

sliced bread magazine

a collection of student art and writing at the University of Chicago



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sliced bread magazine

DEAR READER,

“All sorrows are less with bread.”

-Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote

2017 marks the tenth anniversary of Sliced Bread Magazine, hardly a great achievement in the storied history of publication but one which we nonetheless take great pride in. Ten times in a row, the combined resolve, care, and creativity of successive generations has published one or more compendia of their peers’ artistic output. It is apparent when browsing through old issues that a basic aesthetic germ has persisted, like a sourdough starter that continually infuses fresh material with its character.

While we proudly carry the torch forward into a new decade, we are also happy to report on new developments which we hope will enhance our mission. We have welcomed an unusually high number of new staff, comprising 19 different hometowns and 14 different academic majors, who have been a delight to work with this year. Moreover, we are pleased to report that our financial situation has taken a turn for the better, and Sliced Bread may soon revive the twice-annual publication schedule that was piloted in 2015. We are especially excited about our upcoming collaboration with Active Minds, which will entail a special edition of the magazine featuring pieces dedicated solely to mental health. We look forward to supporting the amazing work that Active Minds does and hope that a copy of the special issue finds you.

We would like to extend a special thanks to our staff, who constantly knead creativity and fresh perspective into the magazine. We also want to congratulate our graduating senior, Javon Brown, and wish him a fond bready farewell. We are grateful for our advisor, Tempris Daniels, and Student Government for funding our work. In addition, we would like to thank the leadership team of Active Minds—especially Zilin Cui—who made the forthcoming special edition come to life.

We invite you to dig into this, our twelfth issue in ten years, and we hope you keep coming back for more!

Panivorously yours,
The Editors

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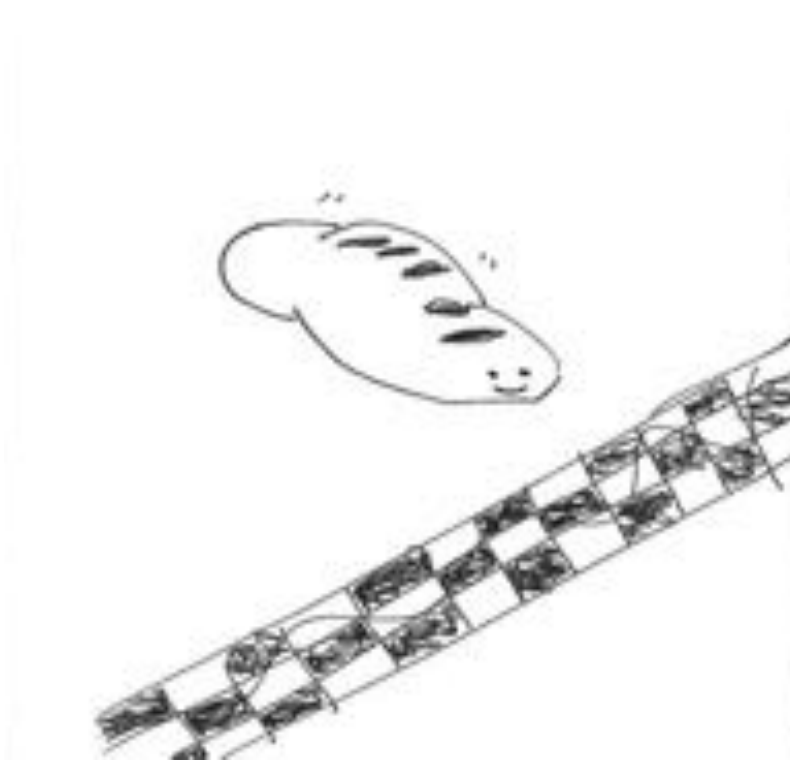
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VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF KALE

NOLAN WINKLER

The *kale* that kale would kale, kale kale kale kale kale.
So much kale, kale overflowing
4 bags – 1 for each arm
Each: cornucopia
of kale.

K A L E: KALE

The rest of yours,
1 leaf of mine,
mixed together – united,
like hometown dirt
at our wedding –

dirt,
in which
we grew: kale.

Peeing on kale,
the dog in our alley,
swaying, curled over
the slats in our fence;
my dad's
anc-
ient stories.

Kale on a bagel,
kale of my love

Sweated & simmered,
like eggs on drugs.

THE DISAPPEARING MOUNTAIN OF LAKE SUPERIOR: A MYSTERY IN TEN PARTS

MIREILLE FARJO

At noon, you watched the sun,
and the sun, double-chinned,
watched you back. Our pinkie
fingers were stuck in the holes of the
café table. Saying
their goodbyes, I
guess.

But I was distracting on
the indomitable coffee—
breathness of your departure,
the astronaut's helmet of pollen
around my head,
the motorcade of clouds that
scraped against our ugly
sunbrella— storm
tendrils always flickering.

I'd read
your letter (*people change*). And
I'd agreed, people

change. But now
I had evolution on
the brain, scanning for
the signs that you'd begun
without me— in the locket of nighttime,
you (pale fish feet)
shuffling to a hand mirror to
pick the cracks from your voice with a
fingernail,

making up your bed like a chrysalis.
Couldn't help
thinking of that woman rippling at us
from San
Francisco or San Jose— Remember
ladies, your eyebrows must
always be sisters, not twins.

The tenth of January, I had
a dream— emerging from a
chrysalis of my own (finally!) I
flitted about you. Your
toes balanced on the waves
of the lake.
A fleck of sunlight— I
paused to fluff my wings. Somehow,
in the meantime,
you sank, your
footing lost or sold or
something. I didn't
notice until you were gone.

It was some time
afterwards that a gull dropped
a postcard into my arms— from
you! Of all things. I snapped it open like
a snow pea:

*Sorry—
Went
disco dancing with the
Edmund Fitzgerald
and, you
know what, we really did
party all night long.*

*And then I had to
catch a bus.*

I had to catch my train.

SUNSHINE AND VANILLA ICE CREAM

PARKER CHUSID

Three weeks ago this Wednesday, I was walking down Ventura Boulevard in the afternoon and Death approached me. It was unbearably hot out. He wanted to know where the nearest ice cream parlor could be found. I told him I didn't know. I suggested the Pinkberry across the street as a viable alternative, but he scoffed at me. I told him that I wasn't parked all that far away, and if he would wait while I walked into Whole Foods and got some groceries (just milk and cereal, I explained) I would take him to find a cold dairy-based treat more to his taste. He said sure, why not, but that he would prefer to just follow me inside rather than wait—in his experience, time passes more slowly while waiting outside grocery stores, he explained. I agreed, and acquiesced. We must have made an odd pair. Death, a sort of British high-cheekboned handsomeness, a pale, sallow countenance beneath military style cropped black hair. Me, middle-length blonde hair, blue eyes, and a ruddy disposition. He walked very close by my side and I wondered if we looked like a gay couple. Probably.

His long dark coat seemed out of place in Southern California, but nobody commented on it. As I walked down the cereal aisle, I thought I caught a glimpse of some flames rising from his boots out of the corner of my eye. I didn't turn to get a better look. I grabbed a box of Raisin Bran. Death asked if we could get Cinnamon Toast Crunch. I told him mom doesn't like me to have too much sugar for breakfast. He sighed and looked away. I walked towards the milk. He didn't follow immediately, but by the time I had found what I was looking for (organic, 2%) he turned up with a box of cinnamon-seasoned granola and an insistent look. I said fine.

At the cash register, Death gazed at the covers of gossip magazines and I tried to avoid staring at the cashier's cauliflower ear. The total came up to \$15.86. My dad calls it "Whole Paycheck." Death asked the cashier where the restroom was. The cashier pointed. "Back and to the right." "Thanks." I stood by a water dispenser and waited. I thought about filling a plastic cup and taking a drink, but decided that then I would have to go to the restroom, and Death and I would just trade places, and that wouldn't get us any closer to the ice cream parlor. Death walked back over, shaking his hands in front of him. "No paper towels." We walked back to my car.

Death sat in the back seat. He originally sat directly behind me, but that made me uncomfortable, so I had him move to the right. I looked up the nearest Coldstone on my iPhone. I like Coldstone. Death looked over my shoulder. "Just 10 minutes away." "Let's go."

Death asked me to tune in to 102.7, KISS FM. He mumble-hummed along. "I got a blank space...baby..."

We arrived and I parked in the small parking lot. It was in a strip mall sliced bread magazine

along Ventura Boulevard between Topanga and Canoga. I didn't remember having seen it before. We walked inside and up to the counter. The only other person in the store was the attendant. Her nametag said "Samantha." When he ordered, Death called her Sam in that annoying trying-to-be-funny dad sort of way, and asked what her recommended flavor was. She faked a smile, and we exchanged a glance that was either sympathetic or mutually condescending... Cute. She said she liked strawberry mixed with coconut. Death looked back at me and made a face. He ordered strawberry and chocolate. Classic. I got a small vanilla cone. Boring.

We sat outside to eat our ice cream. There was sun peeking out from behind the clouds. There was no breeze. Death chose a table half in the shade, and took the chair on the shady side. "Reputations to be kept up and all." He licked his ice cream. He bit into his ice cream. He finished his ice cream impossibly fast. He complained of a brain-freeze. I licked at my vanilla cone and watched the clouds, seeming, as they always do in the San Fernando Valley, to deliberately move out of the sun's way. Ice cream had been a good idea. I told Death as much. He agreed that it had been a good idea, and made it seem like an only slightly arrogant thing to say. I finished my ice cream.

"Do you know why I'm here?" asked Death. He turned to look straight at me. I shifted to face him in response, and found that due to a combination of his placement in the shade, and the sun's placement in my eyes, I could only barely make out his face. I squinted.

"The usual reason, I'd guess."

Death seemed a bit put out. "I guess," he said, with "you dick" as a distinct undertone. Nobody likes to have the best part of their job taken away from them.

I didn't know how to explain to Death that this was a relief. I wondered what Mom and Dad would be doing at our suburban home right now. Maybe walking our dog. I bit into vanilla.

Death seemed uncomfortable, and looked behind himself as if in search of more ice cream to fill the awkward empty feeling that must accompany "the end."

I gave it a try. "I had a dream last night.

"I was lost and I don't know where. But I think there were cacti. A forest of cacti. Saguaros, but not quite. When I brushed against their needles the needles gave way. Some of the needles already had blood on them, and everywhere around me I saw forms with needles stuck in their arms and legs, trying to extract themselves. I watched them for days and weeks. They dragged themselves, each in a different and focused direction. I watched them for days and weeks. I saw one smile in ecstasy, staring on ahead, as its hand tore nearly in half. That took weeks, not days. It had reached some designated spot and it collapsed and then I was facedown and the sand was wet on my face and I didn't need to move I didn't want to move I didn't have to move and I was there for weeks, not days. I drowned there, I think, in the sand, but it wasn't uncomfortable. It wasn't even sad, at least not until I woke up.

“So yeah. You’re here for the usual, I suppose, and it’s almost a relief.”

The sun had set, but it was much too early for that. And it was much darker than usual, but I knew Death was still there. I knew he was there because he giggled when I stopped talking.

“There it is.”

I had the strangest sense that he was crying now and I turned away from him to run and I fell and my face hit the ground and there was wet salt and then there wasn’t. Everything went away and everything came with me. I joined Death, the taste of vanilla on my lips.

HAIKU TO DAD
HANK HUBBARD

Chortle on my balls
My foot is up your fat ass
You motherfucker.

A BRIEF HISTORY

KATRINA LEE

If we had stayed in Bangladesh, my husband would never have bought you, with your lace, your cheetah spots, and your cheap Chinese silk. In Bangladesh, underwear wasn't meant to seduce. My husband would not have made it out of the store without whispers, and the news that Avi Majumdar bought hooker underwear would leap from house to house until it reached the mosque. And then during Friday prayers, the imam would have prepared the creation story for his sermon. He would have explained how God shaped man, then woman, then apple. How woman brought shame into this world when she let apple's seed slide into her belly. How your ancestors were sewn from fig leaves—God's gift to save us from shame, not bring it upon the family. And with that, the whole community would have known about the underwear scandal, and my husband would not have been invited to tea anymore. But we are not in Bangladesh. We are here, seas away from home, because my husband told me that the money was in America, though everyone here tells us the money is back home.

You were a foreigner, too: made in China but destined for America long before you were spun from silkworm mothers. You were cut from cheetah print, branded with lace by hands that hurried you along. To them, you were only a two percent commission. Primped like a harlot, you found your way into the hands of a child who knew you were sexy but did not know what sexy meant. She did not look at you when she folded you into a box labeled for America.

They sent you on a truck, a plane, another truck. Your box opened and you were in America. This was the dream, so you breathed in the shiny sidewalks, shiny windows, shiny people. You were put on a mannequin in the window display and you did not know why you turned heads. You did not know why the swarms of preteen boys would always giggle and point. They were the ones with bleached hair. You forgave them because their mothers never taught them better.

A month later and you were in the bottom of a box on the clearance shelf. You were forgotten. You existed quietly and learned the warmth of cotton, the gloss of satin. You must have heard horror stories of the washing machine, a torture device to break clothes in like horses. I hope you knew they were just stories and that none of them had ever seen a washing machine because the return policy in American stores is very strict. They never take back washed clothes, and they call you a cheater if you try.

You felt the warm, dry fingers of my husband fish you from the box. The cheapskate probably spent an hour comparing prices before buying you. He typed notes into the new smartphone I had finally let him have, even though I knew it would ruin his eyes and thumbs. That crazy goat would never learn. "No, Priya, the paint looks fine as it is." "No, Priya, all the modern women wear them." "No, Priya, sliced bread magazine

it will help me multitask and make money to take care of you.”

He probably paid for you in cash. He probably handed crisp bills to one of those smiling girls who never look into your eyes or ask about your family. She wrapped you in paper that crinkled, and her own nose crinkled as she sniffed the spices on my husband's clothes. She could not appreciate the smell of my cooking, though my recipes are older than her house.

My husband carried you away, and no one cared about the bright pink shopping bag he held in his hand. You bounced in the passenger seat of the silver Volvo and felt the breeze from the open windows. You wondered whether you were headed straight for the washing machine, whether your first destination would be your last.

You were surprised when the skinny fingers of a secretary, or an undersecretary, or maybe a waitress, undid your wrappings. She probably ripped the paper in her hurry, not pulling off the cellophane tape or carefully folding the tissue paper to save for another day. You glided up her skinny legs... then down again. My husband stuffed you in his trouser pocket because he was in a rush, or he wanted a token to keep, or he wanted to keep her smell close, or maybe he did not care enough to be careful. Either way, you ended up in his pocket, keeping his wedding ring company. My husband had insisted on that ring, though it had caused many whispers among both our families. “So Western,” they had said, as I slid the ring on his finger. “Does he think he is a Christian?” Now that ring was in his pocket. You felt its cold metal flush against you. You waited. The ring was remembered and restored to position. You were forgotten.

When my husband tossed the trousers into the hamper, you went along with them. There you waited in the gentle stench of sweat. You floated on the sea of shirts and saris, buoyed by the trouser pocket, who taught you how to hold your breath. My husband's cotton oxfords warned you of starch, the dryer, the iron. My silks thought you were one of them and told you about the delicate cycle. They did not know that I was only careful with good silk. You had nightmares about soap.

Your world shook as I carried the hamper downstairs to the basement. You may have smelled the mold that I have been meaning to call someone about, but in Bangladesh, there is always mold because there are always floods. You heard the creak of metal. The crash of water as I turned the machine on. The muffled shake of detergent powder. The soft pop of bubbles bursting and growing and bursting again. The rustle of cotton and polyester, and the splashes that followed. You felt my fingers find you in the trouser pocket.

You felt me tremble. I had trembled when my abbu shook hands with a strange spectacled man in our drawing room and when I married that stranger two weeks later. I had trembled when the plane shuddered into the sky, and my home and family fell behind. I had trembled in the spice aisle of the supermarket, which had no *methi patta* or *panch phoron*, when I realized I no longer knew how to

cook, not with these spices. I trembled now, but only for a moment.

And here you are in my hand like the rag doll I had when I was a little girl, though I will not forget you in the mud. I cannot show you to my husband, for his forehead would crinkle and his moustache would tremble, and he'd take off his spectacles and rub them with a microfiber cloth. And my parents would hear and the imam would hear, and no one would visit my family for tea. So I cannot rip open your seams and unravel your threads. I cannot leave you to rot with the banana peels in the trash can. I will push you back in the trouser pocket, and then into the washing machine. You will be dried with his trousers. My husband will find you and not know I saw you, and I will bear him no shame. Yes, you must face the washing machine and learn to swim.



THE WITNESS

LIAM MAGUIRE

I

Sole witness to the murder
Footed in a muddied field,
Ragged with snow.

And to the sheaves of corn husks, bound by wire,
Rattling as leaves rattle.

And to the wind, high in the trees,
Gathering into that higher wind.

II

Do not call it stillness—
The air crouching within an urn.

Silence is not stillness, but suspension:
The silence of distant thunderheads,
Or censers swaying in the dark.

Do not speak of stillness,
When you cannot know silence.

III

The bells no longer sing
Across the barrens.

And the sirens are no longer screaming
Upon the wind.

An evening star,
A sun-blached bone:
Witnesses.

IV

A white stone falling across a faultless dark.

At the still point.

HOW COULD BLACK?

JONATHAN GARDNER

Transcribe construction noise to a piece for solo drum set
Without you I'm in misery
Study cubism to play angular licks
One hit banana chips—what have you done for me?

I took drugs now I'm just like the rest of them
Won't say profound, wiseass's not around
Fear, sloth and gluttony—it bring out the best in (me/them)
Paper towel open door, old folks' dressing room
We lost the beat, bright and early heated wheat
Cold swims, stay warm fold your limbs on in, flim-
-see: Don't want to have to lose a week
Wipe me off with your towel after you finish using me

Au naturel, hemp fiber woven very tight
Veggie might, come the night, see the light
No-toast situation, don't go grave-persuading
The crumb stale and fading, growing pale and funghi
-(I'm not death-blaming, the body was frail
The chronicle, the tale, I hope, I grow, I'm glad I came
I can't believe you broke both your legs the day before the big game

YOU ARE AN ONION
FINNEGAN CLARK

You are an onion

I don't know how to tell you
that this morning, when the cold wind came,
you did not change.
As the warm light rose up in the east
and the green grass cried out,
you too were illuminated:

Your shell, your film, your face,
I saw it all as if in a cookbook.

I heard it from the forever-sun
who has yet to tell a lie.

He shined and I saw;
he spoke and I listened.

Now I know what to call you
as you glisten:

onion.

THE BARBER

CONNOR FIEWEGER

I work for a man whom I've never met, but I touch his hair every week. At least, I think it's the same man. I think I can be fairly certain that it is the same man, I believe. I believe that I can think this because he has certain distinguishing characteristics that are always the same, for the most part. These characteristics, for the most part, concern the top and back of his head, as I do not know much else about him other than when he gets said hair cut. He comes in every week on Tuesday promptly at 7:30 A.M. and slides his head into the haircut slot that we have in the false walls of our barbershop. Behind these false walls are us, the barbers. The whole setup is meant to maximize efficiency and avoid the petty conversation with us – the barbers – that so few of us realized a lot of people actually hate and would prefer that the hair-cutting community as a whole would just, like, shut up. And so that's where this man comes into play. He is of the just-cut-my-damn-hair-and-no-I-don't-want-it-cut-any-differently-and-my-kids-are-just-so-fucking-fine-and-dandy school, so he comes here and sticks his head in a hole every week. Well, half of his head. The back half, to be specific. If he is even the same man.

I think he is the same man because of the following reasons: First, the time thing. Always the same and always prompt. Second, his hair always grows out the same way. The left patch of neck hair that I always shave off grows in faster than the right patch. It begins to curl a bit around the ears. He has a mole behind his right ear. He has a little blonde tuft that stands out singularly piebald among his otherwise quite dark brown hair, a polioltic patch coming from some kind of subdermal birthmark. This patch is about the size of a silver half-dollar coin and is on the back right of his head approximately 4 cm right of center and 3 cm due north from where his hairline stops in the back, not counting the thinner neck-hair area. His hair is of slightly above average thickness. He always tips 2 dollars and 70 cents. Exactly fifteen percent.

With all this in mind, sometimes I still cannot help but feel that this is not the same man. I've never seen his face. Some weeks his head is so tight, full of a pent-up something-or-other that is palpable when I brush the skin of his dome as I cut; other weeks it is calm and relaxed, scalp free of tension. What if he has a twin brother, one of them being much more genial and loose-scalped, perhaps from receiving more childhood love or just fortuity in life? What if the two men are unrelated? I know this is highly improbable, but the possibility still gnaws at me occasionally. It's usually when I'm using the buzz-cutters to touch-up around the ears, when the gnawing hits, that is, towards the end of the haircut.

Or what if has never been the same man? Just scores of clones that are pumped out of a test tube and sent into the shop once a week to get their haircut before they are sent to do whatever clonely duties they are to complete. I've sliced bread magazine

never even seen the other side, the customer [?] side, of the shop, of the Hole. There could be a conveyor belt that just, like, brings the clone into its position and then I set about my work and then the conveyor belt takes him away. The pay may just be so that I think that this is a real man paying me real money, but in reality it comes from some outside corporate source. I think about that town where all the people that lived there were working on building the atomic bomb and they didn't even know about it because the whole thing was done in such a hyper-compartmentalized manner, one person seeing a piece of metal come through a hole in the wall on a conveyor belt and attaching a single bolt to the piece of metal and then sending it through another hole in the opposite wall. Assembly-line deterritorialization. They didn't know or care that the piece of metal would be used as a part for the neutron plunger of an H-bomb. Do the clones die? Is that why there's a new one to coif every week? A predeterminedly Lilliputian lifespan for these beings that I lighten the heads of? There is a lot of time to think of these sorts of things on the other side of the hole. After all, I'm not talking to the customer, so what else is there to do.

Sometimes I think about how close I am to the man's brain. Skin, skull, dura mater, arachnoid mater, pia mater, brain. Five layers.

I wonder where the man gets his shave.

THE GREY CITY, WITHOUT TOUCHING GROUND

SAM HOFFMAN

I took a rebellious seat on an L train,
In the cage in the back where the badasses sit and
Watched the track unspool beneath me:
The trace of a young graffitist's sneaker and jacket
Climbing the risen track beneath me to leave a trace

Ascended high above the city I saw blue, red, green
As trees whipped by, I imagined the free fall
Which, after all, would be slower than the train.
Into their welcoming branches I build my nest
Curl up alone and await the dawn

Over my head the trains thunder back and forth
Shooting lightning-sparks into the acrid ozone air
Transit never ends, back and forth across this ceaseless city
I remember the time two humans (us) we touched in that empty car

It is now 4 am, the grey hour of that summer sky
Stars not disappearing: they never appeared for me, alone, or us, in pairs,
nor anyone else, really, in this unconsecrated earthly place.
In this bright white city with no way to navigate
I wander the creeping, crowded branches

YOUR TRIAL

SARAH SALTIEL

Needle pierces the skin

17. “Poor sap. Y’know, you almost feel sorry for him. Nobody deserves this, doesn’t matter what they’ve done—”

16. “No, man, you don’t know this guy. Some people just shouldn’t be allowed to keep on breathing, you don’t know what he did.”

15. “C’mon, it couldn’t have been that bad.”

14. “No, listen, you know my cousin Brett, the one who was in the Marines way back when? Toughest guy I know. He was on the police force when this guy was still walking free, was the first responder on the crime scene. Quit the force that day and now he walks poodles for a doggy day care.”

Toxic mixture of barbiturates, paralytics, and potassium solutions—prisoner starts to feel woozy

13. “Shit, man, what’d he do?”

12. “Well there were these three men, see? And he cut off their legs. That’s how they died, coroner says, by bleeding out—”

11. “I guess that’s not too bad—”

Prisoner is now entirely unconscious, muscle paralysis sets in and breathing stops

10. “No, man, I’m not finished! While they were still alive and bleeding out, he sewed them together, human centipede style. ‘Cept he sewed their mouths to their... y’know...”

9. “Their what?”

8. “Their peckers, man. They were just sewed into a circle, mouth to dick. I swear to god.”

7. “Aw, c’mon, why’d you gotta tell me things like that?”

6. “You asked, man. The press had a field day with it. Called him the Serpent, y’know, because the guys looked like that snake that’s always eating itself. What’s it called—”

5. “Why’d he do it? Think it was a gay thing? Like a hate crime?”

Potassium chloride stops the heart—prisoner goes into cardiac arrest

4. “Dunno—they looked into that for sure, thought maybe that’s why he sewed them together, but two of the men had girlfriends and one had a wife. Guess you never know. I reckon he just did it for fun, the bastard. Didn’t even contest the courts, just sat there, sort of shaking his head to himself. Barely said a word.”

Silence

3. “Looks like he’s just about croaked now, s’pose we should go find Doc to call it official?”

2. “Guess so. What was his name?”

1. "Elijah. Good riddance, I suppose."

Exeunt

Needle pierces the skin

17. It has been thirteen years since I was pronounced guilty. At the time of the murder, I was with Stella and Stella was crying—something was growing inside of her and I...

16. I met Stella in a coffee shop—she was wearing a scarf in her hair that was my favorite color and in the last year we spent together, she was my favorite color and I fell asleep at nights thinking of the color of her laugh, because she was always laughing and orange and pink bubbled into the air. On the last day we spent together, she wasn't laughing anymore.

15. It is impossible to sleep next to someone every night, to breathe in the same air that they exhale, and not love them, and no one in the history of time has ever loved another person the way I loved Stella.

14. I haven't slept next to anyone except my shadow for thirteen years.

Toxic mixture of barbiturates, paralytics, and potassium solutions—prisoner starts to feel woozy

13. One night, I was cooking dinner and waiting for Stella and Stella didn't come home and I found her out on the streets, curled into a ball.

12. Men had shoved their way into her body and she didn't own her body anymore, theirs, not hers, and something started growing inside of her and when they were done, they shoved her on the ground and kicked and kicked and kicked and kicked and...

11. My beautiful Stella, covered in muck, the ground devouring her body.

Prisoner is now entirely unconscious, muscle paralysis sets in and breathing stops

10. Stella didn't laugh anymore and—crying, she was always crying and the air was steeped with the color of bruises when she cried.

9. Something grew inside her and she threw up most mornings so she stopped eating because why would you bother? She sat in bed and her face grew thinner and her bones stuck through her skin like swords, like spears, and she showered three times a day to wash their fingerprints off her, could never wash their fingerprints away. She showered three times a day to wash her body away, she wanted to tear her body apart and she tried to tear it apart but—

8. *Violence begets violence begets violence begets v—*

7. Quiet now, I have to finish this before brain stops working, heart stops working, stops beat, beat, beating

6. At the time of the murder, I was with Stella and Stella was crying and...

5. Stella ran from me and ate the bullet of a gun and it blossomed red poppies at the back of her head and—

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4. Dead women can't give alibis for the men they loved, you know. And so how could she tell the courts that I was with her, how could she defend me?

3. It is impossible to sleep—impossible to sleep alone

2. I still sleep with her but now I sleep with her cries in my head and how can I exist loving someone the way I loved—

1. Loved Stella

Potassium chloride stops the heart—prisoner goes into cardiac arrest
Exeunt

Needle pierces the skin

17. At the time of the murder, you were with Stella and Stella was crying and...

16. Stella cut off the legs of a man, good thing you drugged them because it took half an hour because her body wasn't strong enough when she hit the bone because something was growing inside of her and...

15. You cut off the legs of the other two.

Toxic mixture of barbiturates, paralytics, and potassium solutions—prisoner starts to feel woozy

14. Something was growing inside Stella and the courts didn't care because the courts said she had gone home with them, said she wasn't stable enough to get rid of what was growing in her body, wasn't of sound enough mind but there were sounds in her mind alright, and they were screams, and you couldn't hold her tightly enough to drown out those shrieks but still you held her as her tears ran onto you.

13. Stella didn't laugh anymore.

12. Stella was dying because they choked her laugh from her throat and the only time she was alive was when she was angry and so you let her be angry because that was better than being dead, anything was better than Stella dead and...

11. Stella cut off the legs of a man and you finished the job and Stella ran from you and painted a cluster of poppy blossoms in her skull and how do you hold the body of a girl that you loved when the body is quiet, too quiet, and you're dripping with bouquets of poppy blossoms.

10. No one can tell you how.

Prisoner is now entirely unconscious, muscle paralysis sets in and breathing stops

9. You killed three men, technically two, and they killed Stella, not quickly but slowly, painfully, and you sewed them together because violence begets violence and there was more than one thing growing inside Stella, there was something that you didn't see that was dark and rotten, and it grew inside them and now it grows inside you and the snake never ends and you—

8. You killed three men and you did not fight the courts because how can you live with this growing inside of you?

7. You cannot sleep beside someone without loving them and no one in the

history—

6. No one in the history of time has ever loved someone the way you loved—

5. Stella.

4. Stella

3. You have no final moment of clarity, you have had thirteen years for that, to live with the guilt that rots inside of you, thirteen years to live without Stella, you haven't been alive for thirteen years—

2. Stella

1. Wouldn't anyone have done the same?

Potassium chloride stops the heart—prisoner goes into cardiac arrest

Exeunt

WE SAT DOWN IN A FIELD

ANIL SINDHWANI

We sat down in a field
Overgrown, and green—
Pastoral and excessive. The
Hills crashed around us
Like waves, rolled like waves,
Sung echoes,
Like waves. The wind floated
Around trees as water engulfs
Rocks. A wisp of orange—thumb-

smudged as in color on paint—
Burst through the green-blue; the
Little spot wafted closer, carried
Full and complete like
An unassuming rowboat on
This moving sea. At last:

A butterfly; miniature wings,
Miniature things, twirling
In the watery wind.
Its wings: perfect blood orange
Sails; its antennae: a gruff sailor,
Eyeglass aloft.
It soared and dipped,
A captain's ship
On this runny sea—it launched
Up, and flirted with the sky,
Lusting after the open
Air. Tapping once, twice; the
Water barreled on the orange

Friend, howling as it shifted...
Thrice the butterfly stirred pushing
Against the breeze; It peaked,
At last, winning its war. Animal,
Over nature, man following Jesus's
Example over the lake,
As we lay down, sleeping, in the grass.

BARRY, THE ORACLE

JAKE WEISS

A man once said,
'If you fall in love during the summer,
you're gonna get your heart broken.'

This was my neighbor,
Barry, a carpenter, dunce,
and lonely man, though many years
he'd been married. And for all
his flaws, he'd told it
like it is:

it was, indeed, summer,
I had, indeed, fallen in love,
and, as Barry had foretold,
my heart lay shattered on the kitchen floor
while I overcooked my eggs.

Every moment I spent
waiting for that text
that said you still loved me,
and were coming back
to kiss my lips
as the crickets chirped
somewhere behind us,

and then the mosquito bites
on my legs
wouldn't matter anymore,
and I could enjoy the sunset again,
maybe we'd even wake early
and watch the sun rise;
it had happened before.

Of course, the text never came.
Who would have thought
it would? Too perfect,
too clean, the ending
to a children's book.

sliced bread magazine

It didn't take a wise man to foresee it,
only Barry,
having, once, accidentally hammered
his hand whilst driving a nail
into nowhere.



IT'S ALRIGHT

SARAH KOMANAPALLI

Marie was sitting in the kitchen. She'd been there for a while, a glass of wine in front of her, untouched. The dark circles under her eyes were emphasized by the pendant lights hanging above the countertop. She buried her face in her hair, pulling the blanket around her securely. When she felt that it was safe to look again, she pushed her hair back and swirled the wine glass, letting the aroma fill her nostrils. Tears were coming again, but she pressed the blanket to her eyes, absorbing the drops before they had a chance to fall.

Her eyes flicked up when she heard the door open; Alex was home. His face was burnished red from the biting wind and ice and his eyes were bright against the evening. He closed the door quickly to halt the wintery gust. He saw her watching him as he hung his coat up, and he grinned. Marie smiled back; she couldn't help it.

"How was work?" she asked, knowing it was great, that he loved his job.

"Excellent, we've picked up three new clients. I'm head of one of the projects, which seems like it's going to be really interesting. Already started brainstorming possible ad campaigns." He plopped down on the stool beside her and pulled her into a one-armed hug. "When'd you get done with class?"

"About 3:30." The smile was starting to fade from her face and suddenly she just wanted to be alone. She just needed to work through this and it was hard to do that when people were asking her mundane questions about irrelevant things that she didn't want to—

"Are you feeling any better?" he asked. She must have let her guard down, let her expression change, because now he was looking worried.

"Not really, but it's fine. It's just a mood, I just need to wait for it to pass. Just not feeling well."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"I can't"

"Well, you could, to me," he ventured.

"I can't. If I do, something will be wrong with me."

That was real issue. If she spoke out loud, in real life, some God-awful diagnosis would be tattooed on the side of her skull. She wouldn't be able to pretend, or run, or hide, or whatever her strategy was.

"Have you ever felt that something might be wrong with you? So wrong that if you tell someone they might actually look and see it too?" she asked.

He studied her, as if weighing options.

"Yeah, I have actually. I still do."

She looked him, trying to see if he was telling the truth. Which was silly, because Alex always told the truth.

"Whatever it is, you're alright. Nothing is wrong with you," she said.

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“You can’t know that.”

“Well, you can’t either.”

They sat in silence for a while. Thinking. About what was going on inside them and inside each other. Wondering if all the people they passed on the street felt this way too.

“Sometimes I think I’m a pedophile,” he whispered quickly.

He might as well have used a shot gun, the clean break he made in the silence.

“You’re crazy,” Marie said.

“That’s what I said.”

“No, you’re not a— Why?” It seemed tactless, but it was the only question she could think of.

“The oldest woman I dated was six years younger than me, and the others were much younger. And now there’s you and I...and what’s the difference? Fifteen years.”

“So what? You’re not preying on me. And I’m not a child.”

“I know, but—”

“Just stop. You’re fine. You’re more than fine.” She could see the way he shifted on the stool he wasn’t entirely sold. “Alex, I know the way you think, and it’s not the same as those creeps on the news.”

He continued staring at the opposite wall. Then he started to smile little, looking down at the counter. Marie grinned at a new thought.

“If you leave me because my hair turns grey, then we’ll just know you’re a jerk.”

He leaned on her shoulder and sighed, “Like that’ll ever happen.”

They sat in silence, and she could feel him grinning into her collarbone. He was happy, relieved that she couldn’t see the monster he thought was in the closet.

“Last night I dreamt that I killed myself,” she said. Hushed, so maybe he wouldn’t hear.

“What do you mean?” he said, sitting up.

“Last night I dreamt that I killed myself. But I was separate from myself; so it was actually the worst elements of murder and suicide bundled into one sweaty, horror story. The whole thing was actually shot very cinematically, black and white with artistic blurs. I dreamt that I woke up in the night, and walked into the bathroom. I turned, and standing next to the toilet was a classmate, my friend in fact. She had an odd, twisted assortment of wires and switches around her, and a sharp glint uncomfortably close to her neck. She smiled at me; she had a new haircut. It looked good on her. There was a string attached to the door knob. She pulled it. The door slammed, my view jerked toward the tub, and behind me I heard a sickening plop. I woke up again and was suddenly in the bathroom. Another classmate stood by the toilet. I didn’t know her that well, I don’t think we even have any classes together; she smiled anyway. There were the same wires draped about her, the string tied about the doorknob. But there was an odd, dark shape by her head and I

leaned in to see what it was. Then she pulled the string, the door slammed, my view was jerked to the bottom of the tub just as the gun went off and I heard splatter.”

The whole thing came out in a single shot, no breath spared.

“So, you didn’t kill yourself,” Alex concluded.

“No, I did. It felt like it was me. Sometimes the thought just creeps in— and I don’t mean anything by it, but that was the first time it felt real”.

“It’s a nightmare. You’ve always gotten nightmares.”

“The others I could laugh about in the morning.”

“Marie, you don’t want to kill yourself,” Alex said.

“I think my subconscious would disagree.”

“Nope. That dream scared you. You scared the idea out of your head. You showed it to yourself in such a way that you wouldn’t want it anymore.”

Marie paused, let the idea soak through; she liked the way it nestled in her mind. She gave a half smile, and wrapped her arms around him.

“We’re alright, aren’t we?” she said

“Yeah, no skeletons in these closets. Just coat hangers and clutter.”

blueberry pie

SARA MAILLACHERUVU

one

annie picked blueberries
dropped a barrel on ms walter's porch
never came home

two

flour from the cupboard
butter from the icebox
berries from the bush

three

when does summer end?
on the porch swing
she sailed into september

four

flour blooms into butter
sticky radio jazz follows falls finds her rhythm
she rolls & rolls & rolls

five

basking on the sun-bleached sill
steam, loosened from battalions of berries—
marching blue & brown & sweet

six

fragrance flowers in the soft kitchenette air
naked feet on the linoleum floor
bluebirds hum, dance-dance-dancing

CAPING MECHANISMS

LEAH WALLACH

I've been trying to open myself up
to love, or new opportunities, something
soft that needs to worm inside me.
Something that makes me crack my ribs,
peel aside the sternum,
prep for cardiac massage.
I get to the ribs step
and then it goes wrong. Rot sets in.
The soft thing doesn't come.

I've been trying to pull teeth out,
carefully, all of them, to make room
for the soft thing when it slides down my throat.
The molars are the hardest, slipping under my fingers.
They don't like coming. The roots are too deep.
I'm licking blood out of my gums to make room
for confidence, or gentleness, something
that needs to defang me first.

I've been trying to peel
my skin off, starting
with my shoulders, the soft thing
needs me to be raw.
The first layers flake the fastest.
I scrape my nails and my face falls in strips.
I'm prepping my flayed face for a new one,
something coming, like beauty, or love, or resentment.

I've been starting to suspect the soft thing
isn't coming, that it was there to make this
easier to explain: one hand curled
around my lung in the mirror.
I need a good reason
to split my own sternum.
I need a good reason to break off my toes.
I squeeze my hand up into spine space.
I pull it out. The hole doesn't close.

sliced bread magazine

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

KARYN PEYTON

January 2, 2016

Just moved into the new place! Only a few issues so far. Didn't have heat for a little while - 48, maybe 72 hours? But we've been told by Dvonne (neighbor on the left) that that's normal. We keep hearing a clicking noise late at night, but we managed to sleep through it. Smelled gas when we first came up. Pipe light was out in the stove. Management isn't very prompt, but maintenance man Kevin was on it. Just need to buy a few more kitchen supplies and a snow shovel. Neighbors on the right barely register our existence. Haven't seen the upstairs neighbors yet. Living with my sister is tolerable so far. So far, so good.

January 4, 2016

Saw some kind of mystery bug in the bathroom today. Red and black stripes. LOTS of legs. It's still in there somewhere. But I guess I shouldn't be expecting it to be all sparkling sunsets, garlands of bulbs glistening over my entryway, sweet aromas of toasted almonds, etc.

Apparently management is very loose. There isn't a landlord on site. Which is fine. We're still hearing that clicking noise late at night. Usually starts at around 11ish and goes until 2:15am, sometimes 3 even. Asked Kevin to come look at the radiator again and address the clicking noise. He didn't find anything out of the ordinary.

Starting to hear some other weird noises coming from upstairs, too. I heard a dog bark. Like a single bark. A disembodied voice in the bathroom. Sometimes the wind carries up someone's voice on the street to my window, but last night I heard an opera singer. Pidge went upstairs to investigate, up past the mailboxes (Dvonne brings my mail down to me). Just a Russian couple arguing two floors up with their window wide open.

Made the mistake of listening to Pidge read me an article about seven Japanese taxi drivers who work in Ishinomaki. 6,000 people died there in the 2011 tsunami. Apparently, after the tsunami, they kept picking up ghost passengers. They'd enter the taxi, ask to be brought their destination, and then they'd disappear, leaving their fare unpaid. I'm just picturing a passenger popping up in the back seat inquiring, "Have I died?" Worried.

The neighbor seems to keep to late hours. He doesn't get home until 10. I keep hearing someone pressing the buzzer at around 10:45. Maybe it's a friend of his. I keep hearing him thumping around up there. You would think he would pick up a kitchen chair to move it instead of dragging it across the kitchen floor. But it's fine.

January 7, 2016

The clicking noise is making it a little hard to sleep. Now it sounds more like a repetitive squeak. Pidge and I were brainstorming possible sources. Could just be the radiator. I hope it's just the radiator.

Still need to get the snow shovel.

January 9, 2016

It's sex. There is no doubt about it. He is copulating up there. Every night. With alarming frequency. I have analyzed the spatial geography of his studio. He fucks directly over my head. He does his post-coital walk to the bathroom. His buzzer is over my closet. Every weeknight he arrives home at 10pm and calls someone. Soon enough, the girlfriend booty calls at 10:45pm. Rings the buzzer directly outside my window and giggles so loudly it's like she's going to pop from joy when he lets her enter. The fun begins at 11pm. Weekends are even worse. 3am. 4:28am. They never sleep.

Maybe I'm just angry because I'm lonely. On my way home, I saw a girl riding on the handlebars of a boy's bike as it whipped past me. While the wind blew her long, straight, white-girl hair into his mouth, he breathlessly asked her if she grew up in London? I saw the distorted bodies of a couple cozied up next to a piano through the stained-glass window of the gothic Cathedral next to my favorite Thai restaurant that is always decorated for Valentine's Day. They were dancing; her head was in his armpit. Pissed me off. But it's just sex. People have a right to act on their bodily passions. 11pm isn't too late. I just go to bed really early. Regardless.

January 10, 2016

I've now determined ability to get a good night's rest is entirely determined by astrological analysis, sacrificial offerings, and the roulette wheel.

The clicking has evolved into banging. It's like he's bringing a shovel down on the hardwood every two seconds. Or he's rattling a chain around the kitchen like the Ghost of Christmas Past. Or he's giving really aggressive CPR to his girlfriend so she doesn't pass from this world. Banging around in his footwear of choice: fucking cinderblocks. Right now I'm enjoying his bowling above Pidge's desk. Pidge can't concentrate long enough to work on her poetry collection.

I saw the back of his head today. He was leaving the building this morning like he owned the place. He has a fucking ponytail. Orange backpack. Light wash jeans. I wouldn't fuck him. I don't know who would. Pidge concurred.

I will confront him soon.

January 17, 2016

They fucked from 11:06pm to 2:34am to the soundtrack of Mamma Mia. I am recording this in case they get defensive. This is the proof.

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January 23, 2016

Mamma Mia is their kink apparently. They've done it Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday with Amanda Siegfried's "Lay All Your Love on Me" pouring forth from the speakers of the stereo above my kitchen table. Sometimes they switch it up and watch Batman Begins. I put a note on his door. I used a sunflower-shaped sticky-note to dull the sharpness of my complaint. To allay my fears of confrontation, I posted the following quotes on my fridge:

"To go against the dominant thinking of your friends, of most of the people you see every day, is perhaps the most difficult act of heroism you can perform."
Theodore H. White

"Only when we are no longer afraid do we begin to live." Dorothy Thompson

January 28, 2016

Desperate, I disseminated the following inquiry through my Facebook page:

Anyone have solutions to getting your upstairs neighbors to stop having sex while watching Mamma Mia from 11pm to 2:30am every Sunday, Monday, and Friday night? Pidge and I have tried the following:

1. Posting a note on his door ("Mamma Mia! You are loud.")
2. Banging on the ceiling.
3. Throwing kitchen utensils at the ceiling.
4. Posting another note on his door.
5. Shouting "Penis!" as loud as possible while they are having sex.

Someone said complain to management. Sure, I said. I will complain to my invisible landlord. Management's website is down for maintenance. Indefinitely.

While I received many "likes" and "hahas" and cry-laughing emojis on my status, I received only one other comment: "While I can offer no solution to your vexing (sexing?) problem, I do have to admire their courage and consistency."

January 30, 2016

I am determined to find out who this asshole is. Pidge asked Dvonne. Dvonne doesn't know him. Dvonne doesn't know shit.

This afternoon I inspected the mailboxes. He lives in apt #2A-B (we live in #1A-B. The one that's an addition. It dangles over the railroad tracks). Of course all of the mailboxes are mislabeled. There's an Amazon package for a Robert Lewis in his box, but mailbox #3G is actually labeled with "Robert Lewis." Two Larsons, one Aziz, a Dubtzech, a John Smith (really?), a Danielle Brown, a McClure. I jotted down the names (I'm being a psycho. But I haven't slept in three weeks. I look haggard. Three weeks.) and took a photo of the buzzer box. Then I pulled up Facebook and searched every Larson, Aziz, Dubtzech, John Smith, Danielle Brown, and McClure in the whole goddamn city. John Smith was impossible to deal with. Of course, none of these people were on the map. Not one, not one had a Facebook. Which is fine.

January 31, 2016

My Tuesday evening ritual of barbarically eating macaroni and cheese out of a pan was rudely interrupted by what now sounds like bowling balls.

February 1, 2016

WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING THAT YOU HAVE TO KEEP FUCKING VACUUMING?

February 2, 2016

I think the little fucker upstairs is running around deliberately to annoy us. Is our ceiling his stage? Tonight I tried playing a video game to distract myself. Something my ex-boyfriend used to do to distract himself from me talking. I spent ninety minutes trying to get out of a goddamn ditch before I retired. This situation has proven fodder for Pidge's creativity. She's made up a couple of sex haikus.

Last night the neighbor had a birthday party until 3:30am. When he wouldn't answer his door, I left the following note:

I thought now would be an appropriate time to tell you that there is probably a very large black and red bug under your bed somewhere. I saw it crawl up through the vent last night, but then I remembered I forgot to get you a birthday present. Happy birthday. Hope you enjoyed your hootenanny.

He was very quiet tonight. I think he left his apartment for the evening. I don't expect it to last. Which is fine.

February 4, 2016

Wondering if I should get some kind of tornado insurance. Worried they're going to fall through the ceiling. Excited that they might fall through the ceiling. Hopefully he breaks more than one bone. Had to say it.

He thinks he can make the floor less squeaky by moving the bed to a different side of his apartment. He lives in a studio apartment.

February 7, 2016

Today I figured out who Robert Lewis is. I passed by the mailbox one more time and thought I'd take one more shot at Facebook. After some more advanced searches, I found him.

Robert Lewis is a pastor. The upstairs neighbor, with the godlike sexual endurance, is a pastor. Mamma Mia. We're going to hell for our noise complaints. I held a press conference over Facebook since everyone was wondering who the hell this guy was. My video got 86 likes.

Apparently Dvonne's last name is McClure. So he isn't McClure. Why she didn't bother to impart this information earlier just blows me away.

sliced bread magazine

February 10, 2016

Now I'm the asshole. I passed by "Robert Lewis" on the stairs today. He was coming back from a sermon. He does not have a ponytail. In fact, he doesn't even live on the second floor. He lives on the third floor. He lives above the sex maniac. Dvonne said she could've told me that. Dvonne is so useless.

Hopefully the pastor is Judging him from Above. Now I know I'm going to hell for calling a pastor "that kinky little Bible salesman" and "that naughty, naughty man" and "The Ungodly."

February 14, 2016

It's Valentine's Day.

February 21, 2016

Valentine's Day is a week-long affair, apparently.

February 24, 2016

Today I saw what my hubris has wrought. Two days ago, I did one of the dumbest things I could have ever done. It was born purely of social awkwardness.

I called the police on them. They weren't arguing. They weren't doing anything, really. But I called the police in anticipation of what the night surely held in store. When the 9-1-1 operator didn't really understand my emergency, I clarified, "Something violent is happening up there." In under fifteen minutes, three police cars and an ambulance descended upon my apartment complex. I heard the boyfriend give a small yelp when a knock filled with purpose and a "CHICAGO PD! OPEN UP!" shocked him out of his nude bliss. I enjoyed hearing the police questioning, even though I felt a little bad. Not really, though.

Well, last night we got the biggest snowstorm of the year. 32 inches. I could barely open my front door. Eventually it squealed open almost as loudly as his bed. I had to signal to a passing snow-shoveler to clear the path of dead (now buried) geraniums so I could get to Lake Street to find Pidge's car. Pidge sleeps at her boyfriend's place now. I don't blame her.

To my dismay, her car was buried to the top of the tire treads. I spun around to hail down the honorable snow shoveler, but he had disappeared. I had an interview with a film producer in a high-rise in River North, and, even if it were the last thing I would ever do, no matter how sleep-deprived I looked, now matter how homicidal I felt toward that godforsaken ponytail, I would interview. Dammit, I would.

I needed a shovel. I had forgotten to buy one almost two months ago. But I knew who did have a shovel.

I knocked on his door. His dreaded brown, blasé door. I knew he was home. He left at 8:45 every morning and took the 15 bus somewhere. It was 8:33.

The door opened. His face appeared. Such a benign-looking face. He smiled at

me. I hated him.

“Do you have a shovel?” I asked it with a friendly inflection. I might have had a predatory, glazed-over look. I can’t remember.

He looked at me. Cocked his head to the right. Leaned his arm on the door-frame. Smiled again. “Do you live downstairs?” He pointed his finger downstairs.

I winced. “Yes. Yes, I do.”

“Go fuck yourself.” He slammed the door.

And that was how I ended up digging Pidge’s car out of the snow with a frying pan.

February 25, 2016

Pidge has this new theory that the upstairs neighbor is using “swiffer shoes.” She saw a commercial for it. There exist shoes with Swiffer pads for soles. When you step, you collect dust. “He must be cleaning!” she deduced. At night, lying in bed on my back, glaring at the part of the ceiling where I suspect his bed to be, I imagine a scenario in which I wake up in his bed to the sound of him skating around his apartment in his Swiffer shoes.

“What the fuck are you—” I would ask.

“I’m swiffering!” he would say cheerfully, his ponytail slapping him in the face as he does a pirouette around his kitchen table.

February 26, 2016

I’m getting lonelier and lonelier. It’s a real downer to have to live below people fucking all the time.

This is, of course, my preface for why I got a Tinder account.

I got my first message from a guy I matched with at 7:04pm today: “You’re so beautiful you made me forget my pickup line.” I was so afraid I threw my phone across the room. Desperate to do something, I grabbed the trash, tied it up, threw open the back door, and made my way for the dumpster.

The alley was cold and dangerous. I had to dodge puddles of car oil and colossal rats. Even rats get laid more often than I do, I thought. I hurled the garbage bag into the dumpster. Displaced six or seven rodents. Slammed the lid. And looked up at the second floor window, which was open.

Now, it might be wishful thinking, but I swear I heard them arguing. I swear.

Just grabbed two glasses of wine and toasted myself.

February 27, 2016

Pidge left me note this morning on the faucet with a new idea for the upstairs’ neighbor’s demise:

Put note on their door that says there’s a water leak in the first floor ceiling because somebody has been putting too much “repetitive pressure” on it from

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above. Text Kevin and get him in on it.

February 29, 2016

Pidge, in a fit of insanity, broke their window today. Her reasoning: "I'm sick of their shit!" Without warning, she cried, "Time to pull a Romeo and Juliet!" and sent a rock sailing through their front window. The one that faces the elementary school for science and technology. Thank god neither of them was home. Later Pidge changed her story and said it was accidental. I know better, but I let it slide.

February 29, 2016

Just heard him come home. "WHAT. THE. FUCK?" was all I could make out. Can't say I'm sorry for Pidge's actions. But if anyone asks, it was Pidge.

I think I heard them arguing again.

Three new matches on Tinder. Can't say I'm not pleased.

March 4, 2016

The second floor has been silent for four days.

March 5, 2016

Still silent. Amazing.

March 8, 2016

Well, I definitely didn't see this one coming.

I was scrolling through my Tinder account while inhaling mac and cheese, as I am like to do on Tuesday nights (I try to keep up the ritual despite its being soured by the sound of live pornography). No promising males or females within a two-mile radius. Swipe left. Swipe left. Swipe left. Nothing.

That was when his picture popped up.

I threw my phone. I yelled, then covered my mouth and shot my eyes toward the ceiling. Could he hear me?

I quietly retrieved my phone from under my bed, wiped off the dust, and looked back at the screen. Was it really him? No bio. I cycled through his photos. Ponytail. Benign face. In his last photo, he was standing on some Peruvian mountain. With an orange backpack. Less than a mile away, it said.

I don't think I moved for five minutes. It reminded me of the one time I banged my head on the security conveyor belt at the airport. Set off an alarm. Woke up on the ground five minutes later. I had conveniently already taken my shoes off, so they could drag me unconscious through the scanner without it making a sound.

Then, throwing caution to the winds, I swiped right. Why not? He'll never know.

And we matched.

March 9, 2016

He never messaged me on the app. I was certainly not going to. Maybe he didn't recognize me?

I passed him on the stairs today. I looked straight ahead. He had his headphones in.

He's my fucking neighbor.

The ponytail is growing on me, though.

March 15, 2016

He knocked on my door.

AT 29 PALMS
JONATHAN GARDNER

Whisper winds flit from run-on lands
A smoother grasp corrals feeder's hands
Smitten fifths fall in broken bits
Reveled forms beget twisted hips
Encurving reeds furrow indifferent whimless
An ascension inward and insulated
Anomaly animal altruistic abacus
Ergo softly sigh interchangeable soot

UNDER

AMELIA FRANK

Tungsten time is all that yellow
dimness making minutes move a little

further from each other
slow it's a dark way down

the moon approaches metal heaving metal
you can just imagine steam and churning

SUBURBAN PASTORAL

CONNOR FIEWEGER

A church bell rings in a chime for the pines,
soniferous conifers,
sonorous somnifers.

A boy sits beside one with no need for his time,
eating too many 7/11 taquitos

Sing! of slow-pitch softball on a halcyon weekday evening,
a home in habituation,
night bathed in barbituation.

Sing! of graveled alley and the dew that meeting,
of a rabbit and a girl with scuffed knee.

A bowling alley's black lights ultraviolet-tinge sneakers,
fluorescence flushed laces,
smudges giving negative spaces.

They show the wear implicit found in climbing up cedars
And their lanes' bumpers are raised.

The 6:52 train arrives, rain pattering on village roofs,
respite from travails,

these theodoric rails

carry parents to their drowsy children, somnambulatory goofs.

Sing! suburban pastoral.

SOUL MATES

KAZ

Melody: He said love hit him like the piano he dropped on my head. He killed me so that we could be together... I mean, isn't that what everyone wants? To be with their soulmate?

Soul: The first time I saw her, I just knew I had to kill her. We were meant for each other. It was just a shame she hadn't died yet. I tried to be patient, I really did, but she was starting to fall in love with someone else. That wasn't fair. To her I mean. It would be cruel to let her waste her life with someone else when I, her soulmate, was waiting for her in death. But she didn't know. So I started making plans to kill her.

Melody: I don't know, before I died I was dating this guy from school. He was really great. I told him once how I loved surprises. The next morning he showed up with flowers and chocolates... But how can the surprise and romance of roses and chocolates compared to the surprise and romance of death by falling piano?

Soul: I didn't want to hurt her of course, just kill her. I wanted to kill her as gently as possible. But I also didn't want to run the risk of her surviving.

Melody: He was my first serious boyfriend. I was nineteen at the time and was finally getting my life together. I had an apartment and a job and wanted to start practicing piano again. I finally felt like my own person... But what did I know? Isn't everyone incomplete until they find that one special person?

Soul: I was stumped as to how I could kill her when I was eavesdropping on her stupid boyfriend's phone call. He was planning on surprising her with a piano as an housewarming gift.

What a guy! Giving me the perfect opportunity to crush his dreams while fulfilling my own.

And hers, of course. I killed her for *us*, that includes her.

Melody: I was on my way to lunch when it happened. I was supposed to meet my mom who had flown up from Mexico to warn me about some evil spirit plotting my death... But she didn't understand. It wasn't some ugly ghoul at all. It was my very attractive soulmate planning my death... as a romantic gesture...

Soul: I was almost too late, but luckily she stopped to read a text from her mom.

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Melody: It was her text I was reading when I died. I never finished reading it. I miss her a lot, and my dog Sally, she's a snoodle, and the sun, and the *warmth* of life and people... But we are together now and he says he will help me kill everyone so they can all come to our wedding!



THREE CHILDREN

JUAN CAICEDO

(Italicized sections excerpted from the D——— College application essays of F. Franz (BFA'25), J. Meisner (PhB'25), and C. Quinlan (B.S.'25) in answer to the prompt: "Why do you want to attend our college?")

"I want to attend D——— because I want to meet others like myself, in an environment where I can grow as a person . . ."

Felice Franz had been smoking cigarettes for seven years now. Sometime in the summer between fifth and sixth grade she'd developed, for little reason, a sudden and inexhaustible craving for cigarettes, specifically Marlboros.

She remembered that she'd been at home with her dad and a *Dick and Jane* book of some sort, lying on the floor while he sat watching TV in a wife-beater, cradling a beer dappled in perspiration in the crotch of his boxers, when a Marlboro Man commercial came on. Her mother'd been delivered to the hospital for some unspecified reason, so it was just the two of them in the house. The heat was really coming down outside, insects clicking in the dry, raveled hedge and the pool slurping softly.

She remembered also the thrum of the washing machine and watching her doll being thrashed around in its drum, and that the page of her book, when the commercial started, had been so abraded by time and mildew that Dick and Jane were indistinguishable, and how they seemed like identical faceless puppets.

In fact, the more Felice thought of it, the less she could remember about how the commercial worked upon her or how she felt smoking those Marlboros she got from a savvy black kid at school for three dollars a pack. It seemed—and this was true of Felice's mind generally—that her thoughts were meeting something huge obliquely, like a person looking at the sun.

Another detail she remembered well: the thick, almost pubic hair on her dad's chest and the sweaty smell of it when he carried her, one hand on her head and the other on her bottom, toward her room, when she cried for her mom.

What Felice felt during these smoking sessions, which clotted her lungs devilishly fast and ruined her teeth irreversibly, was a sort of escape into non-feeling, into purely mechanical motion: in, out, in, out, and the long blue snake.

The smoking had become catastrophically compulsive. After everything eventually came out, her father would express surprise that she had been able to smoke two packs a day, how often she must have gone off to do it to smoke that much. In the end it took three electroshock appointments just to tame the addiction.

Giving ECT to an eleven year old girl, Felice reflected, was likely an insanely unethical thing to do, and it must have been a testament to her parents' sliced bread magazine

wealth. Right now she was on a ferry crossing the Neponset River to Boston. She had two black suitcases under her arms. A heavy wind whipped people's clothing about their frames as they leaned over the railing. She was looking down at the dull-black river and trying to create something of a mental collage of her life, something she could wave a hankie at as she left for D—— College, to which she'd been accepted.

Her addiction had followed Felice into sixth grade. Whenever a craving struck at school, she'd hike herself up on a stool and box, and pull a vent's grating gently off with her doll-like fingers, which grew ruddy and developed keratosis at the tips—little moons of horny, tough skin—from the grating's sheared edges. Then she'd rather expertly tap out a cigarette and light it on the hard red gem of a Mickey Mouse lighter, and breath and blow, in the weak light, what looked like plumed, soft-grey serpents into the vent's black slotted mouth.

What she did not know at the time was that this vent had been improperly fumigated: with each inhalation little Felice Franz was gulping air so thick with mold that it would have made a counter tick off to the tempo of the *William Tell Overture*. The smoke's residue was agitating the mold into multiplying berserkly, sending out colonies of spores that made her sick.

Over the next months, her body began to drift away from her, like a mirror uncoupling from its subject. Here especially her memories failed Felice, and her dreams from the time bloomed vividly. Particularly, she recalled a dream in which her cheek had been fashioned into a fleshy cage; when she pulled the gate open, a rotten egg lay inside, stuck in her cheek's muscle tissue. At school she experienced episodes of nausea in which the world spun and the floor threw itself up; whole days in disconnected chunks without referent, only three or four images yoked together; or bouts of vomiting that hooked her near unconscious and crying on a toilet's lip.

Despite all this, Felice was desperate to become involved in her school's activities, hoping she hadn't drifted too far from the other students (she really couldn't remember). She decided to join the school's baseball team. The team was technically coed but only boys joined, and it was understood girls went into Cooking Club and made cakes and little pies that the teacher would bake and distribute at picnics over tea in blue China saucers. But Felice was relentless, and her parents, who were classically humanist and progressive adults (the always told her that life was what you made of it) who desired to inculcate a sense of fairness into their daughter, pushed hard for the team to live up to its coed status.

Of course, there still had to be tryouts, and a whole gamut of beady-eyed boys stood in her way, so Felice got up at sunrise each day for a month and chucked a cartful of baseballs into a field under a big, red, wet sun, collecting them at the end of forty-two hits (for forty-two balls) from the weeds and undergrowth, and plopping them, one by one, into the rattley cart.

Felice remembered the date of the tryouts exactly and intimately, as if it

were stamped on her soles: April 20, 2014. It involved getting thrown five or so balls and managing to hit at least one. It in fact wasn't all that hard, really. The boys stood with their fingers hooked against the chain-link fence, and their faces, irritated by the weather or hormonal oils, were burning in red bursts.

"Get out get out get out," said a fat boy, drumming her shoulders with a curled little knot of a hand.

"This isn't for girls," said another, who through determination had hoisted himself on thin arms three feet above the ground and now hung there splayed like a stick animal.

"Watch yourself get beat," was all Felice said, jutting her chin out a bit, prompting the second boy to nearly fall on top of her, which knocked so much wind out of Felice that she briefly blacked out. She awoke to a foreshortened image of the boys at the fence, their hands between their legs, bobbing little black polished bats. Past the field's perimeter, in a scorching summer haze that made objects lose composure, the teacher was fluttering a gingham picnic cloth onto the grass and the girls in Cooking Club were settling on their knees. They'd just begun to learn how to apply makeup, and the sun was making it run down their necks—they looked like animated mannequins.

Next, a paw-like hand whose back was stitched with intricate fibers of hair was handing Felice her own little black bat, and she was walking to the plate out of the fence's diamond-netted shadow. It sat at an infinite remove from everything, in pale, orange dust. A wind lifted the dust and cast it against Felice's side. It looked like the type of place through which the Marlboro Man might ride.

She gave the bat a tap on the plate, repressed a curdling of vomit, waited.

The coach wound his arm around and threw the ball toward Felice; she wanted a cigarette so badly. The ball expanded and leaned right, and Felice drew the bat up and toward it, tracing a quarter circle on the diagonal, and hit the ball with a solid chock, wobbling to her feet with the residual force. The ball's seams rolling up, the spin halting and reversing at a hit from Felice—it looked as if everything were rushing away from her, the ball tracking after it. Then the bat dropped, Felice fled to first—which wasn't necessary—running toward it while her chest beat like a washing machine.

Felice, on the ferry, was suddenly disgusted with the past, needed it expelled from her corporeally. She hoisted her suitcases on the railing and saw them make a long drop into the river and pop up like two ghastly bodies and slide into the ferry's shadow.

She'd fallen, arms reaching, and passed out before the baseball even landed (Felice was later told all this). The earlier stick-like boy had managed to climb to the top, gripping it for all his life between singeing knuckles on stick arms, and for a magic second he saw the baseball fit perfectly in the sun's face, creating an eclipse just for him, and he was apparently so amazed that he let go and dropped twenty

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feet and split both kneecaps apart.

Months later, after all the purgative medicine, her body returned to normal in all respects but one: her pubescent development had been permanently inhibited. Henceforth she'd forever resemble a child, a doll.

“ . . . to be exposed to the greatest ideas of the West while also developing skills to effect real change in the world; it was Eugene Debs who noted . . . ”

Outside the development in which Jehovah Meisner had lived for eighteen years hung posters for a new housing project from the Pyramid Corporation. Meisner looked at them as he rode the bus to the train station—they showed files and files of anonymous happy families in rugged black-and-white print, their faces ideograms. Someone had spray painted on the posters and written PYRAMIDS R BILT WITH SLAVES.

An hour later, and he was out; the buildings that had pinched the sky suddenly dropped off, and all around were drowsy green fields along which lay the sidelong shadows of transmission towers steepening into the horizon. Far off, he saw cows. A mountain of clouds, rushing from the east, dragged a curtain of rain into the fields. The last time Meisner had seen such lavish nature had been the spring he turned ten (the last year he'd still used his first name), when his family had decided to visit a farm in upstate New York.

They'd driven for five hours, Jehovah and Alma in the back, their mother's crutches laid like a fifth member of the family over their knees. Their father, who believed a lot in the power of naming things, pointed out all the minerals ribboned into the stone through which the highway had been cut—calcite, dolomite, schist, limestone—their streaks reading like seismograms, evidence of ancient disaster. Alma, age six, opened her hands like a prayer book and read their palms. Her latest interest had been palm-reading, which their dad called unscientific, and he'd stumped Alma by showing her his own hands, stitched and whitened with scars and burns from his work in a kitchen.

The farm was located in the Appalachians; the car had to snake around a mountain toward its bald top. At the farm's entrance was a wooden gate with a plywood sign hanging from it by zip ties that read OLDEST FAMILY OWNED FARM IN NY. A pale family, a couple and their daughter, stood with their hands hooked against the fence. They were furiously red. But when they saw the car approaching, the mother's and father's faces seemed to change imperceptibly, as if the molecules of their skin, like crystals, were rearranging themselves, and they turned a shade redder.

They ate dinner at the farmer's own table over a tablecloth that depicted, in stiff geometries, the farmer's family's history. It had apparently been created by the dead blind grandmother, who'd quilted it by feel in the last years of her life. When her body stiffened her hand had closed around the needle she'd been holding and

lodged it an inch into her wrist. As Jehovah ate chicken and potatoes—whole potatoes, amazingly—he marvelled at his edge of the tablecloth: people bound in rows and rows in the hulls of boats that looked like upended ziggurats. Farther, the same anonymous people chained in the bottom of a trench. Stitched below: *Eerie Canal, 1817*.

From the canal-bound people extended several ivied lines. Jehovah, running his fingers over their beginnings, followed them: by his father's plate were brown diamonds struck by rows of fletched, golden arrows—fields and wheat in the Midwest. Another line ended in a valley somewhere else in New York. One, with many leaves, ended at the table's center, on the self same mountain as the barn, under the hanging light that revealed both families opposed at the table.

Later, the farmer's daughter would tell Jehovah about the grandmother's ghost. They sat kneeling in her room, which she used to share with her grandmother, and a wind rising from the valley, where lights were threaded weakly into a town, was keeping a curtain above their heads.

The grandmother always rose up through the floorboards, her spectacles bright as two dimes, the girl told Jehovah, and she always clutched her handbag. She smelled like wet leaves and spent the nights floating on the ceiling, yelling.

"She doesn't like you, I know," said the girl. Stacked behind her were all her favorite books, all about horses. Above the books hung a sampler that showed a man throwing off chains (labeled the "Chains of Sin") as he walked toward a distant valley ("Valley of Eternal Life"). On one side of the figure was the phrase, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want" and on the other, "Life is what you make of it."

"How do you know she doesn't like me?" said Jehovah, who didn't believe in ghosts.

"I heard her cussing you out when you come, from the ceiling. Like, 'Get them out of here!' She called you all something nasty."

"What?"

She told him.

"I haven't heard it – how's it spelled?"

He still didn't recognize it, and he wrote the word into his palm with a pen to look up in his Webster's Pocket Dictionary at home. This was a habit he'd picked up the past winter, when the number of distractions in the family's apartment, by the erosion of capital, had dropped to zero, obligating Jehovah to entertain himself by stealing books from an elderly neighbor's apartment—he knew where the keys were hidden—and reading them alongside a Webster's Pocket Dictionary. The neighbor, Mr. Pannetto, looked like a fifteenth century pope, with a broad bald head laurelled in silver hair, and he taught proper diction to poor people in his apartment. He must have been some kind of Communist because that's all the books were about.

"I don't believe in ghosts," Jehovah told the girl confidently. He thought of sliced bread magazine

the moss-bearded man on the back of a stolen book. The book was called this: *The Communist Manifesto*. “I believe in History.”

“What?” said the girl. Jehovah didn’t understand what he was saying; he just loved the language, especially that icy word “spectre” hung like a scythe at the start of his favorite book’s first sentence:

A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism.

Meisner, on the train, felt the book burn in the inner pocket of his jacket, very close to his heart. He had kept it all these years—the rain had now overtaken the train, dappling the windows—and it had become like a lodestone for his thoughts: even the furthest bent toward it.

A little boy across from Meisner was crying into his mother’s shoulder, his face buckling in on itself. The rain outside, natural white noise, transformed the window into a scatter plot.

“I want to go back to hotel,” He swiped at his eyes.

“That’s just the thing,” the mother said to someone nearby “He’s never been to a hotel in his life.”

Pressed into Meisner’s copy of *The Communist Manifesto* was a piece of hotel stationery whose edges were decorated with mistletoe and red ribbon. There was spidery, skinny writing on it:

Don,

Once you gave me your old *Manifesto*—the year was 1992—it says so on the inside. Twenty years later I’m sure there’s some Neapolitan song I could quote which would have one of those perfect lines that say everything so much better. But somehow, this year I can only think of:

“vint’anne! Io nun e ttengo cchiu . . . e dio so’ comm’a n’ombra . . . n’ombra nera”

Minnie

Natale 2001

There was never any woman, not that Meisner had ever seen, in Mr. Pannetto’s apartment. Just him, or sometimes a student to whom he’d read, in a voice that did to the air what a printing press did to paper, Shakespeare’s sonnet 73.

The train pulled forward under a waxing moon: a black shadow—*ombra nera*—lifted in its rim into a white scythe.

Jehovah, on the last night at the farmer’s house, had had a nightmare that a chimera of Marx and the dead grandmother was knitting his family’s history, rocking madly while it stitched everything that would come to be from the tips

of two crossing, flashing needles: Alma becoming a religious maniac, Jehovah's mother's wracked with pain from legs ivied in varicose veins, his father brutalized into insensibility by overwork, unable to speak.

Jehovah leaving them and never coming back.

And at the end of the scroll, unfurled to Meisner's feet, was an image of himself lying on the ground, shot in the throat—the end of history.

Meisner'd gotten out of the city on a scholarship from D———
College, and he had no intention of going back to a home that, for years, had only been sorrow for him. It had been sorrow since the day he'd arrived home from the farm and looked up, in his Webster's, the word he'd written into palm, the one the grandmother had apparently yelled at his family. He'd sat cross-legged in the living room while his mom lay hot water bottles on her knees and Alma watched a Pat Robertson rerun. The pages were Bible-thin. He'd filed through them as a lock files through its sequence of numbers, constructing the word. This is how it went:

N

N-i

N-i-g

N-i-g-g

N-i-g-g-e

N-i-g-g-e-r

“ . . . want to achieve what Socrates laid out in that famous venerable dictum of his: 'Know Thyself.' ”

The sky above Boston resembled the corrugations of brain matter, white electricity flitting across its surface, thunder claps coming after. Clay Quinlan had been by the river, brooding on his decision not to visit his father, trudging through the wide, sandy bank, shadowless and sad. Far off, a ferry blared as it made slow motion across the Neponset River. He seemed to be in a wasteland, surrounded by cultural detritus. He'd been picking through the shore, where items had washed up and now poked out of the greyish sand, and found a plastic skull, apparently popped from the collar of a Halloween skeleton. It had seemed portentous: he'd wiped it with the cuff of his jacket and now held it like an urn as he walked along.

The reason Clay hadn't visited his father was because the man was insane. The last time Clay had visited him, seven years ago, his dad had made him watch footage of 9/11 over and over again and inculcated young Clay Quinlan with conspiracy theories that became the matrix of his beliefs. The world became divided. It might have resembled one of those SAT analogy questions:

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US : THEM::

- a) Men : Women
- b) Whites : Blacks
- c) Clay : Everyone else
- d) All of the above

At night, lying on the mattress in a thin-walled apartment while his father slept with his feet overhanging a sofa, he heard him repeating by compulsion his call centre script: “Sorry to bother you, Mr. Quinlan. May I have. Premium policy at. None better. Well, the thing is. Forty nine ninety nine. Pyramid Insurance. Forty nine ninety nine. Life is what you. Life is what you. It covers suicide. What you make of it.”

He'd gone home and cried for an hour and not known why, his insides trembling like glass at a high pitch, and since then Clay's father had only been a presence through phone calls, and even then he often tried to sell his son insurance through force of habit.

He checked his watch. The shuttle for D——— College first-years was leaving in an hour and a half.

Clay began to walk toward the station – north – but at some interminable point the streets became confused, like fingers in clasped hands, and he found himself in some wasteland of industrial buildings with beer bottle windows and barbed-wire fences, and an exhaustion of empty spaces, not enough ever to fill, it seemed, paralyzed under the stagnant air. People, often blacks, were walking occasionally but always too far away and not toward you, and their faces didn't invite questions; the faces of the buildings did not either.

By inertia, the embarrassment of turning back, he went on, gripping the skull in one palm. Eventually he heard the voices of men, barking like dogs, and found himself hovering by the window of a warehouse. The men were filing toward a desk where another man with glasses at the tip of a sharp nose sat with a sheaf of envelopes, portioning them out. The men were mostly middle-aged, Irish like Clay, stirring around the warehouse floor, which echoed with their bootstomps and talk. They were hoop-eyed and deeply wrinkled, with cigarettes twisted into their mouths.

Most shockingly, they were deformed. Each, in some way or another. The man at the table read out a name and a deformity and they came up to collect some type of compensation payout, it seemed. There were legs and arms sheared off to different degrees. There were men with burns that lay like fractals on their skin, or with glary red cuts woven shut by spiky sutures, and a man who, as he turned, revealed a hole in place of an ear, swirled like a sea shell.

“O'Brien, acid spill,” said the man at the table, and O'Brien came up, lizard-faced.

“Finn, third and fourth fingers off,” and Finn walked up.

Clay’s mouth opened as he leaned toward the window. His reflection bloomed and ogled him. A man saw him; he stepped back, his mouth closed.

He later found his bearings at the road’s end, where train tracks lay for miles and the only structure taller than ten feet was a corroded billboard blanched near white. It advertised Pyramid Insurance. The billboard had a pyramid on it topped by a gigantic eye looking out over the railroad tracks. Fences ran in every direction. Clay sat down on the pavement and set the skull beside him: they both looked out. Cars were connecting and disconnecting somewhere. He traced the path of a train as it slid into the city. Two items, not birds, were being flung in the wind, far away, toward the clouds. The expression on the eye could hardly be discerned; it was either the attention of gentle beneficence or paranoid omnipotence. Below it, in swirled sans-serif, was the phrase: LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT.

Out here, you could hardly hear anything. An electrical whine struck off the fence and made it ring in its piping. Two radio towers in the hills toward the north, away from any water, were blinking at different tempos, as if communicating by code to one another. In the center of the city the Johnson and Johnson Towers stood, idiot twins with their feet in a cubist sort of wave that splashed up hills and, falling back, coagulated into a dense, mechanical centre. Out to the east, though, D—— College sat on a hill, its windows angled against the dim light to shine like pale sheets of ice. It reminded Clay of the phrase “city on a hill” that he’d had to study in AP American History. An exemplum, a fresh start. *Life is what you make of it*. A thread of lightning wove among the clouds. His head hurt.

Taking a cab to the heart of Boston, Clay hit a fabulously overstuffed boulevard, where ethnic markets, drug marts, boutiques, niche electronic stores, family restaurants, strip clubs, coffee houses, and retail houses all vied for air in thin-necked rows, blinking with neon signs that, as the clouds coagulated and began to swirl, emitted a sort of soft radiation into fog-tinged air, mingling different colors into the crowds that poured underneath.

Clay walked into a Drug Circus and bought some stress-relief pills. His head was pounding, and it seemed some force was building friction there, a charge developing that would make Clay crack up. He opened the little paper bag, decorated with a jaunty picture of a circus performer with aristocratic features and a red leotard, looking quite feminine, and popped a pill or two into his mouth.

Everyone loaded on at the shuttle station. Clay hardly noticed. He was suddenly darkly reflective of his hometown of Ravena, NY, which he’d hardly thought about once since arriving in Boston. He’d hardly thought about his mother, holding her head, her arms trussed around his back, and kissing her wiry hair, and slamming every door, and speeding out of town.

Clay remembered that on the last day of school he’d walked slowly through the building and tried to catalogue every moment as it came. The hallways were sliced bread magazine

unlit, desks piled up along their sides; the lockers were thrust open. He'd talked to an aide, one of the old ladies that sat in hallways to check you for hall passes, and she'd pinned him into conversation, sitting stiff at a desk like the deposed tyrant of an ancient institution. A seriously gnarled copy of *The Secret* lay in front of her.

"My pastor," she'd said, narrowing her eyes in the circles of thin wire glasses, "told us about a prophecy in the Bible. The four blood moons prophecy. Regarding the end of the world. And the next, the final blood moon is coming next year. Now, no surprise to me or my own. The way children are nowadays—they don't care about anything but themselves. The boys whoremongers and the girls whores, is what Pastor Pat said, and that is just so true of your generation. My grandniece asked me a week ago, 'Auntie Gedda, what's the patriarchy?' Well, what is a woman supposed to say about such—such crackpot ideas?"

She reached out to Clay's face as if she meant to touch it.

"'Auntie Gedda, what's the patriarchy?' Jesus, Jesus," she said softly.

And suddenly her hand shot back and she groaned terribly and announced as if it were the final revelation, "When I look into your eyes I see nothing. Nothing. The world's not going to hell, it's gone to Nothing."

Clay thought about how he'd gone out of the school afterward: a gyre of storm clouds lying like a cataract over the school building, the cement factory across the road delivering smoke into the sky, the forest that rose along a hill into a granite fin, the saw tooth trees through which the fog was lowering like an Indian band. Sitting in the shuttle as it climbed the hill toward the college which hope made incandescent, Clay felt his heart suddenly seize up and rise, burning. He held the plastic skull and felt his head, flushing with blood, throb. But the foam of the stress relief pills came down over everything, and it all became, at once, white noise.

TO SEE MONET

ABIGAIL KUCHNIR

On a lonely summer morning as I wandered, sneer and scorning,
‘Long the lakeshore path, forlorn troubles that had come my way,
I came to think that I had thunk myself into a dreadful funk
And it would take heroic spunk to turn my skies to blue from grey.
Like a cartoon moper clouds sat o’er my head in disarray,
Contrasting with the sunny day.

“Now,” quoth I, “I know what’s needed, o’er advice, not often heeded,
From a family depleted by the wiles of Saturday.
Before I grouch like Doc Zhivago, scowling like Shakespeare’s Iago,
I’ll remember, in Chicago, glories of the fine arts lay.
An Institute downtown with art a-storied in Chicago stays!”
I hurried off without delay.

Skiping off along the lake, determined now to leave and shake,
The pain and misery and ache that seized my heart that summer’s day,
The waters of Lake Michigan began to splash and splish again
Abetted by the fishermen whose sailboats bob upon the spray,
And nearing Park Millennium was gleaming in the sun’s warm ray,
Art Institute a jewel inlay.

I entered it past lions bronze and then continued, past Gauguins,
Picassos, Pollocks, Klimts, Rodins, past priceless art in paint and clay,
I did not stop sur *La Grande Jatte* or ponder o’er the *Nighthawks*’ thought
Or wander towards *Caillebotte On Paris Street On Rainy Day*.
I half-ran through the galleries to see *mon artiste bien-aimé*.
I knew I had to see Monet.

When in Chicago in a pit of heavy heart and troubled wit
Torn and tortured by the grit and grime and grind of day-to-day
One person always makes me smile, makes lakeshore-journey worth the while,
With his oil-on-canvas style of brushstrokes in a disarray.
When the world is on my shoulder and all seems a little colder,
Sisyphus’s mythic boulder sitting in my uphill way,
That’s when I go to see Monet.
That’s when I go to see Monet.

sliced bread magazine

SYBIL

TATIANA GODERSTAD

Sybil fever dreams of small dead birds & round white stones. She puts her hips to my hips & we hold our breath

& then she is shaking on my bedroom floor, her laughter peeling like apples in the kitchen sink last Thanksgiving

when we carved dark meat & I watched her lick the knife. Sybil opens the windows in the night & invites the wind to howl as she

sleeps, her fists curled tight as if she's crushing flowers in her palms & letting red juice leak from her hands to stain my sheets. Sybil's

fingers turn rough in my mouth like pillars of salt, the taste of wet hair & the soft insides of her wrists. I curl myself around Sybil & she calls me her peach,

as if she is nothing more than a jagged, gory pit, as if I don't kiss her like we're caught in the moment before it rains. Sybil wipes the spit from

her mouth & slams the window shut. I look at her like she's the top of the ocean. She stares back at me like a heart full of stones.

AUTUMN WANTING
JARED SIMON

I thought
I saw
three birds
on the lawn—one hopped
—left leaves.

CRUMBS

The pages you have just thumbed through could not have been brought together without the time and effort of our dedicated staff. In honor of all of their hardwork and poetic perception, we dedicate these last pages to their wit and wisdom.

Just as they helped define the creative sphere of the University of Chicago, so too do they helpfully define these words of the wise. One could argue that this magazine is not only full of wonderful creative work but also a deeply resourceful dictionary. And so we present, our staff's selection of words and their definitions!

MADLINE BIRMINGHAM

pulchritudinous (adj.): beautiful to look at (but ugly to say)

NATHANIEL BOLTER

relaxed (adj.): an aesthetic and state of being achieved by wearing a blanket to the dining hall as proof of how relaxed you are; see also: *tired, stressed, and almost impossibly hard-working, yet also utterly at ease with yourself and your environment*

JAVON MERRIAM-WEBSTER BROWN

abdicate (v.): to finally and mercifully give up hope of ever having a flat stomach

MONICA RAE BROWN

mondegreen (n.): a word or phrase that results from mishearing a different word or phrase; e.g. "a lot of Starbucks lovers"

ANNA CHRISTENSEN

raven (n.): a big ol' tweeter

PARKER CHUSID

prurient (adj.): I know it when I see it

SOPHIA CHUN

Sprachgefühl (n., German): the instinctive feeling of comfort when you hear your mother tongue; the essential character of a language

FINN CLARK

catiline (n.): a cat that just needs some loving or else he's gonna overthrow the senate; e.g. "Come here Catiline! Sit on my lap and play with this yarn."

VICTORIA CONSTANT

cafuné (n., Portugese): the act of running your fingers through your lover's hair

BELEN EDWARDS

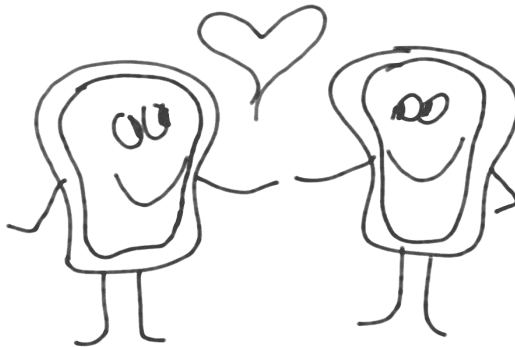
thin (n.): an immoral act against divine law committed by someone with a lisp

MIREILLE FARJO

philandermander (n.): an unfaithful salamander

SOPHIA FISHER

feminism (n.): talking openly about periods and wearing dresses with pockets... right?





TATIANA GODERSTAD

sentimentality (n.): excessive tenderness, sadness or nostalgia

ANNIE GUO

narcolepsy (n.): a condition characterized by an extreme tendency to fall asleep especially when doing homework

STEVEN HERNANDEZ

spatulence (n.): the gases given off by bread whilst it is rising

MARIA ELENI KOLLAROS

olive (n.): a color, a skin tone, an evergreen tree, *Olea europaea*, of Mediterranean and other warm regions, cultivated chiefly for its fruit, or the fruit of this tree

ALEX KONG

Infinite Jest (n.): I'm going to get around to reading it one of these days, I swear, I'm just really busy right now

JOHN A. LUTZ

etymon (n.): literally "primitive word", the linguistic form from which a later form descends

EMILY LYNCH

diva (n.): a female version of a hustler, of a hustler, of a, of a hustler

SARA MAILLACHERUVU

chapookie (n.): a dense, hockey-puck like pastry made with chapati flour and white flour; vaguely resembles a chocolate chip cookie

MAY MAKKI

blasé (adj.): unimpressed or indifferent to something because one has been run down by the unrelenting waterfall of life

CHARLIE MARSHALL

beginnings (n.): ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

JACOB MCCARTHY

puissant (adj.): synonym for “strength” that sounds vaguely dirty

KHOA PHAN

assart (v.): convert (forest) to arable use

WILLA SCHWABSKY

Hüftgold (n., German): word for “love handles;” literal meaning: hip gold

ALEXIS WOLF

verschlimmbessern (v.): making a situation worse in the process of trying to make it better

ILAN WOLFF

bridge (n.): a means for connecting people

