

The sign on I-81 North says,
“Shoulders are for emergencies only.”
Ride me poem; I think I’ve got the blues.

—Nikki Giovanni

The Gallery

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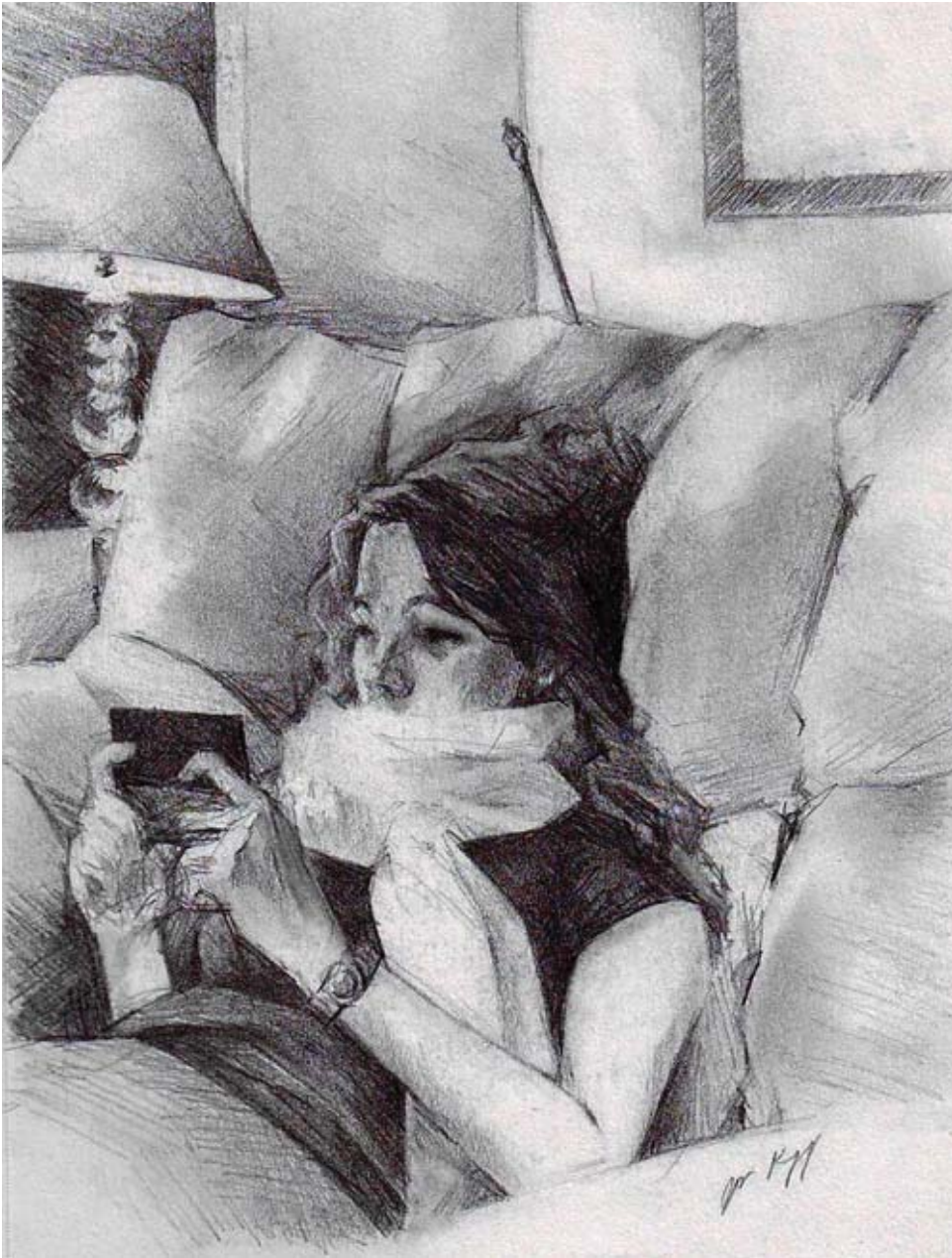
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the Road to the Adirondacks

In a rearview, the line of an eyebrow,
five hundred years of road,
 billboards for blonde massage
 lowest prices allowed by law.
The sea of fast food signs on stilts,
mountains corrugated with gulleys of coal-
 carved through with rust-beaten ruts,
 hung with slugs of bubbling ice.
Warehouse walls proclaim
Jesus is Lord
 in this bombed out
 corridor of earth.

—Julia Schaumburg



Christina

John Knapp

Trinity

By Teresa Teixeira

“Thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead. Thy teeth are like flocks of sheep.’ Man, if anybody ever said that to me, they’d be out in the street.”

“That’s nothing, listen to this: ‘My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.’” The two girls collapsed with laughter.

“After being told that my ‘belly is as bright ivory,’ my bowels would probably be moved too.”

“What are you ladies reading?” The Pastor walked into the girls’ dormitory without so much as a knock.

“The Bible,” they answered together, looking down to hide their blushes.

“And what exactly in the Bible could you find that is so amusing?” Pastor asked skeptically. Neither of the girls answered. The Pastor grabbed the Bible away from them and quickly scanned the page. “I expect to see the two of you for confession after the service tonight.”

As the door slammed behind him, Leah groaned. “I hate confession.”

“Well, it is good for the soul,” Rebecca offered.

Leah cocked an eyebrow in response. “And reading the Bible isn’t?” she countered. “Thou has ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes.”

Rebecca couldn’t help but giggle. “You do have to admit—”

“I don’t have to admit anything.” Leah had only come to Trinity a decade ago, so she was more reluctant to accept instruction than Rebecca, who had been there all her life. Trinity had been functioning under its own government for nigh on fifty years. Rebecca’s grandparents had come there when they were first married. They said that they wanted to bring their children up in a place where they knew they’d be safe: safe from drugs, violence, and persecution.

Leah’s mother had come to Trinity because her husband had left them, so they hadn’t been able to afford a house. When Leah first came to Trinity, her name was Charlotte. When she was christened into the congregation, she was made to take the name of Leah, the woman in the Bible whom Jacob accidentally married. The Pastor thought it was more appropriate than a name that sounded so similar to “harlot.”

After the service, those who had sinned gathered near the front of the sanctuary, awaiting the Pastor to come and pronounce them forgiven. The group mainly consisted of teenagers, but there was the occasional embarrassed widow or chastised child. Leah dragged Rebecca to the back of the group to stand beside David, a regular at confession.

“Rebecca, I think you’re in the wrong room,” David teased as they approached. “The Perfects are gathering in the dining hall.”

Leah snorted. “We might as well head over there. We’re here for reading the Bible. Song of Solomon.”

David smirked. “‘Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.’”

“My breasts look like deer? Well, ‘thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon.’ That means it’s huge if you didn’t get that,” Leah countered.

“Leah, you have that memorized?” Rebecca whispered.

“I took it to mean that my nose was stately,” David teased, taking a step closer to the girls.

“All right, my children,” the Pastor announced, taking the platform. “We are gathered here because you have forsaken God’s Will and followed that of the Devil. The Bible commands us to make our confession before men, so we will all stay to witness the confessions of our brethren.”

The first person up was a young boy around eight who admitted to forsaking his daily devotion to play outside with his friends. His forgiveness was followed by applause. Next, an elderly woman who had taken more than her share of potatoes from the storeroom. Applause. Someone who didn’t pray before he ate. Applause. Sin. Applause. Sin. Applause.

Leah clambered up the stairs and stood beside the Pastor. “I read the Bible.” Someone in the crowd who wasn’t paying attention started to clap.

“Which book?” the Pastor prompted.

“The Song of Solomon.” A few of the older ladies blushed, attesting to their knowledge of the content of the book.

“And what reaction did you have?”

“I laughed.”

A low murmur filled the sanctuary as the Pastor hesitated to forgive her.

“You are forgiven, my daughter.” Applause.

Rebecca scurried across the platform and murmured “I read the Song of Solomon” barely loud enough for her confession to be considered public. Applause.

David strode across the stage, back straight and chin high, a smirk playing at the edges of his mouth. “I rang the bell for prayer five minutes late, and I ate more than my portion at dinner. Oh,” he continued, meeting Leah’s gaze, “I also thought unclean thoughts.”

“You are forgiven, my son.” Applause.

“His locks are bushy, and as black as a raven,” Leah whispered to Rebecca as David strode back down to join them.

“His hair’s straight.”

“Shut up.”

The group left the sanctuary on their way back to the dormitories: the men were on the east side of the town and the women were on the west. Married families occupied the north and south. Holding back the two girls, David peered up into the starry sky. “Isn’t it huge?”

“Um, yes,” Rebecca replied.

David looked back to earth, his eyes shining. “I’m leaving.”

The girls looked at him in shock. Finally, “What? You can’t just leave! It’s not—it’s not allowed.”

David and Leah both turned to face Rebecca. “What *is* allowed?” Leah asked.

“Well—”

“Rhetorical.”

“Oh.”

“Come with me.” David’s invitation was met with more silence.

“All right.”

“What?! You can’t just leave,” Rebecca repeated. “What are you going to do?”

“Whatever we want.”

“No, I mean, you don’t have any money or papers or anything.”

“I figure we’ll just sell our story to the news teams.” David shrugged. Rebecca gaped at the two.

“When are we leaving?” Leah asked, tightening the group to prevent anybody from overhearing.

“Tonight.”

“So soon?”

“We can’t risk Pastor finding out,” he reasoned. Leah nodded in agreement. “Meet me at the dining hall at midnight. The forest behind it isn’t fenced off.”

Rebecca watched through the darkness as Leah gathered her few possessions into her pillowcase. In went her Sunday dress, her everyday dress, and her Bible. “Are you sure you want to stay?” she whispered.

Rebecca merely nodded, too afraid of being heard to speak. Leah kissed her friend on the cheek one last time. “I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth.”

“Do not quote the Bible to justify your sin.”

“How is this sin?”

Leah was answered with silence as Rebecca rolled over to face the wall. With one last look back into her room of ten years, Leah walked into the night.

David was waiting for her where he said he’d be. The large painted eyes over the dining hall doors and the words “God Is Watching” seemed to glow in the moonlight.

“Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.”

“Stop.”

“Enough of Solomon for one day?” he joked.

“Enough of quoting the Bible to justify this.”

“This doesn’t need to be justified.”

Leah nodded her assent, then followed David into the trees.

“Come to bed, Jeremiah.”

“Not tonight,” the Pastor replied, his eyes intent on the wall of screens. One showed the inside of the women’s dormitories, one the men’s, one the dining hall, and several others scanned the outdoors surrounding all the buildings. The words “God Is Watching” blazed in red above the screens, reminding the Pastor whose work he was carrying out.

The Pastor studied one screen in particular. It showed two dark figures darting between shadows of trees. He grinned as the smaller figure collapsed to the ground.

Leah screamed as pain shot up her leg.

“Ssh!” David reprimanded. He turned back to help her up before he saw the real cause of her fall: a bear trap had clamped itself around her leg, cutting through the skin and breaking a bone. “Oh no, oh no, oh no.” It seemed he could say nothing else.

Leah panted on the ground as David tried in vain to pry it loose. “What are we gonna do?” he asked.

“Did you hear that?” Leah asked, nearly in panic. “Someone’s coming.”

“Oh no, oh no, oh no.” David multiplied his efforts on the trap.

“Go, David. Run.”

David turned his head back and forth, unsure of what to do.

“Go tell the news programs like you planned. Bring the police.” Finally, his head stopped its shaking and focused on Leah. “Make haste, my beloved and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”

“I thought you said no more quoting the Bible,” David attempted to joke. Leah didn’t laugh. Lying on her back in the damp forest floor, she watched her only hope of escape run away from her.

The footsteps approached slowly, beating time along with her throbbing pain. The wait was agonizing as Leah lay on the ground motionless, praying for some miracle to save her from being found. The footsteps stopped. She looked above her to find the grim face of the Pastor, outlined by the shining of the moon.

The congregation gathered at the gates of the city, wiping away the remnants of sleep. Many of the young children were still in their nightclothes, not having had enough time to change after the summons. They circled around their Pastor who stood in front of a twitching bundle of sheets stained with blood.

“My flock, I have gathered you here today to take part in God’s command for justice. In Exodus, God lays out for us the various punishments for crimes, and promises to curse us if we do not carry them out—a curse which we can see evident in the state of the Outside’s worldly societies. As of yet, there has been no need to carry out any of these punishments, because all of you have faithfully followed the will of our Lord, Jesus Christ. But there is a dissenter among us, an infidel who has dared to masquerade behind a façade of faithfulness.

“Up until tonight, we have been blessed by having no need of these stones gathered to serve justice, but now, our blessing has been removed by this sinner, and

until she is brought to justice, we will be cursed. The Bible tells us that disobedience is witchcraft, and, in Exodus, it commands ‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.’ It also commands that ‘he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.’ By disobeying the will of her parents in God, this sinner has cursed her parents and must therefore be put to death.”

By this time, nearly every member of the congregation was stealing glances in every direction, eager to spot to whom the Pastor was referring and hoping it wasn’t them.

“Do not fear, my children, for I have already subdued the witch.”

The Pastor flung the sheet into the air, revealing Leah, trembling and bleeding. She tried to stand but didn’t possess the will or the strength. Several eyes shot toward Leah’s mother, standing agape in the front of the crowd, and toward Rebecca, burying her face in her hands.

Leah pleaded for mercy as the Pastor and his Deacons passed the stones among the congregation. After every member was so armed, the Pastor held up his hands.

“We must allow the condemned her last words. May she beg the Lord to have mercy on her sinner’s soul.”

“Let he who is without sin cast the first stone,” she spat.

The Pastor threw.





Morning Routine Self-Portrait
Catherine Cole

Pathos

I watched a fly die today on the windowsill
his wings flapping, fluttering in short
spastic bursts of intense desperate beating
before silence descended upon the world again.
The hush encapsulated us, separated us, me and the fly—
just a pause to rest and gain strength for another attempt.

I watched a fly die today in the window track
his body jerking in a gruesome way,
uncontrolled hops, at first level,
then upside down, then however he fell.
I watched the event, without uttering
the overwhelmed sympathy I was feeling.

I watched a fly die today in an artificial canyon
his short bursts of desperate flight
uttering many words that I could not articulate—
the vicious wish to live for one more night
beyond his allotted four and twenty hours.
I wished for things which lay beyond my powers.

I watched a fly die tonight among dirt and other bodies,
alone but for a human girl sitting silent in an armchair.
And in its death, witnessed some same pathos
finding the hungry desperate greedy strips flayed
without regard, without awareness from sole existence
in a fly's burst of futile flight, lost and without compare.

—Shelly Holder



Anna
John Knapp

The Red Scare

By Kat Zantow

Annette cuts across the drill field, old sneakers crunching the stiff yellow fingers of grass. Her legs are sore by the time she makes it to class, and breathing is hard, air sharp in her nose. The sky is a washed-out blue, and the sun promises a warmth it does not deliver.

A boy whizzes by her on a bike, crackling leaves. She looks up. Black hair, broad shoulders. Her chest clutches, and she freezes, unsure where to run. But he is past her, and doesn't even spare her a glance. She can't tell if panic or rage is holding her in place. The biker breaks before a streetlight, turns his head to look left into oncoming traffic.

The face is puffy, flesh lumped together. The antithesis of Steven's strong lines. As she takes the marble steps into the crumbling brick building, her heart still jackhammers.

Her heart was racing, and she nervously pulled at the refrigerator from the wrong side of the door. She got it right on the second try.

"Would you open this?" She held out the bottle of Magic Hat for Steven.

He unstraddled the kitchen chair and stood before he started unbuckling his belt.

"What are you doing?" She looked through the cracked door to the party still going on without them.

"Sex, obviously."

"Don't—"

Think about something else. Annette steps into the bathroom and splashes water over her face, pressing her palms against her aching eyes, trying to feel present. She looks at the dark circles under her eyes, and wonders when she last managed to sleep. She takes a backwards glance in the bathroom mirror before going into the classroom. Her white jeans are painfully pristine—she has been wearing light colors for a week in hopes of invoking Murphy's Law. The pale outfits leave her skin looking bloodless, unhealthy. Not that she has to impress anyone. Unless she sees Steven again, but she has no idea what she will say.

Annette opens the door to history class. Her eyes rake the room, stop on a plaid shirt and a mass of lank black hair draped over a desk. He is there, already napping,

with his face planted over his notes. She freezes. Then realizes these are not the strong arms of tight embraces and—no, this boy is weak, unthreatening.

Steven isn't there. Of course. He had only shown up to the first class, probably decided it wasn't worth waking up before 9am, or had dropped it altogether. Annette wishes he would show up. Hasn't run into him since. She needs to see him, needs to ask him if—she closes her eyes. She can feel her heart thumping hard.

"Relax." He showed her the hole cut in other side of the buckle. "It's a bottle opener."

"Get a different one. You're going to spill beer all over your pants. And then they'll think—"

"You need to cool it." He re-buckled the belt. Sighed. Two strides with those long legs took him to the counter. He pulled open a drawer and things clanked. Annette glared, thinking he was only pretending to look. But then he took out something that looked like it belonged in a tool chest.

The professor shuffles into the class. His bald spot reflects the hard fluorescent lighting, the shining center of his scraggly white halo. He says hello in a monotone and begins a lecture about the parting of the Red Sea. Annette grits her teeth, imagining the red waters churning apart. Her pen writes *let it rain* over and over in the margins of her notes. The droning goes on, and she can feel her eyelids sliding closed. Her head starts listing forward, but she feels herself falling and jerks upright. Her eyes pop open. Heart pounds fast. She can taste blood.

She hears nothing the professor says until the people around her get up to leave.

Annette started to tell him they should get going, but the door opened. A girl stared at them for a moment, then muttered something and staggered back out into the main room.

Steven winked at her, and she looked down. He was still holding up the bottle opener, fingers curved around the handle like the wood was carved to fit the hollow of his palm. "Is this to your standards, little miss picky?"

She looked at the varnish chipping off the handle, the rust spots on the curved teeth of the bottle opener. He flipped it over to show her the smooth blade of the can opening half.

*He opened the beer with a flick of his wrist. The cap tinkled as it fell on the table, exposing the wisdom *Always Be Kind to a Creative Mind*. Steven took a draught, then handed her the bottle.*

"I'm tired of this party," he said.

"OK. I'm leaving." She winked. "I'll see you tomorrow." She sipped the drink and walked away, but paused at the door. "I'll nurse this for the walk home. It should keep me steady."

"Have fun," he said.

Annette blinks in the cold sunlight, and looks at the shriveled leaves on the trees. The land is waiting for rain. She crunches leaves and grinds them into the bricks.

Passing one of the more upscale dorms on campus, she sees him sitting on a low wall, cuddling with a notorious campus crotch. Annette takes a breath, about to scream, unsure which of them she should warn. Then the boy turns, and she can see the features are all wrong, disordered. It isn't him. He notices her staring. She ducks her head and walks fast along the path. She has to get back to her apartment and stop shaking.

Annette takes the gum-spattered stairs two at a time, then stops on the path. She stares at the grove of trees, the shortcut across campus, and starts to feel light-headed, as if something will pop. The leaves are dying. She walks quickly on the concrete path, passing the shortcut, but her eyes keep flicking back to the dark branches. She starts running, already gasping for breath.

She was walking back to her apartment, tripping over roots until she veered back onto the trail proper. It had rained the night before, and she slipped on slick leaves. The beer went flying, spilling dregs.

Then there was metal at her throat. A point of pain. He was pressing hard, and she gasped. The metal was cold.

"We're doing this," he whispered, dragging the bottle opener along her chest.

"No!"

His voice sounded different, dangerous. She couldn't see his face in the dark, but she tried to slap him. He shoved her and she fell and he was pinning her. He bit her jaw.

She groaned, "Too hard."

He bit her harder. Her head was swimming, dark.

Her apartment is lit by the cheerless light of the outside world. She closes the blinds and turns on all the lights. Walks into the kitchen. Her roommates have left the sink full of dishes. She starts cleaning them, then lets the silverware drop out of her hands. It is not worth the effort. There will always be more dishes.

Annette pulls herself away from the sink. She fills a pot with rice and water, then pulls out a cutting board and as many vegetables as she can find. She takes out a carrot and starts hacking it with a chef's knife.

"Annette!" her roommate calls from another room.

Annette does not reply. She keeps chopping vegetables, considers letting the knife slip, cutting deep into her fingers. But it would not be enough. She is still carrying much too much blood. The metallic taste is on her tongue.

"No hello?" Her roommate walks in, arms folded over her chest.

Annette looks up. Her roommate is wearing vibrant colors. She can't muster the energy to force her lips into a smile, but she asks, "How is your day?"

"I'm living in the worst of all possible worlds. I have three tests in a row next week. I am not ready for behavioral psych. Are you? We should study group."

"What test?" Annette asks, inflection flat.

Her roommate stares. "You don't even know? Maybe you should go to fewer parties."

Annette starts smiling, hysteria rising up in her chest. "You should go sometime."

"I can't give up that much time. But maybe I will be hardcore today. Study beer!" Dana pulls out a Winter Lager. She rummages through the utensils until she pulls out a rusty wooden bottle opener.

Annette stares, suffocating. Her roommate can't find purchase on the bottle cap, and the metal scrapes ineffectively. "Could you open this for me?"

He opened her legs wide. Her head stopped swimming and she felt him thrusting against her. She tasted blood.

She moaned, and he pressed the bottle opener against her throat, said, "Quiet."

"No," she said weakly, and he hit her.

"Safe word!" she screamed.

He put a hand over her mouth, and told her, "No."

"Yes."

She puts down the knife, and her roommate hands her bottle and opener. Annette rubs the bottle opener. The hooks, the curved blade look tempting, abortive. She could force the blood, make sure she would never have to worry again. Her knuckles whiten over the handle. She curses, a splinter sinking into her palm.

"Are you OK?" Her roommate gives her a wide-eyed look.

"No." Annette's voice is strained. "I don't want this shit inside of me."

Her roommate looks worried. "Don't worry about it, I'll get a Mike's Hard Lemonade. Those twist off. Are you OK?"

"No. I don't know." Annette digs out the splinter with the curved blade. A trickle of blood drips off her hand, and she closes her eyes, wanting so much more.

G

the TONIC *that lies in* SEPIA

I have now achieved all my waking dreams
The dreams whose price I paid with blood and sweat and tears
That I fought for with gasping breath through each of these long New York City
years.

And now that I have achieved all my waking dreams
I long softly for the sleeping one
The quietly slumbering, sheep and shepherd dream
That lies just beyond my grasp, so much further than it seems.

But in the winter of the dream
I could look out my bedroom window and instead of seeing homeless
See homes in a sepia vision
Like looking at an old photograph of little matched houses in a British village
Where snow softly dusts roofs like powdered sugar on crepes
I would hear not the alarm bells
But bells on the necks of horses as they foxtrot through the streets
Pulling Santa's sleigh for boys and girls who still believe
This is the image for me my grandmother would weave.

In the spring of the dream
I would wear ribbons in my hair
And watch as shirtless masons laid stones for the river walk
As I sip from the well outside my front door
There would be a cat twining around my ankles and the call of a child as she skips
Skips a game that we no longer remember how to play
Oh, that would be the day.

In the summer of the dream
Sunlight would be so much simpler
And paid in full on the day I enjoyed it
It would stroke the countryside in sensual enjoyment
Painting the rolling hills in liquid gold
That seemed both young and forever old.

In the fall of the dream
I could close my eyes and smell the leaves as they slowly die
Only to be reborn again in an arbor embrace to rustle soft and sigh.

—Samantha Roth

locks

By Kristen Verge

I saw it on his jacket. He said it belonged to his sister. The first time he said it...or did he use another excuse? It was lying across his shoulder, spitefully, curved across the bottom of his collar and dangling from the top of his arm as if it were reclining there. Bold, just like that whore Manet painted.

Shiny, long, and exquisite, the very pinnacle of health and hygiene. My own, thin and pale blonde, anemic, are nothing compared to this. No, the lovely brown hair perched on his shoulder did not belong to me. Mine is much too limp, too hideous to stick to his clothing like that does.

When I first see it at the restaurant, I am silent. Maybe it will go, maybe it will give a little wave and slink down his arm and unto the floor and slither into the corner or under someone's shoe. But it stays, even after he takes his coat off and puts it on the back of his chair. It looks at me from his coat, behind his shoulder. I am still. Maybe it really is his sister's. Or his mother's. It might have flown onto him in the halls of the subway, it may have been dropped from a bird's beak, it may be from the girl from the coffee shop, that old woman we walked by, his best friend from first grade, his dead grandmother, his dog.

Even after what he said, after everything the therapist made him tell me, I worry. I never realized how simply unattractive I must be, how horrible my body is. I spend so much time getting ready that I'm late for dinner, for work, for appointments. There is something wrong with me that made him do it. He says he doesn't do it anymore, but I haven't changed much.

When he tells me the time, I have to check my watch anyway. When he says he separated the darks from the whites, I have to open the washing machine and see if it's true. I hang on every word, compulsively. He tells me I'm the one ruining this, but how can I tell, how can I be sure—where is the line drawn?

He is saying something but, at this moment, I can't understand what. It's peeking at me from the jacket, resting on his shoulder like it belongs there. I reach over suddenly and pluck it off. It writhes in my hands and tries to slip between my fingers, but I catch it. I hold it tightly.

“What's this?”

“Huh? Oh, probably my sister's.”

Sister! What color is his sister's hair? What does her face look like? I ate dinner

with her last week. I talk to her on the phone. What color are her eyes, her skin, her teeth? What does her face look like? Does she wear red lipstick or pink? What shade of mascara does she buy? Does he have a sister? I can't remember her now.

"But your sister doesn't..."

"Doesn't what? Have hair? That's probably hers. Don't worry about it."

The hair curls itself into a tiny coil in my hand, defeated and tired from squirming. I tuck it into my coat pocket when he isn't looking and button the top to keep it from getting out.

"What about last time?"

"What about it?"

"How do I know—"

"I told you I won't."

"But how can I *know*!"

He doesn't talk anymore. After we eat our meal, after he pays the check, after we ride the subway back to our apartment and walk up the stairs, he says he's going to take a shower. I sit on the bed and pull the hair out of my pocket. It wriggles but soon wraps itself around my fingers, sliding over my nails and into my palm. I hold both ends of it between my thumb and forefingers, examining its length. I lay it out on the nightstand in front of me, like a patient on the exam table. The last one was easier. It was medium-length and bright red and curly, and I had never seen hair like that before on anyone I knew. That's how I figured it out. This one, despite how shiny and dark it is, is much too general—it could be from anyone. There were some other things I found last time, too, but I haven't seen any of those yet. Last time, his carefully lint-brushed jacket was more pristine when he came home than when he left. His teeth were too clean. His shoes were covered with brown mud that you couldn't find on the sidewalks of the city. His socks were on the wrong feet. The coins in his wallet jingled too loudly.

The brown hair stretches itself out, luxuriantly. It ignores me and lies on the nightstand as if it chose to be there. I shouldn't have to deal with this. I paid for the counseling, I paid for his new boxers, I paid for my new haircut, I paid for the makeup that promised to remove five years, I paid for the pills.

I imagine taking the hair, coming up behind him, putting it around his neck and letting it choke him. I will convince it to swim in his soup and it will squirm down his throat so he cannot swallow. I will let it bury itself under his skin and give him infections. I will tie it to his toes and wrap it around his legs and arms so he is bound and cannot leave.

But I know the hair could never do that. It's not on my side. It mocks me. It's from a person that I will never see, but will perhaps talk to on the phone once or twice without knowing. It's from a place that's probably warmer, sweeter, and quieter. Not from a head that cries all the time or yells or begs and begs and begs him to promise to stop, yes just promise again that it's over. It won't answer anything I ask it because it doesn't have to—it owes nothing to me and doesn't mind keeping secrets. I swipe it off the table with the back of my hand, frustrated.

—But what if I find more like it? I need this one to compare the others to. I drop

to the scratchy beige carpet on my hands and knees searching for it.

I can't find it anywhere. Is it under the bed? Behind the nightstand? Did it already slink out the door? I cry and swear and lay my face on the carpet, and I see it looking out from my nightstand drawer. How did it get in there? When it sees that I notice it, it quickly ducks back down. I pull open the drawer and there it is, curled into a corner. I go to pull it out but it avoids my fingers, darting from one end of the drawer to the other. My tears start to run down my cheeks again and I shake the drawer with frustration. It stares up at me.

I imagine this hair and a million more just like it attached to a head. The head is perfect and charming and its complexion is remarkable. The face is lovely—its eyes are large and green and the lips are naturally bright pink. The neck just below it is long and elegant, and the shoulders that poke out to the sides are wonderfully rounded. The breasts that hang below the neck sit high and are in perfect symmetry with one another, leading the eye down to a sweet, tiny waist and legs that are nicely shaped. The arches of the feet are high and graceful, the ear lobes are small but nice, the dimples on the lower back match each other flawlessly.

The hair notices I'm upset and smirks. I look down and see it grow—it's getting longer. It grows and grows and fills the drawer, coiling around and around itself. It falls onto the floor like thread that someone is spinning, creating two large, shiny brown piles gliding over the sides of the drawer. I shut my eyes tightly and slam the nightstand drawer closed. It stops. I back away from it and get into the bed. I pull the covers up to my nose and shut my eyes, my face raw.

I feel something tickle my feet and my leg twitches. I shift in the bed. It tickles me again. I throw off the sheets to see thousands of brown hairs swimming around me, circling my toes, climbing up my pajama pants, threading themselves through the buttons of my shirt. I try to get up but they're already swirling around and around my legs to tie them together. I reach down and rip them off as they slide up my arms and over my face. I roll off the bed, gasping, shaking the hairs from my pajamas.

I cry on the floor on my hands and knees, gasping and gagging. I can't see the hairs anymore; they must have crawled back into the nightstand with the first one, the one that came to laugh at me. He's doing it again. He's sneaking out when I'm asleep, when he's at work, whenever my back is turned—when I go to the kitchen to make dinner and when I pull my shirt over my head and when I bend down to put on my shoes. He goes to kiss her slimy, drugstore-lipstick pout, to lick her bony shoulder blades and to run his hands over her scrawny neck. But the hair—the hair is so gorgeous, so lovely and perfect. Mine is not. I run my hands over my scalp. Clumps of fine, dull yellow thread are jammed between my fingers, and I realize that I've been pulling out my hair as I've been sitting here crying. I scream and the water in the shower suddenly stops.

I hear him stumbling around on the wet floor. I look at the little pile of my hair on the carpet. He did this to me. That bastard, he did this. I hear him throw the bathroom door open, but it's too late. I feel the hair winding around my neck, and it's already got me.





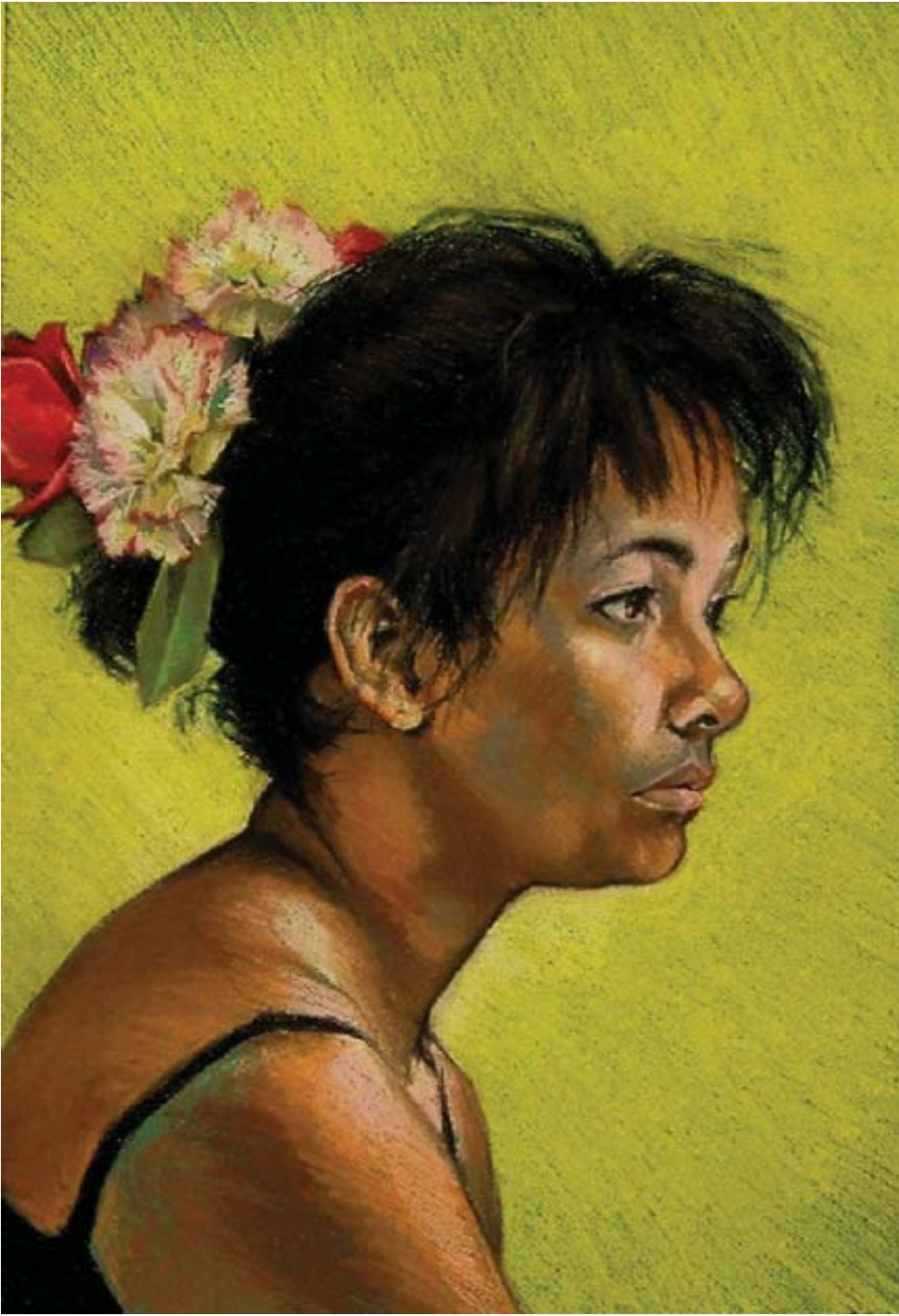
Fractal Landscape
John Knapp



Liminal Sanctuary
John Knapp



Blues Dancing
Catherine Cole



Jenny
John Knapp

snow globe

It's snowing here in Romania
small magical flakes floating
gently landing on
cobblestone and roof
but

I'm sure it's happened before
the drifts have piled up
slush coats the road
growing

there's nothing now but white
the windows are blocked
the doors are blocked
because

there's a blizzard in Romania
the TV says so
the radio says so
(the internet is out)
witnessing

There's a blizzard in Romania
environmental hazard; but still
it's small magical flakes floating
wonderful white drifts growing
peaceful silence descending
because
it's snowing here in Romania
and I'm inside with you

—Shelly Holder

in the gutter

By Carrie Crow

This is Jim. Jim is a facetious asshole or a snuggle bunny-kins, depending on his wife's mood any given evening. This is Jim's car. An orange 1989 Toyota Supra, smothered in 157,842 miles worth of smoke. The engine waited until parked to belch its last, fifteen miles from the concert he was late to, only two blocks from the bowling alley where he used to take his daughter for "Father-Daughter Day." It was something Jim insisted on for all three of his daughters, starting with Chloe. Candace loved going to the park and Chrissy loved ice cream, but Chloe was different. Chloe *loved* the bowling alley. Jim offered to take Chloe to Chuck-E-Cheese, movies, plays; but she preferred ordering fries and watching the League play every Saturday afternoon. She high-fived the winners, and once, a gentleman let her roll for a baby split. After pushing the ball with all she had, it rolled leisurely down the lane—and into the gutter. Still, she smiled. Normally, they played Pacman in the arcade in the back. Jim let Chloe win. Jim let Chloe win *very* often. But that was ten years ago, and kids grow out of that sort of thing.

"This is your *last chance* to see Chloe doing something she loves before college snatches our baby away!" Debbie's voice insisted in the back of his mind. Seven-thirty sharp, the performance started. Getting from work in D.C. to Fredericksburg took just under an hour on a good day. Considering the rush hour traffic, the Friday before Memorial Day weekend... Life is full of choices, and none of them were made by Jim.

Jim jammed the stick shift into park. On popping the hood, he realized that things were bad. Damn bad. Fire and flames bad. Jumping away, he stared aghast. Fortunately it started to rain, smothering the small fire. Unfortunately Jim was without umbrella, and was also smothered in an instant. Slamming the hood and running back to the driver's side door, Jim yanked the latch.

Locked. He didn't remember locking it. Jim didn't have automatic locks—he did, however, have the automatic reflex to lock the car door behind him. His fingers managed to snag his keys. Fumbling, he tried to get a good grip on the slippery metal.

Plop! It took a moment for Jim to realize his keys weren't in his hands anymore. It took him another moment to realize they were riding the new current from the rain, and by the time he leapt his keys had been sucked into the gutter. His heart stopped. Frantically he dug and reached, in case they'd caught on the shelf before the plummet to the sewer. They were long gone now.

With a frustrated snort, he dug out his cell phone. Flipping it open, however, he realized: precariously low battery. He'd forgotten to plug it in last night. There was some juice yet, but would it be enough to call both Triple A and Debbie? Triple A? or Debbie? Save his car? Tell his wife he's all right? Years of marriage with Debbie had taught Jim two important things: Happy Debbie was the most fun, most sacrificial and

most kind person he'd ever known, and the one he had pledged to love and cherish as passionately as she loved him. The second was Crazy Debbie. Fifty-fifty chance that when he called, Happy Debbie would pick up, drive down, save her "snuggle-bunnykins" and forgive him with kisses. Then? There was the other option.

He called Debbie. She could call Triple A after all. *Ring*. She was probably in a good mood. *Ring*. She loved these shindigs. *Ring*. Surely she wouldn't be the Crazy Debbie. *Ri—*

"Well. If it isn't my favorite facetious *asshole*. Where are you?" she snapped.

Apparently, she was.

When he told her he was with his broken-down car in the parking lot of a burned-down Wendy's, he discovered that wasn't the answer she wanted. "Jim, the show is halfway *OVER*, Chloe performed a half an *HOUR* ago!" Jim heard sniffing on the other line—Debbie had been crying, and not in the dainty tear-or-two sort of way. "She came out to talk to me afterwards, she was absolutely beside herself, she wanted to know where her daddy was and why he wasn't there and then she *left* and it just broke my *heart* to see her so *upset—*"

Jim brought out his best strategy for Crazy Debbie. As patiently as he could, Jim replied, "I'm sorry, sweetie, my car—"

Failed. "You know we can't afford a new one, we have to pay for new cleats for Candace and Chrissy needs braces and we still need to pay off the mortgage so we can build up our children to be provided for and Chloe can go to NYU and get a good education and a—"

Beep. Low battery. Abandoning his strategy, he frantically interrupted, "Debbie, listen—" *Call Triple A, call Triple A.*

"No, *YOU* listen, if you don't show up here—"

Blip. He may never know. His battery decided it wasn't important. Peering out from under the overhang, Jim assessed his options. Smoking car was still stationary. Pouring rain still fell. The building he sought protection under was still condemned. So Jim did the only thing possible for a late, marooned man to do in the middle of a rain storm. He sat down and watched the river to the gutter. Well. It could be worse. At least he hadn't taken the interstate.

Jim planned what he would tell Chloe, but he kept imagining her "beside herself." Chloe was never beside herself. Chloe was like Happy Debbie without her split counterpart, it took so much to make her upset—he didn't want to imagine he had done it.

This was what he got for shipping his first born to New York. *NYU*. Sure, it wasn't the Brooklyn side of the city, but he wasn't even sure why Debbie was pushing music. Debbie loved hearing Chloe sing, but Chloe seemed more interested in other things. Like that still-life drawing she gave him, the one that still sat on his filing cabinet next to his wedding picture. Or math. She was always good at math. Sometimes Debbie said all pretty girls who could sing should become singers, like she had. Then again, Debbie thought bowling alleys were no place for pretty girls, even with their fathers. "It's like you don't even *know* your daughter!" Debbie accused.

Eventually, a silver Toyota Corolla pulled into the parking lot. He couldn't be sure,

but was that...

“Dad?” Chloe parked a few spots down, her rain coat tossed over her ochre hair. She ran under the overhang and hugged him. “I saw Mom after my solo, and she was freaking out, it took me ten minutes to get her to talk straight! You know how Mom gets. I figured I could just leave and it would be chill. What’s up?” Chloe smiled, hugging her raincoat close to her.

A far cry from “beside herself,” Jim observed. Jim recounted his sordid story. Chloe couldn’t believe it had all happened at once, and when Jim thought about it, he couldn’t either. She’d assumed he hadn’t taken the I-395 with all of the holiday traffic, so she’d taken Richmond Highway for a while. She tried to call him “like a million times,” but his phone was dead and gone. His car stood out, however. “They don’t make bright orange Toyota Supras anymore,” Chloe teased.

After texting Debbie (“She can’t yell at you with a text message!”) and calling Triple A, Jim sighed. “I’m so sorry I missed your show.”

Chloe murmured something, but Jim didn’t hear it. Once more, she said: “I was terrible, you didn’t miss much.” The silence was long, as long as it took for Jim to realize he should provide words of comfort, console her, or really, say anything. Instead, it was Chloe who spoke. “I...I forgot the words, I kept missing the notes, I just couldn’t hear them and the music was so loud and everyone was staring at me—” She stopped, letting out a breath. “Mom really wants me to keep singing, she keeps saying I’m talented or whatever, but I don’t...” She stopped, picking up a thought elsewhere. “I feel like the people who really make it are the ones who really want it, and I don’t want it! It’s not like all pretty girls who can sing have to become singers!”

Well put, Jim thought.

“I don’t know, I just don’t think it’s for me...”

“Well,” Jim said. “What would you do instead?”

Chloe thought about it. Her silence swirled with big questions about the vastness of the future. Her fingers twitched as she hugged her arms around her, and she shrugged helplessly. “Maybe math, I’ve always kinda liked it, and I love art...but I don’t know.”

A pause. Jim tried to resist grand thoughts of computer graphics design. He was prepared to point it out, but Chloe suddenly said, “I feel like we used to come here before.” She searched the surroundings as they tickled the edge of her memory. “Oh! Remember when we used to go bowling somewhere around here? There was an alley down the street, that’s right, I remember the arcade and fries... It was a lot of fun.” She glanced up and smiled.

Jim smiled back. The car still smoked, the rain still fell, and the only certainty either of them had about the future was that Debbie had a good yelling prepared for them the moment they were within shouting range. The keys were still exploring the great beyond beneath Fredericksburg, and the phone was still off. There was so much to consider, to talk about, so many important things to be taken care of before Chloe left for college, leaving a mountain of debt and her memory. It was hard to even know where to begin.

“Let’s go bowling,” Jim said.

G

Other Pants

It is exactly eleven minutes
before class starts.

1:49

It takes
approximately six minutes
to smoke a cigarette.

It takes
approximately five minutes
to get upstairs.

There is exactly enough time
for me to smoke a cigarette
except I left
my light
in my other pants.

Serendipitous things
have happened for my health.

—Rachel Stayton



Untitled
Catherine Cole

on watching
street bowling
in cork ireland

The Irish answer to golf
In true Irish form
Played with an old iron ball
In the street
A race—who can throw
Their ball across the finish line

The men toss with a jump in the air
And gamblers side-step
Watching their money roll against the curb

Walk half a mile down the road
Pulling from a flask
Pass farms and small cars
And that Irish grass that everyone says is so green

But watch—the ball bounces
And men's shins are broken
In the Irish answer to golf.

—M. W. Davis

The Rain Beginning

In humidity there is no
space, only uncomfortable
awareness of molecules.

It was the rain
that made me forget.

The Rain Ending

The sun watched.
I heard them enter.
A loud clap like a doorslam.
A rush like tiny, running
feet, small whispering children
barreling through trees, tossing
branches and leaves like
they never went to school.

It is the wild voice that grows.
At its loudest
It is already over.

—Rachel Stayton



Shelf Space

Barbara Lockett

my Academia

We cast off little snippets, shed bits
chips, and pieces into eddies of drifting air

this fragment metro station—catch them in a jar
shake, shake, shake it and see what we've prepared

by students pretending to study textbooks and flash-cards
but who secretly watch the colored trails

waft by in lazy currents. We become obliged
and turn back to Socrates, or lowered Spanish sails

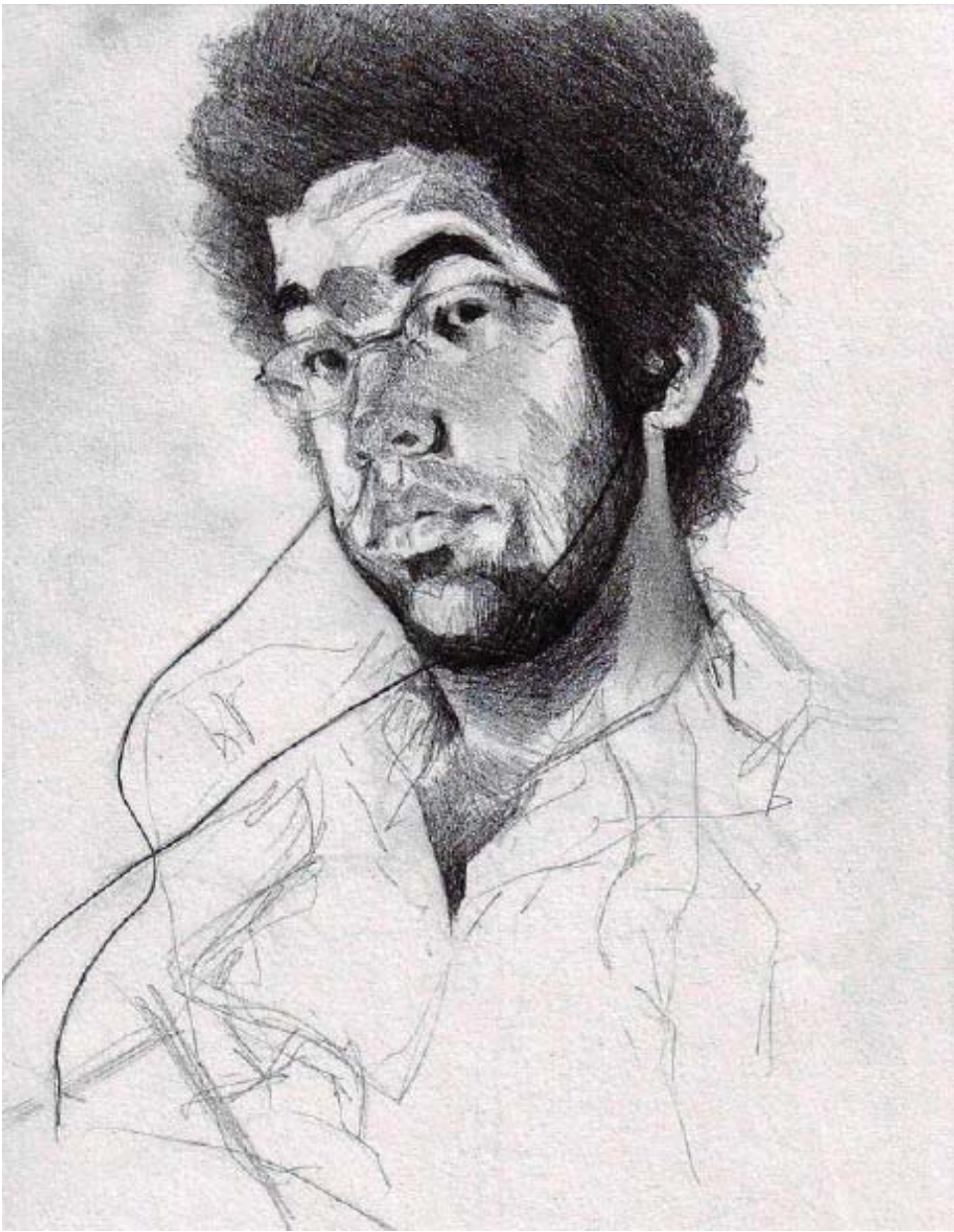
Well, Knowledge, if you jump then I'll jump too
and Learning, well, I'll swim the ocean for you

but I hope this isn't for nothing at all

Academia
shut off from the outside, from myriad lives too

isolated behind glass panes until morning we find
nothing beyond crumpled papers and an overtired mind

—Shelly Holder



Self Portrait
John Knapp

Plato, *we do not know*—

The windowshade shadows move
hourly over my body. I whisper:
“there is nothing of me in others,
there is nothing of others in me.”

Then what did it mean
When I reeled over the toilet?
Was I vomiting cotton?

What holds the squeal of pigs?

In what conch shell does
this body coil?

Is there a method of banality
to frighten the patterns?

I stab illusion after I love it.
I stab love after I lie with it.
I stab myself when I am myself
Yet I am always the object of overcome.

Twin threads string my spine like a harp.
They cannot play together yet
Each string must be plucked.

—Rachel Stayton



Doppelgänger
John Knapp

Ice Age Coming

By Zach Claywell

It doesn't feel like the last day of history. It feels like Tuesday.

I thought there would be more riots, more jubilant sex, more freeing of zoo animals.

I thought I'd see the four horsemen, or Shiva or Vishnu or somebody.

Fire. Brimstone. Lava. Hell. Burning. Meteors.

No. Ice age coming.

Ice age coming.

The glacial wall has been moving closer and closer, but the TV weathermen predict the tsunami will hit sometime early tomorrow. Scientists predict this is the last day of human civilization. Religious leaders around the world are calling this the end of times. Except Buddhists—they say we'll be in another world cycle soon. Maybe not soon enough.

Today I skated down the street, my hands in my pockets, enjoying the breeze. It's July, but it's snowing. Ice age coming. I try to avoid the areas of town with tall buildings, since the sidewalks below have become littered with suicide jumpers. They started jumping a month ago, but it's been too cold for their bodies to decay. The TV says suicides are up 4000% percent.

My town emptied out sometime last month. People made a mad dash to Mexico or anywhere near the equator. No, the TV says, it's snowing there too. Ice age coming.

It hasn't been all that bad, really. I have basically an entire neighborhood to myself. Between the jumpers and the dashers I've been left with a miniature snowy empire. I have enough supplies to last me, well, at least until the end of the world, or tomorrow, or however you'd like to put it.

I've taken to ice skating through the streets, and it's a beautiful feeling. I was expecting this all to be more like *The Day After Tomorrow* or *I Am Legend*, but it's really been quite dull. There hasn't been anyone around in at least a month. I mainly skate

and eat and skate to find things to eat, then eat. I try to keep as warm as I can, try not to get sick (there's no doctors), and keep on going.

I'm not even very upset that tomorrow is the last day of history.
At least it's something.

So today, I was skating and I came across a kid. His clothes were tattered, and he seemed pretty weak, but he was still making an effort to play in the snow.

"Hey, what are you still doing here?" I asked him.

He seemed shocked. He was on his hands and knees playing in the snow, but my question flipped him in the air and he was lying on his back, breathing heavily. The toy he had been playing with flew a few feet behind him and landed under the snow.

"Don't worry, buddy, I'm going to help you," I said.

He seemed to believe me and sat up, crosslegged.

"Where are your parents?"

He pulled his shoulders to his ears in a shrug.

"You want some food? I have some at home."

He got up and stood in front of me.

"It's this way."

He turned around and ran to grab his toy. He slipped his hand into the hole it had dug when it was flung. He put it in his coat and ran toward me.

I skated slowly next to him, holding hands all the way home.

That's how I met this kid. I made him hot cocoa and he's still sitting on my couch over there. I have a TV that runs on batteries, and we watch it. I have all the batteries I could ever need, but I don't know where the TV stations get their power. I can't know, since the TV anchors never say and the only other person I've seen in weeks is this little kid.

"Previous estimates of the destruction of tomorrow's event have been greatly underestimated, scientists say," the TV says. "This is not a climate change, as was previously predicted, but in fact, a cataclysmic worldwide event."

"I heard that some people will probably survive and just live like penguins forever," I said to the kid.

The kid looked up from his hot cocoa with the faintest of smiles.

"Scientists predict there will be no long-term survivors worldwide," the TV said.

I turn the channel of the TV. Snow.

"What's your name?" I ask.

He seems to struggle with whether he should tell me or not.

I struggle with whether he understands how much it won't matter tomorrow.

After a medium-sized pause, he replies, "Boston."

"Boston? How'd you get all the way down here from Boston?"

"No. I'm Boston."

"Oh. Okay... That's a nice name."

"Thanks." He goes back to his hot cocoa, seemingly satisfied.

I thought there'd be orgies. Yeah, I know, I guess I was a bit naïve. Who would get naked with all this snow and ice everywhere? Ice age coming. I guess I never predicted the exodus either. Or the jumpers. I guess I've always just held a very ignorant view about the end of times.

It's evening now, the sun has gone down for what I anticipate to be the last time. If I survive sunrise, I'll be happy. The TV says not to expect much. The TV says try telling everyone you can that you love them. The TV says make peace with destiny. The TV says make peace with fate. The TV says make peace with mortality. The TV says it's the end of history. Ice age coming, ice age coming.

I look at Boston, and he's obviously trying not to cry. Is it creepy to hug him? There's something about him I recognize, something of me in him. He's not my son, but I'm willing to believe he's no one's son. And neither am I. And tomorrow, no one will be anyone's son ever again.

I sit next to him on the couch, spilling the leftover cocoa he left on the cushion beside him. Anger rises inside me. But the stain, I realize, could survive longer than I will. Maybe it should feel bad for me?

I put my arm around him tentatively. He looks up at me from his worried ball, knees to face. His forehead is wrinkled, but his lips want to smile. I want to smile too.

I try to say it's going to be okay, but I stop myself.

"Where are your mommy and daddy?" I ask. I know it's a tense subject, but I can't help my curiosity.

"I don't know. I've never met my daddy and mommy left me and Mr. Necks alone to live with our granny."

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Boston."

He looks down sadly and his eyes well up. He puts his hand to his chest.

"Is that Mr. Necks?"

He nods.

"Can I see him?"

He shakes his head, and clutches his toy beneath his jacket defensively.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

The snow from the TV drowns out the snow hitting the windows. A long pause.

"Is...is it going to be okay?" he asks me. He looks me dead in the eye and asks me to lie to him. I summon up my courage—that particular type of courage we reserve for lying, that type of courage for doing the right thing the wrong way, the courage you reserve for breaking people's hearts.

"Boston," I say, stalling, "Boston. Yes." I struggle with tears. "Yes, we are, going to be." My eyes close and I breathe deeply. "We are going, yes, we are going to be okay."

Boston cries. He cries so hard he's out of breath and gasping for air. He cries the way a boy does when he loses his mother. A wailing, gnashing, gasping, slobbering affair. I recognized it immediately. It was the same crying I had been doing before Boston came.

It's so cold that the warmth of my tears on my face startles me and reminds me of warmer days.

When I was his age, my mother was sick. That's what we called it, we called it "sick."

"Where's your mommy?" my friends would ask when they came over.

"Oh, my mommy is sick," I'd say gravely as a little kid could. "She's very very sick."

The childproof locks on the cabinets weren't for me, they were for her. To fix her sickness. She left and I never again smelled the pungent smell of the grapefruit juice she poured her liquid sickness in.

I remember when she left.

"I want you to be a good boy for daddy," she said. She was kneeling. She smelled like the perfume she used on special occasions. Her hair, makeup, clothes—I could smell her leaving, like a dog must when its owners leave for vacation.

I cried. I cried the warmest tears I can ever remember crying. They felt like bathwater. They felt too warm to be made by me. They could only have been drawn by her.

"I will see you soon, darling," she said. I could hear the snot in her nose jangle when she breathed. When she kissed me I felt her tears mix with mine.

She stood back up, and I hugged my father's knee. She reached into her purse and handed me a rubber dinosaur she'd gotten from a gift shop. It was an Apatosaurus. I knew the name, and I knew that its bright green color was obviously scientifically inaccurate. She knew I knew every dinosaur, and that I had every dinosaur toy, so I don't know what possessed her to give me this one, this scientifically inaccurate dinosaur with the correct long long neck, but with the wrong wrong color.

I've never been without that dinosaur. I keep it with me wherever I go.

"I love you," she said to me. She turned and looked my father in the eyes. She tried to look cold, like she did when she punished me, but I could see right through her. She turned around and walked out the front door. I continued hugging my father's knees for what felt like hours. He picked me up in his arms, though I was getting almost too big for it, and hugged me wordlessly.

I remember that the TV was not on that night. We cried and talked until we fell asleep on the couch.

For years my father took care of me.

I grew up and went to college. I studied paleontology, like I said I would when my mother had asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I suppose there was little other reason.

I was working as a professor of paleontology when I met Cathy.

"Professor?" she said, walking into my office.

"Yes?" I asked. I noticed her perfume before she responded.

"Hello, my name is Cathy Ireglass. I was just hired here at the college and wanted to make your acquaintance."

“Ah, hello Mrs. Ireglass,” I said, raising from my chair and extending my hand.

She walked across the room and gripped my hand.

“Please, I’m no Missus.” She blushed.

“Well, I’m no Mister,” I said. Idiot.

“Ah, well what is your area of expertise?” she asked politely.

“Jurassic, specifically Sauropods.”

“Ah, I’ve always been partial to the Danian period myself.”

“So, you like rats?” I asked playfully.

“No!” she jokingly protested. “There’s something beautiful about the idea of life slowly coming back from extinction. Survivors finding their place in the world and flourishing! It’s the ultimate form of optimism, I think.”

“Ah,” I said. She had been asked to defend her position before.

I fell in love.

My Apatosaurus was in the pocket of my tux on our wedding day, but I don’t think I ever told her.

She loved winter, and she made us move where it was colder. Never mind that I thought winter was plenty cold at home. But we moved to Minnesota anyway.

She loved being able to skate outside in the winter, and winter there lasted most of the year. She spent more hours than she should’ve teaching me to skate.

“You’re almost there,” she said one day, squatting and holding her arms out like a mother does when her little boy is learning to walk. “That’s it! Almost there!”

“Cathy! I don’t think I can do it!” I said.

“No, you can! I promise you can!”

I scooted with my arms flailing like windmills. My toes flipped toward the sky, and I landed hard on my back. The thud knocked the wind out of me and my Apatosaurus from me. It slid across the ice for thirty feet before it reached the bank. I instinctively patted my chest where I kept it and realized it was gone. I flipped to my hands and knees and crawled frantically and desperately on the ice toward where its track led.

She cut gracefully to it and picked it up.

“What’s this?” she asked.

I was sitting cross-legged on the thick ice.

I saw my mother holding the dinosaur in the gift shop, still wearing her scrubs. I smelled the way she smelled floating through the once dead icy air.

I cried. It was so cold my tears frosted a bit and turned to slush on my face.

“What’s wrong? What’s wrong? Are you okay?” She was frantic.

I had told her about the kneeling, about the sickness, about my loving father, about college, but I had not told her about my Apatosaurus.

And there on that thick, thick ice I told her how warm the tears were that day.

I was a scientist, and I knew damn well what we were doing to our planet. The pollution, the global warming, I knew it would have disastrous consequences. But it didn’t.

No, it was just our time. Like the dinosaurs. It was just our time. Ice age coming. The Cenozoic Era has just ended. Little kids will learn about the exotic race of creatures that lived before the extinction. Whatever it is that replaces us will note the date in their geography books. It will have been a Wednesday morning in July, though they won't know or care about the way we kept time.

I remember when she left.

Cathy had been sad, crying more than usual. Sure we had tension, but every marriage does, I thought, I think.

We'd been fighting about the move. I had been offered a wonderful job at UMass and I'd be a fool not to take it.

But we fought. And she was sitting on the bed this night, and she was calm. Very calm. She adjusted her bangs the way she did when she was thinking, but this time I noticed her fingers shook. I was surprised that she rested her hands on her stomach for the duration of our conversation. She smelled the way she smelled when she was leaving.

"Please, don't go," I pleaded. "Cathy, please. I need you."

"I can't go with you."

"Why? We've been having problems, but we can work through them! We've moved before! I learned to love it up here and..."

"I don't love you anymore."

It was cold. Her face was so blank, yet so pretty. Her back was to me, but I knew her face. Perhaps better than she did.

I could almost see my breath.

"That's not true," I said.

I saw my father's knee in front of my face.

"That's not true, Cathy."

"It is. I'm leaving in the morning. I'll sleep on the couch," she said.

"I love you," I said.

She didn't cry. She looked at her stomach. I looked in our closet and her things were packed.

I ran outside to where it was snowing and sat on the curb, cross-legged. I was so distraught that I didn't even pet my Apatosaurus.

The next morning she was gone. I was in too much shock to feel much of anything, so I piddled around the house looking for something to do. I took a walk outside, and patted my chest out of habit. It was gone. I scoured the house. I ripped apart my room, flipping the mattress and tearing my clothes off the hangers. I destroyed everything in the living room except the TV, and basked in its glow that night when I was too tired to continue, waiting for the morning to come.

This kid, Boston, he stops crying. My arm is still around him and it is silent.

"What do you like?" I ask. It is truly a question one only asks little kids, who are

only allowed to have one all-encompassing interest, like cars or dogs.

“Dinosaurs,” he says.

“Dinosaurs! That’s great! I *love* Dinosaurs!” I say.

His face brightens. “You do?”

“Yes! I’m a paleontologist.” I puff my chest.

“Wow! Really?”

“Yeah! Tell me everything you know about dinosaurs, Boston, I love to talk dinosaurs.”

“My favorite is the Apatosaurus,” he says proudly.

“Wow, that’s wonderful! That’s my favorite too! You know, when I was your age I had a toy Apatosaurus I took everywhere. My mommy gave it to me when she left.”

“Me too!”

“What do you mean?”

He unzips his thick jacket to his belly and reaches inside by his heart. In his hands he proudly displays a scientifically inaccurate Apatosaurus that a woman he never met bought at a gift shop somewhere.

The sun is rising, and perhaps that’s what’s warming my tears as I hold Boston close to me.

“Son,” I say, as the dawn brings the end of history.

“Son,” I say, as the ice age comes roaring toward us.



Contributors'

Zach Claywell is a senior English and Philosophy major at the College. This is his first published short story. He is the writer and creator of the forthcoming wmTV show "Space Med School" and hopes to become a professional writer.

Carrie Crow is working on her English and Psychology degree to decorate her refrigerator box, where she will live while working on her Great American Novel (affectionately dubbed "GAN").

M. W. Davis is an ever surprised poet. He lives in a small house, trying without success to shun most human contact. He is working diligently on his first failed novel.

Shelly Holder was born and raised in California's Mojave Desert, a heritage that unfortunately did not leave her tan. She currently plans to major in English, with a possible double in another field that won't pay much money either. Check out her website at www.shellyholder.com for more random tidbits.

John Knapp graduated from William and Mary as a studio art major in 2009. He is originally from Surry, Virginia.

Barbara Luckett is a senior at the College who is both excited and apprehensive about life after graduation. Her passions include photography, traveling, and drinking entirely too much coffee.

Notes

Samantha Roth is a freshman who is planning to double major in English and Psychology. She has only recently decided she can call herself a poet, after some of her work was called “soothing and airy and could make people feel like a feather being blown around in different directions.”

Julia Schaumburg is a senior at the College. She likes Hugo Williams and drinking while watching *Intervention*.

Teresa Teixeira (‘11) is a transfer student from Bakersfield College, CA, majoring in History. Eventually she hopes to write historical novels for young adults, so instead of spouting off about sparkly vampires, they will spout off about how Louis XIV was called the moon king because of his excessive amount of enemas.

Kristen Verge is a graduating senior at the College of William & Mary, and has had other stories printed in *jump!* and *Winged Nation*. Kristen hopes to continue her writing after graduation and to pursue a career in publishing.

Kat Zantow is a Fictician: a writer combining the naïve effusiveness of a fictioneer with a writer’s meticulous plotting and attention to detail. She is presently synthesizing a double major in Psychology and English from the College of William & Mary.

Editor's Note

I don't know what I'm doing next year. My future is a very vague treasure map, with "Here Be Dragons" written all over it, and maybe some hydras and chimaeras or something.

By the time this magazine comes out, I will be only a few days away from celebrating my last Blowout as a William & Mary student. Ah, now that takes me back. On April 29, 2005, I was a bright-eyed high school junior taking a tour of this beautiful campus. It was full of happy people, singing and drinking from innocent soda bottles. My tour guide seemed to know everyone, and they were all so friendly! And there was nary a book or pencil in sight. I thought: This is the place for me!

That day...was Blowout. I've since realized that most days here aren't like that.

But I don't mean to sound cynical. It's been a great four years, full of soul-searching and place-in-the-world-finding. And I've left my mark with this magazine, which my roommate and I created (or rather, re-created) three years ago. That being the case, you'd think I might worry about the future of this fledgling Gallery. But I really don't. In fact, I'm pretty sure they'll do even better without me.

So here's a big thank-you to all the staff members who got us here: To Andrew, Carrie, and Kristine, who've been with us since that first meeting three years ago (and Liz and Rachel, Class of '09). To Arielle, Katie, and Marisa, who've proven to be indispensable in the past year or two. To Sarah, Christina, Kat, and Ricky, our most recent staff members—we'll need more people like them in the many years The Gallery has in store. To Kelsey (ASRK, Fruity Pebbles), who started this whole thing. And to everyone else who has ever been a staff member, or submitted, or hell, even picked up one of our magazines. Thanks, guys. You are awesome, rad, nifty, scumtrilescent, baller, and/or bitchin' (choose desired adjective).

Well, as they say, I might not know where I'm going, but I know where I've been. The Future (yes, it has a capital F) may be full of dragons and other mythical beasts, but thanks to my years at W&M and with The Gallery, I'm a pretty good navigator.

And if, on Blowout, I run into any tours, I will pretend to know the tour guide (whether I actually do or not), and hopefully convince future generations of William & Mary students that this is where they want to be, too.

Your slightly-nostalgic editor,
Laura "and then he ate the baby" Daniels
Class of 2010

*Pssst! World! It's me, Carrie Crow! Laura left the room, but I managed to gnaw through my restraints and reach the keyboard. This all started so simply—but little did I know that it was a cover-up for an underground OH! She's coming!
I left a code in the magazine, spread it to those who still have time!*