now they wanted to stop me from warning others.

After the two receptionists, I headed into Meeting Room B. I was the cowboy; the new American cowboy, and I walked straight forward—not like that ducking and rolling they do in action movies. I tucked the gun in my left hand into my right armpit, pinning it to my side, and used my free hand to turn the knob. When I had the door open, I pulled the gun free again and aimed both guns into the classroom.

There was no sound; no screaming or talking. They all new why I was there, and I think they were ready.

"I'm here to protect you," I said,

swinging my right arm to the side and firing my gun into Ms. Marge's face. The wall behind her darkened with colors I hadn't expected—blues and reds and grays—and she crumpled to the floor. A Korean woman hiding behind a desk near the far wall began sobbing quietly.

"No, don't cry," I said. "You're safe now." I walked over and placed the barrel of the gun on the crown of her head. "Everything is going to be okay." I fired into her, setting her free.

A man in a blue and white windbreaker sitting across the room stood and began waving his hands. "No, pl-please," he said in halting English. "My family..."

I told him I wouldn't let anyone hurt his family. I told him they had gotten to mine, and I wouldn't let that happen to his—I knew how it was. I raised the gun in my left hand to his chest, drew in a deep breath, held it, and pulled back the trigger.

When my family decided to travel to America, there was talk of moving to an enclave of Vietnamese people in Indiana. It was said that there was a city in the southern part of the region where everyone spoke our language and our culture was the only one. There, our people had their own businesses, schools, and police force. In the end, though, it was decided we would move to New York. My father was a doctor in Vietnam, and it was thought that there would be more opportunity for him to ply his trade in the Big Apple, the land of opportunity. He now works in a grocery.

The area in which my family now lives is a neighborhood of other Vietnamese immigrants, but it is not safe for me. I

see them watching, whispering in each others' ears, and I know that they've been infected too. I cannot free them all—all I can do is try to stop them at their source.

When it was quiet, when all of the bullets I'd brought had been fired and there was only the sound of my own breathing, I left Ms. Marge's classroom, my canvas shoes sounding like a sponge being squeezed dry with every bloody step I took. I looked out the glass door in the front of the building, and saw nothing that I hadn't seen on my way in—the rest of the city was as it had always been. I pulled one of the heavy doors open and listened, but all I heard was the endless swoosh of traffic on the street and the tearing-paper sound of a jet overhead. After a moment, far in the distance, I heard the wail of a siren. It was time to go.

I pulled the last box of bullets from the trunk of my car and reloaded one of the pistols, rewinding the other in my mother's towel and stowing it safely in the spare tire. I pulled the blood-spotted satchel from my neck, wadded it up and stuffed it in the corner of the trunk between the wheel-well and the taillight enclosure. Before climbing into the front seat, I leaned into the car and pinned the loaded gun between the side of the driver's seat and the small plastic console in the center where I kept some gum and a few tapes that my sister had given to me. Glancing toward the building, I saw that there was a crack in the passenger-side window, where the handle of the door I had used my car to pin closed had struck it. Someone had tried to get away.

I felt something grow in my chest—a tickling, a substance-less vomit trying to force its way out—and then there was nothing I could do to keep it in my mouth. I bent over, closed my eyes, and let it come—and suddenly there was laughter everywhere, echoing all around me, filling my head with bright explosions in the darkness behind my closed eyes.

When the laughter had subsided, I climbed into the car, wiping the moisture from my eyes with the sleeve of my gray sweatshirt. I slid the key into the ignition and cranked the car to life.

Out on the freeway I felt safe sealed in my steel box. There were strangers all around me—who knew how many were against me—but we were all egg-cartened apart, cradled in plastic and metal. I glanced down at the gun, still where I had stuck it, and adjusted it so the grip pointed up. I could now bend the wrist of my right hand backward, and wrap my hand around it, push my finger through the trigger-guard, feel the smooth metal trigger in the crook of my finger.

Eventually, the low vibration of the car—with the constant rattling of loose screws hidden away in the dash—became unnerving and I opened the console lid and selected one of the tapes: Elvis Presley. My father had a few Elvis Presley records when I was younger, and once in a while, seemingly for no special occasion, he would place one on the old turntable. I had many fond memories of sitting in the main room of the house, doing homework, with my family, listening to the records, the needle popping through scratches

and dirt as Elvis Presley's strange voice filled the room. When we moved to America, my sister bought an Elvis Presley tape and gave it to me for my birthday. I cherished it, and I was sorry for what this country had done to her.

After I'd listened to the tape all the way through five times—following the freeway, unable to read the signs, but sensing that I was going in the right direction by the movement of the sun—I put in one of the other tapes: The Beatles. I felt as if I must be near. Everything in this country seemed to be right where you wanted it to be, within arms reach—when you were thirsty, all you had to do was turn around and there would be a beverage machine; when you were hungry, you went to McDonald's and your food was ready before you asked; when you wanted to be entertained, all you must do is turn on the television: there were three hundred channels. America took all of the things you most desired and gave them to you, even before you wanted them.

What I wanted was to flee to the safety of the jungle; to sit down against a tree and rest my head; to run naked through the humid air, as I had done as a child in Vietnam.

I exited the freeway and drove toward a distant green. The off-ramp spilled into a city perpendicular to the direction from which I'd come. Tall buildings lined the streets, looming overhead. There were many cars, but the going was much easier than it ever was in New York. Cars honked, and people yelled at one another, but the cars still moved. After a short time, I was out of the crowded downtown, and traffic began to move

even more smoothly, the shadows of trees darkening the street in front of me. My car climbed a small wooded hill, and at its crest the outskirts of the town below presented themselves to me, laid out like a filleted fish waiting to be canned—browns and pinks, and green guts still clinging to the spine, offered up for the taking.

I slowed, turning onto a single-lane dirt road between two barbed-wire fence-posts. The gas gauge hovered above the “E” and I had no money in my pockets. I knew that this wasn’t my jungle, but there was nowhere else to go. I drove between the rolling fields, the sun now over the right side of the car, shining in through the passenger-side-window, sparkling bits of dust spinning above the empty seat.

When I came to a low, short-cropped field surrounded by trees, I stopped the car. The barbed-wire fence snaked its way along the edge of a two-foot-high embankment, and as I climbed over it, my jeans snagged on one of the barbs, tearing a patch out of the inner left thigh and scratching my skin. I slowly walked until my shadow fell directly behind me, and I couldn’t see it without turning halfway around.

I sat on the dry grass, folding my legs in front of me. I drew the gun from my waistband and, as I placed its barrel snugly against my temple, the sun fell out of view, a blood red creeping down the dark crown of a distant hill.

Kurt Spickerman is a senior English major. This is his first published piece. He recently became a father. This piece is inspired by the Birmingham Massacre.

o u r

Something aches
in the space of an our
Ours to cudgel and cuddle
without screaming at all
But Mine, you said.
And I cried when
men you hired to dig,
deep and fast, revealed the
shallow grave.
But Mine, you sobbed.
And it took an hour
to put our together
And Mine was yours,
but I named her
Both,
to be shared
between us
And Both likes picking daisies, pulling pranks, gig-
gling, and bubbles
But who is Mine? she asks me one day

And I tell her Mine is dead

She shakes her pretty head
and picks another flower
Something aches
in the space of an our

—HILARY HANCE

*Hilary Hance is a senior double-majoring in English and Music History.
This is her first published piece.*

m y m o t h e r

always asks me if I am still writing disgusting things;
bringing up ancient history, lightly damning while feigning being supporting, wondering wantonly
what I've done towards my dreams;
asking how goes the chase of them;
or if it is all better left forgotten; unmentioned.

She'll let her read what I write.

One night,

we had to sit down in the kitchen next to the red black-and-white television,
to have a discussion on what was appropriate to write about religion,
that written affirmations of Jack Kevorkian was not appropriate for a young Catholic man.

That although showing imagination,
small-minded fixations on urination freezing permanently to people who pee outside in winter revelry,
not an appropriate topic for poetry, especially not to be passed around to kids outright giggling in line,
disrupting classroom activities—that this poetry was cause for suspension,
that, for the next six days, I would go to the office instead of my class,
copy the dictionary instead of my math—for making classmates laugh.
My mother said what I wrote was disgusting.

That still worries me.

—THOMAS McCRONE

*Thomas McCrone is a junior majoring in English. He has been previously published in
The Plain Dealer and Homeless Voice.*



untitled

lauren eberle
cloth, wood, wire
12 in. x 8 in.

Lauren Eberle is an art major. She has two pieces featured in this issue of Unbound.

m y m a c h i n e

We moved your bed into the library
where you kept your favorites.

Under the silver drawer you tossed the empty prescriptions, cotton balls, chopsticks, tape, and
tacks.

Just for your grandchildren.

She was a good woman and knew how possible children can be.

We moved into your old bedroom, where it was dark and hard. The hallway rocks, bedded in
pavement,

hurt my knees when I knelt, the knees you held when I was born and sick.

Playing imaginary is serious business,
and we all take it seriously.

I would unslide the junk drawer and realize possibilities.

I just might have magic.

So together went the tape, the tacks, the bottles and cotton, and when you were sleeping in the
library (or maybe awake), I hovered the machine over you.

This could work.

I made up a way of thinking about it:

Imagine walking ahead of me, down a beautiful street,
a kind of false-Germany street
with lampposts and cobblestones.

Maybe there's a young girl selling
rotary telephones or caramels and the street is still
wet from the raining rain and the pouring, pouring sky.
You look like I wondered about, like the 60's, like paisley
and morning glory sickness prescriptions.

Let me lie quiet in your tummy,
I'll only turn about once,
and I'll only breath when I need,
but please don't stop buying your things
and talking about books and walking.

You turn around and hold out
a hand saying “wave.”
You’ve turned the corner.
Out of sight and out.

When it didn’t I blamed myself.
I know I didn’t kill her,
but I failed to save her,
and that’s too similar for a kid’s ethical center.
I never spent any time
in the adjacent living room,

I couldn’t quite take the irony.

—KYLE MANGAN

Kyle Mangan is a junior Psychology major and pursuing a certificate in Rhetoric. He has been published locally, nationally, and internationally. He is also the poetry winner of our Line-by-Line contest.



untitled

matthew ribkoff
color film scan



oregon landscape

matthew ribkoff
color film scan

Matthew Ribkoff is a junior majoring in Political Science. He has published previously in Unbound. This photograph is part of an ongoing series of landscapes in the Pacific Northwest which deal with human presence and scale, with this photograph representing Oregon.

c o n v e r g i n g u

m

The gunmetal puffs approach in a block,
Four continental cotton balls fated to lock

u

In mortal battle for their vapor at break of dawn.
From the Northeastern monolith a lance is drawn

l

And the Southwestern guardian grinds
Forward on his ethereal wheels, blind

i

To all but his nemesis bearing dark tides.
Over a craggy butte they collide

And gales rush round their grappling
To shear the soil and swallow saplings.

But above is the eruption, those gargantuan bays
Knocking at edges and bursting upward shocks of gray.

— CHRISTOPHER BRADLEY

Christopher Bradley is a recent English graduate and current post-baccalaureate student whose work has appeared in the Oregon Voice, Chapman Journal, and Unbound. He is currently studying in Pavia, Italy.

bedroom scene

DAVID VENDEL

Everything seems to be going great, and then...she starts crying. I roll over, my body on the bed next to hers; my head lies on the pillow. I'm pretty sure I'm supposed to ask her what's wrong.

"What's wrong babe?"

I watch Vanessa roll over on top of me and crawl up my chest. She looks up at me, her eyes still watering. I let my head fall against the pillow.

"Do you love me?" she says in a shaky voice.

Her emotion startles me; I'm not used to her exposing anything. I look out the window: it's pitch black. My eyes wander around the room; an empty bottle of wine, my bong, the velvet painting of pirate ship in a storm that I got at a vintage shop.

An episode of *Seinfeld* is on mute. Jerry is dressed up in Newman's old postal work suit. He's helping Newman with his route so that Newman can get a transfer to Hawaii. Jerry hands a letter to a shop clerk. I mouth the line "Mail on Sunday?" along with the clerk. I hold back a smile and wish I could turn up the volume.

"Of course I love you. We've talked about this," I say.

She rests the right side of her head against my chest. Her tiny breasts feel cool against my stomach. My erection long gone, I look down and admire her body; small, white, tight. Now, I think, I'm supposed to reassure her with comfort. I lift my right arm and stroke her back at a medium pace. I take my left hand and slowly brush her blond bangs to the side so that I can look her in the eyes.

"Are you okay?" I say in a caring voice.

"Yeah...I'm fine...I don't know why I'm crying," she says, upset with herself.

And she should be sorry, but I almost feel bad for her. It's gotten to the point where it's like this all the time. She's overloaded with emotion. I don't know how she ever gets anything done. I have work to do, thoughts to think. She just lets it all out all the time.

I don't respond and keep rubbing her back just hoping she will shut the fuck up. I hate making her cry.

"I'm sorry..." she whispers.

I kiss her on the forehead as I slide out from underneath her. My bong rests across the room on my desk, next to my computer. My weed: in the cabinet of my bedside dresser. I pack a bowl and turn the volume up on the TV so that I can barely hear it. I take a rip and hold it in as I pass it to Vanessa who quietly accepts, taking the bong first and then the lighter.

I watch as George attempts to persuade the tenant association to lease the apartment to him instead of the other man, an *SS Andrea Doria* shipwreck survivor. He stands in front of the board members sitting behind a table and summarizes all of the horrible, tragic, and pathetic details of his life. In the end neither gets the apartment.

*David Vengel is a senior majoring in
Planning, Public Policy, & Management.*



thoughtless moment

lauren eberle
rope
1 ft. x 2 ft. x 1 ft.

Lauren Eberle is an Art major. She has two pieces featured in this issue of Unbound.

m i s s t e p .

I have a tendency of finding pencils nestled in the covers the morning after, creatures composing
my dreams
into symphonies when I lay down for my four hours of peace, my only lovers
everything is a sea of blue the melancholy clings but seems not to hold
i saw the curves and lines of your name in the ecstasies of the sunset, that amber tone hurt more
than i had known
i succeeded in spending the entire day in a lonely room, in a lonely mind, in a lonely rain, in a
lonely bed
seven little numbers, so difficult

— HILARY BOGGS

Hilary is a sophomore studying English.



bad karma

nathaniel benson & christina schueler
wax, paper, collaged photos, colored pencil, mat board

*Nathaniel Benson and Christina Schueler are juniors
majoring in Art.*

e l e g y

I lay in bed for hours this morning
 thinking about all our ever-afters,
 all our last nights that culminated,
 crested, crawled back to messy flats,
 drowned themselves in dry amaretto,
 lost themselves somewhere past three
 and fell headlong into old nightmares.
 The ones that sat waiting, waiting,
 and in the gray haze of too many cigarettes
 and bad marijuana, sprang upon us
 as we watched the monsters of our childhood
 creep from the closets, beneath the bed, the windows
 and claw their way up beside us begging for recognition.
 Aging demons, familiar tormentors of our youth
 still lurking in our shadows
 still whispering to us at the office
 still gripping our hearts as we try to fall in love.
 These are the wraiths that hugged the corners of the ceilings
 and darted among the plastic, dollar store stars
 —artificial, glow in the dark galaxies;
 home of china-made Martians (saucer sold separately)—
 chasing us through alien arboretums filled
 with flesh eating foliage.
 Trespassing chargers be damned,
 we'd save the damsel and be stopped
 by booger-headed bad guys adorned with pirate skulls,
 whose bite turned people to debt-ridden zombies.
 But we fight valiantly before collapsing into the fort
 of sheets and linens and cushions we promised we'd replace.
 Wake up years later alone in the dark,
 drowning in dry amaretto.
 The monsters are passed out on the couch.
 But the damsel went home early,
 feeds her cat,

tells her roommate you're an ass.
And those plastic stars are dead;
died millennia ago.
But still their light fights to break through
the post-twilight glow of the city,
and the haze of a flickering street lamp
and the haze of a night that's gone on for too damn long.
We're lying there thinking about our damsel
and all our ever-afters,
sharing a drink with old monsters
and the debt-ridden zombies,
watching dead green stars
—home of china made Martians
(saucer sold separately)—
cast their eerie radioactive shimmer
on the faces we grew out of,
shed by the bedside and tore free of
in the gray morning of the post post-modern,
semi-realized creations of the make believe,
lamenting how much we want:
our damsel
our innocence
our old predawn adventures.
But by now the monsters are passed out on the couch
and the damsel went home early,
feeds her cat,
tells her roommate you're an ass.
And still we need.
And still we want,
like our parents wanted,
and our parents' parents wanted,
and still we find our wanting wanting.

— DAVID GEORGIEFF

*David Georgieff is a Journalism major with a focus on Electronic Media.
This is his first published piece.*

(n o w) i a m
t h a t g u y

SEAN GARRETT

O h my God. I have gained apotheosis into a statistic.
“You see that cauliflower formation?” The doctor points toward it with his Parker Pen. I look down at my penis lying limp between my legs. My pants are crumpled down at my ankles and I grasp my front shirttails in my hands. They start to shake. “Definitely a genital wart.”

All the air rushes out of my lungs. Like a yoga exhalation, the reality sets in, the tension drains, but on the inhalation my hands quake more.

“You’re sure?”

I want this to be a joke. The doctor stands with his clipboard, something like five foot eight, a short little bald man about sixty or something. Something interests him, something on his little board. He jots, his eyes scan the little piece of paper.

He looks up from that pursuit he so languidly pursues. Beyond his silver-rimmed glasses his aged eyes sigh, “Yes. The cauliflower growth on your penis is a genital wart.” He returns to his scribbling, his doodles, and he scratches check marks. He stands to my right and I return to face forward. My view changes like a dive-bomber pilot’s, staring first at that bright examination light’s glare and the next moment the momentum points me straight at that battleship.

My battleship is dead in the water, a direct hit upon its starboard

side. It is there. It pulses in my vision, growing, biotic. This is not a breach in the hull; this lives. And I think it's abhorrent. It is a lower life form than the cockroach.

And it is growing on my penis.

The doctor has kept writing, flipping the examination sheet over and penning away on the backside of it. He lets me panic in private.

My shoulders slump and my neck pulls erect. I turn on him, my eyebrows mean and demanding. "Can I get rid of this?"

The sound of writing silences. The senex scrutinizes me through his sententious spectacles. We stare at one another and the alien is forgotten for this moment. A dignified physician of the medical community is locking eyes with me about my knob. He answers, "We can use cryotherapy to treat the papilloma bloom."

"That's going to get rid of it?" I demand.

He insists, "That might get rid of it. You may have to come for a second treatment." He retires from our gaze and returns to his musings. I can't think of anything else except what this means. He is going to take a hose that leads up to a tank of liquid nitrogen and release a stream of that. Onto my penis.

And my girlfriend. What the fuck is she going to think about this? For the first time since I've arrived I lean back. The examination chair is a cozier version of the dentist's chair. Everything about it is exaggerated. There's only one straight line and that is the one that is thick, black, and cavernous: the vastness between the sillily stuffed bottom and back cushions. And how is my girlfriend going to react to this?

"It's okay," the doctor insists. I must look shocked. "Current estimates say that one out of every four people gets it." He returns to his clipboard. That statistic rings in my head. I am one-in-every-fourth-person now. Like how 67% of this country is religious, or the chances of winning the lottery is 1:146,100,000. I am that guy.

Sickly clicking the pen, he deposits it into his scientist jacket's breast pocket. The old man finally retracts his clipboard and sets it noiseless on the doctoring counter. "Would you want to be treated with cryotherapy?" he inquires.

The walls are blank but for posters complacent to medicinal moderation and a healthy existence. At least all the ones in my view have nothing to do with sexual diseases. I answer reflexively, "Yeah," a half-hearted heckle to my thoughts. "Let's do it."

He reclines the chair and informs me to lift my shirt. He tells me to spread my legs farther apart. He has latex gloves on, but he stops. I'm shaking I'm so nervous, and he asks, "May I bring my resident in? I don't think she's seen this particular procedure." Whatever, just kill it. She comes in, perky, equivalent in age to me. I think. Or she diets,

whatever. She stares at it, puts on gloves. "Spread your legs farther apart." Handles my most sensitive area surgically, filled latex tubes manipulating me, rolling it for different perspectives of view. She shines the light on it and nods to the old man.

And the hose. I bite my lip so hard it wells blood into my mouth as the cold and shocking vapor trickles onto me. It ends. They mumble and before I can look the mechanical trigger presses and half a passive second later I draw my lips apart and huff out. Like cold water.

"Okay," the doctor mumbles to his resident. He continues, "I think that will eradicate the bloom. It should flake off in a few days, you can pull your pants back up." The doctor is at his board, his resident in her scientist's jacket cavorting next to him, they lingering upon that wooden fact sheet. I drop my shirttails and draw my pants back up like a rape victim. Slow and unsteady. Unsteady and humiliated, ashamed and afraid sans security.

If this could happen...

I try to think of something else. The solution or the problem, or buttoning my pants, or zipping my fly, or fastening my belt, or anything besides what just happened. It feels like a *Charlie Brown* special, but far too real and far too adult for television. What—or better, why—would television desire to tell this? Even Lifetime would reject the premise.

My jaw juts and I ask, "I...?"

He looks up. "You'll just have to check with the window at the front. They'll tell you what to do." And I do, grabbing the sheet that he extends to me and walking out of that room calmly, a poker face presented to negate the assumption of what it could be. I am a neutral: I could have anything. I could have AIDS, to the nurse that is passing me with the chart; I could have Hepatitis, to the nurse that is passing me with a cart; I could have Syphilis, to the doctor who looks toward my vicinity.

At the window they take my insurance card and it is busy around me. The entire lobby is a swelling mass of disease and sickness, but it is impersonal in comparison. There are those with the flu, with bronchitis; communicable, but my God they don't have to explain it to their girlfriend. There's a man sitting with his finger—or what's left of the digit—above his head and he is trying to seem calm but his face is flushed with the rush of blood. There's a little girl playing with a probably germ-infested magazine and she smiles while I tremble and stare over their faces. I wait. I frown. I gaze over the other victims, not patients, victims of life and chance.

"Sir?"

I turn back to the overweight woman with lines creasing inexplicably from the corners of her mouth, emphasizing a chin that really isn't.

"Your co-pay will come to \$50."

I pull out my leather wallet. It shakes. I place a Visa check card down and she takes it up. Behind her, behind the plastic partition, is a room comprised of color-coded manila files. It appears that they hold up the ceiling, that they are the walls. Like it was made for fetishists that desire to be surrounded by paper. The medical profession's librarians. She pushes a receipt toward me and I take up one of their pens. Sign it, slip it silently across the wooden perch and she snatches it. "Thank you," she says and hands me a full paper receipt.

The bill is actually \$52, and I want to scream that she lied. That she is a liar and a cheat and a thief. I instead pivot and march out of the hospital, through their aperture opened by automatic sliding doors, past someone bloody enough to be a gunshot victim.

Patient—whichever way they try to say it, we're all still customers.

Sean Garrett is a Law student.



pinecone

ashley parsons
digital photograph
3888 px. x 2592 px.



wrapped

ashley parsons
digital photograph
2592 px. x 3888 px.

Ashely is a freshman Art major, pursuing a BFA in photography.

d i s t a n c e

RACHEL RASMUSSEN

a winged pillar of light
you saw me,
open palms
raised high

to catch it;
white
but not clean,
it was unmelting

to my touch.
it fell at our feet
and stuck;
buried our separate bodies

where we stood;
filled the gap
between us
with more cold.

*Rachel Rasmussen is a senior Philosophy major. She has been previously
published in Unbound and Bad Light.*



night bird

laila bahman
35mm black and white print

*Laila is a senior in English as a second language,
focusing on acquisition and teaching.*

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