

UNBOUND

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ithaca is go

KURT SPICKERMAN

It was the beginning of Justin Higgins's first year at Cornell, and he was excited to be away from home, to be on his own. To stretch out his arms and legs in new air, walking the campus and town at any hour he saw fit, eating dinner when he wanted. He imagined that the whole world would open up like that to him—like a wild hepatica flower, enveloping him in its sweet embrace. During those first few weeks of summer, the days were long and warm. The air in his dorm was hot and thick, and he walked the trails that circled campus in shorts, t-shirts and flip-flops, tossing a Frisbee with the other boys from his floor, or lying in the grass talking about the girls they would meet.

The collection of old and new buildings and walkways that made up campus were separated from town by gorges crossed with bridges, including the long suspension bridge over Fall Creek; the view of the setting sun each evening was strangely gorgeous—fat and red, like

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a bloodied egg—so that Justin wanted it to sit in that spot forever, stuck in time.

When the first day of classes finally rolled around, there was a palpable feeling of excitement in the air. He wore a new pair of jeans and a white shirt with red sleeves and Cornell's bear mascot on the front. His parents had helped him pick it out when they moved him in, along with the new socks, underwear, pencils, and pens they purchased for him.

"This is going to be so fun," his mom had said, in her hokey way, hands clasped in front of her and shoulders hunched up.

"Mom," he said, checking that no one in the campus bookstore was paying attention to her.

"Well, it is," she insisted. "You're going to have all kinds of interesting new experiences."

"Don't party too hard," his dad said, slapping him on the shoulder.

Justin's first class was a botany intro class. He had printed out a map of campus the day before, marking the locations of each of his classes so he would know right where to go, and when he got to class he was one of the first there. The classroom was in a large grey building, surrounded by gardens, and the air inside the room was sweet with the scent of late summer flowers, at the edge of their lives.

He sat in the middle of the room, not too close to the front, but close enough so he would look interested. After a few minutes the classroom had filled, and when a pretty girl who he'd seen around campus a few times came in, the only open seat was next to him. He hid his

pleasure, pretending to check his text messages as she sat down. After class ended, Justin turned to the girl and introduced himself.

"I'm in the Edgemoor dorms," he said. "I think I've seen you in the cafeteria?"

"Yeah, that was me," she said, sweeping blonde hair out of her eyes. "I've seen you, too. I'm Allie." She extended her hand, and he shook it lightly.

After that they sat together every day, and talked about small things before class started. A couple of times they met for coffee, too, going over their notes from class or talking about what was going on in their dorms.

Justin thought maybe he would ask her out for real some time, maybe to dinner in town. He could see the two of them, walking hand-in-hand. He could see them stepping off the plane together in Portland, introducing her to his parents for the first time.

Now the days shortened and, after the sun dropped from view, the evenings became cooler, and then almost unbearable. Quickly, the days became cold as well—far below the mild Northwestern temperatures Justin had grown up with. By mid-September fall had clearly arrived, and the deciduous trees that lined the gorges became like naked arms, holding aloft torches of red and yellow. The weather just kept getting colder and colder, as if each week represented an increment between the warmth of when he'd arrived, and the coldest temperature he could imagine.

By November, when students ventured out, they were wrapped from head to toe in layer upon layer of cotton and wool. Justin started to feel trapped, within his tiny dorm room, his class-

rooms, the library, and his own clothes. The sky became clogged with clouds, and the snow was like a gray beast that had slithered out of the gorges, up into town, between the buildings and trees, nipping at the exposed flesh of fingers and faces.

On a Wednesday in the second week of November, Allie didn't attend class. Justin got extra handouts from the teacher for her, but she didn't attend class that Thursday, either. When he heard that a body had been found in Cascadilla Gorge—the body of a girl named Allison Moore—he felt as if he had been stabbed in the chest, like he should have known something was wrong. But he realized that he didn't know what was bubbling beneath the sweaters and mittens and loopy handwriting of her botany notes which were all he really knew of her. And he realized that there was probably another person in a different class of hers who was thinking the same exact thing, wondering if there had been a sign.

That night there was a wake—dozens of pale-faced freshman and sophomores holding candles to their chests, their faces lit like saints. Justin stood at the edge, listening to them talk about a woman that no one knew.

"She's in a better place," a girl in pigtails and a plaid shirt said.

"Where she is it's bright," a boy to Justin's left said, passing a flask.

Justin shifted onto his toes, wondering if there was something else beyond these people, closer to the bridge, but decided that the brightness was just more candles. Just more people saying more of the same.

"Hey," a girl in a black hooded wool coat and black Carhartt jeans said to

him, bumping him with her elbow. "Did you know her?"

"I don't think anyone did," he said.

"Oh." She made a "tsking" sound and shook her head. "I hope no one says that when I go."

Justin studied her face as she looked off into the crowd, and thought of Allie, of the weight of her secrets.

"Do you want to get some coffee or something," he asked, surprised when the words left his mouth.

"That would probably be more fun than this," she said. "I'm Kristy, by the way."

Justin introduced himself, and they walked around the throng of people, squeezing between a horseshoe of boys and girls in red and white team jackets encompassing a tiny fire, at the edge of the suspension bridge. On the other side, weaving through new arrivals, they made their way up the path, toward the cafes and restaurants of Old Town that Ithaca had unfolded like an offering to the students of Cornell. Old timey streetlights lit the brick roads, and they found a café with outdoor seating, under heat lamps.

"When did you begin?" she asked, her hand wrapped snugly around her warm mug, an American Spirit in her other hand, hovering behind her, the free fingers splayed out like a rudder.

"This is my first year," he said, cupping his mug with both hands, forcing its heat into his arms. "I'm from Oregon."

"They say this is normal," she said. "The gorges—they call to people. They call to me."

"How so?"

"You know, it's just going to get colder." She pulled the hood down over

her eyes. "We have to enjoy the warmth when we can."

They had talked about their classes, whether they had any of the same teachers, what dorms they lived in. And then they left their half-empty mugs, the contents now cold, and walked back across the bridge, through the darkness of the trees and the few remaining mourners. After exchanging numbers, they waved and parted ways.

Justin imagined kissing her and unbuttoning her shirt. Lying in bed with her, the warmth of her skin against his own.

Over the next couple of weeks, Justin saw Kristy more frequently. On Fridays they often hung out in one of their dorms or drank cups of coffee at popular cafes. Their friendship and the closeness that was building between them became a normal part of their lives, as normal as the increasingly colder temperature. The sky every day seemed to grow closer, hovering where it would seem that it could be touched from the roof of the student union, and then the next week from the windows of its fourth floor, and so on, until it seemed that there was no more light in the sky.

And then on the second day of December an old man walking his dog noticed a boy standing at the railing of the suspension bridge over Fall Creek, looking off into the distance. The old man looked down at his dog, sniffing at something on the ground, and then looked back in time to see the boy drop like a broken cross, falling without a sound.

Standing, squeezing his arms against his own body, as he stood again outside a ring of people with candles,

trying to hold onto his own warmth, Justin thought dropping through the air like that sounded cold. He wondered if it would matter that a person would feel so much colder as their body fell, if it would matter if they were afraid of heights, or of falling, since when the experience was over they wouldn't feel anything ever again.

He imagined his own body approaching the earth at great speed, his brain pushing against the back of his skull, and wondered what thoughts would be in his mind—whether he would think at all, or if it would be like an eternity before he hit the ground, with every event that had ever colored his life flashing before him. He imagined Allie falling next to him, and he wanted to ask her what she thought. He wanted to ask her why.

The second death quickly faded from conversations, just as the first had. It became a part of the weather, a silent mass pushing against them, forcing them into themselves, and separating them from one another.

When Justin walked across the bridge to College Town, the view was still amazing, but he felt the pull now. Looking over the railing, into the low brown stream below, he felt that if he stood too close, his body would wrap itself over the railing all on its own, until the weight of his head and shoulders sucked him down. Something besides gravitational pull wanted him at the bottom of the ravine, something inside of him pulled his body towards it, an internal desire that he couldn't understand or explain that made him want to be over the edge completely, naked and free, falling forever. But he resisted. He focused on the other side, and he

walked with his face tucked into his scarf and his eyes straight forward, until he was again on solid ground.

When he and Kristy were alone, sitting in front of a space heater in his dorm room, Kristy talked of it, too. "I'm going to wear a bed sheet pinned to my jacket," she said, "and see if I can't soar."

The room had become warm enough that she removed her jacket, and she wore a pink blouse that was the only color that he could remember seeing since summer. The only color that seemed to matter.

"I think I would jump backwards," he said, "so that I wouldn't have to see what was coming."

"That's the whole point of jumping," she said. "To see exactly what's going to kill you."

The first weekend of December it snowed almost three feet, and Justin and Kristy had made love that Friday, for the first time, after the awkward pawing and stops and starts. They lay there naked, the warm glow

of her flesh like sunshine, giving him new life, and making his muscles want to move again.

He'd grown up in the Pacific Northwest, and he told her about the green forests and heavy rains that were nothing like the burdensome rains and snows of Ithaca. Nothing like the winters here.

She told him about her childhood, that where she'd grown up, in Ohio, it had been cold all of the time, all of the winter, but there was something else here. And he knew what she meant. He knew there was something darker here, though he didn't know what it was, or why.

That was when he said he loved her. Not because she was different from anyone else, though she was; not because he felt closer to her than anyone else, though he did; but because he needed the warmth of her against him.

"Shhh," she said, and then kissed him gently on the mouth. "Let's just enjoy it while we can."

Kurt Spickerman is a senior majoring in English. He has been previously published in Unbound.

orange: a study

Alone in his studio, the artist sat by the blue canvas,
Shades drawn against green beechbeams, as their silhouettes
Danced across his tilting neck, while the yellow picturelight
Set the red sun mooring the motionless ship,
Sailing somewhere in-between indigo sea and violet sky,
Below the world's bend, a barrel of oranges by the wheel.

The captain's red hands blistered on the tropic wheel,
He bellowed for gauze of yellowed canvas
To be cut from the staysail of the wind-abandoned ship,
To swathe his wounds from darkening clouds of the sky.
Ordering an orange, for scurvy pulled to depthless light,
Every peel stiffened green; his teeth scratched rinds and silhouettes.

The first mate shaded blue when crashed the cold silhouette.
"You're the captain, lily-liver," snarled the orange, "You take the wheel."
The yellow seaman whimpered and waxed to the violet sky,
"Alas, how may I steer with no green zephyrs a salt-stayed ship?"
Rats skittered the scheming planks, as the Iris watched under canvas
For the first dappling of water, the ripple of white light.

Dusk through dawn indigo, with moon-garlanding violet light,
Sleeping by the blue corpse, the mate did not see the storm-silhouettes
Slide behind and draw red knives that cleft the white-eyed sky.
As the gales roared and unraveled yellow yarn of canvas,
Daggers dropped thick green thunder by the wheel
And the barrel's throat hacked oranges down the ship.

Tumbling aft from broken bow, and streaming red the ship,
Lusting for the conjurer of the heaven's violet light,
One orange rolled to a green palm, which dropped the canvas,
Forgot the fingers' threading, the unmanned whirling of the wheel
And every indigo wave which drank the silhouettes
Of cross-clashed mutineers flaming from the sky.

The oakum-winder pondered the orange with the sky.
Climbing to the crow's nest inviolate above the ship,
Golden-sighted, swirling like a land-enchanted wheel,
Sounding the blue sea sparked with daubs of light,
The pith-glow of the orange's ripened silhouette,
Caught why it rolled to him, diviner of canvas:

No wheel turns without a silhouette,
No ship sails without its lights of the sky.

The artist painted an orange.
The orange asked not why.

—AUSTIN DIAMOND

*Austin Diamond is a sophomore majoring in English and
Environmental Science. This is his first published piece.*

a soft-spoken idiot thinks about childbirth

What always confused me
is that in the thousands of years of medical advancements
and the technological achievements of this century

Why is the solution for a jammed baby in delivery
still yanking on it's head with a pair of pliers?
It just seems a little dangerous, you know
since you aren't suppose to let your baby sleep on one side of it's head too long
but for some reason it's okay for the doctor to prod and pull at the brain
like a claw machine game of some sort.

I remember going in for a prostate check
and thinking, "well hold on a minute,"
if this bendy butt-tube can snake it's way round my ass
couldn't they squeeze this in the delivery business
snake their way around the head
and grab from the torso, or arm or leg or something like that?
Anything but the head really...
but then again I'm no doctor.

That's probably why people are so messed up
because they have such a terrible first experience.
Getting pulled on and being slapped about.
You aren't alive until a doctor makes you cry.
All I know is that if I were God, I would have given
babies a sabot of some sort, like in a gun.
Maybe there is a way to turn afterbirth into a shell...

I then began thinking about the chicken and egg dilemma
but instead of a chicken it was a man and a woman
and began to wonder if a certain sex came first
but after a while of wandering about the jungle they realized,
"hey lads, it's a bit boring here, let's go evolve us some vag."

Because even though it makes sense that the woman came first
with the genetic XX thingy and the fetal ovaries dropping to balls and whatnot
a vagina still looks like it was designed after the penis.
Like God was having a pint after making Adam
and staring at his junk and thinking, – “Now where’s that gonna go?
It’s just kinda floatin’ about...”

But then I recall the frog and the dinosaurs
(at least the ones in that Law and Order dinosaur movie with the guy)
and start thinking that man and woman probably started out as both
and then a certain species got strong enough
to afford the luxury to choose, perhaps like when we choose our political
affiliation
and then after getting used to the teams forgot how to change back.

I tried applying this logic to the chicken and the egg and it didn’t work.

I’m slightly confused as to why chickens are not the dominate species on the
planet.
The egg always seemed like a superior delivery system, evolutionarily speaking
and a chicken doesn’t need it’s head to run a race
and they can fly. That’s three over us. And all I can get on them is brain size
and fingers.

Because even taking care of a baby in that first year
is essentially like sitting on an egg
neither move much
and you take turns crying.

I wonder how much giving birth really hurts.
My guess is it would be like getting punched in the groin over and over for a
day
or continually stubbing your toe
or an arm-long hangnail.

The doctor comes out of the delivery room,

he has a big mustache and I wonder if it interferes in his work.
It's a boy, 7 pounds 11 ounces. He looks like me.
His name is Michael. I chuck my coffee and see my sleeping wife.

-- ERIC WONG

*Eric Wong is a junior majoring in English.
This is his third time published in Unbound.*

f o r m y f a t h e r

I smoked a thousand cigarettes today
And it reminded me of that chimney we cleaned,
When the stove went out.
The soot piled on from years was snow on a silent afternoon.
It was caked so the fire could not breathe.
All we wanted was warmth and a flicker of light in the dark.

I smoked a thousand cigarettes today
And thought of that time we blackened our skin out of necessity.
Today I wanted warmth and a flicker of comfort
And I thought of you.

—KYLE EDING

*Kyle Eding is a senior majoring in Philosophy and Classics.
This is his first published piece.*



JOANNA GRIFFIN

untitled #4

Digital Photograph



untitled #5

Digital Photograph

Joanna Griffin is an Art major.

l u c k y

BRENNA CROTTY

Gloria Campbell became a daycare worker six months after she lost her son. Her husband Steve followed along at first when she decided to move, away from her restaurant job in Seattle to a two-bedroom apartment in Eugene. When she decided to watch children all day for nine bucks an hour at the campus nursery, however, he held his ground.

“You can’t do this,” he said. “It’s a student-level job.”

“Exactly,” she said. He told her she was sick, that she was punishing herself. She threw his coffee mug at the wall and told him to go back to Seattle, then. He did.

He had been there over a year now, and Gloria was still in Eugene, replacing a bleach-blonde named Kelly on Monday, taking over her shifts. When she rolled in on her rusted bike she saw Kelly through the chain links on the playground fence, sitting in the shade of the sandbox, wearing plastic sunglasses and gripping a coffee cup to hide her hangover. It was almost one, the start of the afternoon shift and it was hot for early May. Still, that didn’t excuse Kelly sitting down where no kids were playing. Gloria paused outside the gate to yell at Chase and Orion, who were hanging from the bar over the plastic yellow slide across the playground.

“Feet on the ground, boys!” she called, although it would have been clearer to say, “Stop swinging on that bar or you’ll fall off and hurt yourself.” She’d found that daycares everywhere sought to put commands in positive, action-affirming phrases to give the children the illusion that they could do anything.

Kelly was startled into action by Gloria’s admonition and she stood, smoothing her skirt and checking her leggings for sand. She moved with aggravating slowness, wandering along the edge of the bark chips with her hand on the fence that separated the preschoolers from the older children. The bigger kids were running and screaming in the other yard and Gloria could feel the energy stirring up the younger ones. Orion had moved down to the ground and was digging

in the bark chips with Lucy and Garrett, but Chase was still swinging resolutely over their heads.

"I can't go yet. Harriet's inside taking Molly to the bathroom," Kelly said, as though that explained the lax atmosphere. Harriet was the supervisor. "She'll be out in a minute."

"It only takes a minute for these kids to do serious damage to themselves," Gloria replied tartly, reaching up to grab Chase's feet. He kicked and giggled. Gloria could feel Kelly glaring at her from behind and didn't care. This was a transitional job for Kelly, a college gig not to be taken seriously. She was here for work study hours, not to protect children.

Gloria finally got Chase to stand still and look at her. "Do you need to go make another choice?" she demanded. He grinned at her, squinching up his big blue eyes. She smiled back and he immediately knew he'd won. Staying stern with him was difficult. There was something about him, that particularly light shade of blue in his eyes.

"Chase," Gloria said, *boop*-ing him on the nose with her index finger. "Are you going to keep your feet on the ground?" He nodded, still grinning, his nose leaking clear fluid. "Then I'm going to get you a Kleenex." She turned away, back toward the gate where a box of tissues was precariously perched.

"Kelly, watch the slide for a minute."

It happened in the time that it took her to take three steps. There was a startled cry and a thump and suddenly the yelling and running in both yards had stopped. By the time Gloria turned around Chase was already on the ground, face down on the bark chips, completely still.

She broke into a stumbling run, waiting for him to cry so she would know he was okay, but he didn't move and she wondered if this was what Jordan looked like when he fell from the monkey bars and landed head first on the concrete. She hadn't seen and didn't know until the school called later and said, "Mrs. Campbell, there's been an accident." So maybe he'd looked like this at first, before anyone reached him. Tiny and terribly fragile, with his limbs flung in all directions.

If she had made Kelly get the tissue, if she had banned Chase from the slide, if she had stayed home that day and gone in to work for the dinner crowd instead, if she had become a teacher earlier, if she had been on the yard watching her own son instead of letting half-trained teenagers do it.

If, if, if. The word was the resounding beat in her head, in her footsteps as she ran, even while she knew running wouldn't make it any better. Chase's fall couldn't be reversed any more than Jordan's. The mistake of one moment ago was the same as two years. Just the

same, and replacing college students hadn't helped, and her qualifications hadn't helped, and CPR and First Aid training hadn't helped because Chase was still lying face-down on the ground.

Kelly stood where she had been against the fence. She gaped at Chase's body but made no move toward him, waiting for someone more qualified to take responsibility. Sometimes Gloria imagined all the teachers standing around, pulling out their hair and wondering if they should touch Jordan while he lay on the cement, the circle of blood expanding steadily under his head.

She stopped next to Chase's vulnerable figure and slid, spraying bark chips over his back and banging her ankle against the plastic yellow slide. He had missed hitting the bar on his way down, but the bark chips were dry and brittle. She turned him over, knowing that once again she was too late. But there was no swollen lump on his forehead, no abrasions or black eye. Not even a nose bleed. He still hadn't made a sound and as she lifted his head his mouth was slack. No, not slack; sucking in a deep breath.

Then the wailing poured out of him in a burst and Gloria sat down heavily, jostling his bawling face into her neck. She took a breath and it fluttered in her lungs.

Kelly's eyes were on her. Thinking she was crazy. Thinking that, since Chase turned out okay, it was an overreaction. Thinking of what to do next—get him an Icee, distract him from the pain, tell him that he would be fine. Not thinking of what was almost reality, of the sirens and the horrible waiting, of the ambulance and the sirens and the pale, clenched face of his mother.

No, Chase was lucky. Lucky that it had been bark chips under him instead of concrete, lucky that his feet had hit the ground first, lucky he hadn't broken his skull. Gloria rocked him back and forth. Jordan's hot, wet breath against her ear.

*Brenna Crotty is a senior English major.
She has previously been published in Unbound.*

c i t y (e) s c a p e

*Fear the Fire whose fuel is men and stones,
which is prepared for those who reject Faith.*

— *Koran, 2:24*

This two-cent tour is brought to you by...

*Ginny Jailbait – The finest struttin’ slut in town, a gal who likes her skins boiled in gin and sprinkled with
bone-white sugar*

C.M. Flea – Carnivorous Carney barker and snakeoil salesman extraordinaire

THE ASSOCIATION OF SEWER RATS — A RAVENOUS, AVARICIOUS MASS WITH TICKERTAPE TEETH

And

Your humble Guide – Pay no attention to the ghost-voice behind the curtain

I. Welcome Home, Citizens

Follow me, and tread like a whisper. Here there be monsters and, if you aren’t careful,
you might just discover who the monsters are.
If you feel the urge to scream, for heaven’s sake, don’t.
And abandon all hope. They’ll smell it on you.
You won’t need it where you’re going, anyway.

II. La Maison Dieu, The Lightning-Struck Tower

Skyscrapers are altars, monolithic poly-theistic reminders that compete for our worship. Crosses
missing their horizontal beams. So now they rise up and up and up. And we pray to them. We pray “more.”
Never please, always just, “I want more. Now.” Our lips and tongues flapping like pigeons, forming
prayers to lightning-cracked concrete and tired icons.

You can hear the skyscrapers soaring, hear the souls of the Citizens scrape against each other like
bones against teeth— the sound is equally hungry.

This town ain’t big enough for the lot of us. But what can ya do? Cockroach buffet free-for-all, and dog-eat-dog as
always. Bite the hand that feeds ya, that’s the law in this here city!

Trains howl, echoing off of the night's walls, their discordant blaring like that of a pipe organ in the Church of the Irreverent. Wailing like the tinny violin-screach of a million alley cats under our crushing, thundering wheels—this is our serenade as we sleep behind the steering wheel and mow innocence down to fit in our uncross-able concrete outlines.

We built this city on rock n' roll. On stone, on granite. On marble headstones, epitaphs shot through, lightning-cracked, with the same electricity that made Frankenstein's Monster and executed Mother Nature. Now the rocks come rolling down.

III. Streetwalking Maneaters in the Place of Slaughter

Stiletto-clad legs scissor along, cutting holes in the crowd, not a care in the world. The streets swarm with bubble-gum whores. Jailbait. Skinwalkers wrapped in garbage. I am one of them.

The rain is rancid. It can't be washed off. It gets under my skin, it forms a stagnant pool. I feel the urge to peel off the layers of skin trapping the putrescent pond, feel the need to pour boiling holy water on the exposed nerves to rid myself of the oily condensation. I can be beautiful again, beautiful again.

The city lights echo off the dark windowsill, preventing sleep. They hypnotize, they make a zombie of me. I watch headlights traverse the walls as I lay sleepless skinless spineless, I hear the plaintive moans of the fast-fading lights. I hear the city's banshee-screach of "please"... but the rest fades away. I never hear the request, though I wait, immobile. I keep vigil. She never lets me in.

I eat men zombified-alive and kicking.

IV. Catacombs, Choked with Dust and Drainage

GET OUT OF OUR RACE, LITTLE WHITE MOUSE; THIS ONE'S FOR THE SEWER RATS. YOU JUST AIN'T STRONG ENOUGH. YOU'LL NEVER BE STRONG ENOUGH, NOT 'TIL YOU'RE READY, WILLING, ABLE TO CHEW YOUR OWN TONGUE OUT TO WIN. LOSE THE ABILITY TO CRY OUT IN PAIN, BECAUSE AS LONG AS YOU DON'T MAKE A SOUND YOU WON'T BE ELIMINATED.

The sewage pipes are rusted, overused and bursting, they empty saccharin slime into gargoyles' mouths to rain on the City like blessings from the lips of Gods that never existed, but wanted to.

D'ya got someplace to be? Well, all aboard, folks! We got the bes'transit in tha' city, nevermin' the lack a competitors. Lounge in luxury and get where you're goin' twice as fast! What convenience! Buy your eternity pass ta-day!

What's that, kid? You wanna go sightseein'? Well, no dice, pal. Sightseein' is for better folks. Orderliness is sightlessness, my ma always used ta say. Life is a one-way ticket with no stops, and your ticket's expired! Security!

Sorry, folks! Kids these days!

Descend below the asphalt, brave the depths, the subterranean worm-tunnels, the Transport System for worms and leeches and crawling things that consume. This is the clogged subway, a burrow-transport for all things slimy, all things that slither in the dark and shrivel/shrink in the light. Inhale the humid scent. Smell that? Salt and animal fear masked in cheaply made, expensively bought fragrance. Fools plunge into the feverish pockets of musk and activity, into the salty-sardine-sweat-slick riot, the larval/ichthyoid bodies scraping past one another like badly-oiled pistons. *Lusty moans and screechy-bedspring bones. The subway squeals along with the steamy-sex-hiss they make as they writhe together, a frenzied mass-fornication. Everybody's starving for something. I eat you and you eat me and we all get some real fast food, baby.* All the many scaly, reptilian things all go in the same direction, crawling—down the gullet of the beast that gapes wide, smiling in triumph; they serve themselves to their tentacled, tarnished god.

The cave-blind fear is more electric than eels, more toxic than toads, more inescapable than Death. Infectious.

V. Greed Bleeds in the Gutters

GET OUT OF YOUR SKIN, GET OUT OF THIS CITY, LITTLE FEEDER MOUSE. THIS PLACE IS DISEASED, BUT THE LOCATION IS AT A PREMIUM. THE SNAKES IN THIS PIT ARE FIERCE; THEY'LL BLEED YOU DRY IF YOU DON'T FIGHT BACK. BE SHREWD AND SHRED THE FLESH. BUT YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE YOUR BABY TEETH. WHAT IS THE GOING RATE OF SAFETY? WHAT IS THE COST PER POUND OF SOUL? SELL SELL SELL! THE MARKET IS SHOT TO HELL— EVERYTHING MUST GO!

Lay-dees and gents, if you'll look out the west window, you can see the fires still burning. It's lovely at night, lemme tell ya! At this time, folks, we'd like to offer you some souvenirs! Get your red-hot piece of the city— impress your friends and neighbors! The first one's on the house, the next'll cost you your firstborn! It's all being liquidated, folks, get it before it's gone for good!

VI. SICK

Glance upward to see the decayed-cadaver skyscrapers, silhouetted against the amber-ambient backdrop of poisoned-radioactive sky. The sky is a cancerous rose in full bloom, and we bathe it in the jaundiced spotlight of a million shades of fluorescent yellow. We light the sky up until the moon is just one faded, envious eye in the glow of our pride. And those ruins tower above, blank glass faces gazing upon us like Christ on his Crucifix. Their radio-static sighs are almost audible, an electric current that makes the hair stand on end and causes an involuntary shiver. The Deadthings speak:

“This is the Dream!”

Our wretched dream of picking clean the corpse of Mother Earth. One hand in her casket, the other in her pocket.

Come One, come all! Step right up, see the eighth and last wonder of the world! Ya won't never get another chance like this! These here are th' ruins of the Empire!

GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT OF HERE, YOU DON'T FIT OUR COOKIE CUTTER, OUR JIGSAW PUZZLE, YOU ARE COLOR OUTSIDE THE LINES. (BRIGHT COLOR YOU HURT OUR EYES.) YOU DON'T EXIST BECAUSE WE SAY SO, AND YOU ARE NOT A PIECE OF US. WE DID NOT CREATE YOU, AND SO YOU ARE ANTICHRIST. YOU DISGUST US, YOU WANT TO DESTROY US, WE KNOW IT. YOU CAN'T KILL US, WE'LL KILL YOU FIRST.

Cancer in a bottle, Cancer in a box, Cancer in fuckin' chewable-vitamin form. But don'ya fret, lay-dees and gents, I got the on'y cure 'round these parts, hell, the on'y cure anywheres! All-purpose, all-natural, and in a tasty cherry flavor! What d'I call it, ya might ask? Well, I calls it Placebo. An' today I'm a askin' on'y yer soul for one whole bottle a my super-sonic tonic Placebo! It'll cure whatever ails ya! Ya can't find this deal anywheres else! Who's innerested?!

VII. We Are Malignant. We Are Incurable. We Are Pandemic. We Are Apocalypse.

On behalf of our gen'rous sponsors, we hope ya enjoyed tha show! Remember, take away only what you can carry—conscience is a heavy thing indeed, folks. *You are what you consume, and you are what you consummate. Close yourself and become nothing.* TRUTH IS EXPENSIVE; BE CAREFUL WHICH THOUGHTS YOU ALLOW TO INFEST YOU. Pay no attention to the ghosts behind the curtain, to the nightmare projected onto your silverscreen eyes. Close them. There is nothing left to fear.

— — MEGAN WOODIE

*Megan Woodie is a junior majoring in English.
She has been previously published in Unbound.*

broadway agog for empathy: fifth-graders sell out “i feel”

CHRISTOPHER BRADLEY

NEW YORK CITY—The spring play is an annual ritual at many elementary schools, where the fifth-grade class presents a feel-good performance for schoolmates and family members. It is invariably an in-house production and meant to stir students’ imagination and creativity. But one homeroom teacher from Le Mars, Iowa, has hit upon something much bigger. Her play, “I Feel Sad When You Hit Me,” debuted on Broadway Saturday night to rave reviews, and shows are sold out for the next three weeks.

This Midwestern musical is the offspring of long-time fifth-grade teacher Ms. Jane Jimson of McKinley Elementary School. Through songs such as “Understand Your Interlocutor” and “Six-Inch Voices,” the play tells the story of bespectacled and diminutive Jesse Gibbs and his struggles with bully R.B. Buck. It is showing at the acclaimed Gershwin Theater.

Before a crowd of reporters in Cen-

tral Park, Ms. Jimson recounted having come up with the idea for her play after observing a unique playground skirmish. The fight ended after a single punch, she said, “when the victimized student used a perfect ‘I feel’ statement to express his grief at having been punched in the kidney.” Inspired by this real-life application of the school’s teachings on empathy, Ms. Jimson penned her play over the course of the next two weeks.

The big break for this troupe of tykes arrived on opening night in the McKinley Elementary gym in the form of local theater critic Gilbert Johns, parent of fifth-grader Benjamin. He wrote a lionizing review for the Le Mars paper, noting the “tremendous *je ne sais quoi*” of the piece, and Broadway’s drama scouts were quick to catch the scent. Within a month, Ms. Jimson and her neophytes were on stage at the Gershwin.

“I’m just super proud of how my students have taken this project upon themselves and created something so

special,” Ms. Jimson said. She took a bite of her red delicious apple, chewed, swallowed, and went on. “And what truly pleases me is that now we can take our message of empathy and the ‘I feel’ statement to the national level.”

“I Feel Sad When You Hit Me” is currently slated for a two-month run. Tickets range from \$1-\$2.25, and Lindsay Ross’s mother’s homemade cookies are on sale before the show and during intermission, three for a dollar.

Christopher Bradley has his BA in English and is currently a post-baccalaureate student. His work has appeared in the Oregon Voice, Chapman Journal, and Unbound. He is studying and teaching English in Pavia, Italy.



WHITNEY GEIER

destruction

Digital Photograph

*Whitney Geier is a junior Art major. This is her first time being published.
Her artwork is featured on the cover of this issue of Unbound.*

ode to curled toes

--JANE ROARK

Beating hearts on the edge of our sleeves
crumpled on the floor with discarded images
of ourselves, replied by blind touch,
a familiar sensation paired with
smooth and pulsing skin where underneath
your sinews stretch and cramp
with this pleasure of such intensity
your toes curl in ecstasy
and of this tug of war
where bodies tangle together
knotted like rope and hair,
when your hand runs through my gnarls
with savage intensity
forcing the juxtaposition of pleasure and pain
makes my toes curl.
Like a baby's foot with
small spider's legs bent to wrap
around it's prey of giant finger
held in place by its tiny captor,
paralyzed by innocence and grace,
meant to grow and play in dewy grass
as nature surely intended
to experience the beat of the world's pulse
as soft and quick as the dance of our hearts:
together and alone in the contentment
of our soft sheets and low moans
I read your body like brail
with my fingertips and lips and teeth,
with sticky skin and touch bearing
heavenly love strain with
soft sown words that warm the belly
as our combination of sweat
baptizes and condemns us in life
and harmony so glorious we
curl our toes to grapple
life's mysterious beauty.

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She has been published in the Oregon Voice.*

a celebration tree

MICHELLE FENRICK

Words spilled from Thatcher, rapid, like water from an overturned glass, spreading across the surface, materializing on the screen in fragments. We were about to make love when he'd suddenly felt moved to write—finishing his scene that he'd been stuck on—and now his penis was three shades darker than his body and he stared at it in cool concentration, his fingers moving all the time, like a shower of raindrops across the keys. The plastic of the laptop made a pink mark on his thighs and seemed to stick to his nudity. He typed quickly and didn't stop to correct the mistakes he made. "I" flashed on the screen; a few indiscernible vowels; a phrase he'd probably been struck with. "I" again and "Him" and then "her" and "you" and later in the line, "It." Then it was over; the moment ceased to exist.

I was caressing him, I was waiting on him to love me, caring little for the verbal catharsis, though later I would think that I did. What came pouring out

at those moments was not great prose. I never expected it to be, not because of him, but because of us. We were ordinary.

Now there is silence from the keys. "Adrian," he says suddenly and I twist to look up at his bearded smile. "Are you going to need a ride home?"

There is a noise from the outside, the small thwacking of raindrops in the gutters, the soft impact of wind on the side of the house.

"I have to work today." I pause and brush the back of my hand against his calf. The long, fine hairs make it feel like hot silk. His clicking picks up again and echoes from the low ceiling, almost drowning out a "hmm" of assent. I think whether I've told him already and though I'm uncertain I say, "Remember?"

Sunset flecks his dark beard with orange and stains the heap of our clothes a violent umber. He doesn't reply, but his arm begins to shift slowly out of its white casing of sheets and reaches over, tickling my back. For a moment I tense,

but he is only groping for his glass of water.

Outside, the sapling in the yard is shivering and I hold my hand up to the smudges on the windowpane as if I can steady it from afar. We had planted it the winter before last, at flaring root depth like I'd learned from "Friends of Trees," but Thatcher had been skeptical.

"Aren't you supposed to keep the root ball together?" he'd asked. "If you bury it that shallow, isn't it just going to topple over in the first big gust?"

"That's why we stake it."

I leaned my shoulders back against the broad board of his chest. His fresh beard felt prickly on my neck and scratched my cheek as he kissed it. I remember marveling at how large he was, how his upper body could comfortably fold around my slender arms and chest. Even now he takes up most of the queen-sized bed.

I lift Thatcher's glass from where it stands reflecting the cool red tinge of our mahogany nightstand and hand it to him, then take a pull from last night's bottle of wine. I lean half off the bed in order to avoid staining the sheets, enjoying the stretch in my core. I've been at the gym every day after work this week and my abs feel like chilled taffy. I take a corner of the sheet and begin to smear away the long hairs and fine white specks on the carpet. Usually I vacuum when I'm over but I haven't stayed more than a night in almost two weeks. A spidery shadow waves over the textured surface. The tree is beginning to sway more violently.

We planted the dogwood on our six-month anniversary. "A celebration tree," Thatcher had said, staring at it loving-

ly in the nursery. He held his hand near its infant bows as if he wanted to pet it. "Its branches are beautiful."

"Yeah," I said, breathing in. The scent of his Old Spice deodorant bloomed in my sinuses. "It's gonna get these cute little flowers. I think it'll really bring some life into the space."

"It'll be perfect for when I stare out the window," he grinned, eying a group of old ladies in bright sweatshirts bustling around the rhododendrons. "Something to look at other than hundred square feet of dandelions." When Thatcher smiled his cheeks gained a fullness, a healthy contrast to the wan creases his pale face wore when he was writing. I drank in the color in his complexion, and the clarity of his green eyes reflecting gray. I savored his deep laugh.

"What's funny?" I asked, hoping my face looked intrigued.

"Oh nothing..." he was still beaming while he rubbed his eyes, "It's just, that's exactly what my mom's like, one of those people who loves flowers so much she dresses like them...and it just occurred to me, we're all these simulacra, like there's a limited number of molds." Thatcher picked his leg up and placed it gently on the side of the favored tree's burlap bound roots.

"Oh, yeah?" I looked down the row of white flowering plums, glowing like it had the blessing of God in the bright cloudy day. "Then what are you and I?"

"Oh, us?" he said, with tension in his jaw so I could hear the irony. "We're just you're average young gay couple out to spruce up the yard."

I rolled my eyes, still looking away. When I turned back he had that smirk he always got when he had successfully evaded a challenging question, eye-

brows raised and knitted but with an absurd grin—the same look he'd had when he'd sprained his ankle at the ice rink. "Don't worry, Adrian," he'd said. "It's only a flesh wound."

I'd been too timid then to try to soothe him, unsure how he would react. Now I touched his face and it instantly relaxed. His soft lips met my wrist and he told me he loved me.

That night we went to see his ex-boyfriend's band, out at some hick bar where all the country music stars used to play. Now the floors were concrete and covered in broken bottles, like some sort of punk saloon. I took Thatcher tightly by the arm. Ghostly looking cowboy junkies ebbed in and out with the crowd of hipsters. Some even had spurs on their too tall boots. I pressed into Thatcher's body. Then the room grew warm and the hanging lights looked like stars. His breath was breeze and it carried me into the night. I clung to him while he bobbed to the music, jostled with every step.

After the show he drove me home and walked me in to my apartment. When I said I was too tired for sex, he tucked me into bed and went downstairs. I assumed he'd left but in the morning he was perched on a kitchen stool typing, waiting on the coffee to percolate. There was a noise inside of me then, a little satisfied sigh. He was beautiful, without pause or purpose, despite and because of his face (it was made sad by a warm November and the too cold perspiration tracing the veins in his too hot hands). I would have married him that day if I could have; I would have taken him.

"Shit!" Thatcher says and suddenly

I am back in the sheets, his body radiating a heat, which causes my left side to sweat.

It isn't sweat. Water is flowing over his lap and pooling on the bed, Thatcher's silver Macbook pro is elevated over his head like a talisman, almost touching the low chandelier.

"Don't move!" he says, bearded face lighting up with a blush.

"What?" I am clutching the edge of the bed to avoid falling.

"I broke the glass!" he says.

And sure enough, I don't know how, the white sheets are flecked with silver sparkles and I am not wearing a single piece of clothing, not even socks.

I slip out of the bed and onto the floor. "How the fuck!" I'm almost laughing.

Thatcher is wide-eyed. "I don't know! It hit the corner of the computer...just kinda shattered. Oh God! I'm sorry!"

"It's not that big of a deal." I grin to show him I'm alright, but his face remains pale. "Hey," I say. "Just slide off the other side of the bed. It'll be cool."

Thatcher is an artist's still, black hair and white skin, frozen. "God!" he says again. "I can't believe I fucked that up so bad! Jesus!"

I'm making my puppy-dog eyes, heart jumping in response to his harshness. I hope he will just calm down. "It's not like it was really your fault." I say and begin, shakily, to stand.

"Of course it was!" His smooth chest expands sharply and folds. He breathes three times and turns to look at me where I am examining the sheets. "Adrian," he says. His voice is suddenly low and even. Creases appear at the corners of his eyes. "You should probably head home. I mean," and then he looks away,

placing the computer on the floor, “you shouldn’t have to deal with this.”

For a moment the air in my lungs turns to lead and I lean heavily against the nightstand. “Neither should you,” I say, transitioning slowly to a smile. “Look, we’ll go out for an hour or two and hit the bars. We’ll clean it later... you can stay at my place.”

“Adrian.” The same flat tone. “I really can’t. You know, with work, and this has to get picked up and—” he is picking up pace and pitch, “—what if Annie walks in and cuts herself and bleeds to death while we’re gone, then—”

“You can close the door for the cat,” I interrupt him. There is a tension in my throat I didn’t expect and I try to loosen it by wiggling my jaw. I realize I must look silly but Thatcher doesn’t say a word. “I’m sorry, babe,” I say and tip-toe over to his side. The twilight has sobered the white ferocity of his features. My hand glides over his purple cheek. “Just for an hour.” I kiss him. “It will be good for both of us.”

In the low light his face is shifting, and my imagination paints him looking somber. But when Thatcher assents, I hear his invisible smile. “Sure, Adge.” He kisses me. “Can you get the light?”

I pad carefully over the carpet towards my side of the bed, where the bulbous black lamp perches on the nightstand. It feels like something is caught in my throat because every time I am about to speak only a shallow hot breath comes out. As I pinch and twist, the harsh little knob pricks my fingertips. The room is overcome with foreign familiarity, with too-bright detail. Thatcher is gingerly extricating his long body from the sheet while I sift through the pile of our clothes, looking for my

jeans, my boxers, my shirt. I find everything but a single sock. It doesn’t matter. I slip my shoes on in bare feet.

It was a week after we planted the tree that Thatcher heard back from a publishing agency. They wanted his book, but he had to change some things, make it a little more concise in some places, add things in others, tighten up the language and the voice. “No problem!” Thatcher had said. He was standing over the sink in the bright open space of my studio apartment, poised to pop the bottle of champagne. “I’ve been meaning to change some things anyway.” Then, pulling his shoulders back as if he needed to stand at full height, “God, I can’t fucking believe it!”

I was stretched across the sofa, languid after soaking up the afternoon sun, making the motion of my thumb which told him to get on with it. “It’s awesome, babe,” I said, sitting up slowly. “I always knew that you could.”

“You would say that,” he laughed, then began talking a mile a minute about his book: what he was going to do, how he would change the characters. He was going to completely revise and “breathe in a little more of myself, the things I’d been holding back.” Even the shock of the cork departing the bottle, the rushing of fizz, the clatter of the glass jars I used for cups, didn’t stop him. “I have to call Jules!” he said. “And Andrea and Grace and Eri!” He handed me a glass that was mostly foam and I almost tipped it into my lap he let go of it so quickly. “They have to join the party!”

“Are you sure we’ll have enough champagne?”

“Fuck, who cares! We’ll get more!”

I took a long draught from my glass and winced. Champagne had never agreed with me, the dry fizz chafed my mouth. I took another swig and clenched my teeth.

Then Thatcher's arm was around my shoulder and his hand on my chin. He guided my face until I was looking at him. "I'm sorry," he said gently. "Is it alright if a few people come over? I got carried away for a second."

"Oh, no. Of course, it's totally cool." I beamed and kissed him. "It's a big day after all."

They weren't rowdy, Thatcher's friends, just kind of boisterous and talkative. It was often hard to get a word in edge-wise. They would go and on with their stories, one after the other, punctuating the rhythm with ringing laughter. After I'd put in a few quips and been overrun more times than I could count, I left my seat on Thatcher's lap and went to the store on the pretence of getting more champagne.

When I got back it was past midnight. I had dawdled at the comic shop until it closed before meandering the four blocks to the local Safeway. I slipped through the open door and clunked the booze down on card table in its plastic bag sheath, reserving a six-pack of Widmer for myself. As I lay down on the bed in the back of the room, Thatcher asked me if I was okay, a chorus of concerned voices following his. I replied by holding up my open bottle of beer and grinning broadly. "Doing great guys!" I said. "Just keep on partying." Then I rolled over and tried to go to sleep.

Two hours later, Thatcher joined me, his friends having been dismissed. He was warm despite not having had much to drink (the second bottle of cham-

pagne was mostly shared amongst his friends) and I sank into him. "Thanks," he said soberly. "It's nice to get everyone together like that."

I reached up to rub his arm without turning over.

Of course, being at the bar is different. We're regulars at Jim's, and Thatcher and I always sit by the window. At night you can watch all the partygoers toddle by in bright dresses and dark shirts, intertwined with each other and laughing open-mouthed. The yellow ambiance of the bar makes them appear sallow, but the city's lights shine brighter and fuller than ever. There's usually a folk band playing, or an acoustic guitarist, and the smooth notes settle my nerves. Thatcher introduced me to the place when we went to see a favorite band of his, but I was the one who consistently dragged him back. Even if he was working or way too stressed, I could usually order him a glass of wine here and get him to chill out.

Tonight I am applying the tactic. "The Tailhop IPA," I say to our waiter, who is a slender young man with a pretty face, "and a glass of the Pinot Gris." Thatcher doesn't even look up from where he is hidden behind the metal façade, furiously typing. My fingers trace the tension in his forearm, and I slide my chair over next to his. "How's it going?" I say, but he is engrossed. I fiddle with my earring and look up into the smoky crowd.

There are two women at the bar sitting alone, one with a backpack slung over the back of her chair, another perched on her stool in uncomfortable looking heels. They each lift a glass to their lips, one after the other. In the cor-

ner opposite Thatcher and me a couple in their thirties is bouncing a baby to the foot-stomping melody of the band. Our waiter breaks out into the room, tight black slacks shifting over his hips. He makes his way to the table next to us and leans over, laughing. The three patrons he's serving laugh too, and the one on the outside gives his arm a little tap. I tried to remember the first time I'd seen that waiter, whether he was new.

When Thatcher turned in his finished copy of the story it was late April, we'd come here when it was raining and rushed inside for shelter. We'd had drinks and danced for hours, almost until morning. I remember drunkenly ordering appetizers multiple times and Thatcher holding me back from toppling over into our waiter's arms on the third. He was a young man as well, bright eyed, maybe the same as tonight's. When I said, practically shouting, "More onion rings, sir!" he'd laughed and saluted me. Then Thatcher lifted me into the air in a way that made the room reel and the fuzz in my head grow warm, setting me in a chair at the bar. "I've gotta get you home!" he said, laughing, "Before you make a fool out of yourself."

"Hey," I said, flailing an arm in his general direction. "Hey. I'll decide when I'm ready to go home, mister."

Thatcher gave me a patronizing nod. "Mm-hmm."

"Seriously!"

"We go home after onion rings, okay?"

"Fine," I leaned in towards him until our noses touched. "But you have to make it up to me tomorrow."

"And—" he kissed me, "—how will I do that?"

"By going hiking, of course."

Thatcher brushed the hair back over my ear. It tickled and I shook my head slightly. "Oh, I see," he said grinning. "Well I suppose that can be arranged."

The next day I had to work in the morning, so I left Thatcher's apartment on my bike at 8am. When I got back in the afternoon he was still in his t-shirt and boxers from last night and was sitting at the kitchen table working. I crept into his bedroom and started playing Halo, hoping he would remember his promise in time to go before sunset. He didn't. The rhythm of Thatcher's typing lulled me, and I fell asleep with the TV still on.

The typing no longer soothes me. It's a constant pressure on my ears and I have no idea how to remove it. I try to entice Thatcher onto the dance floor by tugging at his arm and wiggling my hips but he doesn't respond. The bright-eyed waiter returns with my fourth beer. I give him the smile I reserve for intimate friends and ask him how his night is going. Thatcher's pinot is untouched so I take a sip. The young man laughs.

"Alright, I guess." Then he leans over, "I keep getting hit on by drunk girls, though." As he lowers his voice it grows silky. "You'd think the impeccable taste in trousers would give them the hint."

"I don't suppose you'd be allowed to dance with me," I ask, my gaze wandering down the legs he'd indicated.

"You know what? I'm off," he glances at his watch, "two minutes ago."

"Great!" I practically bolt from my chair. "Hey Thatch, you mind if a dance for a bit?"

The clacking doesn't cease. He answers with mumbled assent, a vague unfocused smile, so I take my leave

from the table stringing the young man behind me.

It is during the first slow dance that Thatcher looks up. His eyes find my body pressed against that of another man, gliding and shifting to a slow blues groove. My lips are on the verge of meeting those of my partner. I watch Thatcher's face fall, first the mouth coming open, then the cheeks becoming slack. After that his eyes crease around the edges in an expression of pain. It's more than I can take. I clumsily extricate myself from the boy and saunter over to the table.

"It's nothing!" I blurt.

"It's something," he softly returns. His dilated pupils scan my features. I realize how guilty I must look and it isn't fair that he can get away with this.

"Fuck you." I say suddenly, under my breath, and when his eyes open in shock I take two steps back from the table. The Macbook glares from its single, un-lidded eye. "You don't even care!" I say and hold my body tense before his scrutiny. I know that I am drunk because I feel like two people. One is my body, moving though I feel it less, the other is a mind encased in a warm Jell-O mold. Also, I can hear my slur.

Thatcher tips his chair, standing up to take me by the arm, "Adrian!" he says, and he is whitewashed, eyes still wide and pleading. But I am already moving rapidly through the room. I know that the heat in my cheeks is more than the liquor and I look up into the bar lights, avoiding the faces in the crowd. I shove through the door and with the vague impression that Thatcher is behind me, taking to the street like a disoriented bird. Down my chilled cheeks warm

tears are flying, and it's the last thing I want him to see.

Overhead the sky is overwhelming, reeling and inky. I almost fall into it. Thatcher isn't behind me, I realize, so I slow down. For a second my mind is still drifting through space. Then I come back to my body. It's a cold night for July and the air is stinging my bare calves. The lights are just a little too bright and the noise of crowds comes in and out in violent waves. I know my apartment is only two miles away and so I drift towards it, alternately brushing my fingers on damp brick walls and staring at the sky. My steps make my head slosh like a water balloon and my chest ache. The few faces I pass are scrunched with scrutiny.

After an unfulfilling night's sleep I return to Thatcher's apartment in the afternoon, when I know he will be at work. The back sliding door is always open. I push my way through the piles of clothes and grab my toothbrush from his bathroom, my half-finished bottle of wine from the bedroom, and root around for my socks.

I think about leaving him a note, but I don't know what I would say. I glare into the distant bottom of his fanciful modern sink. It gawks back through its one black eye. Then I look out into the yard. At first all I see is a green complacent field but then I am struck with a sudden sense of absence. The perfect branch fan seems lopsided against the skyline, somehow unbalanced. One stake is standing but the other lies uprooted, flattening a line of dandelions and pulling at the rope that secured it.

I take three steps to the sliding glass door but as my hand lights on the

handle I freeze, clutching the cool metal against my sweating palm. A t-shirt of mine is balled up on the armrest of the nearby sofa. I pick it up and stuff it as far as it will go into the pocket of my jeans. Clasp my toothbrush, the bottle, and three DVD's, I make my way out of Thatcher's apartment, leaving through the front door.

The next day I am flirting again with

the waiter, but I feel a little twinge every time he smiles. His face is far too perfect. The next night I dream about comforting warmth stealing over me while I watch the tree wave in the breeze on a cloudy day. I am awoken suddenly by the wind, blowing so hard against the exterior façade of my apartment that the room seems to vibrate. I'm wrapped tightly in my blankets, but I shiver.

*Michelle Fenrick is a junior English major.
This is her first published piece.*

d r e a m s o f s i l e n c e

Have you watched the shrinking body turn white?
Bleached by slow months spent languishing in bed
like flower stems desiccating in a planter box. Silence
covers, cowl-like, brows buckled by the waking dream.
Its sepulchre, draped and smothered by sheets,
floats like a dead cloud. No one sleeps

but the quiet, translucent form; the sleep
that shuts like a finished novel, a puff of white
dust, and a deep stillness, wetted by sheets
of rain that dissolve our eyes and drench the bed.
In the beginning, there were words, her dream,
that she rose from her nest and broke the silence

with her feet across soft carpet. We blink silence
and mouth hollow praise for her escape. Sleep
can be a shame to end, as can the fantastic dream
of mundane impossibilities, lost in the white-
out of waking minds. Some never leave bed
long enough to lose dreams or air old sheets.

In my dreams, she would pin up sheets
to sun-dry; each snap piercing memory's silence
like light moving through a glass lens, or a bed
forever falling through the living room. Sleep
into forgetfulness; she always said, in light white
tones, she never worried as she plummeted into dream

states and wombish black seas. A dream
only fills the frames of undeveloped sheets
that feed through the projector's flashing white
eyes. The beams point to center stage, a cone of silence
falls as a shimmer, buries her sleep
shaped bones and bright bird-nest bed.

Time stretches to a spiral and takes pain to bed
in the malignant stomach, smoothed by a shallow morphine dream,
tenuous as twilight falling fevered into sleep.
Everything is a lack, endlessly thin layers— like sheets
of solid air. A tear, choked out, speaks silence
as eloquent as clear ink on parchment folded to a speck of white.

Her skin stained white by the vanilla-brilliant bed
answers silence with silence, seems to dream
past sheets bunched and piled in simulations of sleep.

— TYLER WELTY

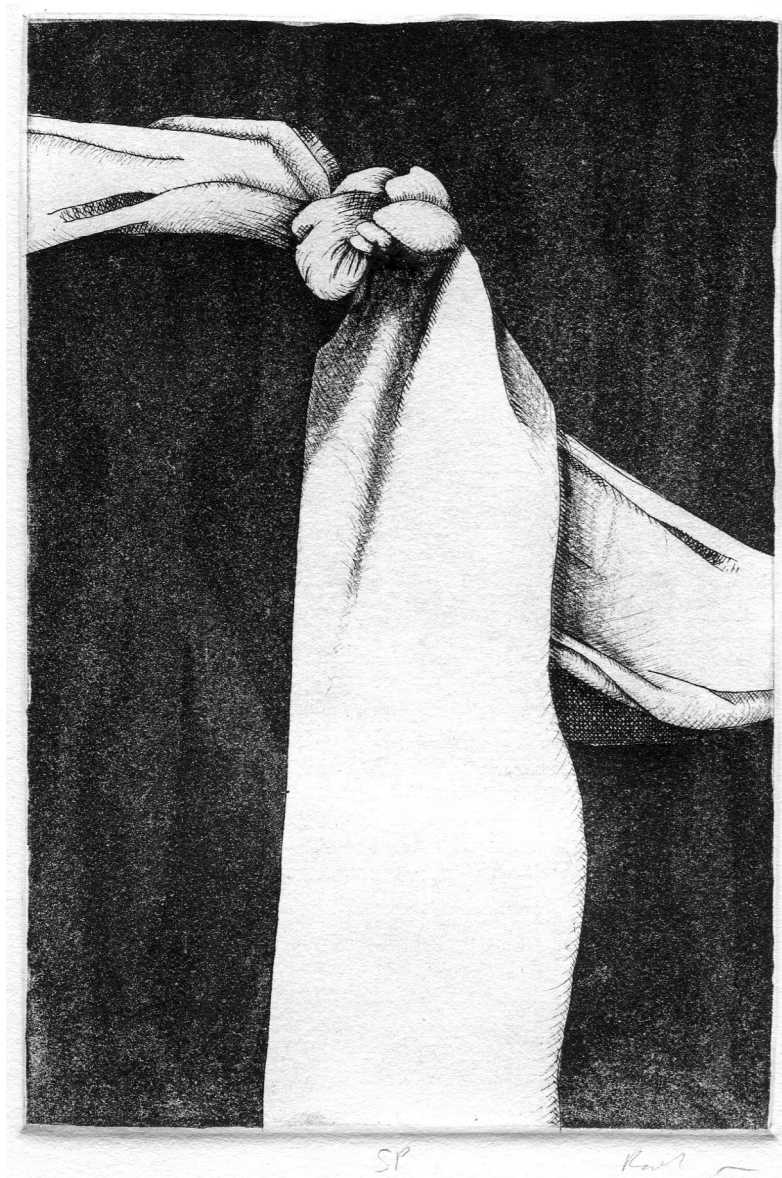
Tyler Welty is a senior majoring in English.
He has been published in Unbound and the CHC Creative Arts Journal.

fire dancers

I can't bear to be the wind.
Swift rain sideways, flicking to fight
Picking the night to pieces, sticking
spines in the creases where your forehead lights
up because you have to dance you just have to
forget about the last be-puddled sock
wring it out to line it up take stock and lock it up
liquid form spun to a pulse, quickened by
drunk songs in Spanish "el fuego del infierno!"
slung over his lips like knapsacks
intentions are famished as I clutch your back
feel your fears and you're sweating sparks
lit up by the flick of blue
in your eyes and you need it roll it
into shapes gorgeous and true
piercing the night, scarlet red hue
soon we shall all burn together
when this world harmoniously cremates
spread our ashes over beaches
but I hope your dance teaches
us all a lesson. How to feel the
flame without singeing your name.

--COLIN KEATING

*Colin Keating is a freshman majoring in Women's and Gender Studies.
This is his first published piece.*



RACHAEL MILLER

scarf etching



RACHAEL MILLER

fred thompson

Rachael Miller is an Art major.

w e w e r e p r o m i s e d s k u l l s

-- EMMA WHITMAN

we were promised skulls along the way
but only got feathers and broken white shells.
we stuck to the left,
followed the trail
of tiny flowers
that I tried to describe to you,
because I knew yellow was still new.

“they look like a kiss on the forehead feels,” demonstrating.
“how reassuring,” you said, blushing red.

and now, at the base
of the tallest cedar in the forest
I feel like that statue
that wept blood,
looking up, worshipping.
we both have eyes fused
to the heavens, playing at praying,
but her face was stained
crimson and, just now,
mine washes clean.

“red was a good first color,” I had told you earlier,
and I still believed it, even though
no one else would trust your sight.

later that night, our eyes finally closed,
a flying tree
with gnarled roots dangling hundreds of feet, tickled the ground.
through owl holes
we saw into the hollow again,
glimpses of liquid gold pouring out—
we swam through honey
with cedar boughs attached to our arms.

*Emma Whitman is a junior majoring in English.
This is her first time being published.*

s t i l l t h e r o u n d s

Still the rounds;
off the labored circuit turn;
close those tired, rheumy rounds;
make blank black and calm
the cave cathedral.

Let the stringent columns,
poured by patient eons,
spill apart -- dissolve into their
sediments quiescent.

Let the raucous domes of stone
hush.
Still, the silent, stone-soft rounds
wait.

Then they shake!
Fill with sounds!
Cluster quickly twining cracks and
bleed the seeping light through
crumbling gravel, grating, churning –
break upon the darkest drum!
Split the murky rafters into
iridescent splinters –
loose the reeling threads, those
luminescent lines, in
curling arcs cascading out from
ringing tongues and tines.
Effuse the frothy haze
of winding winds
that sigh from moistly rasping reeds;
bellow through the hollow wood.
Cleave, molten spears of brass;
sag with tides of melting weight, then
spike in searing, piercing spines.
Split into this fog of pitch.

Echo thick, scratchily
and deeply well
the dank though warmly filling lows –
rumble forward wet air-fragment flows!

Percussively collide;
brightly spark the knocking tips.
Shiver thinly trills, and
swellingly accompany
harmonious cacophonies of
roundly rippling strokes.

Roundly surge –
softly swell –
blinding noise.

Gather swiftly static chords, and singing
writhe collectively electrically.
Spasm on these inky screens
in fluttering fluorescent lapses.
Cloud the night with aural glow as
blinking boiling neon streams
tear the shrouded seams, and lack collapses.

— JEROME HIRSCH

*Jerome Hirsch is a senior majoring in English and Computer Science.
He has been previously published in Unbound and the Oregon Voice.*



JOANNA GRIFFIN

untitled #1

Digital Photograph



untitled #2

Digital Photograph

Joanna Griffin is an Art major.

b o d y e l e g y

How terribly the brain
Misses the heart
When it is blown apart by shells
Hands have made.

-- THOMAS NIXON

*Thomas Nixon is a sophomore majoring in Psychology.
This is his first time being published.*

f r o t h

The rootbeer froth clung to the rim
as sunset crackled the cloudy sky
and cracks appeared upon the limb.

Scarlet clouds seemed to skim
glaring sun's bleary, red-veined eye.
The rootbeer froth clung to the rim.

Had to have been something wrong with him
to push a man twice his size, must've been high;
then cracks appeared upon the limb.

Blood-froth filled his eye to the bleary brim,
fault-lines cleft his skull; his foaming cry
was like rootbeer froth dried on the rim.

There was a crackling look of brim-
stone embers in the bigger man's eyes
as cracks appeared upon the limb.

The cracked club arched arabesque, seemed to skim
bloody sky, the smaller man was a swatted fly.
The rootbeer froth has stained the rim;
Vein-cracks spell the story on the shattered limb.

— MEGAN WOODIE

t r a n s f i g u r a t i o n

LOGAN RAU

My bapa came forth from his mother's womb during the rainiest April month ever recorded in the Kashmir Valley (take note that the date is not important, as dates will not become a part of my family's history until my own birth). Where most children go from the wet warmth of their mother to a harsh dry land of scratching cloth and dust, he simply exchanged one embryonic fluid for another. From his very first steps, water was my father's constant guardian. Perhaps, through its pitter-patter, the rain itself whispered the word *Tariq* to my grandmother, as these two syllables became prophetic in his later years. After all, she would have had plenty of time to listen since their entire village was forced into the trees for the better part of three weeks while the Indian Ocean moved its contents some three hundred miles north into my homeland. If you saw me writing this from my small third floor apartment amidst all the bustling noise of a New Delhi slum, you might begin to doubt the veracity of my tale. You might ask what business a first generation immigrant from (and emigrant

back to) the Kashmir Valley has making claims on history and how it shapes the world. But before you doubt, I want you to listen. Just as my father sat beside a creek listening for the voices of a newborn river god, hear the babbling brook of vowels and consonance blending into meaning. Feel the dissonance of a rock being thrown into still waters and larger splashes of a child struggling to stay afloat.

Once the sea started its long retreat towards its home, my father's parents Kandan and Padmal left the safety of the trees to find a small river that now ran over the spot where their house once sat. As they began to rebuild their lives, they found that the river teemed with small silver fish, so many that it seemed the mountains were dropping them into the stream like silver coins into a wishing well. While other craftsmen ordered new tools, Kandan found the flood an opportunity to change occupations. He and Padmal worked to weave a suitable net, but it was not until the fourth try that they were able to create something that could both be thrown into the stream to wrap around the fish without tearing on rocks or be

broken by the slippery cargo contained within.

After a few months, Kandan followed the stream to its source to see if some natural dam had burst in a high lake, allowing the fish-filled waters to flow down and feed his family while also bringing him a considerable amount of wealth since it seemed the only place in the river with any fish was located right next to my grandparents' house. He hiked thirty miles without seeing an animal near the water; no flashes of silver, no deer drinking from its cool banks. Finally, he came to a steep running cliff and the stream simply disappeared right beneath it.

Four days after leaving, Kandan returned to the village. For our story's purposes, there was not a single event of importance during the next six years. As a boy, Tariq spent countless hours searching the intrepid pools for knowledge. His speech sounded more like the babbling of a brook than the jumbled words of a child. He refused to let his mother cut his long brown hair, and didn't associate with any other children; he simply sat and stared into the intrepid pools that, even when all the other water in the village was frozen, continued to flow and provide for his family. It was on a sunny spring day not unlike any other that Tariq's connection to this water became just as clear as the liquid itself, both to my grandparents and my father. It began with a stone—a rough invader from a dry, cracked world breaking the calm surface. Tariq, sitting next to the water, felt a splash on his face and immediately whipped around to see two older boys laughing as they again attempted to skip a rock across the surface of the water. Tariq

yelled out at them but to the boys it only sounded as if the water began to run faster and louder and they could not make out a word from my father's speech. Again and again they tossed the stones until finally Tariq charged them, protecting the calm surface with which he daily communed. He yelled out and the boys shuddered as his screams became the sounds of a thunderous wave crashing towards them. However, his body was not that of a tidal wave but of a small six-year-old boy. Grabbing their attacker, the boys succeeded in skipping something across the water. By the fourth skip, Tariq reached the middle of the stream and, since he had never once thought to disturb his companion by swimming within it, sank to the bottom.

It's unclear to me if the water had anticipated the reaction of the two boys and the life to come for my father and therefore urged him to strike out as they performed what was a harmless activity. Regardless of reason or musings to cause and effect, Tariq was cradled to the sandy floor of the stream just ten feet below the air his body had become so accustomed to breathing. For seventeen minutes the water reclaimed him, filling up his lungs and the mouth that so often shared its same language. It seeped into Tariq's stomach, making the partially digested fish feel more at home in their new resting place. It was only after Tariq's lungs accept the liquid water over the air above that the surface of the water broke once again when Kandan dove from the bank and pulled his son (who was then lying on his back, hands resting on his stomach staring upwards towards the surface) from to the bank. My grandmother's shrieks

could be heard in the background as Kandan bent Tariq over his knee and began striking his back muttering over and over, "Breath, child! Breath!"

With each strike more and more water came spewing from Tariq's mouth. His skin had turned blue, and strong sunlight reflected off his wet exterior to the point that he looked like Vishnu in the midst of transfiguration. Not until after a large puddle formed beneath Tariq's now gushing mouth and Kandan's hand had permanently imprinted itself on Tariq's back did his lungs once again take in air. Water slowly replaced oxygen and Tariq's skin turned back to its soft brown. It seemed the blue transferred to his eyes which from then on acted as measuring tools both for my father's hydration and the weather. On hot dry days his eyes looked almost clear, but in the midst of a storm they turned such a dark shade of blue that pupil became difficult trace from iris.

From that day on Tariq was almost always found in the water. The villagers called him the fish, partly because of the time he spent swimming, and partly for the inhuman amount of water he drank daily (an average of ten liters). This avarice for the clear liquid turned him into a type of connoisseur. Although he rarely drank water not from his stream, which came to be known as Nila, (not in reference to The Nile but instead to the consistent blue clarity of the water and the color it turned my father's eyes) he could pick out the source of the water and the way it filtered through the earth. In the case of rainwater, he would distinguish the different bodies from where it evaporated and the process of collection. He refused to swim in any type of public pool or chlorinated facility (he

did stick his toe in just once when his father took him to a friend's pool in the city, but immediately removed it and would not speak to Kandan for the next two days). This became a problem when he was discovered to be and revered as the best open water swimmer in India, but refused to enter a swimming pool, which to this day incites fury in India's Olympic committee.

Tariq's swimming not only brought him fame, but it was also his only reason for my survival of the Second Kashmir War. It was at this point that my portion of the story comes into play. I was born by parents unknown in April of 1965. It was this same month that Indian troops began amassing in our small village. If Tariq's birth marked the shifting of the Kashmir Valley into a lake of water, then my birth turned it to a lake of flame. For when the Pakistani Air Force began bombing the upper valley, the molten tanks and exploding shells began to run like lava across the valley floor, sweeping away our village along with every other living creature. Tariq said that he was on his way to Nila when found me lying alone crying in the grass while a tank wreathed with flame rolled over what he assumed to be my house. Not knowing if my parents were inside he grabbed me, carried me to the river, set me on his father's boat, tied the rope around his waist, and began to swim downstream.

Days he swam, only leaving the water to sleep inside the boat or to catch fish (which now seemed to accompany us as we swam drifted along). At first he was bathed in red light from the flames of the village, but slowly darkness enveloped us both as he pulled me further and further from the wreckage of what

was to be a life he would only experience in his inner-most dreams. After five days he stopped in one of Nila's bends where a small house was built right against the shore. A young man about Tariq's age and his wife took us in. The providence of the river brought us to a couple who had a young daughter of only a year. She, begrudgingly no doubt, shared her mother's breast with me as I was near starvation and had almost died from exposure (despite my father's best efforts I constantly thrashed free of his cloths as he propelled us from the war).

Realizing it would take too long to reach the coast by boat, my father made the first of what would be a countless number of sacrifices for my benefit. He sold the small craft to his newly acquired friends for enough money to pay for the bus fair to New Delhi, as well as three large jugs which he filled to their brims with Nila's waters. That day on the bus marked the first one of the rest of Tariq's where he would be parted from the river which had been his constant companion for the first twenty-four years of his dive swim life. When we arrived in New Delhi, Tariq earned money through street performing. He, in exchange for scrubbing the inside of the local aquarium tanks (where he said he experienced some of the most interesting and both pleasantly and unpleasantly pungent water of his life) was given an old four-foot-tall glass box which had previously been used to house baby jellyfish brought over from the South China Sea. After he worked off the tank, he was able to fill it up inside the aquarium and then stand outside the entrance with it. As tourists walked in and out, he submerged

himself for up to ten minutes at a time. They in turn tossed coins into the tank as he bowed to each of them for their generosity. Meanwhile, I rested in a small crib he had built for me out of old extensions for a large water pipe that would have pumped seawater into the shark tanks. Now instead of pumping water, it was stuffed with old fabric and sawed in half with a small cylindrical portion that shaded my head. At night he got both of us extra food from aquarium food court (I took to mashed up fries mixed with hummus), he scrubbed a few tanks, and then we slept in the janitor's closet.

I don't know how long it took my father to raise enough money to afford our airfare to America, but I do know our plane took off on September 23rd, and just as my entering the world was marked by the Second Kashmir War, as our plane exited the Indian air space, the United Nations call for peace was answered with a cease fire between India and Pakistan. The only things we took with us were two pairs of cloths, and three jugs of my father's best friend.

You might ask if one Saakaar Hassan Tamila (when we were given political asylum in the United States my father thought a Muslim name might make my assimilation easier) is making the claim that major acts of warfare revolve around his presence. Since this is a short story concerned not entirely with my life, allow me to share with you a few notes on United States history that you may not have realized. I arrived in New York on September 28th 1965. After a few months bouncing around, performing on the streets and looking for work, we finally ended up in Detroit where my father got a job working as a janitor

in a hotel. In late July of 1967 I contracted a severe case of food poisoning that almost killed me. I was hospitalized from July 23rd through the 27th. During that time, the Detroit riots were sparked and resulted in the deaths of forty-three people. Another date, April 15th 1969, I got stung by a bee while hiking through Central Park with my father (again we had moved and he was searching for work). From that sting, I found out that I am allergic to bees and on my way to the hospital I swelled up like an over-ripe melon unable to disconnect from a vine. On that same day KPAF fighters shot down a U.S. Navy EC-121M during the Second Korean War. Still a stretch? June 24th of 1973, as a nine-year-old living on the Louisiana coast (finally Tariq had found a job fishing which kept him close to water). I tipped over a pot of boiling water that splashed over my feet and legs leaving me with third-degree burns over some 13% of my body. On my way back from the hospital I listened to the radio as thirty-two people were announced dead in the LA cocktail lounge fire in New Orleans after an inebriated and angry customer was bounced from the club only to return and burn the building to the ground.

If not for the fact that I haven't recorded every scratch and ache that I've had in my life, I am sure that I could give documentation of floods, fires, bombs, plane crashes, and riots to coincide with each incident. Instead, I want to leave you with one last date that marks the purpose for my story. This one, the most recent one, the one I am writing as my father is drifting his way towards Kashmir, concerns September 11th, 2001. I woke up early

to drive down to Florida where I was planning on visiting my father who was then a sixty-year-old and worked doing open water swims with dolphins. As I merged onto the freeway, the driver of a two-trailer eighteen-wheeler drifted off ever so slightly and merged into my path. Perhaps he hadn't been able to grab a coffee at the last McDonalds, maybe he had been too many hours at the wheel because he was pressed for time and money, whatever the cause he fell asleep and the closing of his eyelids marked the closing of 2,752 other pairs of eyes later that day. I slammed into the back of his trailer, eventually sending me into a roll that left my car spewing gas into the road, and me with my head split open, three ribs cracked, a fractured left wrist, and a ruptured spleen. I regained consciousness three days later to see my father at my side and the news on TV showing a slow-motion replay of the fly-bang-crash of two planes into the twin towers.

Why and how does this pertain to my father? After I was released from the hospital, my father insisted that I move in with him until I was fully recovered. One evening my father went to the local convenience store to get a few jugs of bottled water (he found earth2o to be the only one palatable). As he walked towards the checkout counter, another man walked through the automatic sliding doors. He wore a large dark leather jacket, blue jeans, and in his right hand, he carried a gleaming silver revolver.

"Everyone get down on the fucking ground!" he shouted.

The clerk fell backward into the large stacks of cigarette cases in the wall as the man quickly jumped over the counter.

"I thought I might find a little sand nigger working the check register."

"I am sorry, just take the money, take it." The man quaked as he spoke with a slight Indian accent.

"Damn right I am going to take your money," the man said as he crouched lower, "but now that I'm here, I think I might as well start evenin' up the score for what your fucking Muslim friends have done."

"Please just take the money, I'm a Sikh. I'm not even from the Middle East I'm from India, please just take the money," he quivered.

"I already told you I was going to take the money." He slapped the man across the face with the barrel of his gun. "Weren't you listenin' when I told you the first time?"

He then continued kicking the clerk in the stomach while muttering obscenities and unrelentingly mocking him for his terrorist cowardice. When he finished beating him, he pulled back his hair and cocked his gun. At that moment, Tariq threw the gallon jugs of water, striking the assailant in the head and chest. He then started grabbing random objects off the shelves and continued to hurl them: donuts, cheap wine bottles, soda cans, bread, cold medicine, when, amidst a flurry of profanities, the man fired two shots through the barrage of packaged goods, grabbed the cash from the register and ran out the door. The police arrived shortly after to find the two other customers in the store huddled around my father who lay on the floor in a vast puddle of water. One bullet clean missed while the other went clear through his side and out his back. From the two holes, a small trickle of clear blue liquid gushed forth. Tariq's eyes started to lighten from their deep

color and he asked the police officer to open up two bottles of wine. The officer, in an astonished stupor amidst the flashing lights of his car and standing in an ever-growing puddle, did so and handed the bottles to Tariq.

"No, no, the corks please the corks," Tariq muttered in English that sounded of India and trickling faucets. Taking the corks, he winced and plugged the two holes, momentarily stopping the flow of liquid from his body. "Now, someone please take me to my home."

"No, sir, the ambulance is on its way. We'll get you to the hospital in no time and they will fix you up fine," the officer said, finally finding his voice.

"Thank you, but really, I would rather go back to my home," Tariq replied. He shakily brought himself to his feet and began staggering towards the door.

"Sir, sir, I am going to have to ask you to wait here, please. Sir, just lie down the ambulance will be here any second now," the officer said without conviction as he stared wondrously at my father.

"No, that will be alright, thank you, I just need to get home."

Tariq haggardly stumbled out of the store, left his car in the parking lot and began walking the three-quarters of a mile back towards his small house. As he did, he looked up and felt raindrops on his forehead. At first, there were only one or two, then more, and after a while, the skies opened up as if a there were a waterfall cascading into the earth's atmosphere. The rain, soaking through clothes and dripping down his face, seeped into his mouth. Tariq stopped. By now, he had reached his residential neighborhood and he looked around until he spotted a gutter pouring forth rainwater. Holding the corks

in his sides, he hobbled towards the gutter and began to drink deeply.

“Nila!”

Little did my father know that ever since he left Kashmir, Nila had ceased to flow. The creek bed dried up, but in the mountains, a lake had accumulated. For years, this lake grew larger and larger, until finally it, too, dried up, forming a cloud that had hung in the mountains, waiting. Then, sixty years later, the cloud rose up high, high past the mountains and into the vast atmosphere above. Refusing to unload its precious cargo, the clouds moved with the wind and at times even against it; they made an oceanic migration, crossing bodies of land and water alike until they came to find my father in his most dire need. Seeing him dying in the streets, they poured down their life giving liquid back towards the only man on earth who would know the journey that they had made.

Lying beneath the gutter, Tariq removed the corks from the holes in his side and continued drinking deeply. Gallons upon gallons of earth²⁰ were replaced with the life giving waters of Nila. Once the transfusion was complete, he again corked his sides then ran home. He reached the door soaked, but with eyes darker and bluer than I had ever seen before. Immediately he ran to the

garage and quickly returned with three old clay jugs. Without spilling a drop, he drew a bath of crystal clear blue liquid that had gone untouched since the first few months of my childhood.

He once again uncorked his wound while I went outside to fill the jugs with the water cascading off our roof. Once the pressure of the water outside the tub and that within his body reached equilibrium, a quiet calm came over his face. I intermittently came to check on him, and when I did I saw him as a boy lying in a small stream surrounded by green grass and mountains that reached out of the earth to touch the sky. In his steady breathing, I heard the soft breeze of a Kashmir my birth had destroyed. After a lifetime of separation for which I found myself the cause, I was able to see my father reunited in harmony with the source of a world he loved and missed. Slowly his skin began not to heal, but to dissolve, until one morning I walked in to the bathroom to find nothing but water within the tub. Helping my father in the only way I knew how, I ripped the shingles from the roof and cut a hole in the ceiling. I then packed three empty jugs in a suitcase and lit the house on fire, knowing the water would quickly evaporate back to the sky, and that my father would meet me back where I had not been since birth.

*Logan Rau is a senior majoring in English.
This is his first published piece.*



WHITNEY GEIER

shopping cart

Digital Photograph

*Whitney Geier is a junior Art major. This is her first time being published.
Her artwork is featured on the cover of this issue of Unbound.*

letter to joseph #3

Here is the poem about your father's yard,
the one that I always wanted to write
in honor of the fig tree and the plum,
and how you came to become what you are.
How the fruits dropped into the lumpy grass
and were squashed underfoot and stained your soles
with purple, how deeply your brother ached
for a paradise that he thought was gone.
How the music of iced and cracking branches
instilled its rhythm in your growing heart
fivefold, even through those warmest of walls.
How the circle broke and how you were made
by its breaking, hardened from the beginning
into a diamantine calm of form,
with straight white teeth and perfect vision,
and how sometimes the plum tree held your weight
on summer nights. How you ripened in the eyes
of girls. Then, how the sweet and sensitive flesh
of your zeal was bruised, and how you turned—
to shield it—into a measured man,
departing from the fig tree and the plum,
but carrying them with you to my side.

— CAITLYN MOE

Caitlyn Moe is a fifth-year senior majoring in English. She has been previously published in the CHC Creative Arts Journal and the anthology Rising Star.

the bed on the floor

the extreme folding of the arms
the creases of the flesh
they climb
inside my head
I find my bones at the laundromat
drug encrusted shells
smeared and blotched
with cum

-- JOSHUA WHITE

Joshua White is a junior majoring in Art (Painting). His comics have been published in Eugene's Dropout, Portland's Stumptown Underground, Albuquerque's String and Columbus' Short North Gazette.

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