



mangrove



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A Letter from the Editor

Re-launching a journal from scratch – The ‘old’ *Mangrove* has been published on occasion throughout the last two decades, but without consistency in format or style – is a daunting and difficult task, but one that I have been honored to be a part of. *Mangrove* is now exclusively an undergraduate journal, reflected not only in its content but in the amount of hard work required by our undergraduate editorial staff. I am convinced of the potential for *Mangrove* to succeed; the University of Miami is, to my mind, a unique school largely because of its location and multiculturalism, which offers a wealth of creative potential from which to explore and expand artistic horizons. In this issue alone you will travel from the war-torn plains of Somalia to a dark night in North London; you will encounter a cast of characters that includes an inebriated Tinkerbell and a local mythological creature known as the Skunk Ape. In short, you will be dazzled by the variety of experiences and impressions that make up the heart of the creative voices within these pages.

It is my hope and ambition that in its new shape – both in print and online – *Mangrove* will endure as an important cultural and artistic publication within the University, one that not only adequately compliments the English Department’s new Creative Writing program, but provides a creative outlet for all students across the campus.

A round of applause is owed everyone whose fingerprints exist within these pages: KC Culver, *Mangrove*’s managing editor, without whom we would be lost; the poetic duo Paolo Javier and Walter K. Lew, whose dedication and encouragement has proven indispensable; Stephen Dvorak, our faithful and dedicated MFA advisor; the entire editorial staff for their hard work and perseverance; A. Manette Ansay for her continued support of this project; the Arts and Sciences department for giving us the opportunity to create this journal. A special thanks to Thomas B. Cavanaugh for being part of this issue. Last but not least a verbal hug to you, dear Reader, for taking the time out of your day to explore the creative voices of the University of Miami.

Morten Hoi Jensen, editor-in-chief

A Q&A with Thomas B. Cavanagh

MARGARET CARDILLO
Contribution by Jason McCall

One of the nation's leading crime novelists, and University of Miami Creative Writing alum, Thomas B. Cavanagh talks with Mangrove about the great state of Florida, what it takes to be an author, and the best part of being a Hurricane. Here are some of the highlights.

Mangrove: Where are you from originally?

Thomas B. Cavanagh: I have lived in Florida since I was about 11 years old. I grew up in Broward County, spent a few years in Miami during my time at UM, and have been in Orlando ever since. Before moving to Florida, I lived in Northern New Jersey.

M: Florida plays a huge part in your novels. What do you find most fascinating about this peninsula?

TBC: Florida is many states in one. The culture and population of Pensacola is very different from that of Miami or Sarasota. There is a very transient population, so a lot of interesting characters wander through every day. We also seem to be at the epicenter of more than our share of national controversies and, quite unfortunately, sensational crimes. Real life here is most definitely fertile ground for a fiction writer. I chose to focus on Orlando because I felt it was underrepresented in the wider genre of Florida crime fiction (which seems to have become a sub-genre unto itself). Plus, I live here and I'm always looking to do anything I can to minimize research...

M: Having lived in Florida for a long time, you've probably seen a lot of change and growth. How do you feel about it?

TC: I'm mixed. I know that Carl Hiaasen has made a career out of lamenting the loss of Florida's environment and I agree with him. I'm a big fan of Hiaasen and was thrilled to be compared to him by several reviewers. But I am also a beneficiary of some of that loss. I'm sure that the house in which I currently live used to be pastureland. I actually wrote a little about this in my first novel, mostly as backdrop to the theme park empires here in Central Florida.

M: How do you know so much about being a detective?

TBC: I do my research. My brother is a police detective and one of my best friends is a cop, so they keep me honest. But one of the reasons I chose to write about a private detective was because they operate outside of official channels. I can be a little looser, a little more instinctive. If I were writing about an on-the-job police detective, there would be certain rules and procedures that I would have to follow. I like the freedom to occasionally break the law in the service of a greater justice.

M: What mystery/crime trope would you like to see go away forever?

TBC: One man's trope is another's cherished tradition. I think it's a fine line between understanding the expectations and conventions of the genre and bringing new life and fresh perspective to your stories. I try to strike that balance in my work—for example, I used a first-person point of view in my last two novels, which is a very private investigator/noir convention. Hey, if someone can offer a fresh take on

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the sultry, double-crossing client or the psychotic sidekick or the detective accused of the crime he is investigating (which I hope I did), then go for it.

M: Better detective: Batman or Dick Tracy?

TBC: Ha! I guess I'll go with Dick Tracy. Batman may be more effective, but he relies an awful lot on technology. A two-way wrist radio does not compare to the Batmobile. Dick Tracy has to do more of the grunt investigative work.

M: What is the most influential book you've read?

TBC: I don't know if it's the most influential, but the one that inspired me to finally sit down and write that first novel was Stephen King's *On Writing*. While I've read King and enjoyed his books, I found this memoir a great mix of inspiration and practical advice.

M: For a long time, UM was known as Sun Tan U. What was UM like when you were here?

TBC: I think it was still called that when I was there in the late 80s. We used to head out to Crandon Park or South Beach on the weekends (this was the hey day of Miami Vice, remember). I spent a lot of time at the Rathskeller, and have fond memories of football games in the Orange Bowl. I saw some big games during those years. I know that the school is much different now—it is bigger and, in many ways, more sophisticated.

M: What do you most look forward to doing at UM when you return at the end of March?

TBC: I look forward to seeing the changes on campus and meeting everyone I can. I have not been back on campus for a very long time.

M: What was your favorite class and who was your favorite teacher at UM?

TBC: I really enjoyed my writing and film classes. Some of my favorite professors included Lester Goran, Evelyn Mayerson, Paul Nagel, Ralph Clemente (now at Valencia Community College), and George Capewell.

M: If you were to be any "senior superlative" in college, what would you have been?

TBC: Ambitious. I graduated a semester early and arranged my own internship on the Mickey Mouse Club in Orlando, to which I commuted every week during my last semester.

M: The obvious question, but this is a literary magazine so I feel like it must be answered: what advice do you have for young writers?

TBC: The usual: don't give up. I have literally stacks of rejection letters from agents and publishers. It took time for me to find the right people. Believe in yourself. At the same time, I made sure that I had a meaningful and fulfilling career as a "day job," because, let's face facts, very few people make a living as a novelist. I have always ensured that any work I do involves writing and have found that it has helped me to stay sharp.

Another cliché (but is also true): write for yourself. Write because you enjoy writing. Yes, you will want to publish it, but that should not be your primary motivation. You would be surprised how few people actually read a novel published by the biggest presses. You must enjoy the process. You will make too many sacrifices to pursue writing that the act of writing must be enjoyable to you. You must want to write.

*For more, check out the full Q&A online at www.as.miami.edu/mangrove.

Excerpt from *Prodigal Son*

THOMAS B. CAVANAGH

There is no death like a child's death.

This piece of wisdom occurred to me as I sat in a pew at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, listening to the presiding priest describe the dead seventeen year old stretched out inside a gleaming white casket before him. My daughter Jennifer sniffled quietly beside me.

Any death is a tragedy, of course. The person was, after all, someone's grandfather or aunt or husband or mother or whatever. But one thing we all have in common is that somewhere, sometime, we were all someone's child. The younger the deceased at the time of death, the more acute the pain of the loss.

The reason that it's so painful, I suppose, is the wasted potential. The younger the person is, the more likely that he would have gone on to do great things in his life. Cure cancer. Fly in space. Be a good citizen and parent. But those snatched from us prematurely never get the chance. Whenever we hear of a death or read an obituary, the first thing we look for is the deceased's age. If someone dies at age 94, we tend to smile ruefully and think that they had a good run. But the younger someone is the more likely that we'll shake our heads and mutter about what a shame it is. He was so young. She left three kids in school. He didn't even graduate high school yet.

The potential unfulfilled in this case belonged to seventeen year old Victor Madrigas, a classmate and friend of my daughter. What made this death even more painful were the circumstances: a suicide by overdose. Add in the mortal sin of self-murder to the devout family's shock and loss, just in case the situation wasn't tragic enough.

My ex-wife Becky—my first ex-wife—had asked me to chaperone Jennifer and two of her friends to the funeral on this sunny Thursday morning. Becky and her new husband each had weekday commitments and couldn't chauffeur the girls, who were taking a day off from school. None of the girls had their licenses yet, despite all having reached or being on the cusp of reaching that all important milestone of the 16th birthday. Good thing I was available. Of course, being unemployed, my only real daily commitment was *SportsCenter*.

I hadn't known young Victor, but the funeral truly depressed me. I thought that my former career as a detective had hardened me against death. You see death as often as I have, even the deaths of young people, you build up emotional calluses. I saw a lot of young kids laying on sidewalks or in crackhouse closets, a pool of dark blood drying black beneath them. I delivered the bad news to a lot of parents. I thought I had become immune to any emotional connection with the victims or the families.

But here I was, blinking my eyes and swallowing a hard lump in my throat. Maybe it was my distance from the job. Maybe it was seeing my daughter so upset. Maybe it was a "there but by the grace of God" type of empathy. But, more likely, it was the close, personal relationship I now had with the grim reaper. Over the past nine months, Death and I had become good buddies.

Wild Woods and Lost Boys

STANLEY ANSELOWITZ

Tinkerbell got drunk last night.
That pretty little fairy and all those turkeys
stumbled around the condo complex
ringing doorbells and leaving
flaming bags of shit on the step.

The guilty party ran
from dunes straight to water,
bare feet sinking in the sand
as they left a trail of clothing.

That fairy and her friends
making whoopee in the sand.
Grains chased body parts,
finding their way into the deepest crevices,
while Peter hid with a video camera.

That little slut
promised to take me to Never Never Land.
You can ride my wings to a dream.
I arrived to find that deviant boy,
with a feather in his cap,
working his own magic
while a reel of celluloid flashed
scenes of sex on the beach.

As I saw those wings flutter
and the wattles flap back and forth
my compassion began to drown,
in my eye's waterfall.
The fairy dust I had
was lost in a sand castle,
and Tinker's head was buried in a toilet.

She Doesn't Cry

Short story by Naja Marie Aidt from her collection *Bavian*, winner of the 2008 Nordic Council Award for Literature. Translated from the Danish by Morten Hoi Jensen with permission of the author and the publisher, Gyldendal.

Anika stands on a dusty platform with her doll in a light blue lift made with thin, blue-spotted plastic. With one hand she hangs on to her dad's grey flannel jeans. With the other she swings the lift back and forth. All the while she is staring at a small girl sitting on her mom's hip on the other side of the platform. The girl has her arms wrapped around the mom's throat and is pressing her cheek to her face. Anika and the dad have been standing here for a while; the dad is reading the newspaper and answers distractedly whenever Anika asks about something. "Is that our train?" He nods. "Is it?" "No..." "Why are you reading the newspaper?" "Mmm..."

They took a cab to the train station and Anika sat completely still and stared at the driver's thick, grey neck. The car smelled foul. Her dad spoke differently than usual, and laughed strangely when the driver said something that apparently was funny. She cried a lot when they had to leave. The infant threw up down her mom's back. Anika screamed as the dad carried her out. They are going to visit grandma and grandpa. The mom is too tired to come. Anika doesn't think she looks tired. It is the little sister who always sleeps. The dad folds the newspaper together and smiles to her: "When we get to the ferry, you know what, we'll have ourselves an ice cream."

A tall, strange man approaches Anika and the dad with a smile, and apparently it's someone the dad knows because they greet each other warmly and loudly with surprise and both place their suitcases between their legs to shake hands. "This is my daughter," says the dad and puts a hand on top of her head, "this is Anika." "Well, well," says the man, "last time I saw her she was in a baby carriage!" "Three years," says the dad, "she's three and a half years old now, and we just got another little girl a month ago." The stranger lifts his gaze from Anika, looks at the dad and excitedly pats his shoulder. "Congratulations old boy, I'm so pleased! And mother and daughter are well?"

At this point in the conversation Anika places her lift between her legs and puts her hands on her hips. She is now standing just like the two men. She looks straight up into the strange man's face and no longer longs to go back to her mom in the apartment with the yellow curtains and the cat that almost always lies in a patch of sunlight on the kitchen floor with slit eyes. She has copied the two men down to the smallest detail, in terms of their physical posture, and again looks over at the girl still clinging to her sun-tanned mom. Stupid little girl. Anika can feel the lift against her bare legs. She makes a big bubble of spit which pops and wets her lips. She sticks her tongue out at the girl. She feels tall and wide. And it also feels a bit like that time she was in the swimming pool with her mom, the water was cold, she screamed, but it was nice, and now she shifts onto her left foot like the dad just did, and something wonderful shoots through her, something at once soft and dark, but still brightly lit. She: a human being. She can barely keep still anymore, she wants to jump up and down, she wants to run to the garbage can on the other end of the platform, but when she peers at her dad and the man who says something with a deep, rumbling voice, she realizes that they are both completely calm, as if locked in their big, bear-like bodies, so Anika remains standing and instead rubs herself across the

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chin with her thumb and index fingers, just as the dad is doing. It is then that the strange man suddenly looks at her. He stops talking in the middle of a sentence, after which a smile spreads on his face. He coughs and covers his mouth. The dad curiously follows his friend's gaze and then he too breaks into an unmotivated laughter, as his eyes study Anika, pausing at her legs peering above the lift and then at her serious face. Anika hides behind her dad. There is something burning in her head and her stomach. He bends over and picks her up. He tries to control his voice. "Don't be sad." He looks at his friend. More laughter. "It's just because it was so funny that you were standing just like us. Right?" Now the dad's voice trembles. "That is *funny*!" The two men let go and laugh out loud. They can barely stop. With his enormous hand the dad pulls her cheek toward his face. Anika cries piercingly as she looks at the girl who is at once put down by her mom and runs down the platform and crawls up on a bench. Anika cries louder. The laughter subsides. "Oh, but honey that's nothing to cry about," says the dad. Then the large, brown train drives in between the children with a seething, wheezing sound. The dad quickly says goodbye to his friend and gets aboard the train with his daughter still in his arms. He puts her down onto the seat in the compartment. He shakes his head with a smile. With a sniffing nose she gets on her knees and presses her forehead against the window. She considers the light-blue doll lift still sitting on the platform. She doesn't say a word. She can smell her dad's pipe tobacco. The window tastes sour. A little, black seed which, for a change, resembles the pupil in one of the dad's eyes that narrows a little bit whenever he is about to say something, is now planted in her. She can feel the way it rumbles in her stomach, but she doesn't cry. The train starts moving. Fields and forests fly by, distant and green. She doesn't cry.

I Let Go

JEANNINE SCARPINO

I let go
of the magnificent Sally
with her blue eye shadow
and her iridescent pink wings.
“Everything in here is mine,”
she said. And so I obeyed.
It was not my fairy princess toy to have.

I let go
of my mother’s leg
as the teacher effortlessly
broke the forming chain of my hands
and walked me toward the table
with crayons for legs.
“It is time to be a big girl and go to school,”
she said. And so I obeyed.
I could not hold onto my childhood forever.

I let go
of the locket
he gave me
fallen from the depths of a gum ball machine
and watched it dance deep down into the sewer.
“We just weren’t meant to be. You should go,”
he said. And so I obeyed.
I could not force him to feel the same way I did.

I let go
of the cookie sheet
and watched my hard work,
the epitome of deliciousness and sweetness,
fall in slow motion
silently to the ground.
“Ma’am, we tried everything we could. His heart stopped. We need you to come identify the body,”
he said. And so I obeyed,
blank, empty,

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unable to give myself the reasoning
for which my heart yearned.

I let go
of Everything.
Everything physical,
Everything challenging,
Everything controversial
And yet
I held on
with an unbreakable grip
to the regret
the sadness
the pain
the disappointment.
“Daddy, Daddy, you bastard, I’m through,”
she said. And I didn’t obey.
I consent.
And I agree.
And I am through.

The Wall

OLIVER KARAN

I had told him to bring white. I had told him twice actually. How are you going to paint this type of piece without any white? We had been talking about this shit for almost a week now, and all I had asked this moron to do was to bring one can of white - doesn't seem that hard, does it?

"Look, I'm sorry Ravi," Kevin said, shrugging his shoulders as he sat down next to Dinesh. He really was, I mean, I could see it in his face, but that obviously didn't change anything. I looked at him for a moment. Sitting next to Dinesh, who was oddly tall and strongly built for an Indian kid, Kev looked young, almost childlike. My room in the basement was fairly small - a single bed, desk, cupboard and TV filling almost the entire space - so I knew Kevin felt my glance from across the room as he sat there, nervously twitching his leg, waiting for me to finally let it go. I shook my head one more time and then got back up and over to my wardrobe, pulling out the worn out gym bag from under the shoe shelf. Dinesh rolled up a joint and lighted it while I rummaged about in my bag, sorting out the colors for the night.

"What about your dad?" Kevin asked, holding up the spliff Dinesh had just handed him.

"What about him?" I replied without looking up. My dad didn't care, I thought, and neither did I. He never came down to my room anyway. Not anymore.

Kevin had been to my place before, but I guess he just couldn't get used to the fact that I smoked weed in my room like it was nothing. In his home, he wouldn't have even been able to light a cigarette, probably not even incense sticks. His parents were all over him, I mean, they had this whole family thing going - lunch times, dinner times, collective activities on a Sunday and all that. Pathetic.

Anyway, as I had expected, I couldn't find a drop of white in my cans, not even ivory or some other shade coming close to it. That meant we weren't going to paint any highlights tonight, which was a major setback, at least if you asked me. Dinesh didn't seem to care much, I guess mostly due to the fact that Kev had instead brought a bag of weed. Yeah, no way he could've forgotten that. It made no difference what Dinesh thought, this was fucked up. I mean, we weren't hitting up just any wall tonight, this was supposed to be some massive shit. The spot I had scoped out was perfect, one of those walls you hardly noticed before it was painted, but that was gonna jump right in your face once it was hit. It was quite a trip though, all the way up north to Tottenham Station, where both the Victoria line and the long distance trains would pass through. By tube it would have taken us forever to get there; but then again, who would want to ride the tube at night, especially going towards Walthamstow, one of those suburbs that had inspired Scotland Yard's decision to make our city's so called "crime knife culture" their number one priority over terrorism. Indeed, this wall wasn't on our side of the city. Not even close to that.

I knew the area well though, my dad and I used to take the Victoria line to the stadium, back when we would still go to the games together. That was like six years ago, when they still had the old steel trains running on Victoria, and when my dad and I still talked. In fact, we would talk the whole

trip up north and back, which was at least forty five minutes from our front porch to the stadium, and we would talk about everything and anything: the team and their coaches, my school, his job at the post office, our neighbor's new car, and whatever else we could fit in that trip. But things change, I guess. Now we didn't even know what to say for five minutes when we ran into each other in the kitchen. Of course, this didn't happen very often anymore, because ever since mom left, that part of the house kind of lost its purpose. I can't even remember the last time someone cooked anything in that kitchen.

"So is your dad home or not?" Kevin couldn't let go of it, I guess he just couldn't enjoy his high without being confirmed that there wasn't a legal guardian in the vicinity. I looked up and let go of my cans for a moment. "I don't know Kev, but feel free to go upstairs and check." Who the hell cared. He was either upstairs holding a pint, or he was at Churchill's around the corner. Same difference, he was drinking. Drinking until he was wasted and tired enough to not miss my mom's presence anymore when he finally staggered to bed. It astonished me that he was still getting up at seven sharp every morning, I mean, he never missed a day at work. Only once had I come upstairs and found him asleep, still in his clothes from the night before, the whole bedroom smelling of beer and fume, and that was right after mom had left. I didn't even know why I was still checking for him every time I would head out for school.

"Which one is it?" Dinesh was leafing through my sketchbook, his eyes already alarmingly low from all the weed he had inhaled.

"What?" I replied confused.

"Which sketch are we gonna do tonight?"

"None of those," I said as I started digging through the chaos of my desk. I finally found the piece of paper I was looking for and handed it to Dinesh. It had taken me the last couple nights to get it right, but now it was perfect. Dinesh was staring at the sketch, I wasn't sure if he was actually studying the letters or if he was just too stoned to read. "WEST END POSSE" it said in ornate lettering, hardly readable for an untrained eye. I hated that name. Probably the most uncreative name London's graffiti scene had ever spawned. Also, P was one of the worst letters to draw, no way you could style that one, especially not at the end. But then again, that name fit us well, because we actually were more of a posse than an actual writer crew, after all most of the guys were better known for vandalizing busses with markers or stirring up bar fights than for the quality of their pieces.

The sketch was kept relatively simple, except for those thick planes I had added to the outlines; one of my specialties, that would add a three dimensional aspect to the letters, an effect that gave the piece a way more solid and imposing look. Besides that, I hadn't included much detail. As always, we would come up with the fill-ins and all those little designs as we were doing the actual wall.

"I just hope we're gonna have enough light to see my outlines up there, man," I said. Dinesh nodded, his attention already turned towards the TV, where Kevin had just hooked up the Playstation and was now navigating his man through Grand Theft Auto's San Andreas.

Me and Dinesh had snatched most of the cans at Russel's paint shop down on Euston Square. There were some other kids in the store when we walked in, black kids, definitely writers too. That made it easy for us, because old Russel was busy eying their every move, he hardly noticed Dinesh and me going in and out. I think I had seen one of those kids before, if I wasn't mistaken he was one of the guys from Stockwell Street. They had done quite some damage on the Circle line, plus they painted a lot of trains running down Piccadilly and Waterloo. Man, we needed to step our game up, I thought

as we walked back to Dinesh's car that day. We just didn't go out enough. This piece was gonna have people talking though. Most of the North side writers hung out on Pinsbury Park on a Sunday, which was only two stops from where we were planning to paint. No way they were gonna overlook this. If we could pull off a move like this every week, or at least every two weeks, we would be among the top writer crews out there. I just didn't think Dinesh and them were up for that. I mean, I just needed to look at the two right now: Dinesh, who was sitting on the floor, reclined against my bed frame, looked as if he was about to fall asleep every second. It wasn't even midnight, and he had already lit his fifth joint. I knew exactly what was going through his mashed up mind: maybe if he wouldn't mention the plan, then nobody else would, so that we would just be chilling here all night until it was too late to leave. And Kevin, he was so caught up in this GTA shit, he didn't care about anything else right now anyway. I'm sure he would have played for days straight if no one had stopped him. I mean, that wasn't really his fault though. He wasn't allowed to have a Playstation at home, and he had never played San Andreas before coming to my house, so I definitely understood. But still, if this guy would only be half as motivated about getting our names known out there as he was about blowing up the police station on the screen, I bet he would have remembered to bring that bloody white.

"So what's up," I said around one, knowing damn well no one else was going to ask, "are we gonna do this or what?" Of course we were. I didn't give a fuck about how tired Dinesh now was, or how close Kevin was to making it to the next level. The way I saw it, there was a way bigger game waiting for us out there on the tracks.

When we finally made it out the basement and up the steps to the street around one thirty, I could see my dad's TV flickering in the living room as I looked back to our house. As we walked down the abandoned sidewalk on our way to the car, I wondered if Dad actually felt guilty for having let Mom just leave like that. Maybe that's what kept him awake all those nights. Or maybe it was just his self-pity. I never blamed him for letting her go, I mean, after all, I didn't think there was anything he could have done at that point. I only blamed him for having fucked up in all those years before she decided to go back to India; for failing to make her happy here, for not trying hard enough, I guess.

It took us a good half an hour, or, by Dinesh's reckoning, one and a half massive joints, to get there. We parked the car on the street closest to the tracks, grabbed our backpacks and started walking. We had to cut through a group of residential houses to get to the line, luckily the neighborhood was as good as dead, there was hardly a window lit. We jumped over the fence and sneaked slowly along the tracks towards the spot, trying not to trip on the rocks in between the rails' planks. As we came in eyesight of the wall, I signaled Kev and Dinesh to squat down by the bushes, to wait and make sure we really were alone on the tracks. I felt my heart pounding as we sat there in total silence, breathing in the scent of grass and leaves. We waited for a couple of minutes and then proceeded to the spot. The area was brighter than I had expected it to be at night, we had a good view on the wall. Of course, that also meant that those people in the apartment building facing the line had a pretty good view of us, in case they decided to look out of their windows in the middle of the night. All lights in the building were shut off, but from where we were it was hard to tell if any of the windows were open.

In the distance, I could see the lights of Tottenham Station, and in the other direction the tunnel, standing there like some black hole waiting to suck in the approaching trains and whatever else would come near it. The wall shouldn't take us longer than an hour, I thought, maybe even forty five minutes if everybody hurried. The last train on Victoria ran around one, so those wouldn't bother us, but the

long distance trains would be passing through all night. However, as long as we ducked down when they approached, we should be fine. They would rush past way too fast to notice us, I reckoned, as I stared into the darkness.

"Ravi," I heard Dinesh whispering sharply, holding his hands up as if to say "what are you waiting for?" I turned my glance back to the wall: it was perfectly clean, no tags, no nothing. I felt my hand shaking a bit as I held up the can and began drawing up the first outlines; letter for letter, word for word. While I moved on further from the left to the right side of the wall, Kev and Dinesh began filling out the piece. Dinesh was good at this; better than me, and way better than Kevin. He would let Kev fill in the broader areas, and then follow up to make little corrections and elaborate those spaces that required a more exact and steady hand. Every once in a while we had to stop and duck and wait for a train to pass, and every time it would rattle past us, we used its noise to thoroughly shake our cans to churn the paint, the same way we used its passing light to examine our work more closely. By the time I had finished outlining the letters and got back to the far left of the wall to work on the background, Dinesh had already switched to a narrower paint cap to add little designs into the letters. I was always amazed by the creativity with which this weedhead would come up with new patterns here. Most writers, including myself, resorted to the classic shapes: stars, bubbles, maybe a couple of starbursts or arrows, whereas Dinesh seemed to never run out of new variations. I paused for a moment and stepped back, eyes and nostrils now sore from the pungent dusts of aerosol and paint surrounding us, and watched our piece progress. It came along well. Ten more minutes, I figured.

At the end of these nights, when the pieces were done and we were at a safe distance, we used to always park the car somewhere quiet, light a joint and just chill, it had become sort of a ritual. I loved these times, when the adrenaline and excitement would vanish, and we could just reflect on the night and kick back. That night, I couldn't wait to get back in the car and get my smoke on, because I knew this time we would all be proud of our work, and Dinesh would be thanking me for dragging his lazy ass out in the night.

We were almost done, I was about to put the finishing touches on my outlines, and Kevin had already begun collecting the remaining cans when they suddenly approached. I remember hearing Dinesh shout "Run!", then turning around and seeing half a dozen figures sprinting towards us from the station. Kevin and Dinesh were already a couple of steps in front of me when I dropped the can and started running. I couldn't see where Dinesh was going, he had disappeared somewhere in the dark, but I saw Kevin running down the tracks towards the tunnel. I could hear a train coming in the distance as I ran, panicking, trying to make it over the gate and out on the street. I stumbled, almost fell down the descent leading from the tracks to the gate, branches from the bushes whipping against my hands and face as I tried to navigate through the near darkness. I had almost reached the gate when I felt a kick in my back that sent me slamming to the ground. I must have busted my lip on something, a stone maybe, because I could taste the blood in my mouth as I lay there on my stomach, my lungs burning, my arms held crossed behind my back by one of those shadows I had tried to escape from.

"Alright kid, now slowly get -" I couldn't hear the rest of the cop's instruction, it was drowned by the ear-shattering hum of a train, coming from somewhere near the tunnel. I felt the man's grip loosening as he raised his head for a second, trying to make sense of the sudden noise. It was obvious the train driver had seen one of us running along the tracks. At this point I didn't know that he was trying to warn an oncoming colleague. He tried to no avail.

Safety measures on the tracks are pretty simple, I mean, they're pretty much obvious. You stay off the rails if possible, and if you're on them and see - or hear - a train approaching, you change sides. The only problem arises when you have a second train coming out of the opposite direction, because you might not hear that one coming. Kev's plan must have been to escape through the tunnel. He just didn't hear that second train.

The ambulance arrived within minutes, however, there was nothing they could do for him. There was nothing anybody could have done at that point: Kevin was gone, his body lying on the tracks, torn into two halves.

The rest of that night was nothing but a blur. I was brought to the police station, where they asked me a couple of questions, I can't remember what exactly, and then told me to wait. When I looked up for the next time, I saw my father standing in the door. I was trying to make sense of the impression on his face, he had no signs of anger or frustration, not even of disappointment written on it, in fact he looked almost relieved, at least that was how I interpreted it.

"How are you doing Ravi?" he asked softly, and I couldn't do anything but nod while I felt the tears streaming down my face. "C'mon, let's get out of here," he said, pointing towards the door.

I smelled the familiar scent of his car as I entered the passenger side: the leather seats, the smell of cigarettes, the same air freshener he had used since I was little. I realized it must have been months, maybe more than a year even, since I last sat in his car. It felt pretty good. "We can pick up some food on the way back if you're hungry," my dad said as he started the engine. I looked over to him. He looked different, older than I remembered him, I thought. I drew breath, ready to say something. I could have told him how happy I had been to see him at the station, how sitting in the back of a cop car while my friend had just died had made me almost throw up on my jeans, and how I had given Kevin such a hard time all night, just because of a can of white. I could have told him how this stupid wall, that two hours ago had meant the world to me, now was nothing more than a blot of paint. Absolutely pointless. I could have told him how confused I suddenly felt, how desperate, how lost. But instead I said nothing, I just turned my head back to the window and stared out into the darkness until we approached our street and turned into the driveway.

Kev's funeral was two weeks later. I couldn't look anybody in the eye, not even Dinesh. I couldn't cry either. It was horrible, I mean, it was just unreal. That pastor was saying something about being grateful for having had Kevin in our lives, and what an extraordinarily kind and talented young man he had been. He actually said some decent stuff. When I looked over to Kevin's parents, I felt like he could have said anything it the world though, no way he would have reached them. His mom wasn't crying - her eyes puffy and red, looking as if she had already cried out all the tears she had. Every so often she would nod in approval to the pastor's word and press her husband's hand, as if to assure herself that his speech actually was a solace to her grief. The sight of his dad was even more depressing though. Throughout the whole ceremony, he just sat there, absolutely stone faced, as if he still refused to believe what had happened to his son.

When I came back home that afternoon, there were two tickets for Sunday's game on the kitchen table. I paused and glanced at them for a while. Dad probably wanted me to go with him, but didn't know how to ask me. I hadn't been to a game in a while, and I didn't really have plans for Sunday, so I might as well go, I thought. I mean, it's quite a trip all the way up north, but what the hell. Yeah, I'd probably go.

Jesus

RAFAEL ALEJANDRO JARA

I picked up a squirrel lying in the road.
I pitied him, thought him a poor fellow
And deserving of enough dignity
To be spared being crushed by tyres in the sun.
I thought about other daily slaughters:
How many snails had been crushed beneath the
Pounding genocide of my careless steps
On cold, starless, rainy nights. How many
Bombs have fallen? I once killed a lamb with
Hands that petted him before his slaughter.
They say Jesus praised a rotting carcass
For its white teeth; others thought it ugly.
My poor fellow's eye dangled on his cheek
But his silver fur was soft and lovely.

Verso Verde, Cocodrilo Verde

*La dia pulsa
En calor y roja húmeda
Pero sigimos caminando
La alameda.*

*El sol cayó entre azules
Y el cocodrilo verde
Pero esperé la noche
Para cantar.*

*Blanco llama de luna
Sobre un mundo de cuna:
El tiempo para pararse
Entre luz y zaytuna.*

*Tigre rosa rugindo
La mañana, sereno,
Salta en triunfo
Sobre el tereno.*

The day pulses
In humid red heat
But we continue walking
The tree-lined street.

The sun fell between blues
And crocodile green
But I awaited the night
To sing.

Lunar llama white
Over a world of cradles:
Just the time to stand
Between olive and light.

Rose tiger roaring
The serene morning,
He jumps in triumph
Over the world.

Venceremos

o is for oppression.
o is for obsolete.
o is for ostentation.
o is for obstacle.
o is for opposition.
o is for obstinacy.
o is also for ovation,
Optimism, oatmeal,
Overcoming, oceanic,
Olympian, oration,
Oblation, obeisance,
Occasion, and opportunity-

But today
o is for victory.

Magic Shadow-show

I walk past an orchid and say,
You are no Eden.

I walk past a breeze and say,
You are no immortal.

To a girl walking in sunfire
I say, *You are no fairy.*

To a spring green lizard
I say, *You are no coconut.*

To a girl veiled with rhinestone diamonds
I say, *You are no Lucy.*

I walk up a stairwell
And say, *You are no ladder.*

And to the mirror,
You are.

As-Sirat

There stands a Spanish fort
Upon the Darien shore
And climbing there (a youth was I
And eager to explore)
Was shocked to find
The place in disrepair:
Two loose, unsteady planks of wood
Served to bridge the deep moat there.
Steadily I trembled at the crossing
With deep and jagged rocks below,
Dangling on a footfall's balance
That seems so very long ago.
Then I was scared to cross with hummingbirds darting to and fro
Now I must cross over a hair hanging with Hell below.

Barbicide

MIKE DIAZ DE LA PORTILLA

A plastic comb stirred in the Barbicide jar. Flakes from other scalps burned off inaudibly. There were three old-fashioned barbershop chairs, more iron than cushion. Each was empty. A single yellow light sat on the ceiling's center, casting shadows all around the shop. The sun was setting outside. The barber's back was turned to the door: he was cleaning clippers. His glasses slid down his nose. His bald spot shone, reflecting out into the street through the windows.

The wooden door, tiled with small windows, opened with a hard push from a woman in her mid-thirties, and the bell hanging from the door rang. Her hair was dark, most likely dyed black, and she wore wide sunglasses like bug eyes, all that black covering the pale sheen of her face; she dragged in a young boy by the wrist. He had a curly mess of hair, thick and dry as wool. He was dressed neatly in navy blue shorts, brown sandals (with Velcro straps), and a white polo shirt. The corners of his mouth hung low in a pout.

"Hi, que tal," the woman said, nodding. She pulled at the boy's curls:

"I need this shaved, it all needs to go. No puedo hacer na'a con esto."

"Of course," the barber smiled at the boy.

The mother told her son she was going to the shop next door and he should meet her there after paying. She left.

The boy sat in one of the metal chairs. He was now tall enough to sit without a booster seat. But he was still small. A map of Cuba was framed above a mirror on the wall facing the chairs. Next to it hung an old photo of some place in Havana, a white building and men in white clothes. He saw straw hats. In the far left corner was a sticker of the Ibis, with the words "GO 'CANES!" beneath it in orange and green. The barber tossed the end of the cloth cover into the air above the boy's head and let it fall down on his legs. He tied the cloak at the nape of his neck.

"So your mom wants me to shave your head. Hmm." The barber spoke slow and content and calm.

"Yeah."

"Hmm. Yeah. What number? Did she say?"

The boy shook his head. The barber tugged at the curls.

"I'd say a three."

"Ok," shrugged the boy. When the barber turned to get his clippers, the boy slipped a hand into the right pocket of his shorts. It felt strange moving beneath the cloth, as if it were forbidden to do so. There was no money in that pocket. But he knew there was something in his left pocket.

"So," said the barber as the clippers began buzzing, "how has your summer been?" The clippers sunk down on the curls, biting at them.

"We went to New York with my cousins. It was fun."

"New York!" the barber softly exclaimed.

"I lived there. Yeah," the clippers got stuck, "yeah. Hmm. I did."

The boy kicked his sandals together, pushing the soles tight against each other, and wondered if the barber knew his name. The Velcro straps peeled apart with his movements. Their sound, scraping and

crunching, seemed loud despite the buzzing clippers. The boy felt a need to speak.

"We saw the statue of Jose Marti! In Central Park!" burst the boy.

"Ah, right. Yes."

The barber turned and coughed. He then bit his lip, releasing it slowly as he lowered the clippers again.

"I don't like that statue," he said.

The boy's eyebrows jumped before he could hold them in place. Everyone liked Jose Marti!

"No," the clippers interrupted once again, whining as they were caught again in a rough thicket, "No, I don't. It shows him right before he died. A man like that never dies. He shouldn't be on a horse. No. Trust me, if there is anyone who knows Jose Marrrrti, it's me. He was a prophet, he saw what communism would become, he wrote novels, poems, essays, newspaper. But he was not a soldier."

The boy squirmed. Shredded curls sat on his nose and cheeks. A hair had got in his eyes. The barber turned, grabbed a brush of loose white bristles, and slapped the boy's face with it repeatedly to knock off the hair, continuing as he did so:

"But he fought anyway. He was not a soldier but he died on a battlefield. Do you know," here he pushed down the boy's head to shave around his neck, "he died facing the sun?" The barber stopped and looked the boy in the face through the mirror on the opposite wall. He pinched his thumb and index finger together and drew them slowly to the top of his neck, right beneath his chin.

"The bullet entered here," he threw his head back, "and so he was knocked off his horse like this, and fell flat on his back. Three bullets hit him. But a man like that doesn't die, I'm telling you. You know he predicted that?"

"Really?" managed the boy. I should know that, he thought.

"Yes. He said, 'When I die, I want to die facing the sun.'" The barber smiled. "He was right."

"So he got what he wanted?" asked the boy.

"In a way. Yes. Hmm. Yeah." The barber nodded his head and switched to the sharper clippers, the ones that cut closer. The boy moved quickly, so as not to disturb the cloth, and placed a hand in his left pocket. There was a tissue. It felt dirty, wet. But again: no money. His eyes opened wide. He looked out the window to the street.

Headlights flashed by on the now dark street.

"Yeah. Mm. When did your parents come over?"

"Huh?"

"From Cuba."

"Oh. My dad came when he was my age in the year 1962."

"And your mom?"

"I don't know."

The boy put a hand in each pocket simultaneously and searched around. He needed his mother. He had no money.

"1962. Hmm. A lot of people disappeared in those days."

"He told me that! My dad said. Yeah, I know," the nervous boy responded. He looked at the gumball machine, and then out the window, but his mother was not going to walk by.

"Oh so you know? That's good. Yes. History," he raised a knowing index finger, "History. It's important to know these things."

The barber pulled out a large razor blade. He sharpened it on a leather strap. The blade sliced back and forth, and the barber held the strap tight, pulling it tense by a metal hook at the end. The strap clunked and clanked against some cabinets when he let it go. He sprayed shaving cream into the palm of one hand and put it on the back of the boy's neck and on his sideburns. The cream was warm. He held the blade against the boy's nape, and then stopped. He looked into the mirror.

"One day, you know, we go walk around the neighborhood and we say, 'Hey, where's Paco?' 'He's gone. Disappeared.' Yeah. In the night they'd take them. Or very early in the morning. And no one would see, or so they said, right. Hmm. 'Oh, where's Tony?' 'He said Fidel was ugly, now we can't find him.'" The barber chuckled. "Right. Just empty houses. Everyone gone." The barber gave a weak smile and a snort.

"Oh," said the boy. He looked out the window, at the gumball machine, and then at the mirror on the wall. He saw his own small face, exposed and hairless, and his mother wasn't back. The barber watched calmly. The boy mumbled:

"What would happen to them? Dad said bad things, but..." He wanted to say something impressive, but his father told him he could never speak about Abuelo or the CIA. The boy bit his lip. He wanted to say something. The barber would think less of him before he left. He couldn't speak any Spanish. He pushed his feet down hard on the footrest of the chair. The barber leaned over to his ear and said quietly:

"A butcher would kill them." The barber put the blade to a sideburn and scraped down. The noise, a hissing, distracted the boy for a moment. He felt small in the chair, like the barber had to stoop over to cut his sideburns, like he was too small to be there alone with the pictures and the map of Cuba and no money. He looked at his tiny shaved head in the mirror. The barber spoke:

"My uncle was taken away. He was an electrical engineer. He wrote poems like everyone, right? Hmm. My cousin was in the army and he worked at the prison. He saw it. El Che stood beside the firing squad with a pistol. After he told them to shoot, my uncle was squirming and still alive. Yeah. Yes." The barber nodded his head. He lifted his blade and walked around to the front of the chair. "He walked up to him," the barber made a gun out of his hand, his thumb a hammer, his index finger a barrel pointed down at the ground, "And he shot my uncle in the back of the head. He spit at the body. He called him a gusano."

The barber nodded his head. He walked back to the boy, placed the blade at his small widow's peak and removed its point in one stroke. He untied the cloth, shook off the hair, and urged the boy to stand.

"Yeah. Hmm," he muttered.

The boy's stomach pulsed. He felt as if it were rising and dropping suddenly within him as he watched the barber walk over to the cash register.

"So, jefe. Eleven bucks."

"Um, I checked my pockets, but...my mom's right next door, she said..."

The barber assured him he need not worry. He pulled a hidden jar of bubblegum out from under the cash register, saying, "Ah, bueno, ok. That's ok. Just sit down in this chair and we'll wait for her." The boy reached into the jar and sighed. He watched the barber sweep the clumps of hair that littered the floor, chewing hard and fast on the gum, but trying not to make much noise. His mother always told him not to chew like a cow.

And then he turned and watched the headlights flash by outside the window while they waited.

P.S. DELLA LORRAINE MATHESON

REBECCA MATHESON

1.

snail without shell, I curl
here is the membrane-ruptured wish
your heart is dead before mine
i pray to god for you
god i was crazy for not
like a lizard afraid of a voice
that insane tear piercing shot of pain
my dream a crumpled sheet of music
fra la la la, la la la la la
on my scheduled shifts, I hum
father do you know me
where the scent of pine & grape jam mingle
where it thunders smack crack then blue
onto my side of the hall

2.

I pierce through the crust of his skin
lace on my thigh, the slap strap of my shoe
if a body is what you want
up the spine I date you to finish
footsteps tick tocks
pick Tommy up at three
I think I may well be a whore
not a man but an animal
he said I love you
and I said no not I
shoulder bladders dip away
place your tongue touches bare neck
brute heart of a brute like
you do not do anymore

3.

Dear Samantha wake up late
choose a turtleneck not the red one
day loss constellation they write
she never thought to explain
I would poke my leg through your sister's stomach
and the taxi driver's name is Raj
it makes you look fat
day taunts a loon easy wreck
and if I had my choice
the most important thing is the colony
just one more hour and
you will laugh Dear
samantha try to eat a Tuesday
night on a linoleum floor

4.

correct or end law duel visa
ending with a bang clang and isn't it
strange queer encore lead a
straight parade it's a bit hypocritical
for Kay, avoid Mike
for him to be too quiet?
for if he really knows you
I am oh well thrown so day
& I could have taken the tram
but what do you know of life
watching her die
long pause filled with gum wrapper
& a sniff
the kabob you threw out last night
teach them to laugh

5.

whose whispers swung by the tips of her hair
ending in pirouettes and then
gone meow it a remedy
poor Q do last prayers
ways smoke dangles on his cuff
& sew it a heart to peel, palpable, comatose
to pee yell Paul! calm me
there she was, delicate & afraid

do you have a blueberry muffin
& I can get off at 59th street
but what do you know of love
it is night, you are asleep, such beautiful hair

6.

Dear Della time emits memories rain on tin
tame tone in ear stains on leather
to she that see that I am here name as
lathered in tears. Dear Della, I am Not
too timid it is a shame Taste a parentheses
to time remind her name leans on one damp lip
me, one limp stool too short and too drained
to see to tell to Della.
Draw me a heart snip me a line stamp me a reason.
To remind me, rain on tin, I am lost.

UPPER EXTREMETIES

two fingers and a cab
bruising humerus his humor made
bone between hands he has
That clavicle snap *Minuterie*
Grunting and the sternum
The process between vessels
Frying manubrium vascular cracking
Made me come that clavicle snapping
Oh Van Gogh upper acromion
Her lateral fracture the tentative warthog
That frying log to a Ms.
Too uncool light a joint
Amiss he also articulating
stars between a window
and the apex

“The Anagnorisis”

BRAD KLIPFEL

In dreams he ran with trees aflame. Red petals shuddering under the black veil with its pinprick stars. Boughs withering, soft susurrus, greens crumbling as the gale-like effacement of a monument’s likeness. Boots heavy—heel, toe, heel, toe—laces unstrung, flopping, as winds hissed, darting out serpentine licks of flame.

His sprints broke only for heaves, coughs, and phlegm: brown and bloody. White shirt wetted, wrinkled, matted as second-skin, his slurps sucked thick ash from above: snowy breaths of grey. The path ahead lay glittering and long, fluttering endlessly, beckoning as silver ribbon in the black.

His mother warned him the currents were fierce, but he was rebellious and ignored her. The bluff stood high above them. Toes curled, he stood on the edge with pebbles and ready to release. A tossing flick—momentary monsoon—and each would suffuse with the colors of the depths and be gone.

Their property was wide: a fence on the border, home built sturdily in the center. A storm had plucked a patch of posts away in the spring and rope dangled, curling in their stead. At dusk he’d wiggle past, slipping to the outer rim timberland—sounds of night beginning—venturing deep, charges of the ethereal surging as happiness in a needle, hands forward, groping and afraid. He saw things strange with no name: birds, creatures that crawled and rumblings far off in the sky. And water, the place where shoals sat clear and she gathered bucket-fulls before he woke.

He asked her often if he was a man—a difference had pervaded him recently in posture and voice—but she was silent and said: “I don’t know. I don’t want to talk about those things anymore.”

Growing anxious with each wandering, she shook him on return, crying out and slapping, but frenzy met with apathy and no osmosis. “Go inside. Finish your washing. You’re still a boy so long as I look after you like this.”

Morning chores—tend the crops, feed the dogs (he’d given middle names to all of them)—were fetters tugging with a constancy he could no longer bear. He cut their binds at their neck one evening in her absence and watched them bark wildly to the woods. She asked if he knew the dangers they’d encounter but he stared at their footprints in silence and wondered if one day he’d leave his own.

The waters gurgled below, alluring, lights playing randomly as pyrite in the current. Something grumbled in his gut and he felt strong and renewed. Thoughts passed—wait!—but he would act. Palms thrust deep in his pockets, he flung out the pebbles and jumped.

The house was empty on return, walls moist, dark save candlelight in the center. He slipped inside and puddles followed as tracks on the floor. Hobbling to his bed, he sat and the mattress creaked.

A splotch of red spread circular at his ankle. Bone searing, he peeled his socks off carefully and winced.

He’d landed cleanly, cutting through suds, but misjudged the depth entirely. A popping pang rose within him and he paddled to the surface, one leg kicking, foam swirling, covering the blood below.

Through the mud he’d clawed and pulled himself ashore.

He grimaced again. The window in the door rippled with her shape. It flapped on the hinge and she was there, bundle of wood, bark blowing freely in her arms.

"Take these," she said.

He stood and she laid them in his arms. The weight laced pain in his leg. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing." He shook his head and avoided her eyes.

They ate quietly, hands sticky, meat slithering in their mouths. A tie was missing from her hair and it hung un-bunned and long.

"You're tired," she said. "You haven't been sleeping well."

"The weather's bad."

She paused. "You went to the river, didn't you?" Her lids were thin, hoping for a furtive glance.

He sucked in meat through his lips. "No."

"I saw your trousers."

He pulled out a string of fat from his teeth and stuck it juicy to his plate. "I was looking for my compass. It fell when I was hunting."

She shook her head. "I don't want to explain it anymore. You can't go out there alone. If you were older, I wouldn't have to scold you all the time."

"I'm okay, mother."

"I don't want accidents to happen."

"You don't want *anything* to happen," he said.

She stopped, glossed in sudden reverie, then shook her head and rose. Her chair groaned over the floorboards and she walked to the washing basin and let her plate fall with a clatter.

"I'm going out," she whispered. "Finish up before I come back."

Her solitude had increased with his age: hours paging through internal records—ruminations—thoughts she never divulged to the boy. Once he'd seen her shivering under the moon: a silver silhouette with shoulders of ivory, weeping, but he dared not speak to her of it.

He wanted to re-bandage himself, wrap the gauze under his socks again before she returned, so he limped to the cabinet and reached for more. His fingers brushed the softness and he pulled out an arms length and tore it, returning to a chair before something—a baleful boom in the night—knocked him backwards to the floor.

When he awoke and it was raining and the forest was ablaze. The stinging climbed his leg more quickly than before. She rushed in and crouched over him—the door rattling behind her—and squeezed him in her arms.

"What's going on?" his mouth was muffled at her breast. He pulled away: "What happened?"

"Let's get you to bed," she said.

"What's going on?" he repeated.

"We'll get these bandages re-wrapped and you can go to sleep again."

He peered past her to the flames.

"Lightning," she said. "The weather's always bad this time of year. Help me and you can sleep later in the morning."

He glared at her, planning a retort, but the pain grew prickly, seething, and he obeyed.

The room took shape from the darkness and he could see the locks of dawn unfolding in tracts of grey. Her figure rippled through the glass—hazy as the eyes of morning—pacing toward trees on the sheen of morning dew. He staggered to the doorway but he was gone.

Limping, boots sodden, he struggled across the peat and breathed through the murk that was everywhere. The edge of the woods lie gaping: a hole with trunks snapped and poking, no canopy but a lingering nimbus of ash. The ground was sliced in trails of mud, leaves scattered wisps in the air.

"Mother?"

His boots were soggy, absorbing slurry.

"Mother?!"

The rear of something—a charred carcass of silver and red—glistened in the sunlight that remained. He was dead or dreaming.

The head lay dormant, side gutted and long—the body of an insect tangled in the mud—with foreign instruments inside, shining like tools he used for the fire, but alive. Its eyes were a singular strip, transparent and shattered, a shape huddled, crumpled behind them. Strewn around were dozens more trinkets, gleaming shards and accessories with knobs and black windows, silent and tantalizing as a feast over the earth.

"Mother..."

"Don't come any closer," she said. A hole was dug beside her, spade plunged in the dirt. "What are you doing out here?" A pair of legs lay tremulous on the ground.

"What *is* this?"

"It's best if you go home."

"I—"

"Please."

He huffed and obliged her with reluctance but hid nestled in the brush. Through the branches, burned, gasping, epidermis crawling with decay, a man lay spread-eagled on a stretcher of cloth and limbs. His mouth parted barely in a whisper. "...water."

"Inside," she said. "If you come in, you must not talk to the boy."

"...alright."

She paused. "I'll have to get him. Shouldn't have brushed him off like that..."

The man's face wrinkled. His eyes flicked and met the boy's.

"I'll be back soon. If he asks you anything, close your eyes and act like you're asleep."

They laid him on the boy's bed, and peeled his clothes (and with them, blood and grime) and clothed him new. She refused a bath, despite the boy's pleadings, for fear that luxury might beget obstinacy, and his groans, already incessant, might deepen to the guttural. She fed him meat the boy had slain, slimy and ambrosial, and spooned in mouthfuls while he watched and was plaintively silent.

She left at dusk when the man was asleep. The boy had scrubbed the scum from the plates and watched her vanish in hues of crimson and gold. She instructed him to rest, if he wished, on her bed while the man did so in his, but her blankets drew abrasions (feathers sticking through, scraping) and he couldn't.

The man's chest was heavier, breaths reaching deathly repose. Fingers reaching, tentative, he crept across the floorboards and grasped his shoulder. Soft, it gave easy; a squeeze and a crunch.

The man's eyelids flickered. "...she gone?"

The boy nodded.

"...can you get me some water?"

Nodding again, he filled a cup and returned, pouring liquid clumsily down the man's cheeks as he swilled down gulps and hacked up droplets on his collar.

"Sorry."

"It's alright."

He set the cup aside.

"Thank you." The man shut his eyes again.

The boy poked his shoulder. "What's your name?" He waited. "I heard what she told you."

The man's lashes fluttered.

"She's gone."

He paused. "Where's your father?"

"Left."

His eyes opened.

"I was four. Mother doesn't say much about him."

"You were young..."

"Just a boy."

"Still a boy."

He lowered his eyes and stirred circles in the floor with his toes. "You didn't answer me."

"Hm?"

"Your name..."

The man grunted.

"I'm sorry, I didn't—"

He sat up stiffly, elbows shaking. "I'm not saying nothing about that. She sees and I'm gone." He pointed with his forehead toward the forest. "I can't survive a night out there alone." Collapsing on the bed again, he sighed.

"I'm sorry."

"Don't say that."

The boy eyes his shoes. "She doesn't want me to know. About that thing you came from. She doesn't want me to ask about it."

The man lifted his head to the rafters. "What do you want me to say?"

The boy stared deeply. "Tell me what it was."

The man tilted his head farther back, shook his head. "Can't say nothing about that."

The boy turned away. "If you don't...I'll tell her. I'll talk to her and say you did." Turning back: "I just want to know where you're from."

The man lay quiet, attempting equanimity.

"That thing...is that why there are those burns on you?"

The man pressed his lips together and swallowed the saliva in his throat. "They're from the crash. That thing...is a plane."

"Plane?" He repeated the word to himself. "You..."

"Fly...with it."

The boy frowned. "Where from?"

"Somewhere out west."

"What were you doing out there?"

The man stared for a long time and said: "I locked up a while back."

"Jail? What for?"

He shook his head. "Don't know. First thing they do now is wipe you clean. Can't remember nothing before that. Woke up, somebody showed me the bathroom and at dinner I was staring through the bars."

The boy blinked. "Do they...wipe...everyone?"

He nodded. "Everyone inside. Cells were getting full so they put the men on busses. Woke up with smoke and pieces of everything. Buildings destroyed. Long fields and piles of stuff blown up and they told us to rebuild."

"Rebuild?"

"Cities. The guards were loud. One of them fell asleep. I took his gun. He was a pilot, scared, and took me to a hanger. The planes were old. They were enough. We'd already left when he told me the engine was bad. Kept saying how crazy I was. I didn't say anything back. We didn't know where to go. I saw patches of green and thought somebody had escaped, but we landed and nobody was around."

The boy whispered: "Did he..."

"Burned up. He's still *out* there. If we had rested more he would have landed. I saw your lanterns—heard there might be others *out* east—and knew we had to stop."

The boy's eyes grew wider. "How long...were you—"

"Eight summers. Nine, maybe. Could be wrong, though." The door squealed. Their gaze was broken.

The man closed his eyes again.

The boy scrambled to her bedside and pulled the covers past his head. She entered, pacing slowly, and sat at the table in the center. Her eyes were sullen and watched the candle burn and drip. He felt her anger despite the absence of her gaze. Hair wet, she stirred the flame with her nail and he trembled, struggling to fight the dots in his vision. The man's eyes flicked and they met once more, a silent symbiosis, before his lids swept inward and his pupils darted fast and he dreamed.

He followed the road to the base of a mountainside: tall with crags, jagged black and shimmering. Hands calloused, rocks tumbled as he slung back handfuls of earth, boots slipping, sales melting with the flames below. Ash was thick, breaths shallower than before: quaffs, repetitions matching fatigue, sleep brushing faintly as feathers at the edges of his mind.

A pool was at the summit with waters clear and sweet. He splashed handfuls to his face and his visage dripped dirty and renewed, grime feeding wildlife at his feet.

The horizon was dark, illusory. No shapes cut though the distant black. Tugged by heat and cold and halved by indecision, he felt the earth and comfort at his toes but could not hold position, plodding onward

towards nothing, quelled with accomplishment, but afraid.

He awoke.

The swelling had stopped. The colors in his ankle were returning. Through the window, a votive glow bloomed in the night. The man and his mother were gone.

Boots chaffing flesh, he bounded across the grass. The glow grew—a lantern in the trees—and he knew that they were there. Gust sweeping leaves, he felt nothing in his strides save trepidation.

The plane's wing flickered in a bestial shine. He rounded the side which was gutted and found them again.

The man's feet were immobile. Turning, she stared darkly, hands clutched, a shovel lined between them. "You were asleep." She stabbed dirt. "He stopped breathing when I came back."

The boy stepped forward. "Give him my shirt. It'll keep the worms off." He pulled it from his shoulders and a button popped and rolled away, lost.

She held up her hand. "There's no need. Go back and get some rest."

The light waved at her feet and he saw the man's mouth and shoulders revealed.

"Let me give him this and I'll go." He slid forward before her protests and snapped his shirt and laid it delicately down. She plucked the spade up, watching, and began to dig again.

The eyes were bloodshot, edges faded blue. He turned to face her. "Why are they still open?"

Her knuckles were firm around the wood. "He said before he wouldn't make it through the night."

His jaw trembled. "You..."

"I saw you speaking in the window. We shouldn't discuss it anymore."

He gulped. "He was talking about...father." Pausing: "He didn't leave, did he?"

She closed her eyes, steadfast, head drooping slowly with the withering flame.

"Someone took him. We came here."

She raised her head. "Don't talk about that now."

"They took him." He shivered. "So we fled." His lips shook. "What are we doing here?! Waiting?!"

"No one's coming, son."

"You lied."

"I..." She waited then said. "You're father, they took him. We didn't know why. He wanted it like this. You know how much I love you, son."

"There are others. People out there." He motioned to the east. "He saw the lights."

"Leaving wouldn't help us."

"You don't know what's out there..."

She lunged.

"Don't touch me!"

The lantern fell broken at her feet, flames lapping yellow-red and crackling.

"Please...don't touch me." He backpedaled, sobbing, and fled. She cried for his return but he went on, for it was no hindrance.

York, Maine

LAUREN ROSENFELD

Bloom! Thaw me of my wicked ways
And fondle my skin.
No wasted time, only lemonade ice trays.
Bloom! Thaw me of my wicked ways
And never let this season stray.
The sun and moon, they lie in sin.
Bloom! Thaw me of my wicked ways
And fondle my skin.

My Arsenal

Don't knock petulance.

It's gotten me some good-natured attention.

Riding on the coat tails of snap phrases

gutting the insides of used used-up glances

I scrape the bottom to get what I want.

Languid looks have me speaking out of turn

but it's my reluctance to give in that has you

buying my way out of loneliness.

Why spend nights alone when there are tangles of
legs walking streets?

When there are tongues

stretching and slipping their way to

unchartered territories.

I'll make a mannequin out of you.

Forbidden Emotions

KALPESH MAHENDRA PATEL

To quench the fears that burn and taunt my soul
Would take a gift from God in heaven above
A woman I've found, but no gold, no silver, only love
I desire a means, an arm, a leg, a role
Fathers guide, Fathers love, Fathers help, my father, my hole
Her beauty, her charm, her lips bring peace like dove
I dream I kiss I suck I moan I *Rub*
Without hands without feet without coins better luck the ugly troll
I dream, I wake I think? I see a treasure
A chest, a key, a map, I turned, no more
The world I lived is gone, *Anxiety* past, welcome pleasure
Diamond rings, golden shoes. I king; I desire my whore
Legs smooth, skin soft, breasts tender, clothes off, apply pressure
The erotic, the moan, so sweet, to God I chore

Homini Foetidus

GREG GIORDANO

A man should have a purpose, know what it feels like to take life away, and support his family. Babe Haslett doesn't make much money, but he can kill just fine. Now he bounces along Highway 41 in a 1986 Dodge Power Ram pickup with murder on his mind. The damp, dank and shadowed saw palmetto hammocks watch from either side of lonely 41, which cuts the vast Everglades in two. Black turkey vultures line the road, squabbling over smashed hares. The Power Ram's open windows allow some of the rotten egg smell inside. Babe sits next to his neighborhood pal, Junior McManus. Junior is sixteen, four years younger than Babe.

"Happy Birthday Babe." Junior says, knobby fingers pushing the lock up and down into the door. Junior wonders what twenty feels like. He thinks a man probably touched plenty of girls by then. Junior never touches anyone but himself.

"Thanks Junior, it's gonna be good, we're going somewhere."

"Yes sir, I do think so."

Babe's corncob teeth shine like melted butter at the sound of "sir." His cheeks are dimpled with patches of thin black hair that his father always mocks. Why don't you go on and shave that "neard," looks like one of the Bailey's cats got stuck in the mower again. Babe's face is dried and dark from the sun, which now shoots down rays from its watchtower in the blue. The boys drive dead west toward the blazing eye. Borrowed backpacks filled with cooking pots, water bottles, water proof matches and pocket knives are piled into the rusted pickup bed. The reddish-brown rust scratches onto the tent, which slaps the bed in the breeze. The open windows scream the glory of the South: The Allman Brothers Band, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Johnny Cash. Babe and Junior sing along with the only real music in the world until their lungs swell with parched pain. The wind yanks on their seatbelt straps like the strings of a double bass. Pale yellow chunks of foam bounce by their feet.

Gripping the wheel with both fists, Babe squints hard over the dashboard. Babe's thick eyebrows come together, forcing skin onto his nose. The straight flap of asphalt is crisscrossed with the remnants of screaming rubber. Babe pictures himself holding the Skunk Ape's head before his sick father back home in Hawthorne. Pa sits up from his stinking sheets on his own account for the first time in months. Blood drips on the carpet, and for once Pa has nothing to say. Everyone in the whole town comes to see the head. Reporters from big cities like New York City, Washington D.C. and Boston come to put Babe's picture on all of their front pages.

"Watch it!" Junior shouts from the passenger seat.

"Huh? Oh!" The car is drifting towards the marsh. Its two right wheels chew up the grass, and shake the boys in their seats. Babe steers the truck back onto the highway, swerving into the opposite lane before regaining control. "I was just. I was just..."

Babe remembers the birthday hunting trips Pa used to take him on. Might do you some good, straighten you out like a real man. They would wake before the sun rose to get the jump on their prey, shooting at anything that moved. If it kept moving then they shot it again. In the evening they brought the carcasses back for Ma to cook. At twelve Babe killed his first quail. Fifteen was his first Buck, and two years ago he nicked Pa. But last year Pa's rifle shook like Mexican jumping beans. There was no meat for dinner that night and Ma said that was the end of that. She made him go see Dr. Jefferson. The doc-

tor said that there was a tumor growing in Pa's head and that there was nothing he could do about it. Not long after the bad news, Babe decided to get serious about his life. Pa couldn't stop his chuckling when Babe told him that he was going to get the Skunk Ape.

"You ain't going nowhere. You ain't even got a truck." Pa said.

"But what about a man's purpose?" Babe asked, confused. Pa's body shook hard. The old springs of his bed squeaked along with his laughing. The whole room seemed to shake too, striped wallpaper and all. It was hot. Babe sweated as he watched the mattress bend and shake. Breathing hard, he took Pa's rifle off the rack across from the bed. The Winchester—twenty four inches of stainless steel octagonal barrel, wooden handle with lever action loading—shook in Babe's fists in front of Pa for several minutes. But Pa kept right on laughing, and Babe left.

"It's hot. Doesn't this thing have any AC?" Babe asks. His attention is back on the road. The scenery is the same. He eases his grip on the wheel.

"It broke. It was broken when I got it." Junior says.

Junior gazes at his reflection in the mirror, the saw-grass prairie rushing behind. The wind distorts his long, bony face, pushing his eyebrows up, his mouth open. A few translucent hairs tickle his upper lip. The uneven buzz cut his brother gave him last week stands up straight. Junior's looks never catch the attention of any of the girls, not in a good way at least. They call him the Dodo because of his big nose, wishing he would become extinct. Junior remembers how he was yanked into this adventure a few hours ago. They talked it over in Junior's dirt driveway.

"I need this truck."

"But."

"What else you got to do?"

"Well."

"C'mon then." Babe said.

Now Junior is glad he decided to join the trip. He thinks if they do catch the Skunk Ape then the girls will like him better. They might not call him that name.

"How are you gonna find the Skunk Ape?" Junior asks. Junior is secretly afraid of the Skunk Ape. He grew up having nightmares of the beast after hearing a story from his cousin whose babysitter's brother knew someone who swears that his dog was dragged off into the woods by the creature, and was found the next morning with its body hollowed out.

"Well, I've been hunting before. I can track. How hard could it be to find an eight foot man-monkey? He can't be all that smart. Besides, it's one of those meant-to-bes, all men's purposes are, don't you know? He smells almost as bad as you I hear."

"What if you never find him? Some people think he ain't real."

"You'll know he's real when he's dead. Everyone back home and in the big cities too will know when he's dead. I think his head will look nice over my fireplace."

"Your fireplace?"

"Yep, my fireplace."

"You think some girls will wanna come meet us after?"

"I don't see why not. They like important men."

"I knew it."

"That's when I'll retire, feeling satisfied and all. I'll slow down and pick one of them girls to make my

bride and raise my own family.”

“I knew there was girls.”

Dead ahead the sun sinks, half hidden by the horizon, but ever watchful. The Power Ram races toward the crimson disk. The boys’ faces are painted with blood from the light. Behind the wheel, above the foam seats, Babe doesn’t see the red sun anymore, or the turkey vultures, the road. Babe imagines himself lying prone in the mud. Pa’s old Winchester waits next to him. Nightcrawler worms wriggle in and out of the soil. Beetles, mosquitoes and dragonflies whizz above his head. Junior shakes behind a distant tree, too scared to come any closer. Between the saw grass, Babe can see the reddish-brown hair of the Skunk Ape, stinking of rotting eggs. The beast stands beneath a cypress tree. Baby birds chirp from its boughs.

Black water drips from Skunk Ape’s hairy arms as he reaches for the little pink birds. The babies, blind with gray eyelids, yell between his teeth. Their mother is watching from another tree. Babe rustles forward through the sharp reeds to get a better shot. The wide brown eyes of Skunk Ape turn toward the sound. Babe can see his face for the first time. It’s near black and tough, but Skunk Ape’s face is not all that different from a man’s, not all that different from Pa’s. The beast tries to leave, but the steel barrel is level now and Babe doesn’t let him go. The first bullet tears through the meat of his right shoulder, smashing the ball of the joint into hundreds of shards. Thick red blood wets the hair, and it sticks to the body beneath. Skunk Ape’s right arm becomes dead weight from the rest of him. It swings from side to side like the pendulum on a grandfather clock. Yelling something terrible, he charges, but Babe is ready for him. The second bullet goes right into the beast’s left thigh, sending him face down in the mud.

Skunk Ape tries to get back up, but Babe is right on him now, kicking him back down into the black muck. Clutching tight his Gerber—a fixed serrated blade with a gut hook tip—Babe hops on the back of the beast; a real man kills with his hands. Skunk Ape’s arms and legs kick and grasp every which way. Stabbing the beast again and again, Babe’s long blade breaks through the tough skin. He makes the insides a soup of broken ribs and torn lungs. Skunk Ape’s rasping breath increases until Babe finds the heart. He feels the beating muscle give up through the wooden handle of his knife. The beast finally relaxes, but Babe keeps tearing, drenched in sweat, face splattered with blood.

Rolling the enormous creature onto his back, Babe claims his prize. The wet blade moves to the beast’s throat. He saws through the soft tubes in the neck. The stiff body shakes as he works. Finally, he twists the head off with one loud crunch of snapping neck bone. All smiles, Babe holds the decapitated head of Skunk Ape high for the wilderness to see. Its contents leak from the open wound onto the mud for the worms to devour.

“Babe, slow down, Babe, c’mon.” Junior says, leaning deep into his seat. Both of his legs are fully extended, pushing down into the carpet. He grips the handle above the window. “Please...”

Babe can’t hear him. The windows scream something terrible, drowning out all other sounds with ripping air. Still half in a daydream, Babe presses the gas pedal down farther. The Power Ram tears down Highway 41, but the scenery never changes; the golden marshes of the Everglades span endlessly. There is no plan. The road never curves. It’s all the same. Dead end roads that intersect singular 41 at irregular intervals pass by unnoticed. All is a blur as the sun sinks lower to violet. Babe flicks the headlights on. A lone billboard, standing on thin wooden beams seems to be flying at the truck.

Two red and blue lights spring from the shade of an old billboard. The colors chase each other through the heights of the trees. Junior looks faint. With one hand on his stomach and one foot on the brake Babe stops on the shoulder.

“How’d you get pulled over by the only cop in the Everglades?” Junior asks.

Mangrove

The playful lights take turns slapping Babe across the face. You ain't going nowhere. You ain't even got a truck. An unidentifiable piece of road-kill is flat in the other lane. A passing car flattens it again. It smells like eggs. A stocky cop with a sharp park ranger hat slicing out from all sides walks to the window. He is older, but his face remains firm despite its experience.

"You were going pretty fast back there boy, I'm gonna need to see your license and registration." Officer Steve Peterson says. He wears a small black and white nametag that reads, "Officer Steve Peterson."

Babe blinks at the sound of "boy."

"I'm sorry officer, we're just trying to get to our campsite before dark. This road goes on forever, you know?" Babe says.

"That's no excuse. Which campground are ya'll headed to?" Officer Peterson asks.

"Well, we ain't sure yet." Junior leans his head into view.

"You mean to tell me that you two were speeding off to 'we ain't sure yet?'" One of Officer Peterson's eyebrows lurches up with this question.

"Yeah, I guess." Babe says.

"Do your parents know where you are?" Peterson asks.

"I'm twenty today, this has nothing to do with them." Babe responds. Sweat forms on his brow. "That's well and fine, but I'm gonna need to see your license and registration." Peterson says. His black boots twists on the asphalt.

"Well this is my buddy Junior's car right here." Babe points to Junior, who waves.

"Yeah, it's mine. I can vouch for it," Junior adds.

"I need to see the paperwork." Peterson reaffirms. Babe opens the glove box knowing that he is not going to find anything.

"We must have left it back home." Babe says.

"And your license?" Peterson asks. Babe never owned a car or drove the family's truck off the property so he never bothered to take the test.

"I don't really have one. But Junior does, he was watching me the whole time." Babe says. Junior nods.

"Do you have a permit for that gun?" Peterson points to the old Winchester rifle behind their torn seats. The steel barrel is just barely visible. Babe stole that gun before he left home, and doesn't remember seeing any papers around it.

That was the end of that when Babe and Junior didn't answer. The officer would hear no more. He says that he must take them back to the station in the police car. When Babe tries to convince Peterson to let him go on account of his trying to hunt the Skunk Ape, Peterson starts laughing. Since Babe is an adult, he is going to face criminal charges, but Junior will be okay. The officer lectures through the scuffed plastic that divides the good people from the bad people.

"Girls like criminals, right Babe?" Junior asks.

"I was going somewhere, I was going somewhere." Babe says to no one.

The sky is a deep shade of violet. With its final slivers of light, the sun watches the cop car drive off into the night from behind the marsh horizon. Stars begin to appear across the heavens. Babe looks for the North Star. The car pushes towards the city, whose white light expands up to pluck the stars out of the sky. The abandoned pickup truck waits on the side of the road to be towed away. Frozen dragonflies hover in the humid air with invisible wings as the violet gives way to black.

Tumble

DAPHNE CHAMPAGNE

I denied myself
bottling my thirst
it became a living beast
stalking my thoughts
creeping into my dreams.

Stronger and stronger it grew
tighter and tighter
I held the reigns
vigilant in my guard-
restless in my defense.

Until breathless I felt
the hunger drip close
swell and become my own
I slipped loose and
fell into truth.

Awake I sat motionless
in a room full of spent passion
alive and unaware
soon I would be devoured by
my diligent hunter

Unable to see, I could only hear
the breathless chaos and the
slithering exit of control.
Arms stubbed, and soul removed
I sat, easy prey.

Castrated to the dangers of passion
I remained pale and broken
legs thrown wide
confused excitement
frozen on my upturned lips.

Stranded in Somalia

ZOHEB IMAM

The rattle of AK-47's echoed off the walls of the small Somali shacks. Kiume stared down the barrel of his weapon. Determined to hit his target, the sounds of bullets whizzed past his ears at velocities faster than 700 meters per second. Patient and determined, the young soldier fired off yet another round amidst the chaos. *Too far to the left.* Discarding the banana clip, he reloaded and cocked the gun in preparation to shoot once more. Becoming frustrated, he felt his blood start to boil. Kiume took a large breath and steadied his hands, concentrating on his objective. He wanted this. He needed this. As he shouldered his AK-47 and aimed to hit the target, it exploded into pieces. Someone else had hit the bottle first... someone else had won.

Kiume dropped his gun onto the table. Frustration slowly transitioned to pride as he watched a little boy leaping up and down at the end of the line. Kiume walked over and playfully pushed the only person he would gladly have lost to, the only person he truly cared about, his little brother, Azizi.

"Next time close your eyes and shoot," Kiume joked as they headed back towards camp.

"I'd still be more accurate than you," Azizi snapped back.

Seized by Somali rebels at the age of 12, Kiume was forced to grow up, and grow up fast. He can still remember the night he was taken from his parents: the men raiding his home, his dad collapsing to the floor after the thunderous eruption of gunfire and the quick flashes of light in the pitch black of his home. He can still remember the terror on his mother's face as he and Azizi were dragged from their home. He definitely remembered his promise to her, his last words to her, as she begged Kiume to protect himself and his baby brother. Her shrieks were barely audible over the ringing in Kiume's ears, yet they constantly echoed within his head with clarity. Separated from his mother, Azizi was all Kiume had left.

The oppressive sun glared down on the bustle of the Somali streets as young Kiume lounged in the shadows. The day started like most other days. While scattered citizens of Mogadishu rioted in the streets and American military patrols attempted to subdue them, Somali warlords vied for control within the war-torn nation. The United States and the UN were doing what they could to maintain the peace, the only droplet of reason amidst this ocean of irrationality. Providing food for the starving, medicine for the ill and shelter for the homeless, foreigners cared more for Somalia than the warlords ever could.

Yet their earnest efforts were futile. Their food drops were stolen and medicines re-directed to fuel the burgeoning civil war. Rebel forces hijacked the food and exchanged it for metal. Guns, bullets, grenades. With thousands of Somalis suffering in their streets, the only thoughts passing through their minds were not of peace, but of more war.

Believe it or not, Kiume and his younger brother were fortunate. As rebel soldiers for Mohammed Aidid's army their rations were a certainty, their homes guaranteed. But these luxuries came for a price: sworn allegiance to Aidid and his rebel party. It was on this day that the brothers' allegiance was

tested, this day that their debt was to be repaid.

A year of American patience finally splintered on this day of October 3rd, 1993. In March, all fifteen Somalian parties had agreed to restore peace and democracy. Yet Aidid's army failed to cooperate with the March Agreement's enactment. The US was forced to respond.

"What the fuck is going on?" Azizi asked, sliding to a stop in front of his elder brother. He had seen it too; the helicopters whirled in the distance after passing directly overhead.

"I... I don't know. But we better get back to the complex." The two brothers had spent the day in the arms market. Azizi marveled at the advanced weaponry while Kiume relaxed in the shade. Now sprinting, their long legs chewed up the dirt road as they rushed home. The sight back at the complex was petrifying. Hundreds of soldiers were all chanting, firing rounds into the air, as Aidid himself rallied them for battle.

"The Americans have attacked fellow party members! Our retribution must be swift and devastating. We will not tolerate their interference."

"Lock and load, soldiers! It's time to see your true colors," an elder bellowed. Kiume stood frozen. He knew this day was coming but he did not expect it to be so soon.

"Let's go! Let's go!" said Azizi, waving his brother's rifle in front of his face. "It's gonna be over by the time we get there!" Kiume grabbed the rifle and stood motionless as his younger brother sprinted off to join the attacking mob. *5 minutes...10 minutes...15 minutes passed... and he still could not get himself to move.* He didn't want to fight. He couldn't fight. Who was he to take another's life? Kiume couldn't comprehend the mob's excitement to murder, his own brother's desire to kill. His brother... his brother... He spun around in an attempt to find his sibling in the now deserted complex. Panic consumed him as the realization struck. He took off sprinting towards the helicopters as they hovered over Mogadishu like ravenous buzzards, their black figure an omen of the atrocities yet to come.

Before Kiume was a sight that no young boy should ever have to see. A Black Hawk helicopter sat overturned in the middle of the clearing amongst the towering buildings. Shot out of the sky, the warlords smelt blood and moved in for the kill.

"Surround them, do not let them out! Move, move, move!"

"Sir, they're using the helicopter as cover. We can't pick off a single one," reported the soldier to the clan elder.

"Not one! What the fuck are you doing up there?"

His eyes scanned the battlefield, looking for any chance, any hope to win this battle. His gaze set on a young child fearlessly rattling off shots amidst dozens of crumpled corpses.

"Azizi! Azizi!" cried the elder, motioning to the boy to work his way towards him.

"Let's show this disgrace how a real soldier fights! Everybody, on me!"

Kiume watched as the small coalition banded together for their last charge. A bullet whizzed by. Tearing past his head and burying into the wall behind him, it brought him back to his senses. Crouching, he watched as the remaining soldiers fanned out and waited for the elder's signal. He wanted to call out to his brother, to plead with him to return to safety. Instead, he just vomited, his puke mixing with the small pools of blood at his feet.

Azizi felt his hand twitch as he caressed the trigger, his back to a small car that had been deserted

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on the field. Looking to his left, he saw the elder lift three fingers. Three versus ten should be no problem. After a few deep breaths, he checked his AK-47 and gave his commander the thumbs up. In a fluid motion, the commander pointed forward and released a hellish roar; Azizi turned the corner and began to fire at the smoking helicopter. Quickly advancing towards the enemy, he saw trained shots dropping his comrades. Within forty yards he made a dead sprint, his small body attracting the least attention. Two enemies fell lifeless before him as he approached from the side and unloaded a barrage of bullets into their bodies. The third ran for cover in a panic.

"Die you piece of shit!" Azizi yelled as he chased the remaining soldier around the Black Hawk. He smiled as he pulled the trigger as the soldier tried to stumble away.

Click, click, click!

No more bullets. The tables had turned. Azizi looked around in desperation, now realizing that he was the only one left. Kiume trembled in horror as he saw the rifle being lifted to his brother's head. Three shots were all it took to steal the life from the child's body.

Wiping the tears from his eyes, Kiume knew there was only one thing left to do. Shouldering his gun, he lifted his head and made eye contact with his enemy. Stepping over the dead bodies of his fallen comrades, spent bullet shells, and scattered debris, he slowly advanced towards the mangled helicopter. The American soldier, seeing Kiume's determination, wasted no time and sprinted frantically across the clearing into a maze of buildings. Kiume could have easily taken the shot, but he wanted to get closer. He wanted to see the fear in the coward's eyes; he wanted to make sure the man died slowly.

Kiume was a victim. A victim of circumstance. A victim of poverty. A victim of the brutality, violence, and war that permeates Somalia.

The American fired blindly over his shoulder as he ran for his life. He glanced over his shoulder as a shot struck his target in the hip. The child, as if momentarily paralyzed, stopped and looked down as the blood pooled beneath his shirt. Sticking his finger in the wound, the boy smiled sadistically and waved a bloody finger at him.

"Holy shit...this kid is fucking insane!" he exclaimed. Dropping his weapon, he strived to put as much distance between him and the devil child as possible. Not even stopping to glance behind him, the American ran as far as he could as fast as he could. Finally, he crashed to the floor as his legs gave out from beneath him. Panting for breath, he looked behind him for any sign of that hellish abomination.

"Thank God," closing his eyes and letting his head drop to the floor in exhaustion.

"Don't thank God," a cold voice said from above. "God abandoned us both when you killed my brother. In Somalia, there is no God," the voice said. "Now what was it? Three shots?" he asked as he pulled the trigger.

Chandeliers at St. Vincent de Paul

ERICA DEL RIEGO

Light inside the dark hollow
Of a dead tree.
Iron chains suspending,
Holding, supporting
The wood illuminating marble –
Light reflected on glass
Colors faces, paints air.

Like a soul hanging suspended
From the fingertips of its Maker.
The light of life shining through
The fleeting case of the body –
Life reflected in eyes
Windows to the soul,
Glimpses of the mind.

The Imaginary Child: A Meditation

JEFFREY LOPPERT

My first name came to my mother one night in a dream during her pregnancy. During this dream, she explained, I was five or six years old and my father was teaching me how to ride a bicycle. The setting, she described, was similar to our old house and neighborhood in St. Louis. The street was long and narrow and was built atop a small hill. She recalled my father running behind me, holding the back of my seat as I started to bike down the hill. My apparent desire for speed led me to pedal by myself, and as I pedaled faster and faster, my father slowly faded behind me and stopped, unable to keep pace. At that moment, he shouted, "Stop, Jeffrey, stop." My mother immediately awoke and described the dream to my father; it was then agreed that I was to be named Jeffrey.

The mind, particularly as it manifests itself in dreams, is a complex entity. While theories of dreams tend to rigidly separate the dream from the waking state, one could also imagine our conscious mind having an influence on and within the dream state. Interestingly, both the conscious and the unconscious deal with the formation of thoughts, feelings, and emotions; the difference between them is the process through which these elements are identified and interpreted. There is, furthermore, a transitional period in which one's state of awareness, either slowly or abruptly, relinquishes control of the mind over to its opposing state. It is at this transitional period that the conscious and unconscious interact and influence one another, and the most intellectually and socially productive form of this interaction is an interruption.

The social element tends to have a normative or even oppressive character, and as a form of resistance to this, the mind has the ability to create fictional situations that are interchangeable with reality. It creates illusions that span the divide between the conscious and the unconscious to resist society's conformity, illusions which we can choose to integrate in varying degrees. These illusions provide a safe haven that protects us against the harsh reality of our existence; we call this escape our imagination. We are able to retreat to our imagination whenever we feel threatened or whenever our mental state is in society's destructive path. This alternate reality achieves a state of freedom in which our emotions roam free and in which the mind creates illusions that reveal and emphasize our true desires. These truths, however, do not necessarily correlate with any moral or ethical code. Whether we agree with the content of these desires is determined by how or if we bring this alternate reality into a confrontation with society's standards.

Dreams are one of the most potent ways in which we escape to an alternate reality and to the protection of our imagination. Dreams allow insight into one's character and are the metaphorical keys that unlock the protective gates to our true selves. They house our deepest feelings and contain our inner beliefs. Regardless of whether these inner feelings and beliefs are socially acceptable, they represent defining elements of our identity. Yet dreams are also visual representations of our hidden desires and fantasies. Our conscious realizes the dangerous pleasure our inner being experiences and attempts to limit such pleasure through the process of interruption. This interruption dispels our desires and is a defense mechanism that smooths transition back into a conscious reality.

The situation my mother experienced was a dream, not reality, and yet it may be interpreted as real. The content of her dream had not actually happened, yet its future occurrence is not an unlikely moment in childhood—the dream bears a certain relation to reality. More importantly, the emotional response my mother exhibited from the dream's abrupt conclusion and successive awakened state is symptomatic of a true interruption. My mother's dream represents an escape, a cross section where the imaginary and the real overlap into an indistinguishable emotional experience.

As the content of the dream surprised and awoke my mother, my fate within the dream became unknown. What fate would my mother have chosen for me had her dream continued? Would I come to a stop at the end of the hill or would I crash? Was she consciously making these decisions or were they uncontrollable images generated from her unconscious? If I had crashed, would she always worry that I might be in harm's way, making her into an overprotective mother? Would this change in her personality alter who I would become? I'm haunted by the possibility that continuing the dream would have created a different fate for both my mother and me.

Yet through the act of waking, my mother had interrupted and discontinued the flow of her dream. If the content and continuity of the dream is important to understanding my name, then the interruption is equally so. What caused this interruption? Was it my mother's instinctive fear of my fate, or the excitement associated with discovering a name? While both possibilities are reasonable explanations, I believe that it was my mother's overwhelming fear for my safety which disturbed her sleep; the discovery of my name was an afterthought and a blessing in disguise.

Waking had not disrupted my mother's understanding and recollection of her dream, but rather the actual dream itself. And when she did wake up, she experienced the discovery of my name as an unexpected extra. This is not necessarily the case for other individuals. One night, Samuel Taylor Coleridge envisioned the entire course of his most well known poem, "Kubla Khan," in a dream. Coleridge described the incident in his first publication of the poem; he explained that upon waking he had a recollection of the poem and began to write from memory. While in the process of writing, however, he was called out on business to Porlock. To his dismay, upon his return he found that although he retained scattered images of the general vision, the rest, he described, had "passed away like images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast." Although the oneiric fortunes of my mother and Coleridge differ, in each case an interrupted dream was the crucial event in which a wonderful result was created even as a remainder of the dream was lost.

At the time of my mother's dream, my state of being in her womb was unknown. I was alive; I possessed a mind and body of my own. I could feel the warmth and love around me. Yet, at the same time, I was not alive; I did not exist. I was in a purgatorial state, trapped and restrained, longing to enter the real world, longing to be born. This intermediate period represents another cross section where the imaginary and the real overlap into an indistinguishable experience. While the mind has the ability to create fictional situations that are interchangeable with reality, the body, through pregnancy, has the ability to create an alternate dimension where life is in a non-existent state of development.

This alternate dimension, however, is interrupted and ceases to exist at the moment of birth. The collapse of this dimension represents the creation of life and a definitive state of existence. Birth interrupts the established state of being for both the mother and the child, freeing the child from a confined state and signifying the beginning of their independence. The opposite is true for the mother, whose birth represents a loss of definite control.

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In the chapter “Creativity” from *Choices for Living: Coping with Fear of Dying*, Thomas Langner discusses the effects which immersion in one’s work has on society and the methods by which society recognizes the individual for his achievements. Langner claims that such individuals live vicariously through their accomplishments and creations. It is believed such individuals obtain a higher sense of recognition and stature, and in rare cases achieve a prophetic immortality. During the Middle Ages, Langner explains, artists created religious imagery and depicted religious scripture. Langer asserts that cathedrals served as protective sanctuaries where artists relinquished ownership of their creative work and by doing so assured the works’ survival and immortality. Churches are then cultural wombs in which the spirit and creativity of humanity develops.

My mother, through her dream, not only asserted her own creativity but presented me with a model for my own process of creative thought. This process has enabled me to search for my own creative freedom and revealed my inquisitive nature, particularly in the exploration of the relationship between dreams, interruption, and interpretation. Letting my bicycle go, waking up, naming me Jeffrey; this was not only her own creative act, but produced the very questions which allow me to question, or perhaps fashion, my own identity.

The method by which my name was chosen adds depth and value to an otherwise common name. In the article “Sleep Dreams of Women in the Childbearing Years,” Cleo Pass discusses how pregnancy disrupts women’s sleep patterns and potentially alters their states of mind. Pass also explores the content of their dreams, which include bearing an ideal child, the fulfillment of hopes and desires, and the distress imagined should those hopes and desires be shattered by infertility or loss. Such images and lingering thoughts were absent from my mother’s particular dream, but I wonder if such ideas had crossed her mind. Had my mother, at times, wondered and questioned my existence? Am I her “ideal child?” Why this name? If my father had shouted another name during my mother’s dream, would it ultimately have had an effect on my state of being, my life, and my existence? What if my mother had chosen a name that she hadn’t dreamed?

What My Words Mean

BRANDON AMICO

If someone were to ask me,
A year from now,
A hundred years from now,
What my words mean, or why I write,
I do not know what I would say.

If they ask me why I chose this word,
Put that there,
Wrote something in a way that struck them as odd,
That did not fit snugly like a child's puzzle
Into the groove they molded
Between their eye and their brain,
Then maybe I do not have to answer that question,
Maybe I can ask right back, "Why don't you read
In a way I can write?"

If they ask me why I step out of reality,
And put something where it does not belong,
What metaphors one could derive
From blatant anachronisms and perversions of nature,
On levels apparent and underlying,
Then perhaps I need not elaborate
Since any explanation I offer could not be as grand
Or as flattering as others' conjectures.

If they ask me why I ramble,
I will launch into an extensive and meticulous explanation of why sentences are better longer
That will be full of bullshit and not believed by anyone.

If they ask me why I write so vaguely,
Why I do not explain everything I could,
I would tell them that I am not a mathematician,
That I am not in the business of cause and effect,
That I am not for pulling the sheets off of ghosts,
And I will ask that if they really need to know so much,
Why do they sleep with the lights off?

And if they ask me why I write,
I will simply say that I hate blank pages.

Modernity

LINDSAY COHN

The art of hypocrisy takes years to master
Painted faces conceal the ugliness within

Flesh erodes
Love decays

But plastic withstands the test of time

We are taught in school that when there's a will there's a way
But what they fail to mention is

Falsity is power

Authenticism is a thing of the past

It's chic to be duplicitous
All the way to the grave

Burning

DANIEL THOMPSON

The pale glow of the stars turned the old house into a ghost. That's all it was to Drew anyway—a ghost house full of phantoms from a past life when the low-hanging branches of the angel oaks and magnolias were a playground and the tire swing was never still; when the adults sat up on the second-floor porch and looked out over the South Carolina marsh at the sailboats passing in the river as they sipped iced tea. The spaniels would wag their clipped nub-tails furiously while they followed Drew and his little twin sisters around the yard, then let the appendages rest when they sat in the shade underneath the trampoline as the three children bounced above. Laughter rang loud across the yard and over the seawall into the low-tide plough mud.

He slipped up the stairs to the porch for the first time in twelve years, running his hand along the black banister whose paint had always been chipping away. A hammock, its ropes a fresh, new white, stretched across the corner where the porch turned to run along the side of the house. There had been a hammock there during Drew's childhood too, its ropes greyed and fraying from a hundred thousand swings. Back and forth. He would lie there in the sun and listen to the steady creaking of the hammock as he rocked, looking down through the open gate at the horses that pulled old-fashioned carriages full of tourists who marveled at the houses on the point. He remembered the large wooden model of his house at Mom's real estate agency and looking at pictures of it on postcards in shops around town. When he used to go to school and people asked him where he lived he would just say "down on the point" and they would know. The house had been in Dad's family for four generations.

Through the glass panes beside the front door, Drew peered down the dark hallway inside, decorated with the same Persian rug and furniture from years before. The only difference was that the small table, which Mom had broken when Dad pushed her, had been replaced by an oval one, slightly larger. There were new lamps too, for one of the blue china lamps had cracked when the table broke and the other one had shattered over Dad's head shortly after. Drew stood on the porch and stared, not afraid of being seen. Whoever owned the house now had moved, leaving a for-sale sign outside the gate.

Boards groaned under his shoes. The cast-iron table that had held so many glasses of sweet tea was rusting through the white paint, along with the rest of the porch furniture.

The moon rose over the river, casting a glare across the plough mud of the low-tide marsh whose smell filled Drew's nose and brought him home. He leaned over the railing and looked at the brick walkway and the windows below the porch.

Hours spent in the ground-floor basement flats while Mom and Dad yelled and broke things overhead had brought the apartments to life. They became caves for spelunking and offices for playing grown-up with the twins; the couch was a ship taking him and Kat and Mary-Lee down the river past Hilton Head and far across to Africa until Mom came in, having done a decent job of cleaning up the tears and the blood from her face, and told them that it was time for bed and carried the two girls up the outside stairs, 8-year-old Drew trailing behind her. Dad would be stumbling around in the kitchen,

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fumbling with bottles and mumbling to himself about impossible cases and money and losing the house as the four passed quickly by in the darkened hall and ascended the wooden stairs silently. Now Drew closed his eyes and pictured the paintings on the wall of the staircase. The first two depicted fox hunts with men in red jackets riding horses, hounds bounding over walls in pursuit of an unseen fugitive who was their cousin. There was one of a pair of white falcons, and from the fourth canvas stared Mom as a child, though it could have been Kat or Mary-Lee.

Later that week when they moved into Mamaw's house in Columbia so that Mom could let her own mother take care of her, Drew would sit on the porch and rock back and forth on the swinging bench that wasn't as comfortable as the hammock back home, though it creaked as steadily. When Mary-Lee tripped and fell while playing in the yard she would run to him and climb up beside him and they would rock and watch Kat crouching over some pet lizard or bug she had caught, her jeans stained with the orange clay that didn't smell anything like plough mud.

Drew returned to the driveway made of loose oyster shells, which crunched as he walked to the wall by the gate and pulled the red jugs from behind the bushes. His hands were steady despite the weight of the liquid that he carried up the stairs. Slowly, deliberately, he poured until the porch glistened in the pale moonlight and then stood back.

Drew wondered for a moment where Dad was, the man who used to sit on the porch of the house he loved so much, sipping sweet tea with lemon and watching the boats parade by until hard times turned tea to whiskey. Mom must have almost killed him. He closed his eyes and pictured the scene as they left the house: Dad laying on the floor of the hallway with blue china fragments from the shattered lamp scattered around his head, his fingers stretched over a bottle. He hadn't died. Mom had seen him again during the divorce proceedings, that day she came home and cried while Mamaw wrapped her in her arms, withdrawing only to call her grandchildren in from their games on the porch and make sure they bathed before tucking them into their sleeping bags on the living room floor.

Walking back down the stairs to the brick path beside the driveway, Drew turned around and took one last look at the house before flicking his lighter. The flame burned up the soaked rag toward the whiskey bottle. He threw it with all his might up over the porch railing, listening to it shatter against the wall.

Huevos

JEFF BALTER

1.

Several various conspicuous cogs churn. Numerous diverse evident mechanisms agitate. More then a few an assortment of eye-catching workings whip. Copious miscellaneous manifest machinery beat. Abundant sundry patent tackle palpitate. Extra then a hardly any a hodgepodge of eye-catching moving parts lash. Rich a variety of government grant engage in quiver. On top then a scarcely every a medley of dazzling poignant ingredient knot.

2.

What it means to roll as a box. That tumbler sunless ghost in the machinery that has gears sunlessly boxing. Settlement of oleo & rolling, in that the spinning like a little let in the seam, settled on a box. And he meant it to settle sand box & incorporating scrambling operations. In other words, exit with real chutzpah.

3.

Tim Berne believes in the stasis of punctuation.
 Tim Berne relieves on his status over operation.
 Tim Bernsie leaves honest tatters of her operetta.
 Timber un-sleeves hornet tappers off hero pariahs.
 Time baron leaves hottest tapas oh pharaoh pharaohs.
 Tied members on leaf slots tryst on tops of arrow harrows.

rocket man

SYDNEY SLATER

jump 35,000 feet
is a 3-D model constructed to scale
plastic houses
toy cars painted
 with store-bought brushes
Lego piece trees, foliage
Plexiglass highway
French tip teeth
on the mannequin neighbors
I wash the windows
green
with disdain and confusion

The cover art was created by Ernest Concepcion. It encompasses the spirit of the journal, including the strange and wonderful variety of images our authors have invoked — among them, the Skunk Ape, squirrels, the Grim Reaper, and hummingbirds. We're deeply grateful to Ernest for reading the work in this issue of Mangrove and letting his imagination and immense talent run wild.

ERNEST CONCEPCION is a NY-based artist. He recently enjoyed his first solo exhibit at the Kentler International Drawing Space in Red Hook, Brooklyn, and has another one forthcoming in June, 2009, at the New York Studio Gallery in the Lower East Side. For more information about his work, visit this website:

<http://culturehall.com/portfolio.html?id=462>

Wish your art was on the cover? Look for details about next year's Mangrove Art Contest to be published on our website:
www.as.miami.edu/mangrove

