

UNBOUND

ONLINE LITERARY MAGAZINE FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON



Fall 2010 Volume 4, Issue 1
www.unboundlit.com

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Nicole Gautier's photograph "Austin, Nevada" is featured on the cover of this issue.

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MAGGIE BREES

HEARTS FOR BREAKFAST

Charcoal and Photoshop

“Hearts for Breakfast” is the winner of Unbound’s 2010 Horror-Genre Art Contest.

UNTITLED

I feel her viscera writhing
beneath my palm
 frenetic
 scalding

her questions slither wildly
 a mass of pitiful serpents in heat
she hits who what and why
and a chuckle works its way up from my tar gut
 "sweetheart
 you're a few Ws away from bein' a journalist"

this would be a long shot
 uncut as she isn't
no zooms
no pans
nothing but the sincerest anguish
presented on 70mm of greasy canvas

her eyes are rosacea-afflicted eggshells
 the pupils are rolled back
I presume they see something far more beautiful
 or at least palatable
in that darkness

I cup her hands in mine
her nails scratch fruitlessly at my calluses
and the dull prick
reminds me that I owe her a rose and a dirge
every year
from here on out

—STU WHITE

"Untitled" is the winner of Unbound's 2010 Horror-Genre Literary contest in the area of poetry.

BLACK DRESS

— MEGAN GIBBS

Your sister called me to tell me that yesterday they buried you. I told her they'd made a mistake. The phone was silent, but I could hear her breathing. This is why we didn't tell you earlier, she told me finally. I tried to make her see that they needed to go back, now, before you suffocate. Listen to me, I shouted. Listen to me, goddammit!

There was no will, you should probably come back, she said and told me where they put you. I hung up and dialed your number but you didn't answer. So I dialed again. But the phone just rang and rang. I shoved my business suits back into my Samsonite and returned to the airport. There were no direct flights home, so I made three connecting flights and hated each person sitting so calmly in their seats. At midnight I finally arrived and ran through the deserted arrival gate and took a taxi to your place. The lights were off, the windows gaping dark and huge in the brick walls. I hit the button with your name on it, over and over, but the lights stayed off, and the intercom held its tongue. I shouted your name at the windows, but you didn't come out. A woman stuck her head through the window next to yours and told me to go home. That you weren't there. You were gone. I abandoned my Samsonite on the

sidewalk in front of your door and ran towards the intersection to find another taxi. You were running out of air.

Dawn is close now. The air is frosty. Mist curls around the trees, extending, grasping, groping. I've stolen a shovel leaning against the small cottage at the gate and I'm coming; I wonder if you can hear the thudding of my feet echoing through the ground as I sprint across the grass. Moonlight glows inside the mist which twists and gropes through the skeletal trees. Even as I run to save you, you're slipping through my fingers. Tall shapes loom, and once or twice I trip over a stone, but I'm back on my feet at once. They've done their best to smooth over the dirt on top of you, but I can still see the gentle mounding of it. The dirt is frozen, and it jars my hands as I drive the shovel into it. I want to shout, "I'm here! Don't worry!" but I'm afraid they will hear my voice and take me away before I can get you out. I can't be too late. So I drive the shovel in over and over. The deeper I go, the harder it gets to move the dirt. My fingers blister and my palms tear and bleed. Icy sweat plasters my shirt to my back, and my tie chokes me; there's no time to loosen it. My steaming breath billows about my head like a cloud. But finally, as a single bird begins its shuddering song, I hear the reverberating thud of your mahogany prison. The shovel leaves half moon gouges in the wood. I clear away the rest of the dirt and jump down. I pry open the smudged and scratched box with the shovel blade.

The moonlight shines down on your face, washing it paler than usual, but the moment I see it, I know everything's fine. You're wearing the black dress and pearls you bought last year for my office Halloween party. You were Audrey Hepburn, and I, Rex Harrison. You wanted a cheaper one, but I

convinced you. It was classy, I told you. And I wanted so much to be able to peel it off you afterwards, and watch the black slither down your long, white limbs. I pull you out and clutch you to my chest, smoothing your hair and crying your name, sounding like the warbling birds. It's hard getting you out of the hole, but I cling to the white marble stone at the top, and pull us up. We're both smeared with mud, and there's a cut on my cheek from the frozen, rocky dirt. Now we match; there are scratches on your cheek, though they've tried to cover them with makeup. I leave the shovel lying in the grass and carry you back to the car. When we get to my apartment I help you take off your black dress, and then I wash your white body clean.

“Black Dress” is the winner of Unbound’s 2010 Horror-Genre Literary contest in the area of fiction.

DERAILED

NICHOLAS EKBLAD

I wake up. In Front of Me wakes up and Behind Me wakes up. We start to pump our levers. Our levers are easy to pump. They turn the wheels on our individual carts. The wheels rotate smoothly, squeaking on the steel tracks that don't go anywhere. I ride my little cart alleach wake, in front of Behind Me and behind In Front of Me. I pay no attention to my surroundings for they are inexistent. All around me is white nothingness. Behind Me is a nice person. In Front of Me is a nice person. I am nice, and we are all nice.

I have been here for so long that I cannot remember how I came to be here, pumping my cart in these pleasant loops. At least, I assume that they are loops because if they weren't, then wouldn't we come across something new? Either way, there is never anything new. Only whiteness, whiteness plotted with this small segment of rail that I ride on, which stretched only six feet ahead of me and disappeared into the white nothingness. The bland smell of nothing continuously haunts my nostrils with a vagueness matched only by that of what I taste. The stale flavor of monotony cranks on my taste buds wake in and wake out. If I had the benefit of resources for thought, it would be drowned out by the incessant squeaking of the tiny wheels that roll under me. However, I

have no reference points except Behind Me and In Front of Me who each stay at a distance of three feet and maintain the same speed that I maintain.

In Front of Me cranes his neck to speak to me every once in a nonexistent blue moon that which would actually be white. Today, there was no moon. But I don't know what that is or why it would matter as to how often In Front of Me speaks. We do not converse often because that would distract us from pumping our levers.

"How goes the lever?" In Front of Me asks, not caring to hide his apathy, because he already knows the answer, and he knows that I know that he already knows it. However, he asks anyway and I answer accordingly.

"It's fairly easy, as per usual. How is yours?"

"Oh my lever moves smooth as ever." He keeps on pumping. I keep on pumping. We sit in the empty sameness that is our ceaselessly white world.

After a long wake of pumping in the same pearliness and the white similitude, In Front of Me stops pumping, so I stop. Then, Behind Me stops and we all go to sleep. That is our life. We wake, we pump, and we sleep. It's not fun, but it's not bad either. We do not know anything else. An internal inclination drives us inexplicably to follow these tracks into the depths of semblance.

The next wake was almost like any other. I woke up and right away I started pumping. Behind me and In Front of Me were pumping effortlessly, unconditionally. Our carts, the rails, the whiteness, the endless routine burned into my sight once again. We rolled on the horizontal sameness for hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries—however long it was in between sleeps, I had no idea. It was unsurprising until I noticed something that contradicted the crippling pallor of my wakes. There was a screw loose inside of my cart. It held together

the wood and a piece of metal connected to the lever.

“In Front of Me, there is a screw loose in my cart. What does that mean? What do I do?” I asked the railer in front of me, puzzled. He did not answer, however, because that is such an out of the ordinary situation that he did not want to think about it.

I had never seen a loose screw before and didn’t know what to do about it. The screw was sticking out of the hole it was in. This was abnormal, and I decided that it should be put back in the hole, to right the wrong. I then had to figure out how to do that. While maintaining my control of the lever, pumping the sameness into the cart, I bent my body forward and looked closer at the screw. I noticed that it had threads that ran gradually up to the top of the screw. It seemed to fit uniformly into the hole. It seemed that I should turn the screw one direction or the other if I wanted it back in the hole.

Here is my turning point. I knew how to fix the problem, but a thought came to my head. What will happen if the screw falls out? That will not be normal. But who says what is normal? Maybe this is supposed to happen. The thought of something different happening was interesting. Fed up with the plague of dullness that I lived in, I decided to not do anything about the loose screw and wait to see what happens.

So I pumped my lever for hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries. Since something different had happened, I had become aware of time. I was able to distinguish how many wakes it had been since I noticed that the screw had been loose, which was quite an interesting feeling. I slept and woke three or four times before it finally fell out.

The metal screw landed with a clink on the floor of my cart. In Front of Me glanced back. He had heard something out of the ordinary.

“What was that?” he asked idly, as if he didn’t really want to know. The question itself was abnormal and I’m guessing that he decided to keep to his pumping.

“Oh it was nothing.” I stared at the displaced screw. The unknown scared me. In furious unison with the drive of my lever, my heart pumped iced adrenaline into my veins, which tingled excitedly. My head was suddenly flooded with countless incomprehensible thoughts. I was thinking. Everything I did preceding this point was done without a thought process. The lack of variety, the lack of change, my inclination to the routine had deprived me of the need to think about anything.

I took one hand off of the lever and extended it toward the screw. This was epic, for I had never let go of the lever except to sleep. Picking up the screw, I glanced at Behind Me to make sure that he had not seen me. Behind Me just stared through me, blankly. The screw was sharp on one end and made my finger feel bad when I held it pinched between two fingers. The arm loyal to routine was starting to get tired so I switched arms, passing the screw to my left hand. I held the screw cautiously, gently in my cupped hand, rolling it from one side of my hand to the other. As I played with the screw, my head rushed with contemplation yet again, with too many thoughts to count and too many ideas to understand. This is different, I thought. This is fun. I wasn’t exactly sure what I was doing, or why I was doing it. All I knew was that I liked it. I then started tossing the screw into the air. I moved my hand in a fast upward motion and the screw rose up into the air, stopped ever so briefly, and then fell back into my hand.

This amazed me. It seems so simple now, unenjoyable, at best. However, at the time, this little exercise of playing with a little screw triggered great interest in my vacant mind.

So I played with the screw, while maintaining command of my lever of course, for days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries. I threw it up into the air and caught it again. I rolled it between my fingers, feeling the threads press against my skin. I inspected all of the tiniest spots of the screw, marveling. I bounced it off the wall of my cart. I listened to the sounds that it made in awe, noticing that it made a different noise when it hit wood, than when it hit metal. Exercising my senses was a new and interesting experience to me. It was challenging and fascinating. I tossed the screw from one hand to the other, which required me to juggle the lever as well. In my excitement, I pumped a little late, slowing down. Behind Me gasped in utter astonishment. My heart raced once again, sending chills through my body. No one had ever compromised their speed before. I hastily resumed pumping, dropping the screw which hit the edge of my cart then dove off the side, in front of me.

The next thing that happened was a cacophony of screeching metal and sparks. The screw had landed right in front of one of my front wheels, which squealed in disagreement. The rear wheels left the track and my whole cart tipped forward. Reality began to twist with a tremendous force that I was definitely unfamiliar with. My vision spun in five, six, hundreds, thousands of circles while my body tied itself into a knot, so it seemed. The dissonance of the crash hesitated for a moment as my cart teetered. It then smashed into the rails among a fiery storm of sparks. As my surroundings and my senses were spiraled into a warped accordion, my cart tipped sideways, landing in what should have been whiteness. However, the comfortable whiteness— the sameness— was gone.

I was laying in something soft and overwhelmingly vivid. It was wet and smelled pungent and earthy. It was grass, bright

brilliant grass. Looking up, I saw that the grass was lying upon a rolling hillside that gradually transformed into an immense, imposing mountain, at the base of which was a beautiful, crystal clear lake. Topping off this picturesque scene, was a strikingly radiant blue sky with fluffy white clouds resting upon it peacefully, dreamily. The great yellow ball that was the warming sun comforted the new world with its presence.

I had never seen anything like this stunning sight. It took my breath away and an overpowering sensation of pure delight took over my mind and body. I sensed the wonderful safety and comfort of the grass. I felt the joyful exuberance brought on by the gentle slopes of the ground around me. The colossal mountain in the distance lifted my spirits high into the vibrant blue sky where they relaxed serenely with the pearly clouds, gazing thoughtfully upon the calm lake below.

Inundated with pleasure by this amazing spectacle, I almost didn't notice something so strange and questionable, so unfortunate that it made me fall to my knees in shock. Among this gorgeous setting and overwhelming joy that I was so fortunate to experience, was the track that I had been restricted to. I saw my fellow railers pumping absentmindedly around the track, up and down the rolling hillside, around the tranquil lake, under the vivacious blue sky and temperate sun, utterly oblivious to the stunning environs right under their nose.

At once, my head was flooded with questions. What is this place? Why are we on that track and why can we not see what I am seeing now? I felt incredibly sorry for my fellow railers who had no idea what they were missing, who sat comfortably and safely in their boring carts, who pumped continuously in a straight line, who pumped incessantly in a never-ending loop. I suddenly became very scared. This was inarguably an amazing place,

but would I ever make it back to my cart? My heart sprinting on a full tank of bone-chilling adrenaline, I considered my situation. What if I can't get back to my safe little track? Everything I know, everything that I am used to is on that track—

The carts came to a sudden stop and I noticed a break in the line. That was my spot. Next to the opening was my cart, lying in the grass near the rails. I was scared and unsure as to what I should do. For as long as I can remember, I have traveled these rails. That is what my fellow railers and I do. That is what we know.

*Nicholas is a double English and Spanish major in his Sophomore year.
He has written for the Oregon Commentator since fall 2009.*

LUB-DUB

It doesn't matter if you know the life
lub-dubbing warm beneath your ear.
If you love her, such the better.
If you care, then pull him near.
But a simple thumping heartbeat
asks only soul and soul aligned.
Masks and layers by the wayside,
no call for witty lines.
Simple touch communion, universal,
like the rain on moss and lichen-crowned trees.
Quiet-thundered secrets of identity.

— TAYLOR WILSON

Taylor is a junior Biology major with previous publications in his high school creative arts magazine as well as the honors college journal Ephemera.



SAMANTHA HANLIN

UNTITLED #1

Watercolor

Samantha is currently undeclared. She was the Editor-in-Chief for her high school literary-arts magazine.

LAST SEASON'S HAIKU

gypsy tendencies,
soft inarticulations.
sulfurous july

-

biking abandon
concussion in the brambles
parting bloodied curls

-

i've always wanted
to do it amongst the shelves –
topple stacks, split spines

— NICOLE GAUTIER

*Nicole is a senior English major. Her photograph,
“Austin, Nevada”, is featured on the cover this issue.*

AERIAL

As quick as she'd force feathers through her scapula
 I'd gnash through them
 starving
My teeth became cemeteries
Slews of rachises and barbs
buried deep in leaky gums

I still remember the invidious joy
from when I found fetters that fit her

Truth is
I'm terrified of open skies
 I need the murky uncertainty of clouds
 I demand crippling precipitation
 and the thirty mph gut punches
 that keep you facedown for the ten count

If and when the heavens part
I hope the gleaming shafts of light
are from dogfights and blitzkriegs
 It's safe down here
 Stay

You don't need to be a pilot
to crunch cyanide pills

You don't need propellers
to find asylum in gloaming

You just need wingtips

 I'm still famished

— STU WHITE

*Stu is a junior English major. He was also a winner
of Unbound's 2010 Horror-Genre Literature contest.*

ULTRA VIOLET REELS

My brilliant sky
is a blue roll of vintage film
with wispy cloud stains slowly
moving by.
They are day ghosts,
emitting warm breaths
instead of attic roars.
The kind that caress
like thinly pulled cotton
trailed along
sun-kissed skin.
Under this sky
I welcome
foreign freckles,
black birds bordering
bold, rusty planes,
and whatever else
rolls on by.

— MOLLY PONKEVITCH

Molly is a sophomore with an undeclared major. She has been published in her high school literary magazine and on Lulu.com.



AMANI S. AL-SOOMALI

BURNING

Ink on Paper

The figure is composed of English words and the “abaya”
or veil is composed of verses from the Holy Qura’an.

Amani is a third-year Art History major.

SONNET ABOUT REBUILDING THE CASTLE I SHARED WITH THE ONE I LOVE

Aftermath. Exhumed from a lonely tomb
Looking for dormant clustered gems in walls.
I walk past columns still proud beneath ruins
Searching faithfully empty arching halls:

You walked inside this place in purple clothes.
Magnificent effigies of us stood
As we were carried upon our twin thrones
Between tall columns in their steadfast mood.

But now I search for remnants and I wonder.
In a fool's nightmare I was cased in stone.
Rocks you couldn't recognize me under.

I weep as I search. Doomed to be alone?

But finally I catch a distant gleam
And find your gems, bright as they've ever seemed.

—CHESTER CARMER

*Chester is a senior majoring in Environmental Science. He has been
previously published in Unbound and the Oregon Voice.*

STREAM

JASON CARTER

You step sideways and look at the slightly covered unopened shoe box and wonder who put the shoes inside of it. You take a step forward, then another step, left foot down, right foot up, left foot up, right foot down, another step. You aren't ready to stop, you're not sure if you'll ever be. It's the decision that brought you here, that unforgivable, unmistakable, whimsical, sexual, mistake. You didn't want it to turn out this way, but it did. You look over to your left and notice a small outcropping in the unusually lush overgrowth. It entices you, draws you in like the ice cream truck did when you were a child, like tits did when you were adolescent, like sex did, like drugs did, alcohol, life. You turn to the left because you're eyes just won't cut it. A step, another step. You're standing in the outcrop and there's nothing there, there never was. You're breathing heavily like the weight of the entire atmosphere just dropped down upon you. Your diaphragm recedes downward and air rushes into your lungs, they absorb oxygen using chemical reactions you can't even comprehend and your diaphragm pushes upward causing carbon dioxide and other unknown substances to be released into the atmosphere. You can't help but wonder where those molecules will be in a year, in a day, the next minute. Who else have you touched? you think. It's not that you regret your decisions, you don't believe in the past. You just wish you still had what you had, you have nostalgia. You don't know that, you're not articulate, you don't even speak English, you're not reading this. Impossible. Stop. The

outcropping no longer interests you; you determine that some kids created it for some Saturday afternoon entertainment, some human ritual that you try to understand. You think back to your child hood and realize it was insignificant, you think back to yesterday and realize it was insignificant. You remember the past doesn't exist; you're you. You know it, you never won't. Turn around, back to the road – yes, that road. Okay, now take a step, please slowly; there is questionable terrain in front of you. It wasn't there earlier. You don't know how it got there, you don't care. You take that step, then another step. Repeating this action instinctually is boring. You decide to be consciously aware of the act of walking and you almost forget how it's done because you don't remember the last time it took mental work to make your legs function. You realize you're not sure what to do with your arms and they feel awkward, out of place. Just limbs hanging at your side. You feel funny, this isn't right. You hold your breath because it worked when you were a child. You think back to that nonexistent time when you always felt out of place. Out of place in your family, in life, in the universe. Unhinged from the door of existence, misplaced atoms. You held your breath then when that feeling came. Each breath drew reality back into your body, your mind; it made you feel better, as if the atoms drew back into the right place and you inflated back into a tangible being, a shape that you understand, not that amorphous foreign object you used to occupy. Back to now, back to stepping. You didn't forget; one step to the road. Left up, right down, nothing to it, you think. The shoe box. You recall that it was unopened. You think about turning around so you do, taking into account every variable of the human figure. Turn the hips, head, swing the arms, lift a foot, turn it, put it down then repeat with the other foot. A little more difficult, you think. Here it is - the shoe box. Unopened,

untainted. Only God and the person that packaged it know what's inside. You remember you don't believe in God. Oh well you think, he won't miss one person. You're not sure if you should bring the shoes into this world, it's a big decision. Can you support the shoe, will you be there for it at all times, will you toss them out when you don't want them? Questions to consider. You want the shoes to have a chance. You stare at the box, wondering if there are even shoes in it. There has to be. You bend down and recall, dick at ease, the actions necessary to open a sealed box. It's easy, not quite as easy as walking, but easier than turning. You decided to take the risk. You determine you're ready for a child. The shoe children. You remember there are two and wonder if their consciousness are linked, or if they are like fused twins, you know, how one always leans to the right and the other one to the left. It's not unusual, just

unheard of. The box is open, the shoes are liberated. No umbilical cord to cut, a convenience you think. Better than real children perhaps. They're brown, stitched together with a slightly lighter brown – it makes a nice pattern. In the front there is a stripe of orange that you think complements the brown nicely. You're happy with your children. It's decisions like these though that fuck with you, that ruin you. Last it was a real human baby. A unique individual with unique thoughts. A new perspective, one you'd never know. That angered you, you wanted to be the baby. You couldn't. You decided you didn't want it so you tossed it out the window. That was a mistake, you realize. That's why you're here, that's why you're lucky to have found shoes this time, they say. You cherish them, but never wear them. Shoes aren't meant to be worn, babies aren't meant to be thrown. Those are your rules.

Jason is a third year student studying Biology. This is his first publication.

SECRETS ON A STRING

This paper crane resting softly in the palm of my hand
is stained with the blood of paper cut veins
hidden in the creases of each careful fold
where scarlet lines lead the way to secrets
disguised ordinarily.

When I look around I see the faces of:
the boy who yearns for the girl
who borrows his pencil every Monday in Calculus;
the woman who dreams through her daily commute
for the woman who completes her
and how her conservative mother doesn't know;
the man who goes home to turn on a vinyl
and pour himself a glass of wine
with high heels on around the house.

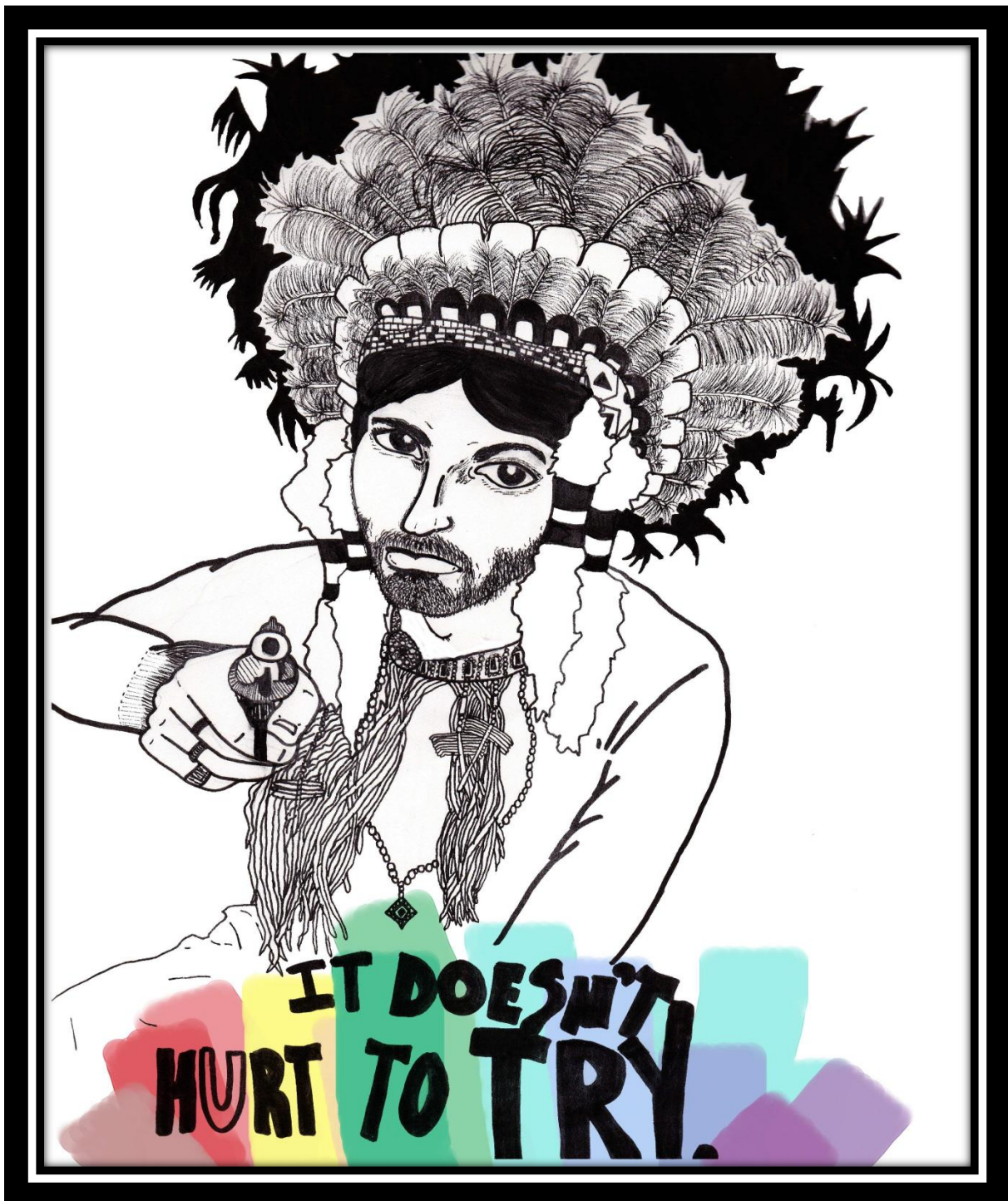
The man sitting next to me wants to have sex
with his brother's wife,
while the girl to my left wants to be loved and told so softly,
so deeply that she is wanted
despite the stain of bruises left to linger from her father's hand.
And in between their worlds, I sit on my bed
folding paper cranes wherein my secret roots,
blooming red lines waiting
until I send them to float out windows
like a freed jar of fireflies.

The perfect paper crane sitting in the drawer of my desk
holds my father's secrets spattered in blood
of why he clenched his pistol between his teeth and pulled,
and yet my mother never learned his last words
as I stole them away when I walked in to see his body
to save her from knowing what I did,
that she was the reason why.

So now when the boy from Calculus walks home from school
and the girl with simple hopes runs to escape her home,
the man who trades his heels for loafers as he walks to work
and the woman in traffic each find errant origami
in between their mind-wanderings and clandestine dreams
to happen upon my secret and know
we're strung together.

—JANE ROARK

*Jane is a senior English major with previous publications
in Unbound and the Oregon Voice.*



JENNI THOMPSON

THUNDER ROLLING DOWN MOUNTAIN

Ink and Digital Media

Jenni is an English major. This is her first publication.

AKA LA LIMONADA

— BYRON J. SUN

Heeeeeeey, you with the rooster, you must not forget what happened to Her—;She did exist! But first you need to know that La Limonada is not an indifferent town—it *controls you*—makes you ignore, overlook, and forget everything that happens here. If you were to look at it from the highest peak, you would know that Uncle Sam came to die here and that this town stands as a monument to a saint that makes dreams come true. Uncle Sam, aka corruption, aka free trade, aka death squads, aka illegal immigrant or more commonly known here as—LA LIMONADA, it has already monopolized not only these town but many others. These towns have drunken its inhabitants to the point that it only allow your senses to be aware of only certain things. From the highest-peak you can see all the roofs are covered with tires, rocks, cinderblocks, cans, bottles, footballs, empty chip bags, and candy wrappers; some were placed by the people so that their roofs would not be blown away by the wind, others were placed by the supernatural forces of what some crazy people call gravity—but it was La Limonada that wanted it that way. It's no coincidence that during the day you ignore people whistling, girls gossiping, packs of dogs chasing passing motorcycles—someone screaming that they got robbed; La Limonada is also forcing you to become accustomed to the snores of a drunk sleeping in the streets, stomachs growling, a child selling candy—a *lost teen huffing glue*—the clapping of hands covered in masa making tortillas; La Limonada has successfully squashed the insurgency of the noise of rats giving birth, of condom wrappers being opened, of a drunk dentist extracting a tooth with no anesthetic, of the cucarachas crying because nobody has

wasted anything, of shoes eroding away on the pavement, of people praying to the egalitarian gods, as well as the sound of a man being emasculated and let's not forget that you can't even remember the two gun shots from yesterday—

N-noooo, don't go, I'm-not-done; you need to hear what I have to say—yes now, She must not be forgotten. You must not be outside after 7 p.m.—no, not outside. Don't even dare look outside; the dogs don't howl, the crickets don't chirp, and even La Llorona doesn't come here at night to search for Her children, all for a reason. For that matter don't even think of being outside after 7—that's why everybody seems to disappear into their homes just before that time. You must be careful, if you happen to break the only law—;*don't break it!*—just don't do it, but if you do some people say that you'll go crazy—*it's not true—I am not crazy*—nope I'm not. Stop asking so many questions but what really happens is that if you're outside La Limonada will start to target you. *This town has secrets it needs to protect.* La Limonada knows I was outside and it's trying to get-rid of me—*I just started to fade a few days ago*—yes fade, but I am not crazy. If I stay in a place too long without talking I will be stuck there and La Limonada will get me; the constant wandering has allowed me to see what I didn't see before but I must keep moving—keep moving.

Now my words have bound you to me, even if you don't want to, you have to listen and you mustn't forget that She exists—if you forget, La Limonada will have succeeded again. I must tell you everything and you must not forget. ¿See that shack over there? N-no, the other one—yes, *the last one*—just yesterday it became the last one as well as the

poorest part of La Limonada. If you don't believe me go check; by now the electricity, the good drains, the clean running water, and cable TV have forgotten that shack existed—;why? Because it doesn't have any and it just became the next target of La Limonada. But let me tell you what nobody knows, what nobody sees and what all have forgotten—;Except me!—*I saw it all*—even what didn't happen. I can feel it all and I still see it all.

Come let me show you—yes, you must contemplate what I see so that She is not forgotten. Where you see that newly planted tree there is an old but still standing cement pila basin that has not been used in a couple of weeks because of all the moss growing in it; where you see that wild grass there is a barrel that once had clean water and now it's infested with mosquito larva. The cluster of old trees you see, that's where what seems like an abandoned shack stands—*but it's not abandoned*—;She lives there! The shack's roof and walls are made of cheap corrugated metal streaked with rust. Sometimes when it was windy She could hear the nails barely holding the walls together screaming in pain to not let go. In some places the rain unwillingly helped the rust uncovered holes that welcomed rays of light all at different angles into the one room shack; where She would follow one trying to count the particles of dust or even imagining that She was one of them moving with the sun as the day grew older. The only “furniture” in the room is the bed on the right side of the room, with a mattress that She had to share with a couple of rats who had settled illegally there. The bed frame is made of dark wood that had a smooth feel and in the top left corner there is a white candle with drip-dried wax reaching the floor trying to escape Her smell. A propane burner sits opposite Her bed; two forgotten photos of what was once Her family lay in the only small drawer of the table, with a dead cucaracha and an empty box of matches.

When it rained, She would collect as much rainwater as She could. It would last Her a few days, hopefully until the next downpour. During the downpour She had to move Her bed to keep it dry and clean so that rats would not invade it. Many times the drips of water falling from the roof would migrate. Sometimes they were over here, other times they were over there. She would laugh and laugh when She could guess where the drops would fall and have all the buckets and pans ready. As time passed She had fewer and fewer pans but then the leaks would subside until eventually there would be only one because Her shack, Her house, Her home, understood her suffering and always created exactly the same number of leaks as She had pans. But those days were over now.

I know, I know, you're wondering who SHE is and if SHE even existed—*but she does exist*—she did exist. Her name is—was doña Pancha. She had five grown children and probably many grandchildren now. She only remembers, remembering that she was told she had great-grandchildren. Her two youngest daughters left for the United States to see if Uncle Sam's legacy over-there was more capitalistically better than what he was offering here; her older son is a decent lawyer. And the other two of her children left without even saying good-bye, the same way her husband abandoned her. When they all left she worked as a tortillera until she could not keep up with the demand; then she washed clothes for people until she could not clean them to the satisfaction of her customers; she ironed for others until she could not lift the iron anymore; she tried to cook but she was never good at it. After all that honest work, she had to beg for money, but her hands were tired, her feet had developed chronic ulcers and she was in constant pain.

Now doña Pancha spent most of her days dreaming of a life, not of luxury, but a life, a life where she could escape her pain. A

life where her bed no longer imprisons and forces her to beg the cosmos to give her a fantasy that would help her move through the coagulated veins that time had become for her. Doña Pancha wanted a life not too different from what she had when she was working and when she still had all the possessions she had to sell to buy some food. Now all she had in the world were Tita, Chancla and Níco. Two hens and a rooster that somehow were managing to survive; they were her companions, the only reason for her to keep living. Right now, she is still there under her sheets in her bed, where you can actually see her memories combust from reality as they morph into her fantasy. When she went into her fantasies she was able to escape her present. She walked out of time and into the world where she was the table she had to sell; other times she was the dog barking outside—even *that she was the noise of a conversation*—and today is no different.

“Tita, ¿donde estás que no te miro? Tita, ¿where did you put your egg today? Níco, stop bugging Chancla. ¿Can you see that she needs to clean all the poop today? Níco... Níco, don’t act like you’re going to work, hoy es domingo and you don’t have to work. Tita, ¿do you want to go to El Mercado with me?” Doña Pancha said from her bed to three strange figures that were taking human shape in her new world.

“ok mamá Pancha, if i have to,” Tita replied, sinking her feathery eyebrows.

“Tita, tienes que limpiar también. When we come back you will help Chancla clean the house.”

“¿why? i don’t think it’s that bad,” Chancla protested while pecking at the ground.

“Siempre es la misma cosa contigo, you’re just lazy,” doña Pancha said, while repositioning her head on the pillow.

“mamá Pancha, but Níco never helps clean anything and he is the one that poops

the most,” said Tita while running across the room because she saw something moving that looked edible.

“Leave Níco alone, él es un hambrecito, and he does not have to help clean—but anyways, ¿what should we get for lunch?” Doña Pancha asked because her growling stomach scared Níco.

Tita scratched the floor while answering, “mamá Pancha, ¿why don’t we make a soup with all the ingredients we can find?”

“Sí, that’s a good idea, let’s go then, before all the fresh vegetables are gone. Níco, te tienes que quedar to keep an eye on Chancla and make sure she finishes cleaning all the poop. Let’s go Tita and make sure you lock the door, because last time you left it unlocked and when we got back, it was all the way open,” doña Pancha said while covering her cold toes with her sheet.

“alright, i’ll make sure i close it this time, mamá Pancha.”

“Let’s cross now, no cars are coming.”

“wow, that car was coming faster than i thought.”

“Mira este que abusivo, he didn’t even care that the traffic light was red.”

“¿mamá Pancha do you remember Antonio?”

“¿Cómo se me va olvidar?—He was always so nice to me. I remember this one time when the wind blew away the roof and he was the only one that helped me get the pieces back to re-nail them. *¿How much for these three potatoes?* Another time he helped me get onto the bus; the driver was impatient and wanted to leave me because I was too slow. No, *only give me two*. But I haven’t seen him for a while. I hope nothing bad happened to him. *Excuse me, give me three tomatoes instead*. ¿Por qué Tita?”

“no reason, i was just wondering.”

“¿Recuerdas a Juanito?” Doña Pancha asked with a smile that gave her the strength to reposition herself on the bed.

Tita pooped before responding, “Juanito... no, i don’t.”

“It was probably before your time. But sometimes he would not go to school and spend all day with me. *¿Can you give me half a pound of chicken?* He was a good listener. He would beg me to tell him stories, el pobrecito; at one point he was coming over so often I had run out of stories and did not know what else to tell him. But then he just stopped coming, probably because he found himself a girlfriend. *Please remove all the skin before you weigh it.* I think this is all we need to prepare our soup—”

The door came crashing down with a loud blast that jerked doña Pancha back and into the present of the real world. The two hens and rooster rushed to hide themselves under the bed. Three robbers were laughing with drunken eyes as the old woman was starting to scream for help. But nobody could hear her; even if they could, they would not be able tell where the screams were coming from. The boss, Roboton and his muscles terrorized the old woman inside the shack as he shouted to his two subordinates, Jorgito and Carlos, to tear the walls down. The walls took as much abuse as much as they could until they had no strength to hold on and Jorgito managed to bring one side down while Carlos rushed to help him complete the job. The fallen scraps of rusted metal tried to rejoin the shack but were tossed far away where they helplessly witnessed everything that happened. Roboton commanded Carlos to take the propane tank but Carlos tried and failed; Roboton took over that job while he composed a rhythm of many more shrieks and blows as he ordered them to find money or something of value. Carlos found the two photos and screamed because a dead cucaracha had touched him. He threw doña Pancha’s dishes out of the bucket to the earthen floor to see if she had hidden any money in the bottom of it.

“Don’t forget to take the chickens. ;At least scare them away!” One of Roboton’s muscles spoke.

She pleaded to them not to take her chickens. The bed did not allow doña Pancha to move. She tried. She really tried; but only dead screams came out. Her adrenalin started pumping, she was finally able to sit up—her screams were resurrected. Doña Pancha got a hold of Carlos’ arm; he did not want to hurt her but Roboton made him do it. She fell on the floor with an empty thud, the screams turning to cries. Jorgito was able to capture the two hens—and even then she prayed that her hens would get away. Their laughter and screams gobbled up her prayers. Roboton kicked her in the stomach because he wanted to cause her more pain. Carlos was ordered to tear up the mattress and see if it had any hidden cash; but all he found was rat poop inside. They shattered her wooden bed frame in their desperate search for valuables.

Two gun shots.... The first bullet let out a scream that echoed and wiggled through doña Pancha’s ears for a couple of minutes. The second bullet escaped through a hole in the roof; rocketing out, trying to escape but La Limonada forced it to descend—*picking a house*—then perforating the corrugated metal roof with a loud blast. The bullet finally ricocheted off the old TV coming to rest just five inches away from a startled child.

“¡Let’s go!” Roboton cried with a face that said he almost peed his pants. They had only captured the two hens. Carlos told them he could not see the rooster—but he did see it; he saw when it escaped through the hole they had torn through the back wall. Roboton and Jorgito were already gone. Carlos looked back at the old woman on the floor—he hesitated for a split second but then continued running through the back door they created. Carlos might have gotten a glimpse of don Juan, who worked as a gas station security guard and who also lived a

few houses away; but he continued running trying to catch up to something that was already out of sight.

“NoooooO, they took my little treasures. ¿Por qué mejor no me llevaron a mí? ¿Why them—why them?” Doña Pancha was looking all around for them, calling her babies as she ignored all the damage to her shack.

“¿Are you okay doña——?” Don Juan knelt next to her holding the gun in his right hand above his head. Doña Pancha’s eyes screamed that they had taken Tita, Chancla, and Níco—that they took them to kill them—that they were going to eat them. Without them she was lost. All she said was “Tita and... and... Chancla, Níco, will come back—I have to say here, yo se que van a regresar,” letting all her weight fall flat on the floor. Her savior did not understand her; he did not lift her because he was afraid of breaking her fragile bones that he could actually see because they were only covered by a thin blanket of skin. Roboton had knocked out two of doña Pancha’s three remaining teeth; while the last one threw itself out of her mouth trying to commit suicide and don Juan was able to catch it just as he saw the rest of them scattered all over the room. He saw that doña Pancha’s fingernails were all decapitated; she had a few patches of long hair here and there but it was mostly gone. Doña Pancha’s chronic foot ulcers, arterial leg ulcers and venous leg ulcers had already eaten up a great part of her feet and legs—and she insisted over and over that her babies, her treasures, might come back. Don Juan looked for some sheets to cover her from the cold when he noticed that her mattress was completely destroyed and that her old rusted table stove was on the floor but it seemed to be the only intact thing she had. The dirt floors were covered with many weeks’ accumulations of chicken poop. The smell of human excrements was able to escape and infiltrate his nostrils making the

hair inside vomit. He rushed outside for some fresh air; he wanted to help her, he really did—but he was forced to slider away.

Doña Pancha didn’t move. She didn’t listen. She stayed on the floor. She didn’t cry. The rats came back and found their mattress destroyed but the neighbors made arrangements and gave them a place to live. Not even the cosmos could console doña Pancha as her thoughts died thinking of Tita, Chancla and Níco who might escape the thieves grasp. As night came and the hour hand pointed to seven and the minute hand reach twelve while the second hand was rushing to reach the number one, a grey dog began to bark and howl, starting a chain reaction that crushed the sound barrier—light slowed, falling like rain swallowing up the darkness. A molecule of Hydrogen got drunk and then ran over a number 2 right in front of Oxygen—*time killed space, and then committed suicide*—matter was created to replace space but then somebody stole it. The moon eloped with a meteorite while the sun went to the bathroom. The trees were upside down—the wild grass was running in search of a place to call home. Near the shack gravity was shifting and moving the trees closer and closer to what was now the new last house. The presence of the old shack, the one nobody noticed and the one that no one will remember was taken by the wind as the earth devoured it.

And that’s what truly happened—La Limonada must not win-again, ;we have to remember doña Pancha! Tita, Chancla and Níco helped doña Pancha; thanks to them she lives as long as she did; once they were gone she fell victim to La Lemonades and wasn’t able to turn time off; making it easier for La Limonada to get rid of that old shack with doña Pancha in it. That’s what La Limonada doesn’t want you to remember, know or even see. But tell me, ¿are you not wondering why one of the robbers had your same name? ;Yes he did! ¿You do know that you have Níco in

your grasp right? No—that's not a chicken you fool that's Ñico. You have to remember what you did—I know that you don't remember any of that happening, that's why I just told it to you; so that you know what I know. *Stop saying that you have no idea what I am talking about.* I understand that this seems unreal but it's all true. I am not imagining it. ¿Why can't you remember? It is all clearly there. ¿Can you see it now? The scars of what

you did and the ghost of the old shack are still here. ¿Why don't you ask the trees and grass? They know—*ask them*—because I can't stop feeling it. I can't stop seeing it over and over. Haven't I told you not to look outside after seven—you *must not look*—no, you mustn't. I must keep, keep, keep—walking. I have to, to, to—tell someone. I have seen.... they must not forget she existed... I must tell... she exists... must...

Byron is a double Spanish and Ethnic Studies major in his Senior year. His story "My Trail of Tears" was previously published in Going Places: True Tales from Young Travelers 2003.

SKIPPING STONES AND THINGS I KNOW OF GRANDPA

he liked cowboy boots and cherry tomatoes
and he was in the army with pictures to prove it
he was Texas bred and Texas Toast

card games played on callous palms
blue-eyed, blond-haired and close
and closed

iron fists
little donnie's blood-evidence spilt on top of
mistress marilyn friday lipstick, mr president,
on top of chevy grease
and sweat
no tears

somewhere underneath it all
a collared shirt canvass-white
starched by fidelity and shelton suffrage-betty fingers
fingers strong like his—stronger but patient limp at sides
waiting as shell-shocked hands tiny explode
broomstick bombs over every inch of her

steely loyal mother can only take so much
rolled up sleeves, packed bags

a family of seven children and a queen to make it work

makes ham and government sandwiches
makes poverty an art
makes it work
makes it.

lonesome cowboy turns mormon
remarries
this new wife doomed to feel phallic pummel
and labor strains eternal. water-breaking, breathing
pushing infinite souls through a tired cervix
to populate their seventh heaven

he met me once
a lone-star smile and leukemia eyes saying
watch this card trick buckaroo and
keep watch for naygers and
always remember that barn animals don't mix

he dies and the world breathes a sigh of relief

five years later at dinner
a salad bowl drops floorward and
older brother asks
when grandpa will visit again

mother draws the curtains
caught up in fits of weeping and
intermittent laughter
the laughter of a luckless daughter
filling the room as
windows bending outward
collapsing break

— STEVEN COATSWORTH

*Steven is a junior English major. He has been published in Monkey Bicycle,
the independent art magazine Glow, and as a guest columnist for the Oregon Voice.*



SAMANTHA HANLIN

UNTITLED #2

Watercolor

OUR APPLE TREES

—JEROME HIRSCH

I shut the door behind on crashing
revelry, and from my perch on top
of all our concrete stairs I briefly saw,
before it waned, the final golden band
of dusk. It seemed our valley was a rising
glass, and that its brim just climbed above
the reach of day. Then the stench of apples
rotting wafted up. How useless were these trees,
I thought, scattering their fruit but not
so we could eat or fashion pipes. Instead
they glazed our lawn in decomposing slop.

Somewhere beyond
the brush of leaves and gentle creak of limbs
about our yard, I heard a measured click.
Around the corner stepped four hooves—a doe.
She nimbly strode across the pavement, her buck
following behind up to our lawn.
In pictures I had seen, perhaps a thousand
times before, antlers like those—up-curved racks
of bone. But never here. Never so close,
slivers and points of horn flashing by
street-light, their velvet gloves shredded, scraped off,
steam fuming from his dark, dilated muzzle.
But as they stooped to browse about our
browning fruit, nudging one, then grazing there,
I knew these were not pillagers, nor
addled hermits, starving, who'd wandered from
the mountains. These two were pilgrims, returned
to where they'd been before, and where they'd come again,
long after all our rioting had died,
and these trees, too, had turned to earth, and more
had grown in place.

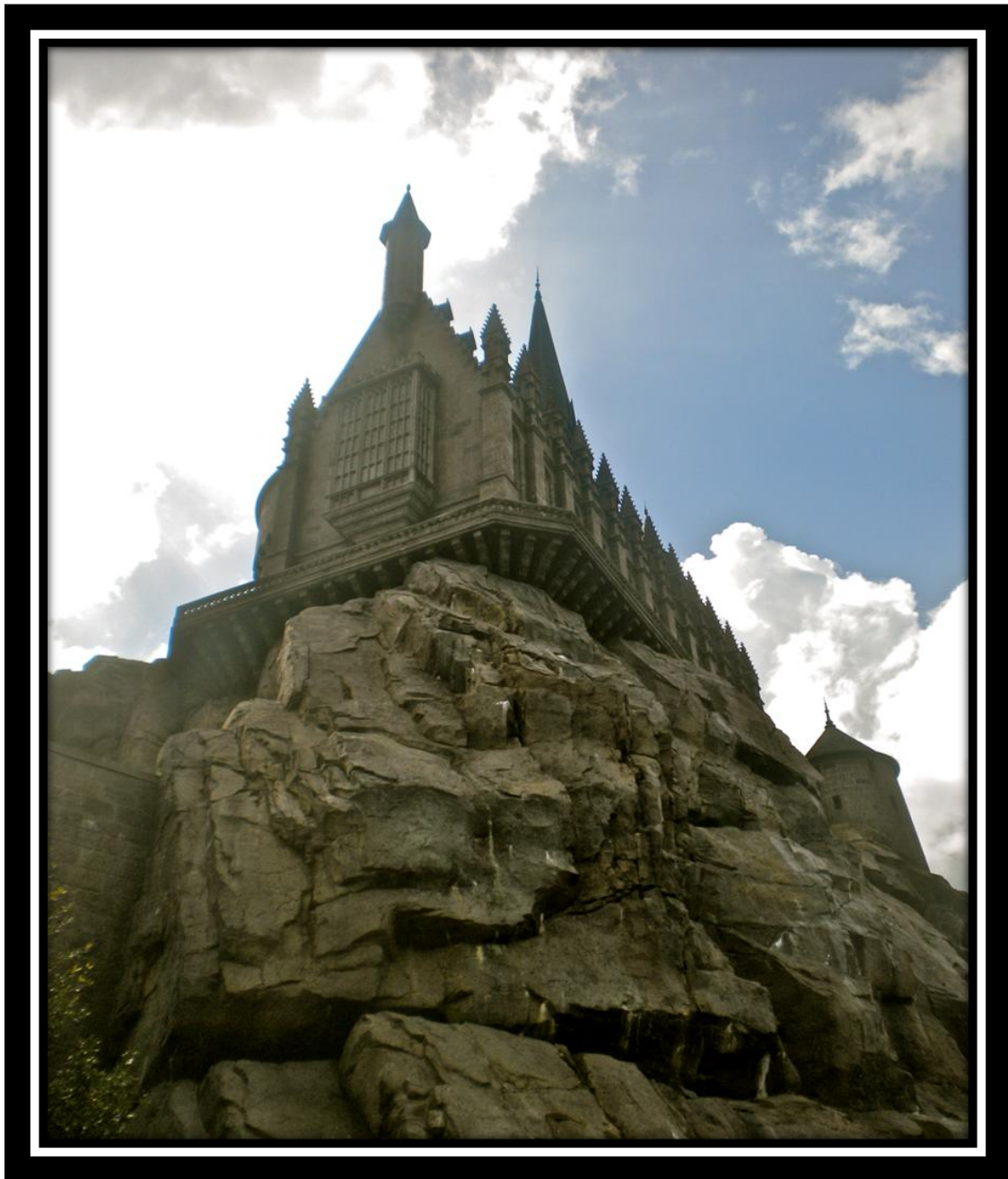
*Jerome is a senior English and Computer Science major who has been
previously published in Unbound and the Oregon Voice.*

HOW TO FULLY ENJOY BREAKFAST

1. Wake up before the kids become coherent. If they hear you rustling around they might crawl out of bed, their eyes puffy and dream-swollen, and expect French toast. No way in hell.
2. Put on your favorite robe. The one with Audrey Hepburn's face on the back. The one that makes you feel like a movie star. The robe She burnt a cigarette hole into last year.
3. Start a pot of coffee. The blackest kind, but dilute it so its ok if you have two ... maybe three cups... maybe your last cup you won't even drink, but it just feels nice to hold in between your breasts because its warm.
4. Have something in front of you: a newspaper, a cereal box, a "To Do" list, an instructional manual... anything that you can instantly direct your attention to if the house gets too quiet. For God-sakes though, don't wake up the kids.
5. Now make your way to the pantry. Make oatmeal. Not just any oatmeal though, the steel cut kind from the bulk section... the good stuff. The stuff that She always aggressively guilt trips you to forgo for the *Quakers Instant Cinnamon and Apple*.
6. Assemble your oatmeal for the microwave. 1/3 cup of dried oats, milk, then stir. Two minutes on high.
Tip: Toppings are highly recommended. Anything can go in oatmeal: yogurt, peanut butter, granola, and canned pumpkin. Put in canned pumpkin—even though that is what you've made for breakfast every day for the past two weeks. Stir it in your oatmeal before putting it in the microwave (just don't think about how She cackles with disbelief—spewing soggy Captain Crunch over the clean, white table linens—every time she spies a can of pumpkin on the counter).
7. Sit down and look at your breakfast. Stare at the oats... notice that they are orange. Keep the cup of coffee in between your breasts. Take a bite with your eyes closed (and don't let Her bubble to the surface). It's probably still too hot (just don't let her come out).
Warning: the kids usually wake up around now. That's what happens when you start reading instructional manuals for twenty-five minutes. Be nice. Breakfast is over.
8. Throw your oatmeal in the trash. Grab the Captain Crunch and light a cigarette. The kids will want French toast.

— JORDAN CHESTNUT

Jordan is a sophomore International Studies major with no previous publications, but is also the largest advocate of pumpkin oatmeal.



MAGGIE BREES

ADVENTURES IN HOGWARTS II

Digital Photograph

Maggie Brees is an English major and was the winner of Unbound's 2010 Horror-Genre art contest.

WRONG WAY

AARON WILMARTH

“Geoff, can we get two Lemon Drops, if you would,” Martin said to the ponytailed bartender. He turned to Frankie sitting at his right on a red vinyl barstool and said, “If that’s alright?”

“Sure, Martin,” Frankie said. “You’re buying?”

“This rounds on me, mate. Though I think you’re up for the next one.”

Frankie laughed as the bartender shook their drinks up and poured them into two tumblers. “Not if your woman shows up,” he said. “You’ll want me to take a hike then.”

“Cheers to that,” Martin said, clinking his glass against Frankie’s. He didn’t mind Frankie, though of all the times they drank together, Martin bought most of the drinks. But he liked having someone to talk to, and even if Frankie wasn’t always at the bar, he was one of Martin’s steadiest drinking mates. Martin took a sip, adjusted the bouquet of red roses on the bar, and pulled a small blue felted box from his right coat pocket. “Did I show you the ring?”

“Only about five times already.”

Martin opened the box. Snuggled into the padded red lining was a gold ring with a single diamond that glinted under the lights shining from behind the bar. Martin was proud of that large, square diamond. One carat, it had cost \$9,600. Only the best for his Alice.

Martin had entered his forty-ninth year in May and was happy it was still December. The thought of being fifty and single haunted

him. Serious relationships were rare for him. Then he met Alice. Before her, and even during their relationship, Martin flirted with the pretty young things that came through his favorite pub, laying on the charm with his London accent that sounded like Robin Leach. He’d even begun drinking fruity drinks. It didn’t get him very far. He had a belly that protruded, squishing into the lip of the bar. His broad head had salted blonde hair that he kept trimmed tight on the side, no longer than three inches on top, and styled with a perfect part down the middle. He blamed his body for keeping the women away, but after a particularly hazy night, his morning thoughts would stray to the idea that maybe his lifestyle was part of the reason he had trouble with relationships. He would think about this over his coffee and four ibuprofens, mull over it at work. And then, at 6:30 sharp, he would order his first drink at the pub.

Martin lived in Vancouver, Washington. He was born and raised in a country where he’d been able to order a drink with a meal at the age of fourteen before moving to Protestant America, as he liked to call it. In America, going to one’s favorite pub every night after work was frowned upon. Martin disapproved of that notion. He had immediately found a pub that reminded him of those in London. Sometimes he left as late as 2am. A habit he had picked up as young man in London. Any misgivings about these habits he kept to himself and tried not to dwell on. Yet, Martin feared that his co-workers at the real estate office would discover he spent his evenings at a bar, and so he never invited them along. And he never got so drunk as to be out of control or unable to drive home. Or so he would tell himself.

“How are you going to ask her to marry you?” Frankie said.

“I thought I would order a bottle of the best champagne and then slip the ring in

her glass,” Martin said. “Although, she didn’t seem too keen on coming here tonight.”

“It is a pub, Martin,” Frankie said.

“What’s the problem with that? It’s very comfortable here.”

The pub was called *Diana’s*, which was his mother’s name. Whenever he entered the humid warmth of the establishment, it was like he was cozying back into his mother’s womb. The pub had two floors. The bar and five tables were on the first floor, and a pool table, pinball, and other seating were on the second floor. The walls were painted a soothing copper red, the wooden rafters and trim were all stained dark, and the assorted knick-knack of beer advertisements covering the walls aided in the cloistered feeling. Martin couldn’t think of a better place to be. He was impervious to the smell of old beer that bleach never eradicated; instead, he smelled the delicious fried foods that came from the kitchen window. Nothing spoiled the idyllic scene of the neighborhood pub, and Martin couldn’t for the life of him comprehend how anyone could dislike *Diana’s*.

He looked at his watch. Alice was now 20 minutes late. He ordered Frankie and himself another cocktail and wondered how long he should wait before ordering food. Nothing worse than too many drinks on an empty stomach.

“Well, what do you think? She coming or not?” Frankie asked. The straw in his drink vanished into the mass of curly, unkempt black beard. He sucked loudly.

“She’ll come,” Martin said. “I told her I had a surprise waiting.”

Martin had switched banks eight months ago and Alice had been the clerk for his first transaction there. She was a tall, blonde woman in her late thirties, thirty-nine to be exact. Heavyset, but not obese, and Martin thought she had the biggest set of breasts he’d ever seen. He had not bothered to ask her if they were natural, he knew they

were. Martin liked to think he could tell after years of selling mansions to rich couples who made yearly visits to their plastic surgeon. Over the next few months, Martin learned her schedule and always made sure she helped him. She smiled when she saw him and laughed at his jokes. Martin asked her out. She said yes. After they had been dating a while she confessed to Martin that she dreaded the idea of being forty and single. He delighted in telling her that that was his biggest worry at forty-nine.

Martin was about to tell Frankie the story of their fated first meeting when a young girl stepped up to the bar. Martin looked over and down, his eyes following the easy rise and fall of her cleavage. “Cheerio there, dear. And how are we tonight?” He drank in her full lips and pierced nose.

She took two chews of her gum and said, “Fine. You?”

“Actually, just dandy. Enjoying a drink with my mate here.”

The girl looked Frankie over. She chewed on her gum a little more and looked back at Martin. “You from Australia or something?”

“London, dear. England.”

“Oh yeah?” she said. She turned to the bar and ordered three shots of tequila, with lime.

“I haven’t seen you here before. You live in town?” Martin asked.

“I just turned 21,” she said. Without looking at him.

“Happy birthday,” Martin said. “Geoff, put those on my tab, if that’s alright?”

“Sure, Martin,” Geoff said, looking at the girl. “I need to see your ID, though.”

“Hey thanks, mister,” the girl said, giving Martin a broad smile.

“My pleasure, dear.”

Geoff looked over the girl’s license and handed it back. She gathered up the shots and walked away. Martin’s eyes followed the sway of her tight jeans.

"Damn," Frankie said. "They just seem to get hotter and hotter, don't they?"

"You got that right, mate." Martin couldn't take his eyes off her.

"What I wouldn't give for some tight twenty-one year-old pussy right now."

Martin was jolted back to himself. "Bloody hell, don't be talking like that. I could have a daughter that age."

"Whatever, Martin. I'm only 32. I still got a chance."

"Maybe if you shaved off that appalling beard, cut your hair, and took a shower," he snapped at him.

"Fuuuuuuck you, man. I'm ready for another round and you're buying." Frankie slurped his drink empty and shook the glass at Martin, the ice tinkling.

"Actually, I'm ready for another too. What were you thinking?"

"That girl's ass reminds me of something. You ever had an Anal Sex?" Frankie leered.

"You think you can just ask me that?" Martin looked aghast.

"It's a drink, Martin. Bailey's, vodka, some other stuff."

"Alright, but you order it. And you're buying," Martin wanted this conversation to be over. He looked at his watch again. Almost 40 minutes late.

Before Geoff could set the drinks down, Martin said, "I'm going to step out for a smoke. I'll be back in a moment." He slid off the stool and walked towards the door, passing by the birthday girl and her two friends. He would love to have a woman in the bud of youth massage his shoulders while he lounged in a bubble bath. Martin could still remember the days of soft creamy flesh, untouched by gravity. As he stepped through the door into the biting air he shook off the fantasies and lit up a cigarette. He used to be young and attractive. His wit and ready smile could charm the pants off any girl. Martin's early years were a string of one-night stands

and short relationships, all drowned in alcohol. Pretty girls and a social life once seemed the answer to loneliness. As the years wore on, the pretty girls went away, and the drinking stayed. But now he had found Alice. Martin pulled out his cell phone, selected Alice's name, and raised the phone to his ear. It rang twice and then went to Alice's voicemail, "Hey, this is Alice. I'm at work or I'm walking Dilbert! Leave a message and I'll get back to you."

"Hello Alice, this is Martin. Just checking in about tonight. I'm at *Diana's*. I've got my mobile on me, so just give me a ring. Cheers." He pushed the end button. It was strange that it had rung twice and then gone to voicemail. Was she ignoring his call? Maybe it's a mistake, he thought. He took a drag of his cigarette. He was still holding the phone, staring at it. He slipped it into his pocket and looked down the street. No sign of Alice. Martin flicked his cigarette and tapped out another. It would be easier to hear his phone ring outside. He blew on his hands to warm them up, lit the smoke.

Frankie walked out. "Hey buddy, I need to try and find work tomorrow," he said. "My unemployment is going to run out soon. Got to get up early and hit the beat. I'll see you later this week?"

"Sounds good, mate. Cheers." Martin put his out hand out.

Frankie clasped Martin's hand, gave it a tight squeeze. "Tell me how your date went."

"Will do," Martin said.

Martin pulled out his phone again. No calls. He chucked his cigarette on the ground and squashed it. Back in the bar, he sat at his stool and lifted the drink to his mouth. It was milky, sweet, strong. It didn't remind him of anal sex, but names didn't always mean anything. Martin ordered some soup and wondered what had gone wrong. He tried to summon the exact words of their phone conversation. He remembered telling Alice he wanted to meet up tonight, and that he had a

surprise for her. Martin remembered Alice's pause when he'd mentioned *Diana's*. It wasn't a long pause, Martin thought, and she'd said she would be there. He tried to time the pause in his head. It seemed just a second too long. "Bugger," Martin said, tossing back the rest of his drink.

Geoff set the bowl of soup on the bar and asked, "Anything else?"

"I'll take a Planter's Punch."

"Sure thing, Martin."

He finished his soup and his drink, then ordered another drink and finished that too. Alice was now over two hours late. The tequila girl stepped up to the bar, swaying ever so slightly. Martin could see that her eyes were glazed and her face was bloodless, she was drunk.

"Well, what do you think?" Martin asked the girl.

"What do I think about what?"

"If a handsome man such as myself asked you out for a date, say, to a lovely establishment such as this, would you stand him up?"

The girl stared squarely into his face. "Are you asking me out?"

"No, dear. It's a hypothetical question."

"Cause you're old enough to be my father."

"Actually, in some cultures our age difference would be quite normal."

"Ok, but this is America, not Australia."

"England," Martin said. "England."

"Sure, whatever." The girl walked away without ordering anything. Martin followed her, trying to continue the conversation.

"Martin," Geoff said from behind the bar. "Don't creep out the girls or I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

"Actually, I wasn't hitting on her," Martin said. "Look. If you were a nice woman near my age, would you stand me up?"

"I'm not a nice woman," Geoff said.

"But if you were?"

Geoff sighed. "I don't know, Martin. I guess I wouldn't stand you up. You want another drink?"

"Lay it on me!" Martin slapped a palm on the counter. "Maybe she got held up in traffic."

Two hours later, Martin couldn't lie to himself anymore. He'd called five times, had seven drinks.

"Geoff! I want another bloody drink!"

"Sorry buddy, but I think I'm done serving you tonight," Geoff said.

"Bugger that! You never cut me off."

"You usually don't get this drunk." Geoff's expression was firm.

"I'm not bloody pissed, mate!"

"Ok, Martin. You want me to call you a cab?"

"I'm fine." Martin said, his voice cold.

"Don't drive home. I can call you a cab. You've barely had anything to eat. I'll get you some cheese fries with mayo while you wait."

"I'm fine." Martin stood up, gripping the bar.

"Hey, man, you're not going to drive, right?"

"Course not." Martin clutched the roses and headed for the door. He passed the enlarged group gathered around the girl. He heard them giggle at something one of the boys whispered. "Fucking little cunts," Martin said to himself.

He unlocked his car, fell into the seat, and slammed the door shut. "Fucking bitches and their little wankers! And bugger that bitch, Alice, too!" He tossed the roses into the passenger seat and pounded on the steering wheel.

After a moment, Martin focused on the roses. He picked them up and straightened them, caressing the soft petals. He would go to Alice's and wake her up. She would let him in, they would have explosive sex, and then he would ask her to marry him. He started up his Mercedes.

Martin veered his car over in front of Alice's, the ass end of his vehicle sticking out into the street. He pushed the door open, clutched the roses to his chest, got out, slammed it shut, and looked up at the two-story house in front of him. It was a deep shade of blue, almost black in the dark, with a long covered porch. Martin stumbled across the walkway and stomped up the steps. Flinging open the screen, he pounded on the door. The dog started barking within. He pushed the doorbell, three times. Dilbert's barking now mixed with growls. He pushed the doorbell and pounded on the door again. Letting the screen door slam closed, he stomped back down to the front yard and yelled, "Alice! Aliiiiiice!"

The door opened. Alice held tightly to Dilbert's collar, but upon seeing Martin, the dog began to wag his tail and whine.

"Martin? What the hell are you doing?"

"Alice! Where were you?" He took one lurching step towards her.

"Be quiet," Alice hissed. "Do you have any idea what time it is?"

Martin looked at his watch.

"Exactly. What are you doing here?" she asked.

"I came to see what happened. Can I come in?" Martin took three more lumbering steps forward.

"I don't think that's a good idea," Alice said.

"Why did you stand me up? I had a surprise for you," Martin pleaded. He put his hand in his coat pocket and fingered the box. He estimated the number of steps it would take him to get onto the porch.

"I didn't want to see you at a bar, again," she said. "I was going to call you tomorrow, see if we could meet for lunch."

Martin set one foot in front of the other until was standing at the base of the steps. He briefly pictured getting on his knee in front of Alice, and toppling over. He decided to remain standing up. It seemed

more dignified.

"Martin, go home. We can talk tomorrow," Alice said. "Did you drive here?"

"Of course," Martin said. He was now on the first step.

"How many times have I told you not to drive when you're drunk?" Alice said.

"I'm not drunk." Martin placed his other foot on the step, wishing there was a handrail.

"I'm calling you a cab," Alice said, turning to go inside.

"Wait!" Martin rushed the last few steps and halted before the screen door. Alice waited.

This wasn't exactly what Martin had in mind. His future happiness flashed before his eyes. He swung open the screen door, got down on one knee. He didn't topple over. Dilbert walked up and licked his face three times.

"Oh God. Martin."

He laid the roses on the porch between them. Prying open the blue box, he held it upward. "Will you marry me?"

Alice looked him in the eyes. Her face was firm, but to Martin it looked like she might cry. "No," she said quietly.

His heart stopped. He peered at the box in his upraised hand, then back at Alice. Her answer was not fully registering in his brain. "What did you say?"

"No, Martin. I said, no."

He hauled himself back to his feet using the screen door. He snapped the box shut and shoved it back into his pocket. "Why not?"

"Martin," she said sadly. "I can't do this."

"I'm not drunk," he insisted once again.

"You can barely stand," Alice said. "You show up at my house in the middle of the night, screaming my name and pounding on my door. Then you ask me to marry you? How long were you at the bar tonight?"

"I was going to ask you at *Diana's*." Martin said, glancing down at his feet. The reality of her denial was beginning to sink in. Shame licked its fire across his heart.

"I didn't want to talk to you there," she said, softly. "I wanted to meet you for lunch tomorrow, sober. To tell you I want to break up. I've tried to talk to you so many times about your drinking and you won't listen." Alice paused and slowly said, "I can't be in a relationship with you."

"Can we talk about this?" Martin begged. The whine in his voice mimicked the dog's.

"No, Martin. No more talking. I'll call you a cab." Alice's face softened. "I'm sorry," she said.

Her words replayed in his head. He didn't know what to say to make this better. The money he had spent on the ring, the plans he had made, asking her hand in marriage, the visions of them living happily together into old age, all gone. His shame flared into anger. "You fucking cunt!" he yelled suddenly. "You're just like all the rest. A goddamn whore!"

"Go home Martin, and please don't call me." She closed the door. The deadbolt snapped home.

Martin stood unsteadily outside her house yelling her name. Alice must have retreated with Dilbert to her room. He zigzagged back to his car. Turning on the overhead light Martin examined himself in the rearview mirror. Really looked. His bloodshot eyes, reddened nose, unfamiliar face. It was his, and it was not his face, as though he was looking at a twin that he was meeting for the

first time. "What's the point?" Martin said to his twin. "I've spent 49 years in a bottle, for what?" Martin slapped the mirror and said, "She's just another fucking whore." He started to cry, deep sobs beset his fat body. The sobs became hiccups, then sniffles, the snot running down his lip. He hit the wheel, his hand coming to rest, before gently sliding down to his lap.

Martin smeared a string of snot across his sleeve. He opened the blue box and looked at the ring. The diamond didn't glint in the overhead light. It looked dead and cold, half submerged in blood. He dropped the box into his lap. He set the mirror straight and looked at himself again. "Alright, mate," he said. "Here's what you'll do. You're going to stop boozing. Call Alice tomorrow. Apologize. Get your life together. Right? Right." Martin thought about all the times he made these promises to himself. But he was sure that this time would be different. He would win Alice back, and he would find happiness with the woman he loved. Martin adjusted his rearview mirror again. He pulled out and headed towards home. "Everything is going to be fine," Martin chanted, weaving his car back and forth, trying to locate the center of the lane. "You've got it now. You've pissed your life away and Alice helped show you the errors of your ways. She'll come to realize she made the change. It's a new leaf!" He pulled onto the ramp towards the interstate and pressed on the accelerator to rev up to 65, a smile twisting his lips.

LAZY GONE SUMMER

— ANDY VALENTINE

Do you remember that lazy gone summer,
when the dying fluorescence looked across the horizon
at us with ruby red eyes? And that breeze, a warm
afterglow that lingered long after the sun had evanesced
from its place in the sky. The foggy eyed mornings, waking
to nothing but soft cerulean above the tree line,
and the nights washed navy again as our eyes cleared.

Do you remember when that all stopped?
When the only color left was a deep gray, spotted
only by the darkness of the evergreens. And you looked
out at the rain from your bedroom window, your eyes falling
softly to the ground with the leaves; brown memories
strumming from the naked branches as skeletal melodies.

Do you remember when you named fall the season of death?
The sky an everlasting watercolor, painted that same damp shade
day after day after day, and the ghost of fog that haunted
the early mornings. No drop of dew can be heavy enough to
wash away our memories, no strand of spider's silk too thick.
For all we have now is one final funeral to attend before the
cold returns and freezes that summer in our minds.

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