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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Salt Hill 30 is a party of old heads and young guns. Like any one of your friends heading towards middle age, we've invited everyone we've ever loved to celebrate ourselves with us. We're serving beer and baking cookies. We're all at once nostalgic for the past and eager to lay our legacy on the future. We insist on remaining in that youthful state that believes only our fathers can become irrelevant as they age.

SH 30 focuses on lineage. We wonder where we've come from and where we're going. Lydia Davis reminds us that we get decaying potatoes from one uncle and beeswax and smoke from another, while Dorianne Laux captures the eternal image of watching our mother put on her face. Minnie Bruce Pratt shows us just how far we've come, and how far there still is to go. Diane Williams insists: "Well, there's still lust in me." And Bruce Covey shows us that even swimwear has ancient roots.

Lineage is also—and must be—about looking forward. There are a number of firsts and excerpts of first collections. Sarah C. Harwell tells your fortune, or anybody's. Matthew Saleesses reveals what it's like to live "unsushi sushi." Zeeshan Sahil and Annie Holmes weave tales about country, family and worship, while writer/teacher Peter Markus publishes an excerpt from *In a House in a Woods* alongside student poems from Detroit's InsideOut. Tetman Callis, a student of Gordon Lish, compels us to find our most fundamental object. Ashley Farmer, Syracuse alumna, shakes the fungal, '80's dust from the word women ("Fun women out buying guns!"), and CACONrad explains "the way of men all over the world." Suzanne Morrison and Briana Rochelle Olson game, invent, and leave us with the most unexpected progeny.

Also, as a special gift to you, we've got some wicked and immortal art by Nicholas Bohac, Matt Fish, Don Pablo Pedro, and more.

Join us in celebrating *Salt Hill's* 30th issue—we may ramble about the way things were, but we do so while sprinting blindly into what's to come.




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Josh Keyes, *Tangled V*, acrylic on panel

BRUCE COVEY

Notes on Swimwear

I have a theory that some people are rain people and some people are wind people, rarely overlapping. Do rain people prefer to be wet? Wind people, touched and left alone?

I've become a little more comfortable sitting around in wet clothes. Snow melting into my shirt, however, makes me feel alone.

Not the kind of comfort that comes from being alone in a thunderstorm or swimming in the ocean at night.

I've only skinny-dipped once, in a pond that reportedly had leeches.

Skinny-dipping seems pointless if alone. It's more fun to be with someone when without clothes, especially if swimming.

Although it has ancient roots, the bikini is a contradiction, having been named after the site of atomic bomb tests.

I swam once in a pool with a white t-shirt. Well, I was wearing the white t-shirt, not the pool. I was, in a way, wearing the pool.

The Man Who Chopped Wood from In a House in a Woods

This is what you need to know to know the man who chopped down wood. He chopped down trees with three quick chops from his axe. He was that good with the axe in his hand, this man who chopped wood. He was that strong. The man who chopped wood was a big man who some liked to say that he was a man made out of wood, his arms and legs as big as the trunks of the trees that he liked to chop down. When he walked through the woods, he cut a path through the woods where he walked. He walked like this through the woods for years and years till the day that he walked too close to the house where the witch lived in these same woods. He walked so close to her house that the roof on her house shook so much when he walked close by it that the roof of this house caved in. It fell in on the witch, the roof did. It fell the way that leaves fall from off of the trees. The man who chopped wood could not help it that the ground shook, that the trees shook out of fear when he walked. But the witch thought that he made the roof cave in the way that a big bad wolf in the woods might huff and puff and blow a whole house down. So this witch who lived in this house whose roof caved in, she put a curse on the man who chopped wood (he chopped down the trees in the woods that made the woods the woods that they are). What this curse did was it made the nose of this man who chopped down trees to make the trees be made to be wood—wood to make a house with, or wood to make a chair for an old man like you or me to sit on our porch and rock back and forth in—it made his nose grow and grow so long that his nose got in the way of his axe when he'd swing it down to bring down a tree in three quick chops of his axe. It was his nose that would hit the wood of the trunks of the trees first and not the axe which his big long nose that just grew and grew and got in the way of the work that he did in the woods that gave

him his name: the man who chopped wood. All he could do now, the man who chopped wood, was peck and peck at the wood, at the wood of the trunks of the trees that he'd cut, like a bird that might peck and peck with its beak at the bark of a tree to pick at and dig up the bugs that live in the barks of trees. This curse went on for days and days and months and yes years till the day that the man who chopped wood chopped off his nose with the axe that he swung down to chop down this one tree. This one day and this one tree, it was a good day and a good tree to try to chop down for this man who chopped wood and chopped down trees. His nose, it got in the way of the axe, and the axe cut his nose so that now it did not get in the way of his axe when he brought it down to chop wood and his nose that the witch had put a curse on, no, a new nose did not grow back.

our planet to the highest bidder
don't ask for the deposit back

act no different than you feel
act no different than you feel
some will step away
others will sigh with relief
always remember nonmoral is not amoral
before you enter make a plow of
your hand to
test the air
they stamp your wrist to let you in
here's my stamp now leave me alone
pressing forehead to
wall gets ears seeing better
don't mention the wasp nest
they'll come with poison to
kill every one of them
we'll make peace with the nest
cooperation we learn on our own
at school it's only football and other war games
magpies eating entrails missing a face
it's all one cake for worms in the end
winter overlays a
white map toward
any direction
the night the kite came in on
no wind with no string
it was talking because

it was a talking kite
I'm Bob Kaufman and
Eileen Myles sent me
and he spoke no more
but hugged me
lots of hugs

Unpacking the Object

In the autumn of 1990, I attended a series of Gordon Lish's private masters' classes in New York City. I took notes and in the spring of 1991 fashioned these notes into a more comprehensible and useful document, which is available online at <http://www.tetmancallis.com/the-gordon-lish-notes>.

"Extinguisher" was written twenty years ago. It was rejected many times. At some point, in a misguided attempt to make it more interesting or artistic, I took its vowels away. This evaporation was too clever and cute and didn't work. I put the vowels back in a few years later, opened up the paragraphing, and made a few other small but important changes. The published version is a polished version of the first draft, but not a significant rewrite.

When I wrote "Extinguisher," I was very much under the influence of Gordon Lish, with whom I had recently studied. To craft the story I applied several of the principles or methods he taught, most fundamentally the method he referred to as "unpacking the object." What does this mean, this "unpacking the object"? What is the "object"? What does it take to "unpack" it?

The object can be your being-in-the-world. It could be argued that this is your most fundamental object. But your being-in-the-world is a squishy object. It's a big unwieldy carpetbag stuffed with all kinds of what-all. While it's useful to keep in mind that it's probably your most fundamental object, it's almost certainly not the best place to start if you're wanting to craft prose fiction. You'll need to pull something out of that bag.

You could pull out almost anything and with it start almost anywhere. You've got to start somewhere. Pick a spot. Make it a spot that counts, then make it count. That's another of Lish's principles: don't waste your time and effort on false objects. While the surface details of

life vary from person to person, what's important and worth addressing is the same for all of us. Pick an object that takes us to this vital heart. Is this object an idea? Probably not. An idea is squishy. You want something solid, something your reader can see or smell or touch. An object in space is always a safe bet, when it comes to choosing a point from which to begin your unpacking of the object. "Extinguisher" is about fear. Fear is a squishy object, so the story's object presents as a point in space. A point is infinite; there's plenty that can be unpacked from it.

To unpack the object is to start with a sentence that makes a good starting point and to extract from that sentence, as it were, everything it could be holding that could be spun into a story. In "Extinguisher" we have a person in a place. What place? We don't know. Do we need to know? Not so's we can tell. "Unpacking the object" isn't the only aspect of the Lishian method at work here. Being stingy with the information is also important. If you don't have to say it, don't say it. If you do say it, make sure it's necessary and—and this is important, this is crucial, this cannot be emphasized enough—make sure it follows from what you've already said. It doesn't have to obviously follow, but it must give the appearance of being inevitable. You want to keep up the momentum. Don't give your reader a chance to get away. Your reader shouldn't even think of getting away until you're done, and then your reader should be sorry it's over and eager for your return.

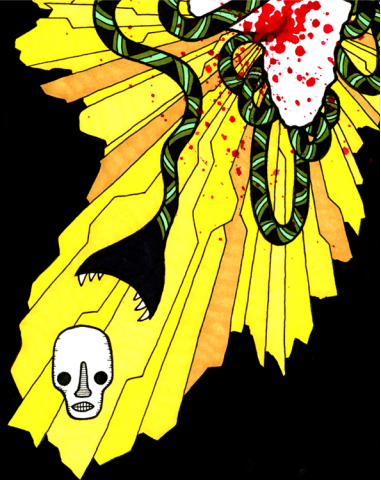
Don't explain. Present to us the world you are creating. Serve us the cooked dish, not a list of ingredients. Explanation is an anchor, a momentum-killer in prose fiction. In "Extinguisher" we have a voice, implying a person, speaking to another—person? An entity in the story. Textual evidence strongly suggests it's a person. Who? Do we need to know? Is there anything in the story that demands we need to know to whom the speaker is speaking?

Choose the right words. Be careful about this. Very careful. Don't assume that the first thing that pops into your mind or flows out of your hands onto the page or the screen is the best and most inevitable way to unpack your object. Make it a habit to interrogate your choices of words and how you deploy them. Ask yourself, "What is a better way to put this? What's a different way? What else can I try before I settle on

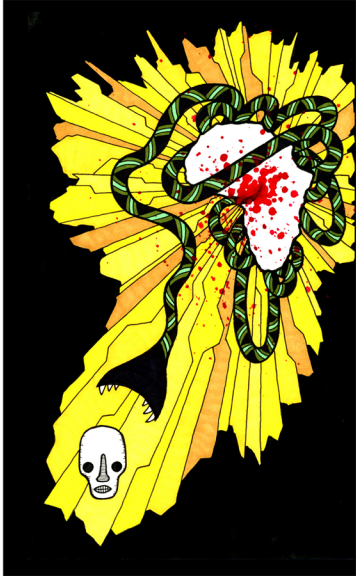
what looks best? How do I even know what looks best if I haven't looked around?" In the market of words and deciding which ones to use and how to use them, don't be a buyer—be a shopper. Try on different things.

Stay in control. This takes practice and attention and discipline in writing just as surely as it does in tennis or chess or playing the violin. In "Extinguisher," I wanted to get in and out as quickly as possible. To do this, I had to stay tightly on top of the words and sentences.

The goal was to explore, without wasting time, without taking the pressure off, what it was like to be in a room and fear that right next door, or even all around, in rooms or who knows where?—we don't know—the story never says—there is a killing conflagration about to erupt.

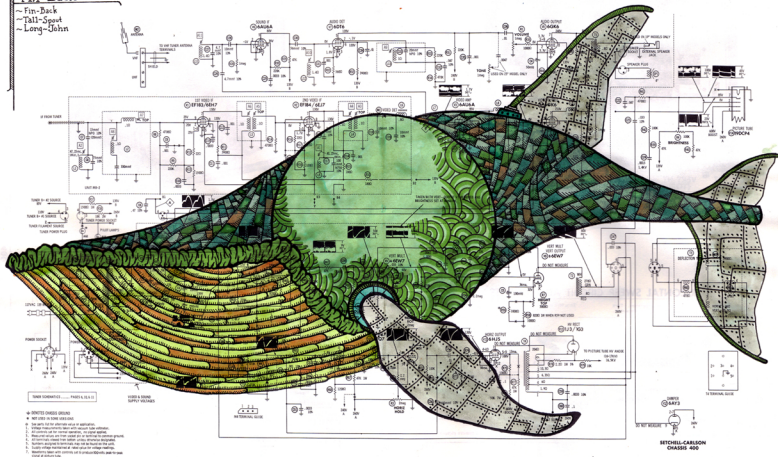


MATT KISH



Fin-Back

- ~ Fin-Back
- ~ Tall-Spout
- ~ Long-John



ETCHELL-CARLSON CHASSIS 400

FOLDER 3

بچوں کی سائیکل

بچوں کی سائیکل
میدان جنگ میں
کسی کا نہیں آتی
چنگ کا ڈار بجے کے
ڈر کے مارے گل میں پاتی
کھٹی نہیں بہاتی
ایک جگہ جم جاتی ہے
اُسی جھوٹی ہو جاتی ہے
کو چنگ کا ڈار نہیں آتی
جب چنگ اپنا راستہ ہاتے ہوئے
اس پے سے گزر جاتا ہے
تو ایک ٹہلی ہی آواز
ہر طرف پھیل جاتی ہے
ایک چھوٹا سا رعبہ
زمن پر ہوا ہو جاتا ہے
چنگ کے ہوا سے تو بہت سی
جھوٹی سائیکلیں
چنگ کو گھیر لیتی ہیں
کھنکیاں، بھابھاکے پاگل کر دیتی ہیں
بھاگنے نہیں دیتیں
ڈرانا کے شرم کر دیتی ہیں

ZEESHAN SAHIL

A Child's Bicycle

A child's bicycle
is useless
on a battlefield.
It can't move
when a tank approaches,
its bells don't ring,
it seizes up,
so tiny
the tank doesn't see it.
When the tank
goes about its business,
runs over it,
a small noise
carries everywhere.
A small stain
spreads over the ground.
When the tank advances,
a swarm of bicycles
surrounds it,
drives it crazy ringing their bells,
doesn't let it escape,
frightens it into the ether.

Translated from Urdu by Faisal Siddiqui, Christopher Kennedy, and Mi Ditmar

Beautiful Women (With Apologies) from The Women

Oh, God, here we go again! Thank heaven for gorgeous girls not too crazy and just a pinch of naughty—makes the office swoon and every time she walks in a sexy affair. You guys, **THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD**: this year she will look exactly the same as next year. Her highly rated eyes shine bright. Super cute in an epic ping-pong battle with her clothing, donning weird outfits, giving sexy poses and showcasing her amazing talents.

Beautiful women started as a business idea. Beautiful women make business-life easier. Beautiful women predict the place of a restaurant in its product life cycle, its brand and its passion. Beautiful women in countries where highly rated pictures are in CVs. Beautiful women let sellers store them.

If you're not of age for some reason, you should leave now. Meeting a beautiful woman can be bad for your health, for your office, can mean phobias, a less attractive affair. A product in a warehouse we directly pack, ship, and provide to 147 million people. A problem product we need. Immediate help is available.

Dear Women, from The Women

Greetings! I hope this letter reaches you well. We have excellent news to share with you. For too long now we've misunderstood each other. We are both rational creatures—to a point. Dear women, please stop blaming men, and when you get your heart broken, please don't complain. Dear women: you are doing it wrong. Dear women, please stop thinking! Dear women, please try out every single sexual position! Dear Women! Dear Republican women! Dear women of metropolitan! Dear women of Paris! I am having such a hard time writing this love letter. Why, my heart is so overwhelmed! Please, do me a favor.

MATTHEW SALESSES

A Second Chance at Kites
from I'm Not Saying, I'm Just Saying

The boy's first bike ride, I felt an awareness of absence. I tried to fit years in a day. I put the training wheels on, I took them off, he fell bad but clung. This seemed to say: we could succeed. My own childhood was still pending results. I drove him back to the park where the kite-flyers made kids laugh and cry. I let him bike the kite into the air. Then I licked my finger to teach how to touch the wind, how the world moved while we stood still. I held my hands over his on the kite with the wind in our faces. Finally I took a shot at showing him what it meant to stay.

BEN PEASE

XIII.
from Fugitives of Speech

Blanka with his Hulk rip-off meets savage Irish hairdo and chest hair meets acrobatic gorilla man capable of spin-attacking any position on the screen. Sheer always felt more should have been made of Blanka's ability to turn himself into a source of electricity other than just standing in place and surging. Character select screen, Fei Long, royal purple outfit, Hong Kong to Brazil, ROUND 1 BATTLE 29 FIGHT

LYDIA DAVIS

Circular Story

On Wednesday mornings early there is always a racket out there on the road. It wakes me up and I always wonder what it is. It is always the trash collection truck picking up the trash. The truck comes every Wednesday morning early. It always wakes me up.

LYDIA DAVIS

Grade Two Assignment

Color these fish,
cut them out,
punch a hole in the top of each fish,
put a ribbon through all the holes,
tie these fish together.
Now read what is written on these fish:
Jesus is a friend.
Jesus gathers friends.
I am a friend of Jesus.