

SFU's Literary & Visual Arts
Magazine

Tapestries

2013-2014



Fall 2014

Each year the School of Arts and Letters hosts the Gunard Berry Carlson Writing Contest, a creative writing and visual arts competition open to all Saint Francis undergraduates. Students may submit written entries of up to 3,000 words in the following categories: (1) fiction, (2) creative nonfiction, including personal narratives and memoirs, (3) essay writing, and (4) poetry, with a minimum of five poems per submission. Students may also submit works of visual art, such as photographs, sculptures, paintings (oil, water, and acrylic), sketches, and collages.

The contest begins in late fall and ends in March, during which time students may submit as many entries as they wish. Entries must be either e-mailed to Dr. Brennan Thomas at bthomas@francis.edu or personally delivered to Room 307 Scotus Hall before the announced contest deadline.

The 2013-2014 contest winners and honorable mentions were published in the third volume of Saint Francis University's literary art magazine, *Tapestries*. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not reflect those of the contest judges and magazine editor or those of the Saint Francis community.

For more information about the Gunard Berry Carlson Writing Contest, please contact:

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Tapestries

Weaving the Threads of Creativity & Innovation

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“Nature’s Edge” (1st Place Winner in the Visual Arts Category)

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And finally, to the many, many students who submitted their writing and artwork for the 2013-14 Gunard Berry Carlson Creative Writing and Visual Arts Contest, I thank you. Your artistic creations moved and inspired the contest's judges and coordinator, who were fortunate enough to review them all.

Editor's Note

One of my former professors, a gifted lecturer whose booming voice contrasted so sharply with his diminutive appearance that he caused a few of my classmates to jump the first day of class, regaled my peers and me with his astute analyses of literature, art, philosophical essays, and even films and television programs. *In art there is truth*, he often punctuated his lectures, adding that only when one sees such truth in perfect light, just as that artist or writer had presented it, will he accept truth's grace and be changed by it. Sometimes this truth slips into the individual's mind so soundlessly and efficiently that he barely feels it at first. At other times, my professor conceded, embracing new truth can be a daunting prospect, especially when that truth seems immense and impervious, like staring into a roiling sea and not believing that there can actually be a bottom to the whole thing.

We constantly search for truth, for that greater understanding of the world and our purpose in it that promises to carry us from one stage of life to the next. My former professor believed, as do I, that the best place to look for truth is in the things we create to capture it. We get truth from ourselves—the things we write, sketch, sculpt, and photograph—and share this truth with one another in our artistic renderings, as the writers and artists whose work comprises this latest volume of *Tapestries* have done.

Their stories and poems and artwork tell us so many truths about the world. They tell us that the human heart is as frail and brittle as a ceramic sculpture; that beauty is quiet and pale and noiseless as a pine; that a mother's abandonment of her child may render the child flightless but not loveless; that hope can be found at the top of a skyscraper.

Francis Bacon compared truth to a pearl, for its pure and simple beauty is unmarred by even the harshest light and it requires no special decorations or ornamental settings: Truth "showeth best by day."

In art is truth.

And in truth, to flip around my professor's words, is great art—luminous orbs of transcendent art.

Enjoy this collection of artful truths.

Best,

Dr. Brennan Thomas

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Ms. Deborah Budash, Director of the Masters of Health Sciences and Masters of Medical Science Programs

Dr. Lauri Chose, Associate Professor of English

Mr. Bradley Coffield, Assistant Information Services Librarian

Dr. Patrick Farabaugh, Assistant Professor of Communication Arts

Dr. Balazs Hargittai, Professor of Organic Chemistry

Mr. Eric Horell, Admissions Counselor

Ms. Janice Rummell, Assistant Professor of Accounting

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Tara Fritz, student

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Contents

Writing

Cecelia MacDonald	<i>Character by Character</i>	9
	<i>Just Don't Stare</i>	62
Sydney Stankus	<i>"Fuzzy Versus Fussy"</i>	15
Amanda Johnson	<i>Plato Takes the MCAT (2nd Place Winner)</i>	19
Rebecca Larkins	<i>Elizabeth Bennet and Social Etiquette in Pride and Prejudice</i>	23
Stacey Edmiston	<i>The Secret in the Garden: An Analysis of "Twickenham Garden" and "The Merchant's Tale"</i>	27
April Taylor	<i>Logotherapy: Validated or Fabricated?</i>	32
Samantha Dilling	<i>Visiting Hours</i>	37
	<i>Forms of Poetry (3rd Place Winner)</i>	40
	<i>The Golden State</i>	59
	<i>Silver Bullet</i>	66
Jordan Gorsuch	<i>Open Doors (4th Place Winner)</i>	47
Logan Patterson	<i>My Reason</i>	55
Tara Fritz	<i>All the Summers of Your Life (1st Place Winner)</i>	69

Artwork

Rebekah Hughes	<i>Mountain Views</i>	8
	<i>Psalm 40:5</i>	68
Ashley Creamer	<i>Kirsten Graffiti</i>	14
	<i>Window Art</i>	54
Chelsie Adams	<i>Among the Pines</i>	18
	<i>Exposed</i>	44
Connor Mullan	<i>The Real Heart</i>	21
Stacey Edmiston	<i>Purple Shield</i>	22
Megan Pfeil	<i>A Sun Rises in the Morning</i>	26
Katie Sheperd	<i>The Fall of Eve</i>	29
	<i>Nightlife</i>	65
Emily Hurley	<i>Given</i>	31
Gabrielle Townsend	<i>Rosaries: Parma, Italy</i>	36

Danielle MacMurtrie	<i>Consumed</i>	39
	<i>The Challenger</i>	46
Yuze Wang	<i>Perplexity</i>	50
	<i>A Moment of the City</i>	56
Breanna Kochinsky	<i>Bus Stop</i>	57
	<i>Snowy Lane</i>	62
	<i>Urban Italy</i>	67
Christopher Evans	<i>Water Droplets</i>	58
Hannah Cole	<i>The Plains</i>	61
Lindsey Farrell	<i>Elleanna</i>	64
Aaron Vizzini	<i>Glen Coe Highlands</i>	75



"Mountain Views" by Rebekah Hughes

Character by Character (Creative Nonfiction)

Cecelia MacDonald

Five years. Five years is enough time to finish college. Or find a husband. Or invent something and make a million dollars. Five years is longer than the Civil War and enough time to create an animated motion picture film. And five years is the short amount of time I lived in peace.

When I was in kindergarten, my teacher shared with me—and by me, I don’t mean me specifically, but the entire class, which makes the whole situation worse because it affected not only young and impressionable me but all seventeen of us—but she shared a piece of unsettling news.

She informed us that, scientifically speaking, the entire solar system was going to be destroyed by the sun’s implosion at some point. Note here, however, that her explanation was simplified to a typical kindergartener’s level, and my recounting of events has been amplified for you to fully comprehend the severity of the situation.

That night, at bed time—the time when all insightful words of wisdom are uttered in an attempt to prolong being forced to go to sleep—I sat up in bed, straightened the covers, and right as my mother leaned over to kiss me on the forehead, I asked, “Is the sun going to explode?” knowing full well that a loving, caring mother such as my own would not allow me to grow into such maturity of my full five years without having ever offered me the opportunity to learn this crucial fact.

My mother paused and said casually, “Don’t worry about that. That won’t happen for millions of years. We’ll both be dead by then.”

At which point my eyes widened. I uttered in disbelief, “What? I’m going to die?”

But, much to my surprise, my own mother dismissed my reaction, disregarding my life’s value and instilling an emotion of betrayal—a feeling that, up until that moment, had only been directed at my sister when she frequently split dessert with me and I ended up with the smaller half.

My mother kissed my forehead and patted my head. “It’s late,” she said calmly. “You don’t want to be tired for school tomorrow. Get some rest.” As if anyone sane could rest after hearing such news!

She smiled in the way that my younger self found reassuring and my older, more sophisticated self later recognized as pity. Then she pulled the blankets up to my chin, turned off the lights, shut the door, and abandoned me.

Now in the dark, five-year-old me was able to let the full impact of the words soak in—although, more accurately, I believe the shock of it simply had worn off. And I, promptly, burst into uncontrollable sobs that resulted in both of my concerned parents bursting through the door into my dingy bedroom. My father wielded a plunger over his

shoulder and demanded to know where the intruder was hiding. Looking back, in his defense, I conclude that having no brothers at the time meant no baseball bats to satisfy the movie cliché.

Once they realized that no criminal had sneaked through the window, nor was a monster taking refuge under the bed (I still contest that one resided in the closet), my parents soothed me and I fell into a restless, disturbed sleep that I suppose I have never quite recovered from.

Now, the purpose of this little anecdote, you're wondering. It's more intended as a preface to the larger issue at hand.

A therapist I saw once advised me to reflect on my life. From her perched position on her chair with her legs crossed tidily in a fashion that made my lackadaisical reclining on the deceptively comfortable sofa seem inappropriate, she instructed me to look back and trace back to the beginning of my anxiety disorder.

Hours spent sitting in solitude. Countless internet searches on how to correctly meditate ending in failure. Innumerable times that my father's credit card was swiped to purchase self-help books that never had their second pages turned. And I've found it!

That moment is it.

The aforementioned teacher—a certain Mrs. Bossi, with an “I”—who turned out to be not bossy in the least, but a very sweet lady quite contrary to what her name suggested, as far as I remember—a name that in and of itself caused too much unnecessary and unwarranted worry for a young girl preparing to face her first day of school. Well, this teacher, or her supervisor, or whoever signed off on such X-rated lesson plans, is to blame for launching the series of relentless panic attacks, so relentless, in fact, that one may conclude that my entire life has been one unending panic episode. Actually, now that I mention it, I do believe that my third psychologist did conclude that.

Even now, as I'm reading this, can you see the droplets of sweat collecting on my forehead? Or have you noticed my arms clenched at my sides in an attempt to hide the pitters that appeared the moment I donned this dress? Or have you been so anal retentive to have been irked by the speed of my voice increasing only to suddenly slow down on the rare occasion that conscious me reminds myself to take a breath?

I am not accountable for this nonsensical thought process. It's Mrs. Bossi you should be seeking out and serving blame to. Part of me wishes my mother had had the sense to deny the claims and waited until I was emotionally strong enough to cope with the whole notion. At the very least, I would've been more mature by my sixth birthday. To the jury, I submit for evidence the pictures of me in my tiara opening up presents to prove my elegance and grace. Yes, she should have waited to divulge that I wouldn't even survive on this planet to experience the sun exploding.

Regardless, I knew then, and I know now, and I have been left to deal with the consequences of bearing this burden of knowledge.

Upon relaying what my therapist and I had discussed to my family at dinner one evening, my *adorable* six-year-old sister, with her beautiful brown locks and charming little smile, whose physical appearance uncannily reminded me of myself, set down her fork and suggested very seriously that I should make a flipchart to make sense of my life.

The fact that she knew what a flipchart was made me wonder if she, too, knew that the sun was going to explode. In a manner of much more concern than my parents ever showed to me, I asked gently, "Are you aware that the sun is going to explode at some point?"

Her eyes narrowed suspiciously as if this were some horrible trick. I reached my hand out to comfort her, saddened that I had to be the one responsible for telling her such news. And then, my hand froze in midair as she scoffed automatically, said sassily, "Yeah," in a manner altogether unappreciative of what I had done for her, and resumed eating her mac and cheese.

Perhaps she is not as mature as I was at that age, because she did not seem to be worried at all about the sun's explosion. She probably still does not understand, as I had at that age, what this scientific discovery means for her. After all, I was beyond my years. Poor girl.

Anyway, my first psychologist informed me that generalized anxiety disorders sometimes run in the family, in which case my parents would be to blame. Fortunately, at the same time, perhaps by a God attempting to make amends for allowing the sun to explode, one of my ninth grade teachers had assigned a family tree project. No one in my immediate family has ever shown signs of any offshoot of an anxiety disorder—unless you count my uncle's then-fiancée's emotional panic attack before their wedding...but I don't think it works that way. You have to be blood-related, right?

My second psychologist one-upped the first and told me that only three-point-one percent of the population in America suffers from a generalized anxiety disorder. Since there are so few of us, Mom says that I'm a rare gem. But I'm a dual citizen, so that must mean I'm even rarer.

See, the ironic thing in this whole mess is that one of the reasons the school's counselor prompted me to seek help was my inability to sleep. Like I said, I haven't slept properly since that night all those years ago when I was five. They say that humans spend one-third of their lives sleeping, so I consider myself fortunate to have lived longer than everyone else. I was warned that there were side effects of the medication I was being prescribed—and, having not been put on the medication at that point, I grew anxious and a million horrible outcomes categorized themselves in my head: hallucinations, stroke, cancer, seizure, death, etcetera.

I held my breath, crossed my fingers behind my back, and was told that one of the side effects is difficulty sleeping. At which point I was relieved, not because it wasn't the awful side effects I had conjured in my head, but because I like not being able to sleep.

You see, I have come to regard my inability to sleep not as a hindrance. Quite the contrary! It is my secret superpower. Realize how much more productive I am than you are because I am awake one-third times longer. To put this in perspective, a person my age (eighteen years old) hasn't even been conscious for twelve of those years—which makes sense why I'm so much more mature than all my fellow peers. Imagine how different the world would be if no one ever had to sleep. The average human being would actually live eighty years instead of deceiving herself into thinking she was eighty when she'd only been awake for fifty-two years, nine months, two weeks, and (just shy of) three days. No human would be slighted ever again.

One of the perks of not sleeping very often is all the extra time on my hands I have to do all the things that everyone else commonly complains of not having time to do. To give you a rough idea, some of these things include, but are not limited to, never missing breakfast, never missing any meal, going to the gym to burn off never missing a meal, having an organized sock drawer, having knowledge of a plethora of scientific studies to use at my disposal to impress friends and potential suitors, and so on. I never have to worry about a washing machine not being available in the dorms since few people do laundry in the wee hours of the morning, or fear that I'll sleep through a class, nope, never accidentally done that. The list is really endless. The extra time relieves some of my anxiety; I thought about writing my thesis on how the symptoms of the disorder are treating the disorder.

Plus, this talent has helped me so much that I'm considering listing it on my résumé under "Skills and Assets." In fact, I consider my ability to stay awake an evolutionary advantage. This also parallels with my ability to eat past being full. See, in cavemen days, they never knew when their next meal would be available. Being able to eat and eat and eat would have allowed me to store food for later. Thus, I would have survived well past all of those who eat smaller portions. So every time I pass a wafer-thin, attractive female, I thank my lucky stars that I can eat. I fully understand why the male species ogles now because, evolutionary speaking, men instinctually know that these attractive women wouldn't have been around much longer back in cavemen days.

By the time I met with my psychiatrist, I knew everything I could and had to regretfully inform her that she would be unable to win me over with statistics and other facts since I had memorized them all. Fearing that she wouldn't believe me that I knew everything, I confessed the whole ordeal about how much extra time I had to research and memorize such facts. I have never seen someone in a white lab coat whip out a notepad and pen faster. In the end, she found a loophole by impressing me only with what her signature got me. In addition to the tasteless pills that fuel my superpower of sleeplessness, she gave me permission to request testing facilities so I can have more time to complete a difficult exam. Knowing that my peers would be jealous of me, however, I have never used these privileges. Rather, I suffer in silent solitude as a martyr, sacrificing myself, my talents, and my special privileges to ensure everyone else's well-being.

Countless children grow up wishing they could join the ranks of the world's renowned superheroes. Marvel either modeled their characters after me or predicted my birth.

Bruce Banner—alter-ego of the Hulk, for all of you who are deprived of comics—struggles with a love-hate relationship with his special abilities. Much debate has been the result of whether eating too much and not sleeping enough is good or bad. I'm also a total klutz and stumble and destroy things on a regular basis. Neither of us realizes our own strength.

Wolverine is constantly picking fights and forced into predicaments where he doesn't know who is his enemy or ally. As a college female, I sympathize; the lines between friend and foe are blurred.

Spider Man's story revolves around his life as an ordinary man as much as it does his superhero adventures. Regardless of the menial troubles of his day-to-day life, he shoves his personal problems aside, suits up, and saves the world—every time. I, too, spend hours hopped up on caffeine, memorizing information for class and writing papers and studying for tests and attending meeting after meeting. All of this rather than socialize and have time to myself. Peter Parker puts New York first, while school is my priority.

Batman and Iron Man are both uber-rich businessmen with no supernatural skills. Instead, they're self-made. They use their genius intelligences to succeed. Guess what? Me too.

Still working on the Wonder Woman physique, but there you have it!

I am a combination of all their strongest features, picked apart and assembled together in one ensemble. I stand before you, equal in talent to all the superheroes—except better, because I'm real.

So the next time you're sitting there, fretting, stressing, tearing yourself up inside because of your own insecurities, I implore you to take a deep breath. Your weakness can only become your downfall if you let it. Spin it, twist it, flip it on its head. What if all our faults were only the young alter-egos before they realized they had talents? Weren't all the heroes in books and shows and movies terrified of their talents at one point?

Peter Parker endured a spider bite; Bruce Wayne witnessed his parents' murder; Superman grew up far, far from home; Cecelia MacDonald obtained knowledge of the sun's explosion. After cumulative hours of therapy, my team of specialists and I concluded that I could not only exist with my disorder, but I could thrive. As with any shortcoming, when you use it to your advantage, it becomes your strength.

Ease up on your stress. After all, it isn't the end of the world. You still have a few billion years before the sun explodes.

Step up, speak up, stand out, and be your own superhero.



“Kirsten Graffiti” by Ashley Creamer

“Fuzzy Versus Fussy” (Essay)

Sydney Stankus

The section of *Willpower* that really piqued my interest was the three-page portion entitled “Fuzzy Versus Fussy” (Baumeister and Tierney 72). This passage described a study that followed a group of college students who were trying to improve their study habits. Three groups were involved in the study, and the first group set up a plan of where, when, and what to study on a daily basis; the second group set up the same plan, but planned their study methods by month instead of by day. The final group made no study plans. The monthly planning system turned out to lead to a significant improvement in the grades of the weaker students, while the daily planning group had altogether abandoned planning (Baumeister and Tierney 72). I chose to model this study in my own life because I procrastinate on my school work, and I have been staying up very late at night recently in order to complete my work before it is due. I know that I spend too much time doing unnecessary things during the day, even when I know that I have a heavy load of school work that needs to get done or the date of a major exam is approaching.

I am not the most organized person, nor am I the most motivated; I decided to try out this technique of planning my studying by month. This was a big change for me, because I was used to setting up a daily agenda, and when I did not accomplish each task, I would move the unfinished business to the next day. I have noticed that with my daily method, I would feel discouraged when I did not complete the projected day’s work. I also noticed that I was giving myself too much leeway and allowing myself to put off tasks, as I would pass the same task from Monday to Tuesday, and sometimes the same task would carry through the entire week before I would get around to it. Before I began to implement my monthly planning strategy, I measured my approximate willpower using the daily planning strategy. The factors that I took into consideration during measurement were (1) how many tasks I planned to complete each day, (2) how much of my time per day was spent procrastinating, and (3) how overwhelmed I felt at the end of each day. I kept track of this in a table (shown below). I chose these three specific questions because I found myself feeling extremely overwhelmed most of the time, especially at night, and after carefully evaluating my day, I attributed this feeling to the amount of time I spent procrastinating. I also had an inkling that the more tasks I set up for myself each day, the less I wanted to begin tackling my to-do list. Beginning on a Monday night, I ranked myself for one week on these numbers and feelings.

By looking at the completed table, I noticed that on the days when I procrastinated the most, I felt the most overwhelmed before bed. The amount of time that I procrastinated, the amount of stress I was feeling, and the number of tasks that I had planned for each day seemed to positively correlate to one another. I hypothesized that by

Day	How many tasks I planned today	How much time I spent procrastinating (approx. hours)	How overwhelmed I felt before bed (1 lowest-10 highest)
Monday	6	2	7
Tuesday	6	2.5	8
Wednesday	8	4	9
Thursday	4	2	5
Friday	8	3.25	7
Saturday	5	2	6
Sunday	8	6	9

making a plan at the beginning of the month that would spread out my work load, I could reduce the number of daunting tasks on my daily to-do list. I began the month of November by taking about 25 minutes out of my day and sitting down with all my class syllabi and my day planner. I took note of reading assignments, research papers, quizzes, and exams that were indicated on each syllabus. I set up goals for each day and decided when I would need to study for exams and quizzes or begin research for papers. Writing these down for each day in my planner spread out the work load and led to fewer tasks being squeezed into one day. Starting on Monday, November 4th, I began to keep track of the new number of tasks, the amount of time that I spent procrastinating, and the amount of stress I felt. The table (shown below) tracks my progress for two weeks on the new monthly method of planning.

Day	How many tasks I planned today	How much time I spent procrastinating (approx. hours)	How overwhelmed I felt before bed (1 lowest-10 highest)
Monday	4	2.5	5
Tuesday	5	3	6
Wednesday	4	2	3
Thursday	4	2	3
Friday	2	0	1
Saturday	2	3	2
Sunday	1	4	3
Monday	2	1	2
Tuesday	3	1.5	2
Wednesday	1	2	2
Thursday	3	3	3
Friday	4	0	1
Saturday	2	1	1
Sunday	3	2	2

By reducing the number of items on my daily to-do list, I noticed that the number of hours I spent procrastinating and the number at which I ranked myself on feeling overwhelmed also decreased. Although the number of hours spent procrastinating and the number of tasks that I set out to accomplish may not depend upon each other at all, I think that the fewer tasks I proposed, the more inclined I was to begin working on my list. I believe when I see that I have eight things to do that day (e.g., starting a research paper, doing chemistry homework, typing a lab report, and studying for an exam), I subconsciously allow myself too many breaks because I feel sorry for myself. I noticed that I would repeatedly quit working on my school work and check Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and text messages about every fifteen minutes. However, when I saw that I had only four or five tasks to complete, I started to work on them and finished in a timely fashion, allowing myself to check social networking sites after I was finished. I did not set any constraints on myself to change this behavior purposely, but the new behavior seemed to come as a result of the fewer number of goals I set for myself daily. I think that I felt less overwhelmed before bed because I was not in “crunch” mode—trying to finish things before midnight in order to wake up at 6:45 a.m. I began to start on my work as soon as I came back from class, leaving myself more free time to enjoy myself with friends in the evening and at night.

The results of my personal experiment support the results that were indicated in the book. My grades have been easier to control, and I intend to continue planning in this monthly manner. I feel less discouraged at the end of each day because I rarely have to change my daily list of tasks and I almost always complete them all.

My self-control greatly improved with this method of planning because the number of hours that I spent procrastinating drastically decreased. (Granted, I did procrastinate for six hours on the first Sunday.) I actually began my work with several days’ leeway, and I stopped carrying tasks over from one day to the next, as I had been doing at the end of October. I actually started this very paper much earlier than I normally would have. My new method of planning has helped me in my daily life because my time management skills have improved greatly, and I find that I am a happier person and I get to bed at a more reasonable hour than I did prior to changing my planning habits. I better understand the concept of “Fuzzy Versus Fussy” in psychology because I have found that planning ahead gives a distinct advantage to those in wars and in situations like mine. The “fuzzy” long-term goals were easier to follow than the daily “fussy” goals that allowed little flexibility.

Work Cited

Baumeister, Roy F., and John Tierney. *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*. New York: Penguin, 2011. Print.



"Among the Pines" by Chelsie Adams

Plato Takes the MCAT (Essay)

Second Place Winner

Amanda Johnson

Undoubtedly, one of the most horrifying experiences in my college career came last April when I journeyed to Lancaster to sit for the Medical College Admissions Test. I had studied for the exam for two months, driving back and forth every single night to Penn State University to take a comprehensive preparation course taught by medical students. Ten hours of every week were devoted to learning the basic science material covered by the MCAT. From non-Newtonian fluids to natural selection, I'd mastered every single paragraph of every single test preparation textbook.

When I arrived at the testing center, however, any hubris I may have had going in to the experience faded. Crammed into a room with fifty other students all vying to best their peers due to the scaled nature of the exam, I was lost in a sea of type-A savants, and their pretense really started to get to me. I recall wiping my hands on my white shorts and being disgusted with myself for turning the fabric see-through with sweat. When we were signaled to begin, I read the first passage in the biological sciences section—it was on geology. *Geology?* I thought to myself. *How in the hell am I supposed to know any geology?!*

Socrates's character states in Plato's classic work *Meno* that we all have a full complement of innate knowledge in us from the time we are born, because the soul is immortal and crosses through many lifetimes before it ever arrives in a body. Much like the MCAT, Socrates believes in our supposed unique human ability to analyze data both quantitatively and qualitatively and to assess it correctly on the basis of the fact that we essentially already know everything there is to know. In some ways, this is a very appealing conceptual puzzle to me. As I progressed through the MCAT, I realized that the basic premise of the exam was to discern who among our cohort of test takers had the ability to process completely unfamiliar data and use prior knowledge and reasoning to form a rational response to the foreign scientific topic. This, in essence, is one of the most prized skills in our modern society and is often boiled down to buzzwords like *critical thinking*, *quantitative analysis*, and *brainstorming*. Socrates, however, would argue that all these words are mere window-dressing for what is actually occurring. We have all this knowledge within us, and critical thinking is merely our human ability to recall all that we have learned from previous incarnations.

What does it really mean to have this sort of Platonic omniscience? The ability to know everything without truly learning anything at all is a pretty compelling idea when taken in light of the human ability to judge and discern motives and conclusions from just a small bit of information. Is critical thinking really recalling things that were already previously learned by the immortal, indestructible soul? Is it comforting or unsettling to believe in reincarnation—that we have infinite experiences because we live again and again? For this pragmatic test taker, I didn't really have time to persevere over the answer to the great question of reincarnation. As I hit my stride in the middle of the exam, I came to the verbal reasoning portion. By this point, I was answering questions about

women's rights, Chaucer, paleontology and macroeconomics. Although I had never studied these concepts before, I was able to use my sense of reasoning to deduce the answers from contextual information. Examining Meno's paradox in this same light, Socrates would refer to this kind of deduction as previously learned information that was merely being remembered by the soul. Although this argument is compelling, the relatively new field of brain-focused neuroscience would probably disagree with this statement. Information such as recently rehearsed telephone numbers from a conference, prices of an article of clothing at the mall, or the name of that aesthetically pleasing person on the opposite side of the bar flows through us like Heraclitus's everlasting energy and reaches our short-term memory. If we rehearse this information enough times in enough different contexts and receive an adequate amount of rest that evening, this information will eventually be stored in our long-term memory and may be a painful reminder of that failed business deal, that impulse buy, or that very unfortunate one-night stand.

As the time limit was called on the second section of the exam and a ten-minute break was announced, I lazily slumped my shoulders down and sank into my chair, no doubt due to the exhaustion that follows the complex interplay of signaling cascades that cause adrenaline to course through my cells and on to my tissues, tearing through my central nervous system to stimulate my sense of focus and alertness. It was then that I realized that I was really, really thirsty. I walked out to the hallway to the water fountain, and in that moment I began recalling useless bits of physiological information. "The pancreas secretes digestive enzymes," I told myself. "The equilibrium constant, K , equals the concentration of products over reactants." Plato would have a field-day with me. My immortal soul seriously must be hung over, because information is just spilling out of me like the water that dribbles down my chin. I shrug off the constant bombardment of useless information, and I head back in to the testing center to do battle with the final section of the exam.

Plato's work has interesting implications for educational pedagogy. What kind of elementary schools would we have if we didn't teach children the alphabet and the scientific method? Would Socrates enter the classroom and pull information out of scores of six-year-olds with lines of badgering and questions? To me, this idea that we need philosophers to help us find the information that we already possess within ourselves seems farfetched and impractical. How would we train our teachers? By the very same method, at the hands of some more prominent Socratic figure? In many ways, the Western high school and college education practices this to some extent. The educator directs the learning through the provision of useful educational materials, and a lot of the learning really takes place when the student engages critically with the material and uses the student's version of the Socratic method—"I don't understand!" After struggling for a while with the material, the student comes to some greater enlightenment and understanding as it pertains to the topic, and the teacher ultimately assesses progression in learning through tests and projects. In my mind, Socrates's character is not so much a philosopher as the first great education professor of modernity, of how we think about the process of learning.



"The Real Heart" by Connor Mullan

When I finally finish the exam, I am absolutely ecstatic. I walk out of the testing center so fast I'm almost flying, nearly tripping under the weight of my own clumsy feet as I jump into my car seat. On the drive back, a lot of the "big questions" begin to make themselves apparent to me. What I'd do with my future if the test went horribly, how I'd spend my days now that they're freed up as I roll ahead into summer break, and whether God has invested any interest in my ultimate success in the career I have worked so hard to attain up to this point. Looking back now, this exchange with myself was very Socratic, and the more I think about previous events in my life, the greater appreciation I have for how this internal philosophical questioning I've always employed works and how it has made me a much happier person because I have a sincere love for drawing my own conclusions and finding my personal answers to life's massive questions.

Is it really possible to know if such a thing as an immortal soul truly exists? And does this soul contain all the knowledge I will ever uncover? I cannot come to an ultimate resolution on this topic, because the idea of reincarnation and prior knowledge is very

compelling, however scientifically paradoxical it may be to a culture that lives largely in the world of definite information and strict adherence to a particular way of learning. I'm not necessarily sure that I want to know the true answer, because the idea of previous knowledge and past lives is poetic and quite beautiful in the way that I perceive it. There is a great deal of comfort in the idea that the soul is invincible and that it contains all things. Knowledge is fluid, and it knows no bounds. It moves through time from life to death to life again, never perishing itself. It uses our bodies as a vehicle for its expression, however clumsy or articulate we may present its form to the rest of the world. Plato has a finessed understanding of knowledge, rediscovery and the soul, and if he were in my MCAT cohort, I'm sure he would smash the exam.



"Purple Shield" by Stacey Edmiston

Elizabeth Bennet and Social Etiquette in Pride and Prejudice

(Essay)

Rebecca Larkins

Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* follows protagonist Elizabeth Bennet as she navigates early nineteenth-century England. Elizabeth, as all women were, is pressured by norms and expectations of the society of the time. Elizabeth struggles with this pressure to conform, and, unlike most women in the novel, rebels against it. In opposition to the social standards and influence, Elizabeth refuses to marry for money, she is not intimidated by men or "superior" figures, and she often voices her honest thoughts and opinions, however controversial. Elizabeth is careful not to be disrespectful, but at the same time she refuses to settle for anything less than what she deserves. Much of the conflict in *Pride and Prejudice* comes from Elizabeth Bennet's resistance to the social etiquette of the time, particularly regarding marriage.

The early nineteenth-century society was very restrictive for, if not sexist against, women. There were standards that women had to meet and restrictions that they had to face. Women were to know how to keep house, were educated just enough to hold conversation, and were "cultured" to know things such as how to play an instrument and draw. They had to be very careful not to be too outspoken, and they could not be too old, because then they would never get a husband. Women often accepted any proposal of marriage, despite a lack of love in the relationship, because of the security it ensured. Charlotte Lucas is an example of this standard; she accepts Mr. Collins's proposal of marriage because she is "old" and afraid that she will end up an old maid. There is no love in their relationship, at least in the beginning; it is merely a relationship of convenience. The most important rule, according to society, was that women were at the service, and mercy, of men. This idea can be summarized as follows: "[T]he whole education of women ought to relate to men. To please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet—these are the duties of women at all times, and they ought to be taught from childhood" (Cohen).

Elizabeth Bennet is the exception to the rules that governed nineteenth-century women. What she believes and what is important to her are very much at odds with what society holds as important. For example, unlike most women, Elizabeth is not very serious; rather, she is playful and energetic. She wants to have fun and enjoy life, and she is not afraid to have witty, even charming conversations with men, as she does with Mr. Darcy. She even goes so far as to joke about him to his face, something that very few, if any, other women would dare to do. Elizabeth does not define herself by her relationship with a man. In fact, her strongest relationships are those between herself and her sisters and that with her best friend, Charlotte Lucas. The only man in the novel who always has Elizabeth's respect and affection is her father, and their relationship is one of mutual respect. Mr. Bennet encourages Elizabeth to be a free thinker, which shocks Lady

Catherine de Bourgh, a symbol for society's expectations. When Elizabeth stands her ground against Lady Catherine's condescension, Lady Catherine is stunned. She replies, rather taken aback, "Upon my word, you give your opinion very decidedly for so young a person" (Austen 166). Lady Catherine, being a woman of higher station than Elizabeth, has many opinions as to how Elizabeth should have been raised and how she should act, but Elizabeth does not care what she thinks, much to Lady Catherine's dismay.

The characteristics for which people look down upon Elizabeth are actually what make her special and superior to other women. Miss Bingley ridicules Elizabeth because she walked all the way from Longbourn to Pemberley and muddled her skirts in doing so—as if Elizabeth cared about a trivial problem like that. Elizabeth's opinion is that "[t]he distance is nothing when one has a motive; only three miles" (Austen 32). Walking itself, the ability to leave a certain place, is symbolic of freedom, something Elizabeth has that most women do not. In the nineteenth century, "By taking a walk, choosing a direction and destination as well as a pace, a companion, and a time, a woman restless and dissatisfied with her constricted role could advance toward several enabling social goals" (Palmer). While some women would prefer to take a carriage, whether to preserve their skirts or to show their wealth, Elizabeth would prefer to walk for the sake of enjoyment. Elizabeth only does what she wants to do, regardless of whether those actions correspond to what society tells her to do.

In terms of romantic relationships, Elizabeth is very much at odds with the normal protocol of society. Women generally accepted a marriage proposal for position and security only, and were very neutral about their true feelings. Even Jane Bennet hides her true feelings, for fear of overstepping her boundaries. Charlotte Lucas is the prime example of a common marriage of the time; she was, at the very least, on the way to becoming an old maid and therefore jumped at the first chance she had at marriage, even if it was with someone for whom she cared very little, if at all. Elizabeth is the only one who is outspoken about her true feelings and thoughts about marriage. Realistically, she probably should have at least considered Mr. Collins's proposal, given the power he wields over her family, but she would not because she refuses to be trapped into a marriage. Elizabeth even originally refuses Mr. Darcy, who is her true love, because his feelings and motives are not to her satisfaction. Darcy admits that he loves her "despite his better judgment" and is somewhat ashamed of their class differences; Elizabeth cannot accept this, for she refuses to be disrespected and treated as any less than an equal (Mann).

While Elizabeth has her own rules and motives, she is still careful not to upset the natural order of society too much. She does not have the station, as Lady Catherine de Bourgh has, to be completely independent and above society's rules. For example, Elizabeth acknowledges that her relationship with Mr. Wickham would never have worked out because he was poor and without property; therefore, he would not have been able to provide her with the proper safety and security that a wife expects from her husband. He is not an "Ideal Man," and therefore it would be "imprudent" to fall in love with him (Gao). Elizabeth is very polite in her rejection of Mr. Collins and is careful not to

be mocking or to cause hard feelings, even though she is disgusted by the idea of marriage to him. Also, while she eventually marries Darcy for love, it is convenient that he is very well-off.

Elizabeth Bennet is aware of her surroundings, but refuses to be forcefully influenced by them. She is unlike most women of her time in the way that she thinks, speaks, and acts, and she does not care to change these characteristics, nor does she apologize for them. In fact, her different personality is what makes her special and adds to her charm. Elizabeth cherishes her relationship with her family and does not define herself by her relationship with a man. She also refuses to settle for someone whom she does not respect and who does not respect her, even if it means jeopardizing her future well-being. She has too much self-respect to lower herself to anyone else's standards, even to those who believe themselves to be above her, such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Mr. Darcy. The society of the early nineteenth century placed much pressure on women to conform, but ultimately Elizabeth Bennet would not do it; rather, she stood up for herself and gained everything that she knew all along that she deserved.

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“A Sun Rises in the Morning” by Megan Pfeil

The Secret in the Garden: An Analysis of “Twickenham Garden” and “The Merchant’s Tale” (Essay)

Stacey Edmiston

Gardens have played a prevalent role in many stories throughout the ages, stretching their roots across the world and planting seeds inside the minds of writers of all ages. Two examples of these planted seeds can be seen in John Donne’s “Twickenham Garden” and Geoffrey Chaucer’s “The Merchant’s Tale.” These two works have more than the use of gardens in common; they connect in ways that many have not noticed before through their uses of themes, imagery and symbolism. Not only do they expand on the use of the garden by relating it to the ideal paradise of Eden and the Genesis story that follows, but they both reference the contrasting seasons of winter and spring and weave around the idea of love. Also, certain parts of “Twickenham Garden” could be read through the eyes of Chaucer’s characters in “The Merchant’s Tale.” These two pieces of work are so deeply rooted together, but it seems that no one has yet discovered how—until now.

The Garden of Eden is not only a story found in the Bible; over the years, it seems to have become a literary mechanism to symbolize an ideal world, a perfect and pure environment untouched by sin. According to medieval depictions, the Garden of Eden was a lush and fruitful garden, separated by walls from the inhospitable environment that Adam and Eve were banished to after their fall. Many critics have noted that the gardens in Chaucer’s work closely resemble this Garden of Eden (Dunlop 10). In “The Merchant’s Tale” from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, old man January built a garden in which he could privately pursue sexual pleasures with his wife, May. January refers to May and his marriage to her as his “paradise,” alluding to the ideal world of Eden. In terms that are also similar to the biblical account since God made Eve so Adam would not be alone, January identifies his wife as “man’s help” and “comfort” (Dunlop 10). A pear tree stood in January’s garden, like that of the Tree of Knowledge in Eden. This is where May fell to the serpent’s temptation, better known as her lust for Damian, her extramarital lover whom she sneaked into the garden. By giving into temptation, it can be said that the truth was revealed to January when his blindness was cured and then concealed again by May’s lies, similar to the revelation of Adam and Eve’s fall. Eve was tempted to eat the apple, as May was tempted to sleep with Damian, and Eve tempted Adam to eat the apple, like May convinced January that her affair cured him. The garden itself may resemble the Garden of Eden; however, the relationships threaded through this tale can be considered the Fall.

A reference to the illustrious garden can also be found in Donne’s “Twickenham Garden.” The narrator of the poem plays the part of an unrequited lover whose affections are not returned by a woman who remains faithful to her husband. He waits in her garden, eager to urge her to love him; however, he commends her for her faithfulness to her husband, understanding that he is in the wrong. He mentions that the garden he occupies is a “True Paradise,” symbolizing the Garden of Eden as a place of innocence, grace and joy.

However, the lover admits that he is causing the Fall of this ideal world by playing the part of the serpent, turning the garden into a place of expulsion, grief and absence (Andreasen 148).

A connection can be made between the two works by the fact that they both use references to two contrasting seasons: winter and spring. In "The Merchant's Tale," this symbolism can be seen simply in their names. January's name refers to the winter month with the same name, whereas May shares her name with the spring month. January is an old man, sharing the bare and unfruitful characteristics of his title month, whereas his youthful wife represents the spring seasons. In "Twickenham Garden," the spring is mentioned in the first stanza; however, this word holds more meaning in the poem, representing not only the season but also a water spring (Richards 180). For the sake of argument, only the representation of the season shall be used, "for spring, although the season of rebirth and renewal, is also the time when a young man's fancy is inspired" (Andreasen 149). The lover went to the garden because he recognizes that he needs a cure that will bring spiritual renewal; spring is the season of rebirth and he wishes to share in it, escaping the sorrow of his unrequited love (Andreasen 146). On the other hand, winter is mentioned in the second stanza. It not only brings the grave frost that causes the trees to mock him in his depression but also represents the bleakness of his mood at the time.

Love seems to be the most obvious theme between "The Merchant's Tale" and "Twickenham Garden," even if they are two different types of love. Sexual love is obviously prevalent in Chaucer's piece by the mere fact that May cheats on her husband by having sex with Damian in a pear tree, turning the blind husband into a "foolish, goatish cuckold" (Holman 247). On the other hand, unrequited love can be seen in the garden of Twickenham. The narrator of the poem is upset because the woman he loves will not return his love for her because she has decided to stay faithful to her husband. It is not known who the woman is in "Twickenham Garden"; however, it is very possible that the story is entirely fictional. Even if it is based on true events, the woman may not be Lady Lucy of Bedford, whose garden was used for inspiration, but could be a feminine member of Lady Bedford's literary party (Louthan 149). Either way, there is no conclusive evidence who the woman and the lover are in the poem, but their situation still exists. The lover of "Twickenham Garden" went to the garden for renewal; however, he cannot cure himself because he brought his sinful love with him. Instead, he turned good into evil by bringing his self-seeking love into the garden (Richards 181). His very desire for repentance is thus transformed into bitterness (Andreasen 148).

Some phrases from "Twickenham Garden" can be taken to represent the different perspectives of January and Damian from "The Merchant's Tale." Damian was a squire from January's court, so by engaging in his affair with May, he betrayed the trust and friendship of his lord (Holman 247). Keeping this in mind, almost the entire first stanza of "Twickenham Garden" can be taken as Damian's point of view. Damian entered the garden in order to meet with May, or, in other words, "to seek the spring." His "sighs" and "tears" could be seen as joyous relief that May would respond to his love for her, or they might

suggest that Damian felt some guilt by betraying his lord and is therefore “blasted with sighs, and surrounded with tears,” representing his inner turmoil about the affair. Continuing with the idea that he feels some guilt, he not only betrays January but is also a “self-traitor” by understanding that this affair goes against what he believes to be right; he feels guilt for going behind January’s back, but he does nothing to stop it. Through this affair, he will transform into the “serpent” that destroys the “true paradise” of January’s marriage and “transubstantiates” the sanctity of January’s garden.



“The Fall of Eve” by Katie Sheperd

The second stanza of "Twickenham Garden" can be considered January's point of view after he finds that May had cheated on him with Damian. January is in a state of betrayal at this point; not only has his wife made a cuckold of him, but she did it with a squire from his own court. This stanza opens with winter, the very season that his name represents. The joyous rustling of the trees, which seems to mock him to his face, can be seen as the shaking of the pear tree that January felt as May and Damian commenced with their affair in the branches. The "grave frost" that robs the trees of their leaves to stop this mockery would be January's renewed sight when he sees what his wife is really doing. Despite the fact that May fooled him with her lies, he may figure out later what had truly happened and weep out his years like a stone fountain. Whether he figures it out, January is in a state of denial, stepping back and becoming a "senseless piece" of the garden and letting May get away with her affair. The last two lines of the third stanza continue the idea of January's denial, indicating that he believed her affair cured his eyesight. At that moment, he may believe "o perverse sex, where none is true but she," hinting that no other woman can be as truthful as her. However, since May had lied to him, her "truth" kills his understanding of the affair.

"Twickenham Garden" and "The Merchant's Tale" may be two completely different stories, but it cannot be denied that there are some deeply rooted connections between them. The serpent from the Garden of Eden slithered his way through "The Merchant's Tale," transforming into Damian, who tempted May, and then changed into the lover of "Twickenham Garden," who tried to tempt his forbidden love. Winter and spring were displayed in both works through the use of symbolism in "The Merchant's Tale" and the use of imagery throughout "Twickenham Garden." A major theme in both pieces is love; however, they display two different kinds of love. Not only do these two stories share these fundamental elements, but they can be read on different levels. It is surprising to think that all this evidence of the connections between these two stories had gone unnoticed for so long.

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"Given" by Emily Hurley

Logotherapy: Validated or Fabricated? (Essay)

April Taylor

Viktor Frankl imagines the horrific death of his mother in the following way: "Once these people...had been crammed into gas chambers...they saw there was no help. Then they began to pray...and surrendered themselves to what God had bestowed upon them" (qtd. in Pytell 101-2). While this account is certainly moving and tells a tale of great courage, one is inclined to question the accuracy of this description. For those who have seen images of fingernail scratches on the inside walls of the gas chambers, Frankl's description may be difficult to reconcile. This group of skeptics includes Timothy Pytell of California State University, who criticizes Frankl's account of the Holocaust as an attempt to "prove his own psychological and philosophical theories" (89). Pytell even asserts that "the real hero of *Man's Search for Meaning* is not man, but Viktor Frankl" (103).

The theory that Pytell believes Frankl is trying to promote in *Man's Search for Meaning* is logotherapy. Frankl believes that he was able to survive the Holocaust because he found meaning in his life and in his suffering. One of the ways Frankl found meaning during his time in the concentration camps was by "communing with his beloved" while he performed hard labor (41). Frankl also found meaning in a more concrete way by dissuading other prisoners from committing suicide and helping others find hope for the future (79). Several times throughout the book, Frankl quotes Nietzsche, who said, "He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*" (qtd. in Frankl 76). This exemplifies Frankl's belief that the search for meaning was key to his survival.

Frankl claims that his observations in the concentration camps validate his theory of logotherapy, while Pytell believes that Frankl's account of the Holocaust serves primarily to promote his theory of logotherapy (89). However, I contend that neither of these explanations is sufficient. It seems unlikely that a man would endure the Holocaust and then *use* the experience to sell books. Frankl did not intentionally distort the reality of the concentration camps in order to promote logotherapy. However, it also seems unlikely that Frankl's optimism miraculously saved him from the gas chambers. Logotherapy falls short of accurately describing human nature and the psychology of the prisoners because Frankl was driven by misguided attempts to help others find meaning, to explain suffering at the cost of the sufferer, and ultimately to cope with his own suffering and survival.

While Frankl tries to help others find meaning in their lives, this search for meaning is often misguided and inconsistent. For example, Frankl relates the story of several prisoners who found the will to carry on by convincing themselves that they would be home for Christmas. When Christmas came and went, and the prisoners had not been released, they were devastated. Frankl then says that these prisoners literally died of disappointment (76). The ending of this story suggests that these people caused their own deaths by hoping for the wrong thing. Similar to the prisoners' hope of being home for Christmas, one method that Frankl heavily credits for his survival is imagining being with his wife in times of suffering. He even says that he could feel her with him when he did so

(Frankl 41). When Frankl was released, he found that his wife had been killed in the camps. Why did he not also die of disappointment?

This inconsistency is just one example of Frankl's tendency to selectively apply his observations in the camps to his theory of logotherapy. Frankl survived when his hopes of seeing his wife again were destroyed, but the prisoners did not survive when Christmas came and went. Frankl and the prisoners were both searching for something to live for; the only difference was that Frankl, with his own theory of logotherapy in mind, believed that this "something to live for" was the key to survival. Meanwhile, the prisoners were authentically and unknowingly putting this theory to the test. Unfortunately, their attempts to find meaning ended in tragedy, suggesting that having "something to live for" is not the key to survival after all.

In addition to being inconsistent, Frankl's attempts to help others find meaning can even be considered sadistic. Take, for example, Frankl's attempts to explain the suffering of a Jewish man who had lost his entire family in the Holocaust. This man sought advice from Frankl. He knew that he would never see his children again because they surely occupied a higher space in Heaven than he was worthy of attaining, and he could not understand why God wanted him to suffer so badly. Frankl helped the man find "relief from his suffering" by suggesting that God was causing him to suffer in order to make him pure enough to see his children again (119-20).

There are two issues with the way Frankl relieved this man of his suffering: His method promotes sadism and it blames the sufferer. Frankl clearly states that he is against sadism, or seeking out avoidable suffering (113). Despite this, Frankl's idea of curing this man's suffering is to tell him that suffering is the only way for him to see his children again. Not only is this man now driven to suffer, he also believes that he deserves the suffering because he is not pure enough to see his children in Heaven.

Rabbi Harold Kushner preaches that the worst way to comfort somebody is to attempt to explain his suffering because suffering is sometimes unexplainable. When suffering can be explained, Kushner proposes three explanations: works of nature, actions of evil people, and faulty interpretations of events (64-80). According to this theory, the man's suffering was caused by the people who killed his family, not by God. Telling the man that his suffering is punishment from God could cause him the third kind of suffering—faulty interpretation of events. In other words, in addition to dealing with the loss of his family, he also has to deal with the fact that God does not find him worthy of seeing his children in Heaven and wants him to suffer. This shows that Frankl's prescribed meanings are often empty and have the potential to worsen situations because they come out of a desire to *explain* rather than to *accept* suffering as tragic and undeserved, which it often is.

In an attempt to explain suffering and ultimately his own survival, Frankl condemns those who did not survive the Holocaust by saying that they were unworthy of their sufferings (66). Frankl is so driven to explain his own survival that he inadvertently undermines his fellow prisoners. Frankl states, "I survived better as a person because I

had a rich intellectual background, an inner life on which to draw” (qtd. in Pytell 95). By suggesting that his own intellect led to his survival, Frankl insults those who did not survive. While Frankl’s search for meaning may have made his life in the camps more tolerable, a good deal of his survival was based on pure luck. Ending up in the right line upon arrival (Frankl 12), only being in Auschwitz for about three days (Pytell 93), and failing to get on the trucks that supposedly led to freedom but actually led to death (Frankl 61-2) were all products of luck, not a superior outlook on life.

Even Frankl’s description of his mother’s death in the gas chamber undermines others who were not as “worthy” of their sufferings (66). Consider Elie Wiesel’s description of his Holocaust experience, detailed in Dorothee Soelle’s article “The Cross.” Wiesel describes a young boy being hanged in a concentration camp. He struggles in agony for at least half an hour before finally succumbing to death, while a man in the crowd repeatedly asks, “Where is God now?” Wiesel finally responds, “Here he is—he is hanging here on the gallows...” (Wiesel qtd. in Soelle). Frankl leads us to believe that the only respectable way for a person to suffer is to smile, pray, and “enter the gas chambers upright with the Lord’s Prayer or the Shema Yisrael on his lips” (134). Unfortunately, not many people are able to suffer in such a way. The boy in the story cried out in agony for half an hour, and the actual victims of the gas chambers scratched at the walls in vain hope of escape. Were these people unworthy of their suffering? Is it even possible to be unworthy of suffering that is not deserved? Wiesel suggests that God does not expect people to be worthy of their sufferings but rather suffers *with* them. The victims of the Holocaust were (mostly) innocent people, and Frankl is insensitive when he judges them for the way they greeted or resisted death.

Envisioning his mother’s death in a way he considers dignified is one example of Frankl using his validation of logotherapy as a coping mechanism. Frankl did not, upon release from the camp, decide to use his experience to promote logotherapy and sell as many books as possible. In fact, he resents the popularity of his book, saying it is a testament to the misery of humankind (Frankl 15). Pytell perfectly captures Frankl’s motivation, saying, “It seems as if Frankl was torn between how things really were and how he wished they had been in retrospect” (106). Frankl did not intend to lie in order to prove his theory. Rather, he experienced an internal conflict when some of his observations did not match his preconceived notions. If he imagines his mother’s death the way it really occurred, he may be overcome with grief rather than pride. If he had simply told the Jewish man that his suffering was caused by the evil acts of the Nazis, he didn’t deserve it, and all that was left to do was forgive and move forward, he would have had to give up his attempt to find a definite meaning in all suffering.

It is worth acknowledging that Frankl’s treatments have been effective in a number of cases. For example, Frankl claims that his explanation relieved the Jewish man of his sufferings (120). However, this relief resulted from a fabricated meaning that Frankl produced for the sole purpose of providing comfort. This situation is similar to a parent telling a child that his grandmother has not died but rather has gone away on a trip. The

child may be temporarily comforted by this explanation, but he will eventually begin to question when his grandmother is coming back. Likewise, if the man suffers a long time, he will probably begin to question whether he has suffered enough. He will not be able to find relief in the fact that God loves him unconditionally and does not want him to suffer. Only by hearing this truth, instead of empty explanations, can he begin to find closure and peace.

Frankl's observations of the camps and later conclusions about life were all fueled by his preconceived notions about logotherapy as well as his attempts to cope with his own suffering. Frankl went into the concentration camps with the idea that the key to survival was to find meaning in life. This led him to see meaning everywhere he looked (even where it didn't exist) and to actively search for a meaning in his own suffering. Perhaps having a meaning, along with luck, did help Frankl survive, but Frankl experienced much of this effect because he believed he would. Frankl's theory of logotherapy sufficiently comforts him and helps him explain his survival, but one must use caution when attempting to apply the principles of logotherapy universally.

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"Rosaries: Parma, Italy" by Gabrielle Townsend

Visiting Hours (Creative Nonfiction)

Samantha Dilling

My legs carry me mindlessly through the white-washed walls of the intensive care unit. I am stuck in a labyrinth in which there is no end; there are merely alcoves on either side which take you even further into the maze. Nurses with faces as pale as their uniforms pass me like machines, their minds calculating numbers on charts which directly correlate to a list of symptoms that equate to something less than diagnosable. I am nothing more than a distant shadow in their busied brains.

Unknowingly, I begin counting the rooms after I pass through the double doors, remembering that yours is the ninth on the right. My heart rate steadily increases, no longer in tune with the clicking monitors that surround me, calling out to those just as alive and lonely.

I rest my hand on the doorframe of room number ninety-four as I attempt to collect myself. Just as I inhale a deep breath, my vision blurs and every emotion I have (until now) successfully shoved into the deep recesses of my chest now rises up my stomach and into my mouth. I press my lips together, holding back the bile that has taken up unwanted residence on my tongue. Warm tears squeeze their way out from behind my eyes as I swallow it back down, suppressing it once more. I attempt another deep breath, and another, until I realize I am unable to procrastinate any longer.

I hear the rustling of stiff sheets and the slight give of a hard mattress. You're awake.

I clear my throat softly, wanting you to be aware of my presence, although I am certain that the heartbeat that reverberates my eardrums must have given me away miles ago. A white curtain hangs from the tiled ceiling, held up by metal clamps looped around a pole for easy accessibility and I can't help but wonder if that pole would be strong enough to hold me. But just as I begin planning what sheet and knot I would use, I step into view of you.

My hand is pulled to my lips like a magnetic force that is out of my control as I take in the sight of you. Your left eye, which once shone a brilliant blue, is now bloodshot and swollen. The left side of your head is bandaged and half of your pale blonde hair is shaved down to your bruised scalp. Your lips, which were once so thin, are now bloodied and blown up like red balloons. Your bones jut out from beneath your skin, as though they're rejecting you and begging to be freed. Down your arms I notice the scabs and scars and marks from unsuccessful attempts to hook you to an IV. But there is more than just one bag hanging beside you, and I realize that the other is morphine.

I take a step closer to you, waiting for your eyes to flutter open like they did so many mornings when I'd wake you with your favorite breakfast (two plain pancakes and a cigarette). Your head tilts slightly to the right but your eyes remain closed. I take another small step, and another, until my waist is just inches from the seemingly disjointed hand hanging limply from the edge of the bed. I reach out and press my shaking fingertips to the

hard palm that faces me, hoping for your hand to turn and clasp around mine, silently accepting my every apology.

But your hand remains stiff.

I memorize the new lines on your hand, the crescent-shaped bruises on your palm and the shallow scratches. I trace my way up your arm, my fingertips traveling over the hills of your veins, a familiar territory, and the streams of tubes filled with fluid, an uncharted area. Just as my hand begins the climb up your forearm and into the crease of your elbow, I feel you move. But rather than moving toward me, an invitation to venture even closer, you pull away from me, a protest.

I take a step back and inhale a deep breath, feeling the rush behind my eyes again as I notice your right eye is now looking right at me. I search the depths of your gaze in the hope that I will resurface with a strand of hope or affection that I can hold onto for the rest of the day, but I come up empty-handed. All that I can find in your eyes is a direct reflection of the pain that both your heart and body are enduring.

"I'm so, so, so—"

But before I can even finish my apology, you hold your hand inches above the mattress, silencing me. I dive into your eyes again, deeper this time, realizing that if I can't find any form of redemption, I'd rather just drown in them. But you pull me back to reality with just two words.

"Please leave."

I feel the tidal wave crash into my chest as I take another step back.

My worst fear has been realized—you don't want me here.

Suddenly every argument, every fight, every "I'm sorry," every "you don't mean that," every "I love you," every "don't say that," has become another wave throwing my helpless body against cliffs and coral reefs. I am lifeless, my body thrashed beyond recognition, my heart ripped to shreds.

Tears gather behind my eyes and burst through, falling upon my cheeks as though the depths that I have drowned in have finally consumed me.

I reach out once more, my shaking hand yearning for the touch of your skin.

But you pull your hand away.

I begin backpedaling out of the room, temporarily getting wrapped up in the white curtain like the swells of the waves that are finally pulling me under.

The rush returns to my head and I can no longer see or hear anything but the sound of water filling my ears.

My shoulder connects with something solid and I nearly fall to the ground, collapsing into nothing more than a puddle, the aftermath of the wave that has wrecked my body, and you are no longer able or willing to save me.



"Consumed" by Danielle MacMurtrie

Forms of Poetry (Poetry)
Samantha Dilling

Third Place Winner

Home But Not Really

The carpet is frayed in the hallway
And the nails along the walls are facing upwards
As reminders that any attempt to
Unearth the secrets swept beneath them
Will result in bloody hands
And the closet door in the bathroom
Is hanging off the hinges
From the time your stepmother tried
To hide her boyfriend
And your father threw it open
As a reminder that closets
Are cliché places to hide skeletons
And the red stain in the bathtub
Is the result of your own hate
Breaking through blood vessels and skin
As a reminder that sometimes
People can replicate sunsets
And the glass window in the bedroom is splintered
From the time your father had a nightmare
And thought the house was on fire
As a reminder that sometimes
We burn alive from the inside
And the hole in your bedroom wall
From the time your brother put his head through it
As a reminder that walls are the only things that stand between
Yourself and every version of yourself that
You've tried to hide within them.

You Are Not

Your hands are not sandpaper
You cannot round my sharp edges
Or scratch away the good parts of me
Your fingers are not cages
Capable of capturing my hopes and dreams
And tucking them into a dark corner
To be forgotten about
Until a rainy day
Your eyes are not black holes
That will suck me in
And spit me back out
In outer space
Untethered to anything
So that I may float around
Devoid of gravity
And responsibility
Your hair is not a net
That can tangle my limbs
And refuse to release me
Until I submit to your commands
You are not a strong current
Beating me endlessly
Before sweeping me out to sea
Because I am capable of standing
On my own two feet
And walking up the bank
To dry land
And safety.

Reminder to Self

The past is a funny thing.
At one point, it was the present.
It was the moment we weren't living in,
It was the minutes that fell off the clock like wilted flower petals
As reminders of precious time we'd never get back,
It was the sun streaking across the sky
Like the shooting star falling toward the earth
That you never got to wish upon.
But we dwell on it as though it's something we can change.
As though we are capable of wrapping our hands
Around those of the grandfather clock and turning them back,
As though we are capable of gluing the fallen petals back onto flowers,
As though we are capable of resetting the sun back to morning.
But the present is a beautiful thing.
Because we are currently watching the clock ticking,
And the flowers blooming before wilting,
And the sun shining in the middle of the afternoon.
The present is the moment we are living in.

Rooftops

Sometimes I wish I were a rooftop
Because I don't believe there is
A more honest place on earth
They feel the warm touch
Of the sun
In the middle of the summer
They feel the chilling touch
Of the snow
In the middle of winter
They feel the romantic touch

Of lovers nestled
Against each other
But sometimes
They feel the soft touch
Of sad feet
Walking slowly towards the edge
Never to be felt
Again.

Taxi-Driver (A Loose Sequel to Rooftops)

Sometimes I wish I were a taxi driver
Because I don't believe there is
A more honest person on earth
They hear the apologies of
Intoxicated teenagers
On their way home from the clubs
That they used fake IDs to get into
They hear the quarrels between
Frisky lovers
Who drank too much on their dinner date
And can't wait to get home and shed their clothing
They hear the ramblings of
Elderly folks
Complaining about gas prices
And the brand-name stores that
Put the local businesses under
But sometimes,
They hear the confessions of
Lonely travelers
Who were wandering the streets
At three in the morning

Contemplating how they would like to take their lives,
Until they saw a taxi cab driving past
And realized it was their sign to go
Home.



“Exposed” by Chelsie Adams

Anything But Holy

Cracked vinyl bus seats

Windows that have heard the stories of every passenger smeared with truth

The spit of the elderly woman who fell asleep while reminiscing about the son whom she's visiting whom she hasn't seen in 35 years

The stubbled cheeks of the older gentleman who is counting the pennies in his pocket on his way to the store to get food for his daughter

The knitted scarf of the middle-aged woman who is slowly pulling her coat closer to her in an attempt to warm herself because it was the only article of clothing she could afford that year

The ponytail of the teenaged girl who is tracing the scars on her wrist from the last time she tried to end her life

They congregate for a common purpose, but

The doors to their hearts open like the hinged door, letting anyone haphazardly stumble in for a moment,

And

Their souls are brighter than the lights of the megabus as they are honest with themselves for even just a minute

Smooth polished church pews

Floors that have been tread upon by every saint stained with lies

The flats of the elderly woman who is nodding off while pretending to pray for the son whom she hasn't spoken to in 35 years

The loafers of the older gentleman who is calculating the amount of money he can sneak from the spaghetti dinner fund without getting caught

The high heels of the middle-aged woman who is slowly pulling up her skirt on one side in an attempt to catch the attention of the younger man further down the pew, while her husband holds her hand on the other

The tennis shoes of the teenaged girl who is tracing the bruises under her blouse from the last time she started a fight with her boyfriend

They congregate for a common purpose, but

Their masks are painted on more elaborately than the Sistine Chapel

And

Their lies are built up more intricately than the stained-glass windows that surround them



"The Challenger" by Danielle MacMurtrie

Jordan Gorsuch

When I was a little boy, I discovered a beautiful white bird. Sunlight shone on it like a beacon, a heavenly display. I approached it cautiously as I let the dewy grass lick at my bare feet. I scrunched my nose as flying dandelion seeds stuck on my face. The green trees circled the area and cascaded rays of light, which scattered throughout the yard. The day was gorgeous and it was cool October. I inched closer and closer to the bird when I discovered something odd about it: highlights of crimson soaked its features. Sticky blood pooled around its mangled body. I did not cry out for my mother. I picked up a bright yellow daisy and placed it over the dead bird. It was still beautiful, and death didn't change anything. That time must have some significance because I think of it often. Dead bird. Young kid.

I told this to my therapist. He jotted down a few notes in his notepad and stared at me for a long time. He was older; his full beard, with its hint of grey, made him look wise yet approachable. Mr. Figgins often wore nice argyle sweaters, sported a Rolex (which cued me in to his success), and always had yellow dog fur on his pants. My parents like to compartmentalize certain things. Like me, behind this closed door, with this over-qualified therapist. The class ring on his finger gleamed in the sunlight as he rubbed the bridge of his nose, making his glasses angle slightly and annoyingly to the left.

"What happened next? What happened to the bird?" he finally asked. Mr. Figgins leaned forward, his dark skin highlighted by that dreadful sunlight. He was calm, like my father when he sat in my hospital room as the rain fell sideways.

"It doesn't matter," I laughed. "It was a stupid story anyway, and it doesn't matter."

"It matters."

I fought the impulse to haul myself out of that unforgiving leather chair and retreat to my bed—to drop the needle on my favorite vinyl and listen to the record again and again. I needed to withdraw into myself. However, I remembered what happened last time, all too well.

"My dad came home. He kissed my mom on the forehead and grabbed her ass. I don't think he meant for me to see that. He did it a lot. Anyway, he started doing yard work while smoking his Marlboro Reds. He placed the daisy in his front flannel pocket. Then my father picked up the bird and unceremoniously chucked it into the black garbage bag that housed grass clippings and his own cigarette butts. That was its final resting place. I always imagined the cigarette ash dirtying its bright white feathers. It makes me sad to think about it."

I sank into the leather chair, eyes closed. I tried to remain calm and hide the fact that it felt like my brain was drowning. Mr. Figgins wrote more and more notes; his writing

was more aggressive than before. His frail hands zipped across the notepad. His dark eyes seemed livelier than they had moments before.

"It seems like your father's actions really affected you. Thank you for opening up, Will. How's the music going? Or your friend Stephen?" He tapped his notebook thoughtlessly. The rhythm reminded me of a song I wrote last winter.

"I've taken a break from music. Stephen and I aren't talking much."

"Is that because you have taken a break from music?" he asked.

"Family won't leave me. Music won't leave me. Friends just tend to let me down," I said.

"That isn't the healthiest way to look at the world. You need outsiders; you need people to cheer you on. Family cannot always carry the burden of living," Mr. Figgins explained as he stood up and poured himself a glass of water. The ice cubes clinked together like an offbeat symphony. I realized that all he had on his walls were scholastic accolades and graduation diplomas. "Don't you see something wrong with your philosophy?" he asked while sitting back down.

"Nothing can be wrong if you see nothing wrong within it," I shot back.

"Like with that bird you found in your yard," he pressed.

"I didn't quite mourn the bird dying; I just hope it didn't leave a family behind. Kurt Cobain emptied a shotgun shell into his head, Ian Curtis hanged himself, and Elliott Smith stabbed himself in the heart with a kitchen knife. They all left someone to live alone. We'll always have their music but they were selfish in the end."

"Yes," Mr. Figgins responded uncomfortably as he rubbed his ring finger. "How are you feeling about life of late?"

"Life...life is a gas chamber," I said as I blotted out the sun with my thumb.

* * *

After careening through the steep and windy streets of Seattle, I finally reached home. Despite all the negativity that had seeped into my life, I always appreciated this eccentric city; the weather could shift unfavorably at a moment's notice, I might spot a conservative businessman partake in yoga, and my carpenter father loves McDonald's and farmers' markets. The contradictions in life are always quite interesting. The awful sun had, thankfully, been swallowed by a cloud that cast the house in shadows. I slowly climbed the flight of concrete stairs that led to my parents' house. The weather-worn pale green siding, coupled with the several archways and curves of the house, worked together to accentuate the house's idiosyncratic character. Paths of ivy crept their ways up the creaky banisters and white stone support beams.

When I reached our porch, I kicked off my checkerboard Vans and placed them on my skateboard. I noticed a couple of cigarette butts and ash smeared on the wooden planks, with their chipping red paint. They almost distracted me from the old hash marks

my dad and I would make when Mom said phrases like ‘slippy’ or ‘yinz’—bad habits formed by her upbringing in Pittsburgh. There had to be at least seventy marks on the porch. Who knows how many times they ‘slippy-d’ out when we weren’t on the porch on cool summer evenings? I smiled my first genuine smile all day. I realized I was lucky that I had my family. But a familiar memory returned to my mind.

* * *

I was in the bathroom.

My parents tried remodeling it after last summer, yet I still got that foreboding sensation. The old marble flooring got torn up and exchanged with limestone. The bathtub was completely replaced by a walk-in shower. Hell, they even changed the light fixtures and repainted the room a soft yellow to seem more inviting. I could still feel it, though.

I remember my adrenaline-fueled panic when I stepped into the bathtub. As I made peace with my decision, I started to feel warm. I remember softly gliding sharp metal across my skin and my nose filling up with the smell of rust and salt. My head reeled as the water slowly crept up to my neck; I knew that everything was okay. I just needed to close my eyes and let go.

I’m just trying to make myself better for my parents. I’m trying so hard.

* * *

I cut into my well-done steak; I made sure Mom cooked it longer. I can’t really handle seeing blood anymore, especially not lately. All blood does is bring me back to when I woke up in the hospital, with gauze covering the length of my pale arms.

“What are you thinking about, honey? You haven’t made a peep,” Mom said warmly.

“You remember when that guy died on Halloween of a heart attack? Just walking along the street from God knows where and he keels over dressed in that bright yellow rooster costume. That was awful. He didn’t even look that old,” I recalled as I leaned on my chair. Another dead bird, another memory I can’t shake.

“I do remember that, dear,” Mom replied as she reached for my dad’s hand. He shut his mouth and leaned back, taking a swig of his Miller Light.

As he cut into his rare steak, Dad replied nervously, “Hope you’re ready to spend your weekend cleaning the gutters and raking leaves with your old man. Also, some coon got into our trash again. Shit is all over the lawn, looks like we’re gonna have to beef up security around here,” he continued while chewing. “We’ll clean the trash, secure it with some bricks, and put some ammonia in their damn nests. And we gotta fix up that wooden fence. Last resort, I’ll just mix some poison into some Coca-Cola. Problem solved.”

“Of course, I wouldn’t miss those raccoons for the world. I’m going to the Angry Crocodile tonight, though, going to see some friends,” I said as my parents gave quick nods.



“Perplexity” by Yuze Wang

“Well, while you boys take care of those pesky raccoons, I’ll be planning our first big family expedition; I’m thinking Amsterdam’s Red Light District. We can get Will a passport and soak in the culture and row down the canals and eat expensive food like we used to. How about it, guys?” Mom asked us while sitting up from the dinner table.

Dad and I gave a unanimous nod and we started to clean up the table. Mom would wash the dishes, my dad would dry them, and I put them away. Dad once again grabbed my mom’s hip and pushed her closer to him, smelling her hair. I had never smelled a girl’s

hair. Hell, I never even kissed a girl. Dad seemed to really enjoy doing that sort of stuff with Mom, probably because they're in love and that comes with the territory.

"When are we going to get a door for the bathroom? I mean, it is a bathroom, which is like literally the most obvious place for a door," I mused while putting away a plate from India. My parents froze; my mom looked down at her yellow checkered apron. The reason they sent me to a therapist was growing apparent. "Well, I mean, after Dad kicked the door off its hinges, I figured we would replace it," I continued.

"You're right," Dad said in a sort of defeated way. It was like I had sucker-punched him. "I'll go and buy a replacement door tomorrow and get it sorted out pronto." He gave me the thumbs up, but the gesture felt overly stilted and awkward.

My parents still weren't ready to talk about my suicide attempt.

* * *

I was riding the bus to watch my best friend's band open for Ghost Graffiti, the liveliest electro-noise group in Seattle. How bizarre, to be a member of the audience and not the band. The events that led to my ouster from the band are a blur; it wasn't my fault that my brain wouldn't let me sleep or eat. I couldn't fathom practicing on a guitar. I guess, in some way, they had to cut me from the group.

I watched a romantic couple hold hands in the seat opposite of me. My parents are close in strange ways. They are highly affectionate, but when I was younger, they would get in brutal arguments about his drinking and her spending. Trivial things, things that love supposedly conquered. Different arguments happened on late nights after my suicide attempt. Hate and anger seemed to come along with love, just like sadness and heartbreak. That's why I never want to fall in love. Music taught me that.

Once I was inside the club, I got my hand branded with the permanent ink of a black marker to signify the fact that I was under 21. The club always opted to draw a frownie face rather than the usual 'X' that was common in music venues' lexicon. I really wondered if alcohol was even that fun; it always seemed to make my granddad sadder when he was alive. The stuff killed him, and he wasn't even my granddad near the end thanks to the dementia that eroded his mind like poison. My father defended his own tobacco use to my mom; he said that cutting down on his alcohol intake made up his tobacco addiction. Guess he never saw those commercials about tobacco. It's made out of the same stuff as cat piss, I think. That has got to be unhealthy.

"Hey, do you have a light?" asked a confident, boney, blue-eyed girl who startled me out of my scattered musings.

"Yeah," I replied slightly too quickly, as I fingered my pocket for my yellow Zippo lighter and fumbled to get it up to her lips. She inhaled and breathed out deeply, closing her eyes. Her heavy black makeup resembled the raccoons that tore up the trash at our house. "What's your name?" I asked.

"Brie," she said, without making eye contact. She seemed preoccupied with her cigarette. Finally, she kicked me gently with her black combat boots and craned her neck to point towards the stage. "You excited for the show? I'm not really familiar with the main act, but I'm here for the Twisted Foxes. They seem to finally be getting recognition around here."

"They've only been around three months; I'd say they're lucky," I replied irritably.

"True," she said, as smoke cut through her teeth. "Hey, I didn't offer you a cigarette. Here, take one." She held out her arm. It was pale and covered with little faded horizontal scars. "Come on, I won't bite."

"I don't smoke," I said.

"But you had a lighter; why else would you have a lighter?" she insisted.

"It's a good way to start a conversation. I find that smokers are always willing to talk with a cigarette in their hands." She smiled at this remark. Her teeth had a sensuous gap.

I looked past her and noticed the crowd gathering in front of the stage. Everyone looked so excited, so carefree. The multi-color lights from overhead started shining on the stage so the lights everywhere else were dimmed to compensate. The club was converted from an old rundown church. Some guys tore out the pews and the stage used to house baptisms and homilies—forms of rebirth.

Brie nudged my arm. "Why aren't you performing with Stephen? This is basically your band; I came out and saw your shows when you played in dives. You guys were just as good back then. Even the songs are the same, just a different guitarist."

I was tired of this subject; maybe I shouldn't have come after all. "I don't know. He didn't want to wait around for me. I took a break from school for a while. I took a break from living." I always hated talking about Stephen. He was my best friend, but he hadn't visited me when I was in the hospital. No one had. Just my family, as always. "Two weeks after I heard that Stephen got a new guitarist, I realized that I was just a means to an end. I was a leaf and he was a whole goddamned forest."

She tugged at my Modest Mouse t-shirt; her uneven nails were yellowing at the corners. "Will, I don't blame you for not remembering who I am. You can talk to me if you want. I'm not really good at much, but I am a great listener, I won't disappoint you as a friend." Her wrist relaxed and she looked calmer. "If I like you enough, anyway," she joked and we both smiled. I hadn't felt at ease like that in a long time. I liked it.

* * *

Twisted Foxes took the stage and half the crowd cheered them on, some of them clapping their plastic cups to their chests to clap and others throwing their frownie-face-marked hands in the air. Brie started making her way towards the front of the stage, pulling me along with her. I welcomed her touch in a platonic way. She could be a true friend. Really, though, I did not want to be close to the stage. I still wasn't sure why I had

come. Twisted Foxes opened with their signature song, "Place the Face," which I had written during my granddad's last days after he chased me through the house screaming in his underwear. He thought I had stolen his money; I couldn't recognize him anymore. I called 911 as he banged on my bedroom door. That was the last time I ever saw him.

The buzzing chords and cymbal hits got the crowd moving and I danced too but I don't know why. I was so angry my song was playing, yet I was dancing. It was surreal. Stephen ended the song with a distorted power chord and looked at the audience. Then he saw me and nodded his head.

"Thanks for coming out tonight. We're the Twisted Foxes. I am dedicating this set to my friend. He was always the truer artist." Then he swept his long brown hair out of his eyes and started slashing at his guitar. The guitarist that replaced me started making loud feedback with his amp and the drums sounded dark and grandiose. This was not one of my songs. I watched them cut through the song with unabashed experience and enthusiasm. They were great, I was happy for Stephen. I was having a great time throughout the entire set and I wasn't angry anymore. I let go of my resentment; I had the opportunity to open my own doors, to make my own choices.

"This is the last song of the night and it's called 'Anxious Fits.' Sing along if you know the words!" Stephen yelled as he jumped on the drum set and overshadowed the drummer. Stephen executed a beautiful, hard hitting guitar riff, and the bass nearly drowned out all the other sounds. Then everything cut out except for Stephen's muted guitar strums as he sang, "I'm not invincible, would you kindly hush praise. I'm just so tired and I feel so wrong. I'm not invincible, I'm not invincible, I'm not invincible." Stephen then dropped to his knees and sloppily played the outro of the song. He was visibly distraught; it was apparent that the words meant a lot to him. The drums capped off the song, and the crowd cheered while the lights flashed on. Stephen thanked everyone and then went off-stage; his bandmates followed him behind the curtains. Brie beamed with her perfectly imperfect smile, and I felt content. I really did. I was no longer the bird with tarnished wings. I was a work in progress.

"Need a light?"



"Window Art" by Ashley Creamer

My Reason (Fiction)

Logan Patterson

"I remember in college, senior year, everything started slipping away, or I guess I started slipping away. In search of reason, I lost myself, and created a vast distance between myself and the world around me. I wasn't even sure if I was alive sometimes. I toyed with the notion that I was stuck in a dream and only death could wake me.

"I remember the roof of the old skyscraper downtown. I'd take the 6:07 train into the city every day after class. My eight-minute ride was usually spent talking to Mickey, a homeless guy who always called me 'Kid.' He chose to be homeless and was a consultant of not only mine, but many of my peers. Mickey was famous around these parts. He was respected, well liked, and his wise words and intellectual insights made him seem more than out of place on the floor of that train. Ask any one of my college buddies who the smartest man they ever met was, they'd say Mickey.

"Mickey introduced me to the skyscraper. At this time it was still being built. All the framework was done, but the inside of the building wasn't yet operational, so Mickey stayed there quite often. I remember he said to me one fall train ride as we entered the city, 'You see that building there? The one on its tippy toes, reaching for the clouds? You ever get the chance, you climb up to the roof of that building. You bring yourself a girl, some wine, you get up there by 7 o'clock, and, oh boy. You ain't ever seen a sunset 'til you seen it kiss the horizon from up on top of that building. A sight like that'll give you reason to wake up every morning.'

"So that's what it became. My reason.

"There wasn't a single day for the four months leading up to graduation—other than two evenings when thunderstorms threatened to uproot the city—that I didn't watch the sun sneak behind the earth, or the light of an overcast evening turn to blackness from that rooftop. Those rusty railings became just as much my brothers and sisters as the nuisances sharing my bedroom. I'd dance with them. I'd sit with them. I'd ask them every question I had and they'd never answer. I'd tease them and myself by hanging from them, off the edge of the building, putting my life in their hands. They never let go. I'd beg and beg, but they always held on.

"My goal became to convince them that I had to do it, and they had to let go. Every time I thought to myself, *This time is the time*, every day that I said to Mickey, 'Today is the day, Mick,' I found them waiting at the edge to talk me out of it. I hated them for it. Now, I love them for it.

"The first time I went up on the roof of that building I had hopes of being mesmerized by the evening sky. The last evening I will ever spend on that rooftop was last night. This time I took your mother and a bottle of wine, just like Mickey told me to. The building is fully operational now, but I made it a point over the last few years to become



"A Moment of the City" by Yuze Wang

friends with the maintenance crew, and they were nice enough to let me revisit the roof. We hopped on the 6:07 train into the city and I told her exactly what I'm telling you now.

"I've never seen a sky like the one I saw last night. The way the sun lit up the world didn't even compare to the way it lit up your mother's face, and you know what? That's why I want to wake up tomorrow. That's my reason now. And so are you guys.

"Those red, rusted rails were my siblings; that rooftop was my home, and together they saved my life. They are the reason I am here right now. They are the reason you are here right now."

I turned to find that I hadn't even realized they'd fallen asleep. I kissed them both on the forehead, pulled their covers to their chins, and told their unconscious ears that I loved them. I walked down the hall to find my beautiful wife fast asleep as well. She is now the rooftop that I stand on. Those gorgeous children down the hall are my rusty railings. This family is my reason.



"Bus Stop" by Breanna Kochinsky



"Water Droplets" by Christopher Evans

The Golden State (Fiction)

Samantha Dilling

I was standing by the window in the kitchen polishing silverware with a cloth napkin when I saw the black sedan pass the “Welcome to California” sign. It had been a slow morning, the smell of bacon and grease wafting through the diner as the odd elderly couple trickled in from town for their usual two eggs over easy. I had just finished wiping down the ceramic speckled tables when I walked to the back to finish up the dishes. I typically managed the morning shift alone until Franz, the sixty-something-year-old widow, showed up to help me handle the afternoon rush.

The sedan slowed to a crawl on the road before swerving into the parking lot. I began stacking spoons as I watched the four teenagers, two girls and two boys, spill out and wander toward the entrance, out of sight. The bell chimed over the door but the kids made no noise. I finished putting away the butter knives before I grabbed my small tablet off the shelf and walked into the dining area.

A gentleman in a brown suit with more hair in his ears than on top of his head was seated at the far right corner of the bar, stirring a cup of coffee. Franz was leaning over the counter in front of him, her apron tied too tight around her waist to make her red checkered dress seem even more form-fitting. She waved her acrylic nails at me before turning away. I hadn’t heard either of them come in.

The teenagers were sitting silently in a booth to the left with paper placemats spread out in front of them. None of them made a move to retrieve the menus tucked between the salt and pepper shakers. I cleared my throat as I approached them, not wanting to startle them any more than they already were.

“What can I get for you folks today?” I asked as I poised my pen over my tablet.

One of them, a boy, looked up at me with a blank stare. “Where are we?”

“You’re at Lina’s Diner in Ember, California, and the special today is all-you-can-eat pancakes for only \$4.99,” I recited.

They sat in silence for another minute before one of them, a girl this time, spoke up. “I’ll have the special.”

“Same,” the rest chimed in unison.

“Coming right up.” I turned and headed back to the kitchen to begin making it.

Just as I finished pouring the batter on the stove, the bell chimed again. A few seconds later, I heard the click of Franz’s heels on the linoleum. I walked over to the door to the dining area to see how many people had just walked in. A group of two, a young couple, was being escorted to a booth. I turned back to the stove and poured more batter, knowing they would end up ordering the special. By the time Franz walked back and

tacked up the order slip, I was finishing the plates. I placed a dollop of whipped cream on top of each stack of pancakes and then carried them out.

Those seated in the booths ate in silence, as they always do. The only sounds that could be heard were the occasional ding of the old man's spoon against his coffee cup and the soft tune of the radio drifting in from the back.

I walked into the kitchen again and turned up the volume, listening to Barry Manilow's voice fill the room.

*I see a ceiling
Four walls
Guess you all went away
An hour ago we were laughing
Lovers and friends
Maybe that was yesterday
So what's the deal?
Did I miss something real?
When I slept through the end of the world*

A plastic bin full of clean silverware glistened in the sunlight by the sink. I picked up a few spoons and began polishing them as I looked out the window.



"The Plains" by Hannah Cole



"Snowy Lane" by Breanna Kochinsky

Just Don't Stare (Creative Nonfiction)

Cecelia MacDonald

I know I shouldn't stare. It's something you're not supposed to do when these things happen. My mom would scold me if she caught me. She'd say I was being rude, but it's very hard not to look at these things when they happen.

I scoot back in the chair, letting my legs dangle over the edge. I cross my arms. I'm still looking, so I turn my head and study the marks stretching across the kitchen cabinets. I follow the swirls in the wood until they lead me back to the place where I'm not supposed to look.

I cringe and tilt my head down to my lap. I pick at the red on my nails. My hands are dirty. I want to get up and wash them, but I'll have to pass through the living room to get to the bathroom, in which case, I will be force

d to look. Despite the ache in my stomach I feel when looking at it, every time I peel my eyes away, they manage to find a way to look at it again. I'm reminded of the magnets on the fridge, and that distracts me for a while.

I should probably tell someone. I want to yell out to my sister, but she stepped outside. And it would be disrespectful. At least Mom would say so. We're supposed to be quiet in churches, whisper in libraries, and not shout when these things happen.

I expected more blood. On television, when anything dies, there's always blood pooling like Kool-Aid under them. When I fell off the swings yesterday, I hit my elbow and started bleeding. And I did not die.

At first I thought he wasn't dead. But he's on his back, looking at the ceiling. He hasn't moved in a very long time. I even poked him to see if he'd move, but he didn't. Thinking about it now, I squeeze my eyes shut. I hope it makes up for staring at him up close then.

I squint one eye open to make sure he is still there. He is. I unfold my arms and pick at the cloth of the seat. It stops me from looking at his open eyes.

I wonder how they'll get rid of him. Sissy should be back soon. When she comes back, I'll tell her we should bury him. In the backyard under a tree is a good place. I think I should call 9-1-1. But Sissy said that was a bad idea. She told me that we don't call the police for things like this. I told her that she could tell them it wasn't her fault. Police visit our school sometimes. They bring their dogs and lollipops. They're nice, I told Sissy. They would believe her if she said she didn't do it. But Sissy shook her head, told me I didn't understand, and put the phone on top of the counter. I'm tall for my age, but even on my tippy-toes, I can't reach the phone. I think Sissy put it there on purpose.

Then Sissy told me to sit on this chair and be a good girl—I'm always a good girl. My teacher gives me gold stickers for my chart all the time—but Sissy told me to sit here while she went outside for a minute. She must have seen my wide eyes because she told me not to stare at him. I do what I'm told, and I sit on the chair. But even if you got all the gold stickers in the whole wide world, you would want to stare at it, too.

I hear a car pull into the driveway. I stand up on my chair and peer out the window. All I can see is the top of a woman's head as she approaches the side door. I fall back to my seat. The door clicks like it always does when it's unlocked, and the person walks inside.

"Hi, sweetie," the woman says with a smile.

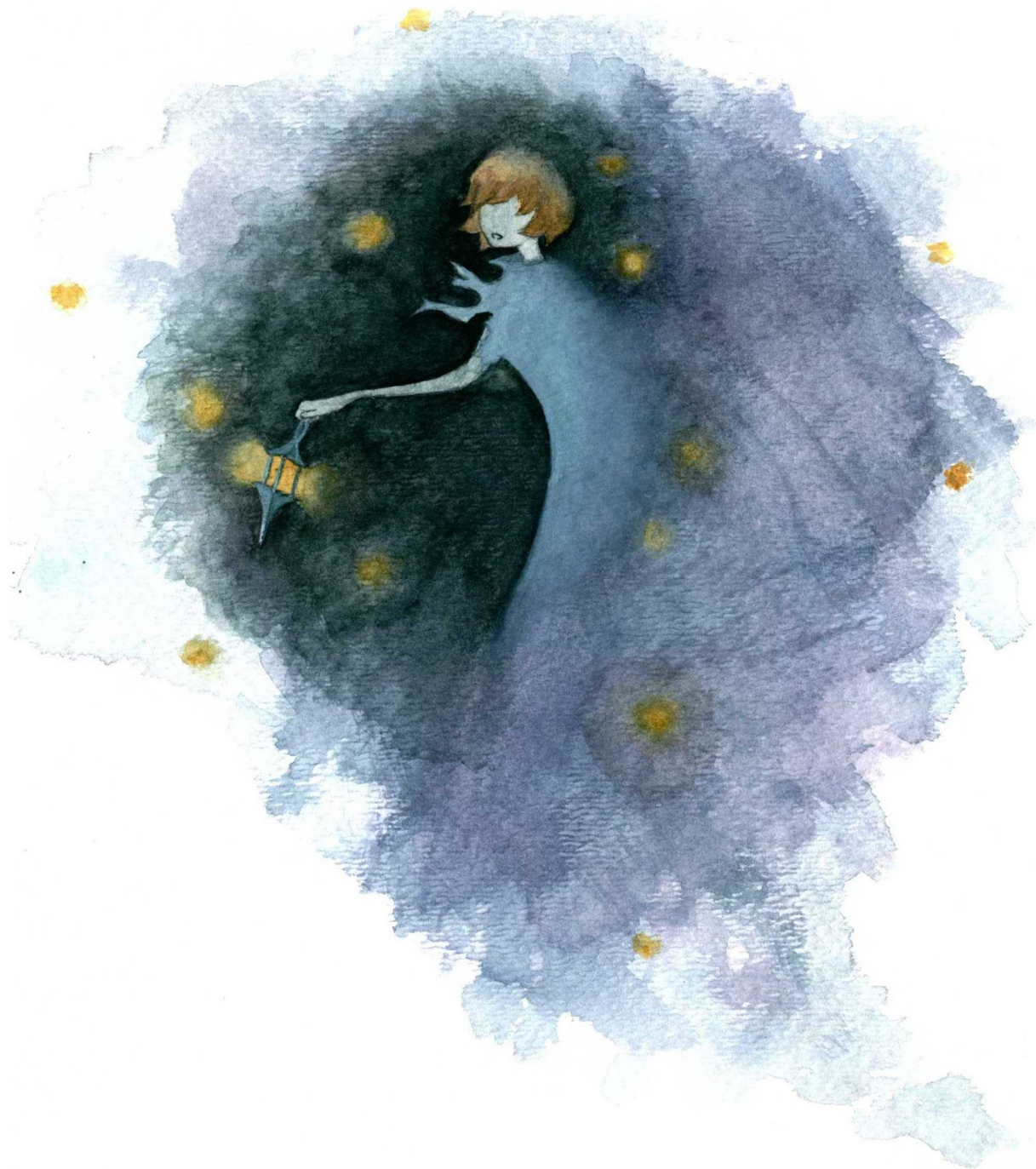
"Mommy!" I jump down from the chair and run into her arms. She hugs me.

"How was your last day of kindergarten?"

I sneak a glance at him again with his eyes wide open staring at the ceiling. "It was fun," I tell her. I point at the shelf in the corner of the room where he is. "But our goldfish died."



"Elleanna" by Lindsey Farrell



"Nightlife" by Katie Sheperd

Silver Bullet (Creative Nonfiction)

Samantha Dilling

My dad crushed empty beer cans with one hand and always managed to land them right in the trash can when he tossed them, no matter how far away he happened to be. He always seemed to be leaning back in a chair somewhere with a grin on his face, making you wonder what he could possibly be thinking. Sometimes, when he was leaning back like that, he would reach an arm out toward me and I would run across the room, or yard, or street, just to jump onto his lap and feel him rest a hand on my knee.

He would grin, like he always did, and say, "Son, let me teach you a few things."

Or at least that's how I imagine it.

My dad always seemed to be doing something. He would have one arm twisted around a carburetor and the other dripping oil and grease, or one hand planted on a shingle and the other gripping a hammer and nails, or one hand raked through his dark hair and the other scribbling numbers and names. Sometimes, when he was bent over those engines or pounding nails into those houses, he would call out my name and I would run across the room, or yard, or street, just to stand beside him and see what he was doing.

He would grin, like he always did, and say, "Son, watch this and you might learn something."

Or at least that's how I imagine it.

I always wanted to be the son my dad never had, but my mom never let me cut my hair, so I would tuck my ponytail underneath a baseball cap. When my dad took me fishing, I would expertly thread the fishing hook through the wriggling worm, ignoring the blood and brown residue on my fingers. I would then cast the line and hold my chin up high when it landed in the center of the lake.

He would grin, like he always did, pat me on the back and say, "Son, now that's how it's done."

Or at least that's how I imagine it.

I always wanted to follow in his footsteps, no matter how big they happened to be. When my dad took me hunting, I would hike for miles over fallen trees and damp leaves as long as I was able to walk beside him. He would bring a calloused finger to his lips and use the other hand to point in the direction of a herd of white-tails. I would hold my breath and beg my heart not to race just in case the deer could hear it from several hundred yards away.

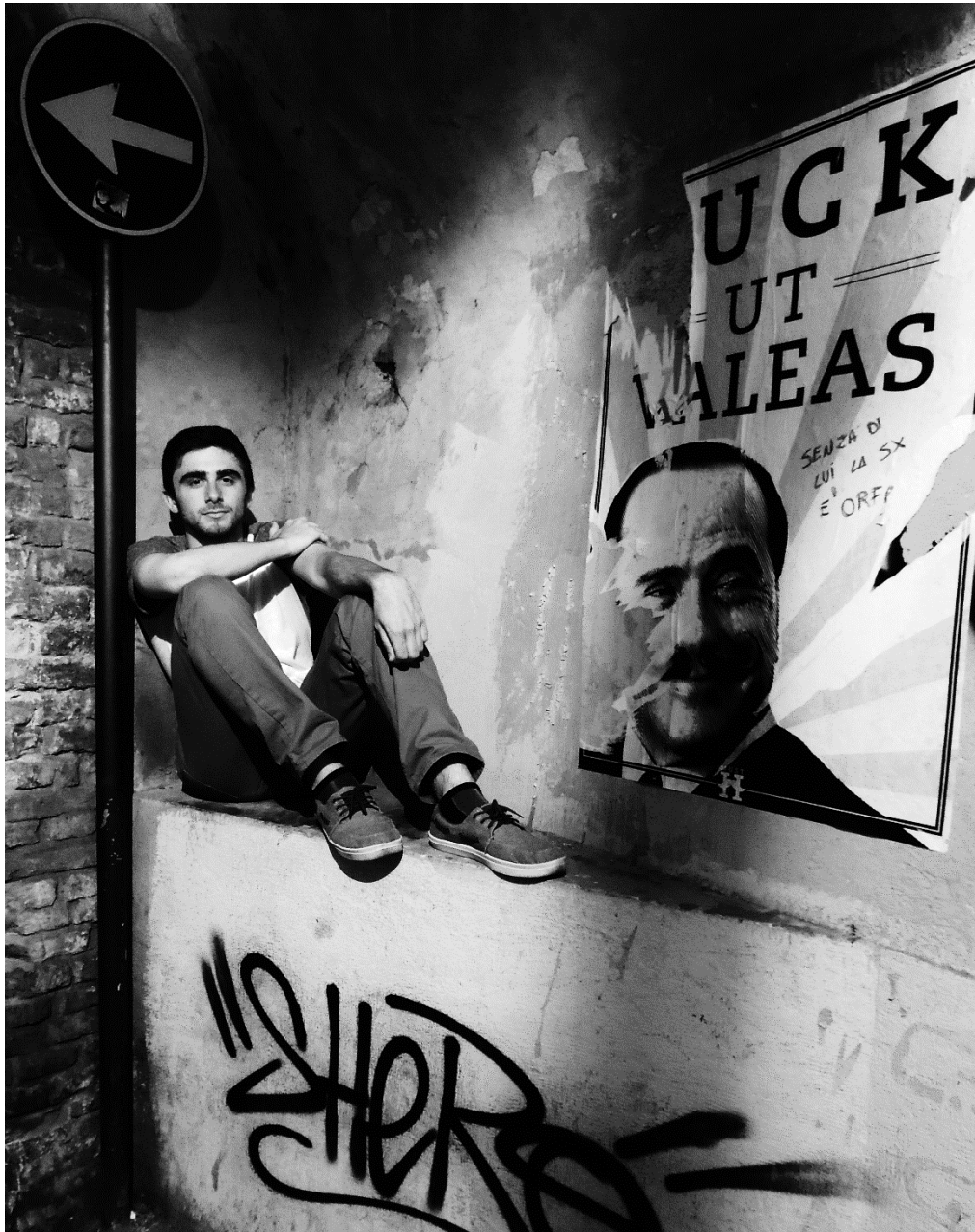
He would grin, like he always did, hold his gun in position and say, "Son, I got this one."

Or at least that's how I imagine it.

My dad always seemed to be there when I needed him. When I couldn't swim, he would grab my hands and hold me up. When I scraped my knee, he would be there with peroxide and a bandage. When I had a basketball game, he would sit in the stands and cheer my name. And I know, eventually, he'll be there to walk me down the aisle on my wedding day.

He will grin, like he always did, wipe a tear from his eye and say, "You were the best daughter I could have ever asked for and I'll see you again someday."

Or at least that's how I'll imagine it.



"Urban Italy" by Breanna Kochinsky



"Psalm 40:5" by Rebekah Hughes

All the Summers of Your Life (Fiction)

First Place Winner

Tara Fritz

For years, the tree had been mine.

Before that, it was my mother's. She would wake up at dawn during the summer and make herself a cup of coffee, slide a book from the shelf in the living room, and venture outside to sit beneath that grand old oak tree. The world was so quiet then, she said, even though at our little farmhouse there were no houses for a half-mile radius. It was always quiet.

After she was gone, I took up the summer tradition. I would sit beneath that tree in the summer dawn with a cup of coffee next to me and one of the books from the living room bookshelf propped between my knees. Every morning when my father woke up, he would lean out the open window, look down on me and call, "What're you doing down there?"

But I never answered, because he knew.

* * *

I was named Lily Rose after my mother's two favorite flowers. When she left, I didn't speak for four days.

My father had always called her a free spirit. Those two words explained everything about her—the way she woke up at dawn to read beneath the tree, the way she was always talking about the adventures she'd had back when she had traveled, the way she was always talking about the adventures she hadn't had yet. She wore nothing but bright, girlish colors like she was still trying to reclaim her youth. Some thought of her as quirky, but to me she was just my mother.

She has wings on her feet, my father used to say, and one day they'll carry her away. I guess I should have listened, should have known. The farmhouse was always too small for her; it was just a matter of time before she outgrew it.

* * *

Years after she was gone, my father lost his job at the construction company. He began to spend most nights poring over stacks of letters and bills strewn all about the dining room table. We had to eat in the living room every night because there was no space in the dining room for us, not with all those bills and all my father's desperation crowding the room.

It was a Friday night when he finally told me what was going on. "I'm trying to sell a bit of our land," he said, his quiet words almost drowned out by the background noise of the local news channel. He looked over at me, then, in the middle of a commercial. "Money's been awful tight lately now that my job's gone, and all these side jobs just aren't cuttin' it. If I can't sell some land, we're gonna have to sell the house."

I felt the whole world shudder to a stop around me. I had lived in the farmhouse all my life; there were so many memories within its walls I could barely think of leaving it. I swallowed my shock and replied, "You can't sell the house."

"I'll do what I have to," he said. He had looked away again, back to the television, too much of a coward to look at me. "Gotta put you through college somehow."

The thought of college made my stomach feel weighed down with too many possibilities. The thought of leaving my home, leaving the last tie to my mother—I could hardly bear it.

* * *

I distinctly remember one morning spent with her, the first morning I could feel her slipping away. I was ten. It was a Saturday, early morning, with the sun just perched on the horizon and waiting to spring into the sky. Hearing noises in the living room, I slipped out of bed, crept downstairs, and peered curiously around the corner.

My mother was there, hanging something on the wall. "Oh, Lily Rose!" she exclaimed when she caught sight of me. She always called me by both names no matter how much I hated it. "Could you be a dear and tell me if I'm hanging this straight?"

Wordlessly, I nodded, padded across the carpet in my bare feet and looked up at her where she was standing on the couch. She had hung up a huge rectangle of corkboard and was now trying to attach to it a map of the world, gaudy and bright just like the rest of her.

She asked me questions like, "Is that better?" and, "A little more to the left?" With more silent, sleepy nods, I finally managed to guide her in pinning the map to the board. Leaping backwards off the couch, she stood back and surveyed the living room's newest decoration with her wide, baby-blue eyes. "I *love* it!" She turned to me. "I saw the whole thing in a magazine. I'm going to put more pins on it to mark all the places we've been. And, of course, all the places we still have to go!"

All the places *you've* been, I thought but didn't say, and all the places *you* still have to go. The words remained balanced on the tip of my tongue, walking the edge of my teeth. "It looks nice," I observed instead.

She nodded appreciatively. "It does. It really does." Then she sighed, sagging a little, one adventure of the day now over. My mother was never happy unless she had an adventure. "Now, where did I put those pins...?"

They were red like tomatoes. I had seen the box on the kitchen counter the day before, but I didn't feel like telling her. Something heavy had settled behind my ribs that made me unable to speak. I crept out of the room as quietly as possible the second she was distracted—back up the stairs, into the comfort of my bedroom, and under the warmth of my covers.

The sun was awake and streaming, deep orange, through my window. I had already lost the dawn.

* * *

My father sold off the first part of our land just as I began high school that fall. According to him, negotiations with our neighbors for part of our fields had expanded to include part of our apple orchard, too, and by the time all was said and done he had more money than he'd asked for and had given away more land than he'd intended.

"But we need the money, Lil," he told me as I stood tight-faced, fists clenched in the kitchen. "They cut us a good deal and agreed to pay all of it upfront. Besides, we still have most of the orchard. Nothing has changed."

But, of course, something had changed. Our neighbors were rich and retired, the kind of people who bought land just so they could build ornate patios and plant gardens full of too-expensive flowers and show all their wealthy friends around the expansive property. They wouldn't touch the apples in the orchard, only admire the blossoms come spring and let the fruit rot in the cold.

It was a week or so before I could face the orchard that used to be all ours. When I got there, the beginnings of a fence already separated the newly purchased land from the old. I stared across it, the sudden barrier, at the trees that used to be ours. *Mine*.

"Mom would be disappointed," I told my father whenever I'd had enough. I was shaking with anger, an earthquake in miniature ripping through my body.

He was at the dining room table, looking over bills as usual. "Yeah, well." I didn't expect him to fight back, but then he added, "If she didn't want to lose the farm, then she shouldn't've left in the first place."

I stood in numb shock there on the kitchen linoleum, the earthquake subsiding. I knew, somewhere deep in my bones, that my father was right. He had said the very thing I was too afraid to realize: this was her fault.

As I stomped wordlessly up the stairs to my bedroom, I felt ten years old again. Young, vulnerable. But not with a mother slipping away—a mother already gone.

My bed welcomed me like a safe haven of blankets and warmth. I pressed my face into the pillows and weathered the aftershocks.

* * *

The Sunday before I lost my mother, I found her downstairs in the early hours of the morning when I ventured to the kitchen for a glass of water.

She was leaning against the counter, staring out the window above the sink. She had no makeup on. It was hard to see her without her usual fresh face, her bright lipstick and thick black eyelashes. I had always thought of my mother as somehow ageless, but that night she looked old. Empty. Her blue eyes, usually sparkling with excitement, were dull and listless. She was drinking straight-shot whiskey from a pastel-striped glass, the one with the chipped edge, a few fingers already gone.

“Mama?” I asked her childishly, suddenly terrified of something I didn’t know and couldn’t fathom, a senseless object defined only by my fear of it. “Are you okay?”

She gave me a lazy smile and placed a hand on top of my head, smoothing down my flyaway hair. “Of course, I’m okay, baby,” she told me, even though it was three in the morning and her makeup was gone and I could smell the alcohol on her breath. Nothing felt okay.

I changed tracks then, thinking of the screaming matches that had grown far too common in our household at the time. “Are you and Dad okay?”

“Of course, baby,” she said again, but her smile had faded until it was just the slightest upward quirk of her lips. She sighed and let her hand fall from my head, looking away and taking a sip of whiskey. Gazing out the window again to the black night beyond it, she said, voice low like she was speaking only to herself, “Do you ever wonder what’s out there, waiting for you? Do you ever think you’re missing out on something important?”

My fear of that black, shapeless thing only grew. I was eleven, still a child; I didn’t know what to say to that. I couldn’t comprehend her wanderlust.

She didn’t speak again, didn’t look down at me or smile or reassure me that everything was going to be all right. She just kept looking out that window, like she could somehow see the bright stars up there through the black cover of clouds.

I turned and tiptoed back to my room again, eleven and unsure and no longer thirsty.

* * *

It was like a mirror of that Sunday when I found my father one night in almost the same position she had been in all those years ago—slumped against the counter, drink in hand, staring out the window at the dark night sky. It was just past midnight. I had come down for a glass of water, just like before, just like four years ago.

“Dad?” I asked, wary. He had done a lot of drinking when she had first left, but never when he thought I was around. He never wanted me to see it, all that despair, laid out wide open on his face like that. It was there now, a still-bleeding wound patched with half-hearted stitches. “Are you okay?”

He didn’t jump when I spoke to him, though the house was dead silent. He must have been expecting this. “I think...” he started haltingly, his voice low. “We have to sell the house.”

I would like to say that the words hit me like a ton of bricks or some other overused cliché for absolute shock; I’d like to say that I screamed *No!* and begged him to change his mind, but I didn’t. The words were like a sharp prick of the finger at first, then nothing. I felt nothing.

What I did was sidle up next to him against the counter. When he put one arm around me, I leaned my head on his shoulder and breathed it all in. Disappointment, loss.

The bittersweet memory of moments long gone. I inhaled and exhaled until I began to feel again, and even then, I only felt relief—that it was over, that there was no more waiting. It had always been inevitable, I realized then. All roads led to leaving.

“I’ve been looking,” he began to explain, and I could feel the vibration of his chest as he spoke, still holding me close, “and I think I found an apartment for us downtown. It’s pretty small, but it’s affordable. I can find work easier in the city. You can get a job waitressing or something, once you turn sixteen.”

“We’ll make it work.” The words came out of my mouth slow, lingering, like part of me still didn’t want to let them go—let all of this go.

“I’m sorry, Lil,” he said, pressing a kiss to the top of my head.

I sighed and turned my gaze to the window. I could swear I saw stars in the blackness above us, but maybe I was just looking through my mother’s eyes.

* * *

That last Sunday morning, only a few short hours after I had found my mother alone in the kitchen, she woke me up with a knock on my bedroom door and a shout of “Waffles are ready!” She never made waffles unless it was a holiday or someone’s birthday. That day, it was neither. It was only later that I realized what she was trying to do, what she was trying to compensate for.

She was wearing her Sunday best even though we didn’t go to church anymore—a dress the color of robins’ eggs that highlighted the brighter blue of her eyes. She was twirling around the kitchen, more jovial than I had seen her in weeks, skirts flying out in a wide circle around her. Her favorite coffee mug was sitting on top of a book—a thin paperback full of poems I had often tried to read but never quite understood—beside the kitchen sink, the only remnant of her daily tradition, soon about to fade with the onset of autumn. In the dining room, she slid a full plate and a glass of orange juice in front of me before kissing the top of my head and floating off to the kitchen again.

My father came downstairs only a few minutes later, bleary eyed and slow-moving. When he saw the brightness of the kitchen, the brightness of his wife’s smile, he smiled a little himself. “What’s going on here, huh?”

“Breakfast,” my mother chirped, gliding over to him and planting a kiss full on his mouth. “Come on, eat up. There’s enough for all of us.”

The rest of that day passed in a happy blur. My mother and I picked the last of the apples in the orchard and went for a long walk in the cool, late-September air. That night she treated us all to dinner at my father’s favorite restaurant downtown and later, all three of us squeezed onto the couch, entwined together beneath blankets and bowls filled with the remnants of microwave popcorn as we watched all my favorite movies—the ones with princesses, and happy endings.

Waking up that Monday morning for school was surreal, like stepping out of a dream. My mother reheated for me a few of the waffles from the day before and waved goodbye fifteen minutes later as I got onto the bus. I smiled wide, teeth showing. For a moment she mirrored it from behind the living room window, but as the bus pulled away I saw it drop like a dead weight from her mouth.

When I got home, the map was gone from the living room wall. I went into the kitchen, searching for her, calling her name only to be answered with silence. Her goodbye was written in red ink like fresh blood on a recipe card that blared at me like a fire siren from the counter; there were torn-up remnants of first drafts in the trash can beside the fridge, and the red pen had been haphazardly tossed beside the sink like an afterthought.

At first I almost couldn't comprehend it, what she had done. I read each frantically scrawled letter over and over, as though by memorizing the note I could somehow bring her back to me.

I have to go.

Four heartless little words.

By the time my father got home, her careless red lines were smeared beyond recognition by my tears and clumsy fingers. "She's gone," I whimpered into the stiff fabric of his denim jacket as he cradled me on the linoleum floor.

That was the last thing I said for four days. One day for each word.

* * *

Two short months after my father's midnight announcement in the dark kitchen, our house had been quickly snatched up by a rich couple just like our close neighbors, only younger. Our bags were packed. The apartment downtown was ready; all it needed was the two of us.

As I watched the last moving truck pull out of the driveway, I felt a familiar numbness envelop me like a cold embrace and knew it wasn't just from the November air. I had a sudden need to look back at the house, to look at the grand old oak tree that stood proudly beside it. The new owners wouldn't honor my mother's tradition; they wouldn't know how to make the coffee just right or which books were the best to slide from the living room shelf and prop open on their knees. They would never sit below the tree's wide branches in the early dawn light, and if they did they would never know the story behind it.

"This is all the summers of your life, huh?" I hadn't even heard my father step up beside me, but there he was, hands in his old denim jacket, staring up at the tree just as I was. "You and that tree."

"Yeah." I let go of a deep breath and added, "But it was Mom's first."

He didn't say a word, but he didn't need to. I would always see my mother beneath that tree, my mother slumped against the counter in that kitchen, my mother hanging up the map in that living room. All of her was still there except herself.

"Come on," I said, turning away at long last. I'd had enough. She was gone and she wasn't coming back, and I was maybe finally starting to understand that. "Let's go."

My father and I, we were flightless birds. But maybe it was time we ventured beyond the nest, too.



"Glen Coe Highlands" by Aaron Vizzini

Tapestries

2013-2014

Weaving the Threads of Creativity & Innovation

