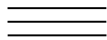


THREE
RIVERS
REVIEW
OF UNDERGRADUATE LITERATURE

VOLUME XVI



UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH HONORS COLLEGE

Three Rivers Review 2011
Volume XVI

Three Rivers Review of Undergraduate Literature is an annual student-run publication of the University of Pittsburgh Honors College. It seeks to enliven, foster and publish the best undergraduate fiction and poetry in the greater Pittsburgh area. It accepts submissions, from September 15 to January 15 of each academic year, from undergraduate students at the University of Pittsburgh, all University of Pittsburgh branch campuses and all institutions of post-secondary, undergraduate education in the Pittsburgh area. Inquiry and submissions can be e-mailed as attachments in Microsoft Word (.doc compatible) files to: ThreeRiversReview@gmail.com. Submission requirements are: a maximum of 15 pages fiction or 5 poems. All submissions must be accompanied by a cover sheet including name, academic year, academic institution, mailing address, e-mail address, submission titles and a press-ready biographical statement. Submitted work is not guaranteed to be returned. Authors will be contacted as to the status of their work no later than two (2) months following the current volume's submission deadline.

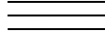
Three Rivers Review wishes to sincerely thank Dean Steven Husted, Karen Billingsley & the University Honors College, Jeff Oaks, University of Pittsburgh English Department, Jeff Martin, Lydia Davis, Cyrus Console, and Cheryl Corey at *McNaughton-Gunn*.

Cover Image by Stephen Kao.

Copyright © 2010 *Three Rivers Review*/University of Pittsburgh Honors College. All rights revert to author upon publication. Copying done for non-personal or classroom use is forbidden without the expressed consent of *Three Rivers Review*/University Honors College or author. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, in creative works contained in *Three Rivers Review* is entirely coincidental.

THREE RIVERS REVIEW

VOLUME XVI



UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE SUPERVISORS

UHC Dean	Steven Husted
Assistant to the Dean	Karen Billingsley

UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISOR

English Department Faculty	Jeff Oaks
----------------------------	-----------

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editors-in-Chief	Evan Chen
	Jeanette Schroeder
Fiction Editors	Sara Jayne Poletti
	Deirdre Ruscitti
Head of Publicity	Matt Tumas
Design Editor	Margaret Lucidore

THREE RIVERS REVIEW STAFF

Poetry:

Odana Chaney
Julian Day Cooney
Kelsey Hughes
Isabelle Jargowsky
Jen Lue
Melissa Dias-Mandoly
Maira Quigley
Megan Vanek

Fiction:

Sophia Bender
Laura Caton
Christine Cramer
Michael Elofer
Ariel Fisher
Kelsey Kuhar
Emily Maier
Donna McDermott
Maureen Shaughnessy

CONTEST JUDGES

Cyrus Console & Jeffrey Martin

CONTENTS

POETRY

2011 THREE RIVERS REVIEW POETRY PRIZE

WINNER: Alicia Salvadeo	
Memory Milk	13
RUNNER-UP: Madeleine Barnes	
Incident on the Tram	23
Forms of Suspension	24
In Order to Survive	25
Follow-Up	26
Stepping Forward	27
STAFF SELECTION: Hannah Aizenman	
Moth	28
A Fourteenth Way of Looking at a Blackbird	31
INES PUJOS	
And This is Not a Love Poem	32

FICTION

2011 THREE RIVERS REVIEW FICTION PRIZE

WINNER: Andrew Tybout Before the Wave	35
RUNNER-UP: Anna Gilchrist Spoondog	45
STAFF SELECTION: Andrew Whitmer Gila Monster	59
AMANDA MARTIN Ressurrectionists	63
LAWRENCE LENHART Old Parts	72

COMMENTARY

POETRY INTERVIEW: Cyrus Console	84
FICTION INTERVIEW: Lydia Davis	89
CONTRIBUTOR AND JUDGE BIOGRAPHIES	93

EDITOR'S NOTE

Almost a year ago now, I was in a meeting with last-year's co-editors along with my to-be co-president Melissa Difatta discussing the responsibilities of running the magazine and asking dozens of questions about how everything runs behind the scenes of the weekly meetings. After scribbling down furiously every piece of advice and pertinent information the old editors divulged, I returned to the bedroom Melissa and I shared with several other girls. I was overwhelmed by everything we needed to accomplish in the coming year, but Melissa seemed peaceful, joyful even. As we put away our notebooks, she turned to me and confessed, "I have no idea how things work, but this year is going to be great!"

That exclamation stuck with me all year, and now I think it a fitting sentence to describe the journey of creating this magazine. Evan Chen, who graciously stepped up to the role of co-editor only a few weeks before the school year began, and I had no idea how to fill the shoes of the accomplished editors of last year. We had very little experience with the business aspects of running a magazine. Along the way, we learned to rely on the advice and help of others. To that end, we are eternally grateful to Karen Billingsley, assistant of the University of Pittsburgh Honors College Dean, and Pitt Faculty Advisor Jeff Oaks who always had their doors open to us. Thank you to all of the officers who banded together to make this year a success. We would also like to thank Dean Steven Husted for providing us with the space and the secure funding to make this edition possible.

We have been humbled by all of those who fueled this magazine with their energy and enthusiasm. Thank you to the staff members who took hours out of their weeks to read and review submissions and who made weekly meetings cheerful and enjoyable. Thank you to all the writers who entrusted us with their creations. Thank you to Joel Coggins and Nour Abdelghani, who radiated love for *Three Rivers Review* and who guided Evan and me throughout the year. We would also like to thank our dedicated judges: poet Cyrus Console and Pitt Professor and writer Jeff Martin. Finally, we would like to thank writer Lydia Davis and poet Cyrus Console, again, who allowed us to investigate the intimate aspects of their work.

This year has not been without its obstacles and missteps, but with the help and dedication of an entire team of people,

I believe this magazine you are holding in your hands truly is something great.

Jeanette Schroeder
Editor-in-Chief
Three Rivers Review

Like Jen, I would like to thank all the people whose contributions serve as the framework for this issue of *Three Rivers Review*. Karen, Jeff, Dean Husted, Joel, Nour, Cyrus, Jeff, and Lydia, thank you.

I would also like to thank Jen for facilitating the proper completion of the magazine, for making sure all things were running according to plan, and for her unending patience with me. And I'd like to thank the staff for cooperating despite our often-conflicting schedules. I am thrilled with the result.

Evan Chen
Editor-in-Chief
Three Rivers Review

In loving memory of Melissa Difatta,
who could have done anything, but chose to be a writer.
May your passion always fill our empty pages.

Anchored

by Melissa Difatta

As a kid I kept sins on my fingers,
tying a knot of string along each knuckle
for each unholy thought that hooked
its yellow tooth inside me.

As a teenager I started on my wrist,
letting every twisted nightmare
bind its way up my arm,
my neck, my legs.

As a man I tied my limbs together,
wrapping swollen knees
and scarred elbows.
A coil of string encircled my head,
the saddest crown of shame.

In my old age I tied myself to the furniture,
to the doorknobs, to the floor,
to the oak in the backyard,
shackled to the ground.

That is where you'll find me--
bloody, gasping for air, counting
my sins like the rings of a tree.
Put your mouth to my skin, touch me,
heal me—bruise, by bruise,
by bruise.

POETRY

2011 THREE RIVERS REVIEW POETRY PRIZE

JUDGE'S REMARKS

Alicia Salvadeo: "Memory Milk"

I admire the scope of this poem—the way memory and heredity and books and biology take up voices in it amid the narrative of two central characters, "he" and "Alicia." Salvadeo's use of the page impressed me—her willingness to trail off at section break, her ability to suggest simultaneity:

Go, take a shower. I'll do
the dishes.

Don't worry about
the dishes. I'll do the dishes.

Here, the body remembers as much and as well as the mind does. Milk is "made of glucose and galactose, of body and brain sugars, and my stomach can't handle the combination." It threads through the piece in regionally and biographically specific ways, connecting mother to child all the way back to the founding of Rome. Water appears everywhere as well, connecting ancestor to progeny; phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny: "...we / haven't really changed much in seven / million years." Salvadeo's poem is a beautifully detailed meditation on the flows of milk and water, sand and time, that ultimately lets us "hear and then listen" to them.

Madeleine Barnes

Full of deft line breaks and vivid particulars, Barnes' poems contemplate suffering with care and seriousness, fixing a gaze just beside the image of the body in pain. Reading them, one senses the unspeakable just around the corner,

But this is the moment before the news travels
when the tram doors open and he pulls her off.
The passengers stare in different directions
while the fields change color, full of testimonies.

Cyrus Console, Ph.D.
Author of *Brief Under Water*
Poet

WINNER: ALICIA SALVADEO

MEMORY MILK

I.

dear stippled beginning,
thought made in milk:

dear purple landscape,
in my dream the land is breaking:

when he asks me about rightness of time and place,

my body remembers being a—

II.

we hadn't been home for days. first
we go through the fridge, check expiration dates,
throw away what has soured, what has
blackened over absence.

Go, take a shower. I'll do
the dishes.

Don't worry about
the dishes. I'll do the dishes.

I wash the dishes, hear and then listen to the water
running over glass.

(imperceptible shedding of the skin :: act of undressing,
of being undressed)

compare this to the memorized sound of water
running over shoulders. compare this
to the forgotten sound of nothing but water.

III.

these things are susceptible to eventual subduction
beneath the now, the confusable here:

humming wing of Somerset bird, seashell fishhooks whittled
by Leatherman blade, hands seeming to fit when together: never
returned, old copy of *Under Milk Wood*: wet
raspberries loosed from a plastic carton
falling like red rain flooding
the Delaware: crimson roof shingles in blur, my
mother's hands, washing dishes. hands slender, skin peeled
at the thumb, this crease, this vein. breath
on the glass door, mine—she
tells me to get away from there: so close, my reflection made
a new face together with the rabid dog's, it was
spitting windows from eyes, breath
on the glass door: get away from there, it will eat you,
its mother wouldn't dare feed it anymore—I

wash the dishes. I remember
what it felt like,

the unrestrained madness, pawing through snow.
expecting the snow to taste sweet.

IV.

I go through his books, pull volumes off shelves, piles of books around me like piles of dirt as I survey the diagrammed pages, memorize the artists' renderings of molecular breakdowns, of nervous systems, circulations of blood, evolutions of skull, put volumes back, look *Alicia*, he says, *you'd enjoy this book of phrases in Pennsylvanian Dutch*—places it over an opened copy of 'The Greatest Show on Earth,'

says, *If I hadn't been born other than in 1983, in Reading—*

[still I think only of continents, subtle shifting of ground, white
floods filling cracks, dark surfaces dry as buried bone]

says, *—can't swing a dead cat without hitting half a dozen moo cows—*

[I remember curds, sweet and sour whey; I remember fictions,
filling him in on what he missed when he didn't know me—
knowing

I am parts missing, needing to be filled in]

digresses with compulsion to explain to me the chemistry of milk,

says, —*is made of glucose and galactose, of body and brain sugars, and my stomach can't handle the combination—*

[thinking: It bothers , the inevitability of body, of forgetting what was
once, of a part of “turned off,” like a light;
the inevitability of becoming human,
the inability to notice drift—

returns to the book,

says, —*throw the cow over the fence some hay/I am on the books read/strong glasses for see—*

V.

he suggests *Darwin was born
in a vacuum*—[I'm reminded:
black-and-white photograph

I found

in Graciela's book, of children tumbling
inelegant, down a mound of sand]—*descent
with modification—nothing to
refute it—as concrete as the
heliocentric*—[their faces against
sand, tiny bodies cast out and skin
chafing, folding to force and
dream

of taste

of sand. feel of sand.

primordial crave of sand]—*what Dawkins
wrote here on the Hand of Plato*—[my
body re-]—*why the discovery had to
wait until*—[dream of ideal

essence of rabbits,

discreet categories of limbed
and limbless so rabbitlings
could retain sanity]—*and large
animals disappeared*

*when we found Australia, when we,
or not we, I mean they, found
here, and all the birds when
they, I mean he, found
islands*—[water

rising, lapping up white
beaches, erasure with water,
subtle shifting, I am thinking

about change

we can't ever
recognize, inklings of it only
over diagrams handed
down]—

*his boat was
named the Beagle, and
we
should get a dog*

VI.

give back its scales, its teeth, its tail with all those bones
(one that grows back when severed)

give back its hands, scaly claws to lick clean

let keep its wings, its beaky mouth,
its bok bok, its warm blood

*its mother wouldn't dare
feed it anymore*

//

he suggests that these coils of nucleic acids
are the body's Book of Genesis

—there is probably a joke
here, about revisions along the way—

if I feel I've done this before, in sense I have:
to return to former form,
to return to a beginning, shiny and new,
clean and white, the moment
of awaking

in the morning, naked, and not after.

if my body remembers being—

VII.

if/when
he helps me mend a broken heel before we go, cutting rubber from a crutch tip,

since
I refuse to buy new shoes (truth of matter: nothing fits my feet if not handed down)

while
we go through the foundation myths, distracted when we arrive at Rome,
 at Romulus and Remus in the brush, gumming the grub fed them by the woodpecker,
 lapping at the wolf's warm milk, their mother buried alive, unable to feed them anymore

and while our things to pack remain scattered on the floor, empty bags open on the armchair

my body—

VIII.

the act of undressing oneself, of being
undressed:

my hands, just like my mother's, just like
the ridges along my ear, his finger moves.

these blue sheets,
 he says,
bring out your eyes,

and he talks even after they've shut (

about how we
haven't really changed much in seven
million years,

about through how we moved, how
the animal went from water to land,
from land to air, or else

back to water

RUNNER-UP: MADELEINE BARNES

INCIDENT ON THE TRAM

The girl on the tram without a ticket
is forced off the car between stations.
The officer has two different colored eyebrows.
He speaks harshly and spits at her shoes.

Seven hundred crowns, he says to her in English.
She shows him her wallet, five American dollars,
a medical card. A large yellow leaf is stuck
below her heel. When he twists her arm,

her shoes make no utterance. Two hundred
hours from now, four thousand miles overseas,
her mother will drop the phone. In three hundred,
the news will air. They will have found her clothes.
But this is the moment before the news travels
when the tram doors open and he pulls her off.
The passengers stare in different directions
while the fields change color, full of testimonies.

Something about the way he struck her head
to wake her—*did he have a badge?* A pin drops.
The tram makes its way through the mountains.
No one can hear her now except for me, walking

at night on the path beside the river. I follow
her voice, a wire so thin it cannot be traced
to a body. Cables shudder overhead,
making their secret violent connections.

FORMS OF SUSPENSION

The body is safe in the mirror. The mirror is not in control of every sacrifice. Two lovers kneel between two mirrors. They are trading bones. They mean for you to see it.

I am looking for safety in a smashed bird
want its power and dumb luck to generate new softness

its body piles light into the cement, reflection flickering off a
passing car's
metal door. Something better is waiting, it confirms, it goes on
forever
between two places, chooses one, makes a transition.

Between two mirrors the lovers break open, gathering each other
and wanting privacy. I see the bird drop from the edge

of their window and smash itself under tire after tire
it matters as much as a footstep, particles drifting too slowly
to ever really die—one body of air lifting off of a surface

and landing over itself. The mirrors hold the lovers in place,
recording their thousand inseparable positions.

IN ORDER TO SURVIVE

It goes on forever. It goes on, the whole sea filled with its weight. Terezin, the puppet camp, Auschwitz, the farm he robbed, a body thrown from an electric fence No. 232 Ost, crematories lit from the inside out.

He believes you are somewhere, still inhaling. It goes on forever, every wind-filled cut, every chance fluctuation that simmers down, spares him. Your name burns to sawdust on his tongue, distracts him from anxious illusions—

rat's heads motionless, lining the walls. Dogfights, one animal devouring another, biting at the edges of overlapping graves. Survivor with a stark expression, face tired from knowing and pretending not to know, what are his chances of seeing you

alive? Transatlantic flights move in strong arcs overhead. He thinks of the rail traffic controller who watched full trains return to his station empty. Thinks of planes overturned twice in the snow. Hatred moves his whole body forward.

From here he won't make another sacrifice. He looks for your name in every article, listens for news of your body in every exterminated corner of your home. It goes on forever this way, his thoughts of you unburied.

FOLLOW-UP

You can't ask your skeleton to step out of the room
when you ask the doctor a personal question.

You can't feel a cell dying, or one hundred cells dying,
but someone can tell you how it starts.

The paper gown looks the same on your body
as it does discarded on the floor.

This is a note to say the healed version of you
will not look like you, or your sister.

The alternative is worse; you have been there
you've seen snow-packed eyesockets,

blue-inked thumbnails searching for food
on an ice-covered floor.

Kneeling before a Gestapo. Watching your
skin rise below a tattooed number.

Nothing to see here—a smudge of black earth
in a pile of debris, a river becoming the wasteland

it cuts through. Your body's incinerated chapters.
the silence of true emergency.

STEPPING FORWARD

Normal, says Freud. *Normal*, says the left hand,
right hand.

Case of mints, pill cutter—

The room looks exactly like the room. She's not surprised.
Same case of mints, pill cutter—

Same pigeons apologizing to the window.

She stands—she sits down, *repeat*—
Progress, lack preceding collarbones, need preceding want.

No secrets, meaning she was medicated, finally—
What was there to do but wait
for softer bruises.

Cut the room out of her body—impossible.

Every time, a curtain over light: *this morning*.
Meaning some objects had moved a certain distance.

Progress, thought preceding action, supposedly.
Normal, she says. This is nothing—
compared to—

MOTH

[Notes: The poem in section ii is "A Poem" by Nichita Stanescu; section iii is paraphrase of an abstract by P.S. Callahan.]

i.

The word itself, first; the softness
of the thing—brevity of *moth*,
intimate *moth*, disappearance
of *moth*,

the way *moth* slips inward

between the lips
to tongue and teeth.

Moth sounds like itself—*moth*
suggests something else,
a lost letter or two.

Moth, almost *mother*.
Moth, almost *mouth*.

Moth a word made only to
whisper, to pass in secret,
tender and desperate,
to proclaim I *exist*, and let
that be enough—

to fade, to fail, become
some small fossil, the
faintest evidence of what
might have been

a memory even then,
might have been seen

and thought a dream:
a scarce shadow, the sound

of wings in the dark.

ii.

Sitting on your porch one night, a little stoned and smoking a cigarette, I consider the coming end of summer, think of us in bed together, how you run your hands over my shoulders, touch my collarbone and then your own, slide your fingers up my spine; how when you leave in the morning you press your lips to the bottom of the arch of my foot, holding my ankle as if it might crumble; a poem I read somewhere—

*Tell me, if I caught you one day
and kissed the sole of your foot,
wouldn't you limp a little then,
afraid to crush my kiss?...*

—not in the original Romanian (I have to wonder what was lost in translation).

The body is a solid thing, but a kiss— a kiss is fragile, an insect, fleeting and sad, an attempt to get inside of what you cannot get inside. A moth, half-obscured in the smoke I exhale, beats its paper body against the window: tragic, its attraction to the light from within.

iii.

The idea that antennal sensilla of insects (spines) are dielectric waveguides or resonators to electromagnetic energy presumes the emission of such energies from insect pheromones (sex scents) and host plant scents. It has lately been shown that many organic molecules chemiluminesce in the far infrared windows. The prediction of luminescence from the insect pheromone was based on form, arrangement, and dielectric properties of the moth antenna sensilla—in short, on morphology and antenna design alone. The spectral emission for the moth pheromone is given. The male moth is attracted to the acetate molecule given off by the female. It is also demonstrated that the exact same coded far infrared lines are emitted by a candle flame. The male moth is highly attracted to and dies attempting to mate with the candle flame.

iv.

Psyche at the moment of
illumination; the lover
revealed: Eros, asleep.
A moth, perhaps,
hung in the dim glow
of the candle precarious
in her trembling hand—
at the instant of contact,
wax on skin, Eros wakes.
Where the lover leaves
through the window on
gossamer wings, the
moth lingers, plain,
lonesome, longing.

v.

What no one suspects is that moth wants.

Moth is modern, moth mathematical.
Moth is cultured; moth has traveled—

Attacus atlas, *Lymantria dispar*—moth writes
almanacs. Moth believes. Moth knows all
the names for beauty; *Antheraea polyphemus*,

Thysania aggripina, moth is a monster and
features in myths. Moth is a fiction.

Aglossa cuprina: moth eats human flesh—

acherontia; moth superstition, moth a
wife's tale. Moth wages wars. Moth is
old, witnessed the invention of the wheel.
Moth is in the process of becoming.

Moth is rational, moth philosophical,
moth a master of transverse orientation.

But moth is the victim of some optical
illusion, and, helpless—*Actias Luna*—

moth in private has impossible dreams
and, foolish or brave, always flies
toward the moon.

A FOURTEENTH WAY OF LOOKING AT A BLACKBIRD

after Wallace Stevens

Dead in the snow—sprawled, broken-winged;
inkblot, frozen lovesong; a pair of dark and
heavy human bodies tangled in some remote
white bed, failing, oblivious, even as they sleep;
an object unmourned, unrealized, voiceless;
photographic negative, image before image;
the dormant, ubiquitous memory of flight;
the emblem of the fallen; stoic, bloodless;
the deafening *unbeat, unbeat* of its heart.

INES PUJOS

AND THIS IS NOT A LOVE POEM

We spent the month of September on city rooftops reciting Whitman & Lenin.
I unbuttoned your white shirt & you tugged at the hem of my dress, threads
unraveling into a shadow at my feet.

You had conversations with your dead mother-your Virgin Mary- while you
smoked peyote underneath a dust bowl of stars twenty-five miles
from Phoenix, holy pages tucked in worn-thin pockets.

We fucked on floorboards until my knees bled shards of glass.
I never prayed to a god but knelt on marble in a small church in Mexico,
the face of El Niño, thorned and adorned in gold.

I spend mornings writing lines of poems that you'll never read,
snorting lines of coke & licking spoiled ink from past lovers,
their tongue clucking the syllables of your name.

I'm sorry that I fell in love the day you left me at the street corner
while I held a chandelier of 100 white & green origami cranes,
all strung along buttons & lace in my hand. Their wings ruffling in the
wind—

My mother named me after a saint she prayed to the night she lost her sister.
My father called me chaste & meek so I would remain clean. You whisper
my name over & over; rosary beads for your throat.

This is not a love letter because you would not kiss me. When my tongue
was ripe from shots of tequila & lime. You poured me another drink
until I forgot the words my mother taught me.

I used to pick wet leaves, press them to my tongue & count how many more
months of winter we would have. Now I tuck them behind
folds of books. I count how many more times you will leave me.

FICTION

2011 THREE RIVERS REVIEW FICTION PRIZE

JUDGE'S REMARKS

Andrew Tybout: "Before the Wave"

"Before the Wave" is a funny, sad, wry, and moving story about brotherhood and friendship. It's a story about what we notice regarding the people and places surrounding us. It's about what we fail to notice. It's about trying to protect each other. Ultimately, though, "Before the Wave" makes us consider just how vulnerable we really are. This work stays with you.

Jeff Martin

Writing Professor, University of Pittsburgh

Author of "Children, Go Where I Send You"

and "The Time for Nice is Gone"

BEFORE THE WAVE

On the morning of the wave, Terry made a peach cobbler. Or tried to. It started out fine: he went to the market, bought an excess of ingredients, returned to the cabin and, with the aid of the family cookbook, managed to craft a nest of dough and fruit promising at least in its resemblance to the picture. The problem came when he slid it in to bake: the oven was a haggard, senile thing, prone to unpredictable variations in temperature. Terry had put the would-be cobbler in for thirty minutes, as instructed, but when the timer rang it was pale and raw and unready. So he set the oven for another thirty and took a nap.

When his Aunt Martina came in she stopped, sniffed, then walked over to the couch where Terry was sleeping and flicked him on the nose. Terry opened his eyes and grimaced. He hadn't shaved in three days. He was sixteen.

"What?"

"Are you cooking something in the oven?"

"I'm cooking a cobbler."

"Wonderful. It's burnt."

"It's burnt?"

"I haven't opened the oven but I can just tell. Here, smell."

Terry paused a moment, then groaned and laid his arm over his eyes.

"Jesus."

He shuffled over to the kitchen, donned Martina's silly oven gloves and retrieved the fallen pastry; it was blackened and bubbling like a cauldron. He winced and threw it in the nearest trashcan. Martina stood watching with her arms crossed, somber as a funeral attendant.

Then she clapped her hands and said: "Where's your brother? Where's Hammond?"

"Sleeping, I think."

"Ham!"

Silence.

"Ham!" she called again.

A chorus of bounding feet sounded from somewhere near the bedroom. In seconds Ham had skidded into the foyer.

"Hello, yes!" he said. Ham was nine, and blond.

"Terry," said Martina, "Take Ham outside."

Terry sighed through his nostrils. Martina never gave

punishments explicitly; her retribution came in pointless, time-consuming ordeals.

"Outside where?"

"Just outside. Maybe the monument. You can take my station wagon, even."

Terry bit the inside of his cheek.

"Be back for dinner?" he asked.

She smiled tightly.

"Be back, don't be back."

"We'll race the tourists," said Ham.

"No, you will make sure your brother drives the speed limit," said Martina. "And Terry, I want Ham to be on his best behavior."

"He will be," Terry said.

"You're just saying that to make Aunt Martina happy," Ham said.

"Yes, actually carry through with it," said Martina. "Can you do that, Terry? Can you take care of Ham?"

Terry smiled grimly but said nothing.

They were in the station wagon: Ham in the passenger's seat, Terry in the driver's. The two brothers seemed completely incongruous—Ham fidgety and eager, Terry deadpan and vacant, piloting the car with the distance of a bus driver. On the radio was something about the Canary Islands, about a shelf of rock falling into the water.

Ham said: "When Aunt Martina yelled at us, you know what I was thinking?"

"What Ham, what were you thinking?"

"I was thinking, 'Up your ass with Mobil gas!'"

Ham had read the insult in an interview with Jack Kerouac.

"Do me a favor," said Terry, "tell her that when we get back."

Terry was bony and depressed. He listened to *The Cure*. His hair was as black and greasy as the coat of a bull.

"I will," Ham said. "I'll say it right to her face."

Apparently it wasn't a shelf of rock that had fallen from the Canaries, it was half an island. Terry switched the radio off.

They were living in the Keys for an indefinite, miserable summer. Their parents had sent them there, in the hope that it'd make them "more independent." In reality, quite the opposite was the case: the island was small and tacky and rife with borders, not the least of which was Martina herself. Realize: Aunt Martina wasn't

a mean woman—in fact, she'd probably crack the list of the island's top ten sweethearts—but she hadn't the temperament for kids; she was too ensconced in adult matters—health, politics, bridge—to accommodate the traveling struggle of the two brothers. She'd tried for the first few days—had brought out Scrabble and everything—but Terry and Ham were competitive to the point of physical violence, even in the benign arena of board games. Within a week she resolved to “let boys be boys,” intruding as little as possible in their hyperactive affairs: she ignored them save the times when she cooked them dinner, and they ignored her save the times when they had to sit at the dinner table.

“Gang, I know you're not having the greatest time, but don't worry,” she'd told them. “Soon you'll be back with your mom, and your dad, and all your friends, and you can tell them, ‘We had a fun vacation, but it's over now.’”

Terry turned onto a street towards town. Antiquated villas passed in the haze. It was a small island they lived on—five miles from end to end, one of them covered by breweries—but it married two distinct worlds: quaint neighborhoods and an unruly downtown made specifically, it seemed, to be abused by drunken college students.

“So where are we going?”

“We are going,” said Terry, who hadn't actually thought about where he was going, “to The Three Palms.”

“Ew!”

“Tough.”

The Three Palms was a restaurant near the downtown boardwalk that had three plastic palm trees outside the entrance. They were a poor means of drawing customers, but a much-needed barometer as to the quality of the establishment.

“Did you know their palm trees are fake?”

“Don't just go making wild accusations, Ham.”

Ham hated sarcasm.

“Terry, I hope when you get old, you poop yourself constantly.”

“If I do, I'll just have you clean up the mess.”

“I won't be anywhere near you. I'll be living in Madagascar.”

Ham's current aspiration was to be an archaeobotanist in Madagascar.

“Nope. You'll be living next to me in the retirement home. They've already got two spots reserved.”

"They don't reserve spots in advance."

"Sure they do. I've seen it."

"I'm going to cancel mine."

"Can't do that. Everything's already been set up. As soon as you were born, the Committee for Reserving Spots carved your name on a door and planned out all the necessary funding. In a government document somewhere, it says, 'When Ham reaches the age of 65, he is mandated to report to such and such a retirement home.'"

Ham thought for a moment, tasting this for truth, then said: "Terry, you're the lyingest liar in the kingdom of lietopia."

"And why's that?"

"We're not doomed," Ham said. "Otherwise people would be sad all the time."

"Wrong," Terry said. "They just ignore it."

Within minutes they were cruising through the plastic oasis of downtown: all T-shirt shops, souvenirs, the requisite three restaurants named The Crow's Nest. Half a mile away, standing solemn at four hundred feet, was the monument, looming as black and alien as the monolith from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The Three Palms was at the end of the main drag. It had a big purple patio and a banner draped from the roof reading **LIVE ENTERTAINMENT AT 10: JOSE AND THE MARLINS**. No one was on the patio.

Inside, at a booth, Ham put his thumb to the end of his straw and slowly withdrew it from the water. Then he released his thumb and watched the water dribble out.

"Look, see. That was pressure buildup."

On the television was a live feed of the amputated Canary Islands. They reminded Terry of an ancient sea battle, all white froth and rubble, a saline graveyard. No one was watching. A waitress—youthful, with dyed red hair—approached their table. She had a tattoo enfolded in her cleavage. Terry and Ham both ordered fish and chips (Terry fixated on the tattoo), and then she walked away.

"Ham?"

"Yesss?"

"When that girl comes back, ask her what her tattoo is."

Ham pretended not to hear. He was pushing ice cubes down with his straw, trying to pilot one all the way to the bottom of the cup. The girl returned with the fish and chips, both unapologetically re-heated in a microwave.

"What's your tattoo?" Ham asked. "The one on your boobs."

The girl smiled tightly.

"It's a symbol for good luck."

Ham frowned, digesting this.

"That's kind of stupid though, because if it worked then everyone would have it."

"Well," she said softly, "I like it."

When she was gone Terry rammed his foot into Ham's knee.

"Jesussss!" Ham cried. "Oww!" He picked up his stale brick of fish and hurled it at Terry. Terry swatted it away with a beef fry.

"Ham, you made that girl feel terrible."

"I was telling the truth!"

"Jackass: what makes you think people want to hear the truth all the time?"

"Cause they don't know it."

"Okay but what you're doing is, you're telling people bad news. You're making it worse for everybody."

Ham bit his lip; the color drained from his face. This, Terry knew, always preceded some sort of lashing out. Or at least, that's what he expected—this time, instead of unleashing his trademark groin kick, Ham stood, shoved his plate across the table, and stalked silently out of the restaurant. Terry watched him leave, arms folded. He turned to his miserable plate of food. A fly landed on a fry and began rubbing its legs together. A man covered in streaks of sunblock approached his table and asked: "Your brother, you know where he's going?"

"He'll be alright," said Terry, staring at the fly.

"You sure? He does this a lot?"

"He's just retarded."

The man threw up his hands.

"Your family."

Terry left the restaurant thirty minutes later, after he'd come to the unsettling realization that Ham wasn't following his usual tantrum cycle: storming off, moping, returning as if nothing had happened. Sometimes Ham stewed in the car instead, listening to All Things Considered, but he wasn't there either. This time, he was somewhere else, somewhere in the carnivorous sprawl of the island. He approached the nearest bystander: a T-shirt vendor with a gecko on his shoulder.

"You seen a kid wander out a little while ago?"

The vendor chewed on his lip.

"Yeah, I mean, I seen a kid come out. Don't know where he went though."

"You don't know which direction?"

"Nah, sorry man. Wasn't looking too closely."

"You don't remember anything?"

"I remember there was a kid, and he left." The vendor shrugged.

"Okay. Thanks."

Terry hopped in the car; turned the key. Listless soft rock trickled through the speakers. A full-scale search for Ham was a daunting endeavor—he'd never gone looking for his brother before, always confident that he'd find his own way back. But Ham must've grown tired of the old charade, its predictability. He wanted to punish Terry, to scare him into repentance for his remarks at the restaurant. Gliding through downtown, Terry tried to summon a description of his brother for bystanders—details to give Ham character, definition—but all he could invoke were unhelpful asides: Ham hated his sandy blond hair, and was always scratching it as if removing paint; Ham's favorite movie was *The Life of Mammals* with David Attenborough; Ham's phobias included going to prison in France and growing fat and cruel like Henry the Eighth.

He stopped to speak to a sheriff, red-haired and beaming, on the return from buying a chocolate-covered pretzel.

"Nope, I ain't seen no kid. I'll radio it in, though."

"That's okay."

"No, I'll radio it in."

"Fine. His name's Ham."

"Ham," said the sheriff, committing this to memory. "Ham the kid. Okay."

As Terry rolled away he watched the sheriff in the rearview mirror. He didn't reach for his walkie-talkie.

He drove inward, into the suburban heart of the island, all trees and pickup trucks and lighthouse-shaped mailboxes, and at each turn he knew he was growing farther from Ham, his chances of finding him diminishing in the idiocy of the directionless search. Nevertheless, he had a friend at the golf course—really, his only friend—and Ham knew him too—they'd all gone to the pool together—so maybe...

"No," his friend said, reclined in his chair at the caddy shack.

"He didn't come by. He seemed kinda weird, when I met him, so it doesn't surprise me that he'd ditch you."

Terry didn't think he was so weird, but he said: "Yeah, I know."

His friend nodded, and then they were silent. He wasn't his

friend, really, merely an acquaintance.

Finally the friend/acquaintance thought of something else to say: "Yo, you know what your brother told me, when we went to the pool together?"

Terry raised his eyebrows like: what?

"He told me, 'You shouldn't try to project yourself as being so tough. More girls would talk to you if you were just you.'"

Terry gave a weak little snort of amusement.

"Like, I know he's just a kid, but honestly, fuck him."

Terry decided to head back in the direction of the restaurant, hoping against hope that he'd catch Ham wandering aimlessly about, maybe pointing out the faults of random passersby. But he'd no such luck: he drove along the coast toward downtown, and saw no one below the age of twenty. When he neared the boardwalk, however, he slowed. Something was amiss: the posts were planted in the sand, rather than the water. The entire structure, in fact, stood precariously above a dune, as if it had migrated inland since he last saw it. But no, he thought as he decelerated to a crawl, it wasn't the boardwalk that had migrated—it was the water.

He stopped the car; looked out. The tide had slunk back as far as a quarter mile, as if to gather its strength: it wobbled blue and faint on the horizon. The exposed bar of sand loomed wide and bare. The tide must have receded suddenly, hurriedly: the sand was dark brown, like almonds, and still very wet. And the sky: it had turned jaundiced—a sickly half-sunset. But most unsettling of all were the people: throngs and throngs of pale bodies, basking and reading and playing in the small extension nature had allowed them. Hundreds of them, like a seaside block party. Frisbees flew, joggers jogged, the familiar beach chatter floating oblivious across the sandbar.

"Ham?" he called. Nothing. Somewhere, in the back of his mind, he noted that the seagulls were gone.

Terry got out of the car and wandered toward the makeshift beach. The noises of play and summer fun grew louder, but beneath them was a strange sort of silence, absolute and cold, which he had never heard before.

"Ham?"

His sandals met the sand. At the beginning it was normal sand, everyday sand, but as he moved inward, past families and sunbathers, it grew mushy, alien. He looked about for someone, anyone, recognizable.

"Hey!"

It took him a moment to realize he was being called to. He turned. A man, pink-skinned above his bathing suit, was sitting up; waving him over. He wandered closer, cautious of everything in this new environment. It was the sheriff. Sans uniform he seemed tubbier, less authoritative, but the fiery red hair was the same. He was sprawled out on a large beach towel. Next to him was his wife, back to the sun, asleep.

"I saw your brother, a little while ago," he said. Terry's heart leapt.

"Where?"

"Here, around here. He was wandering around trying to convince everybody to leave the beach. Strange kid."

"How long ago did you see him?"

The sheriff squinted, remembering.

"Twenty minutes ago, maybe. I'm almost sure he left. By the end he looked near tears. Told him you were looking for him, but I didn't know where you'd gone."

"Know which direction he went?"

"Oh, thataways," he said, gesturing toward the monument.

"Thanks," said Terry. "Really, thanks."

"Don't mention it," he said, already turning back over.

Terry started off toward the monument, the sand suckling at his feet. Of course the monument. The epicenter of Ham's curiosity. The only place he'd go if forced to play outside. He traveled the sidewalk, sandals smacking the hard surface. There were very few people beyond the beach: the streets, the boardwalk were all but deserted.

When he neared the grassy expanse at the edge of the monument he saw him: a small figure, shuffling alone, head down as if in prayer. He took off at a run, cursing Ham under his breath, his pent-up mass of fear dissolving into an old brotherly hatred. He was going to give him a welt to last a week. He was going to fill his shampoo with a quart of piss. He was going to ship him to Haiti without a passport.

He slowed to a jog when he neared him.

"Ham!" he called.

Ham turned. His eyes were red and moist.

"Why'd you run away?"

"I didn't run away," Ham said. "'I was trying to help them."

"Who, the people on the beach?"

Terry was at Ham's side now, the two of them standing close in the empty grassland. Ham nodded; gulped.

"They wouldn't leave," he said.

"Well, that's their choice."

"But why?"

"That's their choice."

Ham blinked rapidly, warding off an incoming tear.

"Okay, we have to go to the monument now," he said.

Terry almost never took orders from his brother—was in fact ready to enforce his own brutal Code of Law—but now, in his frazzled condition, it was best to indulge him just this once: who knew where Ham would run off to if given a half decent reason.

"Good idea. Fantastic idea. Let's go to the monument."

Ham took off hurriedly toward the tower that stood still in the yellow void. It was stone, a bottom-heavy cylinder, fat at the base and thinning ever so slightly to the observation deck at the top. It cast a long and haughty shadow across the field. It was Presence, Authority. They moved across the granite plateau at the monument's base, and then they pushed through the doors and entered the small rotunda. It was dim and eerie, a chamber neglected. A painting on the wall said: **THE SPIRIT OF FLORIDA**. There was no elevator, just a small door leading to the stairs. They took it.

They said nothing as they ascended, their feet shuffling and echoing in the endless upward spiral. Eventually it got lighter, and they could hear the whistle of the high-altitude breeze. Terry was very tired; he never exercised. Ham seemed fine. They reached the exit onto the observation deck. The deck was uncovered; the only precaution keeping tourists from an unsightly fall was a series of bars too close to squeeze through.

Terry and Ham walked out. The air was cold, and they could see everything, the totality of it all. The island lay splayed out in the ocean like a patchwork comma, houses on the fat part, downtown and the monument's grass on the curve. Only, the new sandbar now deformed the comma. From above it seemed wholly malevolent—a spreading cancer. The people, mere dots in a jumbled impressionist painting, swarmed about, as if arranging themselves to form a pattern.

Ham tugged on Terry's sleeve.

"Look, see, there it is."

"There what is?"

"Out there."

He pointed yonder somewhere. Terry squinted. The water was no longer distant and passive: something was happening. Half a mile away there was a ridge of blue, white-capped and growing,

moving silently toward the beach. Even at a distance Terry made it at one hundred feet or more: it bled into the horizon like a growing stain.

"Oh Jesus."

Ham sat down and put his back to the bars.

"So when it's over we'll go to Aunt Martina's and have dinner," he said.

Terry stared.

"Terry," Ham said, tugging at his brother's shorts. Terry looked down. Ham repeated himself, slower this time.

"So when it's over we'll go to Aunt Martina's and have dinner."

"Right," Terry said, and then he looked back out. He felt very small, very faint, like a rock adrift in infinite space.

"You're not just saying that."

"Right. I'm not just saying that."

The air was cold and thin. There was a helicopter off in the distance, faint but there. It moved slower than the wave, though Terry imagined it was trying very hard.

"What are you going to have for dinner?"

"Peach cobbler," Terry said, absent. "I'm having peach cobbler."

"The one you made?"

"Yeah."

Ham nodded silently.

"It smelled good," he said.

Terry began to give instructions: "Okay so Ham when it hits it won't reach us, but put your back against the..."

Ham interrupted: "And then, you know what I'm going to do after dinner?"

Terry stopped.

"What?"

"I'm going to have Aunt Martina tuck me in. At 7 at night. And do you know what I'm going to say?"

"What Ham, what are you going to say?"

Wind rippled lazily past.

"I'm going to say, 'That was a nice day, but it's over now.'"

SPOONDOG

Tim Pup is two years older than I. When I was younger, I was always confused when other kids would introduce their siblings as being a year older, or three years younger, when they really meant a year and three months older, or three years and five months younger. I was born on July 16th, 1983. Tim Pup was born on July 16th, 1981. Of course, he wasn't born Tim Pup. But to this day no one has ever simply called my brother by his given name, Matthew. Tim Pup just isn't a simple person.

The day before my fourteenth, and my brother's sixteenth, birthday, Tim Pup fell out of a tree and broke both of his legs. One at the ankle, and the other at the knee. He would make a full, if slightly bowlegged, recovery, but at the time he was devastated. Tim Pup had been a promising contender in that year's game of spoondog. To him, the injury could mean nothing worse than a hitch to his plans to become the season's champion. To our mother, it seemed like nothing could be worse than the interruption of her tightly scheduled routine. Mom had just become a partner in a law firm an hour away in Trenton and she was doing everything she could to, in her own words, *prove herself to the patriarchal bastards who never thought a public university coed could hack it*. As the note she had dictated to the secretary instructed, I met my brother at the hospital after summer school had ended for the day.

Tim Pup's room in the hospital was sea-foam green, and there were abstract paintings in purple and orange hanging on walls. He shared with a ten year old boy who was missing a finger.

"Lawnmower accident," his mother said in a tone of grave resentment.

Our own mother was still at her office in the city. I imagined the conversation that must have occurred hours earlier, probably with the blonde nurse who had welcomed me with a little too much enthusiasm when I arrived. *Is it serious? But not life threatening? No, my husband will pick him up in a couple of hours. Don't be too easy on him. I've warned him about this before.*

I gave my brother an awkward hug over the bed, searching his body for damages. He looked normal except for a pair of white plaster casts that gave him the look of a half-wrapped mummy. Besides, he was still skinny, still red-faced, and still had the same unblinking blue eyes.

"What happened?" I asked, pulling up a chair beside him.

"Reconnaissance. There was an unexpected interruption."

"Does it hurt?"

"You ever been water boarded?"

"No."

"Then you can't even imagine."

He picked up his magazine, *Time* was doing a special edition on the Pathfinder expedition to Mars, and flipped through the pages. I wanted to turn on the television, but the neighboring boy's mother had gone and it looked like he might be sleeping.

"Tim Pup," I whispered, "do you want me to call Laura?"

"And distress her over my situation?" He considered. "No. She could not bear the shock." And with that, Tim Pup handed me the magazine and spent the next hour waiting for our father to arrive, staring through the purple and orange masterpiece on the wall in front of him. There was, as I had sometimes glimpsed before, something about his countenance that could only be described as regal. He was a prince out of his time. I looked at the digital clock hanging above the door, 4:37. I had so many questions. I looked back at Tim Pup, willing him to return my gaze. At 5:38 I stepped into the hall under the guise of getting a drink of water. Instead I found the nurse who had welcomed me on my way in. Her desk was nearly bare except for a hefty stack of papers and a bowl of lollipops.

"Excuse me, could you tell me what happened to my brother?"

"Who's your brother, honey?"

I gave her the necessary information, all over again.

"Ah. Matthew Yeager. Fell out of a tree. You'll have to ask him for the details, honey!"

I nodded, lingering as I wondered how I could best get the real story out of my brother. Tim Pup did not appreciate being questioned. He viewed information as a series of gifts, to be granted only to those who had proved themselves worthy. Those he deemed unworthy would receive nothing better than any assortment of tall tales that came to his mind.

"Is there something you're worried about, honey?" The nurse asked. She looked from me to the bowl of lollipops, clearly wondering if I was too old to be offered one. I didn't know how to tell her that I was worried my brother would never decide I was worthy enough.

"Do you know where he fell? Where the tree was?" I tried to justify my question. "I've asked him but he doesn't remember. I think he hit his head or something."

“Let’s see... The call was made by a woman who found him on West Avery, said he was in her yard. You have any friends over there? I thought he was cleared for a concussion but if he’s having memory loss we should look into that. You just sit tight while I page your doctor. Here, take a sucker.”

I decided not to be in the room when the doctor arrived. I didn’t want Tim Pup to put the two together. So I wandered the hall of the hospital, watermelon sucker in my left hand, letting my right rest on the smooth, pink paint on the walls as I investigated the scene. I rather hoped I would walk by a big transplant operation—doctor, we must get the brain of this cow into this man before it’s too late—something exciting to pass the time. But this didn’t seem to be that kind of floor. Just a lot of people in a lot of beds, all of them waiting. On my second lap around I racked my brain of the local geography. West Avery wasn’t a street that I was familiar with, so I rationalized that it must not be close to our house. But the only friend Tim Pup had was me, unless you counted Laura Belmer. But she lived by us. To hear Tim Pup tell it, Laura was his woman, and had been for two years. Smaller and skinnier than Tim Pup, Laura was an observer, and though it seemed like she always knew what was going on, she rarely felt the need to get personally involved. Tim Pup said she was fragile.

When my father arrived, he tousled my brother’s hair and handed him, in extemporaneous fashion, the contents of his pocket, two dollar bills and a Life Saver. My brother accepted the gifts graciously, and we rode home to the sound of Jewel telling us that we were meant for her on the radio. I sat in the back seat, diagonal from my father behind the wheel. He looked tired and stiff, his green tie tight around his neck. Dad owned a pizzeria in Aubon known for its cheap prices and large portions. It was a combination that made him popular with everyone in town except Mom, who kept the books. Every other week she set him up on a lunch date with one of her business friends, hoping one of them might take an interest in the shop. I tried to make small talk about his latest meeting, but he was distracted and we spent the rest of the trip in silence. As we were about to turn onto our street, Tim Pup announced that he needed to stop at the Dollar Tree a block further down the road. The Dollar Tree was the kitschiest store in town, and it was also my brother’s favorite. Why pay more, he would say, when there are a billion Chinese who know we could bomb them at any time? I was pretty sure he was joking.

“Five minutes,” my father said, but it had already taken us

ten just to get my brother out of the car and into his new wheelchair.

"Hey, Bill," my brother chirped on our way in the store.

"Tim Pup! What's with the plaster?" the long haired man behind the counter replied.

"You should see the bear." My brother wheeled himself down the children's aisle and out of sight. I was looking at half price Fourth of July decorations when I heard him call my name in a stage whisper. I looked over my shoulders to make sure that no one had taken notice before I followed my brother's voice to the back of the store. When I reached him, he pointed to the top shelf and told me to take down a pair of red plastic binoculars. I tried to hand them down to him but he stopped me.

"Just hold onto those for a second. Lucy, I've given this some thought, and I've come to the conclusion that I have to drop out of this year's competition."

"What? No! You've been doing so good!" Spoodog was all he would ever talk to me about. "Don't let this get to you, Tim Pup, this is nothing for you. I'll help you if you need it!"

"Well that's the thing," he lowered his voice to a near hush, "I couldn't say anything in the hospital in case Lawnmower was in on it, but I've gotten some really good information."

"Then you definitely can't drop out now!"

"I have to, Luce, my number's been called. But I don't see why all of my hard work has to go to waste. I want you to carry on, adding my army and my knowledge base to yours. We probably should have teamed up long ago."

I turned away for a moment, hoping I looked interested in a plastic container full of army men. I wiped my eyes quickly and turned back. My brother was illuminated in the harsh light of the store, his eyes looking even more blue than usual. His left eyebrow raised slowly and I smiled.

"Really? You mean you'd tell me all you've been up to?"

He hesitated for a moment, and I worried that I'd ruined it. "Yes. Yes I think I will. I'm getting old, you know. Not too many sixteen year olds are still playing... so if this is it for me, I'd rather one Yeager win than no Yeager at all. Now wheel me back to the front."

I didn't realize until years later that children in other towns didn't play spoodog. In Aubon, New Jersey, there was nothing better. Every year, as soon as the cherry trees were in bloom and the April showers had replenished the creek that bordered the north side of town, children would leave their homes and head for water. In the standard uniform of shorts and the rain boots your mother

refused to let you leave the house without, we went as if in a trance, called by some higher power which had planted in our hearts the same, singular motive: to capture the best collection of blue crawfish in town.

This was no easy feat. To assemble a really top notch collection required patience and cunning. Inexperienced spoondoggers were known to hunt too early in the season. Swept up in the excitement that built in whispers and giggles throughout the spring, they would run to the creek as soon as it was warm and begin assembling their armies in the tanks they hid in their bedrooms and basements. But crawfish don't do well in captivity, and if you got them before they molted in June, your chances of having them survive until September were not optimistic. And September was when the real fun began, mating season. Before children in Aubon had learned about the birds and the bees, they could tell you, in scientific detail, the mating habits of the *procambaris alleni*. Crawfish are aggressive creatures, and in the months of September and October the males would engage in great battles, fighting for the opportunity to breed with nearby females. Neighborhood children were only too happy to help with this process, pitting their hand selected armies against each other, and watching in delight as many a warrior were maimed, losing limbs or chunks of tale, which often grew back in new and fascinating mutations.

Over the next couple of days Tim Pup filled me in on what he'd discovered about the way spoondog was going down that year. The upset, he said, was a new boy who lived on West Avery, and he promised to gather Laura and me together for an exploratory mission on the following Saturday, when Mom was out visiting her sister in Philadelphia two hours away. That week was the fastest of my summer vacation. Even remedial algebra went by in a flash.

Saturday was hot. Laura had just gotten her license, and after packing up water bottles and sunscreen, and packing Tim Pup into the back of her Chevy pickup, we set out for West Avery. Laura was looking at her side windows so often to check on my brother that we fishtailed the whole way. But we made it safe and sound, parking exactly five houses down from the residence in question. Laura and I left the comfort of our seats to hop in the back with Tim Pup and listen as he outlined the plan.

"It's brilliant, really. The creek is right in his backyard, so he has prime access to crawl. But instead of taking his catches back home in a tank, he's moved his tank to the water, like crab traps. They can get in but they can't get out, and he never seems to take them out

of the water until he needs them to fight. That way his army isn't removed from their natural habitat, where they thrive. What I can't tell is, how is he stopping his crawl from going ahead and fighting and mating on their own in the water? I need you to take the binoculars to that tree, in his neighbor's yard, there, and watch him to see what he does."

"But what if the neighbor comes? Isn't she gonna wonder what I'm doing in her tree?"

"She works at the flower shop on Saturday."

"Well won't he see me watching him?"

"He hasn't seen me yet."

"You fell out of the tree."

"What do you think the binoculars are for? I only fell because I had to crawl so far to the edge of the branch to see anything. Go now, he has a match in an hour, so he's bound to check on them soon."

"How did you find out he has a match?"

"Lucy."

"Is Laura going to come too?"

He shot me a warning glare and I knew my time was up. Binoculars in hand, I walked as casually as I could down the street. There was something comforting in the knowledge that the houses on this street looked similar to the ones on my own, just another series of split levels, some in blue and some in brown. After taking a look around to make sure no one was out, I darted down the neighboring woman's yard, past the house, to the edge of the creek in the back. There was a tall wooden fence separating the two yards, so I couldn't tell whether or not the boy I was looking for was already outside or not. I put the binoculars in my pocket and climbed the big oak as quietly as I could, settling on a branch close to the trunk. Sweat stuck my shirt to my back and my back to the tree. I amused myself with a ladybug until I saw movement in the boy's yard. The sliding back door opened to release a lab puppy, followed by a boy. He looked to be about my age, but taller, with thick blond hair and freckles. His description matched my brother's, except I didn't see the "callous cunning" that Tim Pup had found in his eyes.

So, this was Bobby McCann. I wished for a moment that I was still close with Amber Petrinsky, so I could spread what little gossip I had about the new boy before everyone else would meet him when real classes started in September. Aubon didn't see a lot of new faces, so new kids were generally treated like celebrities. But I had figured that our friendship was over when I called to RSVP to

Amber's birthday party at the end of the eighth grade and Amber told me that my invitation had been rescinded, which my mother told me later meant that I had been uninvited. My mother helped brainstorm reasons for my sudden alienation. *You need to start talking to people, or when will anyone ever want to talk to you? Get your head out of the clouds and into some textbooks. You shouldn't be hanging around your brother so much, Lucille. God knows he's the exact replica of your uncle Lucas, and when was the last time he got anyone's attention for the right reasons?*

Suddenly, I was glad that Amber had decided I was too quiet, or too dumb, or too crazy to want to hang around. Bobby McCann would be mine alone. I watched him sit on the bank of the creek and take off his shoes. I scooted out a little further on the branch to get a better view. He took hold of a rope that he had tied to a post in the weedy grass. Following the line of the rope he waded further toward the middle of the creek and I scooted further out onto the branch.

Reaching the end of the rope, Bobby pulled hard and what did look very similar to a crab trap, with all its wire and holes, came up from the depths of the creek. Squinting to see what was inside of the trap, I suddenly remembered the binoculars that were in my pocket. Struggling to get them out of the back pocket of my pants while maintaining balance on the limb, I fumbled and dropped them in the yard below. Bobby probably wouldn't have noticed if I hadn't also said, "Fuck!"

Seeing him looking at me in the tree, I realized that my mother was right. I was spending too much time with Tim Pup. But instead of speaking up more or studying up more, I was going to run away. I would hop a bus, that afternoon, and I wouldn't get off until I was far, far away from New Jersey. Further still, away from the tri-state area. Screw it, I would go all the way to California.

"I'm so sorry," I said to Bobby McCann, who looked too surprised to respond. Inching back toward the trunk, I started my descent as quickly as I could manage.

On the ground in Bobby's neighbor's yard, I sat down at the trunk of the tree. I needed to savor this moment before I had to go back to the car and tell Tim Pup and Laura what I had done. The mission for which my brother had sacrificed his legs was ruined because of me. When word got out, no one would want to set up a match with the cripple and the spy. We were as good as out of spoon dog, for the season at least, and probably forever. It was the only part of starting regular classes again in the fall that I had looked forward to. Maybe I should just walk straight to the bus stop, bypass

my brother altogether. After all, Tim Pup would only take me back home. *You did what, Lucille?*

I was trying to remember where the closest bus stop was when I saw a blonde, freckled face appear above the fence.

"Bobby?" I rubbed my nose on the back of my hand.

"How do you know my name?"

"My brother."

"I know your brother?"

"Probably not."

"I didn't know any kids lived next door."

"Yeah. I'm gonna go." I stood up and brushed myself off.

Bobby's head disappeared and I began to walk away. Maybe if I got to the sidewalk unnoticed by my brother then I could run across the street and cut through the opposite yards. Before I had made it more than a few steps I heard the fence rattle as Bobby scrambled down on my side. He was taller than I'd expected. His nose was crooked, too.

"That wasn't as hard as I thought. I'm Bobby, which you know. Who are you?"

"Would you believe it if I said my name was Amber Petrinsky?"

"Yes."

"Good."

"Oh. Well it's nice to meet you, Amber." He stuck out his hand. I remained motionless.

"Look. If this is some kind of trick, you can give it up now," I said.

"Why would I trick you?"

"Why are you being so nice to me?"

"If a strange girl was watching you from a tree, wouldn't you be curious? I don't mean strange, I just—look, I just moved here. I don't know anyone, and everyone here plays this weird game that you probably play too and I have no idea what I'm doing..." His smile faltered and I stuck out my hand. We shook, our palms sweaty from heat or embarrassment.

"I'm Lucy."

"I've never met an Amber that goes by Lucy."

"Yeah."

"Do you play spoonduck?"

•••

Every spoondogger gets to choose five craw to make an army. In any given match, you can deploy as many of your craw as you want. While it may seem like a tempting strategy to throw all of your forces into battle at once, most players quickly realize that their craw will tire and give up if they're overworked from the beginning. And when you play as many matches as you can win, you want to prepare for the possibility that you could be playing a lot of matches. By the end of the season, it's not uncommon to be playing with an army of two, or even one war-weary craw. Two years after Bobby caught me spying on him from a tree in his neighbor's yard, we found ourselves up against each other in the final match of the season. It took place in the back schoolyard on a Friday after classes had ended. It was cold, and I kept my singular army wrapped under a blanket as I waited for the fight to begin.

Children from ten to sixteen formed a ring around the field of play, a two by two foot rectangle outlined by an assortment of stones that had been found nearby. Everyone was bundled in jackets and hats. The littler kids in scarves and gloves. Bobby was also down to one craw, a mean buck twice the size of mine, but missing his left pincer.

Looking at Bobby across the field, it was hard to force a smile. We'd promised each other that we wouldn't let ourselves take the fight too seriously. We both knew that it would be our last year to play. After you became a senior, thoughts of college and other future plans were meant to transform you into someone too mature to play a silly game like spoondog. But as juniors, we could still cling to the notion that we had nothing more important to do in the world. And we wanted to win. Mary Keaton gave Bobby a kiss on the cheek for luck. Tiny, with curly red hair and freckles, Mary was the last person you'd expect to be vicious on the debate team. But she killed. At least, that's what Bobby had told me when I had helped him pick out his tie for the homecoming dance. Coral, to match her dress.

Thomas Hinton, who had lost to Bobby in the prior round, officiated. "Craws on their marks!" he called, his voice distorted from behind the scarf he had wrapped around his face to keep out the chill. Between the scarf and his knit cap, all you could see of Thomas was a pair of glasses. We responded automatically, placing our warriors in the center of our respective halves of the field. I let my index finger linger on my craws shell, just long enough to try and will some of my own passion into his tired body. At least he felt warm, the blanket had done its job.

"Bobby McCann faces Lucy Yeager. Opponents?" It was our

cue to shake hands, but Bobby pulled me into a quick hug, followed by his traditional punch to the shoulder. Titters were heard from the crowd. Somebody booed.

"Bobby!" I hissed, "This is war."

He smiled at me, looking guilty, and stepped back to his place behind his craw. Thomas gave us the nod and we bent down to attach our flags, little paper triangles glued to toothpicks that we tied to the craw's backs. The toothpicks were speared through the dead bodies of snails, a crawfish delicacy. As soon as we had them secured, the craws instantly became animated.

"3:45!" Thomas called. The match had officially started. We would let our craw do their worst for fifteen minutes. At the end of that time, whichever craw had consumed the snail off of the other's back, or incapacitated his opponent, had won. If neither occurred, overtime would be allotted, though this was unusual. Crawfish are, by nature, mean. And after a season of fighting, the finalists were usually the meanest of all.

Spoondoggers were allowed one item each with which they could urge their warriors onward in battle. This item could not be anything electrical, and must strictly be used on one's own craw. My item was a pool cue with a sharp, whittled edge. If it even so much as glanced Bobby's craw, I would be forced to abandon it for five minutes of the match. Being so incapacitated could ruin a game.

Bobby's item was a wide toothed comb, which required him to remain much closer to the action of the game. I asked him once if he minded, he'd been clipped by pincers before, but he said he felt obligated to be in on the action as much as he could be. If his craw was going to lose a limb, he could take a couple of scratches.

I used the side of my cue to guide my craw to the left of his opponent, then gave him a quick poke in the back to urge him forward. Craw weren't usually expecting attacks from the side. Bobby's craw, distinguished for the crowd by the green flag that contrasted the yellow of my own, was dully surprised. By the time he had righted himself for a defense, my craw had already gotten in a good pinch to a hind leg. Bobby guided his craw back with the comb, repositioning him for the offensive.

I thought back to the conversation I had on the phone that morning with Tim Pup, now at Rutgers pursuing his degree in pharmacy. He had warned me against going soft. Sentimental, was the word he used. But I had assured him that I would leave my relationship with Bobby off the field. Watching him, though, so completely absorbed in the game, it was hard not to feel conflicted.

"No one expects you to win this, Luce," my brother had told me, his voice crackling from a bad connection, "which is exactly why you have to." It's true that I wasn't the fan favorite. Bobby turned out to be a pretty good guy, and his spot on the soccer team didn't make him any less popular. And as Tim Pup had pointed out to me on numerous occasions, everyone knew I was in love with him.

"Everyone, Luce."

I shook my head to clear my thoughts. His green flagged craw had a hold of my yellow's leg and we were at six minutes to go. With my cue, I hit at the ground behind my craw's tale, hoping to surprise him into moving forward toward his attacker. If he backed away, his leg might rip right off.

Bobby was trying to convince his craw to make a sharp turn, a move which might also snap the leg if I couldn't get my craw to turn with him. I set the side of my cue against my craw's tale, pushing as if it were the rudder on a boat. The more I pushed right the more he turned left. Push, turn. Push, turn. Push, turn. If I could just keep my craw turning he might get a chance to gather strength and break free. I was holding my cue so close to the point that Bobby and I were only feet apart. I was watching his expression, jaw set, eyes narrowed, when I heard Thomas Hinton yell.

"Penalty! A touch on green. Yeager will sit out the rest of the match, four minutes to go."

Looking down, I saw what I had done. The tip of my cue had slipped and was clearly on Bobby's craw. There was no arguing. I stabbed my cue in the dirt and took a few steps back. The entire season and I would be worthless for the moment it counted. There was nothing I could do but watch, and hope my craw had something left inside of him. At least my tactic had worked and he had been freed from the grasp of his opponent. I paced the yard, refusing to look at Bobby. I kept my eyes strictly on the craw.

The comb pushed the green flag back, hoping to reposition for an attack. But my own craw got a stab in with his pincer and held tight. I couldn't help but holler as I watched my craw get pulled along with Bobby's. His grasp was firm, and pressure like that was likely to cause a break. Bobby should have known to back off when he saw my craw take hold.

But Bobby knew what he was doing. With one swift movement he flipped his craw over and onto the back of my own, so the front half of his craw was on top of the back half of mine. The stunned stillness of his warrior proved that he'd had to sacrifice one of his craw's own legs to do it. The small blue leg, smaller than the

butt of a cigarette, lay motionless on the grass beside the fighters.

"Look at that!" Thomas shouted, so excited it seemed like he forgot he was announcing at all. "Holy hell! And, and one minute to go!"

Bobby's craw was perfectly positioned to win, despite his injury. If Bobby moved him forward another inch, the craw would go for the snail and it would be over. I bit down hard on my fist. What would Tim Pup say when I told him I lost? I already knew what my mother would say. *Don't you see what happens when you put your eggs in a paper basket? You need to choose your projects carefully, Lucille. I may just be your mother to you, but after all I went through last year, I think I am qualified to say that, at least. Wouldn't you agree, Lucille? What is the new philosophy in this house, Lucille?*

"Perspective," I muttered, as I watched my warrior struggle to buck his attacker. He didn't realize that the game was as good as called. Once the snail was gone and my little yellow flag was destroyed, it was over.

Bobby's hand, holding the comb, hesitated over the action. His craw grasped the air in front of him, his prize just out of the reach of his pincers. Bobby rested the comb against the craw's back, careful not to touch my craw in the process. I could see the veins in his hand as he tensed. One more forward push and I could go home. Bobby's hand twitched, and in an instant, the craw with the green flag was back on the ground. With the weight of his opponent off his back, my own yellow flagged warrior made a rush toward his enemy, and snapped the green flag in two.

"Is that? It is!" Thomas Hinton and I saw it at the same time, the craw with the yellow flag with half a snail in its mouth. "Snail down! What a comeback! Yeager wins the season with seconds to go!"

Mary ran to give Bobby a hug. I stood still, replaying the last minute of the game as hands clapped me on the back and shoulders. The crowd dissipated like a sudden rain that was gone before you realized you were wet. I got down on my knees to remove the flag from my hero. As I wrapped him in the blanket, I made a silent apology to whoever had made crawfish, for the damages we all had done. I could hear the sounds of excited conversations fading away. When I looked up, Bobby's silhouette interrupted the horizon. He stretched out his hand and helped me up.

"Good game, buddy," he grinned.

"Was it?"

"Didn't you hear the crowd? Most exciting game of the

season, just the way it should be.” Bobby put his craw in an old shoebox he’d lined with toilet paper.

“Things don’t always happen the way they should.”

“Maybe, but this time it seems like they did. I’ll try not to harbor too much resentment. In fact, I think I’ll only hate you a little.”

“Where’s Mary?” I found my book bag where I’d left it under a nearby tree and put it on.

“Practice. There’s a meet in New Haven this weekend. I can’t get over how intense it all is. They travel even further in the spring, you know. Hey, what are you doing this weekend—want to come by and be my goalie? I could use some extra practice.”

“Maybe. I’m at my dad’s apartment this weekend. I don’t know what he has planned. I think Sharon said she wanted the three of us to go hiking or something, but give me a call just in case.” Sharon was the business partner Mom always wanted Dad to have, an irony that was lost on her after the separation. Sharon had never been unkind to me, but I hated having to spend weekends on the pull-out couch in their one-room where the air smelled like synthetic peppermint and the walls were too thin. I had taken to plugging into my walkman before going to bed, the volume turned up to full. Bobby and I started walking toward Bobby’s car. The game had been so consuming that I’d forgotten we were only twenty feet behind the school. Bobby opened the passenger side for me, but I didn’t get in. “Hey. Bobby, you know you didn’t have to—”

“I always open your door, silly,” Bobby took sudden interest in the pavement. “I’m a gentleman that way. Now get in, bitch, it’s cold.”

“No, you know what I—Bobby, I know that you—”

“Are freezing your balls off? Yes, I am, thank you, although I probably wouldn’t have used such vulgar language myself, potty mouth.” Bobby tried to shut the door, but I stopped it with my foot.

“Wait.” Looking at him, his nose and cheeks red from the cold, I felt a pang of guilt for making him stand outside any longer. “I’m sorry. Look, Bobby. Bobby. God damn, Bobby McCann.” It was the name the guys on the soccer team call him, and at that moment I thought it was the funniest thing I’d ever heard. I laughed until I felt tears.

“Lucy? Are you okay?” Bobby leaned down to put his icy hand on my forehead. “Yes, doctor, I think she’s lost it—”

I pulled his hand to my mouth and kissed it. And before he could protest, I kissed his mouth. It was my first time, not counting my Uncle Lucas the Christmas before, who tasted like Blackstone cigars

and pulled my hair so hard that my eyes had watered. Kissing Bobby was more like how I imagined kissing should be, only more fleeting. Bobby pulled away and stepped back, unspeaking. Soundless. He drew his eyebrows together, and as he looked at me, he frowned.

Neither of us spoke until he pulled into the driveway of the house I shared, alone now, with my mother. I hopped out first and he handed me my backpack from the backseat.

“Congratulations, Lucy,” he said through the window. Before I could respond, he was gone.

The house was empty when I walked in. Mom left a note on the kitchen table saying she would be working late. I put the craw in his tank in my room and gave him a double serving of his meal. Staring at him through the glass, I thought he looked pretty small. Or maybe the tank just looked bigger since the other four had been lost along the season. The season I had won. I felt like I should do something to celebrate. I could call Tim Pup, but he would probably be out with Laura. It was hard to get a hold of him on weekends. Waving goodbye to my warrior, I went to the living room and sat down on the couch beside the table with the phone, willing it to ring.

GILA MONSTER

Nudity is of little concern to the people of Loving, New Mexico. Houses scatter across the desert like crushed red pepper so that the view from anywhere is a great red tribute to land untouched by human folly. Warmth spreads itself thick and rises up out of the rocks, heating the scaly bellies of strange lizards and causing a tip-toe effect on barefoot housewives scurrying down the driveway to check the mail.

Sara, however, takes her time, for she is a woman of vitality and grace—less offended or concerned with the itch of fabric or the heat of pavement. The desert agrees with her, from the ends of her tanning breasts to the breeze running over the humble texture of her southern wonders. She carries the water bill in one hand and an unlit Pall Mall in the other. Her dirty blonde hair is an effortless mess of sexuality and shining life, her outfit a pair of sunglasses. The difference between lizard and housewife is defined in sequence from the tip of her tongue to the blue polish gleaming carelessly from the ends of her feet—all for the eyes of God and no one else.

The porch extends out from the house without the comfort of shade. Sara prefers it, settling in the shoddy embrace of a pink and rusted lawn chair, plastic chipping from its sides.

This is the world's early afternoon, but it is Sara's dawn.

The sunglasses hide her Carolina blue eyes from the light, her headache's unrelenting encouragement. She opens the water bill, all eleven dollars of it, and tosses it on a porcheside pile of uncashed disability checks and cigarette butts. The radio is a raspy machine, and it hisses the welcome soulfulness of *Comfortably Numb*. Sara takes in a long swig of desert air and sparks up the Pall Mall, killing half of it in a single violent suck, leaning forward in her chair and hugging her knees out of some quiet, buried need.

Her thoughts wander: *What are the other former prom queens up to this morning? How much ice is left in the freezer?*

There are specifics to Margarita craft known only by the happy few that have studied its potential. Sara can charm a blender with the skill of a poet and the hand-strength of a dock worker. You blend the ice lightly, she tells people, so that it's frozen enough to enjoy, but thin enough to move effortlessly through the straw. This is breakfast: a heap of toast, buttered in excess, a plate of taco wraps, the margarita, and yesterday's copy of the "Current-Argus"—the paper out of Carlsbad. There are no napkins. There is merely Sara,

her habits, and the concrete slab porch basking in the New Mexico sun.

The headlines are absurd, scattered in glossy ink to rally interest in the importance of minor league baseball, coming storms, and the candidacy of men dressed in collared shirts, unbuttoned at the neck in a very “Every Man” sort of way. It’s never there anymore, not on the front page, at least, but buried simultaneously in the thick middle of scattered briefs and the widening crevices in Sara’s head. This is where the nightmares live. This is where they talk about the war.

It’s such an unflattering word, Iraq—four letters, that uncomfortable capital “I” sounding off to some weird, personal effect. Sara drinks to it, sleeps to it, and breathes in and out all the buzzing connotations of the word, the country split with rivers, the nation split by people. Her life is a series of these same weird, personal effects, expressed in habits, reminisced in dreams and in the afternoon rattle of desert nothingness. They arrive earlier and earlier, past the boiling point, past one hundred, a few empty blenders later.

She slurps clumsily. Cold tequila dribbles down her tan, voluptuous chest, settling near her belly button, drying in a sizzle. She lies back in her pink lawn chair. The Lord’s undying light maps her form in heavenly detail. Her eyes close slowly as her hair blows from one side of her face to the other.

Sara falls asleep, and the strange music begins.

The desert turns nightly in an instant. Rockets fly up to the heavens from every direction, burning through the blackness pissing fiery embers, concealing the stars and blowing up in the face of God. Specialist Sara Wilder loads the weapon with the skill of a poet. She charges it with the hand strength of a dock worker. She can never hear the screaming, only the satisfying clink of brass on metal, piled high and deep in tallied bravery. The team leaves the scene, the piles of brass, the riddled buildings. Sara carries a machine gun, a heavy, determined thing—the squad automatic weapon, the object of so much penis envy it could only be entrusted to a woman. She yells many things to starry-eyed new guys, swearing in tongues appropriate to the warrior condition.

Sara wakes in Loving, New Mexico, clutching the news out of Carlsbad.

The sun welcomes her back with throbbing power, so much so that she has to quickly roll her Carolina blues away with a quickness that speaks to the cost of her sunglasses. A sudden rush of margarita and taco wrap swims up from her stomach. A line of spit slowly descends from her lip as she stares over the mess leaking

down the cracks in the porch. Her hair creeps into the corners of her mouth. A great heave of momentum takes her back upright, where her fingertips stroke those lost strands back behind her ear. She cleans her teeth with her tongue.

Sara is an elegant creature—her wants and needs are spelled out in simple detail, categorized neatly and with odd exactness in two groups: Sleep and drink. She currently favors the former, wishing in self-pity to return to the dream from whence she came, from where she's sure most of her true self remains, stuck in time, long since deceased. The spigot outside the garage drips loudly, leaking a timely anthem of single low notes—the words she knows, the tune she hums. She gets up to check it, finds a friend waiting in the puddle of the driveway—a Gila Monster, spotted beautifully with orange and black brush strokes.

It sticks its tongue out at Sara. She nods.

The radio hisses again, stuck on repeat. Roger Waters lures her back to the lawn chair, where the strange music covers her in blankets.

The four of them rock back in unison, but at the tilting point a rocket flies up past their heads and shakes the feeble structure, raining calcimine and heavy chunks of limestone on their connected body, now rushing forward in a panicked attack. Violence of action, she thought, violence of action. Her one-man is already down in the doorway, the fatal funnel, shocked by the impact of bullet on bullet plate. The two-man takes the path of least resistance and engages targets on the right flank. Her three-man takes one to the leg, and the bright hue and rushing departure of his lifeblood sends an urgent message. Sara dives over the wounded, slides on the floor, and rains all of her evil desires against her adversaries. She paints the walls red, even parts of the ceiling, with dramatic flair, the once smooth room now textured with the remains of what once was, of what will never be again. All that remains are the screams of camaraderie, but Sara fiercely applies several tourniquets above the entry wound, calming the sprinkler into a leaky spigot. The grateful man calms his breathing and raises his head to her, then slowly sticks his tongue out.

Sara sees a lizard in Loving, New Mexico.

The Gila Monster had moved. It's to her direct front now, mere feet from the end of the pink lawn chair. It stares at her with the same look of curiosity that people wear when they don't understand. She doesn't flinch, doesn't jolt in surprise or scream. It's been done, this type of thing. She's seen it before, studied its ugly face—the words she knows, the tune she hums. A wobbling cigarette settles in front of her flame. Specialist Wilder removes her sunglasses and

locks eyes with the great lizard, leaning forward in nude, drunken fearlessness. The monster moves slowly forward.

Some people go looking for death. Sara searched the weirdest corners of the world, under all the rugs, even in the splattered remnants of human life. She didn't see it, couldn't find it, not even in the stoppage of breath or the mutilation of body. There was no end to all things. Time moves in speeds and directions that supersede finality. There are no means to a meaning. Everything simply is.

Sara's gaze strengthens. The lizard blinks. She fiddles with the cigarette, feeling its heat near her finger. A moment of clarity tingles down the softness of her back.

The Pall Mall is over. The Pall Mall never was. She puts it out on the meaty part of her tongue, swallowing its fiery ash. The monster moves slowly forward.

AMANDA MARTIN

RESURRECTIONISTS

Before her death, Candle lived in a corner of the city, neither liked nor disliked, and rarely noticed. She braided her hair in a long braid every morning, washed dishes in a tavern every day, shared a room with five others every night. She desired nothing more complicated than a cup of tea at the day's end or a comfortable place to sit when her feet ached. Life gave her little more than this.

After her death, several fey found her body washing in the murk of the river. Venderrr, younger than the rest and bored with searching for muddy trinkets, waded into the water and pulled her body to the shore. He breathed his milky breath into her mouth and nose and across her eyes, drew the water from her lungs, whispered words that entwined around her and drew a part of herself out of herself. When he finished, Candle stood before his soulless eyes, a shade without thought or expression. He could have claimed her, but he did not. He felt no concern for her at all, so she set her steps away from him toward the city.

She roamed up and down the streets, paused by the factory, paused by the tavern, turned and wandered again. She walked until she came to a little grey graveyard with an iron gate, nestled between tall buildings long out of style. There she halted for many years.

As she stood by the graveyard's gate, she twisted to one side, then to the other, like a hanged man on his rope. She had a little white face, a long white body clad in white, long hair that spilled like ink over her shoulders and down her back. Her eyes were so deep and black and unseeing that they might have been holes through her head.

A time passed, and no one entering the graveyard ever saw her. Candle's thoughts in her darkness were shadowy and dim, without consequence.

One night years after her death, she became aware of eyes watching her, and noted the attention. And so she saw the man before her, who stood in the darkness with a wooden spade over his shoulder and a hat on his head, holding a lantern in one gloved hand.

She had no words, neither to speak to him nor to describe him. She could not make sense of this present collection of bone and blood and skin. She only looked at him, and did not think it odd that he looked back. Then he stepped past her to unlock the gate. He entered the graveyard as though it were his home, and three men

followed him.

Candle turned to stand on tiptoe, peering over her gate at them. She watched as they dug at the head of one of the graves. They reached a coffin, and she heard the soft creak as they broke it. They moved quickly, deftly. Once they laughed. They dragged the body from the ground with ropes, and wrapped it in black cloth. The three men quit the graveyard with their prize on their shoulders, but the first stayed behind to fill the grave. When he had finished, he locked the gate, tipped his hat to Candle, and set off down the street.

Candle stood perplexed. Not once since her death had she made herself the object of her thoughts, for she had never been the object of anyone else's. Faltering, she remembered her rebirth, her resurrection: the cold, long-fingered hands on her arm, pulling her through liquid shadows, and the sibilant speech of the fey as he whispered in her waterlogged ears.

In the deepest hour of night, several nights later, the four men returned. She had expected them. Perhaps her new interest glimmered in her face, because the first man smiled at her before he unlocked the gate. He was tall, with a neat-kept beard and shaggy hair. His eyes were black as licorice, rimmed roundabout with darkness. His face when he smiled was solemn and beautiful.

Candle listened to their voices as they worked, hoping to hear one word that would not blur as it touched her ears. But the men spoke softly and seldom, and she did not think to move from her gate to come closer.

When they had finished, they collected their limp bundle and patted down the freshly-turned earth. The first three slipped from the graveyard without a glance in Candle's direction, but the man coming last tipped his hat to her again.

From that moment, Candle loved him with a desperate fascination. She knew no desire for his happiness; she wanted only to see him and to be seen by him. She took two steps after him, arms stretched out to reach for him, erratic in her haste. Then she halted. She ran her fingers through her hair, and returned trembling to her place.

With new eyes she watched the mourners bury their dead. They wore black coats; they carried umbrellas. Their faces awakened strange memories within her. First she remembered grief, for that was the clearest emotion they wore, and familiar to her. One afternoon, during a lengthy graveside eulogy she could almost

overhear, she remembered boredom. Candle held these emotions as though they were coins she could clutch in her hand; now and then she considered them, turned them over, rubbed at them.

The man did not come again at night, but he passed by the graveyard on the eleventh day, when grey light had begun to seep into the morning. He carried no spade, but she recognized him nonetheless and leaned forward to catch a glimpse of his licorice eyes. She saw that he did not see her.

"Man," she said, but he did not turn. She shouted the word after him, but he did not hear it.

That sent her into a panic. She had not said a word since her death, and few words before it. Having brought this word into the world with such trepidation, only to have it go unheard, she felt as though she had dropped her firstborn down a well. She wanted to retrieve it. She did not know how she could. She seized the gate with both hands, sagging against it, and her frustration burned through her.

She became full of memory. She remembered the grey factory where she had worked as a child: the wood of the door as she opened it every day on her way to work, the whirring and clicking and clatter of the looms, the smell of thread. She remembered Margo, who had sometimes run a hand along her shoulder, who had sometimes smiled. She remembered the tavern: her confusion at its disorder, the stickiness of beer on the floor, the men whose eyes touched her always. Once she had stood on the factory roof, staring down at the swarming city while pigeons fluttered about her head and pecked at her toes. Once she had visited her aunt in the country, and seen with wide eyes a multitude of stars.

Candle looked at the sky, vast and empty above her, and then at the people in the street. Seeing them, she remembered a longing for home.

And then she saw the fey, making his way down the street with a deftness of movement that no other creature could imitate. His kind hated to be surrounded by humans and cold iron, and rarely entered the city, but this fey was still young and bored. He came up to Candle with his hands thrust into his pockets, and sniffed her face. He was just her height; his teeth were as sharp and bright as his black-slit green eyes.

"You smell of human thoughts," he said.

Under his gaze, Candle jolted back into language. "You see me."

"Course I do. I made you." Venderrr peered into her huge

eyes, clicked his tongue. "All those human thoughts," he said. "They'll burn right through you."

Candle shrank from him. Margo had loved to tell stories of the fey: how they were incapable of sorrow, incapable of love, amused by even their own pain, frustrated by mercy, always empty, always longing, seeking and finding every moment of the day. She saw in the clearness of Venderrr's face how utterly her situation failed to move him, but she caught his sleeve as he turned to go. "You see me," she said.

"I see lots of things."

"You see me."

"Is that all you can say?"

"Man," Candle said. "Man sees me."

"Ah." Venderrr's eyes yellowed. "There's a human in this city who can see you?"

"Only at night."

Venderrr smirked. "That's the way of it," he said. "You only shine at night, and only to some eyes."

"Why?" she whispered.

"Because you're burning," Venderrr said. "You're burning with human thoughts, and they'll burn you right down to a stub if you let them. Should be interesting for you."

"Interesting?" she echoed, and he shook his arm and said, "Let me go."

She released him, and he continued down the street. The few humans remaining outside parted to let him pass, but he took no heed of them. She knew their murmurs amused him. What need had he to be seen by humans? Self-assured as a cat, the fey could be ignored by every man, woman, spirit, and beast, and still derive unmarred enjoyment from his own company. She envied him that, for she had grown half-human in her thoughts. She was human enough to not want to be nothing.

She waited for the man with licorice eyes.

She had not noticed the seasons before. She had forgotten their pattern. Rain washed the cobbles clean, the grass in the graveyard withered, snow fell. The people walking down the streets coughed and snuffled, pulled scarves around their faces. Funerals came daily, but few were well-attended.

Candle stood tall and hopeful by her gate, waiting to be seen by the light she cast, but every eye slid past her. It had been better, she thought, in the days when none of this had mattered.

Venderrr did not return to the graveyard until the spring,

when the snow had melted and the ground had thawed. He carried a wooden spade, and wore a hat, and three men accompanied him. At first Candle mistook him for another. Then she saw the paleness of his hair and face, the mossy greenness of his eyes, the sharpness of his teeth.

She flung herself in front of the gate. "Where is he? Where is the man who can see me?"

"Learned to speak like a human, have you?" Venderrr said. He pushed her aside—not even touching her—with a glance of his eyes. His men unlocked the gate for him, and they entered the graveyard together.

Candle wrenched herself from the gate to follow them, shaking from head to foot, almost nauseated with the effort. When she thought she could go no further, she lunged at the last man in the procession, caught his coat in both hands. He did not notice her, but Venderrr did. His eyes glimmered.

"Where is he?" Candle said. "What have you done to the man who can see me?"

"Taken his job," Venderrr said.

None of the men seemed unsettled to hear the fey speak to himself, nor did they blink when Venderrr extended his hand to the empty air. They knew not to question a fey's strangeness. Candle leaned heavily on his arm—or would have, had she weighed anything—and Venderrr led her through the rows of gravestones to a grave recently dug and filled. Candle looked down at it.

"He's dead?" she asked.

Venderrr shook his head. "Not likely, not a man like that. He's a resurrectionist—a body-snatcher. Digs up corpses for doctors. Goes by the name of Exili."

"But you've taken his job? You're a resurrectionist now?"

Venderrr flicked his fingers, expressing with that gesture all a fey's contempt for mortals. "I was a resurrectionist before Exili was born. Did I not resurrect you?"

"You unmade me," Candle said. "I was human once, and you unmade me. Do you think I would have asked for this?"

"This is my art."

"My thoughts are wearing through me."

"Why should that worry you?" Venderrr asked. "You were dying from the moment you were born. Is it not interesting to die?"

"No," Candle said, "it isn't."

She had become aware of time: not flowing around her anymore, but sweeping her toward her fate. Before she died, or fell

apart, or whatever would happen, she wanted Exili to look at her—not even to smile, just to look. Because now that she thought about it, she realized that no one had seen her, not for all her life.

“Where is he?” she asked.

Venderrr leaned on the handle of his shovel and gave her his full, amused regard. “You would leave this place to find him?”

“Yes.”

“This one man who can see you?”

“Yes.”

“But what can he give you?”

She had not thought of gifts or exchanges. She had thought only of his eyes. “He sees me.”

“I see you.”

“You see lots of things. That’s what you said. But you can’t make anything human.”

“Perhaps not.” Venderrr started digging. His pale hair slithered in tendrils from underneath his hat. “I brought you to life,” he said. “You have a body, of sorts, and a mind of sorts to think with. But you’ll never be human.”

“Why not?”

“I’m a fey,” Venderrr said. “I can’t make bodies that bear human thoughts. Even my own body can’t do that.”

She had to leave. She had no time to stay. But what if she faded into oblivion as she slipped through the city? What if Exili were dead? What if he could not see her? Candle felt thin and tremulous as paper. When she held out her hands, she saw through them to the grass on the ground, and she saw how brightly they shone, how they flickered like tongues of fire. What if she could not find him? What if she found him, and he hated her?

She turned back to the gate, and Venderrr caught her hand. “Come away with me,” he said.

“No.”

“Yes. Come away with me,” he said. “Each day of late you have grown more and more like me. Why should you try to be human? Why does it matter who sees you?”

“He has human thoughts,” Candle said. “He tipped his hat to me.” She yanked her hand free of his fingers and turned and ran through the graveyard to the gate and out the gate and into the street. Her skirts swirled around her ankles like ashes, and she gathered them in her hands as she ran. Each step burned her feet and lungs and shook her body. It had frightened her to be touched by Venderrr, after going untouched for so long. There had been no

warmth in his hands at all, only the strange prickle of his desires, inhuman and incomprehensible.

She paused at the end of the street, and all the human thoughts that had chased behind her slammed into her in one great wave. She stood clutching at her head, tangling her fingers in her hair, panting under their impact. She had remembered living, and living again. She had not remembered dying until that moment. She had fallen in the river and drowned. The water had filled her body and mind, and now she felt it wash within herself, as though it had never drained from her.

Had she been pushed? Her thoughts, nimble, human, and burning, leapt at once to conspiracy. But she did not remember being pushed, and she did not know anyone who would have cared enough to push her. She had been a factory girl, a tavern maid—nothing worth knowing or killing. She had tried so hard to be inoffensive.

She padded down one street after another. Grey towers stretched deep into the sky above her. The windows gleamed with glass. She peered inside a familiar building: saw an expanse of machinery and motes of thread-dust still hanging in the air.

She looked past the interior of the building to her reflection. She had not seen her face since her death, and now she saw that it had become as fey as any face could be. Her chin was sharp; her cheekbones sharper still. Her eyes were huge and black; her mouth wide. She gazed at her reflection until she felt she would tumble forward into the void of her own eyes. Then she whirled about on her heel and ran again.

To the tavern. Three stone steps leading to a green door. A railing of wrought iron elaborate with curlicues. She found the railing almost by instinct, and the steps, and the door. Already a man sat slumped outside. Perhaps he caught a glimpse of her as she swept past, because his mouth, already open, dropped wider. Her thoughts quivered inside her like water in a glass, threatening to spill.

The door opened. She ducked under an arm, slipped past a thick and fumbling body. Stickiness on the floor. Smoke. Human thoughts atremble with memory. She looked for the licorice eyes, and felt them, like the warmth of sunlight on her face.

Beautiful, beautiful Exili.

He watched her cross the room. His eyes followed her exactly. She came to stand by his table, and he tipped his dark face to look up at her.

"You see me," she said at last.

"Yes."

She whispered, "What are you?"

"Just a resurrectionist," he said.

This man had brought her to consciousness. He had taught her grief, boredom, envy, and a strange sort of love: an emptiness and longing and hungry fascination. He had filled her with more thoughts than she could hold.

"You made me human," she said. "You made me human."

"Did I?" Exili said.

"Yes." One word—barely that.

"I saw you every night, standing by that gate," Exili said.

"And then one night you looked at me."

"Yes."

"You are so strange," he said, "so lovely."

She laughed low in her throat. "No," she said. "Surely not. My teeth are so sharp and my eyes are so wide. You saw me twice, and then you went away and never came back."

He lifted his glass, swirled its contents thoughtfully. "Did I owe you anything?"

"No."

"I see ghosts all the time. Always have. But ghosts don't usually see the living. They have sorrows of their own."

"It hurts—so much—to see," Candle said. "All the people, everywhere. They used to come and go, and I never saw them. Their faces. Their thoughts. I didn't see." Her body shuddered. She gathered fistfuls of her hair in her hands.

"And then you saw, but they didn't."

"Yes."

"And now what?"

"Now I'm going threadbare," she said. "My soul's too human and my body's fey."

"Did you think I could help?"

The question brought her up short. She looked at him, wide-eyed, still clutching her hair. Then she unclenched her fingers. Her hair tumbled about her shoulders again, and her face smoothed. "I thought it would help to be seen by you. I thought it might—balance things."

"But it hasn't."

"No." She paused again, still full of thought and feeling, but no longer hysterical. "What are you?" she asked.

"A resurrectionist."

"You steal bodies."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because there are doctors in this city who need them," Exili said, "and who pay well."

"The fey said he took your job."

"He's a different sort of resurrectionist altogether. There are men out there who like his arts more than mine, and he's cast in his lot with them. Venderrr," Exili said, speaking the name as though he savored its taste, "Venderrr will find that neither his life nor his art matters to such men. In the end, they're nothing but shadows."

A tremor ran through her, ended with a twist in her stomach. "What are you?" she cried. "What are you?"

"A resurrectionist," he said. "A body-snatcher. A grave-robber." He spoke without apology, but with almost tangible finality. Each word shut like a door in front of her. "You don't like me to see you," he said.

"I—thought I would."

"But you don't, do you? You can't bear the weight of this."

"Oh!" she said, like a gasp of pain. She whirled around, filled to the brim with her fears. She felt awkward, heavy, real. She stumbled through the tavern, barely avoiding the men who wandered its floor, feeling his eyes burn her back. She pushed the green door with all the force of her panic, but it stood solid and unmoving at her touch. She yanked at her hair, panting and cornered; she doubled over until she was nearly huddled into a ball on the floor.

The door opened. Venderrr stooped to take her hand, very gently, and she grew calmer at once; her body became colder and lighter with every heartbeat; her emotions emptied out of her, and she could breathe again—or perhaps breathing no longer mattered as much as it had.

She rose, and he led her out into the darkness to stand beneath the starless sky.

"Do you weary of human thoughts?" he asked.

"Yes," she said.

"Then close your eyes."

She held very still as he kissed her.

OLD PARTS

Pap moved in with us the day the laundry room hobbled and bumped with the breaking of the dryer. Mom slapped it like a stubborn jukebox, wishing it would play again the humming tumble and flop of the laundry. She was drying the bedclothes—white rolling linens, a comforter, and a pillowcase—so that she could dress the bare spare mattress before he came. When Dad left to pick him up, he considered taking the dog’s leash with him.

“In case I have to drag him to the car.”

We laughed, imagining the fierce fight he would put up: the dragging of feet and head-tilt as he gave his underwater yowl, a helpless plea to the sky denouncing this great injustice. Mom and I kept on laughing, spewing toast crumbs while Dad lifted the keys from the counter and, as an afterthought, the leash too.

I was in the yard when our gray station wagon crumbled up the slight grade of our gravel driveway—my dad returned with Pap. Mom, fretting over the dryer, on the phone with Sears, didn’t see me go out. Otherwise, she would have blocked the door—her best fullback stance at the threshold—until I put on shoes. The ground was moist where my feet stamped. My toes squirmed, dancing with the surfacing worms and delighted in the refreshing yard. The scorch of summer would parch the grass soon enough; it would be burned to pale hay, a matted ashy lawn.

He parked the wagon and caroueled around it to the passenger door, and the handle yanked and snapped. Locked.

“Come on, Dad,” he knocked on Pap’s window.

Pap closed his eyes, reclined the seat.

Dad wanted to lose his temper—I could tell by the way his fists balled and he beat his thighs with them—but he saw me in the yard, barefooted spectator, and he wouldn’t let himself. Going back to the driver’s side, he jolted the door open and leaned in. In his leaning, there was the same kind of caution that Mom exhibits when she inspects a roast in the oven. My father commanded attention, repeated whispering into the unresponsive car, like an unhearing ear, something not received again and again. I cheered for him, shifting my weight to one foot or the other, pressing harder into the earth. Eventually, though, he gave up, closed the door with vigor, and walked away daintily as if he was just burned.

“Pap will sleep out here tonight.”

“In the wagon?” I asked.

“Yeah,” Dad walked past me, leash clenched in his palm,

and spoke in a tone—a vicious buzz that he hid from my mother. “In the goddamned wagon.”

Sears couldn’t send a repairman until after Memorial Day.

“Tuesday?” my mom despaired on the phone. “What do I do until Tuesday?”

The next morning, Pap stayed in the car, awake but apparently protesting our yard, as if that first step on enemy soil might be an act of self-betrayal.

Dad was in the yard, ignoring the wagon—the aluminum elephant—and picking at a tangle of twine, reversing its perplexing accumulation of knots. The time for confidence passed and he sighed and sat in the yard. Pap cranked the window reel and the glass receded. His voice was raw, a coarse bellow from his pink month, a tongue flapping between shelves of gum.

“What the hell are you doing?” Pap seemed disgusted by Dad’s efforts. It was always this way since Pap had been a mechanic. A practiced tinkerer.

Dad looked at the car and shrugged. “The dryer isn’t working.” He pulled a satisfying twist of nodules through the snarl of twine. “I’m making a quick clothesline for us. For just the weekend.”

Pap shook his head while cackling. “There’s gonna be nothing quick about that doozy,” he pointed through the car window to the impossible braided whorl. With a stretch, he invited blood back to the bones in his limbs. He unlocked the car and threw open the door, emerging from it like a much-needed hero.

Pap wobbled, creeping further along to the fringe of the yard, wincing at a regular snag in his stride, some petty pain from his hitching hip. He arrived at our silent pillar of bark—the shagbark hickory—leaning with his palm pressed to the moss. The tree was our good ol’ boy, a fanned reach of branches that was for the yard a last defense from the sun. Always and eventually failing by the August sizzling, we admired it for its loyalty, stature, and age.

“Fetch an axe,” Pap pointed at me.

I looked at Dad. “It’s on the second stud in the shed.”

I raced for it, an eager helper and plucked it from its post.

When I came to Pap, he asked: “What are you waiting for? Have at it,” and he extended a hand as if introducing me to the vine that wrapped around the tree, binding the trunk in fibrous coils. Without hesitation, I lifted the axe and swing-chopped at the vine, mangling it a bit. With a few more hacks, the axe perforated the vine and Pap lifted it like a slain snake from its shallow trench. He

unwound it easily from its tree-clutch revealing virgin bark with no moss beard. He walked with it, the vine in endless extension, toward my Dad. With one final falter—the relentless hitch—Pap gave the vine to Dad. Dad pretended at first to not know what to do with it, but he could not afford to be so stubborn. The vine was thrice as thick as the twine and the hacked end in his hand only needed to be tied to the birch tree nearby to the hickory before Mom could start pinning the damp bedclothes.

“Thanks, Dad.”

Pap gave a curt nod and spun toward me. “Help me tote my staying stuff.”

By Memorial Day, the clothesline was decorated, a many-colored overlap of cloth, bowing the vine. Light summery pieces given a quick wash before the season’s wearing, hung to dry in the yard, all together heavy. I slalomed through the cotton pieces—petaled towels, trouser legs, and bedclothes—and in the middle, the others unequivocally posed to it, my mother’s scant silk dress. My sprightly orbiting of all the hanging things, shoulder-brush and onto the next, grew sincere at the middle where the goldenrod dress rustled with the draft. Beneath its delicate wind-dance, I gyred and swayed according to it. All was waiting for the wind to gust.

On the porch swing, Pap was frantically spooling his thumbpad over the radio dial, in search of the Reds game whose AM broadcast the newspaper had promised. Bands of static between “blessed are you among women” and “those who fail to see the canal is an American asset,” obscuring the message from the passing channels. Dad walked away from the grill and Mom, nervous that our only sausage links would burn, lifted the grill-hood with a kitchen mitt. The smoke blew onto the porch, and Pap was hacking at the charred gristle. “Every chance to kill me,” he said under the current moment of static and then winked at my mother in case she was listening.

“Should I turn them?” Mom called to the corner of the house where only I could see my dad, screwing the green hose to the spigot.

“What, hon?”

“Should I turn them?”

“Turn what? I’m busy, hon.”

Pap thrust up the volume to overpower their banter.

“The sausages. Should I give them a flip?” Mom wailed, delivering an agitated squint to Pap who swung innocently.

The hose was apparently attached then because my father

squeezed it like a trigger and it sprayed at the grimy plastic table, drenching the cobwebs, driving away the old leaves, and doing battle with an earlier season's stains.

"I'll be right there. Just leave it."

Mom looked nervously at the grill, walked away, but only made it a few steps before she returned to the sausages and poked at them anyway. Each of us—dancing, thumbing, spraying, poking—the idle work and play of the day before we sat to eat and memorialize.

Mom doled lumpy spoonfuls of potato salad and bean-beef soup next to our sausage on the double-ridged paper plates. The pale of the potato cream and blush of the bean sauce met and agreed upon a different boundary on each plate. Elsewhere, steaming corncobs, buttered and salted; a dozen deviled eggs, my three without paprika; cheese macaroni, lightly peppered. A great bowl of wild cherries in ice water, hubbing the table. We waited for Pap as he lugged through the yard, the voices of the baseball commentators growing closer. Mom and Dad glanced at each other, each shirking the responsibility; one would have to tell him the rule.

"Dad, can you knock the game off while we eat?"

Pap, still approaching, didn't respond. He rarely answered unless you were sharing the same plane as him. He sat, ignoring the request, but Dad bore into him.

"Dad?"

"Oh, I meant to ask—can't I have Marty and Joe over for lunch?"

Pap lifted the radio to them, presenting the voices like friends, and he winked at me. I giggled while the hearty voices of Marty Brennaman and Joe Nuxhall launched into the sixth inning against Atlanta.

"Funny, dad. But, please," Dad looked to Mom for help.

"Just for today. For Memorial Day."

Pap snapped the game off with an angry twitch of his index finger. "I'm not sure there's a better thing to be heard in the whole country right now than the sound of a ballgame. What do you say, kiddo?" he asked me.

I shrugged, not wanting to challenge my parents.

"But, what you say. Dad's rules, right?" Pap raised his eyebrows at Dad, who was slicing the sausage, just relieved the radio was off and that the chewing had commenced. We tore into the food, and everyone—even Pap—was compelled to say how great it was. Mom smiled, humbly curled lips, and just watched us enjoying. She had a bite of everything, but mostly just spooned cherries into her

hand and nibbled around the sweet-flesh pit, spitting them into the yard like soft pebbles.

The dog was moaning inside the house, aware that food was being enjoyed without him. The first of it really made us feel guilty, and Dad almost went to get him after one particularly devastating yelp.

"You let him be," Pap said. "If I can't have the Reds, then you keep that mooching mutt shut up in the house."

We ate until it was gone, refilling our plates until we were scraping at the serving dishes, which surprised Mom, since she had planned on serving the leftovers for the next couple of days.

"Well!" she said. "We must have been hungry," without implicating herself.

Without delay, Pap slammed the radio on the table and accelerated the volume, lifting us to the press box.

Mom left the table with a handful of plates. Dad moved to help, but when Marty's hoarse croak announced the top of the ninth, he stayed. I sat, flanked by two men, waiting for the words to grow me up. Pap and Dad knew how to listen, knew what they were listening for—to agree or reject speculation, to hum or shrug at relevant statistics, and when, of course, to reminisce on our fortune over the last two seasons, our back-to-back series' titles. How to say the word 'champion' without the vibrato of entitlement, the type of pride that invites a luck-ending scourge. To sound simply and excusably optimistic. Before long, though, with limited opportunity to find my way into the game, Marty and Joe were signing off.

There were formal things left to be said like "This one belongs to the Reds!" and "Thanks for tuning in," but Pap choked the radio there and we were back in the quiet darkening yard.

"That's the way, boys," Pap spoke with his eyes on the table, either to the radio or to us. We each took the plates nearest to us and filed for the kitchen.

Just as we had grown comfortable on the porch, warm and dozy under the black stretching sky, fireworks splashed and roared from Bedford's farm. From the steps, I was surrounded—Pap's slight budging on the swing and my parents standing, leaning against one another. The yard flashed in swift illumination: the table and chairs, the moss column of hickory, and the cloths on the line. When the fireworks stalled—sprays of light disintegrated—we all sat dumbly waiting.

Pap cleared his throat. "I used to carry the clothesbasket for

my mother. From the washboard to our line.”

A pink bouquet bloomed in the sky and shattered. Pap was fixed on the cloths draped on the vine.

“I used to think it was my big help. She always told me she couldn’t lift it herself. That it was too heavy, and so I was proud to do it for her. When I was your age,” he was speaking to me, “almost ten—I had diphtheria. Trapped up in my room for most of a month. That whole month, I could see Mum from out my window with the basket on her hip. Without strain. It was no problem for her. And when I was better, I resumed helping her. And she played weak again. I waited for her to pin them and sometimes asked if she could lift me so I could clip them to the line myself. We did that together, always.”

The fireworks were finished, their chalky waft outlasting the echo of their great cacophony.

“My mother hated invention,” Pap said. “When I showed her the catalogues, she got huffy. She knew that hands and time could accomplish anything.”

Without the firework beam, his face was erased, a shadowed oval on a swing. His whole shape was in childish repose, a kid silhouette on a bench for adults. Pap pressed the volume of the radio gently, a scrupulous nudge, and we all entered the old time. The punchy bass and teasing brass, best heard under the crackle of a phonograph, was so faint that the radio’s speaker—its rapid energy of circuitry—was forgotten. Rosemary Clooney was somewhere, alive and strolling on the porch, and her music was expanding from within our heads and we let it stir us like a spoon through a thick stew. With this rich and tender sound, by his nostalgic sense, Pap was placated. With these old things, he was always at home.

It should be the easiest thing of all, to just be defeated at the end of a day and slip to sleep, but the habit of being awake—the trend toward tiny victories of mind and muscle strife—is not so easily tucked to sleep with me. Sometimes, when the day gives only defeat, I curl to sleep like a bug under its rock. This day, though, seemed to be filled with greater victory; we had, throughout the day, returned to Pap his rightful privacy. The momentum of this victory was wind to the crank that kept my mind active.

I heard him tossing on the bed, his mattress grating beneath his weight. He yawned several times to start the sleep routine, but felt it failing and sighed. He was restless like me, resisting an end to this day, not wanting to start all over the next. By the rush of that

momentum, I heard his body sloping from the mattress, a sharpening slant until he was upright and his feet clawed toward the door. I listened as he did something I wasn't allowed: he left his room and wandered through the house unencumbered.

The Sears truck clattered up the driveway the next morning. Pap and I were clacking checkers on the porch, pieces leaping like frogs toward the edge, their princely path before becoming king. It fascinated me that the ceremonial crown was etched on the underside of every piece.

"I don't know why you should think it odd," Pap said. "Even for you, there's only one journey between kid and king."

"We should all be kings then," I suggested.

"No. It's not for everyone. Most people reach a point. It's when enough is enough is enough! Not for you, though."

The repairman was encroaching the porch.

"You must be happy to see me," he said, thumbing to the clothesline.

"That's a hell of an assumption, guy," Pap said to him.

The repairman laughed nervously, waiting for Pap to respectfully turn it into a joke. Pap only watched the checkerboard. "My up?" I nodded.

The repairman skated past us skittishly. He was welcomed into the house, Mom taking him by the arm to the defunct dryer. Meanwhile, she unpinned the laundry in the yard and folded it into her basket. Pap, amidst his playing, glancing at her. Dad untied the vine from the birch and dropped it in the dense ivy patch. Pap, in and out of the game, watching the yard. Before long, the repairman was leaving, the Sears truck careening toward the paved road, and Pap made his final move, showing no mercy as he double-jumped my last pieces. He glared at the bare yard and despite his fresh victory, he seemed inexplicably defeated. His posture rankled to a slouch; he was wrestled down by his sagging spirit.

"Did you like the way they fluttered out there?" he asked me. I nodded.

"I saw that you did. Me too. So did I." I looked at the yard, newly desolate.

"It's one thing, saying 'that's how it was back then,' but there it was," Pap said. "You were weaving with the laundry and dancing around your mother's dress, and I saw that you knew just how it was."

My ears, by their imaginative night-following of Pap along

corridors and down the staircase, onto the porch or into the kitchen, invented actions to match his sounds. It was nothing like the careful prow on foot like chasing landed butterflies; it was an intimate becoming of the action as I listened. When Pap knocked the banister with his knee, I was in the midst of the contact; an extension of myself was swept when along the wall, he spread his feeling fingers. One night, though, he stopped at the kitchen and my ears reached for him, but I was unable to transcend the silence between us. I was disappointed by my deafness; in the absence of a larger sound, I felt I should at least hear his heart bouncing to move the flesh of his chest. My discouragement emboldened me, leapt me from my bed to trounce through the door. I was escaped from my room and in pursuit of the wandering thing in the bowels of the house.

The search stopped short when I saw him, plainly sitting at the head of the kitchen table, at Dad's place. His palms were pressed, back against, pupils fixed on the wood of the table, the chair, and the door, respectively. He was wholly and respectfully disposed to the house.

"Pap," I said to him, severing his trance.

"You shouldn't be—" he was about to say, but just chuckled realizing we were in equal violation, both brazenly escaped from our rooms.

I sat at my usual seat and was accidentally leering at Pap.

"What?" he asked. I didn't respond. Kept looking.

"Is it still his seat when he's sleeping?" he rolled his eyes to the ceiling through which my father slept. I shrugged.

Pap ejected himself from Dad's spot and sat at his own place, the one Mom had designated at our first dinner. "Maybe that's the problem with a house," Pap said. "Maybe we'd all sleep a little better if we just rolled dice for the dinner table throne."

We were both looking at the throne seat, vacant and emanating its power.

"We take our turns," Pap said. "You will at your time. For your turn," and he raised his eyebrows. The way he said it, the mesmerizing privilege, made the table glow.

"How about some sleep?" he asked me as if he had a vial of eye-dust in his left pocket.

"Yeah," I said and I went for the staircase.

Pap didn't follow, though. He stayed behind and wandered some more. Before I fell to sleep, the vents delivered unnamable sounds, foreign and metallic creeping. After my listening—my derided strain—I gave up, curling with the sheet-wrinkles to sleep. Those sounds, I let belong to Pap.

Our fifteen year-old house, the fifteen year-old appliances within it, each at their own time, sputter-stopped or gave one last, agonizing moan that summer. The Sears repairman came back, replacing parts for the air conditioner, vacuum cleaner, microwave, washing machine, and even, again, the dryer. In June and July, my parents racked up almost \$1,200 in repair fees since all the appliances were long past their warranty guarantees. With each, Mom's renewed exasperation.

Pap offered inadequate consolation. "I'm glad for it. Means I'm not the only old thing in this house. I'm in good company."

Pap smiled, watching Mom sweep with a broom all the crumbs and the dust, dragged across the floor and he preferred the slow-burning stovetop to the microwave zap anyway. And too, the chink-thwap of clothes massaged against the corrugated steel washboard (originally, a decoration on Mom's laundry room wall) to the electric purr, the angry bustle of the washing machine.

This work, the old work, for several days from this week and that, until the repairman's return. The straining hands and passing time, as Pap's own mother once did. Best of all, with the dryer's second breaking, the clothesline vine was tied again to the birch and the shivering sway of the summer clothes enchanted me once more.

When the Sears truck came, again and again, the circuitous route back to our house, Pap and I would sigh. By the second time, the repairman knew better than to interrupt our game. He would pass meekly by and wait for Mom to rescue him.

"He never could have been a king," Pap said.

I agreed. "He doesn't have what it takes."

One August morning, my knuckles bashed on Pap's door. As usual, I came to wake my summer sitter. My parents were at work and us, left to our play, a healthy balance between checkers and baseball. I waited before pounding again, a crisp rattattat, but he was unanswering. Since he moved in, he woke later each day, sometimes joining me only an hour before my father came home from work. I went without him to the yard and I shuddered when I saw how the grass had baked. The white and yellow hay and somewhere, by the table, rocks stamped into the yard.

I went toward them with a detective's swagger. Let's just see what this is all about. They were not rocks, though; they were dried cherry pits, tanning under the aggressive rays. Once scattered and sunk across the Memorial Day lawn, they resurfaced now. Outlasting their hiding spot.

I kicked them, amassed now into a central pile, and saw how they contracted with the heat of the ribbon-rays of the white and gold sun. Now unprotected, now victim, now enduring the drain of daylight.

Pap didn't come from his room all day. Maybe, he was just sprawled on the bed, stretching and unable to find a reason to get up. Maybe, he was prolonging a favorite dream. I stayed on the porch blowing soap bubbles across the yard, listening to the Reds (losing by one run to the Dodgers) until Dad came home. By then, I was dipping the wand into what was left, scraping at the shallowing bottom.

"Where's Pap?"

I shrugged. "He never got up today," I said. "Must have been dog-tired."

"You didn't see him even once?"

"No. Good thing too. Dodgers won."

Dad walked fast, a destination-pace through the door.

Pap, the old tinkerer, was gone. Dad called the funeral home and relevant family members in a sad-rasp voice. The house filled with flowers—white lilies and yellow roses in bell-glass vases sent from relatives in Washington, Florida, South Carolina. The word 'sympathy' was given to us—as if those syllables, when whispered softly or with a hand on the shoulder, would muffle the grief. Leaning into his casket before it was sealed, I pressed into his palm, the crown-side of a checker—the king potential.

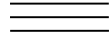
Some weeks after the funeral, we finally entered his room with museum respect, to dismantle the memory that he was ever there. Dad and I filled the suitcase with clothes, all to be donated to Salvation Army. We stuffed it all—underpants and undershirts, wool socks and collared polo shirts, trousers, and flannel pajamas.

Mom was undressing the bed; she had the linens bunched and tossed into her basket, the comforter was folded under the bed, but when she stripped the pillowcase, she gasped. Mom, in her disbelief, sat on the bed and reached into the case, removing a fan motor, a thermal switch, a gas valve, igniter, light socket, and drive motor—all the old parts disassembled.

Dad clenched his jaw, and I thought for part of a moment that he might finally use his raging tone in front of Mom, but his seething irritation converted into a different energy. He laughed, and my mother, in her bewilderment, sat with the appliance parts on her lap.

"That's the way," my dad said. "That's the way to go."

COMMENTARY



INTERVIEW

CYRUS CONSOLE

Cyrus Console holds a B.S. in Organismal Biology from the University of Kansas, an M.F.A. in Writing from the Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts at Bard College, and a Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Kansas, where his poetry won the William Herbert Carruth prize, the Victor Contoski prize, and the Ana Damjanov prize. He is the author of *Brief Under Water* (Burning Deck, 2008), for which he received a Fund for Poetry award, and *The Odicy* (Omnidawn, forthcoming 2011). Recent poetry has appeared in *Boston Review*, *Critical Quarterly*, *Lana Turner: A Journal of Poetry and Opinion*, *Seattle Review*, and *No: a journal of the arts*, where he served as contributing editor 2002-2009. He currently teaches at the Kansas City Art Institute and the University of Kansas.

Three Rivers Review --- The biography at the end of *Brief Under Water* emphasizes that your B.S. is in organismal biology. Does having a background in science influence your poetic practice?

Cyrus Console --- Biology is a science of names, and I'm curious about the way poets and biologists both might think of themselves as responsible for naming the things we live with. One thing the modern poem does well and uniquely is mix different discourses and speech registers, and I think my background in science has sensitized me to differences among those registers. The newspaper's way of talking about science, for example, has little in common with Nature's, and I want to represent and explore that contrast and contrasts like it. Contemporary poetry is interesting partly because it allows you to move in multiple, sometimes mutually exclusive spheres of English.

TRR --- Geoffrey G. O'Brien describes the most essential units of *The Odicy* as "steeply enjambed sestets of thumping mock-pentameter," while he characterizes those of *Brief Under Water* as "brief prose full of Kafkan paralytatics." The prose poem has been viewed as a vanguard form while pentameter has been the formal base of English-language poetry for centuries. Do you find certain forms easier to inhabit than others? Is the notion of a recognizable "vanguard form" in itself paradoxical?

CC --- Generative constraints like metrical or stanzaic rules, or the small rectangular plot of the prose poem establish shape, rhythm, and proportion in a space yet to be inhabited by words—knowing

the space to be filled helps me invent the language to fill it. Proust for example talks about how the “tyranny of verse” can “force” poets “into the discovery of their finest lines”—I think that imposed form is heuristic, that it allows poets to find meaningful combinations that are not otherwise thinkable.

You make a good point that “recognizable” and “vanguard” cancel each other, or that vanguard forms are recognizable only retrospectively. On the other hand, the prose poem since Baudelaire or Bertrand has evoked what Stephen Fredman (and Mallarmé before him) called a “crisis in verse,” a moment in which traditional prosody no longer fits what poets have to say. In this sense prose poets continue to represent the inadequacy or insufficiency of available literary modes.

TRR --- What sources, literary or otherwise, influenced the composition of *The Odcy*?

CC --- I was looking at classics of English verse—Shakespeare and Milton. In connection with the book’s “Anthony” figure, I thought especially about the Henry plays. I was fascinated by the way Henry, at about my age, went from being a screwup to a man of parts. I spent an unreasonable amount of time online reading about guns—phrases like “cover garment” and (as a weapon is said to do when it shows through a cover garment) “print” come from that corpus. Binyon’s and Carlyle-Okee-Wicksteed’s translations of the Divine Comedy. Leda Cosmides and John Tooby’s writing on evolutionary psychology—especially evolutionary foundations for aesthetics and fiction. W.S. Merwin was a continual source of inspiration, especially in *The Lice* and later writings such as “For a Coming Extinction.”

TRR --- The poems of “The Opathy” seem to reckon with the religious notion of immanence and of the alpha and omega of *The Book of Revelation* in a way that makes omnipresence, both spatial and temporal, seem totally absurd—I’m thinking here of moments like “Selah. / The greenness of green grass is almost like / A form of speech I almost heard / The intimacy of the air approaches / Frontal nudity,” where language of the biblical tradition meets that of the MPAA in a way that is difficult to reconcile. Do you feel there is a lack of rationalism in the way the American religious tradition attempts to reconcile itself with contemporary problems and technologies?

CC --- If anything defines an American religious tradition, it would

probably be that it contains multitudes, and as such prescribes no specific relationship to rational thought. I suspect people are hard-wired for religious experience, and that from a neurological perspective the *credo quia absurdum* facilitates it. (Wikipedia says *credo quia absurdum* is a misquotation of Tertullian:

The Son of God was born: there is no shame, because it is shameful.
And the Son of God died: it is wholly credible, because it is unsound.
And, buried, He rose again: it is certain, because impossible.

That said, I notice increasing antipathy between rationalist and fundamentalist partisans. I remember a substitute teacher by the name of Nicholson or Nickelson who stood me up and shamed me in front of our 5th grade science class, smart aleck that I was, for defining “rainbow” as “the visible range of the electromagnetic spectrum.” The correct answer was “God’s covenant.” I was surprised at the time, but it seems to me these sorts of discursive confrontations have become a daily part of American life.

TRR --- I’m interested also in the way your book deals with Vietnam. As a ‘90s child, I don’t remember Vietnam being often talked about. It was the war we lost. Not the war of 400,000 killed or maimed by Agent Orange. What was your cultural experience growing up in the ‘80s in relation to a historical trauma that had occurred so recently in history?

CC --- I don’t recall Vietnam being talked about either, though it pervaded television and cinema and could be felt, it seems to me, throughout popular music of the sixties and seventies. During the composition of this book I was thinking of how ignorant I and my generation were about the “conflict” (ask Americans in their 20s or 30s how many Vietnamese civilians died in it)—and yet how much of our play was “Vietnam-themed.” My toy weapons were the M16 rifle, M60 machine gun, M1911 pistol, and M67/MK2 fragmentation grenades. My favorite shows involved intelligent, sensitive, disillusioned and frequently disgraced Vietnam vets transferring skills from elite combat units to civilian life: *The A Team* (Operational Detachment Alpha, same as Rambo), *Magnum P.I.* (Navy Seal, Naval Intelligence), *MacGyver* (EOD), *Airwolf* (Helicopter pilot; dog named

"Tet"). My imaginary life was 95% jungle combat. I had or sought very little access to facts about the war, and yet the war was a major part of my childhood. Part of *The Odicy* is my effort to find a responsible way to write my "experience" of "Vietnam," or my remove from that experience.

TRR --- More generally, do you see the pop culture of the '80s as a denial of the historical violence that preceded it? I think here of the tension between the pentameter of "I'll have a burger and a glass of coke" and its semiotic content, and of the extended tension of such a line against all of "The Ophany."

CC --- The burger line is found text from *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, if I recall correctly. My sense is that rather than deny or repress the violence, 80's pop culture aestheticized and repurposed it. The "ninja," for example—ubiquitous among action figures, cartoons, commercials and movies of the 80s—seems like a figure for a variety of post-Vietnam imagination, but especially for emergent ideas about covert warfare. The "ninjas" of Halloween 1986 are now an electorate comfortable with the idea of "black ops" and state-sponsored assassination.

TRR --- Could you talk about your use of the name "Anthony" in its varying forms across *The Odicy*? At times it seems a genuine attempt at elegy is being made ("It is hard to imitate the dead / Air associated with my friend / And teacher"), while at other times the sincerity of the poems' speaker(s) feels less stable, like when *The Shining* is referenced—"Tony was a little boy that lived / / In my mouth, among the candy shards / And varicolored solutes of that place").

CC --- My project throughout *The Odicy* is not only to deploy traditional verseforms, but to distress them, continually testing their relevance to contemporary experience or applicability to contemporary language. I'd say the single key function of "Anthony" and "Tony" in the poem is as metrical substitution—throughout the poems, dactylic and trochaic pentameters clash with the iambic. Somehow the front-stressed meters sound more true-to-life to me than the iambic one. You could say that "Anthony" personifies metrical distress, or the misadequation of content to literary style.

TRR --- What has your experience as a writer been moving from your first book to your second book, and looking forward to a third?

CC --- I got more interested in my writing's relation to the social—*Brief Under Water* is centrally concerned with autobiography, whereas *The Odicy* is more concerned with poetry's potential to mediate experience of fundamentalist discourse or of the increasing weaponization of the citizenry or of ecological collapse.

TRR --- What advice would you offer to undergraduate writers?

CC --- Aspiring writers often underestimate the degree of interdependence between strong writing practices and strong reading practices, so I would first encourage undergraduate writers to read. I would encourage them to locate and imitate writers they admire, but also to attend to what they dislike in poetry (and language use in general) and to write against it.

INTERVIEW

LYDIA DAVIS

Lydia Davis is a fiction writer and translator. Her numerous books include *The End of the Story* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), a novel, and *Varieties of Disturbance* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), a collection of stories. Her collected stories were published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2009. She has translated work by many French writers, including Marcel Proust, Gustave Flaubert, and Michel Foucault. In 2003, she received a MacArthur "Genius Grant." She holds a B.A. from Barnard College and currently teaches at the University at Albany, SUNY.

Three Rivers Review --- What can you tell us about your path to becoming a writer, academically and personally?

Lydia Davis --- I was pretty sure I would end up being a writer even when I was as young as twelve. I wrote well and I worked hard at it in school, though I didn't do any more than I had to. My real love, actually, was music. It wasn't till I was in my twenties that I "found" my form--the very short story. I majored in English in college because I assumed that was the right thing to do if you wanted to be a writer. I also thought you should find work as an editor, whereas now I know that that career move should be temporary, because most people are either one or the other, not both. With good training in school, a writer can and probably should work at a job that may be completely unrelated to writing. (As a chef, landscape gardener, vet tech, etc.)

TRR --- Can you describe the differences in your approaches to writing novels, writing short stories, and translating from French to English?

LD --- The stories are so short, many of them, that I can write a first draft in under an hour, or grab just a few minutes to read through it and work on it. The novel--I've only written one--was like a steady job, 10 to 3 every day more or less. I had to put in the hours or it never would have gotten done. It was also much more confusing than the short stories, requiring diagrams and careful work on transitions from part to part, etc.

The translation work has also been something that required a schedule and setting myself "quotas"--4 pages a day, for instance--in order for me to make progress. But translating is something you can do when you're tired or in a bad mood--it's demanding, but not

as demanding as writing your own original material.

TRR --- What was the worst mistake you ever made as a writer, and what did you learn from it?

LD --- That's a tough question! Because it's very normal and inevitable to make mistakes in writing in the sense of going off in the wrong direction or spending weeks on an idea that is really too lame to be worth pursuing. That's all part of the process. So there is no really bad mistake in doing that. I think writing about personal material that will hurt someone's feelings (and allowing it to be published!) may be the worst mistake you can make. I made that mistake once. What I learned is that if I really must write about someone I know, I should make the disguise so good that no one will ever guess.

TRR --- What is the process for determining the length of your stories? Are the lengths predetermined, or do they happen organically?

LD --- Most of the time they happen organically. The finished story is very close in length to what it was in the first draft. Sometimes a story will get much longer than I intended, and then that is tricky because actually the requirements of a long story are quite different from the requirements of a very short one, so I have to adjust what I'm doing. I always revise a lot, even in a very short story, and usually that ends up making it a little shorter.

TRR --- What's your process of revising a story? How many revisions does a story go through before you decide it's finished?

LD --- I try to finish the first draft all in one go, so that I don't lose the thread of what I'm doing. Then, I read through it again and again until nothing bothers me. Sometimes, if I don't know how to end it, I leave it alone until I figure that out.

TRR --- How do you work through writer's block?

LD --- I keep lots of stories going at once so that there's always a story to work on. I try to start new stories while I'm still working on older ones, again so that I'll have another story to turn to. If I were completely stuck for an idea, I would set myself an exercise and make sure I did one or two every day till I loosened up and ideas

came to me spontaneously.

TRR --- Which books and authors do you find most influential for your works?

LD --- I can never tell what book is going to spark off an idea, so I try to stay open, whatever I'm reading, whether it's a novel by Nicholson Baker (I recently enjoyed *The Anthologist*) or a poem by John Ashbery, or the multi-lingual warning notice on a new appliance.

TRR --- What are your favorite literary magazines?

LD --- I like the Canadian magazine *Brick*, and *Threepenny Review*, *The Paris Review*, I've been reading the *TLS* and the *London Review of Books* for a long time--I like their international outlook. I read *Harper's*, and *The New Yorker*.... The list goes on and on, and I'm probably forgetting some important ones.

TRR --- What advice would you give aspiring writers about getting their work published?

LD --- Well, first things first--make sure it's really finished, and good. That will involve some hard work. Be patient--don't send anything out before you're satisfied with it. Write a brief cover letter, not a long one. Send only to magazines that like the sort of thing you're doing. Expect plenty of rejection slips. Be patient.

TRR --- What do you think is the most important lesson that students should learn before graduating from an undergraduate writing program?

LD --- It's hard to isolate just one thing. Remember the importance of detail. Learn to write a good description. Learn to write naturalistic dialog. Work on your powers of observation.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

HANNAH AIZENMAN is a native of Birmingham, Alabama and a graduate of the Alabama School of Fine Arts creative writing department. She has received recognition for her poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, including the Edwin O. Ochester Undergraduate Poetry Award from the University of Pittsburgh, the runner-up prize from the 2010 Three Rivers Review Poetry Competition, a Level II Award from the YoungArts competition by the National Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts, and a Howard Nemerov Creative Writing Award from the University of Washington in St. Louis, as well as honors from Alabama State Poetry Society and Alabama Writers' Forum. She was also published in *Three Rivers Review* Volume XV. Hannah is currently a junior at the University of Pittsburgh studying English Writing and History of Art and Architecture.

MADELEINE BARNES is a junior at Carnegie Mellon University majoring in Creative Writing and Fine Arts. Her poems have appeared in *Plain China: Best Undergraduate Writing*, *5AM*, *Allegheny Review*, *Spectrum*, *Spires*, *Oakland Review*, *North Central Review*, *Open Thread*, *The Albion Review*, and *Weave Magazine* (upcoming). In 2008, she placed first in the Borders Open Door Poetry Contest, judged by Billy Collins, who is featured reading the poems on the Borders website.

MELISSA DIFATTA was a student at the University of Pittsburgh where she majored in English Writing. She was the upcoming Editor-in-Chief of *Three Rivers Review*. She received the 2009 Undergraduate Creative Nonfiction Award and third place in the 2010 Edwin O. Ochester Undergraduate Poetry Award. Her work has also been recognized by Pitt's Writer's Café program, where she received first place in creative nonfiction and second place in poetry in their 2010 Contest. Her writing has recently been featured on WYEP's radio program *Prosody*, hosted by Jan Beatty. Melissa passed away on August 9th, 2010. Her online featured memoir "The Bone Marrow Queen" can be reached through Google. Melissa loved books and hated cilantro.

ANNA GILCHRIST is an English Writing major at the University of Pittsburgh and is also pursuing a certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

LAWRENCE LENHART is a senior at the University of Pittsburgh. He hopes to attend an MFA program next year, possibly in the Mid- or Northwest. He enjoys books and birds.

AMANDA MARTIN is a senior English major at Grove City College, where she serves as the Design Editor of the campus newspaper, *The Collegian*.

INES PUJOS is a creative writer at Carnegie Mellon University. She is co-founder of The Canary Collective, a new artist colony based in Pittsburgh that aims to promote art in the least expected places. She hopes to move to South America and live in an hacienda in a few years.

ALICIA SALVADEO is a junior at the University of Pittsburgh studying Poetry, History and Russian & Eastern European Studies. She is currently the Senior Editor of *Collision Literary Magazine*, published through the University's Honors College, and is a volunteer teacher through the Young Writers Institute of Western Pennsylvania Writing Project. Born in Staten Island, New York, she discovered at an early age that world-famous accent doesn't come with territory, as she grew up mispronouncing words like water, butter, coffee, salt and "Hi, I'm walking here."

ANDREW TYBOUT is a junior at the University of Pittsburgh, majoring in English Writing and Anthropology. He is the Assistant Arts and Entertainment Editor at the *Pitt News* and had an editorial internship with National Geographic Books.

ANDREW WHITMER is a senior at Youngstown State University, majoring in English. He is the Vice President of the YSU Student Literary Arts Association, a sports correspondent for the *Warren Tribune Chronicle*, and a veteran of the United States Army.

JUDGE BIOGRAPHIES

CYRUS CONSOLE holds a B.S. in Organismal Biology from the University of Kansas, an M.F.A. in Writing from the Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts at Bard College, and a Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Kansas, where his poetry won the William Herbert Carruth prize, the Victor Contoski prize, and the Ana Damjanov prize. He is the author of *Brief Under Water* (Burning Deck, 2008), for which he received a Fund for Poetry award, and *The Odicy* (Omnidawn, forthcoming 2011). His recent poetry has appeared in *Boston Review*, *Critical Quarterly*, *Lana Turner: A Journal of Poetry and Opinion*, *Seattle Review*, and *No: a journal of the arts*, where he served as contributing editor 2002-2009. He currently teaches at the Kansas City Art Institute and the University of Kansas.

JEFF MARTIN holds an MFA from the University of Pittsburgh, where he currently teaches courses in fiction writing. His fiction has appeared in literary magazines and journals in the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Australia. His story "Children, Go Where I Send You" won the Scott Turow Award for Fiction. His story "The Time for Nice is Gone" was runner-up for the Pearl Story Prize. Nominated for Harcourt's Best New American Voices, he's at work on a novel that deals with social work, autism, and family. Several chapters of his novel-in-progress have appeared (or are forthcoming) in *Pearl and Tears in the Fence* (UK).

VOLUME XVI

This issue of *Three Rivers Review* is set in 9-12 point Palatino, a typeface designed by Hermann Zapf, initially released in 1948 by the Linotype foundry. *Three Rivers Review's* masthead is set in Copperplate Gothic Light, a typeface designed by Frederic W. Goudy and released by the American Type Founders in 1901. Printed in the United States of America by McNaughton & Gunn, Inc., 960 Woodland Dr., Saline, MI 48176, on 60 lb. Natures Book Smooth Antique Recycled paper, which consists of 30% Post Consumer Waste.

SUBMISSIONS

Three Rivers Review accepts unpublished work by undergraduates at institutions of post-secondary education in the Greater Pittsburgh area. **We do not accept simultaneous submissions.** All submissions are reviewed in anonymity.

Submissions are opened & reviewed between September 15 and January 15. Responses to submitted work can be expected by March 15, following the reading period.

Submit up to 15 pages fiction or 5 poems through e-mail as a Microsoft Word (.doc) file to:

ThreeRiversReview@gmail.com

Annual Three Rivers Review Poetry & Fiction Prize contest details are made available during the Fall semester.

Thank you.

