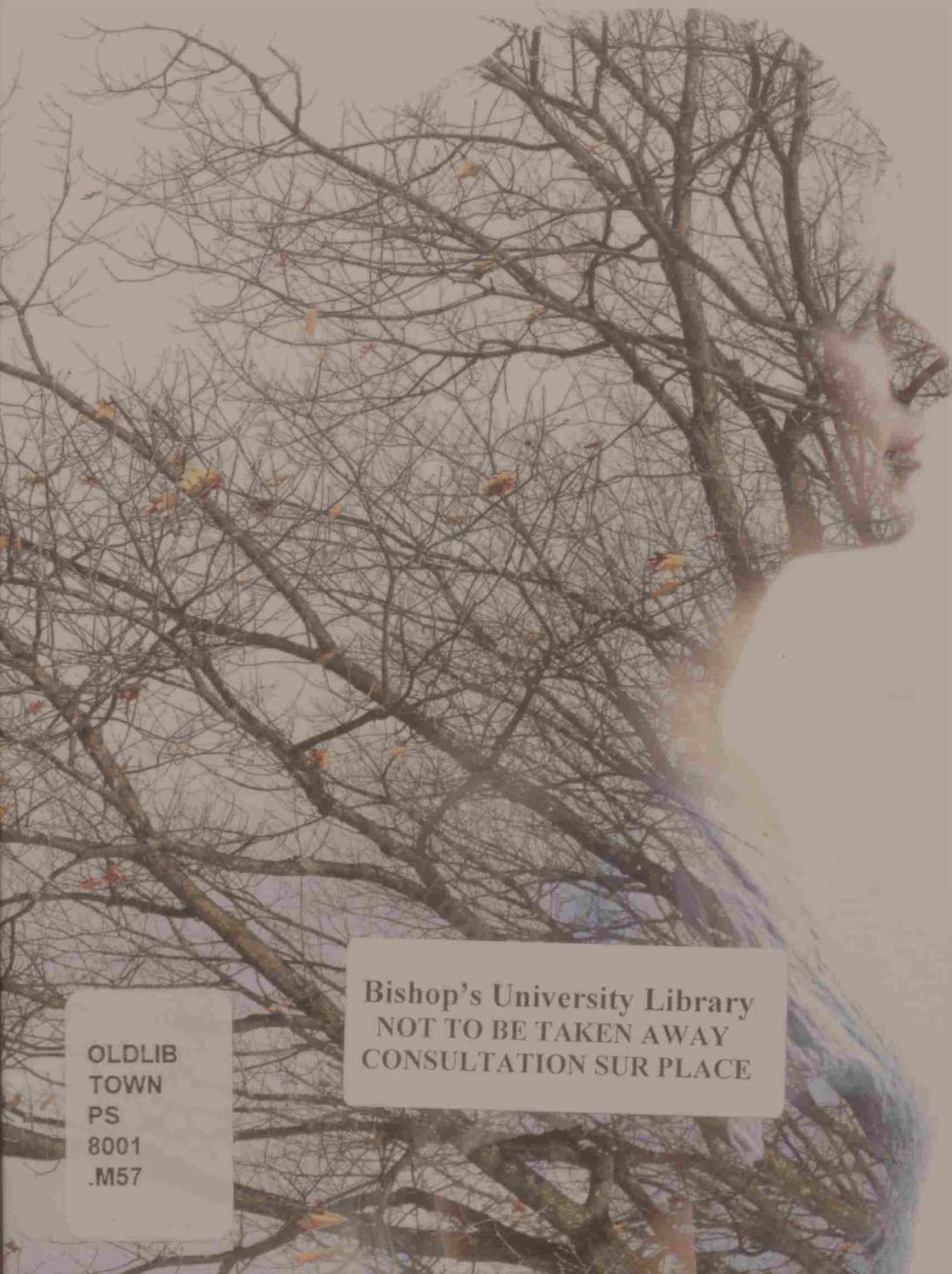


THE MITRE

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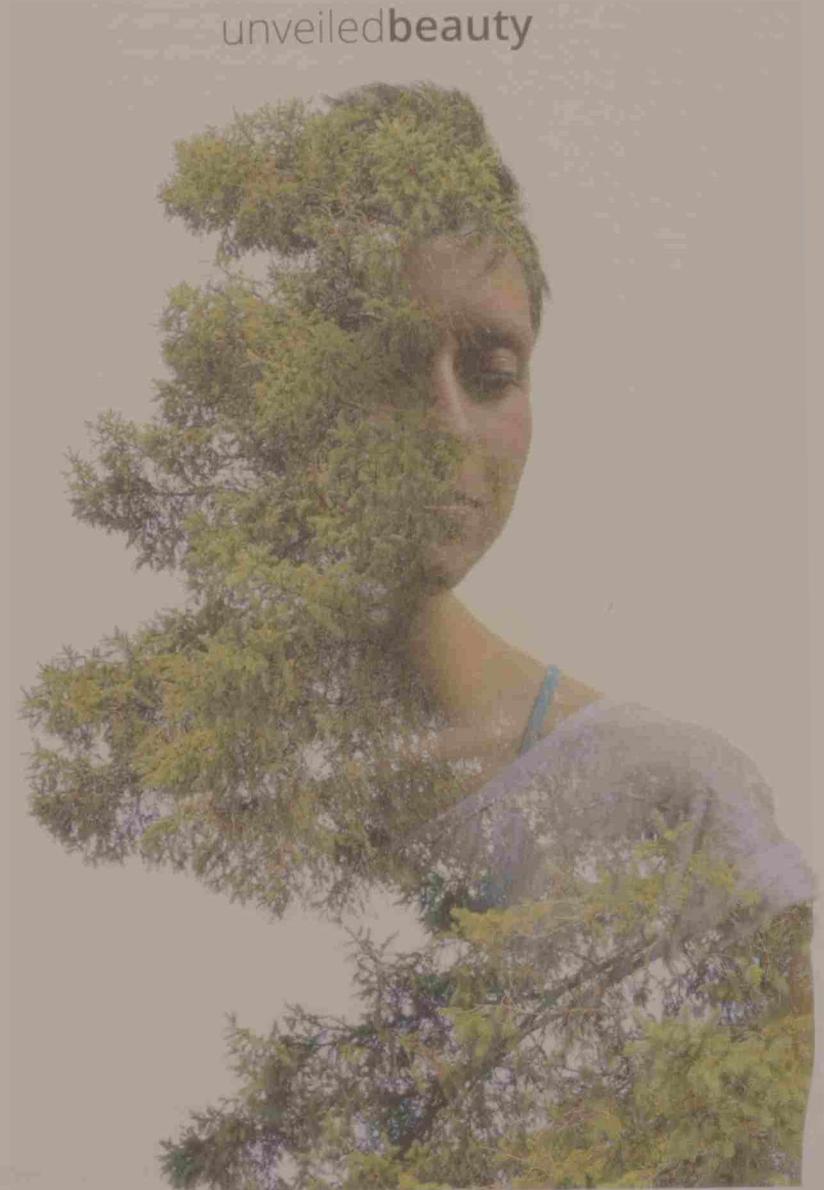


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2015

122nd edition

A Bishop's University literary tradition since 1893



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Behind the Veil

Kristy Bockus
Editor



There comes a point when every child learns what it means to be beautiful, the definition rooted in a manufactured beauty that acts as a dictator over the choices we make. What will you wear on the first day of school? Will you learn hockey or dance moves? Where will you go for lunch? Will you cry at the sight of your reflection? Can you ever be beautiful?

Stop.

Wear what makes you comfortable. Do the thing that brings you the most joy and chase after the dreams that inspire you. Eat wonderful food that fills more than just your stomach. Smile at the person who stares back at you from the mirror. Look into those eyes and

say to yourself,
"I AM BEAUTIFUL."

Whisper it. Shout it. Sing it.

Above all else,
believe it.

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&

Friends & family, for never giving up on me. You are the most beautiful people I've ever had the pleasure to know. There are no words that begin to sum up how much I appreciate the support you've provided to me. It takes a strong type of person to fain interest about layout technicalities when discussed by a sleep-deprived, coffee addict. There is no way any of this could have been possible without you.

Cheers!
Kristy Bockus, March 2015

This 122nd edition of The Mitre is dedicated to my mother,

Loretta Bockus,

the woman who taught me the true definition of beauty.

Wake Up*Kristy Bockus*

It's three in the afternoon and every inch of my body hurts. My apartment is only a few minutes from the university, but the short walk feels like a marathon. I shiver underneath my sweater as cars drive by me. Are they looking at me? I wonder what they see, probably just a fat little girl stumbling along the sidewalk.

I close my eyes for a moment and listen closely to the faint beat of my heart. It's like I can feel it there, in my chest, pumping blood through my body. I'm already exhausted from the walk. I wonder what would happen if my heart just stopped – right here, right now. Who would watch my body fall to the pavement?

I snap my eyes open. It is not safe for me to be alone with my thoughts out here. There are too many options... a speeding car, a tightened rope, a forgotten ledge. I shake my head to get rid of the images. No one notices the dark circles under my eyes or the mascara that stains my cheeks. All they see is another girl who isn't their problem. The ones who dare to glance at me quickly look away. I want to pull my sweater over my face, a quick escape from all the people.

A yellow cab honks across the street, startling me. The bustling New York traffic has come to another standstill. When I reach my apartment, I fiddle with the keys until the lock finally decides to cooperate with my frustrated jabs and twists.

The room is small and cramped. As soon as I've closed the door, I hear the pitter patter of tiny paws as my kitten runs to greet me. Her soft fur brushes against my cold legs, but I'm too tired to bend down and pet her. She meows at me, a reminder that she doesn't like to be left alone. However, it's never just the two of us. There is always that voice in my head.

Why are you just standing there? You're such a lazy ass. Do something. Go run. Grab some weights. Move. Move. Move.

I kick off my sandals and jog around the room in small circles. 10 minutes... 20 minutes... that should be enough. Time to see how much damage I've done today.

The scale is cold against my feet. A zero quickly displays on the screen, and I silently wish it would never change. Zero, but then three small dots appear. I know I failed. Still not perfect. I let my eyes wander to the mirror mounted in front of me. I hate what I see. Failure. I pinch the fat around my stomach with the tips of my fingers. Not flat enough.

I finally manage to look down at the number on the scale. My heart stops. 87 pounds. I was 86.4 this morning. How the hell did I let myself slip up this badly?

Darkness creeps into the corners of my vision. I slam my hand against the wall and take a deep breath to steady myself. Sobs shake my body. The scale must be wrong. It has to be. I tear off my clothes and step back on the scale.

Please, please, please.

The same numbers appear on the screen. I want to scream. Instead, I slump, defeated, against the wall, and slide onto the floor. I sit there crying with my face buried in my knees.

Crying won't solve this. Get up. Move. This is why you're still fat. All you do is sit on your ass and feel sorry for yourself. GET UP.

I slowly push myself off the floor and put my clothes back on. I find a hair-tie on the nightstand and tie my hair into a tight ponytail. Routine takes over. I drop onto my

back, not wasting time to put down a mat. The calories have to be purged from my body. I clasp my hands behind my head and bring my chest to my knees.

One... two... three... keep going. More. Repeat for five sets. Stop being so weak. Next. Bring an elbow to the opposite knee. Twist. Faster. No breaks. Work through the tears.

The breath bursts from my lips as I gasp for air; the sound of my heart pounds in my ears. It's so loud that it drains the sound of my kitten's meows from the bed. When I don't respond; she drops onto the floor and tries to rub her face against my elbows as they twist from side to side in a bicycle crunch. I try to push her away without stopping, but she's persistent. A second later and her paws are on my stomach, as she tries to wiggle her way on top of me. The weight of her on my lower abdominals sends pain shooting up my side. I roll my body sharply to the side nearly knocking her away from me. She meows again and makes her way back over to me. I don't have time for her stupid games. I stare at her and yell, slamming my hands against the floor with a hiss. She freezes then runs underneath the bed. I stare at her shadowed figure for a moment and want to crawl with her into the dark shelter.

Tired? Well, isn't that too bad? You're the one that messed up today. Sure, go ahead. You are a failure after all. You want to change that? Control yourself. Or are you weak? I knew you were weak. I don't even know why I bother trying to help you be beautiful. You don't even try.

I know the voice is right. I need to try harder. I am in control.

An hour later, I finally stop. My sweat-drenched body rests on the floor. Muscles protest when I stand, legs quivering from the effort. I keel over, hands clutched around my stomach. It feels like a knife is being rammed into my abdomen.

Ignore it.

The pain saps my last bit of energy. I opt out of taking a shower. Instead, I crawl into bed and wrap my blankets around my body. No point in setting an alarm. In a few hours, I know I will wake up when the pressure of my bones grinding against each other becomes unbearable. Even with all the blankets and pillows, nothing helps soothe my joints.

As I stare at the ceiling, I can't help but wonder if this will be the last time I close my eyes. Will these blankets become my coffin? Fear usually keeps me awake at night. However, today exhaustion wins. I let my eyelids droop, their weight too much for me to lift. I drift away into a few hours of freedom. A dreamscape where there are no voices, no hatred, and no mirrors to haunt me.

My phone buzzes next to me. It's another text from my friend, Amanda. She keeps telling me I need to go to the hospital. I don't believe her or maybe I do, but there are people worse off. The doctors need to spend their time on someone who deserves to be saved, someone who is actually loved. The world will be better off without me.

This time the phone rings. She knows I'm avoiding her. I grab my phone and turn it on silent. I'm not in the mood to talk to anyone. In fact, I'd rather just go back to sleep. My kitten is nestled next to me almost as though she is trying to keep me warm. I don't think she could be any closer to me. I can feel her inhale and exhale. The poor thing hasn't left my side all day, and I wonder if she might be getting sick. She has bad allergies and has lost a lot of weight recently. It worries me. She shouldn't be so skinny.

I begin to try and say her name, but my lips are cracked and bleeding. I hate the taste of blood. Does blood have calories? I wipe my lips on my sleeve. Better to be safe

than sorry.

I wrap the blankets tighter around my body. My elbows snap loudly from the movement. It's so cold in my apartment even though the heat is turned up to twenty-seven degrees. I wince as I feel a pinch in my hips. Turn onto my back. Now my spine is on fire. Turn to the left side, shoulder aches. Turn back to the right, pain sears through my hips and legs. Lie on my stomach and cry myself to sleep. Maybe I'll feel better in the morning.

Dreams

Marilyn Johnston

You really want to know,
what life is about my dear?

No?

Well, guess what?
Life is a demon dwelling deep in a closet,
peeking through the door with sadistic eyes.

Ready to ...

strike at any moment.
It watches you when you sleep at night,
waiting for the perfect moment
when you are most vulnerable.

To take over ...

glancing through the small gap.
Its shadow slowly slithers inch by inch,
ever closer to your bed,
suffocates your breath,
so it can creep into your dreams.

Where it invents a ...

dark, disappointing, depressing world.
A world that looks exactly like your own;
a void and colourless world,
mundane, clear cut, and gray scale.
A newspaper clipping of a world.
You and your shadow.

But this Shadow is You ...

so you follow it.
Where you walk into a thick forest,
follow carefully on a dimly lit path.
Walk for what seems like forever,
only to come across
a tree with a crooked grin
with branches that cover the sky.

Under that tree are perfect ...

small, shining, sunny patches of warmth
 where just enough light escapes through
 the branches, allowing fresh growth.
 Where tiny plants gently seep out of the ground,
 thirsty for nourishment and morning sun.
 Butterflies dance around flowers like ballerinas,
 drawn in by a sweet, seductive scent;
 their wings sparkle like diamonds under light.

Only beauty, purity, and joy reside here ...

suddenly everything turns to black.
 You awake to the sound of thunder
 then check your alarm clock.
 It's 3am and still very dark outside.
 Your only comfort?
 That demon in the closet, a demon called life.
 A demon who sometimes gives us nightmares
 that turn into pleasant dreams.
 Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily life is but a-

You better get back to dreaming, my dear.



Standards, Kristy Bockus



Sonnet to the Models*François Leduc*

Upon a pedestal is raised beauty
of females garnished in desired fashion.
They play on a stage for all men to see;
men look on, caught in a heat of passion.
The players refuse to breathe desire
and passively act to woo the audience.
Girls give no heed to polite attire,
perform with complete obedience.
They serve men's gaze on a gilded platter,
never dare to beg for their dignity.
They play to please the eye of beholders
and make their bodies subject to slavery.
Upon this pedestal stands woman, fickle,
in guise of beauty; she suffers the sickle.

Man bun: long hair, don't care. - *Richard Lavoie*

Cover Up*Tina Golab*

You stand there in front of your vanity, regarding yourself in the mirror. Freshly washed hair clings to your shoulders. You squint slightly at the sight of your fair skin and cling to the bathrobe that's wrapped tightly around you, afraid your reflection might show you something you don't want to see. Your eyes look plain; they see a person who looks thin and frail, scared even. No, this absolutely won't do.

With your jaw set, you return your own gaze in the mirror before you sit down and face the assortments of creams, powders, pencils, sprays and various other objects that, to you, frankly look like torture devices. You begin by brushing out your thick hair; the individual strands of hair band together to fight off the teeth. It's a tough fight, but you tease and prompt the hair to give way and eventually it yields. You stroke it softly, as if in reassurance that all will be well. Then you pick up the hair dryer and round brush, dictators to shape each strand. Your hair is like butter in your hand and no longer fights your will. You touch it up with hairspray; the particles pollute the air and make you cough. The final product is a hairstyle that looks glossy and voluminous, cascading gently around your shoulders.

Next you reach for the multitude of powders that lie before you. You start with a light foundation that matches your skin tone. Carefully, you dab any red blemishes that insist on returning to see daylight. With each dab you erase them, creating the illusion of a flawless surface. Then comes the powder, the word *Natural* embossed on the cover. You take hold of the makeup brush, dab it into the powder and blow gently on the brush. Gently, you sweep it across your skin. With each stroke, you even out your skin tone and ensure that the blemishes are firmly hidden. You turn your head left, right, up, down to make sure you've covered everything. Satisfied, you reach for the blush. With a light dab of the brush, you paint your cheeks. The result is a fresh face just freed from the chilly outdoors.

After the skin come your eyes. Those are the most important. Remember that Mama use to say that the eyes were the windows to the soul. First, you take the metal device that you once thought was used to scoop out eyeballs - the eyelash curler. You bring it slowly towards your eyelashes, still somewhat wary of the potential damage it could inflict. You hold your breath and count to four before removing the curler with a breath of relief and apply it, hesitantly, to your other eye. Next comes the black eyeliner. Slowly you trace the outline of your eyes, creating a border that makes them pop. Then it's the eye shadow's turn, you use it to distract people from looking too closely at your eyes. They may be the windows to the soul, but you don't want peeping toms. You delicately sweep a light shade of pink over your eyelids. It's subtle enough that it doesn't distract from the masterpiece you're trying to put together, yet noticeable enough that people will be distracted and not meet your gaze directly. You reach for the mascara to add the final touch to those windows, a thick frame to define every angle of your eyes.

The final step in the creation of your masterpiece waits for you encased in a tube of fake gold, reflecting anything that lies close enough to it. You take the tube, pull off its cap, and turn the bottom so that the lipstick protrudes from its case. Once pressed against your lips, you feel the waxy substance on the surface of your skin with promises of vibrance. You smack your lips together once before turning to your wardrobe.

You pick out a dress that hugs your body in all the right places, emphasizing all

your curves. It's strapless with a sweetheart neckline. A short dress that definitely ends above your knee, but not so much that it makes you look like a slut. You choose a pair of heels that show off your legs nicely and give a decent lift to your butt. You strut over to your full-length mirror to see what you've created. The person in front of you looks familiar. You know you've met her before, but she's been transformed. Here stands someone who's the image of perfection; men will call her a goddess of beauty and will fall at her feet. Girls will huddle with cold stares in the corners of the bars, as she strides past them with their boyfriends on her heels. People will call her slut, bitch, whore, and skank. They'll tell her that a girl like her should really cover herself up, but they don't know she already has.

Blue Woman viii*Frank Willdig*

The night, being deep and dark
 Is darker still, the blue television
 glows and drones, and she lies
 transfixed in her helplessness
 - a desolate, indescribable place.
 She sits, and sits quietly,
 dreading each tomorrow; she doesn't talk.
 She doesn't smile. She considers
 the ravages of time and waits for
 the world to happen.

Every breath presses on her chest,
 each limb is a stone; she endures
 the heavy emptiness of loss
 and feels the exceeding dullness
 of despair.

The world's weary weight
 is mapped out on that lovely face,
 each line reflects the gentle
 and careworn topographies
 wrought by birth, love, and death.

Shafts of light capture her compassion,
 like Kollwitz's dispossessed,
 this daughter, this mother, this sister,
 this wife, this friend, this woman,
 this angel of the ever-shortening days

does not seem to grasp how much she is loved
 and that she won't bear the world's weight alone,
 and that I love her and bound by affection
 and with the consoling knowledge
 that we have each other in this life.



Reflection, Benjamin Tracy

Masked

Nicole Gauvreau

"I've seen your type before.
 You wear a mask,
 and seem happy on the outside.
 You smile;
 on the inside, you're crying."
 At those words,
 I cried on the outside,
 and it felt good.
 When I stopped,
 I put on my mask
 and smiled as I left.
 I would have to work harder,
 I told myself.
 No one should see through the mask.
 The mask protects me;
 it keeps me safe.
 I don't trust others enough to remove my mask;
 only a few have seen the truth,
 and it scares them.
 The mask must stay,
 become stronger,
 thicker.
 It must become a shield,
 armour,
 a lead box for my heart.

Dear sad Stella,

Josue Quirion

I'll tell you what—fourteen year-old girls are pretty fucked up.

I gave Stella an F, failure. You're wrong Stella, I told her, or myself perhaps. Subsequently, her efforts diminished, her work was incomplete, and it seemed that she was too, absent most of the time, and absent even when she was present. F for fuck you Stella, how dare you insult Steinbeck and deprive me of sound sleep; why can't I sleep?

I was contracted for part-time substitute teaching in an ethics class, forty fledgling students, morally unadulterated, I anticipated, children with the emotional latitude of a shoe or a tic-tac. What experience did they have, what scars, what stories? None, of course, void capsules, bereft of secular anxiety. Children—playing, singing, running, flying kites, building sandcastles, and respecting curfew. Mere children, let them come. I can handle them.

Have you ever been so wrong that you shut your eyes in an attempt to make yourself disappear, like an ostrich that digs its head into the soil, or a fearful infant, or his mother, playing peek-a-boo to reassure him, vanishing half-a-dozen times as he beckons for an encore, her number one fan?

I did close them, but did not find solace in the obscurity that welcomed my tortured mind as my eyelids collapsed. I did not disappear either, so I reopened my eyes, and there she still was—Stella, sitting there, ever so customarily, her legs crossed, politely, looking up at me or through me, into my mind or into oblivion, either way she kept her eyes open, always, and maybe, maybe that's why she saw all of it, the all-encompassing melancholy that was dutifully represented in her analysis of all things.

Last term, we revisited Steinbeck's canonical novel *Of Mice and Men*, the class agreeing that George killed Lennie to save him from a more malicious death at the hands of that smooth-handed, smooth talking bastard Curley. But Stella, she thought differently; she declared that George's reason for pulling the trigger was vindictive and twofold. One: he subconsciously despised Lennie because the latter was bereft of empathy, and all of George's worries would rebound off the giant's dense, stout frame, reverting back to a sufficiently troubled protagonist, perpetually testing his resilience. "An eye for an eye," Stella said referencing the *Old Testament*. "Lennie gave George an opportunity to gouge his fucking eyes out, and he wouldn't miss it, he owed it to himself." Two: Lennie had to go, because he did not belong in this world, alienated amidst the daily fret of mortal emotion. His foreign simplicity was alarmingly visible in contrast to the complexities of humanity's alleged "enlightenment."

That was Stella: 14 years old, executing established heroes and denouncing conventionality, ever so subtly. She chiselled away at my sanity periodically, installing hesitation and insecurity into an actualized mind that I had spent decades formatting.

I don't mean that she did strange, eccentric things like collect nail clippings, or pour the milk before the cereal, or play solitaire and actually enjoy it. No, Stella was, by all conventional measures, a seemingly balanced individual, a typical teenager: she was part of a regular junior high clique, brushed her teeth for two minutes before going to bed, wore clean clothes and socks that matched, blended in you could say. She was transparent, spoke in turn, never argued, rode the bus to school every day, and sat in the middle with the rest of the drifters, chewed her food with her mouth closed, and with that mouth she talked about kissing boys, while her chin rested on the hammock formed by her interlaced

fingers, eyelashes fluttering in the most ordinary way, and that's the disconcerting part, that such an archetypal teenage girl, turned out to be so, so, so, broken.

She talked to me indirectly during my tenure as a temp-teacher, whispering intimately, in depressing diary entries, to a God that I had become, it seemed; she was imploring my consideration, desperately demanding my or anyone's attention. Arranging her own intervention. But how, how could I tell Stella, that I could not help her, that her agony was her own, that she would ultimately be quarantined and medicated by a civilization that secluded and sedated hearts like hers?

By and by, I let it go, and distantly gave her work a B, to encourage her, you know, it was noble, it was what she needed, a good grade, here's a fucking sticker Stella, now go paint your fingernails all the different colors of the rainbow. Go and be a kid, please Stella, go be a fucking kid.

Days after my tenure as a substitute teacher ended, the headlines read, "Local teenager commits suicide. Family dumbfounded."

I would answer her, now.

Dear, sad, Stella, tragedy befell you. You were defectively manufactured, fabricated around the foundations of a damaged heart, destined for malfunction, an impending ruin. Oh Stella, your heart bled, and there was no stopping your descent into permanent agony. You drowned in despair and, I'm sorry, Stella, because my buoy could not have saved you. Stella, I could not fix you, in technical terms, you were broken, and in figurative terms, you were thrown into a passionate chasm with no end and no beginning, falling, and your feet would never rest; in medical terms, you were mentally-ill; in statistical terms, you were 15% of your nation; in semantic terms, you were chronically depressed, Stella.

I am sorry Stella, I never was a strong swimmer. I could not come to you. I was not courageous enough; I am only human. Forgive me. I think about you sometimes, about the way you looked at me or through me, pleading perhaps, for me to save you. But how could I have known Stella, when you sat ever so normally?

I have a theory, though, that Lennie would have jumped overboard and rescued you and that his compassion would have been your salvation; you scared me, Stella, you and your contagious misery, but Lennie, all he would have seen was a beautiful, distressed girl with long, soft hair.

Twelve a day, disease go away. - *Camille Provencher*



Don't Forget, *Janan Chan*

Never thought I would be here. - *Kassandra Morin-Chagnon*

On Grief

Katherine Bannerman

Love was once a wire
that cradled and encircled you.
It wrapped around your fingers;
it was taped to your scalp.
It was a swaddling cloth, a vine of comfort
that had always existed
and kept growing around you.
You used to lay on the table
in hazy, tranquil silence,
unable to conceptualize anything
but pure, sweet comfort
and perfectly white bed sheets.

Death flipped the voltage switch.
The wires became pain,
anguish,
seizures of agony,
tearing apart your neural connections
and reforming them, misshapen.
Death hit like thunder roaring through every vein,
a sound that will never leave your ears.

When the electroconvulsive shock of Death left,
then came Grief,
and Grief made the wires corrosive.
Now they bore into your skin,
pulsing acid through your heart.
There is a sour smell high in your nostrils,
a burning, foul odour.
Sugar became ashes in your mouth.
Grief left the taste of blood on your tongue,
the vinegar taste of regret.

The soft, comforting fabrics of the table
became cold stone.
Now, you are laid down on unyielding marble.
Now, you know Grief.

Weightless*Asha-Marie Bost*

Sometimes you feel that your whole world is falling apart and you're falling further into weightlessness. It's an odd feeling, like an orgasm while waiting at the bus stop for a bus you'll never take: infinite and despicable. She haunts your dreams. She always does. Blond, orange, pink hair flashes before your eyes, changing faster than your heart can skip its beat. She leaves you drained like every ounce of you left with her, because each time you see her, it isn't long enough.

You know that feeling, don't you? It's a hard, unreciprocated feeling. Maybe it is reciprocated, but you wouldn't know. You're too damn scared to tell her that you've loved her ever since eighth grade when she whisked you away with gray, blue, turquoise, green eyes that glinted in the sun of the teacher's lounge, while you tried not to stare. From the first day you saw her, every preconceived judgement you've ever had about a person flew out the window, because she was the most beautiful, weird, smart girl you've ever met—breaking through any stereotype or gossip you've ever heard. You can't stop thinking about those times you used to write those creepy poems about her hair or took pictures of her pale skin sparkling in the sun of the waking winter morning, because you thought it was beautiful to watch the sun dance across her skin.

She's not perfect, but she could be perfect for you. It's weird that someone can make you feel something this intense. You know that you'll never be as big of a part of her life as she is in yours, because she is elusive, holding her feelings trapped in a box that only the patient can see. You're only ever her outbreak counsellor when she has nowhere else to turn. When she tells you how she feels, it feels like the lead from the pencils you chewed during those hours of sleeplessness has coagulated in your blood, dropping your body into a state of free-fall. You feel her pain like someone smashed a brick into your head. It's funny that all you want is for her to be happy, to not drown in weightlessness and not trouble herself with the meaning of infinity. You know that no matter how hard you try, she will always think these things, that she will always be so frustrated by society that existential questions will haunt her waking hours. You wish that she could understand just how beautiful she really is. Her happiness is intrinsically linked with yours, connected by a string of paper circles, continuous but breakable. One small tear could send you both free-falling.

She has a smothering effect on you that feels like the touch of satin on smooth skin. Sometimes you wish you could forget her; you move far away, where only the connections of technology bind you together. Still, she takes hold of your mind, breaking into your thoughts like a robber with twenty years of experience stealing hearts. She isn't mean though; she is the kindest, most generous woman you've ever met. You pray that she isn't your Alaska Young, gone before you have the chance to tell her that you love her.

Weigh with Words*Brooke Harvey*

I used to live off of sentences,
a well-tidied paragraph,
an obvious thesis,
supporting arguments, and
concluding statements.

But with you, I only needed a word.

When you broke it, I became speechless.
Not because there were no words;
not because I had nothing left to say,
but because you took away my voice.

Your word shattered into a sea of consonants,
quiet vowels and intonations.
The sound of your voice overcame my own,
as the second pronoun took first place.

You won the race by finishing my sentences.

A tsunami of verbs came spilling
over the shoreline of subservient nouns,
punctuating my run-on sentence;
your action words silenced my flow of thought.

You were a sailing exclamation mark, while I was a sinking ellipsis.

Without a voice, I began to listen.
I heard the waves of your comma splices
crashing against the deserted rocks of adjectives,
tone adjusted like sails in a windstorm.

Words can no longer hold meaning when they're weighing down the boat.

Half mute, half misunderstood,
I built a raft out of the novels of words you broke.
Shattered tenses, broken senses carry me away
to find solid ground upon which to write my name in sand.

Sometimes what isn't said makes the loudest noise of all.

Eulogy*Emily Liatsis*

I lost my eulogy,
 I suppose it was for the best.
 For, it wasn't composed beautifully,
 if anything, it was a mess.
 My life's purity,
 torn with that polka dotted black dress,
 that premature maturity
 with death's sweet caress,
 and its surreal obscurity.
 It's not glamorous, I must confess.

Be the person you always needed. - *Jessica Ward*

Jilted*Katharine Mussellam*

It all happened too quickly for me to prepare for it.
 I was walking to an information session on an upcoming school event, and I remember her little voice breaking my train of thought.
 "Excuse me," she said. I turned to where her voice was coming from. "Do you know how to get to the hall where the information meeting is?"
 "I'm going there myself, actually," I replied. "You can come with me, if you want."
 We walked. I noticed that her wavy blonde hair had a single streak of red in it. It bounced lightly as she walked.
 I half expected her to sit down somewhere else when we got to the hall, or notice some friends and go sit with them, but instead she sat down next to me. We began speaking. I found out she was the same age as me, nineteen, and that she was hoping to become a photographer one day. I wanted to be a writer. She had a cat. I had a potted plant. She had a sister. I was an only child. We continued our exchange of little facts that slowly build a mosaic of the other person until the meeting began, and we were forced into silence for an hour.
 After it was over, I invited her to get coffee before heading home. She agreed. We chatted for another few hours. How was this coming so easily? I had never been this natural with someone I just met. It made no sense. She asked for my number and said she wanted to hang out again some other time.
 Things began accelerating at an even faster rate. We met later that week, and then again a week later, and again, and again, and again. We were soon sharing everything, going to movies, listening to new albums together. It was a whirlwind of dopamine, endorphins, and all those other chemicals that bring happiness into your brain.
 Then one night she kissed me. We had been going out for two months. I was taken aback at first, because it had been a long time since I had been kissed, but then I welcomed it. Her lips were soft, and she kissed with a delicacy that I had never felt before.
 I completely lost control. I made a foolish mistake without thinking. I took her to what is, still to this day, my favourite diner.
 I somehow completely forgot that Damian worked there. He and I had agreed to stay friends when we stopped dating, but sometimes he still got flirty with me. Assuming I was with a friend and not a girlfriend, he swooped in to take our order, giving me that little smile that had won me over a year ago. It still gave me shivers, even if I didn't want to admit it.
 Of course, she noticed. It was so obvious. I tried to laugh it off, but she persisted.
 "How many partners have you had before, Alison?" she asked. I could feel what was coming, but I answered obediently.
 "Three," I answered.
 "How many of them were guys?" she asked.
Here we go, I thought. I knew I should have been more careful – or maybe I should have said something sooner. It was too late now. The first domino had been tipped.
 "Two," I said guiltily, even though I knew that there was nothing to be ashamed of. It's not my fault so many people don't understand.
 "If you were straight, you should have told me in the first place. Then I would have known. That's why you took me here, right? So that your old boyfriend would tell me why

this isn't serious." Her voice was slowly rising.

"This is serious," I replied.

"Is it?" she demanded accusingly.

"You're beautiful, you're smart; I love what we have. Please don't end it just because I've had boyfriends before. I'm completely invested in you."

"I can't do this," she exclaimed. "I can't, knowing that you'll leave me for another guy. Admit it; this is just an experiment for you. It doesn't mean anything! You're just saying that so that you can prolong your little fantasy!"

"This isn't a fantasy, Cassidy," I pleaded. "I just said I'm invested in you – in us! I've loved men before, but I've loved women too. Right now that's you! Nothing else matters!"

"Save your breath, Alison," Cassidy said as she got up from the table and lifted her bag over her shoulder. "This is over."

"Cassidy!" I exclaimed, as I stood up too. The words spilled out as I desperately tried to save a boat that had already sunk. "Please don't end this over something so trivial. Think of what we've had! Yes, I'm bi. Maybe I should have told you that sooner, but it doesn't mean I don't want to be with you just because I've been attracted to men in the past. That was the past, Cassidy. This is the present, and it's with you!"

"It's over, Alison!" Cassidy shouted in my face. She glared at me for a moment, then turned back towards the door and walked away in a huff, her wavy hair bouncing. I stared dumfounded as the door swung closed, the little bell ringing and the light reflecting off the glass as it moved.

That's it, then, I thought after a few moments of complete blankness. It's over.

In days gone by, I would have hoped for a phone call or a message – something to express forgiveness – but I knew Cassidy wouldn't be doing that. Her reaction made it plain. Bisexuality did not exist for her. It was not a possibility. She could not accept or revel in it, like I so desperately wanted to do. She was gay and wanted a girlfriend who was gay too. She was one of those people who either didn't believe in my sexuality or couldn't stand the possibility of being dumped for a guy.

Well, so much for her.

By the time I walked back to our table – my table – the other customers at the restaurant had gone back to their own conversations. Our falling out had only been a brief distraction. At first I felt numb, but slowly the pain settled in and I began to cry. I covered my face with my hands then bent over the table and sobbed into the crook of my elbow. It wasn't just the pain of rejection; it was the pain of being made to feel wrong for something that wasn't.

After a few minutes, I felt a hand gently caress my shoulder. I looked up. It was Damian.

"What's wrong?" he asked, his voice low. There was that word, again. I thought of crying out, *It's me!* I held the words back.

"My friend is in need," he stated plainly. "What's wrong?"

"Cassidy just dumped me," I said, wiping the tears from my cheeks in time for more to run down. "She dumped me because I'm bi, because I used to be with you."

"Is that what all the shouting was about? I could hear some of it from the kitchen."

I nodded.

"Well," he continued, "if she left you because of that, maybe she wasn't worth it to begin with."

"Yeah," I said sarcastically. I couldn't agree with him. What we had had until just

moments ago was too wonderful to believe that.

"Come on," Damian said, "if she couldn't see the beauty in all of you – every last bit of you – then she could never really love you. She couldn't have stayed with you. If she couldn't accept you, you don't need her."

I was still heartbroken, so at that moment I could not grasp what he was trying to tell me. He stayed with me until I had stopped crying, then got up to continue his work.

"Do you still want your soup?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied. I needed it.

I cried again, as I walked home from the restaurant. The shock had not worn off yet.

It was not until the next night that I began to understand the importance of what Damian had meant. The pain had still not completely gone away, but his message sunk in and started to soften it.

I don't have to settle for someone who won't accept my bisexuality, even if they seem perfect at first. There will be others. I can only be happy with someone who loves every part of me.

Snapshot*Curran Jacobs*

Flip back several years. Go back to a time so different from now; be sure not to blink, because you might miss it. You were young, and I was younger. It was a fluke that night when I hopped into your cab. The air of intoxication filled my being and fuelled my bravery. You were just doing your job, while I had enjoyed the night. I climbed into the car unaware of who would be responsible for my safety. The shadow of your beard in my peripherals beckoned me to look in your direction, as I gave my instructions. Hidden in all of your manliness, I'm sure you slipped me a smile.

In a town as small as ours, it was inevitable that everyone crossed paths one way or another. That night was ours. Your silence filled the car, as we made the slow trek to my home. I didn't even give you a chance. Curiosity and nerves spilled from my lips, as I filled every inch of the car with my voice. This is how I remember you.

Back to reality; back to the late night pillow talks. The rest of the world could come crashing down around us. It wouldn't matter, because in that moment, there is only you and I. I tell you a story, and you remind me of how we met. *All I remember thinking when I dropped you off was, man, this girl can talk.* I giggle. All I feel are your arms pulling me closer and your soft kisses on my forehead. The ache of a silence that holds words unsaid. I bite my tongue. Our time has yet to come, but it feels like it's slipping away like the minutes on a clock. I hold you a little tighter tonight. I don't think you'll notice.

Zachary*Kathleen Manners*

You came into my life like you came into those tissues now strewn across the floor and overflowing from the bin where the empty box of condoms sits, precariously perched on top of empty pens and old receipts and one old sock with the heel worn out from all those times you stepped too heavy for the fabric underneath your foot to handle gravity's pull towards the earth, as you came crashing down like tissues thrown across the room from the bed now lying crumpled by the bin.

Spinner*Charlotte Peters*

I am layered in webs of you.
 At each turn I see you,
 everything evokes a memory.

The flip-twist of your hair, and
 the song that you imitate to my endless amusement.
 An absent glance at the ceiling; remember when we counted every tile?
 All those times I saved you from spiders and beetles;
 the stories we have for sunsets.

Like the spark in many eyes,
 we are each other's reflections: bouncing back
 laughter,
 anger,
 wonder.

I see the world through you-coloured glasses;
 prisms with your face again and again
 and again and again and again and again
 and again and again

Layers and layers and layers and layers
 of you.

How will I scrape you off my retina?
 Will you cling to my lashes
 like Spider Webs,
 sticky, invisible, yet still there?
 I cocoon myself in you.

In the hair flips and singing and eye rolls and stories.
 Silk made by us. Silk made of us. Silk made for us.

E.E.*Janan Chan*

Vanessa was never your typical kind of girl. She kept to herself, never being a both-er but never standing out much either. She had close friends, and she would sometimes open up. There never seemed to be any problems, just perpetual content. She never wore colours. Just a wardrobe of nothing but greys, whites, and blacks. I asked her once about it, and she said, very plainly, colours are overrated. It seemed to me that she had an almost high and mighty attitude to her, as if she was better than everyone else. In truth, she really just didn't care. It was as if shopping and dressing in various colours was a hassle. She still looked fabulous in a grey skirt, white chiffon top, and black leggings. She was stunning, quietly perfect.

That was until May 3rd arrived. Most people get traumatized when someone close leaves, but for her it was the opposite. She grew and became more after he left, and when he came back, that's when she changed. I was there when he came back, we were walking home from school when I saw a police car parked in the driveway. She ran inside where her father sat waiting at the table. He even smiled and said, "Hi, Vanessa," as if everything had meant nothing. As if the fifteen years meant nothing, as if the fire meant nothing. For him, it was like no time had passed at all. I watched from the doorway as Vanessa went in and immediately ran out. There was no exchange of words, just silence.

I chased after her over the fence that cut up her elbows and knees. She ran deeper into the forest, until finally she stopped and dropped to her knees. By the time I got to her, her hands were shaking and mud caked her pants. She simply kneeled there and stared blankly out at the trees. I sat down next to her on the cold, wet mud and simply put my arm around her. Then it was all over. She collapsed, and all her weight fell against my body. She began to cry, as if everything that had mentally and physically held her together all vanished at once. Her body transformed into a heap against me; I could feel the blood from her elbows soaking into my shirt. We sat there for nearly two hours. I watched as the sky went from dim to dark to black, and the hum of the forest filled the night. She stopped crying but still hiccupped and shook under the weight of it all. The blood was scabbed over, and the mud on her body dried into clumps of dirt. Her makeup ran down her face; she looked horrible. After several minutes she finally spoke, fucking-hiccup-Christ, she whispered, nearly choking on her words. What are you going to do, I said. Leave, she said, leave and never come back to this fucking shit hole. I paused and let the sound of the forest fill the silence. Are you going to come with me, she asked. I looked down and saw only the top of her head; she still stared into the darkness. As I sat there, I knew that this was the last time I would ever see her again. I didn't want it to be, but I knew it was. No, I said, I can't. I really, really can't.

We didn't say much after that; she became silent. I didn't feel like disturbing her. Sometime during the night, we both got tired and decided to head back to my place. I gave her my jacket, and we walked home. Her stance and mind seemed shattered; her upper body was nearly fetal. Even as I cleaned her wounds, she just winced and looked away. I lent her a baby blue shirt as pyjamas. It was the first time I'd ever seen her wear a colour. When everything was settled, I whispered goodnight and kissed her on the forehead. A few seconds of silence, before a final, Yeah, you too, Ezra. I hated it when she called me by my first name. I woke up the next morning, and she was gone. Her side of the bed was cold, and my jacket and shirt sat folded on a chair. I unfolded it and searched every pock-

Until We Meet Again*William McMahon*

The snow falls gently from the sky.
 What great memories we have shared,
 holding hands, we look each other in the eye.
 How deeply for you I have cared.

Your smile set fire to the sun
 and gave birth to the stars.
 The shimmer in your eyes
 will have my mind forever on the run.

Until next time we meet again.
 For now we stand, taking in the moments.
 My love for you knows no end,
 the thought of being without you - my heart laments.

Love me tenderly once more in the night,
 a kiss, as I whisper, "Have a safe flight."

**Echo of the Lake, Emily Knight**

The Ice Moon Tonight*Frank Willdig*

From the stale glare of the hospital hallway,
I walk into a frozen twilight.

I walk into an ice-clear evening,
beneath the indigo, violet, and orange
of a vast and empty sky.

Over the parking lot and row housing,
and before the first stars appear,

I see our scythe-like moon
suspended like a jewelled
blade about to fall
on this tenuous thread of life.

And I find the scene beautiful;
in its austerity, in its crystal clarity,
there is a vivid translucence
that brings me peace.

The night will be long and the winter has been cold;
it digs into my skin and it burns to breathe.
I walk around the building
alone and heavy-hearted, knowing
the beauty above me is a beauty
he will never see again.

What Is Enough*David Edmond*

These past years have been long and hard.
The days spent together were precious,
as we reminisced times gone by.
I did for you all that you had done
for me all those years.

Never did we think that it was you who would depart first.
It was always me that would take the everlasting path.
We laughed and joked that the hereafter had to be better than the here and now.
The doctors were always there to prolong our time together.

They were there to keep you comfortable and pain free.
They maintained the body; my job was to treat the mind.
We had shared great moments in life, now I was left to share the final moments,
to keep your spirits high, to be the person you knew and loved,
to take you on your final journey.

As I look back today, did I do all I could?
I was by your side every step of the way.
When you cried out, it was me who held your hand.
Rightly or wrongly, I feel I let you down.
I could not reverse the course of your journey.

I prayed and prayed that medicine could keep you here beside me,
but a great power decided your time on earth was over.
You fulfilled your mission, and it was time for others to carry on.
You were there for me, as I was for you.

Our friends say so, so it must be true.
No matter how much I accept it, I still have doubts.
I have solace though, knowing you accepted all I did.
You were ready.
I was not.

Time and Jim Cavanaugh

Frank Harding

Time wore Jim Cavanaugh. It passed in a flash, one day like another, hanging out with the school bus drivers at Sanderson's gas station. He kept one eye on the passing traffic looking for cars he recognized - the Dupuis kid in his mother's old Dodge, or Harvey up from the village with mail for the farms off chemin Kinnear Brook. There's a job that won't last, he thought as he peered through the dusty window beyond the pumps. It was Friday, with the first sparse snow of the year. The wind whistled in the gaskets of the station door.

Elliot Lidstone's rusty yellow Subaru rolled up to the pumps. A twerp with a big mouth, Jim thought. He looked away to watch for Judy-his-ex, who would pass by soon with her week done. One day you're married with kids, a house, and a wife. Then in front of the entire world, she goes to Rudy Scully's farm, into to his bed and arms. Scully was short and bald and had a belly; an old man Jim had known his whole life. It was torment.

One winter afternoon three years back, Jim got drunk and brave. He loaded his father's old over-and-under and went looking for Scully at his farm. The old man's granddaughters saw him coming up the drive with the barrel sticking out the window, and Scully took off for the sugar-shack where he kept a gun of his own. Jim was too drunk to hunt him long. The Sureté found him passed out in the ditch by the turnout.

That lost him the gun that was all he had left of his father, but it stopped his drinking, so maybe it saved his life, for what that was worth. His boy took Judy's side then, thirteen years old with contempt in his eye. The girls were older and kinder, but there was pity in their concern. Nobody feared his anger. He wore the horns for a man fifteen years his senior.

Elliot Lidstone wafted in with the smell of gas. This guy was a flake, with his nothing pet-food business that had to be going bust. Both Jim and Elliot lived out on chemin Kinnear Brook beyond the abandoned blue barns of the Caron farm. When old man Caron died the year after Jim's divorce, the farmhouse went on the market so the estate could be divided. It was a handsome place, rebuilt in the old style after a fire in 1958, exposed to the weather on the crown of the ridge. It sat empty a few years, looking increasingly forlorn, until they dropped the price and a woman from Montreal bought it. Jim heard she was a good looker but paid no mind. He was working again as a contract millwright for Cascades Paper, and life was looking up. Then he saw the woman from the Caron place buying groceries in the village.

His neighbor, Claude, pointed her out. Jim was instantly fourteen again, fidgeting and perspiring - all before she even caught his eye. When she did, he felt like he was drowning before her impossibly dark eyes. He tore his gaze away and stumbled from the store, aware she watched him crossing the parking lot to his old Mustang.

Her name was Manon Lesperance. Claude's wife had rented her a mailbox in the village and they chatted. She worked in an office in Montreal and planned an early retirement out here in the woods. Meanwhile, she came out most Fridays for the weekends. She had plans for a garden and a pool. She was a woman alone.

For months, Jim thought of her first thing every morning and all day long afterward. When he drove past the old Caron place, he saw that she'd painted it a rich brown. The hedge needed trimming, and he knew the gutters were rusted out. Would she let him fix them? But then he'd just be the handyman.

A long time ago when he and pretty Judy were first married, the year she graduated high school, the future looked good. It didn't stay that way. Judy was his first girlfriend but not his last. He was a lousy husband, sleeping with her friends and annoying her sister, drunk a lot and stingy on payday. Judy got a job at Spencer Supports stitching girdles, which he didn't like, but the money helped, so she worked.

The years passed. He remembered how she was at first - lush, her strong body soft to touch, with green eyes and barley hair, and he knew why he married her. By the time she left he'd forgotten that girl, but when she was gone, he discovered that her friends had gone too. It was like being with him had somehow set a seal of approval on him. Without it he carried the smell of a rejected man, and women knew it.

Elliot disgusted him. It felt nice to know that you had it better than some people. This guy had the stink of lonely. Jim could barely remember the guy's long-gone wife, a fierce-looking woman with razor-cut black hair, a good forty pounds bigger than Elliot. It was hard to imagine him now with any woman. Jim wanted to punch the creepy little hippie in his smart mouth. Elliot had the knack of saying exactly the wrong things to him.

Being neighbors didn't help. Elliot's crumbling bungalow stood just after the Caron place and directly across the road from his own driveway, so they were thrust together more than Jim liked. When the alternator on Jim's old Mustang died one rainy morning last March, Elliot heard him cursing and kicking quarter-panels and appeared unasked in his rusty rice-burner Subaru to offer a ride to the garage. Jim got in despite himself and received Elliot's wisdom on cars, women, and money. The kid had no clue, and he hadn't a clue that he had no clue.

After that, Elliot visited regularly for a while with advice on horse and dog care, always fishing to borrow tools or groceries, ignoring hints he wasn't welcome.

Finally that April, Jim's little bitch border collie got knocked up by Elliot's mutt. Jim offered to punch Elliot's ticket then and there for not keeping the animal on his own property. They hadn't spoken since.

Elliot didn't look at Jim as he casually leaned on the counter and studied the stock, waiting for Mr. Sanderson to return from the pumps. The cigarettes were gone these days, replaced with air fresheners, used-truck weeklies, and chrome-plated fingernail clippers in varied motifs. The old man came in on a rush of fumes, his grubby parka flapping, followed by a big French truck driver asking in thick joul about the road to Beecher's Falls. The trucker paid for his fuel, squinted at the map on his cell phone, and left on the breeze.

"Whatcha need, Elliot?" asked Mr. Sanderson.

"Twenty bucks in regular and a package of, uh, Québec Classique. Régulière."

Sanderson looked at him sharply through smeared glasses. "You smoking again, boy?" Elliot was over forty and looked it. Jim realized that he, too, thought of Elliot as a kid.

"They're not for me. You sell combs?"

Sanderson put his hands on the counter and pushed himself straight, studying Elliot.

"You never bought a comb in your life, Elliot. What's going on?" He reached over his shoulder without looking and plucked down a card of cheap black combs.

"Nothing." Elliot turned bright red. He grinned.

"Spill it, Elliot."

Jim watched, coffee in hand. Boy, Sanderson could read people like a detective. "Yeah, Elliot. What's up?" He felt envy. Why this kid and not him? He'd felt lonely a long

time.

"Lay off, you guys. You'll jinx me." Elliot gathered his comb and change and fled, grinning.

Jim hung around till the bus guys were gone then went down to Restaurant Maurice for a hot chicken sandwich. Afterwards, he headed over in the dark to the hotel for a couple of beers. Tonight he would avoid the video-poker. He sat alone and watched Angela wait tables.

There wasn't much work these late-autumn days – run a Christmas-tree baler for Vanasse Brothers or chop a few running cords to sell on the side. Thank heaven he'd kept his woodlot during the divorce. He hated going home to an empty house with its cold air smelling faintly of dry-rot. He'd make a fire to dry the air, but it would be better with someone there all day to keep the place warm.

Suddenly, he knew what he wanted. Someone once said a faint heart never won a fair lady. He'd go and see Manon Lesperance tomorrow about her gutters. Who cared if she thought he just wanted work? A weight lifted from his heart. He paid his tab with a smile, which made Angela smile. Outside the wind was fresh and cool.

On the road, the November leaves danced in his headlights. He gave the big motor open throttle. The car surged ahead the way a Mustang was supposed to, out past Sanderson Gas, up the big hill by the reservoir and onto chemin Kinnear Brook. Overhead the bare branches of the trees twisted in the moonlit sky, and he felt the wind buffet the big car. He passed the pond by chemin Theriault and began the long climb towards home. On the right appeared the lights of the Caron place. He'd call there in the morning. He imagined Manon inside, busy with dinner or maybe reading.

He looked down her driveway, as his headlights swept around the curve. Parked behind her grey Accord was a run-down yellow Subaru.

The Human Season

Janan Chan

The carefree summer days slip by and autumn colours and responsibilities return with vibrancy. It's understandable that one groggy morning, you'll wake up and realize that winter is here. When winter is here, it's everywhere. Outside, the beautiful red and yellow trees that once stood like torches have burnt out, leaving behind the crisp and gloomy ash of dead branches. The days are shorter, and each day as you leave work, you are consistently surprised that it's already dark. The inside of your home has been infiltrated by winter like a sly snow leopard sneaking into a prey's home; the floor tiles are cold and you have to put socks on. You dread the moment you have to leave the shower; mornings become your greatest enemy. Winter is inside, it's outside. It's truly here.

And with the acceptance and almost defeat that, inevitably, winter has arrived, comes the negative connotation of frightful colds, window ice scrapers, slush entrenched sidewalks, grey skies, grey coats, grey hats, grey, grey, grey. Yet, winter is the only season that is the most relatable; the only season one can have empathy for, the only one with meaning and heart. Unless you are born with an uncanny ability to make everyone happy and have endless warmth like summer and spring, or incomparable beauty and colourfulness like fall, you probably have had some troubles in your life, much like winter. Winter isn't a perfect star child like summer or spring; winter has never been handed the blissful laughs of children for just being but has to control its storms and winds just to create perfect snow days for them. Winter knows its flaws and short comings compared to its elder and much, much more successful sibling, summer. Winter is the most human season.

Throughout life, winter struggled with its identity and constant judgement and criticism, only appreciated by a handful of skiers and snowboarders and children who get a day off school. Winter never dresses up or presents itself with assertiveness and dominance like fall, but instead delivers a humble image of white, a natural beauty lacking from our commercial and make-up riddled world. Winter is the type of season that would show up to prom in a last-season second hand dress, and while everyone oohed and ahed at the hundred dollar red, yellow, and green dresses and tuxes of the prom king and queen, only some would notice the impeccable beauty and truthfulness that lies within winter. Winter knows everyone hates snowstorms and shovelling snow; winter knows its problems, but it tries. It puts effort into gaining our love and respect through windless days and clear, crisp mornings. Mornings where you can go outside and feel the cold travel through you, warm up, and drift out in a single breath. Winter mornings where you can leave the artificial warmth of inside and feel the cold on your face and in your lungs. Winter is not something that is glamorous and extravagant, but rather plain and truthful. Winter is honest; it knows its faults and accepts them and works on them, but is still, in the end, honest. Winter is the person that you and I fail to be. Because after all, winter is the most human of seasons.

After the Ice Storm*Frank Willdig*

There are light grey shadows across the forest path,
and the bright sun gleams through the crystalline branches,
clumps of bejewelled and bedazzling ice cling to the trees
- the creaking, crackling trees.

After the ice storm, the deep freeze follows.
The rock-hard snow becomes highway to this country
of cedar, birch, spruce and fir, each having localities
and suburbs - the sprawl I approve.

Cold and crisp against my face, I breathe this boreal air
and gratefully accept these beautiful offerings;
this arboreal community, bowed before an elemental fury
in silence but for a voiceless conversation.

Bird of Prey*Kristy Bockus*

It hums in the silent night,
a faint glow moving in the dark.
Raven locks flow over pale skin;
blue eyes lurk within the bramble.

Destructive in its beauty,
a child stops blinded only to danger.
Lost languages whispered to him,
entice him to move forward.
Come to me, fair one,
slowly motion to the boy,
bony fingers slicing through the shadows.

Wings gleam behind the creature,
as it rises from the leaves
transparent among the stars.
Hair, radiant against the darkness
falls against a fragile frame.

Those icy eyes sparkle
like a thousand crystals,
gazing into the boy's soul.
Such innocence, such joy
So tempting...

Shadows surround the boy,
lips as blue as his eyes
draw closer.
His gaze frozen on the sheet of ice
that encase the once wild bramble.

No where to run.

Nails trace his neck
leaving trickles of blood.
A treat for later.
Poor boy, never kissed.
Too bad his first will be
his last.

Pigeonheading*Kathleen Manners*

The winged shall inherit the earth where the legged have failed.

1. Feast not but of the sacred crumbs, for they bring life. Let not the meals of men tempt thee, for they bring indigestion.
2. The wretched shall be purified with the defecation of the pure.
3. Make thine presence known. Gather. Take to the skies and to the earth, for it is yours to inherit.
4. Birdsong is the only song. This is law.
5. One man, made of flesh and bone, and hair that bears little resemblance to the almighty feather, shall be chosen. A conduit of pure energy shall he be and from his remains shall rise The One. Lest no Pigeonhead go hungry in his presence, for he bears but the crumbiest of breads and the sweetest of drinks. Feast in his presence. Feast and rejoice.

* * *

Wingless, I stand. I am a prisoner in this cage of wheat and dough. A worn testament rests on the bagel shop's counter and reminds me only of my misfortune: born of the flesh rather than the feather; I am impure. And how I desire to join those who swoop and soar above my head. The street pigeons – so often blasphemed as 'rats with wings,' soar like angels through my skies. Soon, my darlings. Soon I shall serve your Swarm. I coo from behind the counter, as I ring up the next order.

Clack... clackclack... click... ding! Whiiiiirrrrr... swoosh.

The cash register sings to me, and I whistle back the same sad tune. We are trapped together, this machine and I. Maybe one day we will fly from this place. Maybe then we'll be happy. I close my eyes and picture the most beautiful of scenes: machine and man, allowed to float on the wind with their masters. Free.

"Ahem."

I snap out of my trance and realize that I'm running the fingertips of one hand atop the cash register's keys, while the other flaps by my side.

"Keep the change," the customer says before backing out of the store. The door swings shut behind him and music (if you could call it that) invades the shop from the street. I recoil and suppress a gag. I've got a bad taste in the back of my throat, but that might be from all the birdseed. Eugh. What is that noise? I close the cash register with a harsh CLACK, and I swear the machine shares my distaste.

Peering through the shop's front window, I find the source of the disturbance: a teenage boy with a guitar.

"Loitering," I hiss under my breath. There's only one thing to do: I lunge for the stale, day-old pastries, and in a flurry of poppy seeds, I march outside.

The youth's eyes light up as I approach, but I am still internally cringing with each repetitive musical sequence. I plaster a smile on my face and focus the rest of my energy inwards; I must summon them and their music. It is the only way.

I begin the ritual. First, I block out all external noise – the boy's song becomes but a whisper. Then, I break the bread. I must focus on each crumb as it falls to the earth. Each crumb is sacred. I sway in front of the boy, whose face is now twisted in confused horror. Oh, young one, I think to myself, you know not the meaning of horror until you have faced The Swarm. I stop. I can hear them now. To the unknowing ear, it might sound

like leaves on the wind, but soon the sound grows more and more frenzied as feathers and beaks break through the air.

They are coming.

I turn my head to the heavens, overjoyed. It is time. I have proven myself worthy in the eyes of my masters and now, now I shall ascend upwards into The Swarm. I close my eyes and imagine the cash register perched atop the counter. I can practically hear its clicks and whirs of joy. We've done it. They engulf me. Feather by feather, I am consumed in their cloud of beaks and talons and majesty. And so, I ascend beyond the earth, towards the skies. We are one.

Graceful Swan

Katharine Mussellum

Adrienne applied her makeup to get ready for the show, creating black feather-like lines fanning out from her eyes. A thin layer of white covered her skin down to her broad shoulders where they were not covered by her leotard. She was the black swan in her modern dance company's rendition, "Swan Lake." As the production went on, she had surrounded herself with supportive people. She had come a long way to get to there.

Back when she was still in high school, she was known as Andrew. She did not tell anyone that she was a girl until her last year. With her birthday money, she had been to the store to buy some more feminine clothes, as well as cutting her short hair into a style to match. She wore these little details as she descended the stairs in her home and uttered the words, "I'm not a boy," to her parents.

Her parents had different reactions to this revelation. Her mother was simply silent with shock, grabbing the edge of a chair for balance before sitting down. Her father just glared at her with a look of disgust on his face. They ate dinner in silence that night, but eventually the two of them began to ask her questions, thinking they could get to the bottom of it. They were sure she was just mistaken, overreacting to simple differences between her and other boys. She tried to tell them that they were wrong, it was more than that. Her true identity was that she was a girl, but she couldn't get it through to them.

She was in despair when she was left alone that night. Her mother's confusion was expected, but she didn't expect her father to be so stern. The way he had looked at her was unbearable.

When she went to school the next day, the boys she used to spend time with all shunned her and shouted slurs at her – all except one. Brian stayed by her side, taking to her new name and pronouns right away. He was her one escape from her father's actions at home, which worsened over time.

Adrienne kept wearing her new clothes despite her father expressing his disagreement.

"You can't be serious!" her father said angrily as she came downstairs for breakfast one morning.

"You're my son! I don't have a daughter! I don't know what kind of crap you're trying to pull, but stop embarrassing us with all this!"

"It's who I am dad," she snapped back at him. "I can't change it. You always wanted me to be myself. Now I'm doing it."

He did not press on since Adrienne's mother was in the room, but he eventually got a chance to fully express his newfound contempt for his child.

One night, her mother was going out for the evening, and Adrienne found herself alone in the house with her father. Two hours after they had eaten dinner, and it was mostly dark, her mother had still not returned. Her father took the chance to confront her.

"What's wrong with you, Andrew?" her father said, as he grabbed her by the collar of her shirt with both of his hands. "You think it's cool to be a problem child?"

"No, Dad. I –" Adrienne tried to respond, but she was cut off.

"What is this, then?" he shouted at her face. He let go of her, shoving her backwards. Adrienne nearly lost her balance from the force of it.

"I'm not having a freak for a son," he continued, "I will get you to stop this."

Her father approached her again, hitting her in the face before kneeling her in the

stomach. This time she did fall, and her father stood over her for several minutes as she trembled. When Adrienne could finally get up, she ran as fast as she could up the stairs, hoping to find refuge in her bedroom.

The next morning, as she was getting dressed, Adrienne saw the bruise left on her stomach by her father the night before and winced in pain when she moved. She wondered whether she would have to live like this forever.

She fell into a vicious cycle with her father, the bruises becoming harder and harder to hide. Sometimes he would spare her body and instead give her long, loud lectures, but it was hardly compensation.

To stay away, she spent as much time as she could after school with Brian, pouring out all of the painful episodes. She also spent more and more time in the dance studio, practicing. She wanted to join a modern dance company in the area, and the auditions were coming soon. The healing bruises made it difficult, but she had to try.

Sometimes she felt like she was relying on Brian too much, but she had no one else. Still, it nagged at her, so one day she asked him what he really thought.

"Are you sure you're OK with this?" she asked him, "with me being trans? I'm sure it can't have been much less of a surprise for you as it was for my parents."

"Well, I guess I'd be lying if I said I wasn't a little thrown off at first," he said. "I mean, I've been told the whole time I've known you that your name was Andrew, and your physique suggested you were a boy. That's how we're brought up. It wasn't something that I ever thought about. A male was a boy. I hadn't learned until much later that they aren't always one in the same, but I never expected anyone I knew would be transgender. But it doesn't matter whether you're a boy or girl to me. You're still the same person, and you still love to dance."

"I'm glad I have you on my side. My father doesn't even seem to want to understand."

She began to sob, and Brian held her shaking body, soothing her by running his hand up and down her back.

"Shh..." he whispered. She cried on his shoulder, knowing that he didn't mind.

"You know, Adrienne," he said, becoming more serious. "If it's that bad, I think you should really start to consider moving out. You can't live like this. I like hanging out with you, and I know you're dedicated to dancing, but all this time you spend away from home is making you tired. I can't pretend that I don't see it. You need to move out."

"I don't know how or where to start," Adrienne cried.

"I'll help you," Brian assured her. "We'll work on it together."

Brian helped her prepare for the day she would leave, accompanying her to the dance audition – Adrienne's hobby would, hopefully, become her new source of income – and organizing her things into boxes. For the first time in weeks, things looked like they could get better.

In some ways she would have preferred to go when her parents were around so that she could say a proper goodbye, but she couldn't risk her father preventing her from leaving. She felt like she never got the chance to hear how her mother really felt, being so afraid of her father that she didn't speak much, but that would have to wait. If her mother really cared, she would stay in contact with Adrienne even if her father chose not to.

So, one afternoon when her parents were both out working, she brought Brian to the house and they loaded up his car. Adrienne left a brief note on the kitchen counter for her parents to discover upon their return. She took one last look at her childhood home.

She tried to let the good memories from previous years come back to her, but the rooms now made her remember too much pain from the more recent past.

After that night, Brian had helped her settle into her apartment. Adrienne was able to finally have a proper place to rest at the end of each day. She made it into the dance company and celebrated with Brian and his family, to whom she had explained her situation. They welcomed her with open arms into their home whenever she wanted. Adrienne was happy again. She was free.

She dressed the way she wanted with less fear of scrutiny and abuse, leading to better concentration both in school and dance. She was able to graduate from high school, which now allowed her to focus solely on her dance career. Her body and her life no longer felt like a prison, the fluid movements of choreography set her free.

The night of the performance, Adrienne finally got to show the world who she was. She was a beautiful and graceful swan with nobody holding her back.

My Precious

Asha-Marie Bost

My shoulders lift into a question:
if science is simply an art form
with numbers and facts, why then
must we value it above all else?
I've been told that I have too much
Adipose tissue on my body
for love to seep in,
too many blocked sodium channels,
passage ways in my brain
that say I have no inherent value,
that my queerness is just something
to keep my depression from feeding
on me; it is my precious,
this identity, stealing, thwarting,
making me a Smeagle, searching and
stuck in an endless cycle of desire.
All I want is the special,
eagerness
that accompanies a sureness of identity.
No more time wasted,
burning spruce and birch bundles,
waiting for the courage
to live on the outside like any human,
to leave the inner cave of my head,
to watch the layers crumble,
to live happy,
like you seem to be.

Fallen Angel*Madeleine Hession*

Hell, come a-knockin' and
take me down, down, down.
For my soul's twin windows
are too wired to be sound.

My mind's not as sane as it once was before,
but who's to say sanity lies with Babylon's whore?
What is self acceptance
when you have the approval of the world?
How are you set straight
when your mind is motley curled?

With twisted words and a broken hand,
I fall through the fingers from the Holy land.
For God was the beholder of his son's thorny crown,
so hell, come a-knockin' and
take me

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SONNET 129*Marilyn Johnston*

Th' death of a zombie is a waste of game.
It's savage in action, and the most violent of lusts.
It's wrong, indecent and a bloody shame,
'To waste ones time hunting zombies 'til dusk.
What pleasures lie in a dead man shot straight
Between the eyes? But no sooner had
You used a boy as swallowed bait,
Did zombies come to consume the lad.
A Mad feeding frenzy, and in their consumption do know,
That feeding them a boy is a hunt most extreme.
A zombie lies dead, proof of my very woe.
Now, a peaceful zombie from a forgotten dream.
And the world knows death, yet not very well.
This heaven a place, where dead men are hunted to hell.

SONNET 130*Marilyn Johnston*

My zombie's eyes are drying in the sun;
His wounds are far more red than my lips' red;
If the surrender of death be white,
Why then this surrender has come;
A death by wires, piano wires hang from his neck.
I have seen corpses damasked, red and white,
But no such colours see I in his cheeks,
And in some graveyards is there more delight
Than on the death bed that from my zombie... reeks.
I love to hear him groan, yet well I know
That talking hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a zombie go;
My zombie now when he walks,
His left leg treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, my zombie's love is as rare
As any raw steak, uncooked or prepared.

Cemetery*Kristy Bockus*

Broken bones lay scattered in dirt,
 agonized memories of second-hand joy.
 A crumbling gravestone fights fate,
 gravity is the stronger opponent tonight.
 The evening remains in silence
 until the time again comes to rise.

Blood-smeared lovers try to rise,
 unearth hearts buried beneath dirt,
 failed resurrections result in silence.
 Lost heartbeats once pumping with joy,
 chilled with the darkness of tonight,
 remind lovers of a looming fate.

Hide together to shake the fate
 that holds you down, unable to rise.
 Struggle to be set free tonight,
 only to sink farther into the dirt
 fertilized by lovers with promises of joy,
 rotted with disappointment and silence.

Decaying bodies lay entangled in silence,
 witnesses to sins never overlooked by fate.
 Professional manipulators of premature joy,
 false beliefs that they will always rise,
 forget their bodies rest on loose dirt
 that wants to claim victims tonight.

Wait for a subtle shift tonight
 when lovers separate in silence,
 reveal carcasses covered with dirt.
 Soiled souls mark the lovers' fate
 of never seeing the sun rise.
 Desperate to taste tainted joy.

Destroyed lovers teased with joy
 of guaranteed pleasure for tonight.
 Bodies and spirits together rise,
 moans of pain penetrate the silence.
 All to avoid an inevitable fate
 that hides underfoot within the dirt.

Tonight lovers carve their bed in dirt,
 cradle gutted joy, resisting fate.
 Wait to rise in the eternal silence...

Our Equation*Sarah Legge*

The embossed sky-coloured mug allowed steam to envelope my cheeks. I felt my fists releasing. Last night had ended in screaming tears, for no real reason at all. It seemed that our face cracking, ear shattering battles no longer called for reason. Reason wasn't part of the equation, but coffee in bed still was.

Twelve hours earlier the war had surrounded the scummy toilet, or maybe it had been about yesterday's lifeless clothes laying on the floor. I can't remember now. He charged at me, argument in hand, stretched out far beyond him. It pointed straight at me, threatening. We charged at one another, refusing to stop until we knocked each other clean off our horse. If I could move to the stands – become an onlooker to our joust, then maybe I could invite reason back.

Either way, my eye clad in crimson pull themselves open when he crawls back into bed holding cups of "I'm sorrys". The fists that I have been holding in my sleep release and a half smile crack across my face, knowing that this is only part of our equation.



You Made Her Cry, Amy Gibbons

Time to Kill

Matthew Purdy

As I sleep, my chest expands and collapses with every breath, the long wound along my side sears with pain. I awake to the familiar sound of a metal bowl that hits the floor of my cell. The smell of the food is irresistible; I forget about the pain in favour of my hunger. The shackles dig into my wrists, as I dive at the food and another cut tears opens. I sink my teeth into the piece of meat; it truly is worth the pain. As I chew, the sounds around me come into focus. Another battle approaches. I listen to the blacksmiths who prepare my opponents' weapons. My ears catch the conversation of the guards; they don't think I can understand them.

"Did you feed him yet? He needs to be fit for tomorrow's battle."

"He ate. The filthy beast didn't even notice me. He was too focused on wolfing down his food."

"What a monster! How many has he killed?"

"I heard it's up to twenty-two. He was born for this."

A monster? Is that all they think of me? They know nothing. I kill only to survive and hope that one day I'll be released; one day I'll be free again.

Freedom, I thought, I can barely imagine it. I wander over to the corner of my cell and lie down on my bed. As I fall back to sleep, my thoughts drift back to my childhood.

I was born, one of seven children, in the remote savannah of North Africa. I, along with my brothers and sisters, was raised without a father. He suffered the same fate I now face; he was captured, enslaved, and forced to live out the remainder of his life in gladiatorial combat. My mother, fortunately enough, had help from the community with my brothers and me. We were taught how to hunt, kill, and survive by the best of our tribe. My sisters would go on to start families of their own. By the time I had reached early adulthood, my family was known and respected.

As I sink deeper into my dreams, my thoughts turn, as they always do, to my last moments of freedom. I remember that the wind was unusually cold on that day. My brothers and I went out to hunt as always, but wandered for the longest time without the sight of any prey. The savannah seemed strangely quiet and empty. Finally, far from home and from our usual hunting grounds, we came upon a large herd of zebras. We spread out and crept towards them, attempting to surround the herd. I was almost within striking distance, when I heard a loud unfamiliar sound. As the zebras bolted, I saw my brothers in combat against a group of men dressed in gold and red. I would learn later that these men were Roman soldiers. I rushed to join the fight and aid my brothers. I remember being poked at with sharp gold and silver objects. After I defeated four or five of the soldiers, I was struck across the eye. Before I could regain my stance, a heavy rope net fell on me. My brothers and I were thrown in cages and began the long, terrible journey to our new home. From that day forward, I have known no other life except the inside of my tiny cell and the blood stained sand of the Coliseum.

As I remember my wife, children, and former freedom, I become restless. I think about my brothers. In the early days of captivity, we fought together but were too strong as a group, so we were made to battle separately. One by one, my brothers all met their deaths. I managed to survive fight after fight even with just one good eye. Don't ask me why I've survived, because I don't know. I have nothing left to live for, but the will to survive keeps my mind and body from giving in. Now, with the familiar sounds of preparation that

reach my cell, I know that in a matter of hours I will once again defend my life in front of the bloodthirsty citizens of Rome.

Today is the day that I face death. While my opponents tend to their weapons and don their armour, I remain in my cell. I need no armour, only my hands and the instincts of a killer. I sit with my back to the wall and lower my head in meditation, as I do before every fight. I focus on my heartbeat and let the external world fade away. *Ba-boom, ba-boom*. I think about my family, my brothers, and my children. I ask them to protect me, to be my armour today. I think about all the pain and loss I have endured. They will be my weapons. *Ba-boom, ba-boom*. I hear the distant roar of the crowd and the rising gate that separates me from the Coliseum. The door of my cell is unlocked and swings open. *Ba-boom, ba-boom*. My shackles are removed and fall to the floor. *Ba-boom, ba-boom*. I race up the ramp towards the bright daylight. *Ba-boom, ba-boom*. I stare at the sea of spectators; my eyes adjust to the light. I spot my opponents. There are three of them loaded down with armour and weapons that glint in the sunlight. I can sense their fear. *Ba-boom, ba-boom*. I lick my lips. *Ba-boom, ba-boom*. I let my rage consume me. *Ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom*. I throw my head back; open my mouth and roar, a display of my lethal teeth. The entire stadium falls silent in awe of the beast that stands before them. Perfect, I think to myself, time to kill.

The Colossus of Barletta

Frank Willdig

An imperial boor, haughty and proud,
Of bluster and bombast, silently loud,
With his arrogant, smug, and brutal gaze,
In a similar pose we see these days.

Grandiose, inhuman, where is the grace
Of classical Rome in this primitive face?
Recording some triumph, this crudely forged art
Now fails to impress the feeling heart.

This metal-fleshed hero, almost a god,
With symbols of power, the cross and the rod,
Built for the ages, forever his fame,
Now nobody seems to remember his name.

Mute witness to hubris, pride and desire,
Such is the vacant face of empire.

What's on Tonight?*Frank Willdig*

Missing teeth and large tattoos,
 faces wracked by years of booze,
 screaming eagles, stars and stripes,
 tattered jeans and corn-cob pipes.
 In sheds and shacks in swamps and woods,
 in pawnshops selling tacky goods,
 myth as science, history's lies,
 this is how the city dies.

The endless stream of beauty queens,
 parade before they're in their teens,
 mean-spirited competitions reign
 where crowds revel in the loser's pain.
 The constant noise of all-day news,
 the gun-bearing, sweat-stained rubes
 who can't see that they're the joke
 of an empire going broke.

Tonight across the great expanse,
 I watched the stars who couldn't dance.
 I saw the wars rage far away
 and watched our poor living day to day;
 in the land of dreams the hustler's king,
 he puts a price on everything.
 With the lies that numb us every night,
 we can only pray things turn out right.

The Science of Folly*Alexander Larivière*

It began in Grade 4. It ended at age 84. It was a life's obsession inspired by a science fair, and its course saw a decades-long struggle of meticulous planning and steadfast dedication. His ideas, bordering on the megalomaniac, though able to be distracted by those necessities of life, were ever dwelling, ever calculating, and ever striving.

Of course, his university was science, and he excelled beyond expectation. He disappointed beyond expectation by his subsequent choices. Any field was open to him, but the wonderful dream remained, and when such a fire is lit, nothing will quench it. Eccentric would be a word to describe him, and only by virtue of not having told a soul of his deeply held aspiration did he keep himself free from the chains of the madhouse.

After all, a brilliant scientific mind can succeed outside of the laboratory. Upon finishing university, he went into the food production and distribution business and had managed to build up a sizable operation even though he limited himself to only a few choice food-stuffs. He was told to expand. He smiled and continued. Could anyone really blame him? He was successful, there could be no denying, and was to all who knew him a bit of an eccentric.

Success allows for leisure, so no one thought much of it when he took-up flying. Beginning with small prop-planes, he had graduated through the preceding levels until he was proficient with most aircraft. Then his real training began. Flying a plane is relatively easy when compared to flying a plane well, to fly low and straight, to feel the winds and adjust with the supplest wrist. The hours he spent in the air while those below looked up wondering! But they respected his dedication to perfection and, after all, he was a bit of an eccentric.

None were prepared for his next project. How was it to increase his assets? Nevertheless, they trusted him. His food business was now international, though still limited to the same, small handful of products. No matter, he produced them to the highest possible level of quality. His next move was the more unexpected for its curiousness. In a remote area of Chile, neighbour to some particularly isolated edge of the Atacama, he opened another food production plant with an adjoining airport. The two, perhaps the most absurd decision of all, were built by his own newly established construction company (itself conveniently located next to the airport). This was certainly an unexpected move by the lauded businessman, yet whenever anyone questioned him on his decision, he would smile, take a short bow accompanied by a knowing wink, and be on his way. Yet everyone in their turn would laugh, because he certainly was a bit of an eccentric.

For the two years preceding his death, he lived as a recluse in his factory in Chile, which, although always bustling and maintaining a sizeable workforce, never seemed to package and ship its wares. The construction company never went to work in the nearby village, but, come the first rays of sun, could be heard rumbling into the desert. In his final days, one could see truck after truck pull into the factory exposed and empty, then leave covered and, presumably, full. They drove into the desert along the same road that the diggers and dumptrucks followed. His plane, designed by him and being as massive and foreboding as any military jumbo-jet, sat still on the runway as a long and thick hose snaked from the factory to some connecting apparatus on the outside of its hull. This was certainly curious, but one can excuse a successful old-man a few of his eccentricities.

The day of his death. How its memory would have lived on for many long years,

had it not caused its own amnesia. The factory is empty, the construction yard is still, and the only sound is the thundering engine of the plane, starting, preparing to take-off, and fading as it follows from above the now well-worn road. Do you know how it feels to finally be at the cusp of achieving a lifetime's work? How many suffering nights of yearning! How many days of dogged determination! How wide the range of emotions in those tender minutes before the accomplishment! He flies. He makes no mistakes. He reaches the crater dug by his will and perseverance. The cargo-hold doors are open and it falls, the litres and litres, a flooding rainfall. The strong sun shining through its trailing mist shapes, a rainbow so rarely seen in this arid waste.

How white the surface it meets, and that meeting was the moment all things ended. The reaction was too magnificent. From that crater in the Atacama Desert, the force spread through Chile to the rest of South America and over the earth and ate the solar system and devoured the galaxy and swallowed the universe whole. This, the 73rd big bang, was begun by an eccentric food-stuffs manufacturer. He did have an instant before he was obliterated (what other word is there?). In this instant he was back at that fourth-grade science fair, nose perched on the side of the desk, safety-glasses covering more than half of his face, watching his professor in his starched, white lab coat pouring exactly sixty millilitres of vinegar into a papier-maché volcano containing two tablespoons of baking powder.

The Alright Samaritan

Josué Quirion

It's Christmas eve,
and I'm walking home,
smoking my last cigarette.
I notice a vulgar
pile of debris -
revolted, intrigued.

I move closer
and realize it's a man,

"Merry Christmas,"
he manages.

I draw a dollar from my denim bank,
but before I toss it in his paper cup pension,
I confirm I've still got five bucks,
because I'm out of cigarettes.
I have miles to go before I get home,
miles to go
before I sleep.

"Merry Christmas," I reply,
as I lob my benevolent offering.

Repentance, I thought,
only cost one dollar.

The Mountain*Guenevere MacDonald*

The newspaper headline glared up at him from the table. He didn't need to read it; he already knew what it said. He didn't need anyone to tell him. It was the same routine each time, always erred in the beginning. The right people had to be told, information had to be confirmed. You couldn't go around telling people news without following procedure. Procedure took time, not as long as most people thought, but time never the less. Sometimes it was minutes, sometimes a couple of hours, it all depended on circumstances. The rest was a polite courtesy, a small window of time before it became too real.

With a sigh, he picked up his toast in the one hand and the paper in the other. He ignored the headline, and barely skimmed over the first paragraph. He didn't need those details, he'd been there. Some details didn't need repeating or reminding. There was only one thing he was looking for, one piece of information that needed to be confirmed. He found it three quarters of the way down the page. He'd already accepted the outcome, this was just ... procedure.

He choked down the last of his toast and took a gulp of coffee. It was too hot and scalded the inside of his mouth. He grimaced and cursed loudly. He got up from the table; tossing the newspaper into the recycling bin, he absently dumped his plate in the sink. Several small fruit flies jumped up from the sudden movement. Where had they come from? He hated flies, especially fruit flies. He saw no purpose for them other than to torment him. Too small to squish, they couldn't be caught with a clapping of the hands either. He eyed the recycling bin. No, they were too quick for a newspaper. He would have to find a solution later. He took another gulp of his coffee, awful. He was about to dump it when he saw the source of the flies. In the sink the week's dishes sat lonely and ignored. He stared at them. When had he done the dishes last? Did it matter, who was he trying to impress, the dog?

He glanced toward the corner of the room. A rather large mountain of fur moved ever so slightly, just enough to let him know there was still life. Lazy mutt just sleeps and eats and craps all over the yard. Still, he smiled. The wayward pile of fluff was the only one that understood him. At least he thought she did, but he wasn't certain if it was only a desire for table scraps that kept her coming back to sit at his feet.

At the end of the hall, he stopped beside a small table. There was nothing particularly fancy about it. He stared at it anyway. Keys, wallet, phone, id cards, all rested in a beat up basket that he had bought from an old lady for a quarter at some roadside yard sale. It was quite plain, no color, no décor, no handle. Just a yellow woven bowl-shaped basket, but it served a purpose - the guardian of essentials. Each morning, he would gather his things and every night he would come home and deposit everything back in this sad little basket. It seemed so trivial to even stop and think about it, but somehow today it seemed slightly more important; he couldn't say why.

He opened the drawer of the table and pulled out a bag of M&M's. He counted out four then put them in a mason jar to the left of the basket. The soft sound of the candy landing in the jar carried to the kitchen where the mountain of fur stirred and started to rise. He counted out two more M&M's and dropped them into the jar to the right of the basket. Without a second thought, he picked up the lids and secured them tightly to the jars.

The mountain had a voracious appetite for things it shouldn't eat, and M&M's were

high on its list. The sound of the jar lids screwing shut also seemed quite loud this morning; perhaps, it was just the stillness of the street outside that made it seem that way. The mass of fur stopped in the door way, slouched slightly and scuttled back to its corner. It settle down onto its oversized pillow, he pondered for a moment if he had somehow accidentally adopted a very hairy exotic breed of large pig.

The idea that the beast in his kitchen might actually be a pig stuck with him as he made his way through his day. No one had actually told him it was a dog. He was just asked if he had a place for a pet that needed a home. He tried to remember the last time he had seen the animal's face as he worked, absently washing off equipment. He couldn't remember. His mind drifted to the jars. A few weeks back, she'd knocked them off the table and broken them. He'd come home and found shards of glass everywhere, but not a single M&M. She'd somehow picked through every piece of glass to eat the candy without cutting herself or disturbing the carnage of the jars. She hadn't disturbed the table or the basket either. Were pigs that smart? Were dogs that agile? He had replaced the broken jars later that day with the current jars. The M&M's were carefully counted out and each chocolate covered candy replaced.

He was pretty sure they had said dog. He couldn't remember what kind she was supposed to be. Big and fuzzy summed it up; beyond that, he didn't know.

The sound of the alarm startled him from his musings. He grabbed his gear and followed the fast moving line of volunteers scampering toward the massive, red trucks. The jars flashed through his mind, as he secured his belt. He always thought of the jars on the drive to a call. The truck swung around a turn, causing a swaying motion for the occupants inside. He leaned into it without a second thought. He'd done this ride so many times over the years.

They were headed to the highway where a broken down vehicle had caught fire. No injuries. The dispatch prattled on over the radio. Her voice seemed very high pitched and whiny like the sirens wailing on the trucks. Why was everything so loud today? He counted M&M's in his head.

He'd made it through the first jar when the siren cut out, and the big rig eased to a stop. Mechanically, he jumped out and started pulling the hoses off the side of the tanker. What if it was really a hybrid dog-pig of some sort? He'd gotten her from a house near the University's center for Bio-Medical Research. He had no idea what Bio-Medical scientists did at the University, but he figured there must be some kind of experimentation going on. What if they had somehow found a way to combine the two species? They were cloning sheep in England; a hybrid dog-pig didn't seem so crazy.

He pulled the hose toward the metal shell that had once been a car. The flames were jumping and crackling in the cold air. As far as calls go, this one was turning out to be relatively uneventful. He let his mind wander, while he held the hose. It only took a few minutes for his team to extinguish the flames, long enough to soak through his protective bunker and turn the highway into a skating rink. With the flames out and the tow truck on the scene, he rolled up the heavy wet hose and hoisted it on his shoulder. Around him his team was collecting gear and loading it onto the trucks.

He was trying to picture what a hybrid dog-pig would look like. Would it have paws or hooves? He cautiously began lugging the hose towards the back of the truck. Just as he reached the far end, a panicked shout made his head snap up.

Suddenly, everything around him was in slow motion. With only seconds to react, he dropped the heavy hose and dove behind the truck, as a vehicle slammed into the

tanker's side.

The truck let out a high pitch metallic groan and swayed from the impact; it threatened to tip over on top of him. Hoses and equipment fell from the side of the truck and a large roof ax flew through the air, narrowly missing his head. When it landed on the ground next to his feet, the loud crack it made on the icy road echoed through the frosty air and hung in the night for what seemed like an eternity.

He clung desperately to his helmet, praying for the heavy truck to right itself. It groaned again loudly and fell backwards, righting itself into position with a sickening crunch.

Frantically, he lunged for the heavy roof ax. He heaved it on his shoulder and scrambled to his feet. He staggered awkwardly around the tanker, sliding and stumbling across the ice. The driver's face was still frozen in his mind, as he tried frantically to get to the other vehicle. He could still see the fear in that man's eyes. His car had come hurtling out of nowhere, skidding out of control across the ice. Their eyes had locked, and the two men knew in that instant they were both powerless to stop the collision that was coming.

As he wrestled his way towards the twisted wreck, he could hear the familiar sound of his heart as it pounded in his head like a dozen racehorses. His breath was heavy and labored under the weight of his wet bunker and the axe on his shoulder. He kept going, staggering and stumbling. As he struggled to cross the ice, the faces came. He knew they would. One by one, they flashed through his mind's eye like a slideshow: men, women and children. Their voices called to him in desperation. He knew each face, each call. He knew the list, and he knew the count.

He raised himself up as high as he could then brought the axe down. His feet slid out from under him, and he crashed down on the hard ice. He grabbed at the axe and swung again. Again, he fell. This time he threw himself toward the car and swung the axe through the window with as much strength as he could. The glass exploded in the cold night, the shards stinging his cheeks like a thousand tiny needles.

In his head the faces were gone, their cries silent. Behind him his crew was approaching; their voices seemed dull and distant. Only one thought raced through his head, as his cold wet hands reached into the vehicle. One thought, one voice, one desperate plea... please, be alive.

The scene continued to play, while he sat in the truck. His team around him sullen and silent on the drive back to the station. The sound of the car hitting the truck echoed through his mind. The faces around him told him it was a communal replay. The sickening crunch the tanker had made when it righted itself made his stomach churn on the drive home.

When he walked through the front door, he dropped his essentials into the pathetic remains of his pathetic little basket that now resembled a mashed up tangle of reeves. He stared at the jars. Their cheerful, coloured contents mocked him.

From the kitchen, a faint clicking sound moved across the floor. He slowly unscrewed the lid of the jar on the left and reached in the drawer to pull out a disfigured, blue M&M. How fitting, he thought, as he dropped it in the jar. He tallied the count in his head: 121. A soft thud at his feet and a gentle nudge drew his eyes down. A large mass of fur looked up at him with two almond brown eyes. A furry paw softly pressed on his leg, withdrew a little, then pressed again. He gazed at her for a moment, comforted by her gesture, then pulled out a red M&M and gave it to her. She took it softly with her mouth and set it on the ground at his feet. She looked up at him again then moved in closer; her

head hovered under his hand. He felt a partial release and relented, as he stroked her head. She nudged some more. The last of his reserves spent, he slumped down to the floor next to her. She laid her chin on his leg and nuzzled her head against his chest. Her deep brown eyes looked up at him. "Are you okay?" they asked. He let go, releasing the flood of tears he'd been holding back. It would seem she was a dog after all.



17, Guenevere MacDonald

You're One Great Poem*Asha-Marie Bost*

They say that everyone has a great poem inside of them,
 but I haven't found mine yet.
 Listening to poetry sends chills up and down my spine
 like the winter frost that sneaks its way into my coat.
 The cold is enough to wake me up
 on those nights of invigorating air
 when we've drunk enough to stagger
 close to the edge of the bridge,
 the cold pressing our eyelids together
 and our legs frozen stiff.
 In those moments, I want to hear great poetry,
 to drown myself in the lilt and fall of familiar words
 strung together in heart-wrenchingly complex combinations
 like the slight changes in a beautiful face over time.

Poetry is a drug that can't be understated in its potency,
 because when it means something, you know.
 Poems give you the courage, to fight for your right to say,
 "I'm anxious and depressed but still worthy of love."
 A good poem consolidates the nights of philosophizing,
 connecting the multiple layers of our minds
 together into a whole person,
 because in the end we all die,
 but today we live,
 and living is searching for the moments
 when the world is big enough to scare you
 but small enough to inspire you.

Though our footprints and fingerprints might fade with time,
 your one great poem could be the legacy you dream of;
 your ideas cast on the page for generations to come.
 Your one great poem could lend itself to a silence,
 the silence of knowing your words have sunk
 into the consciousness of your readers,
 perhaps inspiring their own great poems.
 With confidence and an audience,
 the words fly to new heights
 becoming not just words
 but emotions, thoughts, and actions,
 giving you something to live for.

Chores*Kristy Bockus*

Every spring there comes a time to wipe away the toxins,
 scrub off the extra fat, and dust off every muscle,
 patch up rough spots by decorating the walls of this temple.
 Mop the fears off the floor,
 throw away hatred stacked in piles that block self-perception.
 Sweep the sorrows, bury the woes & forget all stress
 that keeps me weighed down.
 Empty out the attic filled with past traumas,
 brush cobwebs from clinging memories,
 kill the lingering spiders that scurry to hide in crevices.
 Shut away the other voices,
 drain the haunting laughter then vacuum up darkness.
 Allow a bit of sunshine to blind these eyes from ideals.
 Finish off outside.
 Give the place a new coat of paint,
 mend the chipped, broken, & battered panels
 hanging rusted and weathered with age.
 Wait for another storm to tear it all down.

Friendly Fire*Brooke Harvey*

There is an image we have of someone who is sick. They are frail, heavy breasted, and uncomfortably still in a hospital bed. They seem tired, but also quietly happy, giving cautious visitors inspiration in their recovery. This is the image; this is an image. Sometimes sickness looks like that but mine doesn't. I'm not frail or in a hospital bed. I'm not necessarily inspiring hope. Sometimes sickness looks like good health. It looks like a twenty-year-old university student trying to save up money for a future. Sometimes sickness looks like a handicap parking permit, a salt tablet taken three times a day, and a first-name basis with a pharmacist. Sometimes sickness looks like high heels, blow-dried hair, and a smile. It may even look like reduced grades and lowered standards, a messy apartment and dirty dishes. It shows up in half-folded laundry and unread text messages.

Sickness doesn't always look sick, nor does it always want to be looked at. There are days when a post-it tattooed on your forehead detailing the very fact of illness seems like an utmost necessity in a world that can so easily be blind to it. There are also days when it refuses to be noticed. Instead, it is masked by adolescence or the times and trials of those in their "roaring" twenties.

My sickness may not always want to be seen, but it certainly wants to be felt. There isn't a single day that I can be forgetful. Not a single day when I am not reminded by my tattooed post-it note of pain, or at least, by the marks left behind by it. In a stage of life that I am supposed to make decisions and work towards my future, I am constantly bombarded with my past. I wish it were as simple as being the girl in pain or the girl who used to be in pain. Regardless of my current state of health, the pain will always be there - the ghost of previous illness, the ache of a current ailment, or the caution of a future outbreak. The math is the only thing that's simple; pain will forever be the common denominator.

Pain, especially chronic pain, is a long-term commitment. You go to bed with it at night and wake up to its company every morning. You share all the moments of joy, disappointment, and accomplishment with it during the days in between. This means that commitment to others is one of the hardest things someone who is sick can do. It requires an immense amount of trust and respect to let someone into a life that constantly requires you to find reasons to live with the pain.

Long-term pain ensures that the receptors are in a state of constant stimulation, making any additional pain deliver more damage to the whole than the sum of its parts. This is what is most terrifying for someone like me. To know that even the slightest additional pain can make everything else I'm experiencing worse than before. This is why you can meet a lot of sick people with trust issues. When mandatory pain is all you know, the last thing you want to do is voluntarily inflict yourself with more. So when people get scared at the sight or thought of illness, you let them walk away. It's the right thing to do for both parties; no one will get hurt anymore. This never works out how you hope. Instead, you get hurt by default. Through the absence of support, pain is forced into becoming your best friend. Nothing makes you feel lonelier than that. So you try to trust again and let people in just to see what will happen.

People are so afraid of saying the wrong thing that they don't say anything at all. Silence causes even more damage. I never needed a bogus speech or a lecture on how hope can heal no matter how dim the future seems. What I needed was someone to be there, someone to just sit there in the room. I didn't need words; I didn't need hope. What

I needed was a gentle reminder that even though I was fighting the invisible, individual fight of friendly fire, I wasn't alone in doing so. I wasn't the only one wearing the uniform.

Being the friend of someone who is sick is one of the hardest and most patience-requiring things you can do. It's also one of the noblest and most important, because it means you have learned to see something that isn't right in front of you. It means you are willing to give someone your time and your awareness. You are unknowingly offering the gift of a life worth living to someone who has ceased to understand and believe in its existence.

Looking sick and being sick are most often completely separate entities. Invisibility can no longer be a superpower when it is the very thing that is holding you back. There are people I have let walk away, and people I have walked away from myself. The biggest, most visible thing I have learned through my invisible illness is that the pain brought on by the people I have kept in the room is well worth the fight. The people who want to stay, who maybe don't have the right words to share or hope to inspire, are the ones that teach you what it's like to feel again. They are the ones who make an image of illness pale in comparison to the reality of it, in all of its twisted, painful glory. These people are the reason to keep living with the pain. They are the ones who say all that needs to be said about life, love, and trust, without needing to utter a single word. They don't lessen the load you're carrying, but they're the ones who remind you of how strong you truly are.

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