Metaphor is Weber State University’s Undergraduate Literary Journal, in its thirty-ninth year of publication. The journal is staffed entirely by Weber State University students.

Metaphor accepts submissions in visual arts, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and performing arts from students of Weber State University.

Publications in Metaphor are chosen through a blind submission process. The author, or artist, of each piece is unknown until the piece is selected for publication.

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Book & Cover Design By Jane Enser

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Metaphor is many moving parts, working together to create a cohesive whole. In creating this beautiful journal, we, as a staff, have relied on many organizations and individuals for support, advising, creative vision, and more. We’d like to extend a thank you to everyone who helped us in bringing this edition to print:

First, as a staff, we are so grateful to our advisor, Professor Ryan Ridge, and his labor in guiding and instructing us. We would be lost without his direction and extremely hard work. I think each of us learned something new about the process of writing, editing, and publishing from him each time we met as a team, and these lessons have informed the creation of this journal and will continue to inform our careers as we move forward. For this, we are so thankful.

Jane Enser and Taylor Klover, our graphic design team, impressed us beyond words with the creative vision and dedication they demonstrated. Each time we met with them, or Jane shared her designs with us, we were absolutely blown away by the organization, style, and expediency given. Their work on giving Metaphor a brand identity is invaluable and much appreciated. We want to thank them especially for their hard work in designing, editing, and getting submissions ready for print; this work is no small task.

There are many members of the English Department faculty and staff who supported and promoted us—Doctors Siân Griffiths, Christy Call, Rebekah Cumpsty, Julie Panko, Courtney Craggett, Hal Crimmel; Professors Abraham Smith, Laura Stott, Sunni Wilkinson, Jan Hamer, Heidi Hart, William Pollett, Clint Johnson, Nic Muranaka, Erin Guy, and Ryan Evans, we are thankful to you all for letting students announce Metaphor deadlines and events in your classes, as well as assisting in spreading the word about joining the staff or submitting work. Thank you!
Writing has long been an inexplicable and inextricable force in my life. I have been a collector of images as long as I can remember; in the way some gather seashells or stamps or, like my grandmother, vintage Campbell’s soup cans. While hunting for the perfect treasure at thrift stores, I’d tag along beside her, collecting succinct images of the people around us—the purpled eye of a fellow customer, the spittle on the beard of the man minding the tech section, or the scent of juniper emanating from the cashier—while she collected her cans and other knickknacks. I’d write these down as soon as we arrived back home from our excursion, and I haven’t stopped writing them since.

Working with the staff of *Metaphor*, first as the fiction section editor and now as the Editor in Chief, I have again become a collector, finding a prized Campbell’s can in a stunning poem, a surprising first line, or in the souvenir of a gorgeous image. We had record-breaking numbers of submissions this year, and we, as a staff, found ourselves engrossed in an unforgettable endeavor to curate a collection of these stunning pieces. We are so pleased to bring a selection of the works to publication this year, and we are thankful to each and every creator who submitted.

As writers, I think it’s important that we’re always on the lookout for ways to improve our work, too, as much as we collect images. Nothing has helped me more than being part of the community of creators Weber State has to offer. I encourage everyone to become involved, to submit to future editions of *Metaphor* or to join the staff, to join clubs and organizations offered by the English Department, and to connect with fellow students in creating a network of those you can share work with.

To the creators of Weber State: we need your art, your writing. We need the escape of your fiction, the emotion of your poetry, the reality of your creative nonfiction, and the truth of your art. We need the energy, persistence, and zest each one of our submittor’s demonstrated this year. We need
the community created by students from all majors and all backgrounds, and we are so thankful to those who call Metaphor their home—whether it be the staff, the work, or the contributors. Most of all, we need you to stay collecting.

LIBBY LEONARD EDITOR IN CHIEF

With our art, each of us are attempting to carve out just a little bit of space for ourselves in this world. Despite how large and isolating the world can seem, the connection that art can provide between us is one of the few soothing remedies for the existential fear so many of us feel. I am grateful for the literary community that Weber State has provided and for the ability to share my own writing while partaking in the works and successes of my peers. Many believe writing to be a solitary task, but I have never felt less alone than when I am knee deep in a workshop with people who enjoy their craft as much as I do.

To the other writers out there, I hope you keep writing, and I hope you keep reading the works of others. Our own writing will only be as good as the work we read. In fact, writing cannot be a solitary task. We’re in this together. All of us. Find your people, and share your work. Build off of each other’s success, and support each other through rejection. As writers and artists, we’ll become well acquainted with rejection, but we can’t let that discourage us. If you keep going, I’ll keep going too.

I am grateful to the staff of Metaphor for their dedication to the journal and their support through the planning and running of our annual High School Editor’s Conference. Thanks to the work done by our editors, many high school students will have learned writing and editing skills to help prepare the way for their college journeys. I am grateful to my Editor in Chief, and now good friend, Libby. Thank you for allowing me to be your assistant and helping me carve out just a little more space for myself to make sense of the world we live in.

I encourage all of us who are carving out space for ourselves in the College of Arts and Humanities to stand together and support each other in our art and work. In a time when our arts are looked down on, I hope that you will continue to write your poetry, your fiction, and nonfiction. Keep writing your scripts and screenplays. Keep drawing and painting. Keep singing, keep dancing, and keep performing. Support the people around you in their arts as well. The world needs each and every one of us and the unique art that only we can create.

PORTER LUNCEFORD ASSISTANT EDITOR
Make your metaphoric mark now! During the designing of this year’s Metaphor, I often found myself thinking of Weber State University people: students, staff, & faculty. I pondered the goals we all share to improve ourselves and contribute to the positive growth of global society. No matter the creative medium when solving a problem, we turn to make gestural marks either on paper, phones, or maybe even a gum wrapper in the middle of the night, to act on our ideas for the future; ultimately, to create the future we hope to be apart of.

This is when the 2020 design vision & style were born: Metaphoric Marks. I created a visual language composed of hand-illustrated smooth grunge gestures resembling editorial marks and the striking impact these marks have when endowed with meaning. Each gesture represents a different metaphor of a unified creative process.

I invite you to take time and discover the meaning of these marks for yourself. By utilizing our skills as creatives, together we have what it takes to make our beautiful globe a better place for all life. Even during the confusing time we are experiencing, keep your head held high enabling your ideas to bloom. We are the people who create hope even when hope may be difficult to find.

I implore all talented people, make your metaphoric mark right now, with the vision of leaving our neighborhoods, communities & Earth better places than we all found them.

JANE ENSER GRAPHIC DESIGNER
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Poetry is the way dust dances through the beams of light coming from your window. Picture the surreal moments: the moments where you feel the chill creeping up your neck or maybe down the inside of your throat. The airplane landing — that butterfly feeling that accompanies the wheels touching down safely. Maybe, it’s the sorrow, the anger, the hurt after he or she or they left you. It doesn’t matter how, they’re gone and it still stings. Poetry is found between the mundane madness that is life. A literary art form that truly brings the power back to the people in the sense that our interpretations of life are uniquely objective.

This year, Metaphor was flooded with a vast number of quality submissions. While it was truly a delight being able to dive deeply into the creative minds of so many of our talented students here at Weber State it was also a huge responsibility. However, I feel that we as a team did our best to select those pieces which spoke to the diverse narratives that embody our campus as a whole. It has been my absolute pleasure to curate this section with my fellow staff members and I hope that you find exactly what you didn’t think you needed here.

KRYSTIANA DAVIS  POETRY EDITOR

MOTHER
BY BENJAMIN FAVORO

here she waits
with the solstice

see everything
the sunshine meets
melt into shadow

the red rock shatter
against the green mountain

maybe if the moon
was more
than a skeleton

she would sing
us sweeter lullabies

here she stops
for the eclipse

those forest green pines
across the skyline
fold into starlight
I feel like a different person
each time I step outside my door
Killer like “the kid” I will adhere
to the gravity of my potential
and inevitable end
Periodically I am exhausted but I do go on
he said on the radio banging about in my head
there is less melancholy than you would think
contained like bright whiskey
in me distilled from all senses drip sunsets
from dark dark dark dirty air comes a good laugh
the kind that turns whole apples sweet
Berrigan talking and warm tea helps everything
fall into a sort of place
Now it’s 11 pm and all
I want is a drink
I have one so that’s a lie
you always seem to know when I’m lying
I didn’t write you today because it’s all I wanted to do
and my wants are little disasters waiting to happen.
Maybe nothing was taken from me
still I want it back
My eyes are brown as mud
Did you notice?
In midnight hours I know the code of the west
I wake to find you asleep
maybe I’m asleep

Amber eyed is the way you feel
when she sits across from you
drinking coffee becomes something special
almost ritual you place your hands
around the warm center and bring it
up to your lips and think this is good
the way water must taste in the desert
the way water must taste on the ocean
when the sun cracks your skin like cement
and pours into your eyes without remorse
and I can’t help but love the way we never say
just look and know which way the wind carries
leaves and which way the buffalo go to graze
because we too carry we too have thick hearts
to feed
in the lugubrious blue of night everything looks soft
you stretch your arms and sink your smile into my chest

I am not a man who sees things clearly  my heart
and my head are in the same place  my bed was empty
when I woke a dim light was singing  the door was open
and I was alone in an unbearably sane world

It’s 3:03 a.m.
and my late night habits
have gotten the best of me.
Tonight is like a warm blanket
to sit under and contemplate
the stars swirling in their great
fires and insects dazed and confused,
balked about by false moons.
Out of the basic ritual of crickets
comes a song so loud we almost
never hear it. The ember
of my cigarette is itself
a star, burning across some void.
We are so many millions
of miles apart. The past bleeds through
almost visible and ourselves seep
slightly into the future. How far past
our time does our light shine?
Can you see me here, sitting
in the dark?
“I didn’t come to this country to sleep in the dirt.”
So, I went alone.

I woke among the flat-lying
   layers of sedimentary rock
   carved into mounds, tables, and canyons.

In the Bear Paw Café,
   three proud ranchers sit atop their horses
   next to the portrait of a Navajo chief.
Pain in his eyes I try to comprehend.

Bubbling on the surface,
   expanding,
   green grass suburbia.

The cliffs catch my eye as I exit the park,
   correcting my disorientation.

Filling tire tracks with footprints
   scaling the mountain.

Sitting atop a boulder,
   I took a picture and put it on a wall.

*Man and Pest Density.*
LOVE - FORTY
BY BRANSON ELISON

The court rippled with heat
and we ran, and stopped, and ran.
and I couldn’t see the serve.
The sun clouded my eyes,
and illuminated your sweat,
Christmas lights on your skin,
a gift.

I realized I loved you, so
I cried in a car with my sisters.
I tried not to see the sun.
I hid from you, and when you entered
the bathroom, I held my breath
and never let go.
I need to exhale.

Every morning, I’d drag myself to you,
and every night I would die
on a stained wet pillow.
Heaven or Hell I couldn’t tell the difference
but it was with you, hands on skin.
and I would smile,
then cry.

Being in love with you made me sick,
but time let me stand in the sun again.
but still, I never exhaled.

ANIMO
BY BRENDA CARILLO

It’s so fucking cold,
not the weather but my heart.
I never will forget the wounds,
the kind where life kept going
with the flow, but the flow meant
losing Abuelo and then Abuela.

After, when life left her body,
people came up to my mother and her siblings
and said, “Ánimo.”
I keep thinking about that phrase.
In English, I guess it’d be something like
“Cheer up!”

Animus, the Latin word, means soul.
Oh, how I wish
I could still be with her seraphic soul.

Death had never been so close to me.
In the darkness of the mid-July dawn,
that woman, who often scolded me
with affection, was finishing the process of dying.
I now understand that this begins
at the same time as the process of living.

A month before, when I had sat
absentmindedly by her bed,
in the buzz of TV static,
her desire to live was not expressed in words
but was spoken through her eyes.
Abuela, I so wanted you to thrive.
A few steps and I would be by your side.

Yet, I was fearful because, in this country,
I still felt like a child.
A child shouldn’t have to see the dawn drain
from her Abuela’s insensate eyes.

I dreamed of fallen teeth
and stayed still with the fear of rising from the pillow.
The agonized wails that my restless sleep quieted had stopped,
and I knew her heart would soon do the same.

A few steps away, she left,
and the only thing I could think to say
was “Gloria a Dios.”
It’s funny.
I said “adios” without wanting to.

It was a goodbye wish for my Abuela’s soul
to return to the God she tried so hard to help us know.
Will we ever know God as well as you?
Our tears will not be satisfied with the sky’s deep blue.
This ache cannot be massaged like warm dough.
Abuela, please let me hear you say, “Ánimo.”

GOODBYE
BY BRENDA CARILLO

Goodbye

Goodbye

The mouth crafts these
sounds as we leave the
ones we love or hate

Goodbye is not just a spoken phrase
that vanishes like water vapors in the sun

Goodbye is felt from the core
of the bones that carry us

Goodbye feels like shutting
a heavy door on our fingertips
And still, when we touch these red

throbboning

fingers full of memories, the dendrites will
continue to signal the body by traveling
miles of synapses to remind us of one
thing:
the pain of goodbye will always be there

Goodbye feels like washing your hands
with sandpaper that gnaws on the flesh
but beneath the dense red liquid of life, dirt lingers

Because goodbyes never leave
Goodbyes never leave us alone
they feed me lies, but at least they feed me
a starving stomach will swallow anything
regurgitated love, bitter sympathy,
you know, the works

my blood is sweet and desired
only to be spit back in my face
once they realize that its sweetness will grow sweeter
making them sick
my body longs to donate all that it can
until I am tenderness
ready for the worms’ feast

maybe some mascara will make me look awake
maybe I should throw away the dinner plates
instead of washing them
a meal is not a meal when you eat it alone

I scare away the warm embraces that I so long to keep
strangers strange with simple faces
walk so freely away from the prison I have become
stay stay

too much of a good thing
it’s a bad thing

so I’m letting everyone off easy

IT’S A BAD THING
BY BRENDA CARILLO

no more sweetness
bitter bruises have changed my skin

if you fall for me
I’ll let you get back up
I’ll let you forget
I was sweetness before I started rotting
close your eyes. see yourself at the Nile River through the hues of your own thoughts. now.

what the eyes can see: do you see a land beaten and taken out of its crust element? do you see dark faces wake up to the rising of the sun, toil the soils with machete and gun, and doze off on their hard woven mats just to see another dawn. they are barefooted. why, you won’t last a mile in their shoes.

kids slurp away mud water. students sit under tree shades to study. the weather has less to no say. poverty, the cankerworm eating into fabrics, strikes threads, unweaves cotton. the outcome, a society stripped of its clothes.

what i see: contractors building nations from crumbs left over from the table of evil masters. the sunsets there are the most beautiful in the world. toddlers sit and play in the sand, build palaces until the wind blows it away like chaff. hunters keep vigil, farmers sow and till, handymen gloat or confide in their craft and skill. twenty nineteen, year of return for all the descents in diaspora. i am from the asantehene. i saw slums. have seen families slumped to the floor as though never to rise again. i have seen worse than the plagues. the richest continent inherited by the poor...

extra: till i washed out the filters which clogged my vision, lest i see my home through the lens of the blindfolded or afraid of my epidermis or deny my roots but enjoy the fruits they bear.

FROM THE HORSE’S OWN EYE
BY CHARLES OPPONG

TOO MUCH CONFETTI
BY HAYLEY LITCHFIELD

After Rachel Baran

There is too much in my head
All these extra beautiful glittering thoughts.
Can they just explode?
Or, perhaps, I mean implode.
(I’m not sure which)

Scenery blurs around me as I descend
Into a panic-like vertigo.
Shutting my eyes,
I close them tight,
Tight enough to shut out life.

I put my fingers to my head and

Pop!

My anxiety, beautifully
Destructive, as it is,
Bursts like a bubble
Into a glittery mess

At my feet, and on my body.

My mind heaves,
filling in the space
The void has left,
And I see colors,
Not blurs of green and brown,
But individually wrapped bursts of color.

I brush off the confetti
Of my thoughts from my skin,
And watch the golden colors fade
From the sky.

maybe, the reason i have so many nightmares
is because it requires an extinguisher
to put out all the emotional fires
that your solar beams burn me with
maybe, i’m not crazy
one day
when my body is charcoal and dust
cracked blackened checks like
hardened magma
i will breathe a sigh of relief
and the black bark skin
will peel off with the season
so you can see the smooth scales
of someone’s soul having
survived
the changes that the world imposed on it
and you might be surprised
that wings
can be constructed of scales too
I know you
you’re semi-safe in the car after
being with your family too long
you ‘yes man’ your life
convincing yourself
you’re responsible for keeping the scale in check
-whatever scale that is to you-
by giving more more more
till there is no bad luck left in the sandglass
to give the person
who wants so much to help
to make others also feel seen
but there is a voice
that speaks to you in the car
when you’ve left all your family’s rancor
that exhaustion in your mind
seeping into tissue
as you do into the driver’s seat
looking at yet another old person who isn’t even there anymore
and the radio in your car is no longer on blast
because you want it to be
the electronic music is the only thing left keeping you awake
the bass shaking the speakers
shaking you
we tell ourselves that it can all be taken away
that doom impends
and we scream along with the music
trying to be heard in a world that
we’re too good at listening to

grow a pair of wings
and etch them out of the pages
of books you forgot
you loved
built the bones from the
dreams
you keep translucent
in front of your nightstand
from the sinew and muscle
of the efforts made
by putting human first
before hate
in society’s alphabetical dictionary
and be proud that they stare
when you have to open doors
a little wider
to accommodate your
ambition
WRITER THINGS
BY HOPE MCKENNEY

ink wells up in my candles
instead of wax
lakes and rivers are
dark pools and cool gelatin in my
mocha tinted glasses
a bridge over my nose
one I stand on looking over
salted cold foam
interspersed in ocean waves
my hair ribbon has a bookmark
attached at the end
and I always seem to have notes
and pens falling out of my bag
snatching their precious words back up
and tucking them carefully
back in place
hoping that the puzzle pieces I write may find their way
into their puzzle

A GARDEN (STONEWALL ANNIVERSARY)
BY JANETTA HENRY

Who would have thought that 50 years ago
When
Colorful violence spilled from brick
We would learn “that’s enough” and “I’m enough” are two sides of
the same tongue

Our violence has always been that, that is grown
So surprised our defiance matches your disgust
Do you not see the dirt on your hands?
And here we are flowers that grow in the dark
And always find the sun

Graveyards?
We only have gardens
Bury us and find
We have seeds in our bones
We are here
And we are here again
See?
Like magic
Call us weeds, we grow anyway

Give us a plague and we will weave into a quilt
Give us suffering and we will turn to steel
Give us your body, no matter how they tear it apart
Somehow you are back in the garden
No death by yours or any hand can keep you from your Eden
Come lay down amongst the flowers and know you are home
We lie with you

All work comes to this
Working for peace from violence
We still have that baying rage
That frightful fury
Happy to riot here in the daylight
In your homes
In your big white houses
You will find no complacency from we
None of us are free until all of us are free

Can you feel it?
The sweet hum of activity buzzing like bees
As far as the eye can see a sea of flowers
Have you ever seen anything so defiantly happy?
Have you ever seen such a group, living so much, like we?

What I want to say to you is this
Our lives end, they will end
And we may have failed you, and will may fail you again
But goddamn we tried
And we try again
What can we give you but this?
How could we love you any way but this?
We are a garden, we keep growing
That’s enough
We’re enough

CREAM AND SUGAR
BY KALIE PEAD

my words are black coffee.
bitter, biting, brewed in the fog dark mornings,
smooth when they’re filtered, grainy
when they’re not.
they stain her teeth as she sips in the daybreak,
passing through the space between her right canine
and incisor, the same place she once held my name.
she drinks
and as they sink to her gut she lets them burn,
coursing through her veins like a crowded subway train on a monday
morning.
they leave her shaking.
NOTIONS
BY KALIE PEAD
English Department Writing Contest Winner, 1st Place

It’s sewn to the bottom of my foot. No matter how hard I try to shake it, there it stays. Not a step behind. right in time. step, slide, step, slide.

It slops along the bathroom tile, a wet towel that never leaves you dry. It slithers. Up my leg and holds me tight. It tastes my inner dreams and weeps.

Some days it’s aggressive. A biting bitch that has only stillborns to protect. Some days I muzzle it. Some days the screaming toddler won’t stop screaming and I, the manic mother, won’t stop screaming.

So I wrap it tight, in my arms, like a blanket. I ball my hands into fists and our voices carry endless agony into nothingness. We are la la land.

I unwrap my fist, present needle and twine. Waiting in indifference as it stitches itself a little closer.

The needle pierces my achilles and still I sit. No longer screaming.
YOU MUST BE THE LITTLE SISTER
BY KALIE PEAD

i tiptoe through the garden
and pray i’ll go unnoticed.
momma tends to the watering while
pappa puts up a scarecrow.
sunflowers.
millions of sunflowers.
my toes dig into loose soil as i try
to keep my balance.
momma moves to trim apricot trees,
fallen branches thud
softly as they take their last
breath.
pappa inspects the herb garden.
motherwort, marigold, meadowsweet.
he admires a chrysalis,
awaiting the day it becomes a butterfly.
the sun sinks low in the sky
calling the farmers home.
as they gather their tools
they pause at my foxglove feet.
a smile and a sigh.
mamma checks to make sure i
haven’t crept too far.
pappa places his calloused
hands on her shoulder.
together they return home
leaving their garden
to be finished at dawn.

ADVICE FROM A TREE
BY KRISTEN DRAKE

After Amy Gerstler

Use the world to your advantage.
Drink lots of water. Sunbathe. Root yourself.
Grow. Soak in the rain, harvest
nutrients from dirt. Take the world as you grow
and absorb it. Feel the cold and know
sunlight will be that much warmer.
Talk with the wind as it whips
away at your body. Become a shelter
for those too weak to withstand winds.
Teach birds to lighten their wings,
like petals on a breeze. Provide
shade during heat waves and creatures
will thank you with affection
and protect you from rot. Enjoy the littlest
of skirmishes between bugs and squirrels as they tease
amongst grass. Deepen your roots,
strengthen your trunk. Stand tall.
Let the wind play with your leaves and give it
advice on how to be a tree.
Two Moons

BY LIBBY LEONARD

English Department Writing Contest Winner, 3rd Place

His first word was “noom,”
Can you believe it?
In the night he’d
suck with his little baby mouth
and twiddle with his little baby fingers
the little pink nipples
on the breasts he’d call his “nooms.”

It was his milk and my
Easy Way Out.
We could sleep like that
noom to mouth to mouth to skin
he’d never ask me why I didn’t stop, yet
and wasn’t he getting too old
and wouldn’t he never sleep on his own?

After you came around
asking all those questions
satisfying your answers
he stopped saying “noom”
started saying nothing.

Until the night I opened up my moon roof
as we drove through the night to get to you.
He saw it, bright and full,
at its zenith
and he was reminded of the white orbs

he’d nurse in the night
and he said, “noom! noom!”
because he missed his two moons

but I missed you

and by God I wish
I’d turned around.
DISSOCIATION
BY MADELINE GASSMAN

for every man who reminds you of the abuse you
endured there’s a woman who reminds me of mine my
screams are mute against the clutter
of rapists of cowards of men because
my abuser is the wrong gender
the wrong family
member the wrong parent
Mom

SPIT
BY MAKENZIE WILLIAMS

spit of a madman
impaired by spoiled fruit
as a bat boy
as an unwelcome child
of an unforgiven devil who spat poison
fruit doesn’t fall far from his tree
left to ruin
he cannot hide
there is no excuse
for the spit of a madman
doing his best while choking on poison

his spit
compiled by a madwoman
diseased by disappointment

his spit
used like a lioness employs her terrain
to hunt, to track, to twist, to turn, to claw.
to bite, to break, to cripple, to tangle.
to corner
the madman
and stun her unwitting pride

and the savannah
as she takes him down

spit of a madwoman
impaired

she can hide
there is an excuse
for the spit of a madwoman
“I’m doing my best.”

I’ll meet you in New York.

Bedroom museum,
collection Of lustful loss
portrayed
On virgin mauve carnations.

Curvature of shadows, reflection
Yearning for past within strangers
Who gnaw on tongues
Of beloved.

By touch of blissful hymns, sink
Into pulsing ruby hands And
cool tone night lights.
THE WOMAN IN THE PAINTING
BY MELANIE MELGAR

Let me paint a picture for you, see
Count his love bites splattered
Across her shivering collarbone
What if I told you,
    “Love doesn’t bite,
    Only he does.”
See, last night under a lovers moon
His lips were dripping poison honey
Down her earlobe
A paralyzing fantasy
I told you,
    “Love doesn’t kill,
    But he will.”
She can’t deny the philosophy
Of life didn’t include him
Humanity’s sickening stain
That’s who he is
Don’t you see?
I cried,
    “You belong with
    Doves of damascus fount.”
See, despite my visions she failed to leave
Failed to fly
Let me paint a picture now, see
A display of tearful blues
How the choir wails,
    “See those sirens trailing his feet
As he hunches in defeat
Leaving her heart on the street.”

TWO EXTRA SHELVES
BY MORAN HARRIS

after Ada Limón

I like to imagine even my plants want attention.
So I built them two extra shelves. Beige wood
that I sanded and glossed by hand. Once alive itself
now a stepping stool for Chlorophytum comosum
to reach her friend the sun. Housing ample space
for Tradescantia zebrina to spread her hairy tarantula
leg vines and explore the small world I’ve given her
inside my room. What does the dead wood whisper to
my petite Easter cactus? I’ll remember to ask him. I
found plants after I lost my dad. I wanted something
that needed me. Something I could kill if I wanted.
Each night I lie
down amongst my plants, as if I am one of them
and I swear I can hear them growing. This must be how
God feels. I read that house plants are more likely to die
from too much water than lack thereof.
We care too much and end up drowning
them. Maybe God does the same thing. At least
we know he cares.
And I went with her
Hand in hand. Eye for an eye.
Reflecting like a mirror
What we thought the other needed.

Not a love story.
But longing for vengeance.
Vengeance without blood wasn’t much
Vengeance at all

Still, hand in hand.
Our eye for his.
Distant eyes searching but never finding.
Clenched jaw, clenched fist.

She’d put her fist through his chest.
If she could—
And she could—
But she didn’t

She put her hand in my hand.

Although I am forgiving
I am not the stone
laid across a river
to be stepped over
used only
your destination in mind

I am not the grass
in a lily field, to be
ignored forgotten
the sights above
singing louder

I scream,
harbinger of death, rage
coating my throat
I am
a banshee
cold in the night
stars twinkling above

moonlight
trickles down
finding its way between
branches and leaves their
shadows call me
begging me please
I did not mean to forget
but
the pebbles shone so bright
at the bottom of the lake

ripples
spread across my mind
s t i l l
a leaf on a pond
floating in the night

cold leeches into my skin
ankle deep I walk,
the epitome of prophecy
because although I am forgiving
you’ll find

I am not easy to forget.

SLOW START
BY REGGIE CUTLER
English Department Writing Contest Winner, 2nd Place

a sleep contraction
woke me
mine or yours, all
the same.
shudder, obey,
impert the body’s sway.

Wonder precariously
if the street-sound
merchants
will gather to iceskate across
my open irises.

the lullaby man
tucks away into
my ironwood pillow.
lemon shocks conducted
through my oily scalp

atrophy to my slumber.
an apt welcoming
twenty-three nighttime drifters
to settle down
Their starter-home meat hooks
sink in.
INTO THE CHARRED NOCTURNAL
BY TIFFANY BENNET

The quaint city streets were silent in the still of night.
Charming shop windows gleamed in glittering gold.
Puddles left untouched, mirrored the sky after feathering rain.
A soothing melody meandering through the old alleyways
lulled the angelic children to sleep.

A break in the stillness when the doors demand no more duress.
Wobbling towers of caged birds burst through the air stacked
on wheelbarrows, three or four high, crunch on the cobblestone
earth. Children shoot out of the coup like little maniacs running
with scissors giggling at the pink ballerina soaring through the
sky on the tail of a dandelion. The tightrope walkers leave the
roofs and rustle across the telephone wires. Brothers and sisters
jump with glee from bed to bed over the chomping gator that
swims beneath. Fighter jets fly over fields dropping deer attached
to parachutes that float down to the pines. Men in long black
overcoats line up along the pier waiting, with open umbrellas, to
be lifted to the lunars.

A young girl stands at the edge with her lion, watching, with gog-
gles and chin lifted high.

I’D LIKE TO MEET MY DAD
BY TIMOTHY GENOVESI

in the ‘80s
when he was a much younger man
than I am now, before
he became a gravedigger, and
I’d like to sit with him

and smoke a joint
and tell him to lighten up
and hope that he listens
to his older, wiser son. Then
I’d like to meet my grandad
In the ‘60s

when he was a much younger man
than I am now, before
he became a butcher, and

I’d like to beat him
with a pipe
and see if it makes any difference.
I’m collecting cans
in the Wasatch Wasteland
-this was three days ago-
and I happen upon a mutt
who looks like his name
would have been
Bandit or
Roscoe or
Champ or
something basic,
like Trevor.

He tells me he’s lost
and I remind him that dogs
can’t speak English.
He says Woof,
and I say That’s better,
and he says Good.
I ask him, Are you lost, boy?
and he says, Yes.
I tell him we all are, in a way,
and he says
Don’t be an asshole.

To tread a mountain...
stand with a single flower,
petals smearing clouds.
I'm used to kissing tabasco sweet guys
who say delicious things
for a chance between my thighs
but this guy's words are as refreshing as milk
his lips taste like nicotine
and the truths he has spilt

I always thought his fingers were beautiful
long and thin
he holds a paintbrush between them
meticulously straining the glaze for his ceramics
he has red specks stained on his flip-flopped feet
and up his strong forearms to the cardinal tattoo
that peeks out from his rolled shirt sleeve
I want to kiss him
for creating such a gorgeous picture
and for letting me be a part of it
I wonder if he can feel the magic,
the closeness of this silence
I ask what he's thinking
It's taking too long, he says.
Every beginning art class will tell you that art is subjective. It is personal and evokes emotion. It imitates and becomes something all on its own. Whether it is writing, painting, photography, sculpture, film, etc. it is its own creature. How people react to art becomes art. The emotion that comes from art is unique to every person.

Art, for me, lets me understand people and culture in a way that cannot be told but seen. I got into photography because I wanted to point out the things that I observe in a creative way. Along with that, I was connecting the dots with photography and poetry and creating even more. These pieces inspired me in ways I didn’t think were possible.

Each piece, featured in this year’s Metaphor, is unique. They present diversity and creativity in their own way. Through various mediums and subjects these pieces emulate what art is. They are unique to the artist and viewer. Let these pieces introduce you to the talent and diversity that Weber State has to offer.
ACCUMULATION
BY ASHLEY JOHNSON

INTERLACE
BY ASHLEY JOHNSON
THE DEVIL WENT DOWN TO GEORGIA AND FOUND HER CALLING
BY ASHLEY JOHNSON

DISPOSITION
BY BLAKEYL PAGE
CATCH HELL BLUES
BY BLAKELY PAGE

WHO KILLED THE COOK?
BY CALEB GARRETT
CONNECTION
BY DOUG CHASE

COMO LA FLOR
BY INDIE BLANCO
I AM HERE TO TELL YOU THIS IS NOT A HUMAN CENTERED PLANET!!! – THE FOUNTAIN GEESE

BY IZZY FERNANDEZ

PUPPET

BY IZZY FERNANDEZ
CHINESE FOOD
BY JOSHUA WHITE

WINDOWS
BY JOSHUA WHITE
This is Grace Isfeld with the Creative Nonfiction Section Editing Team for Metaphor 2020. Pleasure’s ours, I’m sure.

Brevity is an art form and a skill I tend to lack, so here’s to trying my best to make this as short as possible and giving our section a fitting introduction.

It isn’t enough to simply be an informational study or strong narrative; our definition may seem nebulous, but what we here on the C-Non team are passionate about is passion. Think of it as the unsaid prerequisite. Creative nonfiction combines elements of research, personal experience, and prose. In order to best represent the scope of creative nonfiction, it’s only fair that we give an equal amount of care and love to each concept that the author has. After months of selection, editing, and review, I’m proud to say we’re ready now to put forth the best of Weber State’s exposes, essays, and memoirs.

From all of us here at C-Non, happy reading!

GRACE ISFELD NONFICTION EDITOR
Kathy was a runner. She was a mother. She was a secretary at Weber State University. At age twenty-seven she asked her sister to go running with her. They headed to a park a few roads away and hammered their footprints on the sidewalk framing the parameter, clumsy but determined. Kathy wasn’t a natural runner. She’d broken parts of her leg and ankle earlier on in life and running didn’t come easy, but she kept going. She pushed through and for maybe the first time in her life, she didn’t stop.

It’s nearly ten in the morning two days before Christmas and the sun has finally decided to make a welcomed, yet brief appearance. I am standing in Grounds for Coffee on 25th Street in Ogden, Utah, ordering my beverage and waiting for my guest to arrive. I look around for the perfect little nook so I can give her my full attention and see a table for two propped before a window most businesses might use as a display. As I’m setting up my workspace, Taylor Ward walks in the door and greets me with her ever-present warm and bright smile.

Taylor Ward is a runner. She is a wife. She is a marathon winner. Taylor knows what it takes to win, and she knows that it isn’t easy. Kathy was one of those women that never seemed to carry an extra ounce of weight on her body. She always had the perfect hair, the perfect outfit, but never the perfect situation. Making only a brief appearance in my life, I’ve had to learn Kathy’s history told through my aunt, family members, and her poetry. What I remember about her is that she made a mean batch of chocolate chip cookies, gave love completely and freely, and one day left for a run and never came home again.

“Why running?” I ask her. Taylor’s smile tells me all I need to know. She reveals she always loved to run, that it was something she had a natural ability in. Originally, she played wing position in soccer and hadn’t known what cross-country was. Fate intervened when her soccer coach stopped showing up for practices and a friend invited her to the cross-country team’s workout. Her speed had the team begging her to join, but she wasn’t ready to give up soccer, so for a few years she did both.

Taylor’s schedule is not for the weak. She just finished a marathon where she beat her PR (personal record), is currently working on her Ph.D., training for the Olympic trials, and teaches full time. With a schedule that would make most people grimace, she consistently displays a positive attitude. It’s that positive disposition that helped her decide between soccer and running. She talks about running being a pure sport where everyone is supportive of one another, something she didn’t experience in soccer. She recalls a moment when a girl she’d just beat came up and congratulated her, complimenting her impressive speed. That defining moment of positive encouragement was one of many unique moments helping with her decision.

Taylor Ward is a runner. She is a wife. She is a marathon winner. She is an assistant professor at Weber State University. Taylor knows what it takes to win, and she knows that it isn’t easy. Kathy found an old table at a yard sale and purchased it with some hard-earned savings. She spent weeks sanding it, smoothing its bumps and edges, staining and sealing it. She upholstered the seats with red velvet. This table was special to her. She’d seen its possibilities rather than its faults, and in the end, had a beautiful table where she could share meals with her family. Only a short while after she’d finished it, someone else came into her home and claimed it as their own.

The only predictable thing about life is its unpredictability. You can plan all you want, put in the effort, but there will always be an obstacle course. Your personal narrator is likely to have a loud thunderous voice when pointing out weaknesses, and a mousey whisper when acknowledging strengths. It’s easy to want to give up. Taylor has some advice on this. She views running as an uphill battle where most people quit before they reach the top. What they don’t realize is how far up the hill they’ve already made it. If they keep going, they will reach that plateau that holds all they’ve been working toward. Plateaus often get a bad rap, but Taylor insists this is the part of the journey to look forward to.
Kathy experienced many heartaches throughout her life, as we all do. She endured failed marriages, economic turmoil, abuse, and the suicide of a man she truly loved. She was told too many times what she couldn’t do; what she wasn’t able to do. She went to an EST training, a course developed in the 1970s by Werner Erhard that was aimed to, “create new possibilities for [people’s] lives.” When she came home from the self-empowerment workshop, she was on fire. Wanting to do something she hadn’t believed she could, she laced up her first pair of running shoes.

“When you hit a breaking point in your life how do you keep putting on your running shoes?” Taylor considers this. Running has been the most consistent thing throughout her life. “If I’m sad, I run. If I’m overwhelmed, I run.” After she graduated from college she moved across the country to Alabama with her husband. In a new city without friends, she was having a hard time adjusting and realized she needed people to get through. She decided to reach out to the running stores in the area and found a group to run with. Surrounding herself with like-minded people was the key to helping her through a challenging time. She still surrounds herself with other runners because she learned that going it alone doesn’t work. She quotes an African Proverb, “if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”

On her runs, Kathy battled. She believed she couldn’t trust anyone and handled it through running. It was never a competitive thing; it was about personal growth. Running was the thing that kept her moving and she wanted to take control of her life. Ready to stand up and fight back, she began proving to herself what she was capable of, one mile at a time. She gradually increased her speed. For the first few years, she was simply trying to figure out what running was. It wasn’t long before she was running every day. When she was hired at Weber State, she found a group for runners and joined. Here she found her community, a place she finally belonged. As she improved, she began entering races and pushing her body through difficult and often dangerous routes. In the group she met a minister from campus she became close with, and together, they ran.

“Every marathon has its own story, even if you run the same one multiple times,” Taylor explains. “To be a good runner you can’t ever be content. If you get a PR that’s great and you should celebrate, but you have to keep pushing yourself.” It was Taylor’s third marathon that she crossed the finish line first, but her biggest struggle has been in the Olympic trials. During her first attempt in 2016, she didn’t think her body was going to make it to the end. The course was a loop where she had to keep passing the finish line, and by mile twenty her body was done. On her final loop she told herself that if she was starting that lap, she wasn’t going to quit. She didn’t. Although it wasn’t her best race, it’s one she’s most proud of because she didn’t give up. She told herself she was going to finish, and she did. “You’re entitled to the work; you’re not entitled to the success. You put the work in, but when it comes to that day, it’s not always your day. Sometimes it’s someone else’s day.”

At that point in the race, it’s overcoming the mental obstacles. She’s currently 19th in line for the Olympics which puts her “in the mix.” Taylor knows how to train and has learned along the way how not to. She’s seen many people train too hard, get injured, start too fast in the beginning and burn out in the end, or simply psyche themselves out. Women marathoner’s peak in their thirties and Taylor is just shy of that benchmark, ready to enter with enthusiastic excitement. She has plenty of friends that push her, but she talks about how a lot of times in a marathon, you’re alone. It’s just you and you alone. “When you find yourself alone in the race, you’ve only got you to rely on.”

I still remember the day she died. I was three. She poured me a bowl of cereal, kissed my head, and said she was leaving for a run. She headed out with the minister on a course that many of the runners in her group frequented, a long hill where the speed limit was 55 mph. Due to the flow of the route, there was a section where she had to run with the traffic. During the investigations the lawyers involved were able to determine that she had drifted about a foot into the car lane and a young driver struck her, ejecting her from her shoes over two hundred feet. She died on impact.

In 2016, Taylor entered her third marathon in Philadelphia, and just so happened to win it. As she explains the last leg of the race, I see calm confidence brighten up her eyes, the eyes of a true athlete. At the 20-mile mark, she was in first place, turned a corner, and hit a wall of brutal November wind. She maneuvered her way through the gust and then like meeting an aggressive troll as she headed onto a bridge, she was con-
fronted with another, angrier wind she describes as being able to stop her in her tracks; the type you could lean into and would hold you up. But the end was near. She thrust through the wind on the bridge and saw the finish line at the top of the hill. She recalls the moment she knew she’d won the race, the realization of it all. She crossed the line into her husband’s arms, hearing the announcer inform the crowd that she was their winner. She replays the moment in a way that reveals it was one of the greatest moments of her life, so far.

In the fall of 1983, Weber State University held the Kathy [ ] memorial fun run in her honor. I still have the patch featuring Waldo in a jogging uniform that was given to the runners. For years, running has been a difficult subject for me, but what I’ve realized is that it wasn’t the thing that took her, it was the thing that set her free. In the last months of her life, Kathy had finally found peace.

We can run from our problems or we can run with them. It’s only when we believe in ourselves that we will find out what we’re made of, and we’ll only know what we’re made of if we lace up our shoes. We might win a marathon, or a car might take us out of the race for good. I’m not sure about you, but I’ll keep tightening my laces and remember the plateau that’s waiting on the other side of the hill.

Dedicated to strong women everywhere...

A special thanks to Taylor, Tammy, and Kathy.

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**DAYDREAMING IN SULFUR**

**BY BRI GEORGE**

It was nearly 90 degrees outside, but I don’t remember the discomfort of heat. None of us do. We had the creek to thank for that. Dad told me to bring my water-proof boots, but I don’t think it made much of a difference. Half an hour into the hike, our feet were soaked through our socks and heavy, but I didn’t notice the weight. It was only present upon inspection.

Mom opted to stay in the car. We didn’t notice. We tried to remember her absence but were too engrossed in the detail. We couldn’t help it. One might ask themselves: “Why are the trees so green? The rock demands them red.” But the trees didn’t care. They only knew to be green, oblivious of the dominating hues surrounding them. We didn’t care either. We didn’t ask questions. We wondered without conditions. We walked without the thought of progression.

It didn’t take long until the water soaked our cells enough to saturate them with bliss. A friendly kind of delusion: benign and harmless. We didn’t submerge our clothes up to our shoulders in great pools awaiting under cliff necks when it got too warm. We didn’t have to; we were already wet. Wet with carelessness. It spilled itself out of our ears, refreshing our skin effortlessly with a new kind of formula. We couldn’t feel last night’s argument in the air. It had been vanquished, obliterated by the elements. We couldn’t feel anything. It was a natural kind of a chemical high. We only saw. We only listened. We forgot to touch, forgot to invade the surfaces of all the living things we yearned to connect to for so long. Instead, we let the water touch us. We let it sift its way through our matter, stifling any protestations of concrete concerns.

They call it Sulfur Creek. Before then, I thought of Sulfur as chalky,
sticky even. I didn’t want it to be on the bottom of creek beds, coating rocks in yellow film. It didn’t belong there. But I know Sulfur now. Now, I look at it differently. I hope to find it in unexpected places, coating my dash on winter days, or lining my pillowcase on hot summer nights after fireworks. I want to drink it on holidays instead of eggnog. I want to see it in the flecks of my sister’s eyes. I want to do more than remember it, remembering it isn’t enough. I want to soak my palms in it and reach out to every living thing saying: “Here, see what it’s like to live without gravity.”

Near the intersection of Fountain Avenue and Sunset Boulevard, sandwiched between a fusion restaurant and a sound studio — a marriage uniquely West Hollywood — is a stretch of painted wall which, at first glance, might seem unremarkable. In a city of a thousand murals, street art is a staple of Los Angeles’s culture, and it can be as temporary as a pop-up bar, always moments away from being painted over for the next big idea. This mural is no different. Throughout its twenty-something year timeline, it has been vandalized, repainted, and vandalized again in a cycle that seems never-ending. The devotion shown in keeping the old mural standing is unusual for a city that seems to always be shifting interests.

Standing in front of Solutions Audio, a musical instrument repair shop, while the bustle of Sunset echoes behind, the story becomes clearer. The mural stands just to the left, but a quick glance into Solutions’ window showcases fifteen years’ worth of mementos: candle jars and vases plastered in photographs, picture frames, faded newspaper clippings, a yellowed album cover, and perhaps most notably, an obituary. Dated October 23rd, 2003, it’s a tribute to Elliott Smith, the singer-songwriter who defined the nineties’ indie-folk scene with his carefully crafted melodies and intensely fragile poetry. One begins to understand that the mural is much more than a piece of LA street art. Rather, it’s a living memorial to the soft-spoken man whose music, against all odds, touched the souls of thousands.

•••

A thousand miles away from the noise of the LA hustle, I — a lonely, melodramatic middle-schooler — wondered what it would feel like to disappear. Wallowing in self-pity, locked behind a handful of
fresh diagnoses, I spent hours at the window, watching. Waiting. Sitting patiently. Loneliness became me because I was safer that way. I’ve always been an unreliable narrator, sifting reality through a thick haze of hand-made illusion. Engaging with the truth seemed a monumental task.

I was so tired.

One thing the doctors don’t say about depression is that it isn’t always feeling sad. They don’t say that the sad is just a drop in the bucket. They don’t list the comprehensive side effects, like the total eclipse of feeling nothing at all. And there’s something about the feeling of nothing, in that the world beyond self-isolation’s glass is amplified but still inaccessible. There’s a life out there, for sure.

But it wasn’t for me.

The unusual quality about Elliott Smith’s music is that despite him being considered one of the most prolific lyricists of his generation, he never achieved mainstream status, and that is what makes studying his legacy and devoted fans so intriguing. The bulk of his musical career was spent on underground platforms, independent record labels and local shows. It wasn’t until 1997’s Good Will Hunting, to which Smith contributed three of his older songs and one original piece, hit theaters and subsequently was nominated for several Academy Awards that his music gained broader recognition. Smith’s performance of his aching ballad, “Miss Misery,” was a defining moment at the 1998 Oscars. He seemed out of place on stage amidst the glamor and garishness of the awards ceremony, dressed in an ill-fitting white suit, hair unkempt. His performance, however, was stunning in its simplicity. Following the Oscars, Smith was offered a contract with DreamWorks. The attendance at his gigs began to creep up. Sales were boosted. He entered the public eye.

The mural on Sunset, a swirling duet of red and black, served as the cover for Smith’s 2000 album, Figure 8, the final album released before his abrupt death in 2003, which was ruled a suicide. When Figure 8 hit record store shelves, the mural was simply a mural. It wasn’t until Smith passed that it became the leaving site of candles, photographs, and dozens of handwritten messages — some left on Post-its, some Sharpie-d onto the wall itself. No two messages were the same, but they all carried a similar sentiment: We love you. We miss you. You were worth something.

Graywhale smelled musty, God bless that cliché, and maybe a little like cigarette smoke. I would walk there after school on Tuesdays, a ritual carved deep into the well-trod crevices of my med-numbed brain. Brian-the-cashier came to expect me promptly at 3:17. I liked routine. Routine kept the crisis at bay. Routine was thumbing through the new arrivals of freshly used vinyl, or browsing dogeared, mismatched novels. I could stay for hours, until Brian-the-cashier’s pointed glances became too obvious to ignore.

Then I’d walk home.

Katherine Cusumano remarked in an article about Smith’s legacy: “The strangest thing has always been sharing Elliott Smith. Discovering Smith has been something of a rite of passage for certain young people, but in spite of the vast fan base he cultivated during his decade-and-a-half-long career, the music he made is so intimate, so intensely personal, it asks individual, rather than communal, engagement.” Countless forum threads and articles of similar vein have been written, acknowledging the strange phenomenon that more often than not, Smith finds the listener when the listener needs his music the most. It could almost be classified as a sort of legend. This is all part of the lore that surrounds the fanbase. As Steve Holmes from the band American Football put it, “Smith... gets passed along from one teenage generation to the next. Like this word of mouth quality to the way it’s spread.” He has become a staple in the lonely soundtrack of adolescence, carrying through to adulthood, where his music is shared again and again.

October 4th — which is not a date I remember from my mind, but because I keep receipts stapled to scrapbook pages devoid of pictures — was another
Graywhale day, but different, even if I didn’t know why, then. Brian-the-cashier nodded when I walked in. He never spoke. I liked that about him.

A stack of new-used CDs were waiting on the rack, and the ten dollar bill my sister gave me in exchange for not ratting her out for sluffing school was tucked proudly in my wallet. I wanted something fresh, introduce spontaneity into the monotony of 9th grade, a risky proposition for someone so married to her routines. I bought three CDs for $9 plus tax, chosen at random. Something by Depeche Mode, Old Waylon Jennings.

Figure 8, by Elliott Smith.

From specific key changes, melodies, and the way Smith could string words together to create something bigger than its parts, other artists have taken cue. Although Smith is no longer with us, his legacy lives on. Frank Ocean, a popular singer, writer, and rapper, acknowledged Smith’s influence in the liner notes of one of his top-selling albums. Madonna has on several occasions stated that Elliott’s “Between the Bars” is a song she wished she had written herself. Christopher O’Riley, a pianist, describes Smith as being “… Keenly aware and constantly cultivating a sense of the multilayered, not only in his lyrics, but in the creation of his own singular sound-world as well.” Mary Lou Lord, an essential voice of the nineties indie movement, once called Smith the “… quintessential songwriter of our generation.”

From a cultural perspective, Elliott Smith helped change how music is perceived by many. If one categorizes the nineties indie-rock scene as full of grunge, discord, and distortion, Elliott was a voice separate from the rest. He focused on soft-spoken introspection, flawed characters, and unusual harmonies. He helped pave the path for an upsurge in soft acoustic rock that peaked in the mid-2000s. The influence he had on his listeners redefined an entire genre of indie music that may have otherwise been on the verge of extinction.

There’s nothing cinematic about this story. Elliott Smith didn’t cure my depression, didn’t fix my ADHD, didn’t make me less suicidal. I didn’t go straight home from Graywhale that afternoon, pop my new find in the CD player, and change my life. Life isn’t poetic like that. What Elliott offered me was a chance to be sad. After years of agitated vacancy, his music let me be sad without interrogation, without demanding anything else. And what a gift that was.

One might assume that fifteen years following his death, he would have fallen into obscurity, but a visit to the mural on Sunset proves otherwise. The wall has changed since Figure 8’s release. In late 2016, a large portion of the mural was removed and replaced with a glass window in preparation for a new gastropub to move into the vacant building. The removal understandably infuriated many of Smith’s fans, prompting at least two petitions, and to some, it seemed like karmic justice when the restaurant announced they were shuttering their doors less than a year after opening. Though the fate of the remainder of the mural still hangs in uncertainty, this has not prevented Smith’s fans from continuing to leave flowers, candles, and messages.

A decade later, my plane touched down in Angeles, and I made the pilgrimage to Sunset. It felt like a rite of passage, the ultimate homage to the man whose voice haunted me for the last ten years. Sitting in front of a window is empty. Standing in the heat on a California street felt so deliciously full.

The mural is a community love letter to Elliott. Scrawled over, tattooed with notes, lyrics, confessions, it’s messy and imperfect but earnest. Letting my thumb brush over a lyric written in Sharpie — “I’m never going to know you now, but I’m gonna love you anyhow,” from Waltz no. 2 — I felt a connection to all these other people, who, despite our differences, are bound together by one common quality. How much art has Elliott inspired, drawn out of the same, lonely well that I, too, sprung from? How much beauty? How much life? And how can I begin to quantify that?
Elliott had an unwavering determination to face the world with a soft heart, no matter the cost. No one ever really disappears.

I think I’m learning to be honest with myself.

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**SCARS**

**BY DIANE READ**

I remember dressing up as a witch for Halloween when I was 8, and my mother did an expert job on applying “scar paste” to form an ugly nose with a wart on my face, as well as forming a pointy warted-chin before she smoothed the green makeup all over the paste. She then added black eyebrows, lips, and black lines that formed wrinkles to top it off. I won an award for best makeup at my school that day. I knew I looked expertly designed, scary, and when you are portraying a witch, that is essential. The scar paste also came in handy for my friend Susan who needed scars on her face for her zombie costume. Her scars were oozing blood red makeup that was seeping out of them. We definitely made a frightening combination as we strutted around from house to house trick-or-treating. Scars were unquestionably cool that day.

The day I learned how uncool scars were was when I was a ten year old and tried to do a backflip off of the diving board at the Roy Complex. As my body went into the water, my chin caught the edge of the diving board. I attempted to yell out an underwater scream, but it didn’t matter that no one heard me, because everyone saw the bright red blood beard and drop stains on my red, white and blue flag swimsuit as I exited the pool. A trip to the doctor and seven stitches later, my scar would remain hidden under my chin. It hurt for a time, but the main lesson I learned from that scar was to never try that stunt again. Big lesson learned: if you try to be a daredevil, you might get hurt. Scars can teach us that way. They become memories that we wear on our skin.

I will never forget a few years back, after having my thyroidectomy, the moment after when I would myself staring in the mirror at my neck. Everyone who noticed it and was brave enough to talk to me
would ask, “Did you have a tracheotomy?” That scar was strategically placed near my throat, and try as I might to conceal it, it was just too big for a turtleneck to completely cover. I had a four-month-old baby that I adored, and two other children who would be able to continue having a mommy because I chose to have the cancer removed and receive chemotherapy. My body had started healing and the cancer was gone. I had so many reasons to be happy, but that hideous scar from my neck surgery could not be ignored. Thyroid cancer had left its mark on my neck and my soul, and as much as I tried to bury the way it cut so sharply and so deeply, that scar left an ache so terrible that no amount of ointment or salve could remedy. I lived in a silent world. No one could know how hard it was for me to rise from the vapors of the fire that was caused by cancer and silently burned and scarred my soul.

Although I was still hurting, little by little, each day became a new gift to me. I started exercising more and eating healthier. I remember when I was undergoing chemotherapy and looking out the window of the hospital, at the oh-so-close, snow covered mountains, as I thought to myself, “Why don’t I take the time to notice how beautiful the mountains are that surround me?” They are enormous and majestic, but I never took the time to notice their rarity, and their beauty beyond description. I would find myself walking outside taking a deep breath of fresh air and thinking to myself, “Thank you God. I am breathing. I am alive today.”

One day, I was out to lunch with my sister. I met her directly after a well-child visit for my son. I mentioned to her that my doctor told me he knew someone who could take care of “that scar” on my neck for me. I tried to hold back the tears as he obviously noticed my scar. I asked her if she thought I should get it “taken care of?” She said, “Diane, I know you think your scar is ugly, but I don’t see ugly when I look at it. I see a badge of honor that tells me cancer tried to take Diane from us and she beat it.” She said, “Diane please don’t get it removed. Wear it proudly. It’s a badge of honor.” I am so grateful to my sister for helping me see that scar in a different way. It definitely left its mark, but changing my mind about it turned it into something special, something beautiful. From that moment on, I was never ashamed of it. Changing the way in which I thought about it made me stronger and it gave me courage to fight to become something better. I had been given a second chance at life. My neck scar made my life more meaningful.

The past 4 years have also been a series of several scars on my hands. Due to severe inflammatory osteoarthritis, I have had 10 joint replacement surgeries on my fingers and thumbs. I had to give up a lifetime career of hairstyling because of it. I was devastated, but then again, because I wore a “badge of honor” on my neck, I took courage and found myself picking up the shattered pieces, mending, and pursuing a career that I love of becoming a special educator. I feel like it is truly what I am meant to do, and I never would have found this path without my scars. People will gasp at the sight of my fingers and the scars that they hold. I certainly would not be cast as a hand model, picked to advertise soft and silky smooth hand lotion, but that has never been my dream.

Maybe it’s because I am older and have learned many lessons that tend to manifest themselves as scars that I find them to remind me of the many times I have been bruised and beautifully broken and lived to tell the tale. It no longer matters to me that I am marred by them, or marked by them. My scars are proof that I am mending. They are proof that something tried to: hurt me, cut me, kill me, and didn’t succeed. Oh yes, they did leave their mark, but that is what makes me unique.

I had it right when I went trick-or-treating as an eight year old. Scars are unquestionably cool. My scars have also made me more keenly aware of those around me who bare scars. Not only scars but other markings and differences that make human beings unique are treasures to me. My scars have helped me notice them—embrace them—and love them for their exquisiteness. If we were all the same life would be boring indeed! These individualities, in my opinion, should be celebrated. Scars are evidence of suffering, but oh, the stories they tell. I will be forever grateful that I am so beautifully scarred.
SUMMER JOURNAL
BY IZZY FERNANDEZ

Have decided to stop using sketchbooks for journaling entries as this is wasteful of good sketchbook paper. A more productive me will exacto knife these pages out of that bugger and make a sort of makeshift booklet which I will attach here. Also decided to hell with margins—I don’t need them, never wanted them. This is my journal, I’ll do what I please. I’ve had a couple ideas these last couple days—I present you a list:

1) Bring back fancy hats—hair pins would make great weapons, cool boxes.
2) Where is Orange Julius—why is no one talking about it?
3) Fish rollercoasters—or at least a playground for fishies—my fish are very rambunctious and would love a sort of air bubble tunnel thing—not on the market.

I forget the rest, though I am sure they are excellent and will come back to me in a dream. Hanging out with **** ***** tomorrow. God. I hate him. Our date wasn’t that good but he went on about how great it was, so I guess it was great. Didn’t watch a movie today but that is technology’s fault but not mine. Maybe postpone hangout with **** indefinitely. Oh! Fourth idea just came to me.

4) I am like water falling from the sky—each love I meet is like a cup—a vessel. As I fall from the sky (i.e. move through life) I get caught in a cup—then the cup tips or cracks or overflows (because there is always more of me to come) (and because I by nature cannot be captured forever) but instead of the water just hitting the ground (which is nonexistent—which is death) I just keep falling. And there are of course other vessels along the way that catch me—parts of me as I get closer to the nonexistent bottom (it never ends) I lose more of myself—broken up across time and space and people—fragments of me getting left behind. Until I am nothing—not a drop.

ALL THIS HAPPENS IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE
“You’re in the vacuum,” my aunt Cynthia said. She sat in an armchair, her feet resting on the back of Mocha, a silvering and overweight chocolate lab. Mocha was snoring.

“Like a space vacuum?” I asked. Cynthia and I sat alone in the semi-darkness of the living room with the door to the lanai open, a mellow breeze shifting the curtains.

“Yeah,” Cynthia said, “like space. You’re in the void.”

Void was a good way to describe how I felt. I’d just dumped my honorable and studious long-time boyfriend because he was too honorable and studious. It occurred to me that I wasn’t even twenty, and I’d come so close to marrying a pre-med student who cooked with margarine instead of butter because that is what I thought God wanted for me. Sitting with Cynthia, I puzzled over how long I had believed in something so wrong, and I realized that I could not be sure I’d ever known anything at all. I was in the vacuum.

“It’s good,” Cynthia said. “I think you have to be in that place before you can really know yourself. Before you can know God.”

A breeze pushed through the yard, and we listened as the long leaves of the banana bush whispered together.

“It’s quieter, there,” she said.

I listened for the ocean, but as the breeze died, it was quiet, the warm and dark tropical air muffling the sounds of the surf with its weight.

Growing up, my mom would take me and my siblings swimming at the river. One of these times, I put on my sister’s swimming goggles and put my face under the water, pinching my nose and admiring the stones and sand and crawfish and the darting sparks of silver minnows. I dared a glance up into the middle of the river. The water went from the sparkling clear by my feet to green, then rapidly into black and blacker black, and the black became a thick and tangible annihilation of sunshine, air, and life that slurped the breath out of my lungs and squeezed my heart in a throbbing pulse of anxiety. I was looking into the void. I recoiled, clawing my way out of the water. I pulled the goggles off my face, and collapsed weezing in the sand. My sister laughed at me and took her goggles back.

Sturgeon live in the Columbia River, the river of my childhood. Harmless, massive, bottom-dwelling fish as long as pickup trucks. My sister told me that they eat the bodies of people who have drowned. My dad told me that in rivers these invisible currents of water called undertows can pull your feet out from under you and drag you under the water. I considered myself au courant. The river was a predator, the sturgeon its mouth and stomach. It was higher in the food chain than I and demanded my respect.

When I was eight, I was baptized. In the weeks before my baptism, I stood in front of the white and baby blue couch upstairs, facing east, my bare toes tracing the imprinted pattern of the white woven carpet. Dad showed me how he’d dunk me, his hand on my wrist, my hand on his. The day after my eighth birthday, they filled up the font with water. I didn’t say so to anyone, but I hoped God would come to my baptism, or that if He couldn’t make it, maybe He’d send a dove or something like that. A little miracle or revelation or mystery. As my father lowered me into the water, I squeezed my eyes shut. There was a brief moment of deadened, dark silence as the water fell down over and around me, embracing me, burying me, before he pulled me up and out of the water again. I wished he had let me stay down just a bit longer. I knew how long I could hold my breath. The water was warm and clean and quiet. I wasn’t afraid. If God was waiting for me in the water, I didn’t have nearly long enough to see Him, and unless I forgot to keep my toes down or my hair floated up, I only got to be baptized once. Too soon I burst up and into the light. My lungs filled with air, my family smiled at me, and I smiled back.
A friend of mine drowned when I was eleven. He’d moved in the summertime with his family to Portland. That fall, he got lost in the ocean when he and his brother tried to save a little boy caught by a wave. They call them sneak waves; waves that stalk and ambush with swift and quiet grace.

Strangers found Ross’s body weeks after he died, and although they pulled him out of the water, put his body in a coffin, and buried it in the ground, in my mind his soul was still somewhere in the Pacific. My sister and I spoke of him after with a sort of sad and awe-filled reverence. He was a hero to us, a pioneer and pilgrim in a frontier we could not comprehend.

My family visits the Oregon coast almost every fall. A few years after Ross’s passing, we took little motor boats out to catch some crab. It was sleeting which was uncomfortable but novel. The bay was the sharp, dark, oily color of slate. With numb and clumsy white-cold hands, we heaved the crab traps out of the water, hauling up lengths of slick and salty rope which we coiled, dripping, at our feet.

We measured the crabs we caught with a sharp little steel ruler. We kept the big ones in a bucket where they’d claw sluggishly at each other, and the small ones we’d throw back in. They’d skip across the surface then slip below the curling water, their purple shells fading into gray as they sank, waving farewell, back into the abyss.

A stranger with a silver beard and a black rain slicker puttered up in another boat and handed us a waxed white paper package. Deer heart is the best crab bait, he told us. He puttered away again into the mist, trailing gasoline fumes and curious, black-eyed seals. We unwrapped the grisly gift, sleet falling quietly around us, clinging to our hair and melting in our eyelashes as we shivered and laughed.

We dropped stones which rattled and echoed for minutes at a time. Someone split open a glowstick and threw it down, spraying neon sparks as it bounced from wall to wall. Our feet dangled over the aquamarine constellation, a galaxy of chemicals on the stone walls, fading into a black hole at the center, where the glowstick stopped spraying or the light was too faint to resurface. The hole made me jittery. I had a vague notion that we were doing something illegal, and dangerous, and I was scared of heights, and methane, and black damp, and not knowing how deep it was, or what I’d find at the bottom if I went to it, or if it came up to me.

One friend brought a telescope, the huge kind that adjusts itself as you punch in specific angles and degrees. The friend spent some time setting it up then invited us to take a look. I was glad to get away from the shaft, and waited awhile for my time to look through the lens for Saturn.

When my turn came, I stooped down, the lens softly brushing the skin under my eyebrow. I closed my other eye and immersed myself in outer space. I thought I’d see the planet immediately, or at least a freckling of stars, but instead I saw only blackness fading into inky blackness. It filled my head.

The blackness was six feet of earth over a cool grave, and I felt as if the earth moved from its place under me, and the vacuum of space covered me, covered me so that I was tempted to scuff my feet against the dusty gravel, kick up the dirt and break my eye away from the telescope and the blackness of the sky and breathe in a lungful of warm, sage-laced gravity, but I couldn’t do that if I wanted to see a planet with almost my own eyes, I couldn’t break away because there was a line of people behind me, waiting behind me, and there the telescope was waiting, precise, in front of me, so I had to wait, in between, underneath, submerged in the black space between stars, I had to just wait and look, just look and see. And so I waited, half crouched, my lips sealed.

Saturn materialized, a drifting bright blob, and I blinked at the sudden luminance, a soft exhale escaping my lips as the planet came into clearer focus.

“I see it! I can see the rings,” I said, to no one but myself. Beautiful, curving, delicate rings!
They hung around Saturn at a jaunty tilt, circling the plump planet like an embrace. I stared at the planet for a few moments, memorizing her contours, the camber of her halo, then stepped back from the telescope. I took a few steps away and turned my face from the strangers behind me and towards the desert and cried for the miracle of Saturn and her perfect, silvery rings, so far from me and so close to me in the afterimage printed on my mind.

A few weeks after our first anniversary, my husband and I accompanied his aunt and uncle on a trip to Lake Powell. At night, the lake was a mirror to the sky, turning the arch of the Milky Way into a glinting oblong ring. In the early morning, the sun would rise and all the stars would sink down under the water of the lake until they flickered out.

One hot afternoon, with just my husband to keep me quiet company, I dove off the back of the boat and into the water. I’d resurface and pull myself out, and then dive in again and again. I loved the way it felt to break the velvety surface, the firm caress of cool water on my cheeks and eyelids.

I was still too nervous then to open my eyes under the surface, still too scared of what I’d maybe see in the deep water. Maybe the glassy-eyed sturgeon, or ghostly crabs clawing clumsily at hearts wrapped in white waxed paper, or vanished pioneers wandering through the void, or nothing but the blackness fading into a deeper blackness, with no light to resurface and no revelation to offer to me as I held my breath, pressed and buried under the weight of water. I can’t know for certain what I would have seen if I’d opened my eyes there in the deep dark water of Lake Powell, so cold under the white heat of the summer sun. I believe and I hope though that I might have seen Saturn, a bright sphere haloed in tilted, perfect, icy rings, nestled like a dove in the deep water.

Each of us has a story in our chest. The wonderfully terrifying truth about it just happens to be that we are the only ones that can tell the stories that hibernate within us. The question then persists. If we don’t tell them, who will?

As a team we were impressed by the amount of work and dedication in each piece we received. Every writer that submitted their work has done the hardest part and brought forth the story within them. They awoke that part of them that was waiting to be realized and gave it a platform.

Now it’s our turn, as readers, to take part in a piece of that magic. Human nature interacts and understands by the stories that surround us. From parables to fairy tales we learn countless lessons each time we read. This section is full of more than just stories: it’s full of lessons, experiences, warnings, and questions. It is our turn to experience the harvest, and from Weber State University, we can attest that the harvest was plentiful. I encourage each of us to take some time and become acquainted with the stories between these pages. You never know what they might awaken in you.
The frozen caps of the mountains look particularly eerie this morning, the snow and ice gleaming like a sharp point. I suppose it’s a miracle I can see them at all, this is the first day we’ve had remotely clear weather in a year! It’s so nice to see the bright blue sky again and to feel a little sun on my face. I breathe in the clear air, letting it all out slowly. I glance down the trail to see Eskimo with his nose pressed into the sky longingly. I’m not the only one enjoying today’s weather, I think fondly. I think we’ll take the day off, and it’s not often that we get those anymore. And even though it’s a fairly clear day, I can see fog drifting in over the mountains, the wind picking up. The clear days are getting shorter, and it’s not a good sign. It’s getting colder as winter nears, and I’m growing unsure of our location. The last location marker I found was three weeks ago, in Price city, and that said I was about 136 miles away. I dust the snow off of myself and head inside the worn cabin, Eskimo watches me, but opts to stay outside. My backpack is sitting on a torn-up chair and the saddlebag I made for Eskimo is slumped against the wall. I travel as light as I can, but I made Eskimo’s bag because I’m worried he’ll get lost. It’s filled with his food and a small blanket. He’s trained on how to open it in case he’s ever without me. I’d rather not think about him and I being separated.

I dig through my bag and pull out the map to figure out where we are. We’ve been walking for about six hours every day. Don’t forget that the icy weather and steep mountains don’t make it any easier. And though three weeks is a big chunk of time I feel as though our progress is all but nothing. Though if I had to guess we’ve made it about 105 miles since the last highway sign. So that leaves us with only 31 miles to go! And although that’s not a bad number at all, anything can happen in this weather. We can’t risk going off course nowadays. One wrong move could leave us... well... I sigh and slump to the floor, map in hand. I glance at it again, running my fingers over the glossy letters of Colorado. We have to make it, preferably without dying on the way. I chuckle darkly to myself. It’s times like these you need a sense of humor.

I hear the click of Eskimo’s paws as he pushes the door open with a concerned expression, well as concerned as a dog can be.

“Come Eskimo.” I call softly. He pads over and lays next to me, placing his head on my lap, though I can tell he wants to climb into my lap. Considering he’s 170 pounds of muscle and fur, I’d rather he didn’t. I stroke his soft ears, my heart filling with gratitude and relief. Eskimo is the only reason I’ve made it so far, and that’s not just because he’s the only living thing keeping me sane. I adopted Eskimo two years ago before the snow began. I wasn’t looking for a small, yippy dog, but my parents weren’t expecting me to pick a Caucasian Mountain Shepherd. But I was a huge nerd about breeds and refused to hear of anything else. The day Eskimo arrived was the best day of my life, his paws were bigger and disproportionate on his little body, but it was cute! My little sister, Alexa, even bought me a cute blue leash because blue is my favorite color. What a cute little thing she is, red hair and freckles on her chubby little cheeks. She’s turning nine this year from what I can remember. The fond memory brings a smile to my face, but it quickly fades. I won’t see her birthday this year either.

Sometimes I wonder how different my life would be if I had fled with them that day. The snow had been persisting for a while, the weather in Utah becoming colder by the day, and it was already summer. Since my college was a few hours away from home, my parents called me and told me they were planning on leaving. Being a med student, I was preoccupied with helping the local hospital treat incoming patients in this weather phenomenon, and so it was my decision to tell them to leave without me. Maybe I felt duty-bound... but if I had chosen to flee with them then I would know if they were alive. Not everyone who fled could make it out, the roads were already blocked with snow. And a fat lot of good it did to have me around in the end anyways. The hospital staff fled, patients fled, and so many perished. And I was left alone. Eskimo licks my cheek, well, not all alone.
The wind howls in my ear and claws at my clothes, lashing my skin with cold. The parka I’m wearing does nothing to stop the frigid air and my teeth are chattering incessantly. If it weren’t for the ski goggles gripping my face I’d be unable to open my eyes in this weather, however, they’re not doing me too much good either way. I can hardly see Eskimo in this weather I’m only gripping his fur with numbed hands, trusting him to guide our steps. The whole world is lost in the violent white that is snow and canyon walls, ready to crumble with the snow at any second. My body should be trembling to match the fear rising in my body, but my body is long past feeling.

Suddenly, I feel a tug on my arm, pulling me toward a looming shadow. I can only hope it’s Eskimo who’s got a grip on my arm and not a predator. I find myself out of the blinding white and in dim light. It takes a minute for me to realize I’m in a small cave and that Eskimo is still gripping my arm with his teeth, as though he were afraid of losing me. My legs give in sending me tumbling to the ground and I realize he’s right to worry. Dogs always seem to know. Eskimo curls up behind me, shielding me from the wind being inhaled by the jagged, gaping mouth of the cave.

As energy and feeling seep back into my body, I begin to tremble. After what feels like forever I curl my body into a tight ball and cry. Sobs rack my body so violently it begins to hurt, and I wish it could hurt more, I deserve it. My family might be dead and it’s all of my fault. And here I am, clawing my way out of this icy hell to no avail. I’ll die like everyone else did, strangers, friends and my family. Where is my family?! Not everyone who fled made it. Was it me telling them to go that condemned them to their death?! I’m vaguely aware of Eskimo trying desperately to shove his nose into my arms. He’s family too, he needs me just as much as I need him. I need to pull it together. I lower my arms and Eskimo is kissing me furiously, he’s crying and whining desperately. I wrap my arms around him and cuddle him within an inch of his life. We’re in this together, no matter how distraught or broken we become.

We haven’t moved an inch for an hour, my arms are sore and aching. Eskimo is at my side, watching my every move as I pick up my pack again and shuffle towards the outside. And we’re off. It’s been three hours now, and no sign of a house or any shelter. I’m starting to worry, but we still have another hour before I reach panic. As I reference my map again I feel a sharp tug on my sleeve and fall into the snow. Eskimo is frantically tugging on my arm and barking and all of a sudden, he’s gone! He’s sprinting into the snowy brush, off the road.

“Eskimo! ESKIMO! Come back!” I scream, scrambling after him. I shove through the brush, trying to follow his barking through the deep snow. Finally, I see him. He’s sitting under a bunch of trees, so covered in snow and ice it’s like a dome. He’s fussing over something, a creature or... a human. My blood turns to ice as I approach. We tried to steer clear of the deceased, so Eskimo’s interest has me on high alert.

As I approach Eskimo I can see why he pulled me off the road in a frenzy. It’s Alexa lying there, frozen and empty. I sink to my knees, but no tears come, just silence. Her red hair is in two braids, unkempt and rough. Her eyes are like glass and her face has never been so devoid of color, but the expression frozen in her face is harrowing. Such sadness and despair had been her only companions in death. She wasn’t the type to be sad. Memories flash before my eyes as if I’m the one facing death. Her laugh was the most wonderful sound in the whole world, yet I can’t remember it, just the joy it brought to me. Her favorite number was nine, just because we were nine years apart. My eyes begin to well up. Her ninth birthday isn’t coming at all. No one gets to celebrate her at all. A horrible wail breaks the silence and it is my heartbreak that rings out through the snow. I wish she could be celebrating her ninth birthday this year, even without me. I wish I could take her place. It had been selfish of me to keep trying, there was no point if she wasn’t there. I lift my head to look for my parent’s bodies, surely they were here too. Alexa’s loneliness and sorrow can’t be what she takes with her in this eternal peace. And so, with a quaking voice and trembling hands, I sit up tall and smile down at her as best as I can.

“Hey Alexa, it’s me, Madeline.” A pang in my heart reminds me of when she called me ‘Mabbie’ when she couldn’t pronounce my name. “I-It’s Mabbie sweetie. You don’t have to be sad anymore. I’ve found you, you’re
safe. Keep smiling, I’ll be there too someday.” Tears are streaming down my face, freezing to my cheeks in the frigid weather.

“I pinky promise,” I draw out a breathy laugh and wipe my eyes furiously. “I’ll find you again someday.” I bring my fingers to my lips and blow her a kiss, she used to try to catch the kisses in her tiny hands. I hope she chases this kiss until she has found her way home, to wherever eternal peace awaits.

I push myself shakily to my feet and stumble towards the bridge, Eskimo trailing behind. As we begin to cross the bridge I see something on the other side. It’s a sign but covered in thick snow. I brush off the snow to see the most beautiful words in the world.

‘Welcome to Colorful Colorado!’

We’re not out of the snow yet, but the trek to the south is tangible now. There is hope, even in the bleakest of moments. And so, we walk the thin line between despair and hope as we continue down the long road, leaving the sign behind.
know much at all. When I ordered the same thing, the couple looked at me proud and confused. Having what Dr. Beiser would call a crisis, I put my cash on the counter, grabbed a pink spoon, and leaned against the windowsill staring at what might have been my first and last real bowl of ice cream.

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I thought this to be a place out of time, out of reach from change. It was easy to say that the value of tears was greater than a free scoop of ice cream, but that ice cream left a stain that would never come out. On a Sunday, I walked past the store and caught myself looking through the closed glass doors back to where I first realized that vanilla was not a default flavor. I pretended not to notice the closed sign, grabbed the doors’ silver handles, and rattled them back and forth. The store was empty, nobody filling the chairs and tables, nobody hustling behind the metallic sheen of the counters. I shook back and forth, up and down. I let go of the handles and grabbed a rock nestled under a bush. Holding it in my hands, I smacked the glass door—I felt it bend before it cracked, snapped, and shattered in a glisten to the floor. I pulled glass shards out of my hand still gripping the rock. I hammered the display glass until it fell in crystals. Shouting, I threw the rock across the room and watched it skip off a table and into the wall. I stopped long enough to breathe the bubblegum air in and out, leaned against the counter behind me, and melted into a spindly puddle, face in my hands. I pressed my cheek to the floor. Remembered my infant hands touching the same place. Felt those hands on my face and curled into a ball.

This is bigger than the two of us. It’s bigger than all of us.

I was the first to see the crater—sinking into a cornfield in the outskirts of Nebraska. I was eighteen, cruising cross-country, thought my eyes were playing tricks on me. All the news headlines at the time focused on the worsening hurricanes, the lengthening of tornado season, and the dead polar bears, fish, dolphins, whales, penguins. The glaciers just kept on melting. Now, the Earth was melting, too, right on the edge of Nebraska, and the news found it soon enough, tickling the sides of Missouri and the feet of Iowa by then.

The scientists had no real explanation for the multi-state crater. Some said it was a fault line, but it would have been one-of-a-kind. It seemed bottomless, like a dark night with no stars, as if the earth was tearing itself apart, opening the way to its heart, waiting for a stabbing to end all of its suffering.

The hole became a spectator sport. Perfectly round with a hundred-mile diameter, farmers would plop their fold-up chairs on all sides and cheer each time the edge of the hole pressed up to a line of chalk they’d drawn. Teenage girls threw in ex-boyfriends’ sweaters; criminals threw in evidence. Not a soul could find the bottom. Bear Grylls started to repel into the hole, but when the camera crew lost connection to his audio feed, they pulled him up, dazed and pale. It was his last bout with the wild.

Whole towns fell into the sinkhole. Pastors and prophets declared the end of days and called for repentance. President Trump suggested building a wall around it, but nobody would fund something that wouldn’t make a difference. Poets speculated about the depth of the hole, its perfect shape.
Linguists said there was a pattern to the creaks and groans that came out of the vast opening, but it was the hippie vegans who understood it first. The crater demanded sacrifice—a single human sacrifice. It demanded you.

Back when I first saw the crater, you were in the passenger seat with the back reclined. Your hair blew over your face and back behind you. The curve of your eyelids and breasts showed reverence to the concave curve of your stomach. We left everything we knew to start together. You gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. We named them after the wind and tide.

Now, I’m twenty-three. Our twins are both four years old, and they have a little sister, but you say you’ll go. The news already calls you Mother Earth. They guilt you into it, not that you need that. You were convinced the moment you heard your name echo from the deep black. Don’t buy into it, I say.

It’s bigger than the two of us, you say, it’s bigger than all of us.

The lip of the crater is across the street from our home. I say all that I can to get you to stay. You walk out the front door, our children crying. I run after you.

You step off the porch. Lights flash from all sides. You leave your shoes by the front door, and with the next step you pull your bracelet off. You’re not wearing earrings, but you unbutton your dress, and it falls by the mailbox. I’m shaking and screaming your name and the names of our kids. You let your hair fall down over your shoulders. It reminds me of you sleeping in the passenger seat. You stand before the abyss, naked as the Earth. You place your wedding ring in soil next to the lip of the hole. You turn to see me: all I can do is nod. You are already stepping in as I say, I love you. The grace of your fall says it back to me and to the billions of husbands, wives, daughters, sons, brothers, sisters that are watching you. I want to ask you what it feels like.

The hole stays in the same place you leave it. It acts as a vacuum for all the bad in the world, the waste, the hurricanes, the tornadoes. No one finds the bottom. The kids and I don’t look for it. What you did was bigger than us. It was bigger than all of us. And so, the Earth let you in.

Tex has always felt like a brother to me; the kind you say “oh” before. Yesterday, in the TV room Tex looked up from his phone and asked me, “Ever think about them birds in Oklahoma?” I hadn’t, and I told him so. “I’s reading this article on BuzzFeed about cops there. They’s getting bad,” Tex said, “shot a kid with none of his clothes on.” You’re kidding, I said. “No,” he said, “it’s all over the news.” Now what’s that gotta do with birds, I asked. “I think they should know, too, you know; they got no clothes neither.”
“Life needs regrets,” I say. He thinks I’m poetic, but it’s something I read in a trainyard last week. Raindrops on the tree above our table droops its branches into our line of sight. “Ferns are my second favorite tree,” Clark says. “What’s a fern?” I ask. Clark puts his glass down, stares at me through the eyes. “You’re right,” he says, “let’s get outta here.” “I know a place,” I say. “I know it, too,” Clark says. The rest of the night we lick the paint off a bridge over the Hudson, like we did when we were kids.

I fall forward on my tiptoes and stretch myself upwards to the milk jug. It teeters and topples and then falls into my arms. I pour it into yolks of cells. An egg is a cell. That’s what teacher tells us. The milk splashes just like bath water, and then I cap it.

The yolks spill out nicely ‘cept for the last bit. I ask it nicely at first. I say, “Will you please go into the hot pan? Sorry for the inconvenience.” But it knows what heat does. It says, “No thanks. Have a good day.” I let scraping fingers reply instead of my words. I know it will never be the same egg. A chemical change makes things new. Teacher also taught us about change.

I count to fifteen before I flip the egg. I am a very patient cook. But it’s still mushy. I play a game with the kitchen tiles while I wait. It’s kinda like hopscotch ‘cept I don’t have a puck so I use a raisin instead.

I’ve decided the spatula isn’t a very good flipper. It left the black stuff it’s made out of on the egg. I declare this whole thing to be a bloody shame then put the spatula in time out.

I do it all times seven and then call out really loud just in case someone is listening through the walls. Then I make deliveries just like the people do on the show with the really big cakes. I take loads of plates all at one time so I can practice my balancing skills, too.

“Father,” I say. “Father, I’m sorry that I spoiled your dinner.” He has just informed me that the black marks weren’t from the spatula. He is a very busy man, so sometimes I must say things twice to him. “Father, I—”

“Don’t mention it,” he says. “Don’t even mention it.”
I return to my place, wash my hands, and begin again and again and again until I am eye level with the milk jug. With practiced hands, I make the same mistakes, utter weary apologies, and pronounce the rehearsed refrain: “Come and eat.”

I had never known my father to be a kind man, and only seldom a sober man. Instead, he was a man’s man. A manly man. A man of conviction and frequently few words. When he spoke, people listened, as such was a spectacle. His voice seemed to come to him only when he was home, reclined in his office chair, downing another drink.

My friends and I used to play dress-up. My friends, unlike me, were girls. It didn’t matter to me that the games weren’t for boys, that playing Hopscotch made you fruity, that playing House meant you were gay.

But it mattered to him.

Ten across the rear, laid over his knees. My father wore his wedding ring despite the empty house, and the hollow band hurt most of all with every heavy-handed blow. Slurred shouts and mutterings told me nothing, and I’d pull my shorts up and whimper off none the wiser, only smarter.

My cheeks were red. I breathed warmly into my hands before hugging myself close, faintly smiling and nodding at the strangers slipping past. Frost covered the grass, each step a dull crunch. At work, he was lauded; the man I knew, a stranger to them.

My father worked with his hands until they were thick with calluses, black with oil and grease. He knew how everything worked. He could take a machine apart and put it together again. That’s what he did: He fixed what was broken. That’s what he always wanted to do.

He beat me again during high school, when Homecoming came and went. How dare I, he growled, how dare I turn her down. I could smell the hatred on his breath, could see it in the way he swayed,
could feel it as his fist met my stomach, his heel coming down on my ribs. Before, I was barred from my feminine friends; now, I was wrong to stay away. We understood each other, my father and I. We only disagreed.

I was the last to enter the building, finally warm and relaxed. People spoke together in small groups, clusters of activity, bearers of memory. I overheard kind words and amusing tales about a man I would have liked to have known, now lying just a few yards away.

A sleepover was where we learned what Hopscotch had done to me, that House had been an accurate predictor in my case. My father had tasked me with finding a boyfriend, and I had exceeded his expectations. I next saw him at school through a shiny, black eye, the result of tripping headlong into a doorknob, I’d said. The more I healed, the less of him I saw. Still my father yelled. You don’t treat symptoms, you cure the disease.

Myocardial infarction. That’s what did him in, in the end. A result of his smoking, diet of red meats, and family history. I stood by his casket for longer than I ever anticipated, staring down at his still face, looking over the suit I don’t think he ever owned. He almost looked peaceful.

His face would always contort whenever he watched the games on TV, shouting at people who couldn’t hear him, at people who knew far better than he did. Then, he was surprised when I showed no interest. I couldn’t throw a ball, nor did I really want to, but that, for some reason, only made him mad. A waste of potential, he said. A fucking fairy. I wasn’t allowed to go back inside until he was finished, or until he was drunk enough that he didn’t notice me leave.

I left out the entrance, returning to the cold as others stayed seated for the eulogies. I’d spoken my piece, something I’d crafted just for them, telling everyone what they wanted to hear. People wept. I didn’t know who I was lying for, frankly: myself, my father, or them. It didn’t seem to matter in the end. I’d done what I was supposed to do.

Men were never supposed to be nurses, my father said, ever. Men were doctors. Women were nurses. I asked why he thought he was above women, and he slapped me. He had fought for this country, for the rights of every-one. Who was I to judge, he asked. I moved out a month later, devoting my time to work and school. He didn’t offer to help; I didn’t ask him to.

I watched as they lowered him into the ground, into the hole they had dug for him in the frozen earth. I scuffed my feet across the frost, rubbed my arms as I shivered. I was cold, but still had warmth left in me. What separated us most now was that he had nothing more to give—a dead man, a buried man—and I wished I could have felt more than I did.

I was the last to leave. I stood above him in silence, thinking back one last time. Then, I murmured, Goodbye, and turned away.
I saw a sparrow in a rosebush. My sister Lydia probably would be able to tell you what kind it was and which birds it was most closely related to or possibly even the species of rosebush too. But I still appreciated it sans Latin. The bird was a mottled shade of brown, with nervous eyes and a lithe, jittery body. It was alone, and bounced around the rubbery twiggy branches, dodging thorns and old brown rose petals, shriveled and lacking their former beauty. I don’t remember how long I stood there and stared at it, but I remember coming back to my body and seeing the sparrow wasn’t there and feeling a chill blowing through my woolen coat and watching my bus leave me behind to stare at its butt and the spot on the horizon where I could no longer see its black smoke anymore.

Ever since Lydia went missing, I see birds everywhere, like she Snow-Whited them into watching over me. When she was eight, she started birdwatching with my grandfather since all his other grandkids – including me – decided it was too boring to wait around for a bird to take interest in his backyard bird feeder. I had to revisit many good, painful memories from that time when I went through her closet. The lease on her apartment ran out and she still hadn’t turned up, so Mom and I had to pack up her stuff. I recalled waking up to Lydia and Grandpa sitting on his porch, talking about a stray trill or twitter, and it brought me a pang of remorse. Her balcony had a deluxe bird feeder similar to Grandpa’s, nearly emptied of all its birdseed. Mom didn’t want to touch it, so I had to take it down. I imagined it full, with Lydia watching its eager visitors through her glass door.

Mom loved Lydia but had trouble understanding her obsession with birds. I knew I had to take responsibility for all her birdwatching equipment, which she treated as sacred artifacts. All her cameras and field notebooks are painstakingly arranged in containers under my bed. I periodically check on them as though I think she’ll crawl in and move around her things like a perfectionistic boogeyman while I’m asleep. I still barely know the difference between and lark and a finch, but I’ll be damned if I don’t shine her binoculars every night. They were our Grandpa’s, and after he died, she never left the house without them before she disappeared. I’ve taken up the habit of keeping them in my bag too as if they could protect me from her fate. I don’t know why she didn’t take anything with her. She left her apartment in the middle of the day and walked down the street and vanished.

Lydia, in a sense, was the heart of the family. She became an ornithologist, which is just a fancy name for a birdwatcher with a degree in biology, but whenever she wasn’t in the field, she’d ask me to stay at her little apartment and we’d bake cookies and watch old movies. I didn’t inherit the outdoorsy gene from either side of my family, so when Mom and Dad got antsy, she’d go on camping and fishing trips with them and let me stay home. She was free-spirited but grounded and kind and so annoying when she pointed out the species of every dirty street bird that crossed our path when we walked around downtown together.

I managed to catch the next bus that came around. The empty rosebush rushed away and I imagined from its point of view that I was just a spot on the horizon that went up in black smoke. I imagined Lydia turned into smoke too, but not inky and grainy like me or the bus. She would be nebulous around the edges and filled with gentle tendrils and smell like birdseed and cookies. As the bus idled at an intersection, I spotted pigeons huddled on top of the traffic lights. They were gray and cold but cute and together. I had to smile, but her weighty binoculars in my bag grew heavier.
My face is captured in the pink hue of the neon sign above. A pouring rain creates dark puddles that fill the alleyway, they reflect many other lights and ads back to my eyes. But this one glows the brightest and doesn’t flicker in and out like the others. “Broken Hearts Fixed Here!” the sign insists.

Below this message is an unremarkable vendor stand. The windows are covered with dark curtains so that only a faint warmth peeks out at the edges. A red door that leads inside is shut in front of me.

Do I want to take the risk? This “fix” is probably some black-market neural modification. Last year, a mod nicknamed “Happy Jack” was distributed to block depressive pathways in the brain. Instead, it caused a mass suicide endemic that affected more than thirty sectors. All cerebral enhancements come with risks, some more severe than others.

Ignoring the side effects, would a pathway mod even help me? My wounds feel too deep to ever mend. She left so abruptly, taking all my desire to live with her. If a mod installed by this vendor does have an adverse effect on me, would I really mind? The pain in my chest and the fog in my head beg me to venture forward. Loneliness compels me enough to open the red door.

My eyes adjust to the warm light inside. A sleeping older man is slumped behind a haphazard counter that looks like it might collapse at any moment. Real plants and trinkets line the walls of the shop. Fluffy bright colored couches, chairs, and pillows take up the center of the room. A shimmery sheer curtain leads to another area at the back where a harsh white light creates shadows on the floor.

A voice pulls me out of my observant reverie. It’s the old man, awake now, his eyes are open and covered in cloudiness.

“Hello, I am the Fixer,” he says in a soft voice, “and who are you?”

“Cassandra,” I answer and smile politely. I realize he can’t see my face and return to my sullen state.

The Fixer slowly arises from behind his station and approaches me. He comes closer and fumbles for my hands. Unlike my own, his hands feel creased and worn. The Fixer bows his head to me. I return the gesture hoping he can feel the emotion of it.

“Cassandra, how are you grieving today?” Something about his voice and spirit makes it easier to respond.

“The person I love has left me.” My heart shrivels.

He pats my hand gently. “A broken heart for sure, sit please.” The Fixer gestures to the many chairs in the center of the room. I sink into one wrapped in plush purple velvet. The old man occupies a well-worn chair with a high back. It must be his favorite.

“You have come here to become whole again. I know of two ways to accomplish your goal,” The Fixer explains. “I have in my possession a neural pathway dampener that will target painful memories and dull them immediately. The quick and relatively painless dampener is your first option. The other way is a choice better made in ignorance, so I will not explain it to you. My hope is that by the end of our conversation you are fully aware of both paths and their consequences, so that you may choose which will benefit you more.”

I am confused and skeptical. How am I supposed to choose something if I don’t know what it is? The other option seems bleak as well. But the pain in my chest begs me to stay.

“How do we start?” I ask the Fixer with a hesitant tone.

“Tell me everything you can think of about your partner that has left you. Every memory, every detail. Do not stop until I tell you to. I suggest you start at the beginning.” He smiles and sits back in his chair.

I do just that. What have I got to lose? I tell him how I met her on a commercial flight back to Earth. She was an orbital flight attendant hoping to
someday transfer to an interstellar spaceline. Whenever she had a night back on Earth, we would find each other. But gravity made her feel too heavy and she never stayed long. We fought back and forth about who would follow who to what star system. I was too afraid to leave; she was too restless to stay. I tell the fixer of the day she accepted the transfer to Omega-6, lightyears away. I tell him how nothing could stop my tears as she walked through the door, never to return. I recall her shining smile, brighter than any star.

We talk for hours, going over every detail of our partnership. Sometimes the fixer asks me questions, but most of the time I fill the void myself. By the end, I am drained and out of breath. I did not expect to feel everything all over again.

At one point the Fixer tells me to stop. He rises from his seat and beckons me to follow him. He takes me back through the shimmery curtain I saw when I first entered the shop. Behind it is a crude machine of cold shiny metal, the white light still casting harsh shadows on the walls. The dampener.

“Would you throw away everything you have shared with her just to avoid the pain?” He asks, eyes tearful.

“No.” I sob.

The fixer smiles with unfathomable joy and I do too. “You have chosen the other path.” He tells me.

I thank him and exit with my pain. I look back up at the pink neon sign as I leave and notice that it is wrong. The Fixer does not fix broken hearts, he acknowledges them, and that is much more than I had hoped for.

ENERGY
BY JESSICA ARCHIBALD

The man didn’t believe in Heaven. Or Hell. Purgatory. Nirvana. Any of it. He was far too scientific to believe in such myths. One did not become the most lucrative inventor of his time, or a successful businessman, by following the unfounded beliefs of ancient people who’d died during a bygone era. The soft orange glow of the light-bulb brought forth shining proof of electricity. Preachers screaming about lost souls and white steepled churches provided nothing to prove that pearly gates awaited anyone— let alone existed. It was a fanciful dream conjured by those afraid beyond reason to slip into the deep darkness of death. A story told to children to scare them into morality and conformity.

He believed in something entirely different. Something more founded. Something provable. Perhaps even undeniable.

This man believed in ghosts.

Not the glowing, screeching ones of motion pictures or the white sheets floating down the hall, though. Those were ludicrous cases meant to ignite imagination and trick unsuspecting siblings into jumping. They were no more plausible than the fairy tales about big bad wolves devouring grandmothers. He believed in the real thing, the kind of spirits that had solid founding in logic. Recycled consciousness, or some type of residual presence left over after the body has grown gray and cold. Simply energy following the laws of conservation. One’s mind couldn’t just cease to exist. Nothing just vanished. Matter and energy alike were recycled over and over again. Never created anew or destroyed. There was something more to the supposed eternal slumber. Something viable— unlike the tales of choirs singing to a backdrop of heavenly harp music high in the clouds.
And some kind of residual energy made sense. ‘Particles of personality’ resisting the decomposition of the corpse.

Evidence stood behind his theory, too. People had come into direct contact with these particles of energy, fragments of soul. Photographers captured them on film in their family portraits that had an extra member in the scene — an opaque likeness of a member passed away floating beside their loved ones to make themselves known one last time. Some heard the hollow rapping against the wooden walls of their homes when no one else was anywhere near them. Voices echoed through empty rooms, filling them with uncanny false-life as they carried to a lone inhabitant’s ears. Books set on a nightstand found their way across the room and onto the highest shelf of a bookcase that no living person in the house could reach. More could speak about it than couldn’t. If everyone had their own story about this concept of a lingering soul, it couldn’t be ruled out. So many people saying the same thing had to mean their words had some basis in truth. A truth that could be the undeniable answer to every question mankind had about their ultimate fate.

There was only one way for him to confirm that truth. He had to experience it for himself.

So he announced his ambitions to the world, secretly basking in the attention the statement had brought about as a side effect. It had been awhile since he’d stepped out into the spotlight like that, but people still listened when he described his ‘spirit phone’ meant to reharmonize the personality particles dispersed by one’s death as though the body still contained them. Scientists with their staunch skepticism scoffed at the very idea he had decided to pursue.

Spiritualists applauded with excitement, seeing his efforts as a way to confirm their pseudoscience as something corporeal. His assistants each cocked their brows as he began working, but said nothing as he buried himself in hastily jotted notes about the innate workings of electricity and diagrams plotting the supposed current of life force flowing through all creatures.

He worked without distractions for weeks, shutting out everyone. Gray stubble grew over his cheeks without opposition as the bags under his eyes blackened with the obsession of a dying man. Sometimes he forgot to eat as he became increasingly close to finding the right combination for making the energy of the soul hum with life. After that, it became common for him to forget to sleep as well. Even bathing was put off as blueprints collected over his desk. Though he knew many of them would never amount to the right sequence to allow the dead to speak, there was one he would have bet money on being the winning combination. All he needed now was a prototype. One test would prove his theory, answering the age-old question with science.

Piece by piece, he began building his machine to call the dead, but with each piece placed, he grew sicker. Eventually, he had to stop, his project only half-finished. His assistants gathered his mess of notes and blueprints and odd parts meant to be added to the spirit phone with the promise of continuing his work until he had recovered to finish it. They didn’t keep their promise but he never knew.

His personality snapped free from his body that week, the disarray of energy never to be reharmonized.
A FOREST DARKLY
BY KATIE CASEY

Neverlily lived lonely in a little cottage in the woods. They liked it that way, to be safe, to be themself in the freedom found in the sanctuary of the Mother of all things. The animals were their friends, the water was crisp and cool, the air thrummed with an incredible power that one only had to close their eyes and focus to feel; one only had to listen to learn. The woods did not judge. The earth did not discriminate. Neverlily was safe in the cradle of moss and pine, and no one would hurt them here.

Being a “witch of the woods” suited Neverlily just fine; they enjoyed helping and also enjoyed spooking when the situation arose. There was a power in being a rumour, in the ambiguity of hearsay and mixed messages. Neverlily could be real, or they could be myth, whichever they so chose on a given moon.

They could help the lost traveler, the one running low on water and desperate just to leave and see their home again, the injured and afflicted that were cast out from towns and parties for some silly reason or another; Neverlily could give them peace and purpose, aiding animals or others, or guiding them to wise folk that knew the woods nearly as well, whose compassion and cleverness only aided in the ambiguity. Or Neverlily could terrify the nasty young men that would come in to overhunt, to boast of their courage and promise to take down the monster.

These Neverlily liked less. There was an acrid sort of air that spread wherever the young men strutted about, bragging that they were fearless, that there was no creature, real or rumour, that they could not best. When these came into Neverlily’s woods, it was a new game to see how fast Neverlily could reel them in and then send them shrieking out, vowing to come back with a fiery mob or never to return. No such band ever showed up, the grownups generally too wise or disbelieving to give heed to the childish demands of “kill the beast!”

Then there were the special ones that Neverlily made sure never left the trees. These were the cruel, the dark, the monsters that blackened the ground on which they walked with dark intentions. Neverlily knew plenty of wolves; these were monsters of a different kind entirely. Their prey was seldom deer or hens. They enjoyed hunts of a darker nature. Young men and women, lured with promises of love and forever, came in to find these monsters, but Neverlily was there, these were their woods, and no one would be harmed unless by their will. The intended would get turned around and never find their way deep enough to be caught by the monsters, eventually wandering back home, hearts perhaps broken but still safe.

Their hunters, however, would meet Neverlily.

A man wandered through the woods to the prearranged meeting place. He was certain his target would show sooner or later; the look in her eyes when he had proposed elopement had been promise enough. It was dark now, though, and he was considering calling it a night. Then came the snapping of branches, and he felt his excitement mount. No need for a longer con.

But as he peered through the woods, he saw a breathtaking young woman, certainly not his mark.

She was clad in a tattered ball gown, looking like she had just escaped from some terrible fate, and oh, but she was lovely, like a fairy story made flesh. Her skin was luminous in the rising light of the moon, her hair like starlight, and her eyes big and brown like a prized doe. Oh, she was a much better prize than the plain little thing he’d been pursuing earlier. He walked towards her, her apparent fear subsiding into some manner of relief at the sight of another person.

“What’s a lovely lady like yourself doing out here all alone?” he asked, putting on his usual mask of charming insincerity.

“’I’m lost, sir—may I trouble you for directions? There was an accident... bandits....” Her breath was shaky, barely there as she looked around furtively.
“I absolutely can, my dear. I’ll even show you to the inn, if you like,” he added with a pleasantly warm smile that she appeared to respond well to.

A nod of her head and he set off along the paths.

Seven minutes later and they were back to where they started. She didn’t seem to notice, much to his relief.

Three more of those circles and his facade was fading. He was frustrated, angry at something, though he wasn’t sure what.

“S-sir, if I may... I think we ought to stop by that pond to get our bearings,” the maiden suggested, and he nodded, brows furrowed. If he didn’t know better, he would swear this was the exact sort of thing he himself would do when... well. But that was daft. She looked as harmless as a butterfly.

But even a butterfly will drink blood when presented with the opportunity.

He turned away for just a moment, and something changed.

Where once there was an enchanting young woman, a beastly figure stood: great and terrible, with fur like the moon and teeth and claws like daggers, standing even taller than himself on its hind legs. A monster to be sure but dressed in the clothes of a fine nobleman. Or once fine. Like the lady’s ball gown, this beast’s clothing was in tatters.

“What are you?” He knew the question was pointless, just as he knew what that glint in this monster’s eyes screamed.

He received no answer.

The last thing he saw were those eyes, brown like a bear’s.

Neverlily washed themself in the pond after. Another game won, another life saved.

The woods hummed their approval, and the creatures within had food for the coming cold.

Neverlily lived lonely in a little cottage in the woods. They liked it that way.
dating people. I think I had a phase in elementary where I tried kissing all the boys in my class, but I didn’t really want to do it. It’s just what I thought normal was. I wanted so desperately to be normal, and I never even realised that I had failed so spectacularly at that just by being born.” She nodded, but her eyes never left mine. We were both suddenly admitting things to each other that we never thought would leave our mouths, saying words that we didn’t know how to say. “So you don’t think any less of me?” She asked. I nodded. “I’m thinking about you, yeah, but not in the way I used to. It isn’t any less, but it isn’t any more. Just... different. I’m thinking about myself in just the same way. Different.” I wasn’t sure who I was or what I was anymore. I just kept staring at her and she kept staring at me. “I don’t think any less of you, either,” she said. “I don’t think I could if I tried.”

According to the story below, accurately calculate to the nearest minute the difference in time between the pizza arriving at Clara’s house and the call she received from the hospital.

Blake normally leaves his office at five-thirty p.m. each night, and it typically takes him an hour to commute back to his house, although tonight he left ten minutes early, bringing home bad news. Coincidentally, his wife Clara was ordering a pizza delivery at the same time, celebrating her husband’s promotion that he had been anticipating since the day before.

Deliveries for that particular restaurant take an average of half an hour to bake, and the drive was predicted to only take fifteen minutes to get to the house. Emily was assigned to both make and deliver the pizza, and today she was late to check-in, whimpering something about her boyfriend breaking up with her. Flour mixed with tears as she kneaded the dough and poured the sauce, and those same tears filled her vision, which made her take an extra ten minutes to fully bake the pizza. Grabbing the wrong set of keys she struggled for a minute with the car, then realized that she grabbed the wrong ones, and after three minutes, she returned with the right set. Hurriedly throwing the pizza in the car, she began speeding down the road towards the house with only two minutes to make it. In a haze of depression, Emily didn’t notice the intersection’s light go red until it was too late.

Jarring crashes of metal against metal rocked both Emily and Blake as Emily’s car bisected his. Kicking the twisted door out of its frame, Emily dropped onto the hot pavement, groaning in pain. Lacking any medical knowledge, the bystanders asked Emily what they could do to help, and one man agreed to finish delivering the
pizza, dropping it onto Clara’s porch twenty minutes after Emily had left
the pizzeria, the pizza already cold.

More people forced Blake’s door open while one dialed up the nearest hospital. Not noticing the golden ring on the smoking asphalt, the hospital initially assumed that he was single, and decided to hold off on contacting anyone he might know until he regained consciousness.

Opening her front door, Clara found the pizza with a note on it that had been hastily scribbled. Probably cold, sorry for everything.

Quickly growing more and more worried as she heard sirens and watched the clock tick closer towards seven, Clara tried calling Blake’s phone, only to hear lonely static in return.

Resting on a white bed in a dull gray room, Blake slowly opened his heavy eyelids. Startled, he tried to sit up quickly, only to feel knives of pain in his lower back. Talking was difficult through swollen lips, but he managed to give the nurse what was almost his wife’s number just as the electric clock beeped the hour mark. Unfortunately, the last digit was incorrect; the nurse sadly ended the call.

Vines of twisting color shrouded Blake’s vision as he tried once again to give the nurse the correct number. Shaking with pain, his left hand faintly scribbled the ten digits onto the back of a surgery form, and the nurse successfully made the call ten minutes after her first attempt.

X-rays were then taken, showing a broken man whose life had just been shattered.

Yearning for food, Blake asked for something to eat, and the doctor just happened to have a fresh pizza nearby.

Zoom in on the intricacies of this story to find the answer, and make sure to show your work.

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The dead duck lies frozen to the ground at my feet in front of our apartment building, snow drifting down gently around it. Its feathers are ruffled and broken, ice crystallizing around the soft tufts. A thick, viscous black goo has spilled from its bill, coating it in a dark sludge. Oil? No, it’s too thick to be oil. Tar, maybe? No. That’s not right either.

I prod the duck with my foot, careful not to touch the goo. It’s frozen solid, so why is this obsidian mass still slowly inching down the sidewalk toward me?

“What are you looking at now, Charlie?” Sarah asks, ahead of me. I jump at the sound of her voice, and accidentally put the tip of my shoe in the goo. The goo gives slowly, almost suctioning onto my shoe, pulling me in. I move back sharply, feeling an irrational fear grip a slippery hold on my heart.

“Nothing,” I answer, carefully stepping around the duck. She has the door open with one hand and holds Timmy’s hand with the other. He bounces up and down, splashing in the slush with my old snow boots. As I walk, I violently scrape my shoe against the ground, attempting to scrape off the goo. My stomach turns. I can’t stop thinking about the squish it made, the give I felt as I stepped in the sludgy goo. It clung to me. I know it did. It reached its nasty, thick oozing arms up and embedded itself in my shoe. I scrape more vigorously. Sarah shoots me a weird look, about to ask a question, but instead, she just sighs and turns around.

“You boys are more than I can handle sometimes,” She mutters under her breath as she walks into the building. Sometimes I wish my father had never married Sarah. She rarely has time for us and is hardly home because she always works all the time. She’s never
I want to get to know me, to understand me. She’s always doing something else. She doesn’t listen to me either. Maybe if she had, dad wouldn’t have gotten sick. I knew that he was gonna get sick. I told her but she didn’t listen. She didn’t believe me. Dave doesn’t believe me either. Therapists never do. They all tell me the same thing. They tell me that cancer is normal, it can happen to anyone. They don’t know the truth. They won’t believe the truth.

I walk inside the warm building, my right leg uncomfortable as I track the goo in. I know I didn’t get it all off. Its gross, sticky blackness is too stubborn to come off with just a few scrapes.

I stop at the base of the stairs and carefully take my shoe off, holding it away from my body. Sarah stares at me, exasperation present in the slump of her shoulders and the lines of her forehead. “What are you doing now, Charlie?” she asks tiredly. Timmy jumps up and down the steps, stumbling in his too-large boots.

“I got goo on my shoe,” I explain, hoping that she will understand and not look so sad anymore. I hold the shoe a little further away from myself. I can feel the goo creeping up the edge of the lip, reaching for me.

“There is melted snow all over the place. Your foot is going to get soaked,” she says. I stare at her, confused. She huffs and continues up the stairs, shaking her head. Why doesn’t she understand that a wet foot is a thousand times better than letting this goo touch me? The goo is menacing. I can’t let it touch me. It’ll infect me.

My breath catches in my throat as fear finally finds its grip on my heart. Reality sinks in and the goo hastens its attack, coming for me. I’ll get sick. I’ll die.

Just like dad did.

I move, pushing past Sarah and Timmy as I sprint up the stairs. I really need to put this shoe down now. I remember where I’ve seen this goo before. I know why it was so familiar.

White lips painted in dark ink, sludgy goo laying on a still chest.

I push the memory back again and run faster. Was it even real?

“Hurry!” I call down the stairs, anxiously bouncing in front of our door. I need to put this shoe down now. Sarah has the keys. I can’t get in. I start to sweat.

“Calm down for God’s sake, Charlie,” She yells up the stairs, moving achingly slow. My breath picks up. I’m too scared to look, but I know it’s close, mere centimeters from my fingertips. My head grows light, my blood pulsing rapidly against my temples.

The door is finally opened, and I dash in, throwing the shoe violently into the garbage can and sprinting down the short hall to the bathroom, slamming and locking the door. I turn the water on hot and scrub my hands, violently scratching and scraping my nails against my skin as suds filling the sink. It touched me. I know it did. I could feel it. It was warm and it shouldn’t have been warm. It was coming from the mouth of a frozen duck, stuck to the frozen ground. Why was it warm?

Terror fills my veins with liquid ice, frost blooming across my heart. Panic clambers up my stomach and scuttles its way into my head, making me dizzy and breathless. I can hear Sarah yelling at me, but I can’t quite make out what she’s saying.

“Don’t touch my shoe!” I scream, choking on the sentence. My breath comes in short gasps, my throat squeezing shut. My shaking hands turn red under the water.

“I’m going to work,” She yells back, anger evident in her tone. “Watch Timmy and make sure he eats. And take your damn shoe out of the garbage can.” I hear the door slam behind her, shutting out any outside help.

My stomach rolls, a sea of churning acid within.

A high-pitched ringing fills my ears, mixing with the running water and grating against my eardrums. I hurriedly turn the water off, pressing my wet hands against the countertop. It’s freezing. The broken tiles under my feet run a chill up my spine, forcing me to shudder. The motion sends my body into a frenzy as my stomach twists and my arms shake. There is something in my stomach, and it wants to come out.
The thing inside of me fights its way up my insides, twisting my gut and bending my back as I begin to retch, gagging on my own tongue. Inhuman noises escape from my mouth, my stomach heaving over again, but it won’t come out.

It’s stuck in my throat. My air has been cut off. I gag and choke, tearing at my throat, flesh collecting with blood underneath my fingernails, desperate. I squeeze my eyes shut and shudder again, throwing my body forcefully against the countertop. Darkness collects at the edge of my vision, creeping tendrils wrapping themselves around my sanity. I can hear Timmy banging against the door, his tiny voice calling for me, scared. I sob. He shouldn’t have to experience this. Not the way I did.

Hysteria takes over as I suffocate, and tears stream in warm patterns down my cold skin. It’s so cold in here. Why is it so cold? Frost seems to cover the pearly glass sink, slicking against my palms. I’m going to die.

Finally, heaving and retching, the thing slowly slides up my throat and down my tongue, coating my mouth in a rich, warm lacquer, dripping heavy from my lips. I gasp in deep, gurgling breaths and a rippling tsunami of air gushes into my throat, velvet against my lungs. I blink away the tears, my eyes finally adjusting to the light. Timmy is whimpering outside the door. I stare into the porcelain sink.

We spent those desert nights high on cheap weed and drunk on sweat, sleeping together in borrowed tents. We took what we needed from any unlocked station wagon or sprinter van we happened upon at the trailheads or visitor centers, or on overnight lockdown in the tire shops around town, ignoring the no trespass signs standing between ourselves and our necessities, playfully referring to our plunder as our odyssey rentals.

We passed the time eavesdropping conversations in foreign languages at rest stops and gas stations, inventing our own translations, rendering explicit subject matter upon the most wholesome-sounding family discussions. A German couple teaches their toddler how best to conceal track marks. A Swedish mother reads a book on demystifying orgasms to her twin boys. A pair of Italian hikers casually discuss the efficacy of eugenics as they overfill their waxy cups with ice pellets.

We took turns tempting fate, upping the ante each round. A cup of coffee. A pack of cigarettes. An unattended pocketbook. A .357 Magnum. An ‘89 Cutlass Supreme with a pair of prescription sunglasses clipped to the visor. A blue-nosed pit bull named Bonnie. We never kept anything we took; we had left our affinity for attachments at a rest stop just outside of Grand Junction.

Home had been a rented cabin overlooking a quarry. When our patience expired for extended warranty solicitations, after alert fatigue had set in, when the television finally learned to stop asking whether we were still watching, we burned the bastard to the ground. We stood in the snow, as the cabin collapsed, catching its embers on our tongues, slow dancing to sirens in the distance.
We got by on peanut butter spoons and dried fruit and Tecate and an understanding that we were entangled particles—that it was never she and me, but she in me, and me in she—it was always we and they. The adults had told us follow your heart—write your own story, so we took the pen, shoved it through the spine, raked the pages and kicked the whole mess into the river. We looked them in the eyes and spat in their faces for deigning to permit our agency. To go home never occurred to us—death lived there, long and cold and slow. Here, we would incinerate, our ashes settling into the sand—neither doomed to die alone.

As the glass cracks, you know you really shouldn’t be doing this, but the metal bar is so cold in your hands, and the deep, icy regret was already on your heart when you began the swing that your 20/20 hindsight didn’t kick in until it was too late, but you continued the movement, hoping to prove to her that you were cool, this older girl, shorter than you and way rowdier than you and way more into ghosts and drugs and breaking and entering than you would ever be, but lord she was pretty, and you always lose your mind around pretty girls, hoping for once in your life that this would be a crush that finally wouldn’t hurt you or leave you without a word after a kiss and a wink and an affirmation that it didn’t mean anything because they were proving a point to themselves or their friends or to you in that tone that makes you think you should have already known from the beginning, but this, this would be different, so when she suggested stealing weird candle holders you would never use and didn’t know existed from a shack outside the trailer park you both lived in, you didn’t think twice, until now, that is, your hands gripping a metal bar you only now realize is from a security system and this girl, god this pretty, pretty girl is looking at you with disgust or anger or something else entirely in her pretty, pretty eyes as the glass begins to splinter and the sound of the shatter finally reaches your ears.
There are some places on Earth that feel abnormal. Old hospitals and medieval castles that feel electric, like the air before a storm. People claim that they have seen the dead in these kinds of unnatural places. Environments soak up the excess ideas that we leave behind. When enough people tell a story, it becomes tangible. Something to feel on the skin, to ring in the ears, a mirage in the distance.

The Benning house is one of those places. With every whisper about Ray Benning the house seemed a little more present, looming in the dark shadow of our neighborhood. The entire town was telling the story in one way or another. Whenever any of us walked by the Benning house we felt watched. Its peaked black roof towered over us, with a single circular window like an eye. The once pristine white house had fallen into a multitude of grays. Even the lawn had begun to reflect the change. The little patches of grass that were there were dead or dying. A tall and crooked pine tree stuck upwards as a finger might. It seemed to be the only truly living thing on the property. In defiance of death all around it, it stayed green.

It all began with worry for the Bennings’ kids. We hadn’t seen much of them since Errika Benning, their mother, had passed. We felt awful for the kids, and we brought casseroles and pies and other foods as if there was no other way to express sympathy. We never saw them. Life was so different from how it had been. When any of us looked out the window, we were likely to see Evan or Zoey playing in the street. Our own kids would rally to them, and together they would invent complicated games that were often loud.

A small collection of tin-foil adorned dishes and tupperware patterned the “Welcome” mat. No matter how persistent we were, nobody ever came to the door. Eventually, we got the message, and stopped leaving food altogether. We ought to give Ray a few days. Yes, we agreed, grief was a funny little thing and people would deal with it in their own unique ways.

It had only been a couple days since the funeral when Shirley, their next-door neighbor, said she had seen one of the kids when she was out walking her dog one evening. She said she saw Evan, the seven-year-old boy, in the circular window. She said he was watching her, holding a single palm up to the glass. Something about it just struck her as odd.

Only a day or two had passed when we noticed that the food had never been brought in. One by one, we retrieved our offerings from the porch. It was really quite rude, we said. One really oughtn’t leave someone else’s tupperware and dishes in the summer sun, even if he was grieving. The more we talked amongst ourselves, the more we realized that nobody had seen any of the Bennings leave the house for over a week. They must be running out of food, Shirley had said. Maybe not, we said. It wouldn’t make sense to turn down casseroles if that were the case. We said that old Ray must have checked out.

Ray Benning had always been a bit of a hermit. Some had said it was God’s will that he met his wife. She was the opposite of him in every way socially. At dinner parties she would brighten the room with conversation. The entire neighborhood either revered her, or was jealous of her. She had a delightful and cheery personality. Ray Benning was the kind of man who would sit alone in the refreshments corner, hoarding the dip. He was an odd man, but not entirely unpleasant, especially if someone got him talking about home improvement.

We waited. We idly watched the house, never thinking that we could do something about it. Why hadn’t we called the police or Child Protective Services? Even if we had, would it have made a difference? So we watched the still house. Shirley had become convinced that something had happened. The rest of us hadn’t caught so much as a glance of any of them. We would peer across the street through the windows, but all of them were dark. The eye of the house was empty.
We told ourselves that it hadn’t even been a week yet, and that Ray was a man who valued his privacy. We told Shirley not to worry about it. At the end of the day, we said, he was a nice sort of man who loved his kids. We’re not too sure what happened, but we do know that Shirley called the police. She would later tell us that she had seen both kids in the window, beckoning to her, waving to get her attention. After knocking on the door one final time, she called.

Most of the neighborhood gathered close, surrounding the dancing lights of the two police cars. The sun had set, and we were exchanging a mix of worried and satisfied glances. About time something was done, we had said. The police were pushy. They stood guard outside the house, telling us to go home as more police arrived. Most of us tried to stay just beyond the new yellow-tape boundary. We finally left when they threatened to start writing down names. We didn’t want to be involved in whatever it was that had happened.

Rumor spread fast. In those first couple of days after the police first showed up, the leading story was that Ray was some kind of secret drug manufacturer. Then someone said he had seen a body bag being moved from the house. The only possibility that warranted that kind of continuous police presence was that someone was dead. Ray had always been an odd one, we reminded ourselves. None of us would be surprised if he had committed suicide. Shirley began to panic. Nobody had seen the Bennings’ kids even though we all watched the house in our free time.

It was around the time when we saw the vans. They were labeled as window cleaners, but the people in them wore white hazmat suits and respirators. The vans would come and go, usually at odd hours in the night. When we caught glances, we could see them hauling furniture and rolls of carpet out of the house. It wasn’t long before the local news showed up. It was surreal to see news vans in front of the house. We would watch from the windows of our houses, seeing the reporter silently gesture to the house, emphatically nodding her head as she spoke into the camera. It was a terrible time, but it was exciting to have our neighborhood on the news.

In the first week without his wife, he gave his children sleeping pills. When the news finally broke, it was said that he snuck some into their last meal. He must have envisioned his family being whole again, all of them happy in the afterlife. He pushed a power drill through their temples. It was unclear whether the sleeping pills didn’t work, or he just wanted to make sure his children were dead. They would have been asleep at the time; we reassured ourselves of that. They probably didn’t feel a thing. Ray Benning had wounds on his own head. It was assumed that he attempted to kill himself that way, but couldn’t manage to drill through the bone. Police found him with the drill lodged in the right half of his heart. It seems he held down the trigger, and fell forward onto it.

They had been dead for a couple of days. The police were hesitant to give an exact date, but one officer estimated that it happened maybe a day after the funeral. Shirley was not convinced. She swore that she had seen the children in the window after that. We began to worry about her. She was obsessive over the house. Word got around fast that she had seen ghosts. Most of us told her that she had to have faith. God would not have stopped children from moving on. The kids had suffered a terrible fate, but they would be cared for in the next life. We weren’t sure who we were reassuring. We found ourselves glancing up at the eye of the house, half expecting to see two young children waving to us. Whenever we would pass the house we would feel this chill descend over our chests. The house was unnatural. And yet, nobody wanted to breathe the word “ghost.” The word was that Shirley was in therapy, and probably on some sort of medication. As we drove to work and took out the trash, we almost felt as if nothing had happened. Despite what we told Shirley, and even though we didn’t see the children, we could still feel them. If you were to stand outside the house and listen closely, you might hear small footsteps on the grass.

We hadn’t seen Shirley for several days. She didn’t go out to the store on Tuesdays when she normally did, and she wasn’t seen walking her dog. There were only a handful of us who were close to her. A small group of us decided to check in on her. We knocked on her door, bringing goodwill in the familiar form of food. We noticed her unkempt hair and lack of makeup when she answered. Her dog barked at us from a small cluster of mail at the back corner of the entrance. She smiled an empty smile at our gesture, and thanked us for being so thoughtful. She hadn’t been feeling
well, she said. Well, we told her, if there was anything we could do to help her, anything at all, she should let us know.

And she did. Not even a day had passed when she called us. Over the phone, she told us that she wanted to try a seance. We told her she was out of her mind, that a seance could only bring evil. It was the fake mysticism stuff used in movies, we explained. She said it wasn’t a seance exactly, but she didn’t know what to call it. She had been praying, and felt certain that this was the right thing to do. She practically begged us to help her.

Out of everyone she asked, there were only four of us who agreed to help her. We only agreed because everyone deals with death in different ways, and maybe Shirley needed to do this. Shirley brought a Ouija Board, which seemed like a bad idea. Even if it worked, it seemed a little satanic. It was the sort of thing that could make matters worse. Nothing we said convinced her that she wouldn’t need it. She said that it wasn’t like any of us had done a seance before, and that it might be useful.

It was late in the evening, around 6:00 pm, and the sun had yet to set. We walked up the drive towards the front door, feeling entirely isolated amongst ourselves. Everything about the house seemed still, apart from the pine tree. It was as green as ever, but it seemed to wag at us, like a warning in the breeze. We didn’t hear any other footsteps besides our own. When we stepped onto the porch, we found the door cracked open. The lock must have been broken when the police first entered a week ago. We weren’t sure who was in charge of changing the locks, but they hadn’t replaced them yet. We let ourselves in, not sure what to expect. It didn’t seem like a crime scene. It looked much like our own houses. There was clutter and dust, but there was no broken furniture or blood. The house was darker, emptier. We felt an emptiness that went beyond the literal. We stood around for a long time, as if moving would somehow break something. It was so quiet we could feel the ringing in our ears. Shirley reminded us that we had gone there with a purpose. At first we thought we could perform the seance in the kitchen, around the table. Then maybe in the living room. Shirley said we should do it in the room at the top of the house with the circular window. Nobody argued with her.

We crept up the stairs, aware of every sharp creak. We smelled lemons; the kind of burning lemon that is meant to hide other smells. It wasn’t enough to mask that tingle of chemicals that implied deep cleaning. The carpet had all been ripped up, leaving the stairs and floor completely bare. We opened the door on the right. Light from the sunset streamed in through a single circular window. The room had two empty metal bed frames against the walls, sitting on the exposed subfloor. The walls had been stripped to the studs. The scent of lemon failed to hide something else. Something very faint that rang like an alarm in our heads. A creeping kind of primal odor.

We stood back in the hallway, hesitant to enter the room. Shirley stepped forward, and walked to the window. We stood for a long while, as Shirley put her palm on the glass. The orange sunlight glinted off the bed frames, and the air was still. We exchanged nervous glances. Finally Shirley turned away from the window, and said that we ought to try. We toed our way into the room. Shirley sat us in a circle, placing the Ouija Board in the middle, resting on the bare plywood subfloor. The planchette sat in the middle, just under the letter “T.” None of us touched it. We felt like children sat in a circle, looking into each other’s nervous faces. Now that we were in the moment, it was hard to doubt that Shirley had seen the children. Maybe they were trapped, and maybe we could help. It was a long while before any of us dared to speak, to break the oppressive silence. We joined hands, like we were deep in prayer. We finally broke the stillness when we spoke. “We would like to converse with Evan and Zoey, the children who lived here.” We glanced around, waiting for a change. We stared down at the Ouija Board, still untouched, as if expecting it to move on its own. “We just want to talk.” The room was filled with our voices as they echoed off the bare walls. We could feel the pull of anticipation. “We just want to know that you are okay.” It was as if our voices had charged the air. We all sat, waiting for the sign. There was no change.

The only movement we heard was Shirley. She pulled away from the circle, placing her head in her hands. We watched her, as her chest began to heave. A few of us glanced around the room, hoping to see something. “We want to help you,” we said, but there was no answer. The pull of anticipation subsided into a stillness. We sat alone in our silence.
She dropped her blouse on the motel floor and told me to draw her. “Draw me naked,” she said.

“I’m definitely an artist,” I said, “but I don’t have any paper.”

She slipped out of her bra and dropped it on the floor too. “The menu,” she pointed, “draw on the back.”

I picked up the menu we’d just ordered our lunch from. “Did I remember to order a side of rice?” I asked.

“Don’t tease,” she said, sliding her panties along her leg with her foot. The lacy underwear dangled from her toes. “Just flip it over and draw me.” She kicked the panties at me and lay back on the bed.

I sat at the little table with the menu and a pen branded with the motel logo. “I’m definitely an artist,” I said, “but I never work with ballpoint.”

She shifted into the pose she wanted drawn. “I don’t care; just draw me before my sweet and sour chicken shows up.”

So I drew, dragging my pen along the length of her legs; I rolled my pen over her hips and around her breasts. I moved delicately along her neck to her chin, to her ears, to her lips. I pulled the pen across my lines again and again smoothing out the rough and shaky edges. Eventually, I scribbled enough that her breasts were nearly the same size. The more I tried to fix her thighs, the less flattering they became. I kept rounding her ass to compensate.

There was a knock at the door so I set down my pen and retrieved the food. She moved over to the table and studied my art while I unpacked our lunch.

She laughed. “It’s beautiful.”

“It’s alright,” she said, “I’m definitely not married.”
When I saw the first clown I didn’t think anything of it. He paid me no attention as he passed and I didn’t look to see where he went until I heard them shouting. Then there were more clowns, four or five at least. They circled around a man and yelled commands. There were too many commands. They came too fast for the man to respond. So they hit him. They forced him to the ground. They hit him again. They pressed his face against the asphalt. They hit him again. One climbed on his back wrestling his limbs tight against his body. Others kicked. Their rubber boots dug into his ribs. His stomach. His face. The man cried out for help. So they hit him. Then he cried out for mercy. They hit him harder. They hit him until he made no more sound. They reminded him that he had no rights. None at all. One clown waved a plastic badge to prove their actions were justified. He did not look like the clowns. He did not look like me. They beat him until he hardly looked like a man. But he was a man. I watched them tie him up and take him away. They stuffed him into the back of a clown car. Then they all pulled into the street with a spectacle of horns and lights to go looking for more fun.

THIS IS A JOKE, BUT IT ISN’T FUNNY  
BY ZANE BARROW

She sits, legs crossed, on the floor in front of the sliding glass door. Outside the sky somersaults with thunder, hinting at a storm that is to come. He watches her from the couch. He turned on the TV but can’t watch it. Not when she’s sat there, her eyes glued to the sky, in her self-cut shorts and baggy tee shirt. She’s so engrossed in the whirling clouds she doesn’t feel his gaze on her. He’s so in love with her and the way she loves everything around her. He thinks she adds light to days as dark and soggy as this.

A snap of thunder, a flash of lightning, the clouds open and the rain pours down. She gasps at its beauty. He smiles at her awe. Before he can say a word, she opens the door and flings herself into the downpour. She spins in happy circles, her arms out, her face up. He can’t stand it. He rises from the couch and stumbles into the rain. He wants to hold her. Kiss her. Tell her she means everything to him. But he doesn’t want to interrupt her bliss. Instead he stands just outside the door, letting the rain beat his hair down to his forehead.

Her eyes land on him and she smiles. She reaches out a hand, inviting him further into the world of wonder. He takes it. She pulls him into a sloopy, muddy footed dance. Water drips from his nose and makes his shirt cling to his torso. He smiles, not just for her, but for the world.

FOR THE WORLD  
BY ZOE ELLIS
The Carl E. Andra Memorial Collection was formed by Jean Andra Miller in 1977 after the death of her husband, a former professor of English at Weber State University. Included in the collection are over 1,000 volumes of poetry, essays, and other writings. Jean Andra Miller established this writing contest to invite young writers to interact with the books that she and Carl loved and write something based on her collection.

AMERICAN JAZZ: A PROTEST AGAINST WHITE HEGEMONY
BY KALEIGH STOCK
Winner of the Carl Andra Writing Contest

While many would argue that art should speak for itself, it is impossible to remove it from the social contexts from which it is born. The emotions and thoughts that go into creating art are indivisible from the life of the person creating it, and in the case of jazz, its architect’s lives have been permeated by racism. This racism can be seen not just through the personal stories of black musicians, but through society’s reactions to the musical genre as a whole.

To claim that jazz and the blues can be defined solely by race and protest against white hegemony would be faulty, for to say that white suppression is the only black emotive experience is erroneous. However, it would also be wrong to leave out such an important piece of the puzzle, or even to treat it as a side note, as many critics and historians have been apt to do. This paper will explore how jazz has often been used as a form of protest against white hegemony through its emotional content, and intellectual content, and in form, and how white America has in turn ignored, demonized, and appropriated the genre in attempt to suppress black expression and identity.

The importance of music in the life of the American slave can be traced back to the country’s founding, and since that time, African expression, including music, has been suppressed in a variety of ways. The original set of slaves were forcibly removed from not just their countries, but their cultures. Traditions based in the material world, such as sculpture and basket weaving, were lost, and religious, social and political ideas were forced out of their minds by those who enslaved them. Attacks were also made early
on toward musical expression. In the 18th century, for example, *The Hymns and Spiritual Songs* of Dr. Watts was distributed to try to “convert” African Americans to Westernized styles of music. In another instance, slaves used drums to signal an attack on the white citizenry during the Stono Rebellion of 1739. After this, slave use of drums was banned by South Carolina, along with all loud instruments in the state of Georgia.

Despite the suppression of music, many slaves still managed to hold onto many African musical traditions by passing them on orally, and by creating inventive instruments, such as using overturned washbasins for drums. The songs they brought from Africa slowly evolved over time for various reasons: some lyrics (such as those alluding to African gods) were not allowed by the masters, their language shifted over time as they transitioned from African languages and dialects to English, and the lyrics were adapted to the new contexts of plantation life and slavery. However, many of the components of jazz, such as its complex rhythmic patterns and lack of structure, still maintain many aspects that clearly descended from African, not European music. Due to these factors, the blues and jazz that resulted was not purely African, nor European, but a distinctly African American music derived from the unique and exploited experience of the African American.

An early account of such music can be found in the powerful narrative of Frederick Douglass. Douglass expressed that these songs revealed “at once the highest joy and deepest sadness,” and that they would “compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune...They would sometimes sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone...They were tones loud, long and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains.” He went so far as to say that he had “sometimes thought that the mere hearing of those songs would do more to impress some minds with the horrible character of slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of philosophy on the subject could do.”

The work song, such as the street cries described by Douglass, along with field hollers and levee camp hollers were born out of the pain, oppression and desperation of slavery. They are also considered one of the most unadulterated forms of African music to have existed in the Americas, and as such they completely ignored Western constructed scales and notations. These work songs laid the foundation for the blues, and later jazz. The ignorance and disregard of Western musical constructs in scale and notation was a major influence on these genres, both in melody and in rhythm. For example, these early musicians used what have since been branded “blue” notes, which “were no longer just notes, but flexible sounds that could change in ways unforeseen by the most renowned nineteenth-century composers.”

As the name suggests, blues and jazz musicians would pick up the technique of the blue note, particularly in their horned and vocal sections. Like the songs in Douglass's narrative, the blues and jazz are able to capture gut-wrenching human emotion by breaking the rules of the constructed boundaries of European music. Early jazz musicians such as Sydney Bechet and King Oliver “defied conventional notation and refused to be reduced to a systematic methodology.” One of Bechet’s students recalled Bechet instructing him to take a single note and, “See how many ways you can play that note—growl it, smear it, flat it, sharp it, do anything you want to it. That’s how you express your feelings in this music. It’s like talking.” Such technique and emotional depth can be heard prominently in both Bessie Smith’s vocals and Louis Armstrong’s horn work in the song “St. Louis Blues.”

The work song was also the earliest American example of the call and response form that became quite dominant in the blues and jazz. The technique was used in field hollers, for example, to allow to parties to communicate. The historian and jazz expert Ted Gioia explains that call and response in its original African form is, “as much a matter of social integration of performance into the social fabric” and due to this
fact, “takes on an aura of functionality, one that defies a ‘pure’ aesthetic attempting to separate art from social needs.” As jazz artists reinvented the genre time and time again, call and response and its theme of social integration prevailed, and the music was always functional, not something to be listened to as background noise. The African American scholar and musician Samuel A. Floyd Jr. calls call and response and other modes of improvisation a “struggle-fulfillment in microcosm,” going on to say that the music played is a subconsciously derived metaphor for the African-American experience. In these ways, the call and response technique is both an expression of individual identity and social integration.

The earliest structural forms and emotive energies that underlay blues and jazz music to this day were a product of the employment of African musical techniques on slave plantations. Clearly, this music was an important mode of artistic and emotional expression for the black American. This would not be tolerated by prejudiced Americans, for to accept blues and the jazz as a true art form would force acknowledgement of black intellect, emotional intelligence, and identity. As such, to accept black art, white Americans might have to acknowledge black Americans as human beings deserving of equal status to white Americans. Largely, white society was not prepared to do this. The specter of slavery was to be transmuted into other systemic forms of racism and discrimination: the era of Jim Crow was nigh.

After the end of the Civil War, southern tensions ran high. Slaveholders thought the freemen might take revenge, and the poor white population felt threatened by the competition of black people entering the job market. Many assumed the success of black people would translate to a backslide of the white population. Racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan were formed and white southerners inflicted great violence on black Americans, and laws were passed to force the black American out of the public sphere and into a new kind of slavery. Black people at this time could be imprisoned for walking along a railroad, speaking loudly in the presence of a white woman, drinking, loitering, spitting, being drunk in public, or not having a job. Penalties were increased and enforced only against black Americans, and allegations were often fabricated. Black prisoners were leased out by state run prison systems to factories and mines to bring in revenue for state governments. From the disenfranchisement, rampant discrimination, and state-run slavery of Jim Crow arose the blues. Music was one of the few conduits through which black Americans could express themselves. Some scholars go so far as to assert that the blues would not exist were it not for Jim Crow.

Largely uneducated, most black Americans could not read or write at this time, and to protest in the public sphere was extremely dangerous and often a death sentence. Simply expressing oneself or asserting individual or racial identity in any way was a dangerous form of protest. Cultural historian Lawrence Levine describes a prisoner’s take on prison songs, and how in these songs, “You can tell the truth, about how you feel, you know, but you can’t express it, see, to the boss. They really be singing about the way they feel inside. Since they can’t say it to nobody, they sing a song about it.” While some songs were less explicit, others were written directly as songs of protest. For example, “Take This Hammer” (1902) blatantly protests prison enslavement by implying that the singing convict is going to escape his imprisonment because he knows he doesn’t deserve his chains with the lines, “Take this hammer, carry it to the captain. Tell him I’m gone...If he asks you was I runnin’, tell him I was flyin’...If he asks you was I laughin’, tell him I was cryin’...They want to feed me cornbread and molasses, but I got my pride. Well, I got my pride.”

These musical forms, the work and field song and the blues, along with the social context of Jim Crow were the conditions under which jazz was born. Buddy Bolden, the mythic creator of the jazz genre, and of whom we have no surviving recordings, wrote songs that would land a black person in jail simply for singing them, not to mention the physical abuses officers would inflict upon the offenders. For instance, his signature song “Buddy Bolden’s Blues” makes mockery of a local judge and other prom-
inent public figures. Not a great deal is known about Bolden, but what we do know of his life and death seem to be ominous omens for future jazz musicians. Bolden was a heavy drinker and suffered from severe mental illness. He was imprisoned twice, and on the second time was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Bolden died in an asylum at the age of 54 from cerebral arteriosclerosis. Unfortunately, many of his musical offspring, such as Fats Navarro, Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Fats Waller all died under the age of 50 due to illnesses of poverty, such as tuberculosis and drug addiction. Charles Mingus and Thelonius Monk would follow soon after. Both suffered from severe mental health issues and died at the ages of 56 and 64 respectively.

It is a great loss to both the jazz world and historians that there were no recordings of Buddy Bolden, the father of jazz. It is also telling of the times that the very first jazz band to be commercially recorded was in 1917 by The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, which consisted solely of white musicians, and was led by Nick LaRocca. The song they recorded, “Livery Stable Blues,” appropriated many elemental forms of the music created by black musicians of that time period, including the three chord 12 bar structure of the blues and early jazz, call and response, Caribbean influenced melody and ragtime influenced piano. The song’s tone is jovial, and the barnyard sounds that respond to the horn sections might be seen as humorous were it not for its historical context. The song’s facetious humor had its roots in minstrelsy, the most popular performance art of the time, in which operas were parodied, and very often, white actors dressed up in blackface and portrayed black people as buffoonish and racist caricatures. “Livery Stable Blues” was a “major commercial success,” and LaRocca tried to cash in further on this success in claiming propriety as one of the indispensable progenitors of the jazz genre, a claim which jazz historians have found no evidence with which to back. It is doubtful that the ODJB was even the first white band to play jazz music.

The ODJB and were not the only to cash in on the new jazz idiom. They and many other white bands benefited from a “virtual monopoly” on the jazz market at that time, and continued to until record companies realised the money that could be made off of “race records.” Even though black musicians had invented and continued to reinvent the entire genre of jazz, they were not recognized until they played with the white musicians and bands that emulated them. Jelly Roll Morton, one of the immediate descendents of Buddy Bolden and greatest New Orleans jazz composers was ignored until he played alongside The Rhythm Kings in the first ever interracial recording session. The Rhythm Kings had already recorded multiple times before this event, but admitted that they had asked Morton to record with them as both pianist and composer because they had done, “the best (they) could, but naturally couldn’t play real colored style.”

When jazz finally broke through to mainstream society in the 1920s, droves of puritanical Americans were outraged. A quick glance over the newspaper articles of the time period gives an idea of the way this “devil’s music” was viewed by “high” society. Racist allusions to the black race were abundant. One preacher in the Washington Times described jazz as a “nervousness, lawlessness, primitive and savage animalism.” A 1922 article of the East Orgonian reported that a judge in Chicago had ruled jazz was “immoral” and “fined the proprietors of a...dance hall for permitting jazzified strains,” of music. The Tacoma Women’s club condemned it, saying it was on par with the “saloon and scarlet vice,” and that the “perpetrators of it should be imprisoned.”

One of the biggest fears of the time was of the type of dancing jazz elicited in the youth of the day. An Ogden Standard-Examiner headline lamented, “Even Gay Paris Shocked by America’s Jazz Dances.” In 1926, the Cabaret Law was passed in New York, which banned establishments from allowing dancing without a permit, permitted only string and keyboard instruments (effectively banning most jazz instruments), and restricted the number of musicians to no more than three. The law was used to reduce interracial mingling, and to push black musicians out of clubs. The area most affected
was Harlem. In 1943, it was expanded to force musicians to carry “cabaret cards.” Law enforcement disproportionately revoked the cards of black musicians. Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, J.J. Johnson, and Thelonious Monk were a handful of musicians who, at some point, had their licenses revoked. The Cabaret Law was not repealed until October, 2017.

Other articles from the 1920s make clear divisions between the “high” and “low” arts. A Princeton professor stated in the New York Herald, “good music” has “melody and harmony,” while “sensual music, lascivious, mean music—if it can be called music at all—irritates, demoralizes and vulgar-ized those who listen to it...Jazz...was invented by imps for the torment of imbeciles.” A 1922 periodical called the Topeka State Journal lauded Topeka citizens for its massive turnout to a classical music event, and commented that “the masses are strong for good music.” They exulted that once classical records could be bought for ten cents as jazz records could be at the time, people would again be buying “good music,” and jazz would be “relegated to the trash heap.” Such commentaries speak loudly of the particular aspects of jazz “high society” condemned: those that did not conform to European American musical orthodoxes.

While white jazz musicians like Paul Whiteman and George Gershwin were making a killing off of jazz music, most black artists were living in poor conditions, even during the time of “renaissance.” As jazz expert Ted Gioia described it, Harlem was a place of “harsh economics, low salaries, and looming rent payments.” He goes on to explain that, “A 1927 study showed that 48 percent of Harlem renters spent more than twice as much of their income on rent as similarly situated white city dwellers...a quarter of families took in at least one lodger...Sometimes the same mattress was rented out twice, to tenants on different work shifts...the earning differential between white and black was still an unbridgeable gulf. Black independence, in this setting, came at a price, one meted out daily in the cost of food and shelter.” Rent parties were common, encouraging the creation of jazz music, and giving the people of Harlem a break from the stresses of daily living.

From Harlem came musicians like Cab Calloway, Fats Waller and Duke Ellington, who at the time were relegated “to the submerged Harlem, the lowlife world of speakeasies and slumming.” There was a divide even among black Americans regarding jazz music. Those against it hoped to integrate into white society, and believed that jazz music made black society look uncultured. The vast majority of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance tried to distance themselves from jazz music and musicians. One notable exception, however, is perhaps the most well known of the Harlem Renaissance writers today, Langston Hughes. Hughes was unafraid to write about the less glamorized experiences of the black American, and became a champion of lower-class black Americans. Being unapologetically black, Hughes became one of the first writers of jazz poetry. Jazz poetry, such as Hughes’s “The Weary Blues” conformed its verse to jazz structures, such as syncopated rhythms. The musician in “The Weary Blues” does a “lazy sway to those Weary Blues with his ebony hands on each ivory key,” which may be a commentary on the black man’s experience of living, creating, and surviving in a white man’s world. Because of Hughes commitment to black identity and the lower classes, he was not taken seriously as a poet, even by many of his fellow renaissance writers. Like jazz musicians, Hughes has been vindicated with time as American society continues to deconstruct its former and present prejudices.

As jazz grew in popularity among the masses in the 1920s, white musicians were paid more both for recording and playing live shows, and were made more visible by record companies and clubs. One of the most popular and highest grossing jazz musicians of the 1920s was Paul Whiteman, a white musician from Colorado who eventually settled with his band in New York. Whiteman made over a million dollars in a single year in the 1920s. To this day, Whiteman is a controversial figure. Just as Benny Goodman would be called the “King of Swing” in the 1930s, Elvis Presley was to be dubbed the “King of Rock” in the 1950s, Whiteman was dubbed the “King of Jazz” in the 1920s. While Whiteman’s talent and influence is undeniable, it is imperative to recognize his position as a musician in that time, and
the reasons for which he was named “King” in the 1920s, when history has vindicated Louis Armstrong as the revolutionary of that time. The Richmond Sun Telegram reported in 1922 that Whiteman had wanted to get married and start a family, but was not making the money he needed to do so in the San Francisco Symphony. He understood that there was money to be made in dance music, and so borrowed blues and jazz songs by black musicians, then fitted them into the European symphonic form. In songs like “Whispering” and “Japanese Sandman,” Whiteman blended jazz music with symphonic music in order to “civilize” the “primitive rhythms” and free improvisation of jazz, watering down the Africans influences of the music and making it “more acceptable to white audiences.”

As Whiteman’s music grew in popularity, the musician at times publicly praised black musicians and even attempted to bring black musicians into his band, but was persuaded not to do so by his record company’s owners, who told him it would be career suicide. Still, many credit Whiteman, and later Benny Goodman, for the upliftment of the black musician to an elevated position of dignity in white society. It may be tempting to accredit the uprise of of black musicians to the help of white musicians who were willing to praise or play with them, but ultimately black musicians should be recognized on their own creative merits. Black musicians were the creators and leaders in innovation of the jazz genre. Were it not for systemic racism, they would have risen high above these white musicians, and without their assistance. Historical emphasis ought to be placed on what prevented the most creative and innovative of the genre from transcendence in the first place.

In its appropriation by white culture, jazz music went through, “a virtual stripping of Black musical genius and aesthetic innovation,” as both white and black musicians tried to “minimize their association with ‘Blackness.”’ Even musicians like Louis Armstrong, and later Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie were as successful as they were because they, to some degree, melded their music into white established forms in order to survive as artists in the 1920s and beyond. Even as they did this, white society allowed them to be performers, but would not recognize them as intellectuals, particularly in the beginning. They were forced to “master a wide range of novelty devices and popular effects.” When white property owners realized that there was money to be made off of black musicianship, “The procurement of black entertainment for white audiences soon became...a mini-industry.” When white audiences ventured into Harlem, they still expected to be treated as “ruling class elites,” and thus the “grotesque spectacle of the Harlem club for all-white audiences was born, a musical menagerie in which social proximity and distance could exist.” Duke Ellington later in his career said that, “When I began my work, jazz was a stunt.”

None of this is to say that these musicians were any less innovative, valid or decisive than other musicians, but it is important to the narrative of jazz as a genre, and says much about the time in which it was created. As parts of American white society grew more accepting of jazz music, they still expected black musicians to conform to their expectations of what jazz should be, and what its musicians should look like. The next two generations of black jazz musicians would take offense to this and reclaim it as “afro-centric” music by reinventing the genre time and time again.

As jazz progressed, black musicians continued to “preserve the African American vernacular music heritage,” while also “advancing the jazz idiom.” As the music evolved from swing to modernist bebop, postmodern jazz, and then to free jazz, expectations of what jazz “should” be were deconstructed, and emphasis on improvisation and freedom of form was heightened. The creative forces behind these genres were marginalized individuals, and individuals who refused to be seen as anything less than serious artists and intellectuals. Miles Davis, for example, commented in his autobiography that he refused to suck up to white critics or “perform” for white audiences as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and others before him had done to get by as musicians and support their families, but also
expressed gratitude at their having done it before him so his generation didn’t have to. When Miles performed, he would go so far as to play with his back to the audience, saying that he was an artist, not an entertainer.

The blues and jazz music were invented and reinvented time and time again by black musicians, and against the grain of European American standards of what music “ought” to be. When white Americans began to take notice, they often rode on the coattails of black musicians, and, whether or not they were fully cognizant of it, took advantage of their privilege. Though many of these black musicians have been vindicated with time, it is important to take a historical perspective on the subject and consider the implications this topic may have for today’s musicians, as history tends to repeat itself. Today, we ought to consider the implications of cultural appropriation and demonization on other forms of music, such as hip hop and rap.

In his book Dawn and the Darkest Hour, George Woodcock called Brave New World “a brilliant feat of futuristic fantasy, combined perhaps with a little cautionary fun at the scientific world with which Huxley had such close links” (2). Woodcock was not alone in identifying Huxley’s novel as science fiction. Book covers, commentators, and movie adaptations have categorized it in the same way. Huxley’s 1932 approach to futuristic fiction was, however, different than that of other science fiction writers. He did not build a fictional global order, as Woodcock implies, to poke “fun at the scientific world” for the amusement of his readers. Rather like Michael Crichton in Jurassic Park, Huxley was questioning to what extent science should apply its findings and theories to society at large.

Woodcock also claimed that Brave New World was a serious “criticism of the scientific method” (2). I argue, that in fact, rather than criticizing the scientific method, Huxley actually used it to create Brave New World. He compiled real data, i.e., post WWI conditions, to formulate a hypothesis and a warning about the probable long-term effects of those conditions.

In 1958, twenty plus years after he published Brave New World, Huxley looked at his warnings through a historical lens and found them to have been accurate. In his non-fiction book Brave New World Revisited he notes how fast the conditions he had predicted were occurring. The 50s Beat generation in America (where Huxley now lived) had much in common with the WWI generation in London (where Huxley lived then).
In both cases, a counter culture was rejecting traditional values and struggling to define itself in reaction to what it saw as the failure of societal norms and conditions. Reading about the Beat Generation in Weber State’s extensive Andra Collection of Beat writers, I became increasingly intrigued by the parallels between these two historical periods. The similarities included experimentation with drugs and sexual promiscuity. In his biography of Allen Ginsberg, Barry Miles describes the immersion of Ginsberg and other Beat Writers into the drug culture:

Drugs seemed to be a method of achieving an approximation of the expanded consciousness he [Ginsberg] had glimpsed with his Blake vision. His experience with LSD, ayahuasca, and various other hallucinogens convinced him that drugs were a possible means of altering public consciousness, a way of introducing ideas of a life-style closer to the beat ideals of spontaneity, sexual openness, literary honesty, and spiritual liberation. (Miles 274)

In *Brave New World*, Huxley’s designed babies and the designer babies of today were not yet on the horizon, but the advent of birth control pills gave rise to new sexual perspectives.

Even though Huxley makes clear in *Brave New World Revisited* that he’s concerned with a non-fictional rather than a fictional world, one does not have to look far to find critics who insist on categorizing *Brave New World* as science fiction. In *Common Sense Media Book Reviews*, Michael Berry claims, “... [Huxley’s] novel is one of the most famous dystopian science fiction novels in the English language” (Berry 1). Berry’s classification reflects the interpretation of many critics and readers who see the novel as of the same ilk as H.G Wells’ *Time Machine* and Jules Verne’s novel *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*. And the book jackets on most *Brave New World* editions depict mechanical cogs, space ships, and other illustrations that emphasize the perception of the novel as science fiction.

Media has added to this somewhat arbitrarily imposed definition of *Brave New World* as pure science fiction. The first film adaptation of the novel in 1980 (by Burt Brinckerhoff) closely resembles that of other 80s science fiction films such as *Logan’s Run, Tron, and Star Trek*. Interestingly, Leonard Nimoy, who played Spock in the Star Trek series, was chosen to play Huxley’s Mustapha Mond, the controller, in the 1998 remake of *Brave New World*. The casting of Nimoy, already a staple character in the sci-fi film genre, indicates how the film’s producers understood Brave New World as a work of science fiction. The costumes and set designs were predictable in the same way, and though Brinckerhoff did an adequate job of following Huxley’s plot, his film had relatively little success. The second adaptation, directed by Leslie Libman and Larry Williams was more realistic than Brinckerhoff’s 1980 version. Libman and Williams presented *Brave New World* in a more professional and sophisticated manner. The science fiction atmosphere is still present but not as extreme as it was in its 1980 predecessor.

To say that *Brave New World* is not technically a science fiction novel is not to say that Huxley was less interested in science than authors like Welles and others. Huxley had been immersed in science from a young age, and even intended to be a scientist before he temporarily lost his eyesight when he was 16 due to “a violent attack of keratitis punctata” (*Huxley, The Art of Seeing* 1). His brother Julian Huxley became a prominent and important scientist, and the two corresponded about science issues, remaining close friends and collaborators throughout their lives. Huxley’s grandfather was known as Darwin’s Bulldog because he was a staunch defender of Darwin’s theory of evolution (“Julian Huxley”). Having this scientific grounding meant that Aldous Huxley knew more about science than many of the science fiction authors who critiqued him. Huxley had a scientific approach to life and a curiosity about scientific information in particular. He handled the writing of *Brave New World* like any scientific analysis, using the data that he had available to him. His method of reasoning was inductive, and his data was derived from the radically changed conditions of WW1. This is the data he used to arrive at his hypothesis about the future.
The war had changed the perspectives of many people regarding sexual mores, the possibility of happiness, and the assurance that society would be led by a trained intelligent generation. The novel answers the following questions, questions that his data collection prompted him to ask. What would happen to traditional sexual behaviors as a result of deteriorated monogamous relationships? What would happen if drug use became more prevalent? How would the spectrum of a less intelligent and less educated gene pool play out in the future? What kind of social order would be required? What kind of social order would develop? His hypothetical answer was the dystopian organization in the brave new world. Brave New World then is a bleak hypothesis about what could happen because of these conditions.

The destruction and death in WWI were unlike anything the modern world had ever seen. Post-war shock in England, famously described in Aldous Huxley’s 1923 novel Antic Hay, propelled a social conversion that radically altered pre-war values and behaviors. Huxley said this in Brave New World Revisited (1958): “I feel a good deal less optimistic than I did when I was writing Brave New World. The prophecies made in 1931 are coming true much sooner than I thought they would” (Huxley 1).

The fact that Huxley saw the prophecies coming true in the 50s, sooner than he thought they would, is, as I have pointed out, very clear in the Beat culture of that time. Stephenson describes that culture in Essays on the Literature of the Beat Generation: “the Beat Generation may be discerned in nearly every aspect of the counterculture: the rejection of commercial values and of conceptions of career and status [as well as] the interest in vision-inducing drugs” (13). Just as the Victorian values had begun to fall apart because of the horrific events during and after WWI, more traditional 1950s culture also began to undergo radical change, especially regarding sexual mores and substance abuse. These changes have become progressively embedded in our societies and are now arguably more present than ever. Sociologist Eric Klingenberg’s and comedian Aziz Ansari’s Modern Romance (2014) explores the complex dating and hookup culture we now live in. They present convincing evidence that hookups have become normalized. This is true not only in America, but in many other places around the world.

Apps like Tinder, Bumble, and Grindr are now the norm for hookup culture dating. The culture values individuality and devalues committed relationships that require one person to “belong” to another—not unlike Brave New World where “everyone belongs to everyone else” (Huxley 29). Having one sexual partner in the brave new world was frowned upon and having multiple partners was the rule. In Modern Romance, Ansari notes that this attitude is reflected in Europe’s decreasing marriage rates from the 1970s into the 2000s (220).

Today, we have serious concerns about the widespread use of drugs and substance abuse in general. We have seen this coming for a long time. Berry Miles, we recall, in describing the Beat Writers immersion into the drug culture stressed its importance in introducing the ideas of the counterculture lifestyle. In her article, Drugs, Alcohol, and the First World War, Virginia Berridge explains how drinking and other substances were used to mitigate the terrors of WWI. In decades since then, the increased normalization of marijuana use and other drugs indicates another of Huxley’s predictions coming to pass. Soma, the drug of choice in Brave New World parallels marijuana in our contemporary world. Marijuana is used as a “cure” for everything from depression to cancer—it’s side effects euphoria and relaxation, are the side effects of soma, the drug Huxley’s Brave New World citizens used whenever they felt stressed, angry, upset, or disturbed. Mustapha Mond, the controller of Brave New World, described soma as a “Euphoric, narcotic, pleasantly hallucinaut” (Huxley 37). A description that can easily apply to marijuana as well.

The use of cutting-edge technologies like CRSPR are now making gene editing possible. In China last year, He Jiankui created the first human baby using gene editing at the Southern University of Science and Technology
in Shenzhen. Jiankui altered embryos for seven couples during fertility treatments. Jiankui said his goal was not to cure or prevent an inherited disease, but to try to bestow a trait that few people naturally have: an ability to resist possible future infection with HIV (World’s First Gene Edited).

How long might it take before we are able to order the characteristics we want in our children? And after that, how long will it take before we begin to mass produce children in test tubes? Will we as in Huxley’s *Brave New World* produce them in a place like the hatchery where the embryos of four human types were developed in test tubes: The Alphas being the most intelligent, Betas a little less so, the Deltas below them, and the Epsilons being the least intelligent but doing the most physical work? The hatchery was Huxley’s fictional solution for finding a suitable replacement for the best and brightest young men who were killed in WWI. Possibly too, he may have seen the hatchery as a solution for controlling the growing world population. There may be a complex interrelationship with what Huxley is doing in *Brave New World* and his thinking about eugenics, but that is outside the scope of this paper.

If Huxley’s predictions have come so close to the mark in such significant ways, perhaps we should become more mindful of the details and implications of those predictions. Perhaps we should be asking questions of our own: Are our current sexual values going to prove beneficial for a healthy society? How can we find better solutions for our drug use and substance abuse problems? How are we going to determine the solutions for population control and decisions about artificially produced and scientifically designed babies?

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**THE THINGS WE CARRY**

**BY MAKIN CLARKE**

Third Place Winner of the Carl Andra Writing Contest

The short story “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien is one that has had a tremendous impact on my life and given a lens through which I have begun to view my own life and the “things I carry.” Everyone carries something—physical things—my backpack full of what seem so necessary to me being successful in school—my laptop, my notebook, my pens and pencils, headphones, protein bars, maybe a change of clothes—all things that I have decided have to be with me at all times. Perhaps a greater weight comes when the physical weight comes off of my shoulders when I put my book bag down, and my mind moves to the emotional things I carry. I carry the weight of who I am—both a white and black girl, a daughter, a cousin, a niece—a responsibility to “remember who I am and what I stand for.” All of these ideas contribute to the weight I carry with me daily. In her poem, “To Light” Linda Hogan writes:

At the spring
we hear the great seas traveling
underground
giving themselves up
with tongue of water
that sing the earth open.

They have journeyed through the graveyards
of our loved ones,
turning in their grave
to carry the stories of life to air.

Even the trees with their rings
have kept track
of the crimes that live within
and against us.

We remember it all.
We remember, though we are just skeletons
whose organs and flesh
hold us in. We have stories
as old as the great seas
breaking through the chest,

flying out the mouth,
noisy tongues that once were silenced,
all the oceans we contain
coming to light.

(Andra Collection)

Tim O’Brien’s short story details the physical, mental and emotional weight
that a battalion of young American soldiers carry. Lieutenant Jimmy
Cross physically carries the letters and the pictures from his college crush
Martha. Although letters and pictures are physically light, the reader
knows he is carrying them every second of everyday. The emotional weight
that Cross carries eventually turns into a weight he might never be able to
shake—maybe he is attempting to escape from the reality of the strange
world he has been thrust into—a world full of experiences he could never
have imagined would be part of his life. In order to escape the reality of the
world he is in, he is constantly thinking about her and what she means—she
becomes the one thing he can hold on to—a constant in an unpredictable
moment in his life.

Today “we” collectively carry devices that hold pictures, messages, the
lives of others, opinions of others, all within reach at any given moment.
It seems to be a weight that never leaves. It is also a weight that perhaps
many don’t even realize they carry because to be quiet, solitary, is some-
thing that is disappearing in our culture. Every message sent, every picture
sent and received, stored for eternity in a place we can’t gain access too
but which holds us captive to what the fate of those images or messages
we’ve deliberately sent, hastily sent, or even thoughtfully sent. As part of
this culture, I carry the weight of knowing that there is more important
stuff that I should be thinking about but let the noise of the now weigh
me down. Like Jimmy Cross I carry the weight of essays, math notes and
assignments, a GPA that has become a part of who I am. I carry the weight
of what I’ve learned and what I now know is beautiful about the world and
what is ugly about the same world—a world in which I am pushed and
pulled and struggle to find my identity and role in this world.

As “The Things They Carried” introduces the reader to each of the men in
the battalion, the physical weight of each individual member of a team, and
the varied emotional burdens that gives their lives individuality instead of
just a number in an innumerable less army of others. This is an idea that
most everyone can relate to. There is a responsibility that comes with being
alive and part of a larger whole. Decisions have to be made and despite
the choice one makes, the intended and unintended consequences follow.
How do I decide what is right or wrong, what is better or less than, who
or what do my actions affect? All of these emotional burdens also lead to
distraction as it does for Jimmy Cross and Ted Lavender, Cross’s platoon
member. This becomes apparent when Lavender gets shot in the head
and Cross understands that the weight he carried, wanting to be loved by
someone else, somewhere in middle America, consumes him and distracts
and eventually leads to his feeling that he is responsible for the death of his
brother in arms. It was something that he carried and could never let go; the
knowledge of knowing one of his soldiers died by enemy fire, while he was
supposed to be protecting them and watching over them. Responsibility is a
weight that people have born from the beginning of time. When I consider
the weight Cross carried I think of others who carried the weight of others
who found hope, compassion, leadership, and followed their words, ideas,
and counsel. One of the first times I realized this was displayed in a scene in the film *Selma*. The scene is a close up on a moment in history that is often viewed from a distance. In 1965 Martin Luther King Jr., initiated a non-violent march from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery Alabama. After what was described as “Bloody Sunday” where hundreds of regular people, like me, came together to make a statement about the fierce injustices that Black Americans faced in almost every aspect of their lives, and were beaten with billy clubs, attacked by police trained German Shepherds, and left to their own devices to flee to safety. Another march was planned, this time to march with King in the lead. Just as King and thousands of other Americans from all creeds, races, and ages followed him to the crest of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. I can’t even begin to imagine being Martin Luther King Jr., leading a march that again could end in violence, quite possibly death, and the police are there to ensnare them—in this moment Dr. King had to stop and make the decision of whether they would keep marching or retreat. I can imagine that King carried the weight of every person who was a victim of oppression or inequity in the whole world.

Although I have never felt the weight King did in that moment, there have been moments in my life where I have felt overwhelmed by emotional burdens. One example was during my time playing volleyball at Ogden High School. There are, in general, five positions on the volleyball court. The positions that have the most pressure are the setter and the outside hitter. I got moved to outside hitter my junior year playing volleyball. It really stressed me out. I knew that it was going to be a hard position, but I had to do my best for myself and my team. I felt this emotional burden and I would cry after games because I was trying my hardest in my games and I could feel the pressure of my team relying on me. Although this isn’t something negative or earth shattering, what I felt affected me tremendously.

In “The Things They Carried,” one feels compassion for the boys who were drafted to fight in Vietnam. Most of them had no idea what to expect and how, for many, their forced participation would change their lives. The soldiers in the story not only carried heavy physical burdens, the emotional burdens they acquired were immeasurable. They saw and experienced the horrors of war and what those experiences did to them, physically, psychologically, and emotionally. They were also faced with the anger and guilt associated with what they inflicted upon others. As we know from the not so recent past, these men were not given the proper support and help they needed to handle the enormity of the emotional responsibilities and burdens from the war. A social injustice, such as this, affected each soldier’s life and the many lives of their loved ones. It has a ripple effect. As I have continued to learn and discuss issues concerning social injustice, I have seen a connection to people who were leaders—a Jimmy Cross, an activist, an immigrant.

This connection seemed very apparent in the story of Alexander Hamilton as told in the Pulitzer Prize winning libretto by Lin Manuel Miranda, the son of immigrant parents from Puerto Rico. I made a connection between these two pieces because there are obviously emotional burdens that come from the burden of being a leader. In *Hamilton* the main character Alexander Hamilton comes from the Caribbean. Being an immigrant made it even harder for him to become something in America, a fact that others were all too happy to remind him of. Because of this, Hamilton was always working—striving to establish a name for himself and a legacy that would extend far beyond his life. This ambition did lead to an important legacy, one that shaped the new born nation of the United States of America, but which also lead to the neglect of his own family—leading to infidelity and eventually the death of his oldest son. The emotional weight he carried physically weighed him down and eventually led to his early death. As Lawson Fusao Inada states, “Just as I thought: Dust doesn’t discriminate” (Andra collection) and neither do the effects of injustice.

Social injustice is something that no one likes for themselves but often goes unnoticed for others who suffer from systemic injustice. Through the stories of Jimmy Cross, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Alexander Hamilton,
I strongly feel that the change has to start within us. In *You & Yours*, Naomi Shihab Nye writes, “We can work on inner peace and world peace at the same time” (Andra Collection). If we can change and influence others and make our voices heard, we can contribute in solving the problem of social injustice. For the world to change everyone needs to be upstanders not bystanders. When this happens, we will start seeing a change not only in America, but around the world. We can see what happens when people just sit aside waiting for it to become their problem before they do anything about it. So many moments of injustice could have had a different outcome to this story if people would stand up instead of by stand. Upstanding is a way that anyone can change the world. The action of being an upstander is a way that any individual can profoundly change the world. In *Jubilee* Margaret Walker states, “Right now I’d rather make a good run than a bad stand” (Andra collection). This attitude could have a global impact for the positive.

It is through literature and open discussion about instances of social injustice that as a society we can confront and work to resolve. The pieces I’ve been exposed to, in part from the Andra Collection, have proven to be literature that enable our society to come to a recognition of things we might miss. Throughout my study and discussion of this literature, I have been exposed to several social injustices. Some of these injustices I know from my own experience while other injustices I learned through others’ words and experiences. Various discussions I engaged in were centered around race and the idea that it has been a burden for so many people as well as the myth that feminism is a bad thing that continues to be understood and debunked. In *Phenomenal Woman* by Maya Angelou we read, “I’m a women Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, that’s me” (Andra Collection).

In one discussion, deaf culture was examined, and my eyes were opened to information about the deaf community and how they would like to be treated. The main thing I took away from what I read, discussed, and learned is that we all carry “things” that can break us or can enable us to have the tools to “be the change, we wish to see in the world,” as Ghandi so beautifully articulated. As a result of these readings and conversations, something that resonated with me is that the problem of social injustice can be solved by actively participating as an upstander. The injustice that the soldiers endured in, “The Things They Carried” could have been eliminated through bystanders standing up against the injustices. One can presume that bystanders could have dramatically influenced all the narratives of injustice I have explored. We can become bystanders for soldiers who sacrifice for us today, as well as anyone else who suffers unfairly. Being an upstander for justice is not only something we can do, it is something we should do. “Let’s stand up. The enemy is ready for questions” (Linda Hogan, Andra Collection).

This is our responsibility. In the words of Nikki Giovanni, “I hope I die warmed by the life that I tried to live” (Andra Collection).