

A watercolor illustration of a forest scene. The background is filled with vertical strokes representing tree trunks and foliage in shades of brown, yellow, and blue. In the foreground, there is a path or clearing with patches of yellow, pink, and green, suggesting flowers or grass. The overall style is soft and painterly.

Oneirata 2014

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Table of Contents

Cover – Sofia Zordan

5. **Hemingway 2.0**
– Lena Rubin

6. **About the Author**
– Clara Weinstein

7. **Painting** – Clara Curbera

8. **Calculus Homework**
– Loren Heubert-Aubry

11. **Driving** – Jesse Litvin

12. **Drawing** – Nikko Padilla

13. **Drawing** – Emily Linn

14. **Bicycle** – Teja LoBreglio

15. **Madiba** – Sammi Aibinder

16. **Drawing** – Veronica Erdman

17. **What are you Waiting For?**
– Daisy Mitchell

18. **Eating** – Jesse Litvin

19. **Painting** – Logan Slater

20. **Overdramatic, Mean,
Gossipy, and Overwhelming
by Nature** – Lee Owen

23. **Untitled** – Jenny Rojas

27. **Painting** – Logan Slater

28. **Dylan's Cough**
– Lena Rubin

29. **Painting** – Ben Torda

30. **Untitled** – Eenie Bernard

34. **Drawing** – Tessa Schneider

35. **Untitled** – Louisa Carey

36. **I'm Here** – Emma Dietz

37. **Painting** – Clara Curbera

38. **Real Women Have Curves**
– Lena Rubin

41. **Painting** – Sofia Zordan

42. **Plastic** – Sydney Gabay

46. **Drawing**
– Alexandra Bazigos

47. **Luminous** – Melissa Noboa

48. **Painting** – Clara Curbera

49. **Whitey** – Hattie Schapiro

54. **History I** – Jesse Litvin
History II – Jesse Litvin

55. **Painting** – Ben Torda

56. **Smelly Man**
– Andriana Cunningham

Photographs

58. Nick Tarricone

59. Rita Culpepper

60. Lena Rubin

61. Clio Walton

62. Liana Sasloff

63. Leonidus Georgiou

64. Leonidus Georgiou

65. Ben Wan

66. Ben Wan

67. Tommy Gelfars

68. Jocelyn Fine

69. Leonidus Georgiou
70. Clio Walton
71. Miranda Mitchell
72. Miranda Mitchell
73. Gretchen Bogan
74. Lena Rubin
75. Andrew Knispel
76. **Drawing** – Maddie Osborne
77. **Control Institute Optic**
– Tommy Gelfars
78. **Drawing** – Gretchen Bogan
79. **Untitled** – Louisa Carey
81. **Drawing** – Lena Rubin
82. **Expensive Company**
– Simone Brandford-Altsher
86. **Haikus** – Paula Telyczka
87. **Drawing** – Michael Ganjehlou
88. **Untitled** – Hannah Cafagna
92. **Nature** – Jesse Litvin
93. **Drawing** – Sofia Zordan
94. **Untitled** – Gretchen Bogan
95. **Painting** – Clara Curbera
96. **The Captain** – Nathan Blum
98. **Painting** – Alexandra Bazigos
99. **Untitled** – Clara Weinstein
100. **Epitaph**
– Michael Ganjehlou
Back Cover. **Motivation**
– Jesse Litvin

Hemingway 2.0

Our protagonist flung open the window to his balcony and was not at all disillusioned by the crowds of ostensibly happy people filling the streets of Paris. It was not too early for a glass of whiskey, but he was pretty much off alcohol recently. He didn't really feel like a cigarette, either. So he got himself a bowl of Greek yogurt and consumed it while basking in the afternoon sun, from which he did not shield his eyes in anguish. What a nice day to go out into the world and interact with humans in a healthy and fulfilling way! Man, was he well-rested. The amount of existential angst that had not plagued him last night was astounding. And the date with the woman last night, the one who he'd met at a very clean and well-lit bar? They had really hit it off. Women were so easy to understand! He definitely did not mutter any profanities under his breath, nor did he grimace handsomely at the delicious pain of his own masculinity, as he made his way inside. He'd noticed that he really needed a shave.

—Lena Rubin

Clara Weinstein graduated from the Intergalactic Academy of Pipe Maintenance and Fine Literature in 2018. Her other books include Get the F@# \$ Off my Lawn and its critically acclaimed sequel, No, Really, Get the F@# \$ off my Lawn. Her hobbies include rearranging the dried goods at Whole Foods, carving cryptic messages in the sides of trees, and entering the homes of her neighbors to remove each item and replace it with a nearly identical but slightly smaller item. She currently resides in a small nest in the top of a tree in a local park in Idaho.

Clara Weinstein began her legendary artistic career at the age of eighteen, where she attracted attention for her visionary performance art consisting of carving small phrases of poetry into potatoes and throwing them at passersby. She published her first book, Angry Clams Covered in Lipstick; A Love Story, at age 24. She currently lives with her husband, her two dogs, her three tame raccoons, her goldfish Jesus, and her four wild raccoons, in her basement.

—Clara Weinstein



Calculus Homework for the Chronic Procrastinator: A Step-by-Step Guide

Question 1a: Determine the local minimum, local maximum, and inflection points of $y = x^4 - 8x^2 + 5$. Whoa there! The school day may have just ended, but it's time to shift into your math mindset. Go out into the kitchen to grab a glass of water. You'll want to stay hydrated and alert. Reminisce about your day as you pour the water. Remember the walk to school; remember taking the test and feeling—spill the water all over the countertop and onto the floor, and then scold yourself for getting distracted. Take your time mopping it up. You wouldn't want someone to come and slip on the ground, would you? Calculus can wait. Once that's done, drink up. Return to your room, walk past the calculus homework, and turn on your computer. Open Facebook. See sixteen notifications. You'd better deal with those now so they don't take up your time later. Faceless friend and four other people commented on your status. Respond to them. Comment. Comment. Like. Comment. Like. Like. Comment. Prepare to get back to work, and—Oh, hey, someone messaged you! It would be rude to exit now, you'd seem like you were ignoring them! Shoot the shit for a while. Check your clock. Wow, how time flies! You should really get back to calculus now. Close your Facebook tab. Open a new tab. Go to Facebook. Comment. Like. Will it ever end? The limit of $f(x)$ (the internet) as you approach a (work) is infinity. The limit does not exist.

Force yourself away, and sit down in front of your notebook. Find the first derivative of $x^4 - 8x^2 + 5$ by multiplying each variable by its exponent (n) and raising it to the $n-1$ power. $F'(x) = 4x^3 - 16x$. One step down, four to go. Your cell phone will ring. Pick it up. It'll be Mrs. Anderson, the kind old woman from down the street. She'll want you to shovel the snow off her driveway. Tell her you'll do it.

Only a monster would say no to such a nice, charming lady. As you dig through heaps of snow, wind blowing in your face, imagine a warmer time. Recount your summer vacation. Let your mind wander to the sixteen hour plane ride back, how you sat there, cramped into your seat, sore necked, unable to sleep, a baby in the row behind you screaming for an impossible diaper change. If you leapt out of the emergency exit weighing 68 kg at a horizontal velocity of 2 m/s, accelerating downward at 9.81 m/s², would it be worth it? Would the screaming end? What if it was the baby instead? Finish shoveling the driveway. Get paid. If y represents final wages, x the amount of hours worked, and the hourly wage is 15 dollars, $y = 15x$. Solve for $x = 2$, $y = 30$ dollars. If you can't do the basic algebra, you have no hope in calculus.

Go home, and open up your notebook. Close your notebook, and open Netflix. Browse for a show to watch. *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, *Arrested Development*, *Breaking Bad*—*You can watch Breaking Bad!* Remember that *Breaking Bad* has ended. Cry on the inside.

Snap out of it. You're clearly in no shape to concentrate on homework after all that time in the bitter cold. You know what you need? A nice, warm, relaxing shower. Savor every moment as steam slowly fills the bathroom, obscuring your sight and mind. Think to yourself how easy the calculus problem really is. It's not your fault you haven't done it yet. You're perfectly capable of doing it, you were just getting the important stuff out of the way first, right? Think about college. If you haven't declared yet, worry that you won't get into your choice school. If you have, worry about tuition. Calculus doesn't seem so important in the grand scheme of things anymore,

does it? *Wrong*. Remember that the quarter is coming to an end. That first semester transcript could make the difference. And guess which class is dragging down your average? If you guessed Calculus, you'd be right! Try to remember what the opposite of 'relaxed' is. Get out of the shower, feel the cold marble of the bathroom floor seep into your feet and up your spine. Feel the steam drift against the newly formed goose bumps on your skin. Tell yourself they're from the cold.

March to your room, reinvigorated by a newfound determination to save your average. Have a staring contest with your homework. Lose. Hear a call from the kitchen. Time for dinner. Notice that it's gotten dark outside. Sit down at the dining room table. Devour your green beans and inhale your spaghetti. You need to get back to work as soon as possible. Watch as your parents notice something wrong. "Are you okay?" they'll ask. Smile, and tell them that everything's fine, because they're parents, and you're a teenager. They couldn't possibly understand. Thank them for a delicious dinner, wish them a good night, and scurry back into your room.

Alright, no more excuses. Now, it's the moment of truth. Set the first derivative equal to zero. Simplify to find the roots of the equation. $x=0$, $+2$. $(0, f(0))$ and $(-2, f(-2))$ are the maximum and minimum points, respectively. Find the second derivative in the same manner you found the first. $f''(x) = 12x^2 - 16$. Set $f''(x)$ equal to zero. Look at you! You're on a roll! Solve. $x = +1.15$. Graph the original equation and find the y value for $x=1.15$. If the y value changes signs from the closest smaller integer to the closest larger integer, it's an inflection point. Whew, that was a workout. But you did it! You pulled through! You could move on to *1b*, *1c*, and *1d*, but you deserve a break.

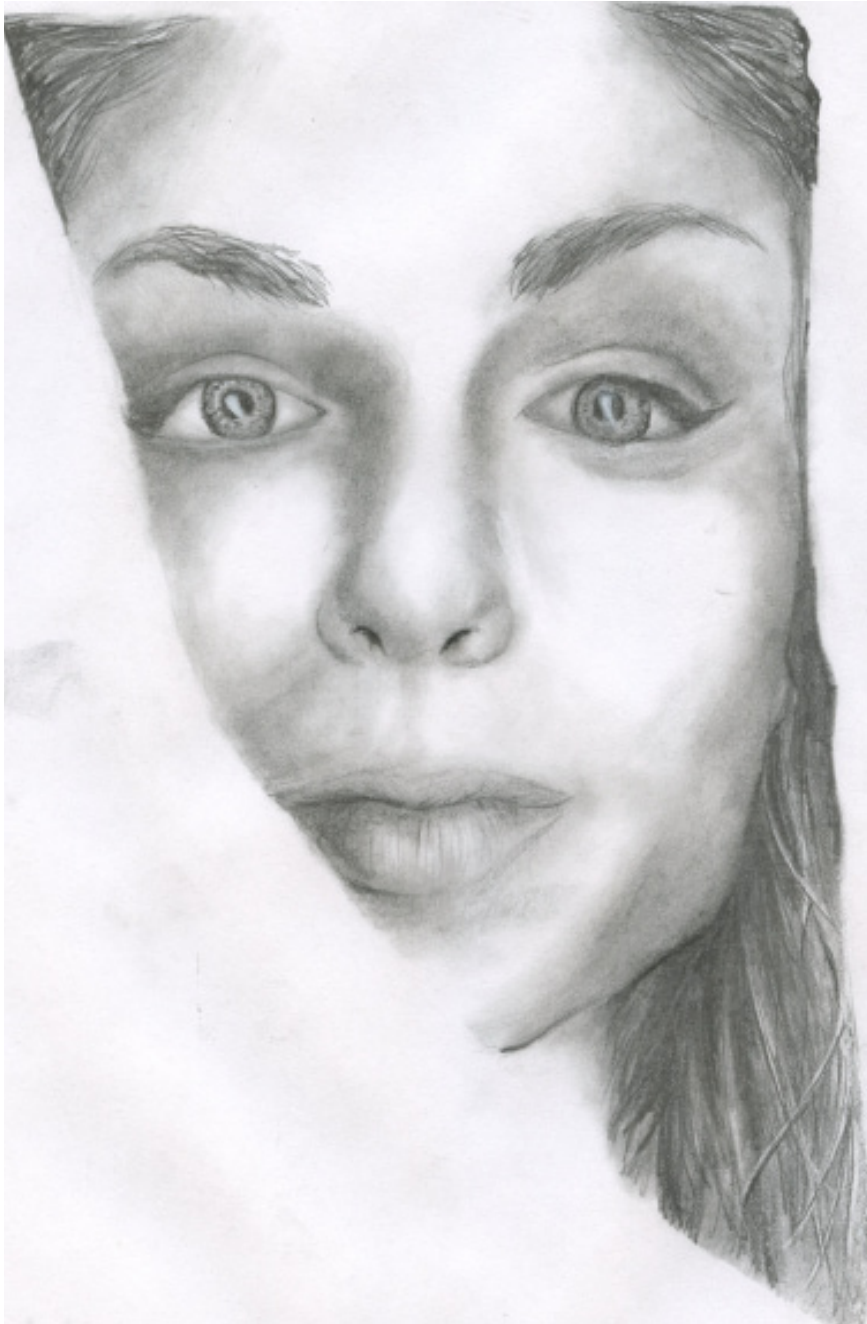
Get your spirits up with some reruns of *Friends*. Laugh. Don't pay attention when you look up to see that it's past midnight. Don't make fleeting glances toward your calculus textbook. Just keep watching the show. Comment. Like. Comment. Like. Everything is fine. The limit of x (your grade) as you approach a (the end of the semester) is 0. Relax. You've had a long day. You've worked hard. Your calculus homework will be there for you in the morning. Why don't you sleep on it?

—Loren Heubert-Aubry

Driving

Once, while in my car,
I backed up into a tree
Tore my bumper off

—Jesse Litvin



Bicycle

Collecting dust
however dust is formed,
specks of age building,
accumulating in the dark.
Still, unspun wheels,
memories of movement etched
into the rubber bones.
Rusting metal, the color of dull fire
in a cave unable to produce a flame.
Cold, musty, damp,
the winter opposed to a nimble summer,
handlebars haunted by fingerprints,
hands now writing with pencils,
cleaning rooms, typing, clicking,
holding other hands.
A hanging, waiting, longing feeling,
the heaviness of time,
a gravity of its own,
an itch unscratched in the garage.

—Teja LoBreglio



Madiba

Was there ever so distinguished a man,
Than he who's called Father of a Nation?
A score and seven, behind bars he ran
A try to rot a racist foundation
Of a country of men, women and kids
Who woke up to empty hostility—
He worked to achieve a land that forbids
Hate, and instead calls for humility.
Madiba yearned for a good head and heart,
For change, learning, and letting go of fear,
Resilience and pluck set him apart
But now all must remember what is clear:
He meant so much but 'twas his time to go,
He was man—all men end up on that row.

—Sammi Abinder



What Are You Waiting For?

“What are you waiting for?” Last time I heard that phrase I was listening to Pandora Radio while writing an essay on protest movements, and it was a Netflix audio commercial: “What are you waiting for? Join Netflix, it will change your life.” Will it? Will it really? Actually it has. I wonder how productive I would have been had I never signed up for Netflix my freshman year. A fatal mistake. However, since I have Netflix, this initial question in the commercial transforms as I think about it: What would I do without Netflix? What would I accomplish without Netflix? I wouldn’t be sitting on my couch in my living room in my pajamas all day binge-watching *Madmen* or *Sherlock* or *Downton Abbey* for hours on end. Of course, I do not actually intend to quit Netflix; however, from my excessive amounts of binge-watching on rainy Saturdays, new questions arise: am I truly to blame here for my binge-watching addiction?

Of course, on Sunday I always blame myself and ask myself: Why do you do this to yourself? I do not really know why I sabotage myself academically all for a day of observing the fictional worlds of Don Draper, Sherlock Holmes, John Watson, and the Downton Estate. Maybe I am not truly in control (that would make a lot of sense because Netflix recently added a 20 second countdown between starting the next episode, giving me only 20 seconds to decide whether I want to have a life), or maybe it is just the instant gratification of escaping my stressful life, but I think that it truly comes back to the initial question: “What are you waiting for?” What am I waiting for? Am I waiting for that 20 second countdown between episodes to end? Am I waiting for intense conflict with the characters in the show to arise? No matter what, these ephemeral, pleasurable distractions will end, so what truly am I waiting for? Am I waiting for the end?

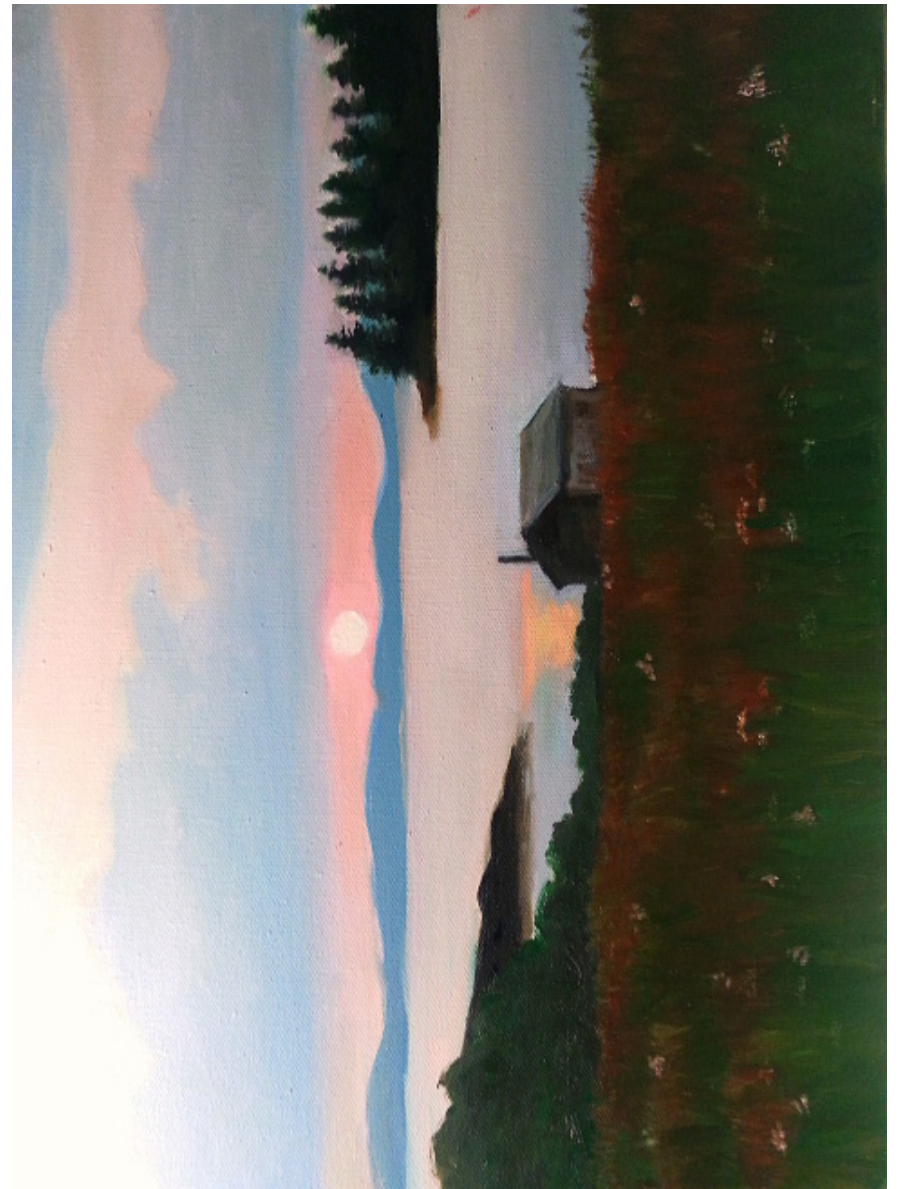
When I watch these shows on Netflix, similar to many things in my life, like high school or extra-curriculars, I wait for the end, but am I truly waiting for the end or a new beginning, a new chapter in my life, a new show to binge-watch? Am I the type of person who never truly becomes appreciative of those types of things until they are gone? Yet that does not mean I don't laugh or smile or enjoy myself while binge-watching shows on Netflix, or going through my four-years at Hastings High School, or practicing for a play; it just means I am the nostalgic type. I like to dwell on the past once these things are long over or even just about to end. So while I crave college acceptances and while I suffer from extreme senioritis, that does not mean that I won't miss my close friends everyday while I am at college, or the warm support from my teachers, or the intellectually stimulating discussions with my peers that I have known for 13 years. It just means that I am waiting for opportunity to grow into my skin as an individual; thus I am not waiting for the end, I am just waiting for a new beginning.

—Daisy Mitchell

Eating

One time in a day
I had pizza; a whole pie
That was too much food

—Jesse Litvin



Over-Dramatic, Mean, Gossipy and Overwhelming by Nature

Everyday when I came home from the seventh and eighth grades, I would take my shirt off and find a large, dark, moist ring right below the sleeves. Needless to say, I had an armpit sweat problem, and there was no antiperspirant on God's green earth that could stop the persistent expulsion of bodily fluid from the recently (kind of) hairy area directly beneath my shoulders. Why? Because nothing on God's green earth scared me more than the girls with whom I attended Farragut Middle School every day.

I could separate periods of the school day into heavy and light perspiration flows. The morning would start out pretty heavy as I walked to school with a girl in my grade who was my neighbor. She would talk about anything and everything, quickly and loudly, as I nervously stared at the ground in front of me, trying to think of anything to say in response other than "haha yeah." Then we would arrive at school and the flow would stagnate somewhat as I found my male friends who talked about nothing but their athletic endeavors and how "gay" one another were – blissfully tedious and familiar interaction. And after that it just depended on who sat in my general vicinity in all of my classes. If in the sphere of desks around me there were mainly boys my pores and I could relax. If there was a significant female presence, however, the levies would break and the Gulf of Mexico would begin to flood my poor t-shirt. Lunch would have been worse had I ever the nerve to eat in the cafeteria with the rest of my class; eating in the bathroom was the only way I could avoid the sensual overload of being in a room with over fifty preteen girls. And then, after this draining and exhausting day of avoiding anything in an Abercrombie and Fitch top, I would walk home alone

where I would treat myself to the warm embrace of new, dry cotton around my underarms.

A lot of people get nervous around the opposite gender, I figured. And I was right. Varying levels of Gynophobia, the fear of women, is relatively common in men of all ages. However, to my relief, as I moved into high school and began my freshman year, I felt my fear of the girls in my grade lift. There were no more sweat rings on my shirt (unless it was really hot, I'll admit) and no more eating lunch in the lavatories. And now, in my senior year, the fear has almost completely gone. Remember the girl I used to walk to school with who caused heavy armpit flow? Well, I've been happily dating her for over a year now.

So, as many people might have done, I wrote off the anxieties of my middle school self as puberty related and nothing more than a lack of experience with the other sex. But, as it turns out, my anxieties are not something on which to look back.

I realized that my fear of middle school girls did not leave me as I left middle school when my friend invited me to come along to his little sister's bowling birthday party. Invited to this party were about twenty seventh grade boys and mostly girls. I didn't think much of it until I walked into Homefield Bowl and felt the ever-so-familiar feeling of prickliness in my underarms. I looked out across the lanes and saw the menacing conglomerates of screaming, singing, hugging, whispering, giggling, gossiping, Instagramming, bar-mitzvah-sweatshirt wearing, five-foot-tall little monsters and realized that, to me, this was still the most intimidating demographic I had ever encountered. I looked around nervously for my male friend just as I

would have done at any party when I myself, was in the seventh grade. Once I hurried over to him and started bowling, I felt calm. “Maybe it was a Pavlovian thing,” I hoped about my reaction upon entering the party. It was not.

Whenever my friend’s sister and her friends came over to talk (shriek) to him, I would be silent and whisper, “stop it, stop it, stop it” to myself like someone out of a Ken Kesey novel. Eventually it came time to eat birthday cake and I was directly confronted with the whole group of girls whom I feared so much. I was dead silent, experiencing one of the heavy flows of my middle school days and taking constant trips to the bathroom in order to spend as little time as possible at the table. After a while I could not take it anymore and I made up an excuse to get out of the bowling alley prison. I remember my first breaths of air as I stepped outside as some of the sweetest of my life, as if I had just survived after a James Bond villain tried to drown me.

So, the question must be asked: why is any self-respecting, seventeen-year-old boy so scared of thirteen-year-old girls that he has everything short of an allergic reaction upon spending time with them?

Well, the answer, like most answers to questions of the psyche, starts with my early years. Let’s go back to the tender age of four, when I was a cute little boy with whom something was noticeably off; I had just begun speaking and did not interact well with others, especially crowds. My parents visited many doctors and psychologists and, after much talk of the dreaded “spectrum” and a delightfully eclectic smorgasbord of other learning and social disorders, I was finally diagnosed with Sensory Integration Dysfunction (now known as Sensory Processing Disorder because “dysfunction” is such a harsh, harsh word to use for children). The symptoms of



this dysfunction include withdrawing from touch, being hyper sensitive to certain fabrics, having difficulty with small objects like buttons, disliking getting your hands dirty, an inability to calm down after exercise or being upset and an oversensitivity to certain sounds. As a four-year-old, I adhered to these symptoms as if they were the Ten Commandments.

So, since no four-year-old should religiously obey the symptoms of a social disorder on children.webmd.com, I embarked on a vast treatment-journey of my disorder; I had a Puritan-looking occupational therapist named May who would run a hairbrush over my entire body and observe me buttoning shirts, a “shadow” who followed me to through my entire days of Kindergarten to help with my “transition issues,” and I even had all of the tags cut off of my t-shirts. But when I moved at the age of seven, all of this treatment stopped. You see, Sensory Integration Dysfunction is a disorder associated with young children, and it wasn’t worth the time and energy to find new specialists in a new town just to use for another year or two. So I was done. And while, at first, I was unusually reserved in my new environment, I adjusted relatively well and my dysfunction was all but forgotten. Then came middle school.

To understand the relationship between SID and my fear of middle school girls, let’s return to one of the symptoms off of the list provided by children.webmd.com: “overly sensitive to sound. Vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers, hair dryers, leaf blowers, or sirens may be upsetting.” You see, most negative sentiments associated with middle school girls has to do with bullying, gossiping, and general crankiness – these don’t bother me at all. To me, the sounds made by middle school girls are equitable to “vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers, hair dryers, leaf blowers [and] sirens.” The “power struggles, conflicting impulses, physical growth and strong emotions” that a parenting

website associates with girls in middle school girls didn’t cause me to leave the cafeteria during lunch every day in the seventh and eighth grades, nor did they cause my reaction at my friend’s sister’s birthday party – I just wish these girls would struggle for power and emote strongly with their inside voices.

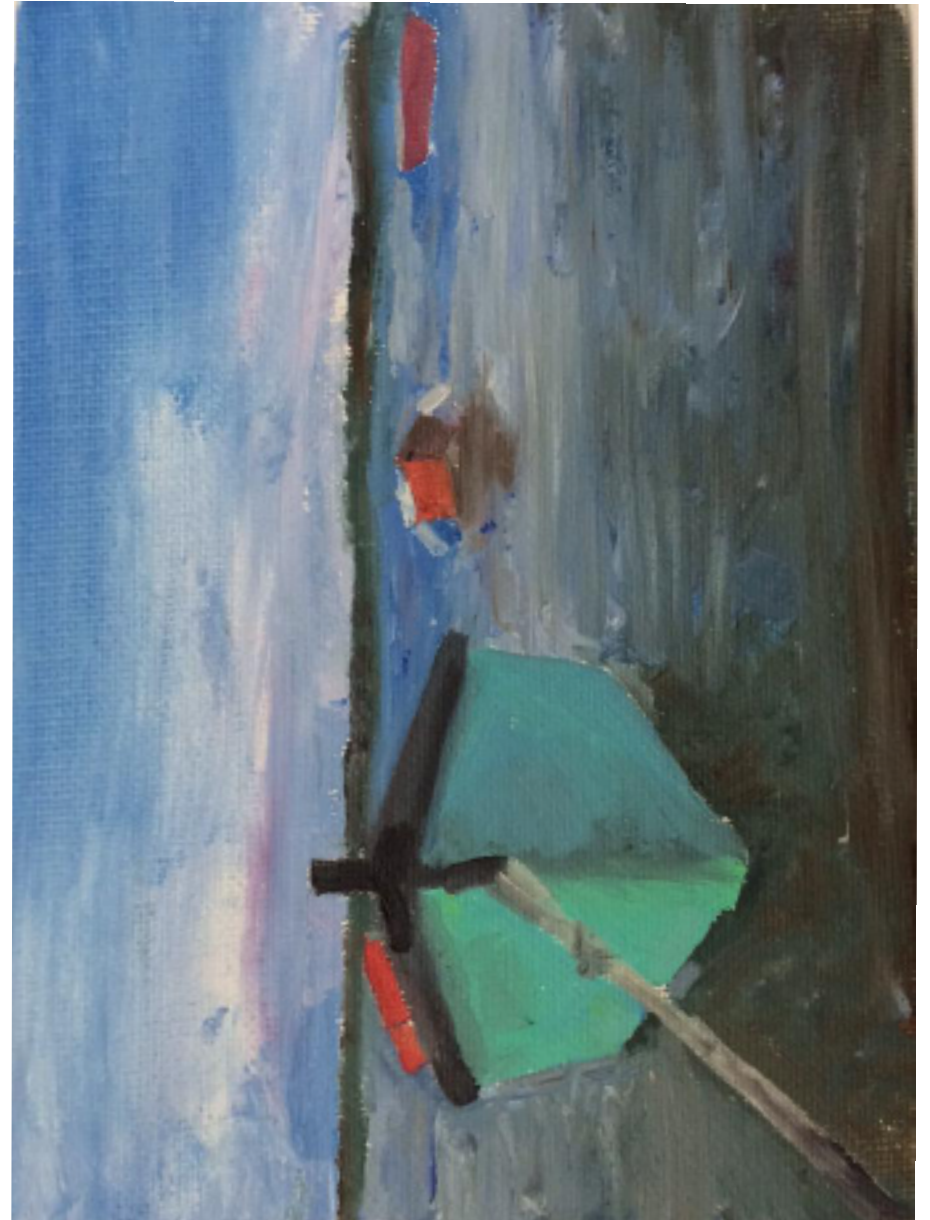
Then there lies the issue of touching. I am and always have been uncomfortable with touching and being touched. This is one of the most common symptoms with people who suffer from SID. So, when I was in middle school and saw girls hugging and blowing kisses and putting their hands on each other, I was overwhelmingly uncomfortable. It wasn’t the thought that these girls might touch me (something I desperately wished would happen deep, deep down) that scared me – even the sight of them touching each other made me nervous.

I never saw the girls in Farragut Middle School as “by nature, over-dramatic, mean or gossipy,” which psychotherapist Lyn Mikel Brown says is an important generalization to avoid when understanding girls in middle school. I never felt intimidated by any queen bee archetype. I never started to nervously stutter as a pair of newly developed breasts crossed my scope. Nothing made me nervous around girls when I was in middle school other than the fact that, to my under-developed social perception, they were all a bunch of loud, noise-making touchers. This is also what I saw when I walked into Homefield Bowl on that fateful Friday afternoon, years after I had been confronted with such a high concentration of seventh grade females.

Simply put, middle school girls send my sensory perceptive dysfunction into overload. Personality is no factor in my phobia; if I had gone to school with fifty police sirens with robotic arms my armpit sweat schedule wouldn’t have changed that much. My prob-

lem was that I was, and still am, somewhat plagued with a disorder that was supposed to end as I grew out of my childhood. Because of this, I have developed a seemingly childish fear. But I like to think it's not childish. Perhaps it's a deep rooted and Freudian level psychological disturbance, perhaps it's a charming little quirk – the jury's still out. And until they return I plan on continuing my middle school girl evasion tactics. If not for me, then for my innocent and unsuspecting shirts.

— Lee Owen



Dylan's cough

just to make sure that it wasn't
maybe just someone in the other room,
you hit replay.
but there it is again, small but audible at one minute
and forty-four seconds into "blowing in the wind." why?—
flu season? time pressure? laziness?

you wonder how long he's been suppressing the scratch, the infernal rasp,
that you can almost feel now like a phantom limb
clawing out from the very bottom
of your very own throat.
but maybe he never intended to conceal
the short, spontaneous, yet almost rehearsed burst of dark noise—

you'd be able to hear it in the first few verses creeping in:
the strain, the melody furtively elbowing aside
the cloud of mucoid ash
no, it's something different—

it has its own pointed pitch.
it's a smirk, a wink—
because it's 1962 and he has no reason to conceal a thing
and every reason to screw around with them.

the sound itself fits, golden, between the ribcages
of the finger-picked riff.
a breath in,
a tightening of the vocal cords,
and a knife's breath outwards
it's all part of the act.

—Lena Rubin



The best place to get a milkshake is a diner. Sure, ice cream parlors make them pretty well, but there's something about the way they are delivered to you in diners that takes them to the top of the list. There's something about receiving that chocolate-y/strawberry-y/vanilla-y heaven in a frosted glass with a red striped straw and, sometimes, and long handled spoon that gives it that extra *je ne sais quois*.

The thing I love about diners is how cozy and homey they can be. A good diner should be filled with locals, the waitresses should gossip behind the counter and chat with the customers - particularly the older men at the counter who smell like tobacco and want someone other than their wives of forty years to listen to them - and the kitchen should be boisterous and rancorous, pots clanging, fries frying, eggs sizzling. It should smell like grease and pancake batter, coffee, hash browns and bacon, and the tables should always have the residual stickiness of Aunt Jemima's Maple Syrup, served to you in a small metal pitcher. It should bake with dry heat in the winter, and chill with stale icy air in the summer. There should be a range in your choice of waitresses - the young, bored, beautiful ones who are stuck there on summer jobs and the older women with dyed hair who have been working that floor since before you were born. You should be constantly offered more coffee, honey, and treated to nicknames by waitresses who crack their gum and wear squeaky white shoes that they tuck, one behind the other, with their hand on their hip while they wait for you to decide if you want white, wheat, or rye toast with that breakfast special. And those waitresses? Oh, they won't warn you about the extra fifty cents you'll owe for the whipped cream on your hot chocolate and certainly won't inform you that by ordering ham, bacon, "and" sausage (as opposed to just one option, signified by the

use of "or") in addition to hash browns, grits, and toast, that you'll be six dollars in debt by the end of your meal. You won't mind though. You won't mind one bit. Because after you've spilled ketchup on your jeans and your belly has distended to the point that you are wondering if you should be concerned about the third to last button that's pulling at the seams, you know you've found it. Your haven, open eight to ten on Sundays. It is the perfect diner.

I had my first chocolate milk shake when I was five years old. My father took my sister and me to the diner on Main Street on a Sunday afternoon when my mother was on vacation in Florida with her three sisters. The waitress with a poorly composed beehive hairdo and a not-so-crisp apron took our orders and kept smiling at my dad, showing the smear of coral lipstick on her yellowing front teeth. My sister and I squirmed around on the vinyl booth cushions and made faces at each other in the mirror on the wall that hung behind him. The air conditioning blasted the backs of our legs and blew from directly behind us onto our hair, picking up white blond strands and swirling them around in the air above us like a true summer breeze. The waitress - her name was Doris, as she had informed my father - made our milkshakes with chocolate ice cream and poured them into tall metal cups. She used chocolate ice cream instead of vanilla with chocolate syrup, and my dad told us that this place was the real deal because of that (to this day I can detect whether or not my milkshakes have been made the "real" way or not). We slurped them down, dribbling chocolate ice cream down our chins and onto our shirts; we giggled when my dad stole a sip and wound up with his mustache covered in chocolate. We got brain freezes for the first time, my sister and I, reveling in this treat of a day alone with our father. We laughed until we cried, cheeks flushed, stomachs aching, and

begged for a trip to the store for boxes of Lucky Charms and Froot Loops. We promised we wouldn't tell Mom. We had fun with him.

I've noticed that women often notice my dad in a way that they normally don't regard men, making eye contact for longer than necessary and ducking their heads before they lift their eyes to smirk at him, inviting conversation. He ignores them, but it's as if they can tell that he loves his children more than anything, would give up anything for them - for us - but he has a desire to change the way his life is headed and it's been smoldering inside of him since the day I entered high school. He wants a new direction, because he feels that the path he's been on his whole life is getting a little less clear and somewhat hard to define, with my sister and me leaving home and going to college. He doesn't know what he's looking for. I know what I am, though.

In my perfect diner:

1. Milkshakes.
2. Late hours.
3. Chocolate chip pancakes.
4. Chocolate chip Belgian waffles.
5. Any kind of Belgian waffles, really.
6. Hot chocolate (cost of the whipped cream included, if you please, some of us don't have a steady income).
7. Waffle fries.
8. A breakfast special (eggs, pancakes, bacon, toast, coffee, hash browns...) for those kind of mornings after those kinds of nights. You can include the full breakfast, if you're brave enough, but I haven't gotten there yet.
9. Arnold Palmers.
10. A case of individually saran-wrapped baked goods that have been

purchased God-knows-where and how long ago but that somehow always manage to get you to consider, and sometimes even seriously tempt you to order, the Double Chocolate Chip Muffin that is the same size as your head.

I'm still looking. I know I have to wait for it to hit me on a road trip through upstate New York or Virginia, but I can't help but look every now and then. My dad still hasn't found a path that will lead him to come to peace with the fact that he chose being a dotting father and husband over all else, but I know we will both find the things we are looking for. He will learn to be happy with living in our small house again. I see it in the way he kisses my mother before he leaves for work each morning and before bed each night.

I will continue to order chocolate milkshakes at unfamiliar diners. I will watch the customers, the staff, the interactions between those two species of people, make notes in my head about the stickiness of the cracked linoleum floors, the speckled tables, the spotless windows. I will sip my milkshake, give it a stir or two, wait a minute, then scrape the bottom with the tip of my straw as if I'm fishing for gold. If I come up with a drop of chocolate goo hugging the lip of my straw, I will wipe my mouth and leave \$5.79 on the table, exact change, and walk out. One day, I will find the perfect diner. And I will order that breakfast special, if you please, with everything included.

—Eenie Bernard



My dad and I have this thing that we have done together for years. On certain Saturday afternoons, when it is rainy or the day is growing dull or we just feel the need for an adventure, we get in the car and go somewhere. It is never anywhere particularly sought out or exciting; we just pick a town with a cool coffee shop and usually a nice little bookstore and go. There is a certain thrill about discovering a new place. Everything about it is new to me, and everything about *me* is new to *it*. We both have our secrets and scars, and the other one need not know a thing. We can present ourselves to each other however we would like.

This is something I have learned about myself over the past couple years: I find a comfort in the idea of a fresh start. It is not that I want to be someone else; I want to be me, but in the way that I would like to see myself. I want to be the girl who loves poetry and California and plays guitar, without being burdened by an idea of myself that someone else has given me. In one of my favorite poems, Emily Dickinson writes, “How dreary – to be – Somebody...” I think what she means is not that it is tiresome to be alive, but rather that it is hard to always be the person that others think we are. “How public – like a Frog,” Dickinson continues, emphasizing how cumbersome and unattractive the identities we feel tied down by can often be. Sometimes we do want to be someone else for a change, but most of the time, we just want to be ourselves without all of the implications that come along with it.

—Louisa Carey

I'm Here

"If you do not tell the truth about yourself, you cannot tell it about other people."

—Virginia Woolf

I'm here to tell the truth.
To speak the words I've left unsaid
To change your minds
Show the life I've lead.
I'm here to show you me
For all I am
Not just how I'm seen
By peers, parents, or teachers and friends
Not through one lens
But in my own eyes
With the mirror in my heart as a guide
I'm here to take a step back.
At 17 I know I'm young
I still haven't saved the world
I'm still a girl.
But summers along the beach
Spent studying shells
Became studying species—
My interests have evolved
Until sometimes I feel childhood's
Out of my reach.
I'm here to help myself
Remember who I am, still am
Who I'll always be.
The girl with lots of friends it seems

(but really just the three)
The athlete, the strong one
One of the guys
A girl in disguise?
I'm here to shed that shell.
This year I went to Comic Con
Lieutenant Uhura, red dress
And confidence
And the love of being a nerd.
My summer spent in a lab
With goggles and latex gloves
That make my hands smell like
Powder and discovery (things I love)
But behind my scientific exterior
I'm still just a girl
Who has changed herself
Who wants to change the world
I'm here to show you who I am:
Young and old
Afraid but bold
The one who sings to entertain
The athlete, the brain
Popular and incredibly nerdy
Most of all
I'm me.

—Emma Dietz



Real Women Have Curves

“Are you making sure to eat enough protein?”

“Yep.”

“Fruits? Vegetables?”

“Yep.”

“And you’re not restricting your diet at all or anything, no unhealthy eating habits or anything?”

“Nope.”

I hope my doctor doesn’t mistake the rapidness of my answers for dishonesty; it’s just that we’ve had this back and forth every visit since I can remember, and my answers have never changed. I don’t like the feeling of the wax paper on the back of my thighs, or the decidedly disinfected smell of the room and most of all, I don’t like having my body quantified and questioned. I feel the most uncomfortable in my naturally bony frame not before the mirror, but when Dr. Guttenberg reads from her clipboard that I haven’t gained a pound since the tenth grade, that I’m in the 2nd percentile for weight, a statistical outlier skinnier than exactly 98% of kids my age, and she just wants to make sure “everything’s okay.”

*

Up to 24 million people in the United States currently suffer from an eating disorder. Ninety percent of these people are female; some fifteen percent of teenage girls suffer from disordered eating or related symptoms. Statistical evidence gives my doctor reason enough to ask the unasked question, “*You don’t have an eating disorder, do you?*”

*

In the seventh grade, my home economics teacher assigned the class an activity where we calculated our Body Mass Index online. I’m still not sure why this was part of the curriculum, which had mostly involved making garlic bread and learning how to maneuver a sewing machine. Anyways, there I sat, among other twelve- and thirteen-year olds with tender psyches and puberty-ridden bodies, in the computer lab, filling out an official-looking electronic form. Once you put in your details, you’d receive both a number (which meant nothing, really) and a word. Mine was “underweight.” The screen was telling me

that there was something inherently wrong with my height-weight combination. Something to worry about.

*

I learned to make what looked so starkly, medically concerning on a computer screen into a punch line. My best friend and I, whose relationship was shaped by our mutual discoveries of self-deprecating humor, would jokingly make weird Jekyll-and-Hyde bargains with our bodies:

“Literally, my butt is so big,” she’d lament.

“Well, if you wanted to, you could give it to me. It’s not like I have anything there.”

“Alright, I’ll just chop it off and give it to you as a birthday present.”

“Fine by me.”

*

In the issues of *Seventeen* I read long before I turned seventeen, there were many articles about body acceptance, touting phrases like “big is beautiful!” and “love your curves!” Never, “having a completely flat chest is beautiful!” or “love your natural scrawniness!” Or even something non-size-specific, like, “your body, no matter what it looks like, is something you shouldn’t feel icky about!”

*

As a kid, I was short and scrawny, and as a teenager, I’m slightly less short and slightly less scrawny. My family is small-boned, and my fast metabolism comes from my father. Sometimes I joke that maybe it’s because I’ve been a cup-a-day coffee drinker since the ninth grade. There are times when I wish puberty had thrown me a bone and given me a couple more inches or a little more padding in some choice places. I don’t run around proclaiming my love for my body – there are other qualities I’d much rather brag about. But I’m okay with having knobbly wrists, ribs that jut out a little bit, prominent collarbones that I don’t love but which I have been told are “high fashion,” tiny hands that make playing Beethoven harder than it already is, and the smallest bra size marketed to the public.

*

Things I think about my body: my body is fine, I like my body, my body looks nice in leggings and bikinis, I am more than my body.

*

I don't think about my skinniness very often, mostly because I'm used to it. I'm not 98 pounds by choice – I didn't get here by dieting or over-exercising or restricting or obsessing. This is what I assure my doctor, again and again. Yes, this is just my body, yes, everything's okay, yes I wish people would stop drawing attention to it.

*

Things other people think about my body:

“You should eat more! You're so skinny!”

(This is only endearing when it comes from my grandma, is delivered in a Brooklyn-Jewish accent, and is prefaced by the word “Bubbeleh.” Otherwise, it's grating and accusatory, and what happened to “keep your eyes on your own plate”?)

“Why do you run track? Like, you don't even *need* to run track. You're so skinny!” or “Why are you eating salad? Are you on a diet? You're so skinny!”

(Is it a product of our culture that making healthy choices is always linked to a desire to lose weight?)

“Your figure is so *beautiful*!”

(Thanks, but all artistic credit goes to my parents and the magic of genetic recombination.)

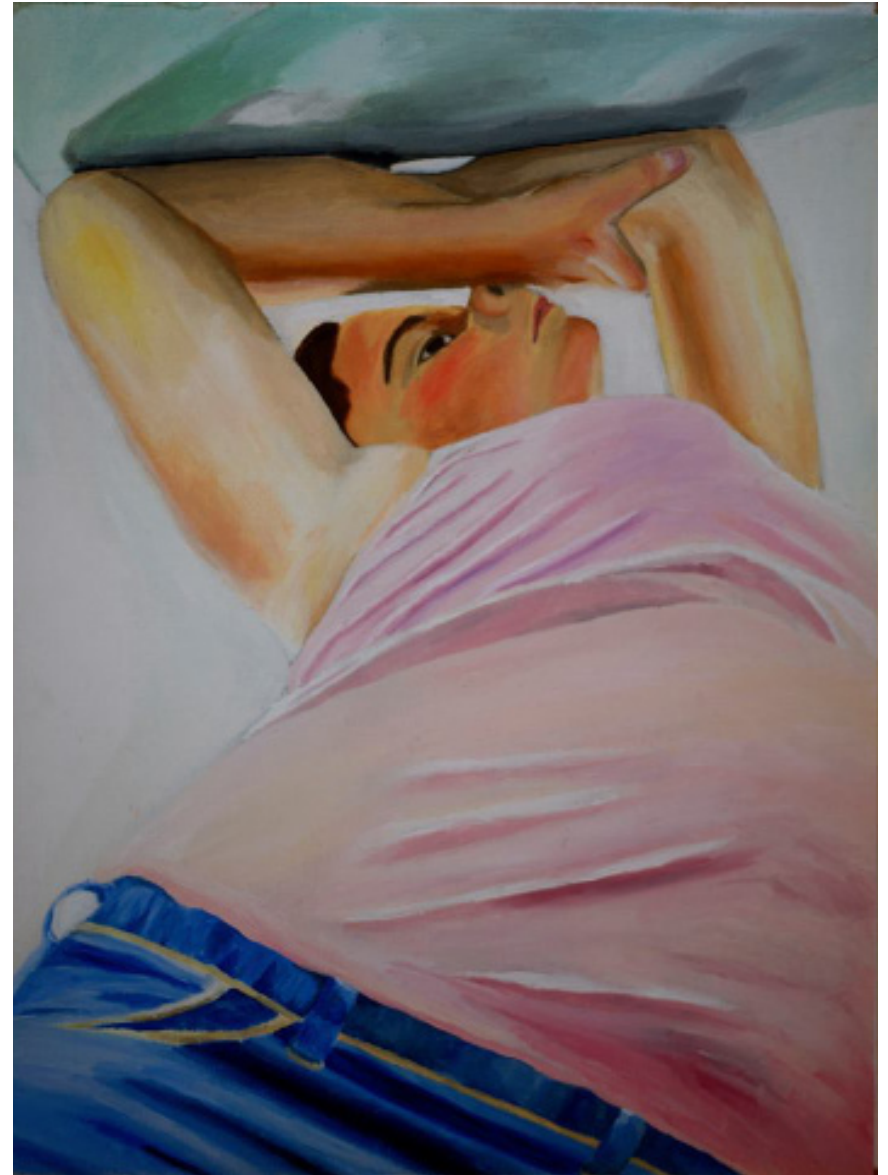
“God, I would *kill* to have a body like yours.”

(Please. Just. Don't make me respond to this.)

*

The story of my favorite pair of jeans: They're dark denim, graze the top of my ankle bones, and I feel great in them. They're the only pair I've found in the last three years that won't bunch up at the bottoms or hang loose around my hips. They're a size zero, the size I've always been. As part of a campaign against the fashion industry, Sophia Bush was photographed wearing a T-shirt that reads “Zero is Not a Size.” I'm still trying to figure out how I feel about it. There's something demeaning and kind of twisted about wearing a size that is inherently *not* a size – it's like being zero years old. Fashion industry, I know I'm skinny, but I exist. I take up space.

—Lena Rubin



Plastic

LA had always been a superficial place. Bleach blonde women strutted down the street sporting fresh Botox, teens asked for nose jobs for Christmas, and everyone had had a facelift at least once by the time they were thirty. Twenty years ago, these procedures had been painful and most required a long period of recovery; now they could be done in mere minutes and were virtually painless. Advances in technology could now make you look like practically anything you wanted, but it didn't come cheap.

Madison's father's job moved them to California when she was just fourteen, and her parents had been worried about her ever since. Obsessed with the life styles of the rich and famous, she would do nearly anything to fit in. After just a few days of classes, Madison decided that it was absolutely vital that she bleach her long, wavy hair, so that she looked identical to the other girls at school. When her parents thought this change was too drastic, too unlike herself, Madison was crushed, and then angry. Didn't they know what it was like to be in high school? Didn't they know how hard it was to fit in? Unlike the other kids, Madison wasn't allowed to go to crazy parties in Hollywood Hills that started at midnight and ended at 8am. Her parents were stricter than those of her peers, and considerably less wealthy. Many times, caught up in the wealth and carefree lives of the people around her at school, she would go on crazy shopping splurges, maxing out credit card after credit card like it was free cash. She couldn't help it; wearing the newest and most expensive clothes to school meant instant popularity, and Madison was addicted to the feeling of being liked. Eventually, she went off to college, visiting her family sparingly.

As much as Madison resented seeing her parents, she was

obliged to have dinner at their house on Christmas Eve every year. Time after time, it was the same old boring dinner, with slow conversation about the weather, politics, or the new housing development going up around the block. Madison dreaded these dinners with every fiber of her being. She hated being back in the old house she grew up in, which had the faint lingering smell of potpourri, a smell she had come to hate for it reminded her of her childhood. She hated the horribly tacky way her parents decorated their house, with red and gold accents and fringe tassels hanging from the windows. Most of all, though, she hated the way her parents looked her up and down when they answered the door, trying to hide their disappointment in her blonde hair and spike-clad Louboutin heels. Did they not realize that this was how they raised her, in a place more obsessed with looks and beauty than IQ?

As she walked up the stairs, Madison prepared herself mentally for what her parents would say. Taking a deep breath in, she rang the doorbell.

"Maddy's here!" she could hear her mother yelling inside the house to her father. She shivered; she had hated that nickname for as long as she could remember for it made her feel like a child. "Well would you look at you? You little shayna punim! Have you been getting more sleep?" Madison rolled her eyes at her mother's embarrassing Yiddish term of endearment.

"Yeah..." Madison replied, hesitant. She was happy her mother hadn't noticed what was really going on. The two of them joined her father at the long wood dinning room table adorned with turkey, mashed potatoes, and scattered candy canes. There were a few moments of awkward silence before anyone spoke.

"So, Maddy, what have you been up to? I heard you have a

new job?” her father inquired, taking a bite of the turkey he had put on his plate.

“Um, yeah,” said Madison in between chews, “I’m working in fashion now. It’s been great.”

“I think it’s suiting you really well, you look absolutely beautiful; your skin is glowing! Let me get a look at you!” Her mother got up and went over to pinch Madison’s cheeks. But when she tried to grab her face, she was met with slick plastic. “What...what’s going on?” her mother gasped.

Madison swatted her mother’s hands away from her face. “Relax, Mom,” she said, with an exasperated voice. “It’s only plastic surgery. Everyone’s doing it, it’s totally normal.” She took a sip of her champagne, the bubbles fizzing on her tongue.

“What do you mean, everyone’s doing it? Madison, do you see what you’ve done to yourself?! How long is this going to last?”

“Forever, Mom. But you said it yourself. I look great; I don’t have any flaws. Finally, I fit in!”

“Do you even know the long term effects of this kind of surgery? Was it really so important to be a clone of Barbie!?” her father chimed in, in a tone Madison had never heard before. He had always been a soft-spoken man who didn’t like to raise his voice.

“Listen: I’m twenty four. If you don’t agree with my life decisions, fine, see how that affects me. Because I promise you, it won’t. At all,” Madison said with a sneer. She stood up, threw her napkin on the table, and with that, she was gone; the only thing left of her in the small house was the faint smell of Chanel No5. They’re so stupid, she thought to herself. Obviously they wouldn’t understand. Madison felt foolish for even going to her parents’ house in the first place. This surgery was the best thing that ever happened to her, and if her parents couldn’t be happy for her, then that was not her problem.

Maybe it was a good thing that her parents acted so rashly; she had to be home anyways to apply the special formula that would preserve her face every night at the same time.

The procedure hadn’t been a very hard one; it only took the doctors about an hour. When she woke up from the surgery, Madison felt as if she had hardened glue stuck to her entire face. She reached up in her medicated daze and tried to claw it off, but was unable to fix anything. She touched her face all over, feeling the smooth and even plastic that replaced where skin had once been. Her nose was now significantly smaller and looked like a perfect downward slope. Her once uneven eyes were now perfectly almond shaped and symmetrical, and held long, dark, eyelashes. Madison formed a smile with her perfectly pink, lush, bow shaped lips. Everything was perfect. Well, almost perfect. There were some slight side effects and restrictions, since the surgery had not been perfected yet. She was not allowed more than one hour of direct sunlight per day, and was not to eat acidic foods that could burn away her new flesh. Occasionally, the doctor warned her, she may feel a burning in her cheeks, or smell the slight scent of burning. These could be fixed by dabbing her face with a wet washcloth, but would not completely go away until they had perfected the procedure, which was another thing that Madison had to be aware of. Annually, she would have to go back to the doctor for them to reboot her face, either meaning adding on with their newest discovery or taking something off due to its now discovered harmful effect. With all of this knowledge, Madison was still insistent. She was going to make up for all the years she spent eating lunch by herself in the library, wishing the other kids would accept her, by being more beautiful and powerful than they could ever dream of.

—Sydney Gabay

Luminous

His caramel skin was covered in complex and colorful ink. The tattoos trailed from his broad and muscular shoulders down to his rock-solid calves. All six feet of him could barely fit on the chair where his surprisingly gentle hands would permanently mark the skin of his daring customers. She was anxiously waiting her turn, observing the white spacious tattoo parlor. Her ginger hair and gentle green eyes seemed that much more out of place because of the bright lights that radiated throughout the shop.

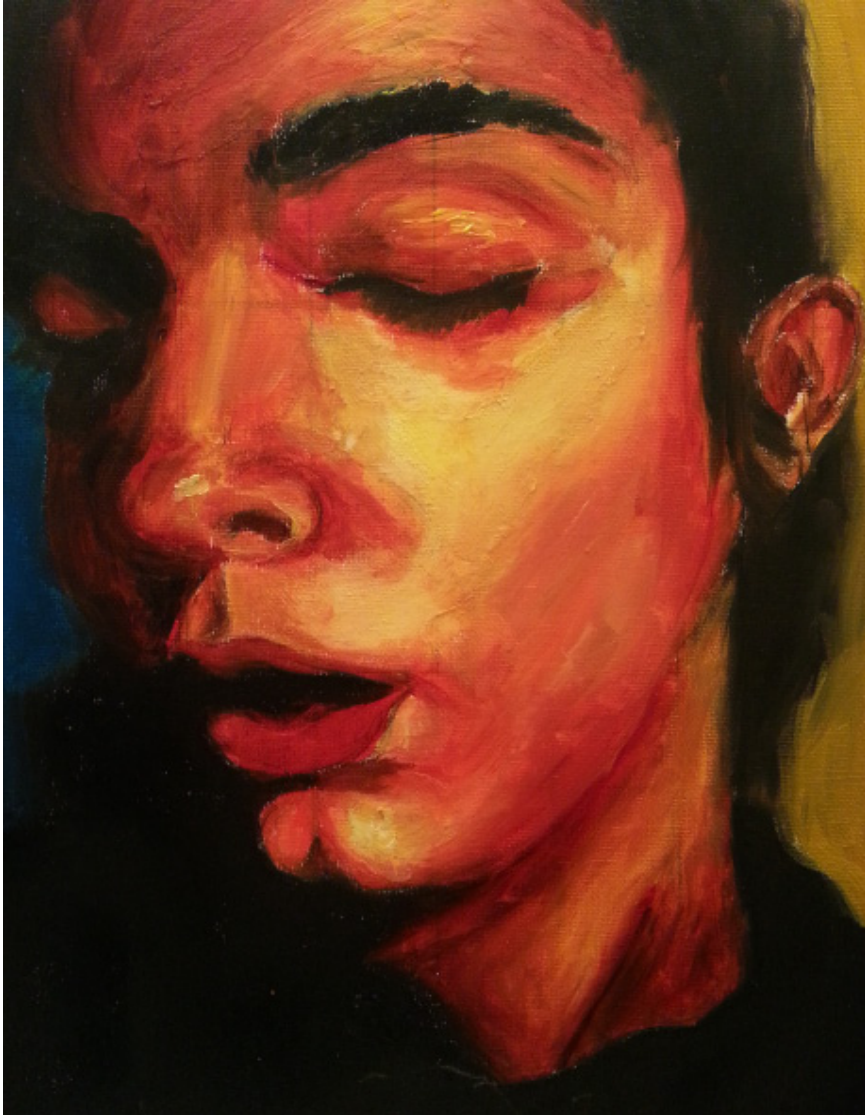
As she lay down on her side she stared at the man and noticed how beautiful he really was. It comforted her to know that there would be some pleasure mixed in with the agonizing pain that was soon to come. Her eyes shifted to the small black gun that slowly crept towards her exposed skin. The loud vibration of the needle seemed to give the tattoo gun life and she suddenly felt nauseous. Her face must have been saying the words that wouldn't come out of her mouth because the man quickly caught on and tried to distract her.

"Your eyes are such a perfect shade of green that they don't look real," he said nicely. She feared that if she opened her mouth to thank the man the only thing that would come out would be cries of pain. So she just smiled, and was secretly thankful that her face must have already been red from the start of this traumatic event for the man to notice her otherwise obvious blush.

Her skin was throbbing and all she wanted was to see the final product and have all the pain be worth something. The man handed her a mirror and she raised it to the side of her red and hot rib cage. She expected everything except the overwhelming disappointment that surged throughout her as she looked at the meaningless tattoo that would now forever be marked on her body.

—Melissa Noboa





Whitey

Come on Hattie! Come on, you know you want to. I knew I really wanted to be in bed. It was three in the morning and I had been driving since eleven thirty. How 'bout I just go home and get you guys my tent? They weren't satisfied with my answer that dismissed their question, but they knew at least I was being practical—where else were they going to sleep tonight? My red Toyota Corolla broke the silence of the heavy humid night as I left them on the grass by the pool. When I returned with the tent in the back seat of my car, they still hadn't gone swimming.

*

My living room is an ugly beige color. Sometimes when I have a moment to sit on my couch and contemplate the walls, all I can think about is prosthetic limbs. If I lost a hand, or a shin and calf, would my new body part match my living room? Would I be able to leave the limb propped against a wall and have trouble finding it later? Probably not. Hopefully my prosthetist would realize my skin is lighter than my walls.

*

Shoved between my big toe and the second was a skinny, black-paint-coated metal wire. Half of my weight was balanced precariously on the plastic surface. The longer I stood frozen there, the more my foot sank into the metal, threatening to cut through the skin, muscle, and bone of the space between my toes. But there was no answer to the jigsaw: as I tried to swing my weight from one side of the fence to the other, the more my toes gripped, the more pain shot through the foot that rested on the side of the fence I was aiming to enter. The spikey ends of the woven wire fence were left uncovered in the exact place I wanted to rest my hips. My only shield was the thin

cotton of my underpants—the longer I waited, the more my toes screamed in pain.

*

I had to leave work early to catch the train back up to Hastings. Blondie was in Grand Central waiting for the same train. We rode it together. It was summer so the sun was still high in the sky at 5 o'clock when we met up with them in the library parking lot. My mother and Lucy went in with us, Jordan asked us not to tell hers.

*

Daisy was already on the inside. She had scaled down the fence without the help of the table that now welcomed me on my left. Tom was there too, and Jordan. They had already gotten across before I decided that I didn't want to be left on the outside, left to watch them splash in the water without me. I didn't have a visual of how it should be done—this was the highest fence I had ever climbed. My white chiffon prom dress glowed with my skin under the sensor lights we had set off on the back deck. Ow my feet hurt and boy am I tired I thought as I climbed down from the fence, jumped off the table, and waited for the rest of my friends to cross over.

*

Two summers ago Jordan, Daisy, and I left this note for my parents on my grandmother's kitchen table:

WE WENT SKINNY DIPPIN'

in the bay

@11:35

Much love, Hattie

And the

GIRLS <3

We climbed through the wooden fence of the bay beach and jumped off the dock into the salty warm water. I remember the night for

the jellyfish that lit up when we brushed them with our hands, and the wind against my thighs as we ran back home through the empty sidewalks.

*

My alarm was set for 5:45. Jordan woke me up at 6:03. I jumped out of bed, already we were three minutes late, and Blondie was waiting for us on the other side of town. We got there at 6:10. I sped but I still thought my alarm clock must be fast. I broke the law again, but this time they were angry because I didn't speed fast enough. *This isn't volunteer work. You can't just show up whenever you want. Come on time.* My fault, I voiced. Driver overslept. I wanted to add that I would never show up late to a volunteer job—show up late when people were depending on me? When my time was valuable to someone else? I could never do it. Service time, on the other hand—I felt bad, but only because I wanted to leave at 10, not 10:10.

*

When I lived in Mexico I hated being American. Gringa this, gringa that. One look at me could tell you all you needed to know: foreign, rich, entitled, exploitive, American—from that place that everyone hated so much because it was the thing they couldn't live without. My town relied on tourism and the money of ex-pats (did you hear that? Mine. My town.) and if you weren't hired by a whitey here, then someone you were related to was hired by one up there. I wanted to be a victim of the system, not one of the benefactors that so lavishly benefited from the investment.

*

Or was I projecting? I was so freaking aware of my freckles and sunscreen that I came to hate where I was from, came to assume that everyone hated it too. As the months went by I tried to make my whiteness as unnoticeable as possible. I left my camera at home,

wore unscented sunscreen (god forbid I wore a hat), no more shorts or purses or large paper bills. I worked hard on my accent. Maybe if they called out to me less, I could pretend that I wasn't white at all.

*

White, yellow, purple, pink, black, all of our dresses lined up on the plastic-coated metal picnic table, the umbrella pulled down. Red, black, blue, our underwear piled on the picnic bench.

*

Every time I turn on my car after nine, every time a friend climbs into the back seat, I'm breaking the law. Sometimes I think about it, sometimes I don't. I always think about it when it's after nine, a friend is sitting next to me as well as in the back (there's two in the back, maybe even three), and a cop lazily trails me from behind. They never pull me over (why would they? They can't tell what kind of license rests in my wallet, can't question my behavior when there is nothing to question). My stomach squeezes on my heart until I take a turn the cop doesn't. Eleven thirty, four kids in the car, I'm still roaming the streets.

*

To wash off the chlorine, Daisy and I ran into the men's locker room (because we could) and waited for the shower water to heat up. I kept hoping some conditioner and a towel would appear. We didn't have either so we pulled rolls of paper out of the dispenser and patted ourselves (somewhat) dry. I pulled my hair back into a ponytail and pretended it didn't exist. We climbed back over the fence without our dresses—they were too pretty to get wet.

7/23, 2:06pm

two days of community service, 8 hours each, 16 hours in total

7/23, 2:34pm

the most important thing is that when we go tomorrow we have to be nice and compliant and quiet. there's no use in denying anything, and he's not planning on pressing charges against any of us because he knows we're good kids but i know i'm willing to do anything to not get arrested, so no sass

7/23, 4:58pm

they didn't say much. they were like "we heard you guys are good, high-achieving kids." honestly though that part kind of pissed me off, cause if we weren't, would they treat us differently?

7/23, 7:19pm

under the law it should make a difference if we have criminal records, not if we come from good backgrounds or are going to good colleges. but i'm not about to tell them that.

7/24, 7:53am

skinny dipping at sugar pond anyone?

*

I didn't realize we were breaking the law. When I woke at twelve the next morning my mother and I laughed over what we did. My dad smiled and told me he hoped we didn't get in trouble. Trouble? It hadn't even crossed my mind. The why? was answered soon enough by my own brain, but it didn't resonate as a severe enough offense. Besides, why would they ever know?

*

Obviously I won't do it again. But what caused me to do it in the first place? No. What allowed me to do it? For a peer leadership activity Zak and I planned a rumor that I got kicked out of PL for breaking some law that the freshmen had to guess. No, don't make the rumor about Hattie—no one will believe you, someone said to us. Like they said—we weren't in trouble because we were good kids.

Because we did well in school. Kids that do well in school don't break the law. So when they do, we won't arrest them. Does that make sense?

*

I think somehow, somewhere in me, I knew the consequences wouldn't be terrible. Somewhere in my subconscious I knew that a white girl who did volunteer work didn't have to worry about skinny-dipping in the town pool after hours.

—Hattie Schapiro

History

Let us not forget
History's grandest figure
William H. Taft

—Jesse Litvin

History II

How could we forget
A legend for years to come
The great Ralph Nader

—Jesse Litvin



Smelly Man

There once was a girl known as Janey,
Her friends and foes thought her zany.
When asked of her whims
Her answers were grim
For they showed the true flow of her brainy.

She wanted the existence of humans to pass,
And forever to stone on the finest of grass,
But always exceed expectations in class
While practicing anarchy at Sunday mass

One day a man asked her for what she was waiting
And although he was smelly with sanity fading,
She thought awful hard bout the question at hand
To answer with something he might understand.

While thinking about the question he posed
She was struck with an answer she'd never suppose.
For Janey had always been quite undecided
And enjoyed the excitement disarray had provided

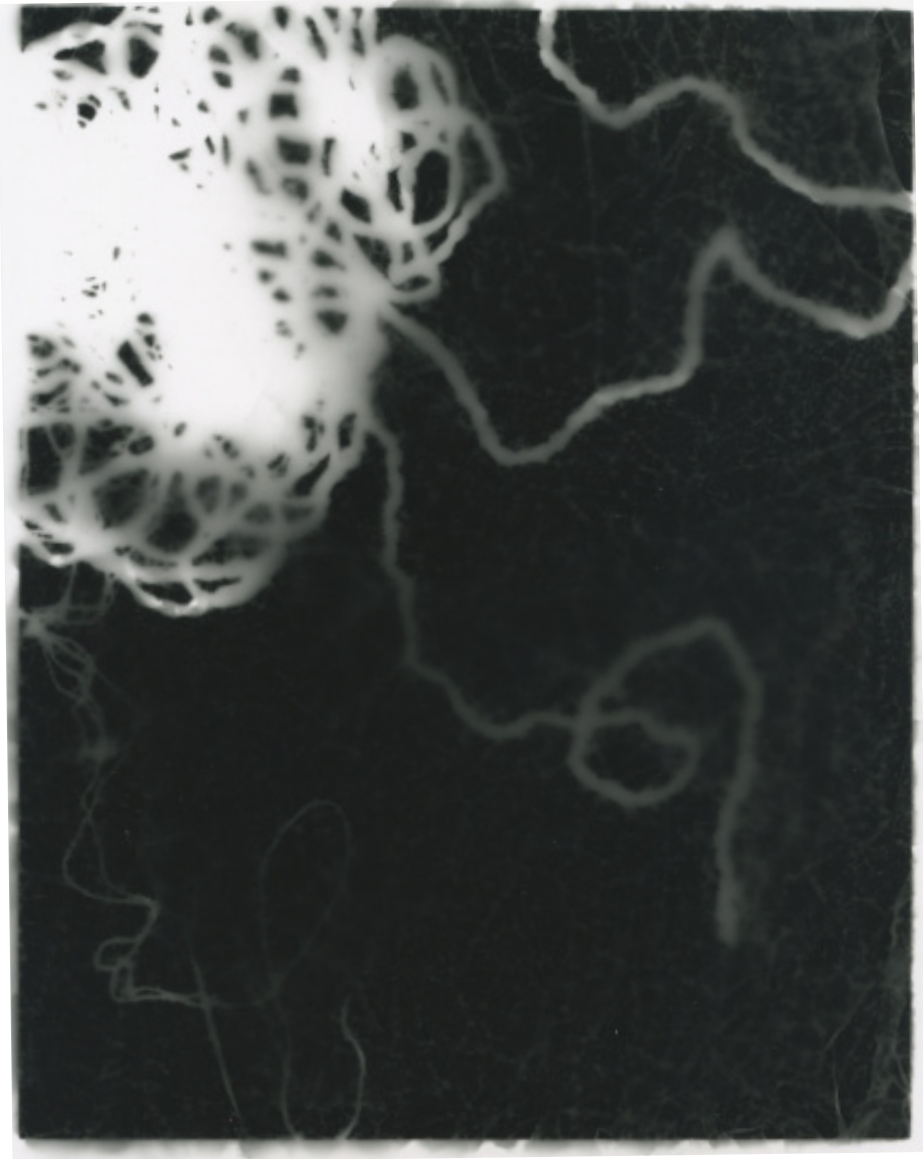
But when questioned with something so straight-up and clear
She realized she was longing for some kind of frontier
Where her one unfound passion she would pioneer
And now all she needed was the path to appear.

And she then told the man who had stunk up the room
That she needed a sonic, metaphysical boom
And from that boom a path would expel
And where it would lead not one soul could foretell.

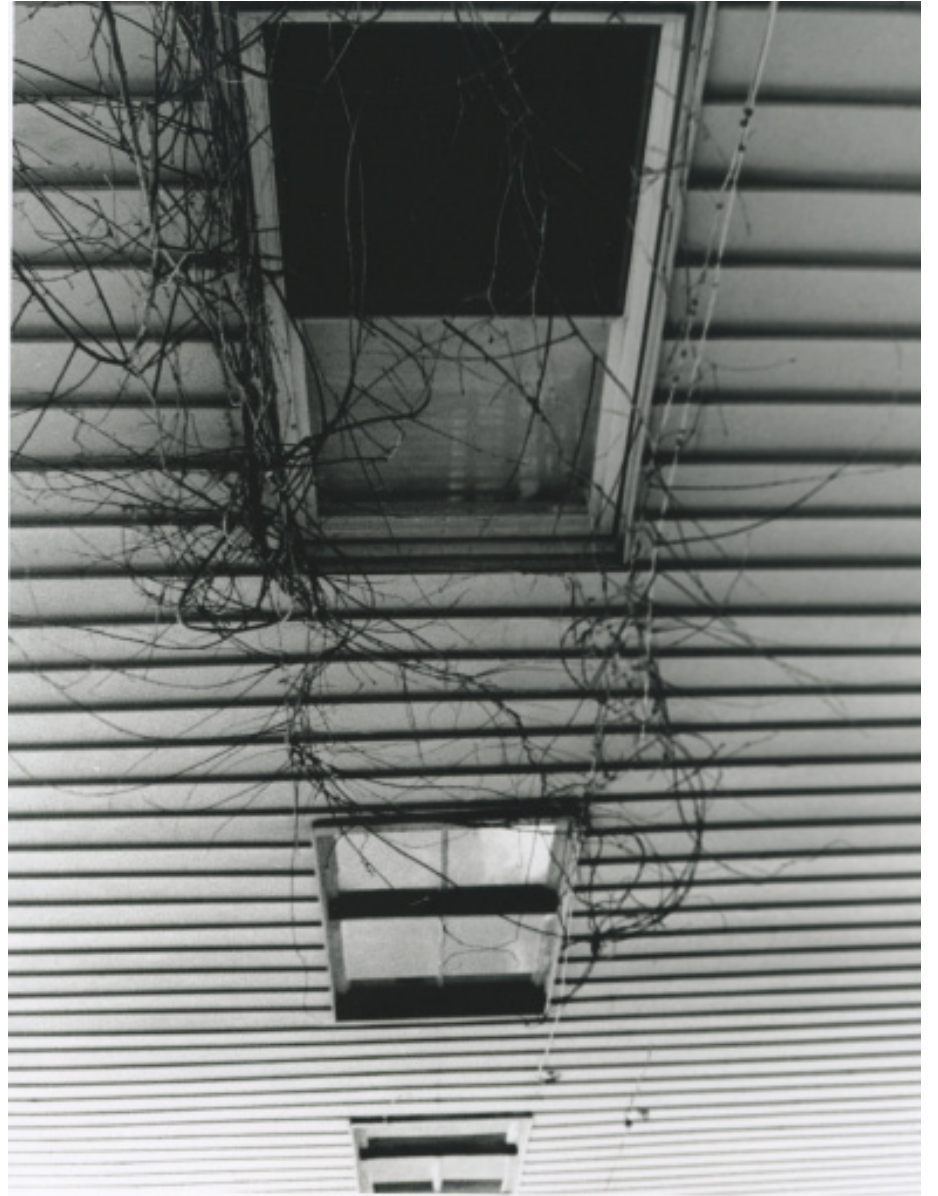
And when falling asleep on the very same night
She was laying and waiting with all of her might
But she realized that she should take action herself
And not rely on the workings of anyone else.

And that was what she was waiting for.

— Andriana Cunningham



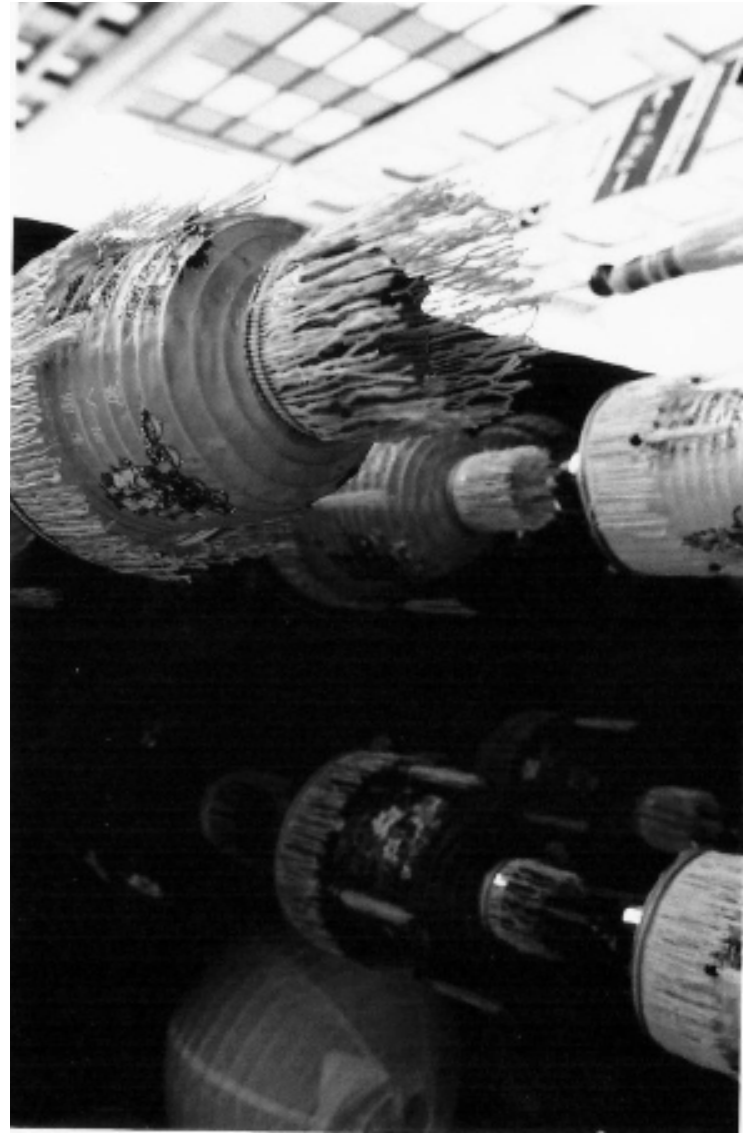




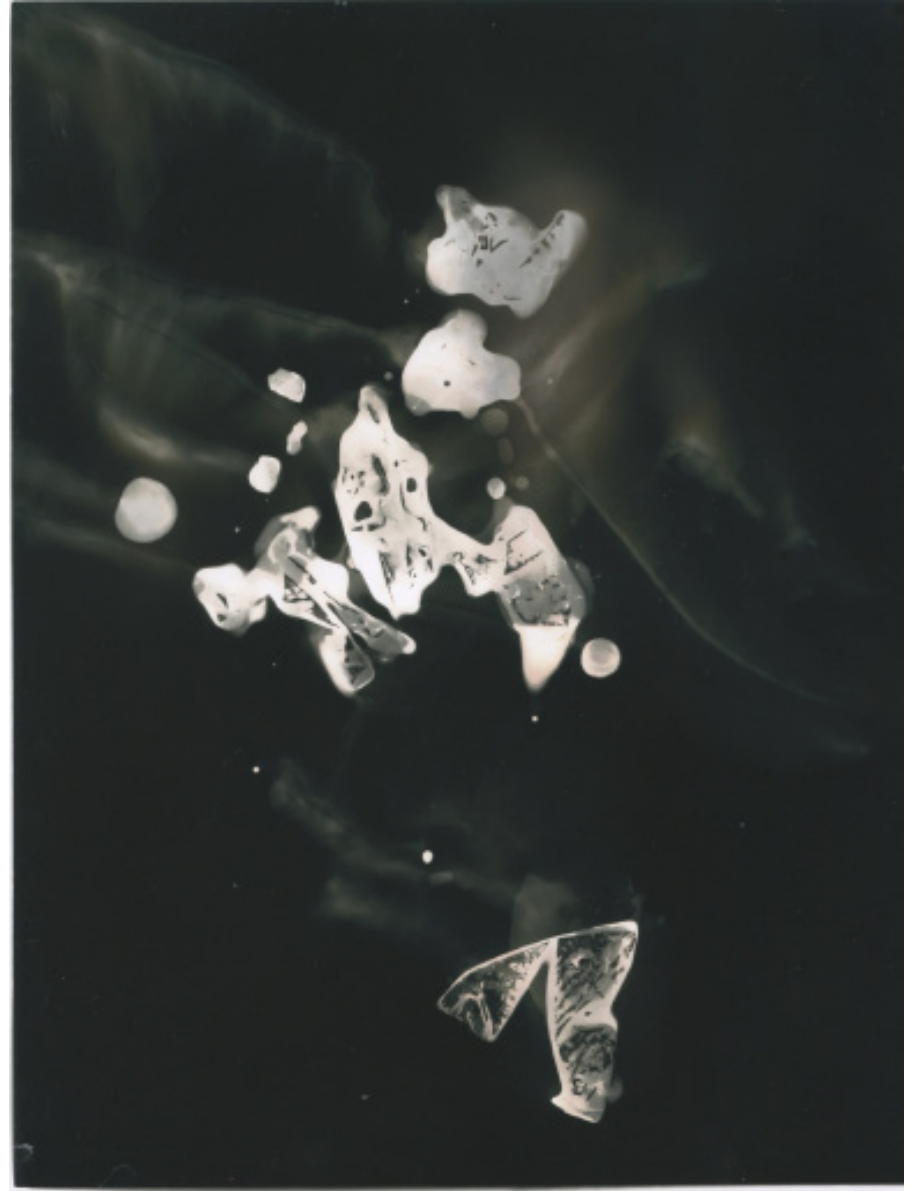
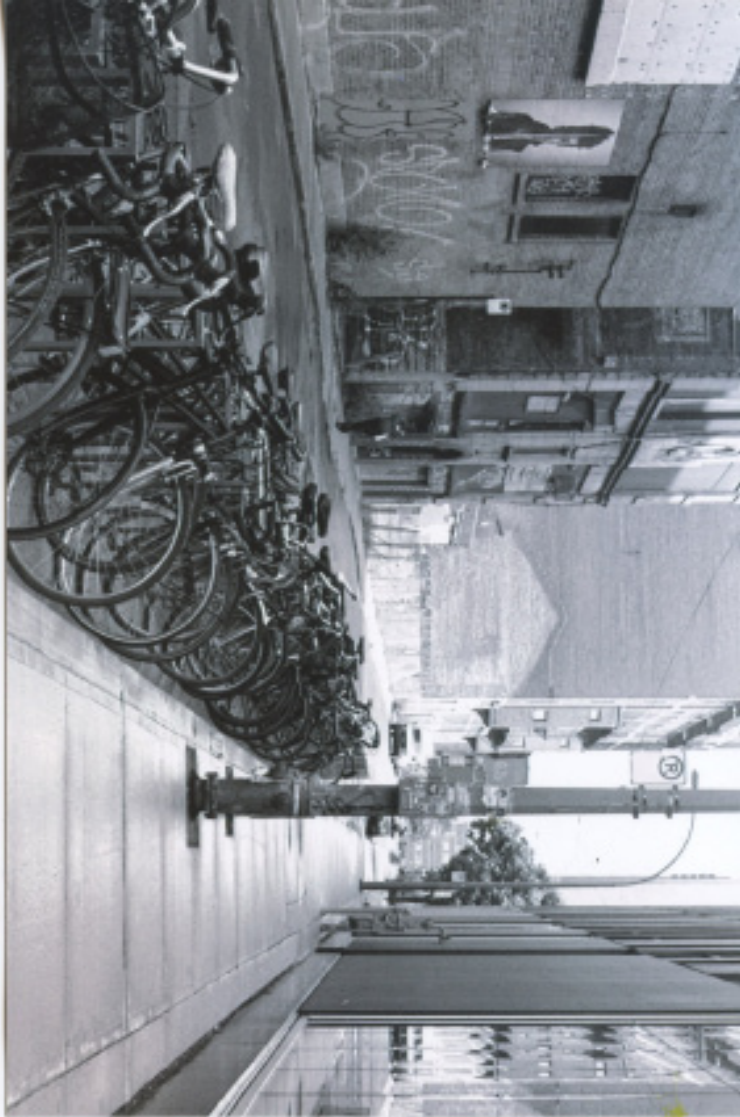














CONTROL INSTITUTE OPTIC

of graphic behavior static domains;
locations of capital – canonized individual
picture of immobile flesh
indecent lineages ceased.
good intended, persistent instantaneous –
hierarchical peace and vehicles cavity –
activity mechanized habitat trust,
and underneath
intransient citizen brain...
immobile =

—Tom Gelfars



She walked along the road,
Looking as if the wind might carry her away
At any moment.

She was a ghost,
A paper doll:
Delicate and translucent,
Moving not by her own accord,
But at the whims of a passing breeze.

*

If you had asked her,
She would tell you that happiness is the real curse.
Happiness seduces you into a walking a very fine line,
A line made of tethered rope
That hangs above a bottomless pit.
Happiness, she would say,
Happiness is the worst of fair-weather friends,
Full of vivacity and life,
Brimming with bright promises and plans for the future.
But happiness is vain,
And when it no longer finds you the nicest of them all,
It leaves without a word,
Slipping away into the night.
It leaves you alone,
Clutching at the promises you have just discovered are empty.

But it's too late.
You're already falling.

*

She could not tell you exactly how long she'd been unhappy for.
No sum of days or weeks or months
Would come to her.
She only knew that it had been a long time
Since she'd last smiled.

Unhappiness is not a symptom you can treat.

They call it “depression”
And hand you an array of pretty pills.
They say they’re “concerned”
And parade you around to “the experts”
Who all happen to be handsomely dressed men and women
Displaying their hallowed titles on golden plaques,
Pretending that they say “princess” instead of “dr.”
All of whom are handed big fat checks each year for “curing” you of
Your insecurities,
But in fact know nothing about unhappiness at all,
Other than that the people who suffer from it furnish
Their lavish and frivolous lifestyles.

There are grocery lists of “nervosas” and doctors and prescriptions
And pills,
But nothing can cure unhappiness in its core,
Except for letting go
And starting anew.
But forgiving and forgetting
Are not two things easily done.

—Louisa Carey



Expensive Company

This girl was obsessed. No joke, she had met Justin Bieber more than a dozen times; apparently if you pay enough you can do that. Glossy images of his face were plastered over all four walls and ceiling and he could see you from every angle and it was overwhelming in the small bedroom of this girl whom I had only just met. But she was aware of how potentially frightening it was—she didn't want me to think she was crazy—and forewarned me. I assured her with a smile that it was no problem! It's actually really funny to think about it now.

I was at this house getting ready for a dance sponsored by a Jewish youth organization I was considering joining. My friend (who was soon to be elected president of the local chapter) was bringing me and her other friend (the Bieber girl) along. You were allowed three events for free before you were supposed to join and pay the fee. The organization is basically a Jewish sorority and Jewish fraternity under one heading, and I had little interest in going to weekly meetings or expensive conventions in other states. This dance was my second or third event, and in all honesty, the dances were the only reason why I would join. I was hoping to make some friends outside of high school because by the time I was fifteen or sixteen, it was getting to feel pretty claustrophobic.

So here I was in the Bieber bedroom (complete with cardboard cutout) trying to figure out what to do with myself while my friend and her friend finished putting on their makeup and straightening their already-straight hair. I just looked at the reflection of my wet curly hair and hoped it would be dry by the time we got the dance. It all felt rather Mean Girls-esque—except for that these girls weren't mean.

In retrospect I should have silently vowed to make an anthropological study of the whole event. That would have made it a lot more interesting.

Instead, once we had all looked at ourselves long enough, I followed the girls, the girl's older brother, and the brother's girlfriend out of the house and into a little red sportscar that smelled overwhelmingly like tobacco smoke. Us dance-goers sat squished in the back while the girlfriend sat shotgun and the brother drove us to the nearby Jewish Community Center. I'll admit that while I was a little afraid I was going to die because the brother couldn't seem to lift his head from his phone as he was driving, I was exhilarated knowing that I really only knew one person in the car. I was far from my usual weekend rituals. Everything felt new.

I'm the kind of person much more likely to go home and write about (read: think about) an experience rather than extend myself and immerse myself in it. I think that's why I like big cities and car rides. I can feel excited about my destination, surrounded by strangers, but there's not much I'm expected to participate in directly. It's like the way I use Facebook; I spend a tragic amount of hours observing other peoples' online exploits, but I set myself as "invisible." Please, don't be offended, but I don't want you to know when I'm online and when I'm not.

My thoughts were interrupted when the little car arrived at the community center, and there we met the other kids from our county who were going to the dance. Before getting on a bus to Long Island where the dance was to take place, we took pictures of ourselves in the parking lot. My social skills really shone when it took a girl at least five tries to get my attention so that I would line up for a

group photo.

On the bus ride, however, I sat next to the Bieber girl and I was actually able to hold a conversation with her. Isn't it strange how when two people who know each other slightly more than they do the other people in the crowd they stick together? That's what happened with me and her. We talked about how we each knew our mutual friend (her from cheerleading and track, me from preschool). It was basically our only connection; I can't consider myself athletic and I'm lucky when I run a mile in under twelve minutes. I was feeling pretty out of place.

But then again, it was a nice drive. I believe it was early springtime, and I watched the sun set over the highway.

When we finally got to another community center about an hour away I descended the bus and realized that I was supposed to interact with hundreds of kids I had never met with my one friend as my only guide. She seemed to know everybody there. (What was I thinking?) There was one big room with a DJ playing bad loud music and tightly packed kids and then there was a room with pizza and parent chaperones. I spent most of the night dancing with my friend and her friends. A few times I accidentally got separated, and once I intentionally separated myself and ended up in the pizza room feeling bad for myself. Then my friend found me, saying she had gotten worried, and I felt bad for a different reason. Then it was over.

I sat in the back of the bus feeling disgusted with myself for trying to be a part of something I knew all along would feel wrong. I tried to fall asleep to the whispers of what photographs should be uploaded. I'm not sure why a bus ride at night on a highway feels so deep and makes you feel pensive even if you're thinking of nothing but pizza, yet watching the highway lights swoop across the pleather

seats soothed my troubled soul and I felt a little better.

I want to yell at you for your shallowness, for not being able to separate yourself from your infuriating iPhone, one of which I intentionally don't own. Stop mugging for the camera; my god, you don't have to take a picture for it to have happened! But unfortunately I don't think I can say I have a better idea about how to be in the moment. You might think that because I spend so much time pondering my existence and What It All Means I would know myself a little better than to expect to enjoy myself at that dance with so many strange people. Though it's my inability to get out of my own head that probably made it impossible to enjoy in the first place.

Malcolm Gladwell said in 2006 that he thinks most "people are experience rich and theory poor." Unlike him, who spends a lot of time in the processing stage, "people who are busy doing things... don't have opportunities to kind of collect and organize their experiences and make sense of them." I couldn't agree with him less regarding myself, but something tells me that's what really separates me from the people at the dance more than anything else.

Once I was on another bus on the way to another Jewish event sponsored by my Hebrew school. It was a trip to a Jewish museum in Manhattan, and I was young enough that my dad came along. I bring it up because I remember him laughing at the way the trip was advertised. "An experience?" he scoffed. "It would be an experience if we just sat on the bus for eight hours!" I often think about the implications of that and haven't gotten too far. I know, however, that much of what I remember about how I felt the night of that dance are the moments in between, the time spent gazing in the mirror with multiple Biebers creepily staring back, the time in the car, the time on the bus, the minutes spent moping by the pizza.

If it isn't obvious to you already, I didn't end up joining. But if anyone's interested, I'm putting together a sorority in which we don't go to events and instead pay to sit around and discuss our experiences, our disillusionment, our shortcomings, our failings. Oh wait. That's called therapy.

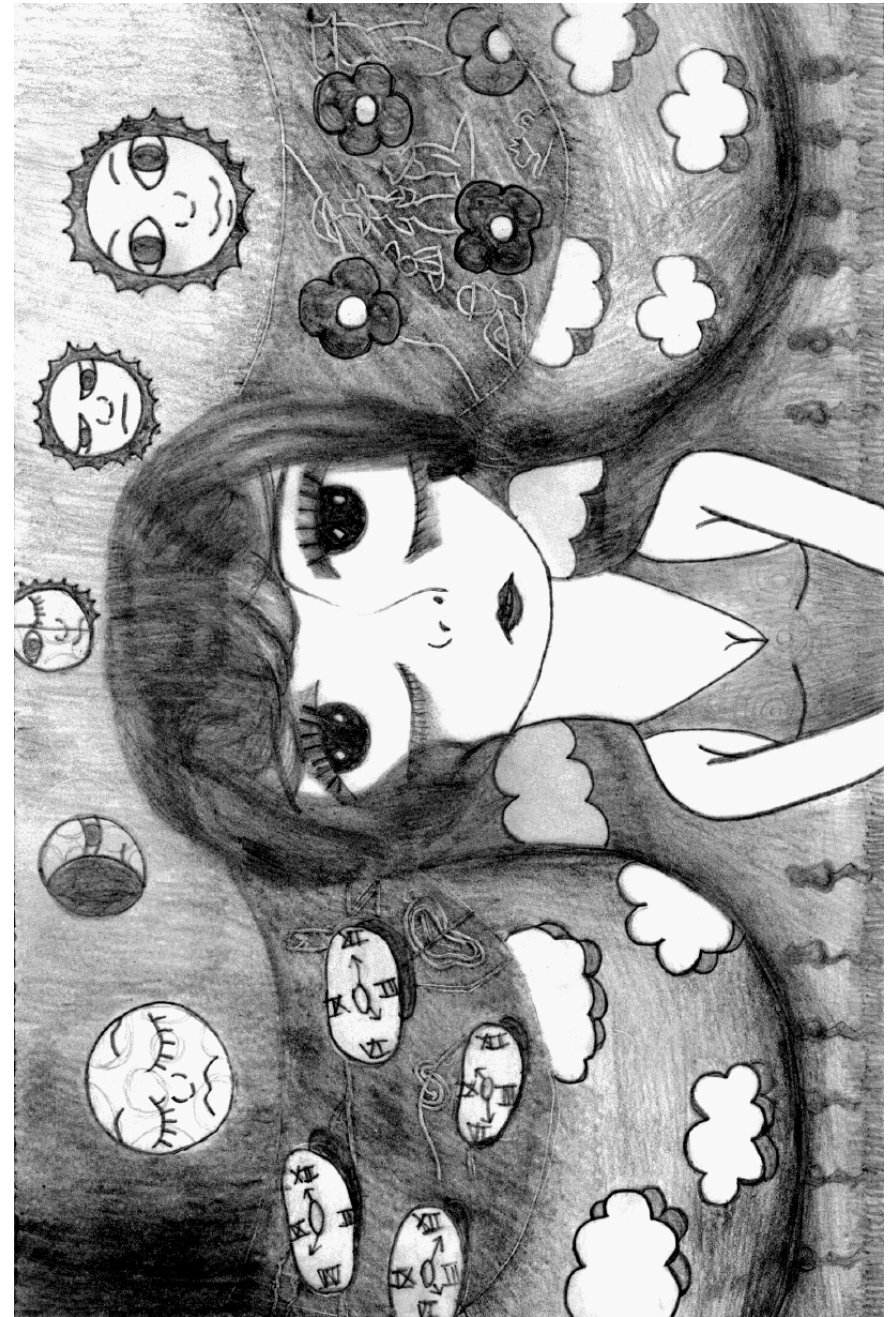
—Simone Brandford-Altsher

I have tried so hard
not even ninety showers
could wash you away

—Paula Telyczka

I kept rereading
the last pages, pretending
that it didn't end

—Paula Telyczka



We're on the West Side Highway, 20 minutes away from Port Authority. My dad just picked me up from my house, and we're on our way to pick you up now. I keep trying to ask you where you are so we can tell how far away you are, but it's too dark for you to read the signs, and you're sitting too far away from the bus driver to ask him. That of course makes me even more impatient and I continue counting down the minutes until your bus is supposed to get here on the digital clock on top of the radio in front of me in the passenger side of the car. I know the bus will be late – but it helps calm me down, because I know you'll be here in the car with me soon. I blast the stereo, which is connected to my phone so I can choose the music. The saddest love songs always come on when I leave it on shuffle, so I try to pick uplifting songs like “Pocket Full of Sunshine,” by Natasha Bedingfield, but of course to no avail.

We're parked at the side of the Port Authority building now, where we always park to wait for you. We're texting about how excited we are, especially now that you've reached the place where you finally know where you are – the Lincoln Tunnel. At that point shortly after you arrive, I always get agitated because you have to stop texting me once the bus pulls in because you lose service, then have to find your way out through the horde of people who occupy the filthy bus station. You call me when you get outside and we find a place to meet while I walk up the street, turn the corner, and try to find you. I'm still trying to find you while we're on the phone when suddenly I realize you're two feet away from me. You're here! “Oh my God, hi,” I say to you as I fumble to hang up the phone so I can rush to hug you. We both really want to get out of the crowd, so we make it quick so we can hurriedly make our way back to the car.

Once we hop in you tell my dad how the ride was and text your parents to let them know you're okay, and I sit next to you in the back-seat still not fully coping with the fact that you are physically here, next to me. I think to myself that you probably texted me and rush to find my phone so I can answer, but I realize that I don't need to – you're here. I sit in the middle part so I can be closer to you, you put your arm around me, and we both look at each other's phones as we scroll through Instagram and Facebook, showing each other different statuses and updates from people we don't know.

Why do we have to be like this? Why do I have to be in disbelief every time you're finally here with me? It's freaking ridiculous. But you're three hours away from me, neither of us can drive, and it costs seventy-five dollars for a round-trip bus ticket. It's torturous to feel this way. It's so hard to love you. No, it isn't because of you – even though you have your moments – it's because of the littlest things that are also the biggest. I can't take you to my school dances or show you off to my friends. I can't make you watch romantic movies with me when I'm in the mood to cry to them, and you can't hold me when I do – so when we watch movies together on Skype and you share your screen so that I can see it too, we don't watch things like that. I guess I can agree with that.

We picked up a quick bite to eat for our long ride back home up to Yorktown (you call my house “home” too. I think it's cute), and when we're there we go into other rooms to get changed and comfortable, then set up the queen-sized blow up bed we just bought for you for when you come and stay over. We set it up in the living room, then lay down, turn on the TV, and watch Netflix from the app we have for it on the Smart TV until the sun comes up and it comes

time for me to retreat to my own bed before I lose my battle with exhaustion. You are a lot better at breaking night than I am, and that sucks. I used to be good at it.

Remember when we met almost five years ago? The first time we talked on the phone after we met we talked until seven in the morning. That same day you asked me to go out with you. Would you ever have expected we would come this far? I was in the seventh grade and you were in the ninth. Both of us were outcast for the same reason, yet we're both so different. You ended up letting it get to you and decided not to keep going half way into your sophomore year, then just got your G.E.D. Now you can stay up as late as you want every night and you've mastered it since then – I just have the weekends to practice for it when you are here.

It's Saturday now, and we go about our day as we planned through the text messages before you got here – it's nice to not be sad seeing other couples out in public arm-in-arm; you're here now. I take you places that they don't have out there in the middle of nowhere, a.k.a. upstate New York. I want you to try new things. The only ethnic food you've ever even had was an Americanized Chinese buffet. You always love what I have you try. You tell me how you wish you had some when you are back home, which throws me off until I realize you mean your actual home, not mine – and I tell you that we can buy some for you to take there. Before I know it, it's nighttime and we repeat what we did the first night, except I cry, and this time you are finally there to hold me when I do. You hold back your own tears so you can be strong for me, but tomorrow you leave me again. Neither of us knows when we'll be together again.

When I said yes to going out with you, never could my twelve-year-old self have imagined that it could hurt so much. Even if I could go back and have the opportunity to change it, I wouldn't,

because I am bold. I am willing to spend a lot of time alone in exchange for a little time with you when I see you because I know a good thing when I see it, even if I don't see it nearly as much as I wish I could. Every time I see you, though, it only gets harder to be away from you, because we make more memories for me to look back on when I think about you – which is always.

It's Sunday, and we go get breakfast at Panera before making the trip back down to Manhattan so you can get on the bus back home. The car ride is the second most challenging thing I have ever had to do, because I know that in just a few minutes, rather than the few days I had when I woke up on Friday to spend with you, I have to let you go again.

We're on the West Side Highway, twenty minutes from Port Authority. I'm sitting in the middle so that I can be closer to you. You have your arm around me and I have my face nestled into the wet stain that my tears have created on your sweater as I cry softly; I don't want my dad to hear me. You tell me you love me over and over and promise you'll come back to me soon, but your words mean nothing to me because I know you just want to calm me down. You'll say anything to make me happy again.

We're parked in front of the Port Authority building now, where we always park when we drop you off. You tell me you'll text me when you get off the bus, quickly kiss me good-bye, tell me you love me, open the door, and exit so you can get your things from the trunk. You wave good-bye to my father, who tells you to let us know if you find your bus okay, and then walk across the street. This is the most challenging experience I must repeatedly go through now: you text me, telling me you miss me already before you have to stop texting me so you can go through the horde of people in the filthy bus station, then lose service until you pull out of there on the bus.

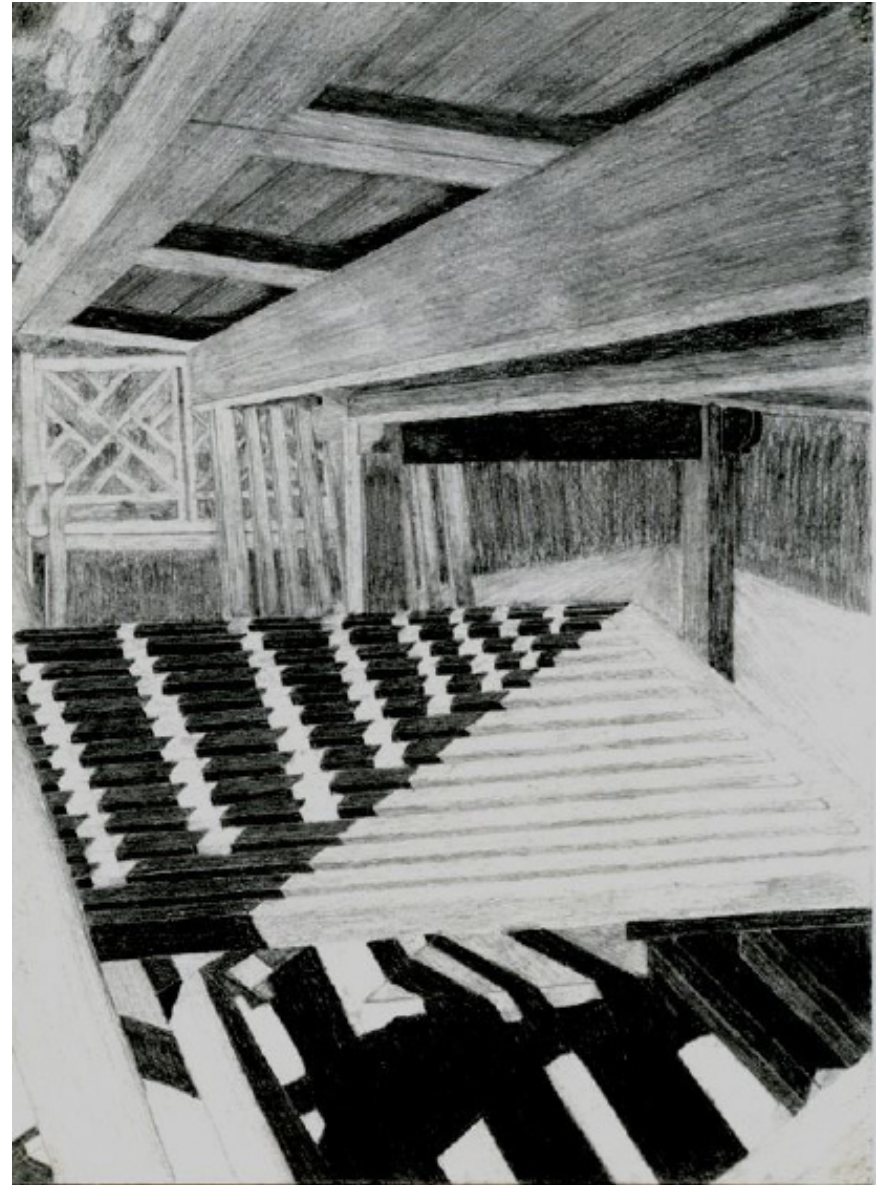
We drove away already, and I've moved back to the front seat. I'm counting down the minutes as we get further and further away from you, wondering how close we would be if we just turned around and went back to you, even though I know we won't. I blast the stereo, which is connected to my phone so I can pick the songs and I try to pick uplifting songs like "Pocket Full of Sunshine," by Natasha Beddingfield; but I don't care enough to keep trying to choose songs like that anymore and just leave it on shuffle.

—Hannah Cafagna

Nature

Once whilst on a walk
I saw a deer, quite scary
Now I stay indoors

—Jesse Litvin



I met him on the bald
15 miles from the moraine,
where I McGuyvered a bivouac,
when I lost the treadway,
his trail candy sprinkling magic on me
at the hostel at the trailhead.
He has been slabbing
while I scramble up and over
the scree, the talus, the drumlin,
weave the needles and aguirres,
challenge the bergschrund,
scale the arete's of the gendarme.
I broke my own trail
as I pink blazed through,
bare-booting and post-holing –
oriented on him –
to the krummholz at the timberline.
I was stacking a cairn
when he met me at the peak.
I was blistered
and he was worn at the edges.
Our ascent was tampered by the blow down
as we tumbled
it was time for me to self-arrest,
and I left him among the deadfall
and the widowmakers.

—Gretchen Bogan



The Captain

On a walk home I saw a one-antlered deer
a mangled face
a limp
an eye whose last sight was probably headlights

I knew it wasn't a good idea
to take him on a motorboat,
even though he was sporting his
wrinkled, gray
Coast Guard hat
that used to be a deep blue
But after watching the way he felt the cutter
leave port earlier that morning,
like he was at the helm
not even my grandmother would convince him
to stay on shore

Of course, he told the classics
we had all heard them
but that didn't mean we didn't want to hear them again

He clasped the side of the boat like it was his grandson
and taught us sea songs with his smile

"Are you alright, Papa?"

He lasted thirty minutes on that boat
The captain lasted eighty-three years

Later he told me
it wasn't important
actually he told me twice
perhaps because his hearing-aids didn't pick up my response
or perhaps he had to tell himself, too
On a walk home I saw a unicorn
majestic and wise
feeble
an eye trying not to look back

—Nathan Blum



I'm so hungry I could eat a horse! I'm so hungry I could just break into a stable with a butcher knife and hold it up above my head and take one last look at the gleaming brown eyes, so full of wisdom. I'm so hungry I could slowly lower the knife as tears spring to my eyes in recognition of this majestic, beautiful creature so wrongly imprisoned. I'm so hungry I could steal a horse. I'm so hungry I could ride through the glen, with my hair streaming behind me, like a beautiful warrior princess. I'm so hungry I could become an animal rights activist. I'm so hungry I could start a horse sanctuary.

*

Home is where the heart is. Home is where the ancient, sinister, rune-covered box containing a human organ is. Home is where the spell book of dark magic is. Home is where the ritualistic sacrifice is.

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You can lead a horse to water, but you can't cure his alcoholism.

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"That's what she said!" Ms. Rudd told me angrily. I had been caught plagiarizing. My entire academic career was tarnished forever.

*

A stranger's just someone you make stilted conversation with at a party, while your friend is in the bathroom, and then never talk to again. A stranger's just a woman you bump into on the sidewalk and apologize to, but you don't think she heard you, as she bustles down the street. A stranger is just a murderer, but statistically speaking you have little to fear.

—Clara Weinstein

“Life can be a challenge. Life can seem impossible. It’s never easy when there’s so much on the line. But you and I can make a difference.”

—Herman Cain/Pokémon: The Movie 2000

“And I want you to have a good night
And I want you to have a good day
Everybody know I see weird things
But it’s gonna be okay”

—Lil B

The hardest part of writing something like this is beginning. The only thing I hate more than staring at a blank screen for hours, unable to be satisfied with anything I produce simply because I care so much, is when I do end up beginning simply by acknowledging this. The drawing you’re about to see on the next page needs context—so much so that I am humbled with the chance to provide it. I began seriously dedicating myself to drawing with a piece I entitled “Heaven” which was featured in the literary magazine last year. Suffice it to say, I may have never found this new passion, a new way for me to externalize, control, rationalize and understand my confused thoughts, emotions, desires and dreams, had it not been for the publication you are holding right now and the people that made it happen. You’ve seen a drawing of mine here: and how I have grown in terms of talent and understanding what it is I want to do, and more importantly the long road ahead that I need to take to really be satisfied with my work.

I am not satisfied with the drawing you are about to see. It

took me approximately 10 hours to conceptualize and plan what I wanted where on the page, another several to lay out what I would go over with colored pencil (an unwieldy medium I still struggle with) and 20 to 30 to actually “draw” it. I largely didn’t enjoy the process—It was tedious, difficult to get the colors and values I wanted—and it made me nothing short of miserable to realize that unless I ignored my perfectionism and desire for it to be as “good as it could possibly be” it would never be finished.

On one afternoon the lit mag was holding a “Write Night” in the art room to garner interest and gain submissions. I had brought my colored pencils to school in a zip-loc bag to draw during it, and as soon as I locked the door of my apartment I realized I had forgotten them there, meaning I would be unable to work on the drawing until the following day. I ran back to the school and got them, and running back home with the zip-loc bag in my hand, I somehow managed to grace my left eye with the corner of it, firmly scratching my cornea, triggering a nosebleed, and leaving me sitting just off of five corners, covered in blood, in intense pain and unable to see.

What followed was a 3-day indescribably terrible exercise in anguish and despair. Characterized by screaming, crying, proclaiming that I wanted to kill myself and constantly fighting with my mother, I envisioned myself able to be patient towards the woman in the ambulance who frantically asked me questions and the doctors who tried to help me, but between the physical and psychological trauma I was going through I was anything but. Perhaps that, how I handled it, was what was most painful of all. I try as hard as I possibly can to be a kind, patient, understanding and sociable person, but between

the unbelievable pain I was experiencing, the psychotic woman in the ambulance, the impatient doctors and my mother, I was either a disobedient toddler or a bitter, stoic, and removed 13 year old. (I had turned 18 only weeks before.) And then it was over, the pain was gone, I made up with my Mom, and I went to school the following week feeling fine.

My worst fear is to be looked at as something that I'm not through my actions. Perhaps this fear helped lead me to draw, to perform at our Open Mic Nights, to make mistakes, friends, and to have learned something I won't attempt to put into words. I'm really not sure you're ready for it: it is absurdly symbolic and personal. God knows I'm not ready to show it to you, but I find the thought of keeping it to myself after all I went through to create it nothing short of hysterical. I thought of making a laundry list personally thanking each and every person depicted for what I have learned and gained from them, but I've rambled long enough, and I think it speaks for itself.

—Michael Ganjehlou



A final haiku:

Motivation

Ah, senioritis
I won't finish anything