

# EL PORTAL

Volume 77. Number 1. Spring 2019

# EL PORTAL

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**Eastern New Mexico University's  
Literature and Arts Journal**

## ABOUT EL PORTAL

Since its inception in 1939, Eastern New Mexico University's literary magazine *El Portal* has offered a unique venue for the work of writers, artists, and photographers both on campus and off. It is published each fall and spring semester thanks to a grant courtesy of Dr. Jack Williamson, a world-renowned science fiction writer and professor emeritus at ENMU who underwrote the publication during his time on campus.

Each semester *El Portal* encourages previously unpublished short story, poetry, non-fiction, flash fiction, photography, and art submissions from ENMU students and faculty, as well as national and international writers and artists. *El Portal* does not charge a submission fee. Submissions from ENMU students receive the special opportunity to win a first-, second-, or third-place cash prize in their respective categories.

For additional information about *El Portal*, please visit our website: <http://elportaljournal.com>

## SUBMISSIONS

*El Portal* is open to submissions from all artists and writers; however, its awards are intended solely for the benefit of ENMU students. Submissions are published on the basis of talent, content, and editorial needs.

*El Portal* serves as a creative forum for the students, faculty, and staff of Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU) as well as artists, writers, and photographers worldwide. Consequently, the views expressed in *El Portal* do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints and opinions of ENMU as a whole.

## GUIDELINES

Please submit all written work in .doc, .docx, or .pdf formats. With the exception of poetry and art/photography, please limit entries to one story or essay. Simultaneous submissions are welcome; we ask only that you notify *El Portal* in the event your work is accepted elsewhere so that we may remove it from consideration. When entering a submission, please include a biography of no more than 50 words to be printed alongside your piece in the event that it is accepted for publication.

- Fiction (up to 4,000 words)
- Creative Nonfiction (up to 4,000 words)
- Flash Fiction (up to 500 words)
- Poetry (up to 5 poems)
- Art & Photography (up to 5 pieces)

Prizes will be awarded to ENMU students only. Prizes are awarded only in the Short Story, Poetry, and Art/Photography categories.

## DEADLINES

**Fall 2019: May 10th, 2019**

**Spring 2020: December 13th, 2019**

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# SUMMER HAZE

*Shayla Ramsey*



## DESERT SONNET

*Tyne Sansom*

Where the desert grass bows before each step  
and holds your foot in summer's sweetness,  
outlining your softness with measured tracing,  
you sang to me a song in desert dreams.  
Just like clockwork you hold my heart  
as I beat time on your skin, desert queen.  
Winds blew into my stagnant rigor  
and washed away my reluctance. I  
left hanging willows and falling leaves for  
sharp cactus and dusty morning eyes.  
The sun soaks into my skin and blankets  
my love as we walk in desert grass.  
The days now roll down straight roads  
far removed from the rumbling, moaning city.



## TIME PASSES

*Holly Day*

There are people I once saw young on TV  
that are now old on TV. I refuse to admit  
that this means I've grown old as well  
that the passage of time has split to bypass me  
like the river that split to pass around Moses  
in that movie I saw  
with that guy who's now dead.

My children keep getting older  
even though I tell them  
they don't have to. I show them how time  
has forgotten me in its wake  
that I'm the same person I was  
before they were born; they  
don't believe me.

## THE MORNING AFTER A FUNERAL WE DIDN'T ATTEND

*Holly Day*

I found her the next morning, feeding stacks of old birthday cards handwritten letters into the paper shredder. "He never loved me," she said by way of explanation, calmly feeding the first of a pile of faded photographs into the shredder as I watched. "There's bacon in the kitchen."

I tried to reach out to stop her hand from pushing more and more of my grandfather into the metal shears that snipped him down to nothing but it was her father first, my grandfather second; what right did I have? "He loved you," I said, watching helpless as a picture of a blond-haired girl in pigtails holding onto the outstretched darker hand of a man fell into the metal waste basket in irretrievable strips. She laughed and waved a thick handful of bills at me.

justification for erasing her father so completely. "How do you write someone you love out of your will?" she asked. "Why is my stepfather getting everything? He even forgot about you!"

I almost said something about how she hadn't visited her father for years, while her stepmother's family had been a constant in his life up to the end, how maybe there wasn't anything left after the nursing home and the hospice, but I don't, because that's my father's job.

## IN WAIT

*Holly Day*

I wrap my thoughts around the egg inside me  
tie my nest with hopes and dreams  
will my body full of feathers  
fluff and bubble wrap.

Each step leads me to disaster. I  
could trip and fall and lose it all.

I wrap myself in blankets and pills  
cradle my stomach in warmth  
close windows against drafts and rain  
barricade the door against wolves outside.

## YOU'RE BLIND AND I'M BEING WATCHED

*Valerie Ruberto*

Before you left, you carved  
out your eyes, snipped  
their leashes so they could  
roam this town freely. I am  
constantly standing behind  
them in grocery lines, and  
chatting with them in parking

lots. I'm brought to flashes of fire  
light swimming through your cheeks.  
Lotus pink lips to your baby  
blue eyes, witness the midnight  
in me. My own greens fade  
to brown as I slither  
through town, catching  
your stare at each  
impossible sidewalk crack. These

windows know too much  
soul; a burden I nurture. I  
am sewn into your lips, each  
stitch a sponge. I absorb  
the words you don't want  
to roam free. On your tongue,  
you confess and set the  
sun to midnight.

# SELF PORTRAIT

Trenna McKinley



## THE CZECH SWAN

*Phillip Parotti*

Ivana Dolak? Yes, I knew her. Beautiful woman. Lovely cream complexion. Long slender neck. Carried herself with the bearing of an empress, straight and majestic. We called her the Czech Swan, and we weren't being silly. She looked like royalty, but we found nothing imperious about her for she could be good fun in a group, and she had a charming manner of speech. Her father had emigrated from Prague and gone to mine coal around Pittsburgh. Ivana had been born in the early 1890s, grown up amidst the steel mills at a time when the smoke blew so thick that the street lights had to be on during the day, and escaped into nursing around 1915. Picked up everything she owned in a single valise, made her way to England, trained in London, and spent the rest of the war nursing gas patients in Royal Army hospitals near Paris. It was in Paris where she first came in contact with art, and the experience decided her future. When the war ended, she returned to the States, caught the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe out of Chicago, and landed in Lamy from which place the Havey bus brought her straight here. How she found out about Santa Fe, I will never know, but to say that she took to the place with the same grace that a swan takes to water, would be to understate the fact. Those of us who thought of ourselves as members of the colony accepted her at once, and without overdoing it, I think Ivana became enchanted by the place.

The women artists I knew during those years—Olive Rush, Alice Corbin Henderson, and Mary Austin, to name only a few—gravitated either toward painting or writing. Eugenie Shonnard, by way of contrast, turned herself into a gifted sculptor, and Ivana, to everyone's surprise, also took an individual path. In Paris, she had been smitten by the work of Toulouse-Lautrec. Lautrec's posters, as you are probably aware, take inspiration from Japanese woodblock prints; Ivana had studied the genre, so the moment she began working, she began doing New Mexico landscapes, some in color but most in black and white. Given the fact that the Museum of New Mexico had an open door policy in those days, she had no trouble exhibiting her work, so steady sales made her self-supporting at something less than a luxurious level.

Making a woodcut does not require the muscles of a blacksmith, it does call for considerable strength in the hands, wrists, and arms. A substance like linoleum is easier to work, particularly if one heats it slightly prior to cutting, but wood can be difficult, and hardwoods like cherry are much more difficult than white pine. The best wood for woodcuts is bass wood from the Linden tree. Gustave Baumann used it almost entirely, and while Ivana became very good at what she did, she always and openly declared Baumann to be her master in the avenue of the color woodcut. Whatever the case, woodcuts and woodcut printing, particularly if one pulls the prints by hand, can require degrees of strength, physical as well as mental, that some women do not command, and that, I suppose, explains what caused Ivana to lock horns just once with Mary Austin and come out the winner. By chance, I happened to be in Ivana's studio one morning, finishing a coffee, when Mary paid Ivana a call. I don't know when I've enjoyed a moment so much.

Give Mary her due, certainly. She was by any measure the doyen of the Santa Fe art community. Her books were esteemed, her lectures were normally sold out world-wide, and regarding art promotion and civic betterment, few could equal her energy or her achievement. Mary was also an exceptionally headstrong woman with a will of iron, a will so strong that her opinionated pronouncements emerged like thundering sermons from the Mount, and those of us who treasured peace usually kept quiet while Mary uttered her edicts. Ivana generally met Mary with a smile, listened to what Mary happened to be saying, and either absorbed Mary's points or let them pass. But on the morning about which I am speaking, Mary charged in like a buffalo, glanced over some of Ivana's work, pronounced it good, and then proceeded to tell Ivana that she must give up making woodcuts altogether because it wasn't quite ladylike.

"Smacks too much of trade, my dear, as though you were an itinerant carpenter or a mere furniture maker. You must paint, my dear, if you want to be taken seriously, and you must start at once!"

That did not sit well with Ivana, and I could see it immediately. Nevertheless, Ivana turned with a smile, looked Mary right

in the eye, and said softly, "Mary, you may well think yourself God's mother-in-law, but until I begin instructing you how to write your books, you must never come in here again and tell me how to work."

I thought Mary was going to croak because I doubt that anyone had ever faced her down that way before. "Well," she said with a pant, "if you are not to be advised by someone who knows a thing or two, I suppose you must do what you will do," and with that waspish utterance, she departed, and from what Ivana told me, Mary didn't darken her door again until Ivana won the Hopkins Medal in San Francisco exactly two years after Mary had tried to bully her.

The Hopkins Medal made a difference in Ivana's circumstances. Prior to winning it, she lived in a two-room adobe up Canyon Road. The medal, awarded in 1922, brought her broad acceptance, so on the basis of her earnings, she bought a lot on Camino Del Monte Sol. Given the price of land at the time, I don't think she paid more than thirty dollars for an acre and a half, and once she owned the land, she hired laborers and set them to building her own design. Carlos Vierra's restoration of the Governor's Palace had created the Santa Fe style by that time, and Ivana adopted it, creating a five-room house with a large studio in one wing and a fairly large living room and dining room in the other; the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom joining the two. The shape of the whole formed an elongated "U" while a deep porch and overhang shaded the connecting rooms. I think she took a year to complete the project, working on the house by day and working on her woodcuts in the evening, and the tireless energy she exerted impressed us all.

Around the time that Ivana finished building, those hearty fellows who we called The Cinco Pintores started building. I'm doubtful that the five, pooling their money, could have marshaled one hundred dollars, but no matter, they acquired lots not far from Ivana, and then in a comedy of errors, they started to build, each his own house, fashioning their own adobe bricks too late in the season for the mud to dry and cure. All told, I doubt that any one of them had more than three seconds of prior construction experience. Will Shuster, another gas victim from the war, and Fremont Ellis were two



of the first to get going, and rather than lay a corner and build walls out from it as they should have, those novices each built a wall first only to see it lean and then fall straight over before reaching a height of five feet. If I could have sold tickets for that exhibition, I could have emerged solvent while providing entertainment to hundreds. Ivana didn't try to humiliate them. Rather, once the walls were down, she went up there, showed them by example how to do the work, and ingratiated herself with them for life, and eventually, those rather primitive structures went up by fits and starts, the entire undertaking culminating in a huge housewarming celebration. Ivana enjoyed being a minor celebrity as the guest of honor.

On that night while we sat on Will Shuster's stoop, Ivana told me why she had decided to settle in Santa Fe. There had been the art, of course, and the colony about which she had heard while in the East, but there had been more to it as I learned when we looked out to the west and took in the last of the sunset.

"This is about the finest kind," she said to me, quietly sipping her drink. "We're about as far from the frantic here as a person can get."

"Yes," I said, "yes we are. Primitive we may be, but living here without having to acquire mountains of stuff reduces life to essentials. I suppose it's a lot like a Japanese house."

"That's why I left the East," she said quickly. "I shouldn't like to sound stuffy, George, but with regard to the materialism that seems to have exploded with industrialization and the rush for getting and spending, the war put paid to my interest in any of that. I imagine the arms manufacturers will go right on manufacturing, so I suppose we'll have another war in the not too distant future, but for me, one has been enough. Living out here on the edge of nowhere is about right, and making things by hand is absolutely the best countermeasure that I can find."

It was that simple, I think, her motivation for the life she'd adopted. I shouldn't like to put words in people's mouths, but in looking back, I'd say that about two thirds of the colony and perhaps as many in Taos had all come to the West for similar reasons. Some might have called it an escape, but personally,

I have always considered it a commitment. Progress is a strange business, don't you see.

So we sat there watching the sunset for perhaps half an hour, and then we went back inside, and that is when Ivana first met Benedict Staines. Like Shuster, Ben had been gassed badly, in March of 1918 as I heard the story, in that last major German offensive, the one that Sherriff wrote about in *Journey's End*. Like Sherriff, he'd been a captain in the British infantry, and after stints in more than a few hospitals, he'd finally been demobilized and advised to seek a dry climate where his lungs might fully recover. In response, he'd come to the States, made his way to Santa Fe, and spent more than two years in the Sunmount Sanatorium because, on top of the gassing and as a result of his weakened lungs, he'd caught T.B.

Witty fellow, Benedict Staines. Tall, somewhat drawn and pale owing to his condition, but both cheerful and direct, he'd shown considerable talent as a poet and had published his first volume, *Tears in the Field*, before Ivana met him. I don't know who it was who introduced them possibly Shuster, possibly Ellis, possibly someone else, but whoever it was did them a service because it didn't take more than an hour or two before Ivana and Ben became a couple. I won't philosophize about love, but sometimes it strikes fast, and in their case, it did with the result that after no more than a month, Ben came out of Sunmount and moved straight in with Ivana, without benefit of clergy but without public condemnation.

Ivana's Prague connection set aside, none of us were Bohemian in the social sense. Free love, excessive drinking, and outrageous behavior we left to the expats in Paris where many talked about writing epics and painting masterpieces while few did. Santa Fe was a different place altogether, a place where the artists worked, almost non-stop, and often from morning to night, and that is what both Ivana and Ben did. Once they moved in together, Ivana's output actually increased, and I think I recognized a new tone to her work and a refinement to her style. Ben enjoyed a similar creative outburst, producing a well-received new volume entitled *Dugout Ditties*, which, in contrast to Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, seemed filled with whatever could be found humorous about life in the trenches. Ben was like that,

you see; he hadn't an ounce of self-pity anywhere in his soul. "It wasn't all bad," he said. "Nothing like that ever is. There were times when we laughed ourselves half to death about the absurdity of what we were doing." And then, without skipping a beat, he began writing *Last Call at Midnight*, the novel that he completed just before he died. Rawlins in the *San Francisco Tabular* called it a minor masterpiece; Edmonds said pretty much the same thing in the *Denver Eagle*. I read the book and found it moving, so Ivana, in my opinion, did literature a service in seeing it through to publication. She was a wonderful nurse, Ivana, but Ben was too far gone by the time they met, and about the only thing she could do for him was to ease his decline. Possibly, deep down, most of us knew that, and possibly that explains why no one, including Mary Austin, ever spoke a word of condemnation about their arrangement.

I will not tell you that Ivana snapped back instantly from Ben's death because she didn't. It hit her hard, that singular misfortune, like a forceful blow to the solar plexus, and for nearly a year, she gave up making woodcuts entirely. Instead, throughout the whole of that time, she lived on her savings and turned to gardening. Perhaps if Ivana had had a child, things might have been different, but because Ben had not been able to father neither a son nor a daughter, all of that nurturing instinct with which we are told women are bred, went into the garden that Ivana produced, and what a magnificent garden that turned out to be. She planted from cuttings, she collected the seeds herself, limiting the beds and pathways, she laid down, to plants and flowers that were strictly native. Whatever the case, the bursts of color she put in brightened the entire area surrounding her house. Permanent residents and tourists went up there in packs to view the splendor, and twice that year, photographers working for the Santa Fe railroad included photographs of the garden in travel brochures that they were producing to entice visitors to the area. We did as much as we could to help her during those months, but there isn't much that one can do to ease another person's emotional pain. In the end, such pain must heal itself, and in Ivana's case, eventually, it did. At least enough of it healed so that she returned to her woodcuts, and when she did, she produced such stunning color prints of her garden that even Gustave Baumann applauded her efforts.

By the time the Depression hit and the markets collapsed, Ivana had recovered her equilibrium and learned, as any person can learn, how to live with her loss. Her prints, her garden prints in particular, had sold well, both in Santa Fe and through a New York gallery that handled her work. Unlike paintings, which sell for hefty sums, prints remained affordable, so while the Depression brought a dip in sales, it never left her destitute. Nevertheless, while the rest of us took almost any job we could find—I myself signed on with the Public Works of Art project and wound up painting three murals in post offices—Ivana never left Camino and managed to eke out a bare living through the galleries where she showed and as a result of the traveling exhibitions mounted by the Museum of New Mexico. I won't say that she turned to farming in order to supplement her existence, but she did take to vegetable gardening in a new way. And in a move that some found surprising, but which Ivana found thoroughly enjoyable, she made herself into an expert on edible plants and took to foraging, partly for food but mostly for pleasure. From somewhere in the Sangre de Cristo she collected a yeast from juniper berries that she used as a starter for her sourdough bread. Whenever I had a piece of that, I knew delight. She learned how to collect acorns, acorns of a unique kind, and grind them into flour; the muffins she baked from that source tasted exactly like they had been mixed with brown sugar.

Insofar as I know, Ivana never once turned her hand to serious literature. That is, she never tried to write poems, short stories, or one act plays, but as a residual effect of her foraging, in 1935, she wrote a pamphlet on the edible native plants to be found in the Santa Fe area. Within two years following the local publication of that booklet, she sold out three printings of numbering more than forty-five hundred copies. At the time, one imagined hordes of Santa Fe citizens taking to the hills and valleys, digging instruments and baskets in hand, and some did, but in so far as Ivana described it, "most folks are buying my booklet for insurance. Things for most of them have not quite become so extreme that they have to use it to survive."

The war, of course, put an end to: the Depression, Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo acting in such a way that the country

saw an outpouring of industry that shattered all former possibilities and changed things forever. Things changed in Santa Fe and Taos, not exactly overnight but nevertheless rapidly. None of us knew what was going on at Los Alamos, but the work there brought a large support community into Santa Fe, so our population began to swell. And then, for one reason or another, the colony began to break up. That's not to say that art and artists didn't remain because they did, but with new artists coming in, the complexion of things altered. This or that newcomer didn't know the old guard, and many in the old guard left in order to undertake war work. I myself was recalled to duty and spent the war helping to train troops in Texas; work which afforded precious little time in which I could either paint or write. Lincoln White, presuming on his degree in mathematics, dropped sculpture altogether and taught aerial navigation to Air Corps students in San Antonio while Burt Winston wrote deceptive propaganda for dissemination to the occupied countries from an office in Washington. Margaret Frobisher, whose exquisite miniatures of pueblos had been selling in moderate numbers, dropped everything she'd been doing, closed her studio, and enlisted in the Navy. From what we learned, she spent the war doing something in naval intelligence. Ivana, having put her nursing skills to rest after Ben's death and in contravention of what she had told me when she first came to Santa Fe, marched herself down to the capitol, introduced herself to the commanding general of the New Mexico National Guard--most of which had been captured on Bataan--and wrangled herself a civilian job helping to administer the new replacement units which were rapidly forming throughout the state. She did not entirely give up her woodcuts during that period, but given the work she was doing, I think she turned to them only on the weekends throughout the long years that the war lasted.

After the war, I would like to be able to say that life returned to normal, but it did not. Members of the colony remained, but the colony as we knew it in the twenties and thirties never reconstituted itself. Santa Fe had grown prodigiously during the war; artists there were in plenty, but the atmosphere had changed. Where once we had ridden horses from our homes to the Plaza and back, we now zipped there in automobiles, when or if we could get through the traffic. Real estate had skyrocketed in value, Eastern and Western money

had discovered the place, mansions were going up on the surrounding hills, and evenings were never again as quiet as they had once been. Things, whether we liked it or not, were turning commercial. Up Canyon Road, for example, new galleries were opening faster than we could count them and charging what some of us thought to be unreasonable prices. We'd mellowed, those of us who had returned, so we didn't lament the rise in the income we could earn. Those of us who had bought property and built homes, in the days before the boom, treasured what we had and set ourselves to make the best of it, for we could not, we knew, go back.

"I think they're talking about paving the Camino," Ivana said to me one afternoon while the two of us were sitting on her veranda drinking glasses of tea.

"Yes," I said, "I think I read something about it in *The New Mexican*."

"And the Museum no longer offers an open door policy," she said. "All shows are now subject to a jury."

"Pity," I said, "but the numbers of artists seeking to show seems to demand it. Not enough wall space even if they doubled the size of the place."

"The thing we sought to escape has caught up with us," she said.

"I'm afraid so," I said. "Thinking about moving on?"

"No," she said. "This place is home, so I'll stick it out. I'm simply too old now to want to change."

She remained a beautiful woman, the Czech Swan. Her hair had turned gray, but it had turned a regal gray and when I occasionally took her to one of Santa Fe's new watering holes for a dinner or to one of the chamber music concerts, which were becoming popular, she turned heads in a way that few women could. I don't mean to imply that there was anything romantic between the two of us; there wasn't, and there never had been. We were simply friends, our shared past and our

efforts to create something artistically new being the chief links that bound us.

She died, Ivana, in 1975, suddenly, dropping dead from a heart attack, gliding from life like the swan that she'd always been. By that time, she'd seen Santa Fe grow from a virtual village of six thousand to a city of nearly eighty thousand, and by that time as well, she'd seen her reputation as an artist grow with it, her work having been written up and applauded in more art periodicals that I could count. By whatever quirk abides, I continue to hang on, but in looking back over the time, I find that the thing I miss most about her was her grace. She knew her capacities, you see, and she lived blissfully within them to the utmost limit that they would permit.

# REFLECTED IN THE BODY'S SILK

*Bill Wolak*





# LILITH

*Grant Guy*

Lilith was Adam's wife  
but when she realized he was a myth  
and could live with him for the rest of her life  
she divorced him and moved in with Patti Smith

## THE TEXAS RANGER AND HIS BRIDE

*Grant Guy*

The Texas Ranger had little to do next Wednesday  
But get married to the preacher's only daughter

But since he hadn't ever known a woman  
He was a little uncertain what was expected of him

But by Wednesday he felt like a pro  
The preacher's daughter taught him all he needed to know  
Between Sunday to Wednesday

The wedding night was a success

He was a happy man

## MANLIUS LAUGHED

*Richard Dokey*

Manlius Solberg thought life was a bitch. His father thought so too and his grandfather before. Manlius lived in the old two-bedroom, clapboard house that his Grandfather Thorstead built when Thorstead came to the Boulder River Valley of Montana from Norway. Thorstead had a wife, who died in the house, and then another wife, who died when Manlius's father Murston Murt was born. When Murt married Shirley Thompson, who was not from Norway, he swore he would let the line die out, but Shirley had Manlius. Shirley died of a rattlesnake bite weeding the roses she planted as a border between the patch of grass that separated the Solberg place from the hay field beyond.

Manlius grew up alone with Murt Solberg. Murt lived a long time. Manlius took care of him. Toward the end, folks said, why not move Murt into town and have him live at The Pioneer Nursing Home? The thought never entered Manlius's head. He stayed with Murt, nursed Murt, washed Murt's socks and prepared Murt's meals. When Manlius had to be out in the fields, he hired the Christensen girl from the next ranch but one up the Boulder Road. Ellie Christensen sat by Murt, read to Murt, helped Murt with his broth and trips to the bathroom.

Manlius came home one afternoon. Ellie was sitting on the mohair sofa in the living room crying. Murt was in bed, his head pressed into the pillow, his mouth formed into a crimped circle. Manlius drove Ellie home. Then he sat by his father saying things he would not later be able to recall. Chester Arlian from the Lutheran church took Murt to the Semple Mortuary in town. Manlius removed the sheets from Murt's bed. He removed Murt's shirts and trousers from the closet. He took everything out back and burned it in the fifty gallon drum. Life was a bitch.

Any man who lives alone is lonely. Manlius thought about it and thought about it. It troubled him to consider finding someone simply to set aside silence. Love was a strange idea anyway. Manlius had no concept of it. Manlius thought, why bother to love someone who was condemned forever to

oblivion? Love was a blindness, like the cataracts that made his eyes foggy so that he could not see clearly what was truly there. Manlius did not want to think that, in the brightest of noons, there was always night.

Manlius was not depressed. He worked hard. He tended the ranch. He tended the roses that Shirley Thompson had planted. He repaired what needed to be repaired. He kept the house clean. Still, he moved about the empty rooms, remembering those who had once occupied them and wondering what was the point of wondering about anything.

There was television. He left the television on at times without watching it. There was the sound of people—sort of people—what they sort of did and sort of said. The voices stifled the ticking of Thorstead's clock that stood on the floor against the far wall. When he turned the set off, the ticking was gigantic. It made Manlius think of breaking timbers and drove him outside to look at the stars. So Manlius did not watch television.

He did not read books. There was a kind of getting lost about reading books, something like being lost when watching television. He was where the words were, where the images on the screen were. When he put the book down or turned off the television, everything was the same. He was right where he was, and that was nowhere.

Sometimes Manlius went into town. It was a small town on the Yellowstone River. Manlius knew everyone. He walked up one side of McLeod Street and returned down the other. He waved at Virgil Entner, who had owned Entner's Dry Goods for fifty years.

Sometimes he stopped, if Virgil was outside, and said, "Hello, Virg. How are you?" Virgil said, "All right. How are you?"

"I'm all right." Then they talked about the weather or the high school football team.

Then they said, "Have a nice day."

Sometimes Manlius went into Cole Drug for a ham and cheese

and a thick chocolate malt, which he had favored since boyhood. There were also Eddie's Tackle and Gun Shop, Ace Hardware, Plug and Jug, and The Flower Pot. He looked into windows because sometimes they changed the displays. He went into The Grand, which had survived the old fire and was now a national monument. He had a beer. He ate pretzels from a wicker basket on the bar, the way cattlemen and sheep men had done for generations. He sat on a leather stool, his arms on the polished mahogany, sipping beer and eating pretzels.

Someone came over occasionally and said, "How've you been, Manlius?"

And Manlius said, "Pretty good. How are you?" Then they'd talk about the weather or the high school football team. Sometimes they had a conversation. Catching up on things, it was called. They were always the same things, just this year's catching up and not last year's. Then they said, "Have a nice day."

There were no new buildings along the three business blocks of McLeod Street. Sometimes a business became another business. Prospector Cafe was Prospector Cafe for ten years. Then it was China Gardens. Last year a couple from town made it Yellowstone Bakery. Manlius went in once and had a bear claw and a cup of Farmer's Coffee. The bear claw was just a bear claw and not too much frosting. The coffee was the same coffee at Cole Drug. People in town did business that way. When someone's business stopped, someone else had a turn, like removing a soiled shirt and putting on a fresh one. Harvesters ran up and down the fields. The cattle went up into the hills above the valley. The cattle came down again. The sheep grazed everything to dirt. Then it started over. Everything changed, but nothing changed.

Until one day, so many years after Murt's death that he could not remember the exact day, Manlius stood at the corner of McLeod and First Street, wondering which way to proceed, so that it would not be necessary to decide which way to return. Something moved beneath the street. Something did not exactly move, but it moved nonetheless. Manlius saw shimmers, like heat waves on a hot August afternoon. Everything was where it was: Cole Drug on this corner, The

Grand, across the street on the other corner, MLB Realty, across from that, and back to Entner's Dry Goods and Virgil outside looking into his window. Everything was there, but it wasn't there. Frightened, Manlius understood that he was not looking through the fog of his cataracts, but through something clear. What he saw was there before his father was or his grandfather or anyone's father. What he saw was the empty, still, vast alone of everything. Manlius put his hand against the wall of Cole Drug.

Manlius stopped walking up one side of McLeod Street and down on the other. Everything was a lie. He had tried to tell himself over and over again that it wasn't so. Habit, that's what it was, truly—the illusion that, if he did something again and again, there must be the kernel of something more, some building material to work with, to shape and form, which did not fade into going and coming. He loved nothing. He wanted nothing. When all was said and done, there was just nothing. He hated his father for this. He hated his grandfather too. They had not given him something to believe. Where was the truth, if the truth was that everything was a lie? He was hungry. He was thirsty. There was no food, no drink. That was why his mother had believed in God. Manlius went into town for supplies. He worked in the fields. He huddled in the tiny house his grandfather had built. He waited.

Manlius worked harder than ever. The harder he worked, the more he had to work. He was oblivious, working. He turned the John Deere up and down the rows. There was something about alfalfa in rows, green and aflame with yellow light. Something about bailing alfalfa, about the tuck-tuck of the bailer, about stacking the bails, wound tight with wire, to stand like monuments of work. He was a mole, digging blindly in the earth, a squirrel, gathering nuts—no mind, no thought, for no reason.

Over and over, up and down the fields, again and again each year—everything changing and everything the same—Manlius tuned himself to the rhythm of coming and going. Yet, should he work a thousand years and a thousand more and never sleep? Sleep was the sole reward for his labor.

At evening, bent over the few things he was able

to prepare for dinner, Manlius knew that work was what he had to hurl against The Pioneer Nursing Home, that he must work, or he must die. Horrified by the absence of hope, he thought only of work. Oppressed, terrified of decrepitude, Manlius Solberg cursed the light and waited for the final surrender to falsehood.

The Christensen girl had become a young woman. Manlius saw her sometimes when he went to the IGA for supplies. Ellie was not beautiful. No woman in town was beautiful, truly. They worked too hard. They were attractive, some of them, for a time. Ellie was attractive now. Manlius thought that there must be a young man, perhaps many young men, circling about Ellie like birds of prey, eager to make nests. Manlius thought, if he had a daughter, she might be much like Ellie Christensen. He would have taught her things, good things, and have watched to see how well she learned. He was glad she was not his daughter. He had nothing to offer but forbearance, doubt and work.

Up and down the aisles of the IGA, Manlius studied Ellie Christensen. To make a child was to be an artist. It was to create something the same, yet make it something for the first time. Watching Ellie, Manlius felt his loneliness turn upon him, like a haunting ghost. Would she discover as well that all was habit, that there was no point to Ellie Christensen?

He considered asking her to Cole Drug for a ham and cheese sandwich and a chocolate malt. He might catch up with what she had been doing since that day, when Murt was dead and he had found her, crying, on the mohair sofa. He wondered if that experience had turned Ellie, if two people, sharing such a thing, could share something more, or if Ellie Christensen, an attractive young woman, had merely gone on to find a life like his own, which was unable to be shared. He felt possessive about Ellie because she was not his daughter. She was free to become anyone. They had stood together in the shadow of Murt's death, but were as distant from each other as two islands in an endless sea. She became more exceptional the more he thought of her. Ellie Christensen, the girl who lived up the road in another house but one and whose parents, Rainsford and Virginia Christensen, worked their land as well, and were like everyone else.

So he walked up to her in the bread section and said, "Hello there, Ellie."

"Mr. Solberg," she said, pleased to see him.

"How are you, Ellie? How have you been?"

"I've been fine, Mr. Solberg. How have you been?"

"Fine, too," he said. Then he said, "How about this weather?"

"Too hot," she said. "I like spring best."

"Spring is nice," he said. "Have you had anything to eat? It's past noon."

"I haven't," she said. "I was just thinking about eating."

"Why don't we go over to Cole Drug?" he said. "We'll have a sandwich and maybe a malt. What do you say?"

"Well—"she said.

"My treat, of course. We can catch up on things. You can tell me what you've been up to."

"Well, then, that's all right," she said. Her eyes glowed. "I do have something I can tell you."

"Good," he said.

He felt elated walking beside Ellie Christensen. They sat in one of the tiny booths. Manlius ordered two ham and cheese sandwiches and two glasses for a thick chocolate malt.

"Well, now, Ellie," he said. "Tell me. You're going to school, I suppose. A bright girl like you."

"School, Mr. Solberg?" She said. "You don't mean high school."

"No, no," he said. "Weren't you interested in something, if I remember? You wanted to go to Montana State to study something."



"Oh," she said, sitting back on the cushioned seat, "I gave that up. School and I," she said, "we dropped out together after the twelfth grade." She giggled.

"I see," he said. "Well, not all of us are suited for college. Some go on. Some don't. The important thing is to do something of some kind, isn't that so? You have a whole, fresh life ahead, Ellie. I suppose, then, that you have plans."

The malted and the sandwiches came. Ellie bit into her sandwich. Manlius sipped the chocolate malt.

"Plans. Yes. Yes, I do, Mr. Solberg. I'm so excited. That's what I wanted to tell you."

"You're excited," he said.

"Yes. Yes."

"Big plans, I'll bet. It's good to have plans."

"Oh, yes," she said. "Big, big plans. Mr. Solberg—"she glanced about, tapping the straw against her tongue, "I'm going to have a baby."

He set the malt down and held his breath.

"A baby," he said.

"Yes. Yes. Cody Brown and I. We're getting married. Mr. Solberg, isn't that just so cool?" She put the straw into her mouth.

"Cody Brown."

"Yes. Sure. You know Cody. Oh, I guess what's happening is not right in some people's eyes, but times are so different, Mr. Solberg. So I say, what difference does it really make? What happens, happens. We're going to get married. I can hardly wait, Mr. Solberg. I've talked to Lucille Baker that owns the hair salon next to MLB Realty. Lucille says she'll train me. Isn't that just too cool? I can work there until the baby comes, and then Lucille says I can keep the baby in a little basket at

the rear of the shop and keep working. Cody has a job at the Eggleston Ranch. Isn't that just perfect? I'm looking for a place for us. Cody lets me use his truck to drive around looking before I start learning with Lucille. Cody's using one of the ranch trucks for a while. Everything is just so perfectly cool." She sucked on the straw. "I couldn't be happier, Mr. Solberg. What's new with you?"

Manlius sat for a time. "Well, then," he said. He sat some more, devoured the sandwich and gulped the malt. "That is quite something, isn't it, Ellie? Listen, Ellie, I must be on my way now. I have something important to do. It was nice seeing you." Then he said, "Have a nice day."

"Well, gee, Mr. Solberg. Anyway, thanks very much for the lunch. Oh, and, shhh. Please." She put a finger to her lips. "Mom and Dad, they don't know a thing about this yet. I'm kind of waiting for the right moment."

"Shhh," Manlius replied. "All right, Ellie. Shhh it'll be. I suppose congratulations are in order."

"Thank you, thank you, Mr. Solberg. I can't wait to have the baby and be married. Cody and I want to have lots of babies."

"You do."

"Lots and lots. Cody is so cute. You have a nice day too."

Manlius put a twenty dollar bill on the table and walked out to the street.

Cody Brown. Cody Brown. He knew this Cody Brown. Cody was a ner-do-well in cowboy boots, a low-life, horse-kicking ass, whose loudspeakers growled from the far side of town and brayed so loudly when Cody was on the Boulder Road that Manlius heard him over the sound of the John Deere. The child would be a Cody Brown, and the next child and the next after that. It was Cody Brown and Ellie Christensen, then Mr. And Mrs. Cody Brown and all the little Cody Browns. Everything was Cody Brown.

Cody's truck was parked at the IGA where Ellie had left it. It

was fire-engine red. It had back tires larger than the front tires. The wheel rims were bright chrome, with nubby, black whirls. The tailpipes were bright chrome. Manlius opened the driver's side door and felt under the seat. He found an eighteen-inch steel pipe.

Manlius went to the front of the truck. He smashed both headlamps. He pounded the hood. He moved around to the right front fender and pounded that. He pounded the door. He smashed the passenger side window. He pounded the right rear fender of the truck, moved around back and pounded the tailgate. He smashed the taillights. By the time he had reached the left rear fender, pounding and pounding, he had started to laugh. He laughed along the left rear fender, pounding and pounding. He smashed the rear window. When he reached the driver side door, he was laughing so uproariously that he could hardly see. He smashed the outside mirror. He pounded the left front fender and saw that he had fashioned so harmonious a design of crushed glass and dented steel that he imagined the truck might have come that way from the factory. Manlius laughed so hard that he sat down on the asphalt parking lot and held his chest with both hands. Laughing, he rolled sideways and lay on his back. He looked at the high, empty, blue Montana sky.

How could anything be so ludicrous? How could he have permitted his feelings over so many years to drain him of intelligence and render him incapable of moving forward? Nothing was serious here, nothing at all. It was only Cody Brown and soon-to-be Mrs. Cody Brown and all the little soon-to-be Cody Browns, bred like mice under his grandfather's house. When he thought about it, and thought about it correctly, what Cody Brown had done with Ellie Christensen was as silly as what he had done to Cody Brown's truck.

Manlius laughed. The people in the IGA, people he had always known, came out and stood in a circle, watching him laugh. It was absurd that it had taken something so absurd to make him see how absurd it all was.

## ELEVEN AM

*Dane Karnick*

*After the painting by Edward Hopper, 1926*

Almost midday sun  
blanches the furniture  
like her mood staring  
naked by the window

in view of other windows  
ignoring her nudity  
in her corner armchair  
that is no comfort to

Her faded sense of time  
passing its tiresome shadow  
along a day with hours  
clocking without her

the weight that sits beneath  
Her thoughts unguarded  
as gleaming skin resigned  
to a discoloring life

## SNOOPING

*Dane Karnick*

The stars had no names  
when I was thirteen  
no cross or sword for  
chalk lines to draw their  
domicile in the sky

with me sprawled on  
our front lawn next to  
the blue spruce jabbing  
the heavens under  
minor inspection

through binoculars  
staring without looking  
uninformed about  
spectral elements  
light years or stellar mass

as flecks of brightness  
merged into hundreds  
my hands tossed around  
the universe from  
shoulder to shoulder

playing keep away  
from that quietude  
touching my forehead  
while streaks of astral light  
bombarded the grass

# SUNSHINE PHOTOS WHILE CYCLING IN PORTALES, NM

*Tyne Sansom*



# SUNSHINE PHOTOS WHILE CYCLING IN PORTALES, NM

*Tyne Sansom*



# SUNSHINE PHOTOS WHILE CYCLING IN PORTALES, NM

*Tyne Sansom*





## DISORIENTED

*Gale Acuff*

I'm still lost. I had crossed the bridge closest to this college campus where I teach downtown, or what I thought was downtown, by the old Western quarter, blocks of buildings quaintly run-down, converted apartments, I think, on the upper floors, and storefronts on the street. I was shopping for nothing but architecture--I spend less that way. Then I found a restaurant, ordered some dumplings, stayed out of the heat but could not avoid the humidity. When I finished I had more energy so I decided to go home the long way around by heading east, along the river whose name I forget, which makes my part of town, Haikou, Hainan, an island. I head for the next bridge, which seems to be near because it is so large, and I will swagger my American hips along the water-front. I have bad knees but halfway between bridges, the one I usually take and that which I am bound to take instead, I only feel my feet inside my shoes. I should be wearing sandals. At least I wore a hat today--a baseball cap I bought at a little sundries shop outside the University. The bill's too big --I look like one of those characters on Lidsville--all hat. It alters me so I will find a cobbler to cut it back (the tailor told me find a shoemaker because she has no needles thick enough to hem it after the shade has been clipped). I have partial shade from coconut palms that line the riverside in double-rows. When I make the bridge the underpass is occupied by young men playing mahjong and dominoes, and by children riding trikes and bikes and roller skating

too near the triple-lanes of traffic. I  
climb the stairs and come out onto a sidewalk  
slightly raised along the bridge's rails. Go  
north, I tell myself. Cross, and continue  
north. Two blocks should do it, two thoroughfares  
and then turn west. Follow the sun. Pull down  
the bill of your cap to block it out though  
you follow it. Look for the landmark to  
your north, the new bank with purple letters  
at the corner of, let me think, was it  
Sanxi Lu and--well, the street that leads north  
to the beach. I will walk it tomorrow,  
dream tonight that it dead ends at sand and  
sea. What is the name of that sea again?  
We are all walking to the sand. We all come  
from the sea. Firmly grind enough sand an  
subject it to intense heat and it bleeds  
glass. Walk on hot sand and you walk on blood.  
We are all returning to glass. The sea  
lies beyond, like heaven, but not as clean.  
The clouds kicked up by heaven shade the glass  
to the hue of dirt. Just an illusion.  
I will see swimmers and boats, funny craft  
by Western standards, far out to sea. If  
the sun should swell as they say it will,  
the sand will turn to blood beneath my feet.  
The people will all be gone by then. There  
will be no more feet. There will be no flesh  
to feel the strain of metamorphosis  
or conversion or transmutation or  
whatever the term is. The temperature  
is 35 degrees. For Fahrenheit,  
multiply 35 times 1.8  
and add 32. Rules of thumb: 0 degrees  
Celsius is 32 Fahrenheit.  
10 degrees Celsius is 50  
Fahrenheit. 35 times 1.8  
--well, say 35 times 2. 70.  
Plus 32. 102 degrees/  
Fahrenheit. Good God Almighty. Holy  
Supernova, Batman. Great Krypton. Great  
Caesar's Ghost. Son of a bitch. Pretty warm.

Figure humidity at the usual  
70%. Great Jumpin' Catfish.  
Great Googily-moogily. Zounds. Jeepers.  
My word. My stars. My-my-my-my  
Sharona. Mine eyes have seen the glory  
of the hunting of the snark. My love is  
like a red. red rose. My love is warmer  
than the warmest sunshine, softer than a sigh.  
My love does it good. Nothin' you can say  
can turn me away from my--guy? The bank  
looms. My mariners, 'tis not too late to  
come to the aid of your party. "It's my  
party and I'll cry if I want to,  
sigh if I want to, die if I want to.  
You would cry too if it happened to you." I  
arrive at the south gate of the college.  
I want a watermelon and I spy  
just to the left of the entrance a cart  
with fruit. I see no melons. Wait. There they are.  
A mother and son are in the blessed  
shade beneath it. She instructs him about  
something. Is he four years old? Service,  
I want service. Dehydration. I slap this  
melon, thump that one. She does not respond.  
Ni hao. Ni hao. Wei, ni hao, I almost  
shout. Ay-y-y-y!!!! They talk to one another that  
way. Wo yao shigua! I want watermelon!  
Another shopper gets her attention  
for me. Just a moment, she says. English.  
Just a moment. Yes, I say. I am hot.  
My face is hot with shame. My body is  
hot and wet with shame, to have spoken as  
I have. I frightened her little boy. He  
stands behind his mother but studies me.  
Or does he stare at the bill of my cap?  
I pay seven kwai for a nice melon.  
I feel shame. Now I am polite. I am  
a gentleman. I pay and pay. Xie xie,  
I say. I bow to her son. Xie xie, too.  
but too late. He hates me. I frightened him.  
I frightened his mother. It is the heat,  
I say, in English. I do not understand  
my words, either. The melon is heavy.

Son moves behind mother again. It is full of tears. The rind is encircling hot tears. It is the weather, I say. I point up. He looks. He sees nothing. I am a sinner. I am Judas. I have betrayed the Redeemer. I would kiss him but he is too far away. She stands between us. I must appeal to her but it is too late. It is as hot as hell. I have no hope. When I get home I put my melon in the refrigerator to cool it off. When I stab it open the flesh will be pink, like faint blood. It will sacrifice me. I shower and collapse on the bed. I hear the hot wind through the tips of the fronds of the palm trees out there. A rattling sound. Snickering. I have been evil today. I resolve to bring the boy a present. His mother will refuse it. I will offer again. Again refusal. The third time is usually magic. I gamble that she will accept the third offer. It will be in her hands. I will put my life in her hands. If she refuses, I will bow and leave. Then she will accept me, my apology. I count on it. I count on refusal meaning forgiveness. It is my only hope. Is Judas in Hell for betrayal or in heaven for his pivotal role as facilitator? Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. Be as one of these. I have destroyed the light of the world. I cannot get through to them the only way I know, though I do not know it, here or back home, though I have no home, only here. I wonder where they live and how and why, other than in the world and out of it. I wonder whether we could live together.

## SUPERHIGHWAY

*Jonathan Ferrini*

I'm assigned to a county road crew picking up trash along the interstate highway wearing an orange vest and helmet. There are four of us on the crew who live in halfway homes and required to work until our probation periods expire. The crew consists of an obese, single, middle aged Caucasian woman named Fanny convicted of welfare fraud for collecting benefits from three social security numbers to support the horde of rescue dogs she loved. Her orange vest barely fits around her rotund body. She shares the sugar cookies she carries providing us with a needed surge of energy getting us through the day. Lopez is a slightly built Mexican immigrant who was convicted of workers comp fraud. When his knees gave out working as a laborer for a construction company, he was awarded workers compensation benefits. He mowed lawns and climbed ladders cleaning rain gutters to support his pregnant wife and three children before the insurance investigator caught him working and pressed charges. Jackson is a tall, lanky, chain smoking Black man in his seventies who fancies himself as a "Mack" and entertains us about his glory days of wearing full length mink coats, driving his custom Cadillac, wearing gold jewelry, and enjoying a stable of girlfriends. He was convicted of check fraud which supported the grandchildren of several of his former girlfriends. I was assigned the position of "siren blower" requiring me to face the crew and oncoming traffic sounding the warning siren if danger approached allowing the crew to seek safety.

Our boss is Deputy Horace who drives the orange county van which tows a trailer including our portable plastic toilet. He is tough. Regulations require we get a one hour lunch and two 15 minutes breaks but Horace only gives us a half hour to eat the unappetizing County provided sack lunch. The smug Deputy is nearing retirement and never leaves the van with the air conditioning roaring. He loves the Rolling Stones. The volume is so loud I can hear the lyrics despite his windows being closed. He plays video games and eats greasy burgers, chips, and gulps down discount store brand cola. The five gallon water jug provided for our hydration is empty by noon and Horace refuses to fill it. Each crew member is responsible

for filling a minimum of ten orange trash bags and cleaning ten miles of highway in ten hours. The only time we hear from Horace is when the van's loud speaker barks,

"Pick up the pace or I'll keep you out all night with two demerits each!"

Anybody accumulating ten demerits violates their parole and is sent back to prison. Working in the darkness is treacherous as we were only visible by our orange vests and a single flashing amber warning light atop the van. We're often the recipients of cruel remarks shouted as drivers speed by, *You got what you deserve, Losers!"*

What did I deserve, I wonder? The sun is beating down, the pavement is scorched, and I'm drenched in sweat inhaling the noxious exhaust fumes. I have a headache, feel nauseous, and I'm angry that life dealt me a "bad hand." I know as the day progresses, obese Fanny will be unable to keep up the pace, Lopez's blown knees, and Jackson's chronic smokers cough will also slow us down requiring us to work late into the night with the possibility of demerits. I won't go back to prison. I may dash into traffic and end my misery but I'd rather wait for the opportunity to kill myself taking Deputy Horace with me. The Stone's lyrics resound from the van, "I look inside myself and see my heart is black."

The trash we pick up along the highway symbolizes lives gone haywire. Most of it is cans, bottles, fast food packaging, and condoms but today we found a weathered photo album and a baby doll. The photo album depicted a happy family I envied and wondered what had befallen them. I spied a used hypodermic needle which reminded me of my mom who died of a heroin overdose while I was in prison.

I grew up in the high desert of Southern California. It's sun scorched, flat, and runs along Interstate 15 towards Vegas. Trailer home and apartment rents are low. The major industry in the area is meth production. Dad split leaving me and mom to fend for ourselves. Mom graduated from alcohol to opiates to heroin and couldn't raise me. My aunt and uncle filed papers to assume my custody motivated by the specter of being paid by the County as foster parents. They sobered

up long enough to pass muster by the county. We lived in a double wide trailer home.

My aunt's husband, Brady, drove a sewage truck for thirty years. His job was to pump sewage from portable toilets and clean out the filthy plastic bathroom enclosures. His retirement gift for thirty years of service was the sewage truck he drove. He was a schemer but never let anybody in on his scams. He was always tinkering with the truck and one day opened the sewage tank exposing the vile odor from human excrement. We lived miles from the closest neighbor and my aunt and uncle didn't mind the smell because they were drunk most of the time. He climbed inside the smelly tank and installed compartments always telling me to "beat it" if I came close to watch him work. Dinner was fast food, a can of chili, or frozen dinners. My aunt would often slip into my room in the middle of the night drunk. I'd pretend to sleep as she caressed my body with her hand hoping I'd awake and take her. She would curl next up to me and fall asleep. In the morning, I carefully slid out of bed, dressed, and left for school. I suspect Brady was aware of his wife's behavior but didn't care.

On my eighteenth birthday, I was given a birthday present of sorts. I was handed the key to the sewage truck and told that it was now registered in my name. Brady wanted me to drive the truck to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and then to Nogales making a stop in each city while unknown people attended to the sewage tank. I asked why and was told,

"Because we'll cut off your mom's heroine fixes. What's your decision?"

I was arrested at a state agricultural inspection station when x-ray equipment alerted officers to the hidden compartments Brady constructed in the sewage tank which he packed with meth. I was facing a forty year sentence for interstate transfer of narcotics.

The US Attorney was a kind woman nearing retirement. She offered me a plea deal if I flipped on Brady. I wouldn't rat because my aunt and uncle would cut mom off from her heroin. I was a first time offender and the US Attorney

knew I was protecting my mother. She took pity on me and recommended to the judge I receive the minimum five year sentence. The judge told me I'd be young enough to begin a "normal" life after prison. Guys like me couldn't live a "normal life" because we never had one.

After sentencing, the US Attorney approached me saying, "Timmy, don't let the past dictate your future."

Drivers routinely throw garbage at us. Lopez was hit by a full diaper and Jackson was hit in the head by a vanilla milkshake. They were humiliated.

Deputy Horace is napping despite the resounding Stones lyrics, "I see a line of cars and they're all painted black...I see people turn their heads and quickly look away"

Fanny was quick to aid Lopez and Jackson. She tapped on the window jarring Deputy Horace awake. Although I resented Fanny for slowing down the crew, I sympathized with her because she was subjected to vicious daily taunts from drivers about her weight. She politely requested towels and water to clean up Lopez and Jackson but Deputy Horace only threw a dirty towel at her and closed his window. Fanny did her best to clean them up using the dirty towel and the last of the water in the five gallon container.

The humiliation from the discarded garbage served to motivate the crew to finish before dark and get home to forget about the day. Fanny struggled to keep up the pace. Jackson's cough worsened and he spat bloody mucous.

Lopez was hobbling with both knees ready to blow out. Jackson whispered, "Timmy, come check this out!"

The crew was standing above a smelly trash bag. It wasn't uncommon to find decaying pets but as we examined the bag, it split open revealing a stillborn baby girl. I ran to Deputy Horace to report the finding. He rolled down the window and I was engulfed by the cool air-conditioning. He said,

"Bury it and forget you ever saw it. I don't want the paperwork and you don't want the demerits!"



He closed the window and returned to his video game and I returned to the crew with the instruction. Lopez was kneeling and reciting a Catholic prayer in Spanish. Fanny was cradling the baby doll we found. Jackson had located the most serene location he could find under a California pepper tree which would provide shade over the unmarked grave we dug.

Something snapped in me. My childhood and the job was like moving through the stages of purgatory and the final stage before entering hell was finding a baby in a trash bag with orders to bury it alongside the highway to avoid “paperwork” and “demerits.” I was ready to end my misery and take Deputy Horace with me.

It was a typical week of long days and nights but at dusk one evening, I noticed two cars racing each other. One of them split off into the adjoining lane cutting off a semi-truck trailer which clipped the racing car sending it across the highway slammed by oncoming traffic but the semi-truck trailer was out of control and heading directly towards us. It was my opportunity to end my misery as the semi would kill us all. My finger quivered on the trigger of the warning horn. I had come to respect my crew as friends and knew they had loved ones to return to after probation. Although I had nobody waiting for me, I recalled what the judge told me and I sounded the warning horn. Lopez hobbled slowly and Fanny was too slow to avoid the oncoming semi but with the help of Jackson, we dragged them both into the safety of the culvert seconds before the semi slammed into the orange van. Deputy Horace didn't hear the warning horn and the van was crushed into a metal ball and sent rolling onto the highway leaving behind a trail of blood.

Traffic came to a sudden halt. A chorus of horns from frustrated drivers is drowning out the sirens of rescue vehicles approaching the carnage. The people racing by us day after day with contempt, pity, or sadistic pleasure for our plight were now glued to their cell phones, and possibly, confronting their own mortality and meaningless lives.

Jackson muttered, “You got what you deserve, Losers.”

We discarded our orange vests and helmets wondering down

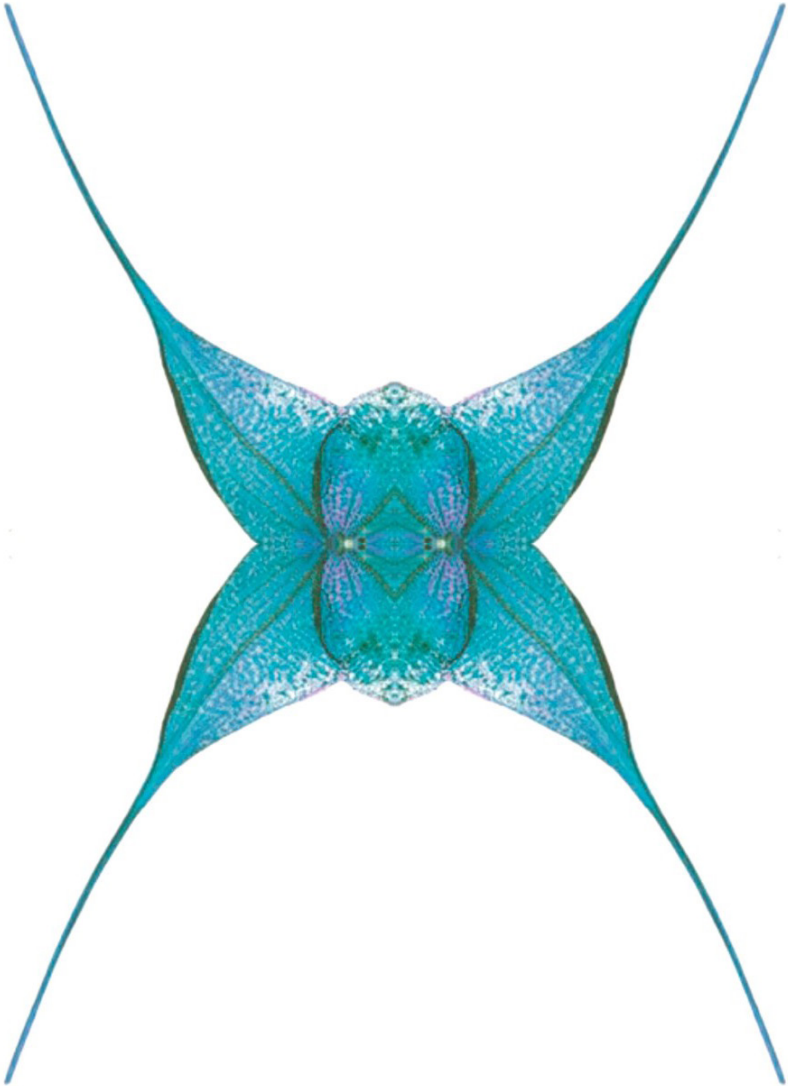
the highway towards a fate unknown but united in the belief  
"our pasts wouldn't dictate our futures".

From a distance, I could hear the Stones lyrics still playing  
inside the crushed van, "I have to turn my head until my  
darkness goes...If I look hard enough into the settin' sun

My love will laugh with me before the mornin' comes"

# THE FLAME'S EVANESCENT SCARS

*Bill Wolak*



## FEBRUARY WINGS

*Christina Avalos*

This mommy always knew,  
it was you she wanted  
watermelon belly  
my glowing dewy skin  
your kicks reminded me  
of the future we would have.

In my arms I held you,  
my boy; bundle of joy  
Hershey kiss eyes, they shine  
milky skin so silky smooth  
hair just like chick feathers  
your smile tickled my heart.

Five months I watched you grow;  
sitting up, spitting up  
belly laughing, waking  
me every couple of hours,  
dressing you - handsome boy-  
giving you baths - splish splash.

February - hearts beat-  
but yours stopped, grew your wings  
and flew out of my arms  
up to heaven, I know.  
Every aspect of you  
I miss - sweet babe of mine.

## || DOORS ||

*Adrianna Irizarry*

**Closed:**

a thin barrier, insufficient,  
a reminder not to talk, not  
to walk, not that way –  
tip toe.

*Shhh!* Steady.

It won't open for a while –

**Open:**

WARNING! WARNING!

He's awake.

Exit quickly. Hide.

*Don't* look him in the eye.

Steady. The other will open soon –

*Tick, tick. Tock.*

Open. Close.

He's on the other side.

Open. Close.

Gravel shrieks, tires grind. He's gone.

Open your lungs and breathe.

## HEAD ON FIRE

*Cody Wilhelm*

Head on Fire

Axons stripped away & neurons burnt out  
my head's on fire  
& God damn it hurts, so I shout  
At the top of my rage, "Liar!"  
Doesn't that exquisitely  
describe you? Your lies cut so deeply & so relentlessly.  
What do I do with all of these left over feelings  
for you & of you? For some  
reason I miss your smiles & midnight reelings  
on how I'm wrong. How do I come  
back from this? Why did I let you bury your pain into me?  
I saw your fear & desperation, your venom, I didn't see.  
I used to have a voice,  
now I hardly make a sound.  
I use to have a choice,  
now getting away can't help but pound  
into my head. God, I wish I could stay  
but it's time for me to get away.  
Abandon my perfect poison  
that tempts me with sweet toxicity.  
I've caught myself feeling the warmth of this prison  
we've created. I'm so damn sick of its duplicity,  
the way you abase  
me. The way I can't help but skip a beat when I see your face.  
My head's on fire,  
my visions blurry & closing in  
I want to carve out this cancer you inspire.  
I can't even begin  
to discern from truth & lies.  
Revive my soul from your tears that baptize  
Me in this burning pain that takes away my breath:  
Drowning me in nostalgic  
remembrance of our love & its death.  
Don't you dare call it romantic--  
My head's on fire & my heart is broken--

## BITTER TRUTH

*Cody Wilhelm*

Jealousy, I thrive on,  
have contempt for the content  
I hate that I can't stop.  
I'm hanging on to prejudice  
for a God that I struggle with.  
Dragging myself through the days,  
counting them down  
eager for an end.

Bury me shallow.  
I'm paralyzed  
by your eyes,  
I'm not quite dead,  
I'm just hollowed out--

I'm absent again  
A liar and an artist  
Painting smiles on all the faces except my own.  
So detached; living in my head with  
Nothing to complete me.

Pushed away from you  
Many times over;  
But I can't get enough  
Of your bitterest parts  
The taste of your embittered and burning tongue.

We were built on your architecture of sick lies--  
Sick and sweet they consumed us  
In lackluster illusions.  
I know you--  
Left seeking truth.

## OH, WHAT A CURL!

*KKM*

Oh, what a curl!  
Your tangled mischievous ways.  
The desire of perfection ruined by winds  
drying you out in the dampest of days.

A pattern of 4c,  
knotted in defeat.  
You've withstood the times,  
defying gravity.

I've called you many things.  
Unpleasant is one.  
But it's the spirals of your growth,  
a reflection of what I've become.

Yet versatile,  
in the styles that you speak.  
Strength, pride, and culture  
your tress are what influence me.

Oh, what a curl  
you've grown out to be.  
Black, bold and beautiful,  
but more importantly, a part of me.

You are free



# **BLOOM**

*KKM*



# POWER

*KKM*



## THE FISH AND THE BIRD

*Caleb C. Washburn*

It is not until she walks into the room that I begin to manifest. A bulbous mass, I lacked all shape and symmetry. Tonight she is elegant. She wears a red, sequenced, low cut dress with spaghetti straps. I find myself distracted and enamored with the ethereal woman before me. She has long, wavy brown hair, a small nose, and almond shaped eyes that are the color of a maple tree. She smiles broadly at me and I find myself smiling back. This is the way of our interactions. So cordial, so effortlessly romantic. We never fight or argue. We simply long for one another. After a moment of being distracted by the woman before me I can't help but love, I look down at my hands. They are tanned and scarred in some places. I rub my palms together and find I have calluses. I almost never have calluses on my palms. Is this hard working persona what she needs from me tonight? What does she long for? The question hangs in my mind. I look around at the setting I have freshly awoken to. It is a nice restaurant. The kind that has an orchestra playing mood music and calamari being circulated on little silver trays for guest to sample. She is across the room shining like a beacon in that maddening dress.

She finally reaches the table and I find myself transported to the other side, pulling out her chair for her to sit. She leans in and kisses me gently on the cheek. The softness of her lips make me weak in the knees and my roughened palms begin to sweat. "So much detail tonight," I muse. The kiss breaks and we smile, staring deeply into each other's eyes. After a moment, she sits down and pulls her chair closer to the table. I walk to my side and do the same. The velociraptor dressed as our server approaches the table and starts talking to me in his strange and eloquent tongue. To my surprise, I respond without hesitation and, after a moment, realize I just ordered an octopus with strange blue rings on it. "Haggis of the sea," he clicks and hisses out, conjuring it from thin air. As the surprisingly graceful waiter places it in front of me, the woman smiles broad from across the table at my confused expression. Sometimes I wonder if it is I or her who most conveys our hidden love in these stolen moments.

After what seemed like an eternity lost in her gaze, I pry my eyes away to take in the rest of my surroundings. It is a very nice restaurant. Through a set of double doors, I see we are next to an ocean. The water is dark. The contrast of the white sands against the inky waves, I find to be beautiful, but not as beautiful as her. Once again my settings change. Suddenly, I am alone on the beach and stare down to find a singular sand dollar. She loves sand dollars. They remind her of a simpler time, when she was young and fearless. She and her sister used to hunt for them like little girls do, exclaiming over each shell like it was a priceless artifact. She told me so one night... Where is she? Why is she missing? As if I had conjured her with my thoughts, and not the other way around, I see her walking gracefully toward me, barefoot. She has on a zebra striped string bikini and small sarong wrapped around her waist. She drinks from a coconut. She reaches me and I find my arm draped around her waist.

"Do you want some?" She offers me the coconut. I look at the liquid and find the color bright yellow. I cannot taste, I remember, and decide against it.

"No thank you," I smile at her. I love this woman.

We have shared a thousand lifetimes together. Yesterday we traversed a glacier in Alaska, walked the Great Wall of China, and snorkeled in the waters of the Great Barrier Reef. Today I find us in calmer climates.

"What troubles you love?" I finally ask.

She smiles at me and, confused, asks in response, "What do you mean? I'm smiling babe, nothing is wrong. Nothing at all."

Her voice is confident but her eyes are screaming. I turn and take her by the hands. I look down at her. This is the first time in a long time that I am taller than she. A whole head taller in fact which troubles me. I put my fingers under her chin and trace her cheek, gently drawing her eyes to meet mine. They are so beautiful, I sigh. "I see you."

She pinches her eyes tight and grits her teeth. She knows that I know, I always know. She leans over and hugs me. Her head

rests on my chest and I find myself stroking her hair.

“You know life, is abundantly messy. But love, if you always escape here and never live out there,” I point to the horizon to an unknown faraway place I have never seen nor could hope to see, “then you will be living a lie. Sure it’s hard, sure it’s exhausting, but it’s real. You can touch it with your hands, feel it on your toes, and taste it.”

I grab her hand and prepare to tell her the truth of this place, the same awful truth that I have had to tell her for a thousand lifetimes. My heart would ache for her.

“This place is not real Yerah. It’s an illusion.”

She shakes her head at me, not wanting to believe it. I give her a sidelong glance and a smile. I find myself talking soothingly, as I would to a child; “We got waited on by a velociraptor at the restaurant babe. Now we find ourselves walking along a beach.”

I can see the exact moment the realization dawns, breaking across her face across like the sunset. I grabbed her hand, desperate to take away her pain. She pulls it up to her face and I feel the warmth of her cheek. It sends a thrill down my spine like always.

“If I leave, if I wake up... you won’t be there.”

“I have loved you your whole life because YOU love you. I am simply a manifestation created by you, a personification of your love. Today I am a strapping, hardworking young lad with brown hair, and almond colored eyes. Tomorrow I may be your mother. I am what you need me to be, to preserve you and only you. You can’t stay here, and you can’t fix your problems in this place. Not really. Life is lived out there, it is only realized here. Your memories, your growth, comes from a place I can never go.”

I caress her face and smile. I lean in and kiss her on the lips. I move my hand into hers, and bring the other down to rest on her hip. We begin to sway and I find myself singing an old Irish tune. The song her love sings her, her true love.

“Red is the rose that in yonder garden grows. Fair is the lily of the valley. Clear is the water that flows from the Boyne, but my love is fairer than any.”

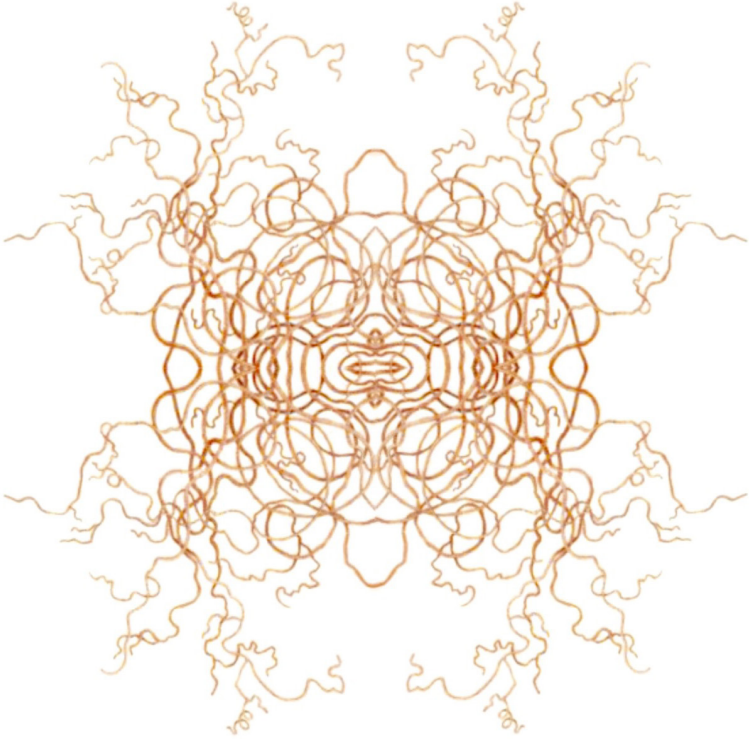
She looks at me with cheeks glistening with tears. I wipe them away gently.

“He loves you, Yerah. He may in some ways fall short some days, but he always sees you and he loves you fiercer than any warrior could. Go home to him, because his arms will be more welcome to you than a dream ever could.”

She began to glide away. As she faded from sight the beach became grey. Lightning shot through every portion of the illusion, and the scenery reverted back to a bulbous blob in an instant. I looked at my hands. They too were grey, my manifestation was gone. My love was gone. I looked up searching for where she may be and began to become excited at the prospect of seeing her tomorrow and whatever new adventures may arise. I missed her fiercely and wondered if she missed me, out there. This excitement troubled me for an instant and a thought occurred to me. Where does the dream end and I begin?

# THE SLIP KNOT OF DREAMS

*Bill Wolak*



## A LOTUS EATER

*John Walser*

These tiny dates sun-dried  
brown as my hands:

dragged back to the boats  
tied below benches  
no matter what I cry  
at the ankles behind me  
the ankles in front  
I'm stored like bruised fruit  
like maniac supplies:  
me and him and him and him:  
the devourers of opportunity.

When I cry at the ankles before me  
the ankles behind  
I am not bruised fruit:

I devour skies:  
I devour sweet purpose.

Under their benches  
do the others notice  
the saltwater deck sweat splinters?

If my hands were not tied:  
if my hands were not bound behind me:  
if I could chaw the skin from them  
the flesh from my palms:  
I would gnaw through the deck planks as well.

The heat of sun shipmate voices:  
no longer my shipmates:  
they curse and curse.

Below the bench: each mile away  
each main sail billow pulls me farther away  
further away:

I would just as readily gnaw through myself.

Like mucilage: these dates they drop:



the seaweed hogtied bind  
of my wrists and ankles  
below the bench planking  
the seep of salt water buckle on the deck:

the hardening of my flesh: my condition:  
that traces back across oceans:

seafaring brine of clenched oars:  
the drag and pull in rhythm like feet  
like a caller's voice asking for strokes  
and the flexing of ancestral backs:

the cause: unknown:  
the treatment: surgery to snip  
flexibility back into the fingers:  
an injection to break down the twine fibers  
the macramé nautical ropes and knots:

sheets are the ropes not the sails.

These dates they drop below their seats: gritty  
dried droops, all pits, no meat: I cannot chew  
joy into them, forgetfulness, the ache  
for me, the excess of moderation.

A friend on a beach once pointed  
to the washed sky and said to me:  
The cormorant of desire.

These dates they drop below their seats:  
dried gritty droops: no meat, all pits:  
I cannot chew cormorant joy into them:

cormorant joy, lotus forgetfulness,  
the ache for more into them:

mostly pit, little meat: I can't chew  
pangs back into them:  
the spray ache of sunshine.

They cannot make me forget

all I remember is the loss of forgetfulness:  
the lurch of longing:

all longing, all the time.  
These dates they drop below their seats:

the other eaters chant:  
lotus lotus lotus:  
lotus lotus lotus:

thrash themselves with throb.

This fruit fails to help them forget  
their joyous forgetfulness:

the sweet, sweet fruit of indulgence  
the sweet fruit of forgetfulness:

they bellow about hunger  
they bellow about fairness  
they bellow for new hunger.

The rowers don't care:  
their pulsing, their aches  
lashed to boards, then dismissed.

I know what is carved on pillars  
what's sung by mermaids  
what restraint is painted on motionless urns:

the petty tyranny of moderation.

Who deserves bound wrists? I cry:  
Someone else yelling that desire is wrong?

Forgetfulness is sometimes delicious: I cry:  
overindulgences sometimes apples, peaches:  
the juice run of pears.

They dismiss my pulses:  
lash them under their seats.

I cannot chew.  
I cannot throb.

# MONK: THIS IS MY STORY

*John Walser*

Monk: This is My Story

Monk alone: like praise:

snake handler: magician:

stands in the pulpit:

stroll circles:

a stone echo cathedral:

the shortest homily:

one minute, forty one seconds:

and he hums My story:

and he whip stitch knots My song:

each note worn lacquer gloss

stage floor sheen scuff

beautiful as pine tar

beautiful as white wood

quill splinters:

each clear note angle

and held rest falling

like white light or joyous gloom:

the must of searching

the shadow rafters:

and when the keys clack shut

the body is removed.

## **BROKEN ANGEL**

*William Barrette*

White wings torn, bleeding,  
battered once perfect face,  
down cast, kneeling in defeat.  
Staring at slashed ichor stained robes.

Jarring laughter as demons circle.  
There rasping voices calling out,  
Hate, Pride, Cowardness, Jealousy,  
Failure. They wail in mocking tones.

They come ready to kill,  
then a sound breaks  
Laughter, the angelic head lifts.  
As the saints begin to prey.

## NASHVILLE

*Scott Jessop*

The morning frost lifted the mold from the canvas of Charlie Butler's Sibley tent and soaked the top of his wool blanket so that it smelled, as contradictory as it seemed, of dampness and dust. He rolled over on his army cot and looked at the face of his lover: Mary Cassady, a thin, sixteen year old prostitute who had fallen in with the Army of the Cumberland in northern Georgia and had been tagging along with the troops ever since. Her freckled face, thin lips and bright red hair beguiled Charlie and he had done all he could to have her nearly every night.

She opened her eyes and smiled. Charlie kissed her as he stroked her hair.

"What do we do today?" he asked her.

"We start with breakfast," she said standing up and pulling the blanket around her naked body. "How about stewed tomatoes and eggs with a rasher of bacon and a stack of cakes?"

"Why not make warm biscuits so I can slop up the grease at the bottom of the pan?"

"I'm serious," she cried.

"I know you are but all I've got are oats," he said rummaging through his pack. Fresh eggs were scarce and any chickens they came across went straight to the quartermaster who kept them for the officers or any enlisted man with a gold dollar. He fished out a small bag of oats and handed it to her.

"Oats," she said. "If all I wanted to eat was bloody oats I would have stayed in Ireland."

He smiled as she pulled her blue dress over her head and tossed her hair. From the other side of the tent his bunkmate Willy rolled over and blinked hard at Butler. He was in a foul mood. The grunting and panting from Charlie's bunk kept him up most of the night. Mary blew Willy a kiss, put on her boots,

and then left to go find a pot and some water.

"If you want a roll, go to the whores' camp down the road. You keep bringing her here, and the sergeant is going to have your hide."

"Willy," Charlie said, "I'm in love."

Grinning, Willy shook his head. He was thirty-four and had been around. Willy Fleming had worked the Ohio and Missouri Rivers, driven mules down the Santa Fe and cut timber in the forests of northern Maine, and in all his travels, true love with a whore was as hard to find as an honest land speculator. "You just think you're in love cause she's giving you rides at half price."

Charlie laughed off Willy's insult being, as he was, deep in the blessed, naïve haze of passionate love, but he knew his friend was only looking after him. The two men had been together since he joined the Union Army two and a half years before, fought side-by-side at Stones River and lost too many friends at Chickamauga. For the both of them, the long winter of death wound on as they trudged their way through the leafy woods of the South. Georgia and Tennessee were miserable places with freezing rain in the winter and steaming heat in the summer. And as the war continued uniforms became moldy, boots thin and food rations hardly enough to fill their bellies.

Three years before, Charlie had worked a scam where he collected three hundred-fifty dollars to substitute for an Ohio railroad man's son caught by the draft. This was in addition to the two hundred-fifty he had accepted to substitute for a Maryland merchant's boy. At least the authorities knew about those two. The marshals caught him, whipped him, and a judge who had served in the Mexican-American War sentenced him to serve in the bloodiest of theaters. He could have bribed his way out, but he wanted the money to set up a business in Colorado or Oregon. His funds were ensconced in a Boston bank, but with each battle, he doubted he would live to see another year. His doldrums broke in the summer of 1864 when he met Mary.

Charlie and Willy went to Madam Langdon's camp looking to forget two days of burial detail following the Battle of Peachtree Creek. The Georgia heat had accelerated the decomposition of the corpses, and the gaping eyes and broken bodies left Charlie longing for a taste of life. Being only eighteen, the madam thought he might enjoy the pixie. And he did. When he returned to camp a day later he was whipped for being AWOL, but it wouldn't dampen his lust for Mary. Twice more he snuck out into the night and went to the madam's camp. General Thomas took the army north into Tennessee. Miss Langdon, and Mary, followed.

She stoked the fire and hung his dented black pot above the flames. Charlie slipped his arms around her and squeezed. "I couldn't find a spoon," she said with a hint of irritation in her voice.

Charlie glanced down and saw his wooden spoon lying in the ash and mud at the edge of the fire pit. "It's right there."

"I'll not be using such a filthy thing."

Charlie looked down at the spoon and shrugged.

"I swear," continued Mary, "you men never clean a thing. This pot is in need of a good scrub, but that spoon is a pathetic mess. Now take it down to the creek and wash it off."

"Yes, ma'am." Charlie said with sharp salute and a silly grin. Fishing the spoon from the gunk on the ground, he gave it a few shakes and then trudged off for the creek.

White tents and smoky fires lined the lanes of the Union encampment on the outskirts of Nashville. In the hickory wood, snow lay on the frozen earth but here in camp it was rivers of mud and clumps of steaming excrement. After thirty months, Charlie had grown accustomed to the harsh conditions. His nose no longer smelled the rotting flesh of wounded soldiers or the thick air of male sweat after a long march. He had forgotten the taste of fresh meat, and the only vegetables he had eaten were the rotted remains they looted from farms and gardens as they passed.

Mary's entrance into his life was like a summer poppy. Her smile could make him feel warm despite the leaking hole in his boot and the thin weave of his summer uniform. At night, Charlie would sleep with his leg pressed between the dampness of her thighs and his hand cupped beneath her tiny breasts. In the morning, she would greet him with a smile. Then the exchange of money because without it Miss Langdon would have her bedding other soldiers, and that he could not stand.

"I was thinking we could open a store. Out west somewhere," Charlie said to her one night.

She sat up and looked at him, "Charlie, ya don't want to be a farmer?"

"The money is made in dry goods, darling."

"Land," she said. "A man of wealth owns land."

He nodded. "We'll do both. I've nearly eight hundred fifty dollars, and with your money, we can easily get set up in a small store and maybe get a start on a ranch. Colorado has high plains grasslands, so it would be good for cattle. The way I got it figured after the war, this country is going to move, and folks are going to be hungry. Yep. Cattle. That's the only way to get a lot of meat to market at a cheap price."

She gently kissed the nape of his neck. With nearly four hundred dollars saved, she was thinking about California. He turned and kissed her. The West was starting to look good. Despite the passing of money and the whispers from the other men in the camp, Mary truly loved Charlie. He was a young man of some means and a lot of promise. After starving in Limerick and starving in Brooklyn and whoring her way across her new country, she was ready to be the wife of a small rancher with a dry goods store in the land of Colorado.

Down at the creek, Charlie washed the spoon while upstream other men washed their breakfast pans and dumped their chamber pots. He decided he should move further up the creek above the waste. As he made his way along the icy shore, he heard thunder to the south. His gaze shifted to the



men along the creek. All had pricked up their ears, and they studied the fields to the south. Not now, he thought looking up at the clear sky. A gentle, cold wind blew and riding it, the faint and distant cries of men. Another clap of thunder and Charlie ran for the camp.

The men were already beginning to muster. Frustrated officers gathered in the campaign tent to pore over maps and debate possible paths of enemy attack. As Charlie passed the big tent, he heard a captain holler for intelligence. It didn't take long. Men bivouacked in the fields south of the creek were running into camp. The Confederate Army was marching on their position they were calling out. The rebel artillery was taking shots to get range and direction. Before long, they would open fire with everything.

Still clutching the spoon, Charlie reached his tent but the fire was abandoned. Mary had left. He looked in the Sibley, but her things were gone. As he came out of the tent, he saw her running down the pike back to Miss Langdon's and toward the advancing insurgents. Mary ducked as another explosion from Hood's artillery fell close to the road and scattered clumps of dirt over her.

Grabbing her hand, Charlie pulled her toward the Union lines. "I should stay with the girls," she said looking back.

"Mary, Hood's army is coming, and they mean to take this city. It's not safe."

"Miss Langdon has always taken good care of us," she started.

"After the battle, I'll put you on a train for Kansas City. I get out in three months. Three months and then I'll join you. Three months and then we'll be married."

On his face, she saw her future: family, money, land and food. Without a glance at the coming storm over her shoulder, she went with him. They crossed into the camp as the Ohio regulars formed a skirmish line.

"Jesus, Butler," said Willy buckling his belt around his uniform.

"You brought your whore? I guess you mean to die with your wick out."

Charlie seized him by the shirt and threw him aside.  
"She's no whore."

He turned back to her, "You'll be safe here." Above him, the atmosphere tore open, and Mary's eyes shifted from him to the sky. A tear formed on her left lid and sat suspended at the edge of her lash. The delicate drop mesmerized Charlie with its fragile beauty. He tilted his head to the side to better see it just as a burning wind blew past. A millisecond later, he was covered in warm, red spray and falling. A Confederate shell had decapitated Mary, and the force of her head exploding had knocked him to the muddy ground.

Willy was yelling at him, but Charlie couldn't hear anything but a high-pitched ring. His friend turned to the front, ran into the smoke and disappeared forever. Charlie lifted Mary's dress and vainly soaked up the blood pouring from the top of her shoulder. Men ran past with their bayonets cutting the air as more shells fell and blasted their camp to bits.

He still was sobbing into his blood and brain covered hands when the captain ordered him to the Franklin Pike. An hour later when Hood shifted positions, he was there. The Confederates charged from across the road firing clouds of bullets. One of the missiles caught his buttocks nicking the sciatic nerve. Waves of hot, searing pain ran down his crippled limb. His escape ended in the trench he was digging. The rebels charged, and Charlie's thoughts turned to his dead love. He would be dead too but for the counterattack of William Jackson Palmer, a Pennsylvania Quaker, pacifist, and rabid abolitionist. Palmer's distaste for violence was forgotten in a red frenzy of sword and rifle shot.

A retreating soldier lifted Charlie from the battlefield and carried him to the surgeon's tent. The sour smell of cheese and burning meat mingled with the tang of spent ether. The blood from his wound had congealed in his pants, and while it had probably kept him from bleeding to death, the nurse could not tell where his uniform ended and flesh began.

Field hospitals functioned on speed, and the surgeon deftly cut away both flesh and wool to get to the wound. With a blood-crusting clamp, he dug into the young man's meaty butt and removed the slug of Confederate lead. The nurse then stitched him up like a torn shirt and covered his ass with the last of the clean bandages.

"I cleaned you up as best I could," said the nurse. "It'll be some time before those stains wear off."

He rubbed at the blots of blood, but the stains were set deep.

# THE LORD OF MAGGOTS

*Kade Miranda*

On a cold night, many years ago, when meager villages used to dot the landscape, we were huddled within the local inn away from the cold, telling stories about our legends of old. I remember one. It was told in hushed whispers by a young girl.

Dreams are peculiar, aren't they? Yet, many fail to realize that our dreams are not our own, overlooked by entities beyond human knowledge. Some say the girl was sacrificed to an ancient entity and became its agent. Others claim she was a Consort of the Devil. Sometimes, I have a hard time believing that any of it is true. Those who claim to have seen her possess little more than depraved minds and shaking paranoia. From where she came it mattered not, because her purpose was clear.

She appears in our dreams, but not usually seen for she favors those trapped in desperation and depravity. She presents a form of a young girl with purple eyes and a warm smile, whimsical and childlike; a little girl desiring friends. This is a deception, a ruse to gain their trust. In time, that trust is gained, and she tells them of her master. She offers them the one thing they desire most: the power to achieve their dreams. Yet, such an offer is not free. In return, she asks them a trinket of high value, not silver or gold but of sentiment. She claims emotions shape our dreams, more valuable than anything mined. Emotions make us human. She helps us because she cares for us. Such a price, for the fulfillment of our deepest dreams and desires, seems almost too low. Many take that deal, and regret it. Like magic, their fortune turns. This newfound position eventually corrupts them. They indulge in degeneracy and sin, but eventually she comes and demands payment.

Yet the debtor, in their arrogance, greed, or pride, would refuse, or resort to trickery. But it was too late, and the girl would laugh. The laughter, that sickening and dreadful laughter. It can make the most heinous murderer quiver like a dog. When it silences, the facade is dropped, and they can see her true form, a young woman with red skin and a serpent's tail. Her

purple eyes lose their pupils. Upon her head rests a pair of goat horns, and her smile is filled with the teeth of great cat. To them she proclaims:

“May the Lord of Maggots have his Feast!”

She vanishes into a silvery mist, and then the nightmares begin. Dreams of absolute terror fill the minds of the poor souls. Abhorrent images fill their minds and their screams describe our worst nightmares, possessing the gargantuan body of a scale less serpent covered by maggot-like appendages, filled with gaping maws full of teeth. It's adorned with the head of an eyeless dragon. Its presence never lasts. The wretches are enveloped in the mist and succumb to insanity, pleading, cursing, or chanting to Azthog the Lord of Maggots.

## YELLOWSTONE

*David Hoza*

They were going to Yellowstone. Chloe was elated they were staying in a pricey room in one of the ritzy lodges in the park. The plan was to leave Caribou safe and sound in the room, freeing them to explore the sights like a pair of love-struck teenagers. How was he supposed to know you had to book months in advance? It didn't seem like such a big deal. So they'd have to stay in primitive camping; hike a little ways in. Big whoop. They'd roughed it before.

"That's exactly what you always say," Chloe said. "Big whoop. Well it's a big whoop to me, you jerk. This is just the kind of shit you always pull, Frank."

"I don't see what the big deal is," Frank replied. "We've been camping before. I thought you enjoyed it."

"You're missing the point," Chloe yelled, with that wild-eyed look she always got when she flew off the handle at him, hands on her hips, ready to rip off his head. He was always missing the point. Elusively, Chloe never shared exactly what it was that he was missing.

"And what about the dog?" Chloe said, as if he was missing the obvious.

"What about the dog," Frank said, oblivious to whatever it was she was alluding. "Caribou comes with. He loves camping."

Chloe rushed to her laptop in a furor, clicking through several pages until she found what she was looking for. With that God damned look of satisfaction she always wore when she was proving something, she turned the laptop around, picked up her keys and headed for the door.

"I'll get the rest of my things while you and Caribou are enjoying Yellowstone," she said with taut satisfaction. "I've had enough of this. We're through."

Frank was blown away. “What about the dog?” he yelled as the screen door slammed.

“Keep it,” she yelled, never turning back. “You need it more than I do.”

“Bitch,” he yelled. She didn’t bother to reply.

Originally their plan was to travel from Bozeman—where they shared a one bedroom rental—down through Paradise Valley, up the Yellowstone River, entering the park through Gardiner. For weeks they’d shared spells of synchronized daydreaming, imagining themselves together, back in the swing of love, each photo-op a starburst of fresh, lovely enjoyment. They’d get an early start, stopping in Gardiner for a leisurely breakfast at the Yellowstone Grill. They’d sit out on the patio, enjoying the morning in style. Chloe was vegan and often they had a hard time agreeing on a place to eat, but the Yellowstone Grill had vegan options, to Frank’s relief. They could sit and watch the elk and bison on the other side of the river with one less point of contention. Entering the park through the North Gate, they’d stop at Roosevelt Arch for a few swanky selfies. Chloe was a pushover for that kind of thing.

Frank had been in the doghouse now for quite some time. Just when Chloe had about forgotten the last bone-headed thing he’d done (her phrase), he’d do or say something equally if not more offensive. Her beautiful face, with those high round cheekbones, succulent lips and dreamy brown eyes, would melt down from her pensive if hopeful ‘we’re almost back on track!’ look—the one he’d come to crave and relish—into her patent, stone cold look of disgust. Scorn and disappointment she could wear literally for days. He was banking on this trip to even things up; maybe even put him in the black.

He planned to surprise her with the hot springs where the Boiling River meets the chill waters of the Gardiner. Chloe loved hot springs, and Frank knew he’d score bonus points once they were there. She’d be totally stoked. To say the least, Frank had learned the hard way that Chloe was anything but easy to please in the months they’d spent since they first met, late one night at a rave in the Zebra Lounge. She didn’t make things any easier with her ‘figure it out, dumbass’ way of

telling him what was wrong. "What I've done wrong," he self-corrected ruefully.

From there they'd head to Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, check in, fool around, catch a nap then wander the park all afternoon. They'd hike and take pictures of themselves enjoying one another just like those first few weeks after they'd met. Later, when their adventure in Yellowstone was all but forgotten, he'd have proof to throw up at her whenever she claimed he didn't love her. He'd had it all planned out. All accept the reservation for the hotel room.

Mad at himself—and more than a little irritated at yet another of Chloe's histrionic episodes, he'd thrown everything he and Caribou would need into the pickup truck and took off for the Northeast Gate. Raging over the fact that he was now going without Chloe, the long way held out a greater chance for smothering any and all regret.

They spent all day driving over to Red Lodge, circling the Hell Roaring Plateau and the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, topping out on the Beartooth Highway just before dusk.

A sensational sunset would have been nice, but the smoke was so thick from wildfires burning in western Montana, the epic skyline seemed curtained by heavy rain. They camped in the back of the pickup just over the Wyoming border, where the first cold front of fall caught up with them. He and Caribou shivered all night. They entered Yellowstone through Cooke City early the next morning.

Frank hadn't bothered to read all the fine print on Chloe's laptop. Dogs must be kept on a leash, blah, blah, blah. Whatever. But when they got to the Silver Gate west of Cooke City, the park ranger handed him a sheet pertaining to travel through the park with dogs, covering the park's pet policies point by point. Dogs couldn't go on trails. Dogs couldn't go on the boardwalks. Dogs couldn't be off the roads or out of the campgrounds.

"It's as much for you and your dog's safety as it is for the wellbeing of the wildlife in the park," the ranger said.



The back of the handout recounted an infamous incident epitomizing the need for the park's rigorous policies. A man visiting the park had opened his car door to get a closer look at Yellowstone's famous hot pots, and his canine companion, a yappy Chihuahua, leapt from the car and ran off, vanishing into one of the steamy, hot, geothermal holes in the ground. Without hesitation, the man jumped in after the dog to save him, scalding himself all over with third degree burns. Authorities surmised the dog had died instantly. The man died soon thereafter. Strictly enforced, there was no elbow room in the park's policy.

Chloe had bailed on their trip—and apparently their relationship. Well he'd be damned if he didn't follow through. So here he was, stuck with Caribou, driving through one of the largest national parks in the United States.

They drove past Soda Butte creek, low and flowing gently, surrounded by young fir, pine and spruce. Somehow, the sight of it soothed him, even if short-lived. The road swung south under the long, arcing concavity of Barronette Peak, a stony fin soaring half a mile above the valley floor. Early that spring, he had tried to talk Chloe into cross-country skiing in Yellowstone, but found it all but impossible to get her out of her Cross Fit routine.

The road passed out of jagged, snow dabbled peaks into Soda Butte Canyon, and the widening expanse of the Lamar River valley beyond. Broad streambeds rambled back and forth in the valley, though water levels were seasonally low. Braided ribbons of gold glistened in the distance where the sun reflected off the waters. Sagebrush lined the entire valley floor to the hills rising in the distance, cottonwoods growing here and there in small groves next to the river.

Frank passed a couple who had parked their RV in a pullout. Sprawled in lawn chairs, they were warming themselves in the morning sun while eating bowls of hot cereal above the braids of the river. Fishermen geared up by the side of the road, dropping off one by one down to the river, scattering like flies knee deep along the tributary. Campground after campground displayed a sign reading "Full."

He'd planned their trip for the week after Labor Day, thinking most everybody would be gone. Apparently a whole lot of other people had the same idea. The Lamar River pullout was packed. Fishermen (and women?) threaded the watercourse up and back like a helix hovering over the wide, shallow gravel beds. A herd of something grazed laconically in the distance.

The valley kept opening up. A show-stopping herd of bison on the road attracted a throng of photographers, wielding gigantic telephoto lenses, loping along under the weight, crouching to shoot, piling up shoulder to shoulder so as to avoid getting in each other's way.

Antelope grazed in the near and far fields; bison lay scattered about. Frank pointed them out to Caribou. Riveted, Caribou whined plaintively, sniffing the air coming in through the window. Everywhere, people were lined up by the side of the road taking pictures. He and Caribou passed really big sage, spent lupine, rock outcrops and small groves of fir and pine; shaggier headed buffalo lazing in pools of bare earth, kicking up plumes of dust.

The wildlife viewing turnouts were brimming to the point that there was no place to pull over and get a glimpse of what everyone else was seeing. Traffic had snuck up on him. A chain of vehicles kept at his bumper like a cattle dog nipping at his heels, urging him to speed up, move on, or get out of the way. But there was no place to pull over! The road dropped sharply off the edge! And when he found a place he could have pulled out of traffic, it was too late. Labor Day was in the rearview, God damn it! Where were all these people coming from?

By early afternoon, what little enchantment he'd enjoyed had completely evaporated in the bare, browbeating sun. Frank fumed with frustration. Outside was a mere eighty-three degrees. Inside, the truck was heating up, the sun radiating through the windshield. With Caribou along, he couldn't really stop and get out and look around. He tried running out to the Tower Falls overlook, but by the time he got there—waiting while dozens took pictures of themselves in front of the falls, then running back—Caribou was lying prostrate in the front seat, breathing heavily. Frank let him out and gave him water.

Tying Caribou to the bumper, the dog soon crawled underneath the truck. "I'll only be a minute," Frank said to Caribou, as if the big, furry, black and white malamute understood anything he said. Frank ran into the Tower Falls store. Hats, jackets, t-shirts, mugs, rocks, walking sticks, miner's helmets—along with basic convenience store goods—surrounded him at every turn, making him claustrophobic.

He desperately needed to find something to appease Chloe. She hadn't texted him once since storming off. It was totally unlike her. Determined to wait until she texted, he was growing anxious. He'd learned that if he waited, she'd eventually text him, but he was beginning to worry. First thing she would go off on him; that much he knew. No idea how long it would take for her to simmer down. Frank grabbed an obscenely priced Chico Bag branded with the Yellowstone insignia, hoping that might help make amends. Coaxing Caribou out from under the truck, they set off towards the Roosevelt Lodge.

In a stall of the men's room at the Roosevelt Lodge, a colorfully enameled, embossed metal sign—vintage nineteen fifties—hung on the wall. Pictured was a young fisherman with an enormous grin under an equally large hat, his fly rod cocked, the fish jumping in the background. The caption read: Teach a man to fish, and he'll play with his fly all day. No doubt, Frank thought, taking a whiz.

Back on the road, Frank drove past the petrified tree, amazed at all the people swarming like ants. Someone in the Tower Falls store had said it was a hundred and three somewhere in Oregon. Ever more hot, he was glad for the moment he wasn't there, stuck in traffic.

From the road, Mammoth Hot Springs was nothing but a massive steaming hillside, bubbling over with mineral formations. Enthusiastic sight-seers crisscrossed to various points of interest upon an elaborate scaffold of boardwalks. Bands of tourists rode around in big Yellowstone taxis listening to their drivers carry on enthusiastically, hands writhing for emphasis.

Bad enough there was no place to park. Frank feared a ticket

or worse. Some zealous, ever-vigilant park ranger breaking a window in a fit of rage, charging him with a felony upon return for leaving a dog unattended in a scorching hot truck. That, or some naïve, ignorant passer-by, someone who didn't know how to mind their own business, narking on him even though Caribou was fine.

The road climbed a vista of rolling savannah, firs blanketing the north side of each depression. Beyond, they dropped into the dense forests along the west side. Frank thought back to the first book Chloe had given him. An avid reader, Chloe loved fiction. Frank was more a non-fiction kind of guy. He'd actually read quite a lot about Yellowstone, Jack Turner, Alston Chase and David Quammen among others, though he'd never made good on his urge to go. Chloe had shared her copy of *Wilderness Tips* with him, excited to hear what he thought. After a lukewarm attempt, he felt in the dark about Chloe as ever.

As the day wore on, the traffic grew ever more profane. It seemed the whole world had converged on Yellowstone in their vehicles to devour nature. Frank recalled a passage from ranger Ed, admonishing that automobiles be banned from national parks. "Let the people walk!" While the notion of walking through Yellowstone seemed absurd, it was no more ridiculous than sitting in traffic, passing the sights one after another in bumper to bumper procession. What little you could see from a car window.

The young pine forests in West Yellowstone looked remarkably healthy, providing an optimism few would have imagined twenty years before. Juxtaposed against the endless mountainsides of lush evergreen, the half hour wait at a full stop in an interminable line of traffic—rivaling anything Frank had ever seen. When the gridlock finally began to break free, he saw the holdup. Dozens of vehicles of all sizes and shapes had piled up in wait for a pilot car to guide them through. They meandered pitifully slow through miles of road construction, eliminating any possibility of leisurely sightseeing, spontaneously pulling over to indulge in the magnificent sights along the road...should any have occurred.

Frank and Chloe had gotten Caribou together. She was

enthralled with the idea of the two of them snuggling with the congenial malamute next to the fire. Now Frank had betrayed that he was a dog person, and Chloe it turned out behaved like a cat. Recently she'd given him a copy of *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. She said her mom had recommended it. He decided to use it to prop up the air conditioning window unit in the apartment. It was doing a good job. What was it with wilderness, national parks and love? Did you always have to take the ugly with the good and the bad?

By mid-afternoon he was so hot and frustrated, he thought he would blow a fuse. The cold air was out in the truck and it was hot as all get out even with the windows down, the breeze as they crept along like driving through a convection oven. Thirty bucks to drive two hundred fifty miles through a park you probably couldn't see satisfactorily in a lifetime, Frank thought to himself. It was like being stuck on a bad carnival ride, with nothing to do but wait for the exit. To pass the time, he started imagining what people were saying in their cars as they passed by.

"I can't wait to see Old Faithful!" he imagined one woman saying, her face animated by something she was sharing with the kids in back.

"I wanna see Mammoth Hot Springs!" a little boy screamed, bouncing up and down in the back seat of the family sedan, pointing at him through the window.

I wanna see her naked, he thought to himself, passing an attractive young woman on a bike. Loaded down with panniers, she probably had been camping and hiking in the park for weeks on end. She gave him a smile. A sign appeared on the side of the road. Caution. Wildlife are Dangerous. Do not approach. Right? He thought with wry humor. His thoughts flashed to the first night he took Chloe home. Bookish behind her black framed glasses, he could never imagine cycling with Chloe through Yellowstone. Why couldn't Chloe be more like him?

Since when had humans ever really been anything other than just another species of wildlife in the park, anyway? It was all just so much nature porn. America's best idea. Abbey had it

right. Keep the cars and the people out, or the very thing you came for would be utterly ruined.

Turning into Fire hole Canyon, passing National Park Mountain, Frank hoped a one way drive would get him out of this depressing, cynical slump. At the last minute, Chloe had gone stark raving mad. Of course, that wasn't the way she saw it. If anyone was to blame for their sudden breakup, after all their plans were set in stone, it was him. How could she leave Caribou behind? That was a shocker, bitter and sweet. Yellowstone would have been the perfect trip had she come along—and been good company.

Everything was always his fault. He thought of the last time they camped together, he lighting the fire, she picking a bouquet of wildflowers in the open field for their blanket, dinner at sunset. Then she'd suggested they go home and sleep in their own bed.

The Fire hole swimming area. Maybe he and Caribou could cool off there. Nope. No parking left there, either. The river looked like a city pool on a hot summer Saturday, teeming with swimmers. The rock formations looked as cool as the Fire hole's water. A stunning waterfall appeared, the rim crowded with photographers. Chloe was the one who took great pictures. Better luck next girlfriend.

Maybe Yellowstone had been created so tourists, flocking to national parks like bees to a hive, would leave Montana alone, Frank thought. So much of Yellowstone reminded him of Montana. The broad, clear, shallow rivers. Distinct rocky outcroppings. Forests and grasslands practically everywhere the eye could see.

Up on a large boulder, an attractive girl struck a pose for her boyfriend. He was calling the shots. Obviously bored at the stale cliché she was called upon to pantomime—hand over her eyes, looking out over the wild, Wild West—her eyes locked with Frank's as he drove slowly by. Her gaze followed him—wistfully?—until they could see each other no more.

The parking lot for Old Faithful was the size of a shopping mall's, and every bit as packed. Stuck in the flow of relentless

traffic, he felt like dumb Chevy Chase, caught in the turnabout in *National Lampoon's European Vacation*. Finally, he was forced out of the parking area, having to circle around the long way, like at the airport. Old Faithful was nowhere to be seen, and it was anybody's guess how long he'd have to wait while Caribou roasted in the hot afternoon sun, the Yellowstone police lying in wait ready to slap the heinous dog roaster in jail. Frank squirmed uncomfortably in the hot seat, feeling the jolt of a dull electric chair. He knew what would happen if women found the skeleton of a baked dog hanging in his closet. It would be the kiss of death.

Leave it to Chloe to abandon him high and dry on the eve of their departure, with nothing for comfort but lust and rage. And Caribou, if you could count that. He scratched Caribou gently behind the ears. So he forgot to reserve a hotel room. It wasn't the end of the world.

"That's the way it always is with you," she'd said. Everything was always like the hotel room. He was satisfied to fly by the seat of his pants, letting life take him where it would. Well, they were parting company, and she was getting out while the getting was good.

It wasn't like Chloe was the perfect girlfriend. She was always so melodramatic. Everything that wasn't just right blew up into a miasma of catastrophic proportion. He hated that about her. No wonder she'd been playing that damn Lucinda Williams song he hated so much lately. Every time he turned around there was that lanky southern voice drawing about a big chain around her neck, breaking down like a train wreck. Just like Chloe to confuse him by turning everything around.

Without even noticing, he'd entered what appeared to be a very large, very old stand of lodge pole pine. Their trunks were fatter than any he'd ever seen. Frank swooned as a seductive daydream erupted, wandering miles and miles beneath the stately trees, the absence of undergrowth as sublime as a park. He longed to sate himself the way he and Caribou did most Saturdays in the backcountry. But no, dogs had to stay on leash, on the pavement. Fuckers. He and Caribou would have to wait. "Sorry, Caribou," he said, scratching the malamute's

chin. Caribou seemed oblivious to the matter.

Frank skirted the West Thumb, but when he saw the view that came with it, he decided to turn back. Pulling into the half full parking lot, he stirred with the possibility that it was cool enough, late enough in the day that Caribou wouldn't roast in the truck. The Stones were playing on the mix he'd made for the trip, an old song that had been playing in the bar when Chloe first turned starry-eyed for him, high on ecstasy.

She would have loved this place. The deep, clear, bottomless abyss, the colorful steaming hot pots, rainbow rills of mineralized hot water streaming downhill into the lake. The long boardwalk down by the beach where all you could hear was the soft lapping of the waves, the lake so big it vanished on the horizon. It would have reminded her of home. Maybe she would have forgiven him here, as they walked hand in hand along the boardwalk, amid the foreigners, above the hot steaming ground. Just a kiss away, kiss away.

Of all things, the way Chloe would call to Caribou came to mind. She was always using the goofy nickname she'd given him. "C'mon, hotdogs and hound burglars," she'd always say. The breeze blew gentle and cool off the water, the waves lapping gently on the beach below the boardwalk. Frank stopped and turned towards the horizon, taking it all in.



# EDGE OF THE WORLD

*Shayla Ramsey*



## REVERSE GODZILLA

*John McDonough*

The day you left you said I never looked at you like I look at  
Godzilla

O.K.

point taken

but

I still look at you

I look at you like Godzilla looks at a big building or

Tokyo

which really should be enough

it used to be enough

but it's not

and this house is too big

and it's full of tapes that have already been watched

I've got no one to rewind them for me

this house is littered with them

I put the first tape in and started the thing in reverse

Godzilla wasn't knocking over buildings anymore

he didn't ruin anything at all he just sorta

fixed stuff

he built things

he picked up his feet and created life

he doesn't stomp on anything

I watched him help a giant bird back into the sky

I watched him breath a blue ray of light and

wham

a lighthouse

I think it was for us

I've been watching all night

his tender hand builds cities

I love Godzilla, and I love you

now I love reverse Godzilla too

so I gained him in losing you

but I would trade him for just one tape of us

I'd rewind it every day

## **IF/IN #92**

*Darren Demaree*

i do not sleep

on my belly

i do not sleep

i fall to crash

the same way

good music ends

too early

to dance

on the capital

# TEMPORARY

*Nichayla Sanchez*

everything can be made permanent  
even the sunrise will stay still if you drive the other way  
but you would miss how beautiful is it

where would I be  
watching  
where would you be  
driving

# ADIOS

*Shayla Ramsey*



## CONTRIBUTORS BIOGRAPHIES

### Gale Acuff's

Gale Acuff's poems have appeared in hundreds of journals. He has authored three books of poetry. Gale has taught university English courses in the US, China, and Palestine (where he teaches at Arab American University).

### Christina Avalos

Christina Avalos wants to live in a world where everyone is passionate about literature. As a child, she was spotlighted within her school district for winning a regional creative writing competition. In pursuit of her passion, she wrote a short story, "The Owl and the Stork" that was published in *Mt. San Jacinto's Flight* 2016. Upon graduating from ENMU, she hopes to complete a book containing her best works of poetry and prose.

### William Barrette

William Barrette is an English Major studying at Eastern New Mexico University. He has hopes of one day becoming a successful novelist for the fantasy genre, and to be a good man for the family he has now and the one he may have in the future. In his free time he loves to play or plan Dungeons and Dragons with his friends as well as spending time with his girlfriend Ashley Burke.

### Darren Demaree

Darren's poems have appeared, or are scheduled to appear in numerous magazines/journals, including *Hotel Amerika*, *Diode*, *North American Review*, *New Letters*, *Diagram*, and the *Colorado Review*. Darren is the author of nine poetry collections, most recently "Bombing the Thinker" (September 2018), which was published by *Backlash Press*. I am the Managing Editor of the *Best of the Net Anthology* and *Ovenbird Poetry*. He is currently living and writing in Columbus, Ohio with my wife and children.

### Holly Day

Holly Day's poetry has recently appeared in *The Cape Rock*, *New Ohio Review*, and *Gargoyle*. Her newest poetry collections are *A Perfect Day for Semaphore* (Finishing Line Press),

*In This Place, She Is Her Own* (Vegetarian Alcoholic Press), *A Wall to Protect Your Eyes* (Pski's Porch Publishing), *I'm in a Place Where Reason Went Missing* (Main Street Rag Publishing Co.), and *The Yellow Dot of a Daisy* (Alien Buddha Press).

### **Richard Dokey**

Richard Dokey's stories have won awards and prizes. They have been reprinted in many regional and national anthologies and texts. He has novels and story collections to his credit. "Pale Morning Dun," an earlier collection, published by *University of Missouri Press*, was nominated for the American Book Award and the PEN/Faulkner Award. "Fly Fishing the River Styx," his latest collection of short stories, was released in December.

### **Jonathan Ferrini**

Jonathan Ferrini is a published author who resides in San Diego. He received his MFA degree in Motion Picture and Television Production from UCLA.

### **Grant Guy**

Grant Guy is a Canadian puppeteer, stage designer, illustrator, and writer. Guy's poems have been published internationally. He has designed and directed all across Canada. He was the artistic director of "ADHERE + DENY" and currently is the director of "The Circus of Objects."

### **David M. Hoza**

David M. Hoza is a graduate of the Environmental Humanities master's program of the University of Utah. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Canary*, *Cine Cera*, *The Catalyst Magazine* and elsewhere. Dave spends much of his time traveling and writing about the West.

### **Adrianna Irizarry**

Adrianna, "Izzy", Irizarry has been writing seriously since she was fifteen years old. She took a break from it to join the Air Force, though came back around after she separated. She now attends ENMU in pursuit of an English degree to aid her career as a professional writer.

### **Scott Jessop**

Scott Jessop lives in the 135-year old, Midland Railroad station in Manitou Springs, Colorado. He is a corporate video and TV commercial producer, author, poet, and spoken word performer. Jessop's work has appeared in more than a dozen publications including the *Saturday Evening Post*, *The Red Earth Review*, *Penduline Press*, *Jitter Press*, *Bewildering Stories*, *300 Days of Sun*, and *Weber-The Contemporary West*.

### **Dane Karnick**

Dane Karnick grew up by the Colorado "Rockies" and lives north of Seattle. His poetry has recently appeared in *Poppo Road Review*, *Ekphrastic Review*, and *Bluepepper*.

### **Kyree Kaye Mackey (KKM)**

Kyree Kaye Mackey is from Hobbs, New Mexico. She loves all forms of creativity; her favorite being writing. Creating original songs, poems, and stories has been a hobby of her since the age of nine. She is attending ENMU as a Digital Filmmaking Major with a Creative Writing Minor.

### **John McDonough**

John McDonough Lives in North Dakota with his wife, two dogs, and lizard: John JR.

### **Trenna McKinley**

Trenna McKinley is a student at ENMU. She has always known that she wanted to be an artist, but she would have times when she would lose confidence in herself and lack motivation to do art. Trenna has always had a hard time expressing herself in my work. This painting, which shows me at peace with myself, was a turning point for me in my life as an artist.

### **Kade Miranda**

Kade Miranda is an ENMU student and majoring in History. He was born in Socorro, New Mexico, and always had a keen interest in the myths and legends of the pagan cultures of Europe.



### **Phillip Parotti**

Previously, Phillip Parotti has published three volumes of fiction as well as multiple short stories and essays in little magazines. Now retired from a long teaching career at Sam Houston State University, he resides in Silver City, New Mexico where he continues to write and work as a print artist.

### **Shayla Ramsey**

Shayla Ramsey is from New Mexico, but has lived in Oregon and visits the coast often. She is a mother of two and has been in law enforcement for 5 years. Her hobbies include: photography, traveling, hiking and painting. She is currently pursuing a life of happiness.

### **Valerie Ruberto**

Valerie Ruberto is a student at Tufts University. She is originally from Montvale, New Jersey. Her poems have appeared in *Rind Literary Magazine* and *Viewfinder Literary Magazine*.

### **Nichayla Sanchez**

Nichayla Sanchez is a biology student at ENMU. She is currently working on being happy with her life. She loves her brother dearly.

### **Tyne Sansom**

Tyne is originally from Canada but grew up in Maine. He met his wife in culinary school in Vermont and they have four children now. Tyne was formally a chef for over 10 years in Maine and Vermont. His interests are cycling and spending time with his family. He is currently a graduate student at ENMU.

### **John Walser**

John Walser is an associate professor of English at Marian University-Wisconsin. He holds a doctorate in English and Creative Writing from UW-Milwaukee. His poems have appeared in numerous journals, including *Spillway*, *Mantis*, *the Normal School*, *The Pinch*, *December magazine*, *the Superstition Review*, *Dressing Room Poetry Journal*, *Sequestrum* and *Lumina*, as well as in the anthology, *New Poetry from the Midwest 2017*. A Pushcart nominee as well as

the recipient of the Lorine Niedecker Poetry Award, John is a three-time semifinalist for the Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry. He is currently submitting three full-length manuscripts for publication: *19 Skies*, which was a finalist for the Trio Prize from Trio House Press (2016); *Chronoscopes*; and *Edgewood Orchard Galleries*, which was a finalist for the Autumn House Press Poetry Prize (2016) as well as a semifinalist for both the Philip Levine Prize (2016 and 2017) and the Crab Orchard Series First Book Award (2017 and 2018).

### **Caleb C. Washburn**

Caleb CW grew up in Floyd NM. He lives in Portales with his' fiancée and is a current student at ENMU, pursuing a bachelor's degree in biology. He is a father and hopes to be an accomplished writer in the future.

### **Cody Wilhelm**

Cody Wilhelm is a freshman at ENMU and is a part of the Football team, a member of the Kappa Sigma fraternity, and participates in Desperate Optimist English club. Cody was born and raised in Lubbock, Texas and started writing poems 4 years ago; Cody is an English major pursuing his Bachelor of Arts and plans to complete the entirety of his education at ENMU.

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