

# RAINY DAY



Dear *Rainy Day* readers, fellow travelers, enthusiasts, and hangers-on,

On these pages, you will find a world in its entirety, containing simplicity and complexity, movers and shakers: A collection of some of the finest poetry and fiction from undergraduate students in the United States. Although our authors come from a vibrant assortment of backgrounds, and have woven their writing with the unique flavors of their lives, they all share one common feature in their unending passion for art.

As our last Editor-in-Chief, Ally Findley, said in our previous issue, it's been a tough year. Hard questions are being raised about identity, humanity, and what it means to be a citizen of the world. Amidst this turmoil, our editorial staff have approached the creation of this magazine with dauntless vigor, reaffirming the place of creative endeavors, reminding us that our words matter. The printed book in your hands would not—could not—exist without them.

Additionally, I owe Ally and our previous-previous Editor-in-Chief, Mark Kasvin (Class of 2016), a great deal for their patience, guidance, and friendship in mentoring me as I took over the monstrous task of running a literary magazine. I'd also like to thank Madeline Day, our incoming Managing Editor, for her enthusiastic help in *Rainy Day* matters even as she studied on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

So thank you, dear reader, for picking up this issue of *Rainy Day*. I hope you'll find an idea, a phrase, an image that speaks to you, that sustains you long after you've walked away. It's entirely our privilege to share the writing of these incredible authors, and we're honored that they chose *Rainy Day* to showcase their work, which is more vital now than ever.

Best wishes, and happy reading,

Katherine Xie  
Editor-in-Chief  
*Rainy Day Magazine*  
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# RAINY DAY

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## PLANT IDENTIFICATION

Kimberly June Blacutt

*Quercus ruber*

I took a yearlong plant identification class called “Creating the Urban Eden,” during my second year. Every week, this class toured campus with clipboards and pencils. One week I learned to differentiate sixteen different species of oak, though there were only slight differences between them. During the weekly quizzes, the professor would gesture towards different types of plants and we’d scribble down their common and botanical names.

I have never been a plant person. I’m allergic to grass and I have never really paid that much attention to plants before. I used to classify vegetation in groups like flowers, trees, bushes, or grass. But now there’s so much more. When the class began I wondered what species the tree outside my dormitory window was. It’s an English Oak.

*Vitis spp.*

The bluish and purple and red bruises were already forming on my neck and my arms and my chest the morning after. My alarm woke us. I had set it because I had been invited to go on a wine tour that morning. It was October 4th. I couldn’t quite recall how it was that I had awoken in such conditions. I had to hurry back to my dorm to get dressed, and stop by the pharmacy as well. I wore a black turtleneck and sparkling blue earrings. The black turtleneck did a good job at hiding the bruises, and it matched nicely with the cream colored skirt I wore with it. I don’t know how much I drank on that wine tour, just that I drank until I couldn’t anymore, until I threw up in the yellow school bus that was driving us around that Saturday. I remember waking up at around 8pm and walking home, feeling hungover and confused, and feeling sore too. I undressed to shower and saw my bruises again. I stared at them in the mirror and sort of began to realize what had happened to me the night before. I missed my plant quiz that week, and a bunch of other stuff too. A few weeks later my TA gave me make-up quiz and when she flashed the images of bluish and purple and red fruit, I wrote “13. *Vitis spp.* – Common Grape.”

*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*

The exterior of the plant science building is fittingly covered with creeping plants. On Monday nights I would go there to study. In the classroom, limbs of the current week’s plants are placed into pots that are spread out along two long tables. I would make sketches of their leaves, their bark, and the shape of their buds. I would study

the plants late at night, so I'd usually be the only person there. Under the fluorescent white lights and amongst the green vegetal matter, I remember feeling isolated.

*Betula papyrifera*

When I speak to my parents over the phone I tell them things like, "School is fine, and a lot of work," or "I watched a cool movie at the cinema," or "This week I am studying birch trees, and my favorite is the paper birch because it's tall and has pretty white bark." They tell me things like, "We're glad to hear you're doing well" and "We're looking forward to seeing you soon."

I haven't told them anything about that night because I don't think they'd like to hear about something like that. I want them to think I'm happy. I know it makes them happy.

*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*

The botanical name for the Alaska cedar is *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*. My professor tells us it's easy to remember because the tree branches are drooping and sprout out in strange directions in such a way that it looks as though the tree has just been "nuked." It's sort of true, and I like the look of the tree. It looks strong to me; perhaps it's been nuked, but it's still standing and thriving.

It took me a whole week to tell someone about it. And by that time I only had one bruise left, on my arm, down to half of its original size. The nurse waited for me to explain why I had come and as the words finally came out of my mouth I burst into tears.

*Bougainvillea ssp.*

We learnt to identify over two hundred species of "woody plants" during Urban Eden. When I went home for break, I inspected the garden in my backyard, trying to identify the plants, but I only knew one of them, and I hadn't learned it at school.

I have always been fond of the pink, purple, and red buganvillea flowers climbing up the wooden pillars of the pergola. On the weekends my uncles and aunts, and my grandparents, and my cousins all come over for a weekend barbeque, and we eat under the pergola. The Andean sky is always beautiful and blue.

*Phoenix canariensis*

Canary Island Date Palm. The dress I wore that night was orange with a palm tree print on it. It was torn that night I wore it. The next time I wore it was almost one year later. I asked Meghan, who knows how to sew, if she could fix it for me. She said yes, and she did. She never asked me how it broke. I never told her. I wore it again on a date in mid-September. It was a good date.

## CHORES

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Brian Wiora

Tea does not stir itself.  
Either I pick up the spoon  
or an earthquake rattles  
the table. This is how  
motion works. I turn  
counterclockwise, twist  
milk into a cup of water.  
The kettle purrs, the cat  
meows from the other room,  
a sound my mother hears,  
complains about. Motion  
is a form of sound. I tap  
the corner of the cup  
with metal, it's too late  
for caffeine my mother  
says. She's concerned  
about me. She worries,  
I excuse myself from the table  
to the litter box, full of time  
spent away from her. I am  
not the only one brewing  
and I'm sorry is the kind  
of sound that earthquakes  
make, shakes the cabinets,  
breaks glass displayed on shelves.  
Boiling water overflows,  
do I clean it up? Does it hold  
me back? A whistle replies,  
more chores to do. I'm going  
to sleep she says, a form  
of stirring, counterclockwise.  
Stirring is a form of sound  
and motion. Is this earthquake  
a good thing? The cat hisses,  
my mother sleeps deeply.  
I wonder what they know

about the way I move. Motion  
is a form of love. I love  
my cat, I concern my mother,  
I've stirred the tea myself.



## HERITAGE

### Brian Wiora

You were born to fix your father's mistakes.  
 To live like Sphynx, Barsik  
 or Manx.  
 But you were always  
 more of a dog person,  
 and you have never been  
 your father.

No, he did not have eight other lives.  
 He had two children  
 that you knew  
 of. He threw you footballs  
 on an empty golf course,  
 watched your hempen feet  
 chase after fireflies.

He thought he lived the good life.  
 There was always enough  
 for him to consume. Food  
 and wine, beer and whiskey,  
 other women. He thought that  
 no one knew.

You have not called him in months.  
 And the dog you grew up  
 with just died. And you've had  
 a sip of whiskey while the moon  
 washed your own mistakes  
 in dying light.

## LOSING MOUNT FUJI

Meghan Gunn

She never checked her mailbox. That was always your job, but it was only ever full of overdue notices and junk mail. There were lots of things she never did. She never flossed or watched the news or had a job with good healthcare benefits. She never really had a job at all, except for stints wiping down elliptical machines at the Planet Fitness on Maple. She always got fired, but never for long—the boss, Wilson, had a soft spot for her, which creeped you out. Sometimes late at night, a little high, she liked to climb the tree in back of her apartment building, and she never jumped down before saying thank you to the tree. She never let you come down until you did it too. The sentence, “Thank you, tree,” felt ridiculous coming out of your mouth. She never read a book without looking at the last page first, never read past chapter three. Her apartment was a cluttered array of thrift store items that never quite found their place, except for one print framed on the peeling yellow wallpaper—“Boy in a Tree” from the Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji series. She never walked down every stair on any staircase, but always skipped a few to get that fleeting feeling of falling through space. She was fascinated by space, especially outer, and whenever she had too many glasses of cheap wine she’d scream that she only wanted to have sex with the moon—you didn’t like that—and laughed the laugh of a loon. Like the loon you heard that summer.

That summer, when she saw an Emerson quote on a napkin at Java Joe’s and her horoscope said to try something new. She said you would look better with a beard. So you took 55 North and, like a miracle, found a ramshackle cabin for lease on a brown patch of grass. You bought her the Dakine hiking pack, last season’s reject on clearance, an ugly mustard yellow. You bought it because you didn’t have any money, but she assumed you felt bad for the forgotten thing. It was the thing she said she loved about you, that you wanted to find a place for forgotten things. She threw her arms around your neck and you let her believe this. You didn’t protest or deny, even though you felt a little guilty, because you can’t disappoint broken people and you sure as hell can’t turn down sex meant only for the moon. That night she fell asleep wearing just the backpack, nothing else. She was gone when you woke up, disappeared for three days, and every night you pressed your ear against the broken cabin window, trying to hear if it was her or the loon howling up at the silver splattered sky.

You realized some things when you were left alone with the loon—your chestnut hair was graying, you could fasten one extra hook on your belt buckle. You considered vitamins and probiotics. You considered meditation. You considered leaving her. But then one night during a downpour she threw open the cabin door, cheap mascara streaming down her face. And she said she would never leave you

alone with the loon again, and you wanted to believe her so badly that you did.

Then things were good for a while; as good as they could be. You went back to the city. You made a home together, and thrift store items found their place tucked against neat floral wallpaper in a little bungalow on South Grand. “Boy in a Tree” was lost in the move. You had a real job, one of those where no one knew what you did exactly. You weren’t really sure yourself. But you learned to fasten a tie and do the things you’re supposed to do. The trees changed colors although you didn’t climb them anymore, and there were less real “thank-you”s and more tired “honey...”s, but you were stable even without the old oak’s roots to hold you down. Her eyes were a little glazed, like the windows of the foggy truck where you first said those three words so long ago. You were happy now. You felt like nothing had been forgotten.

She never cried except that one time she was late, ten and a half days late to be exact, because how could she take care of a child when there was never anything but Cocoa Krispies in the cupboard? She couldn’t, she knew this much. You wondered if maybe you could. It never mattered anyhow. When it finally came, you said maybe it was better this way. She threw a chipped china plate at your head and said maybe the Cocoa Krispies would’ve been OK, maybe the baby would’ve fucking loved Cocoa Krispies.

She never left notes and this time was no exception, although you scoured the apartment for weeks afterwards, even looking under the knickknacks on the bookcase. You didn’t call the police because she wasn’t really missing—maybe she’d never been there to begin with. Wilson called—the machines had gone grimy down at Planet Fitness. You told him you didn’t know when she’d be back. She’ll be back, though, you assured him.

Years later you saw a news story on TV—the remains of a thirty-something woman found on the western slope of Mt. Rainier.  
No identifying documents.

Almost at summit.

## A SEAT TO BE SAVED

Sara Parolin

Even through the rain  
your regality radiates—  
shoulder gnawed,  
your upholstery is consumed  
by the pinks, blues and greens  
of your frolicsome floral skin.

O beautiful seat,  
who stole your cushion?  
Exposed—  
your wooden skeleton peeps  
through your gashes,  
and your innards  
are unveiled, rickety

in the breeze;  
your recline is precariously squawky,  
as if you are crying  
for help. Orphaned, longing  
for a new pair of cheeks to cradle.  
Resilient recliner, whom do you throne?

Not yet a loveseat, but one day  
you will find your queen.  
Stain and must dim your grace,  
offering the untold stories of your previous heir—

until you find home, on rainy days  
I ache for you, the abandoned armchair.

## A SICK MAN

Pablo Llambias

A corporeal hand, which I later realized was my own, lay gingerly on my thigh, contouring the flesh of my leg and reaffirming its presence. My feet were planted firmly on the ground beneath me, until they weren't and I had instead committed to a crossing of the legs posture, which I might have thought would imply a more casual attitude, lest the official person think I was being too serious. She, the official person, was wearing what one might call a sharp outfit; a monochromatic suit embroidered with the company letters above her left breast. I guess she felt powerful. As soon as I had entered the room, she had ordered me to relax, and I came close to shuddering, then became nervous that I may have visibly winced, and thus proceeded to have a session of severe heart palpitations, worsened by my propensity to sweat in large amounts.

By the time I had realized that the way to portray a sense of comfort and relaxation was to bring my right leg over my left leg and lean back slightly, I had beads of perspiration working across my wrinkled forehead, occasionally dripping down into the contoured crease on the left side of my nose, leaving me with the constant uncomfortable decision as to whether I should wipe them away or let them swelter, pretending not to notice.

I was apparently interviewing for some position or another, either as some executive white-collar wise guy guru in their corporate finance sector or else as an overqualified cashier-trainer, whereby I would possibly teach the keys to being an invisible cog to aspiring students with a penchant for hard work or benevolent single moms or disabled folk with good hearts or racist middle-aged men who blame illegal immigrants for their current situation. This is to say, I was not with it. Now, realizing that I did not know what exactly I was interviewing for, the situation started to emerge as downright hairy.

After an impossibly long silence during which she pulled up some sort of document on an ostentatiously shiny desktop, we exchanged handshakes—I approached with palms up in an effort to show subservience, or my belief in feminism, or something—and resumed our respective positions. She complimented me on my wrinkled and disheveled button down shirt, I thanked her. I was then informed that I was—to a degree defined by certain scholastic entities—intelligent, as I had received a prestigious diploma of which I may or may not have been aware. Thinking better of asking if this meant I had graduated university or if it was a participation diploma, I instead thanked her again. I think, at this point, I was acting the part well. My hand was now twitching slightly, vibrating arrhythmically.

We proceeded. I was asked, naturally, why I wanted this job. I didn't realize this was a job, I thought. I am in an interview, I said. No I didn't, but I did think and

then I did say. Confusion sets, and was setting. She repeated again, why do you think that you would like to think about being a part of this workforce. Force—see, I never use force, so now I am guessing I am being attacked. Now as I said, my hand was on my thigh and now I realized I had a hand, and a thigh. Proprioception, that was something I had been losing for a long time. I said, I was told that I should want this job, therefore I want it because I know that I think that I should know that I want this job. I see and saw a pause in her at this moment, and now and then and now I notice her eyes, that she has eyes and they are looking, or casting, at me or onto me or into me. She says, did you hear what you just said?

A joke! It was a joke I say, so because I said that now I understand how to talk; she laughs, maybe, tells me I am funny. Sweat, sweat, sweat, I finally decide to wipe, and then she sees, she sees me. But I know she doesn't really, but now I want her to know. I am in an altered state, I try to think and then say and then I do say what I wanted to say.

Good! We need more thinkers that, she speaks, like think outside a box.

I cannot tell if she has misspoken on purpose. Regardless, I must make her understand that she doesn't understand that I am very altered, striated. I tell her, I am self-medicated, I medicate myself when I need to be medicated; I do it with illegal substances and sometimes legal ones, I tell her that I am an addict, that I have and have had and will have an addiction, that I am not fit to be working this job but that I am apparently physically fit, and I tell her that I am not healthy, that I only understand details, details. I tell her I am a sick child, 39 years old.

Sir, she says, your qualifications speak for themselves, and your intellectual mannerisms are truly unorthodox. You are the type of person we need!

Now, my left hand is contorted in a tense, spider-like weave, gripping itself and clawing at its own insides. I look down and then I look downward as in I look in a downward spiral spiraling down; I look and I see a notepad which I was looking at, hoping to save myself through a past self. Notepad says, titled this morning, says:

*I drink 4 beers when I wake up to soothe my cataclysmic hangovers brought on by severe dehydration and a propensity to view the world in a fatalistic manner, especially at night. During these nights, I consume on average: 3 gin and tonics, 6 whiskeys, neat, and a bottle of red wine, usually priced in the 8-10 dollar range. I drink on an empty stomach, purposefully, to get as intoxicated as possible. I state this because I must be open about my weaknesses, or my virtues; I also am a proponent of the use of illegal drugs, mostly psychedelics, but no opiates. I have, on several occasions committed self-harm, usually preferring to pass the blade of a serrated knife that has gone a bit dull in a perpendicular manner across my left arm, mostly.*

I read this and read it and then say it, to the official person, is who I say it to.

She says they would welcome my refreshing sense of self-awareness and integrity.

Shaking, shaking, I feel an earth quaking earthquake quake and I am quivering or I am a quiver. I think that proprioception is what I have lost, and I have told her this, but she doesn't understand. I see that I have told her that I cannot, but she won't, won't let me. I say, I say, I look at my notepad and say what is on the notepad and I say:

*As for my opinion on this company, I believe it is downright diabolical. It is through institutions such as yours that the denigration of any sort of human spirit that individuals may have occurs. You are proponents of this charade of a game that forces us into blindness and a backwards, reductionist way of thinking, in which efficiency and the production and consumption of goods is placed in higher priority than the attunement of the heart, the soul, the whatever that is inside us that is not blind, that does see. I hope you do not rationalize and dismiss me as a druggie, a hippie; I have graduated from what you call a "highly regarded" university, whose values I at one time admired, but even it has been corrupted. I beg of you change, or at least a release. I tell you that, we are not all wrong but live in a place that strips our souls and granulates them, makes us laugh at the completion of a process that ultimately we feel we can blame only on ourselves, because that self-identity and self-determination that we idealize so much is the perfect cover for the murder of the human conscience, of emotions so raw they seem grotesque, yet so nuanced they feel almost self-indulgent. I tell you that, a story is what we tell to ignore that this is a phantasmagoria with no true pattern, that we go in circles cursing the day when our regrets caught the tail of our hopes, and concocted it into a callous deprivation so as to live in a state of thirst while few know we are even thirsty; to let those who feel the thirst scream in anguish and cry in rage, to make cynics of the ones good-hearted, and to make good people lose belief in virtues, and for virtues to be correspondingly labeled as a farce. I tell you that, in this world, everything is wrong and it is right, and both are hell. I beg of you, let me waste away, away from here.*

She says, sign here, and I do sign what she says I must sign when she tells me that signing is a must that I must do, as in I should and could and would sign, and I do. I sink.

## TEN WAYS OF DYING ON A TRAIN

Andrew Older

### I

A hunk of metal swimming through the sky; it groaned softly as it struggled through the dizzying twists and turns of a river valley. From the comfort of a window seat the hills seemed to tumble over each other in the early moonlight; the faint outlines of trees changed colors in the reflecting glimmer of riverlight; starlight trickled slowly through the vast machinery of sky and bounced off the silver of the cars. It passed by small, sleepy towns, quiet and still as if in prayer, begging for the sun to rise in the morning. It passed by abandoned steel mills, lonely playgrounds, empty baseball diamonds and basketball blacktops, death and life, pain and joy, everything that was, is, and will be. A speck of light against an infinite canvas of black, a starving worm crawling through the dirt above, a shooting star grounded to a track, a hunk of metal swimming through the sky.

### II

Jon had never been able to read on the train. Every night he tried, not wanting to waste an hour-long commute by just sitting and waiting. Jon was an important man. Jon was a busy man. And busy, Jon knew, meant good. At the very least, when Jon was busy, he didn't have to be alone with his thoughts, thoughts encountered rarely in fear of what they might say. In the shower, Jon listened to the radio; at work, Jon talked aloud to himself; on the train, Jon tried and failed to read, put in his headphones and sang along in his head. But today he had forgotten his headphones. And the thoughts came tumbling in like an exponential stampede. They assaulted Jon from every direction, from every conceivable origin, in every imaginable scenario. Jon felt like crying. Dark thoughts, evil thoughts, lonely thoughts. Alas, the paper! Jon picked it up as refuge and almost vomited from motion sickness. Jon had never been able to read on the train.

### III

It looked nice, she thought, the way the moon snuggled into the warmth of a cloud.

She woke up every morning before the sun and caught the 3:53 bus to the train depot. Sometimes she wondered who drove the bus driver to the bus depot, but it never seemed entirely important. She was the first one there, so she turned on all the lights, made the coffee, made sure all the schedules were in their proper places, and tidied up before everyone else stumbled groggily in. Was she happy? She wasn't sure. It was certainly better than her twenties, an age crippled by crack and punctured



fate. But her only friends were fellow conductors, and they were more acquaintances than companions. She hadn't felt the touch of a man in years. And she had forgotten what her smile looked like. But today something was different; the way the moonlight caressed the soft, feathery bed of water alongside the track, the way the brown, aged leaves swayed gently like an empty swing in the wind, the way she felt connected to something bigger than herself, something cosmic, grand and wonderful pulsating with her soul. It made her smile, a smile that looked back at her through the reflective window pane. It looked nice.

#### IV

"Please stop," Jane pleaded to her son. He had stood up on his seat, shouting nonsense, flinging his arms in patterns only a six year old could understand. Some passengers ruffled their newspapers angrily, others muttered with disgust, but most looked away, indifferent.

"James, you need to listen to Mommy."

"No I don't!"

"If you sit down, I'll drive you to McDonald's when we get home." James eyed his mother inquisitively, then plopped down into his seat and shut right up. Of course, there wouldn't be a McDonald's trip when they got home. But she was better at mothering without the judging stares of strangers.

The visit to her sister's apartment had been nice, but mostly it reminded her of things she had given up when she decided to have a kid. At first being a mother was rewarding, but when Harold died, James became a symbol of loss. And she hated herself for that.

Do you even love him? she often thought to herself. How could she have these thoughts? Mothers were supposed to love their children unconditionally. I love him, she thought. I love him. I love him.

But you don't really love him, the voices sang. She pleaded: 'Please stop.'

#### V

His hand quivered and his face felt flush. Beads of sweat ran down his forehead, through the maze of stubble, hung delicately on the precipice of his chin and collapsed down toward some abyss. His legs shook and his eye twitched. This was it, the culmination of what seemed like everything he had ever done. Why wasn't he ready?

His bride-to-be was waiting, a queen enshrined in his heart. He knew she'd say yes; he had overheard her talking to friends about it. But he was more nervous than words could express. He turned the ring box over and over in his hands. The outside felt smooth, soft like a blanket. Inside, two months worth of salary pushed together into one big diamond symbol of his love. He checked his phone, trying to distract himself. He loved her more than life itself; for some reason, though, he never wanted this train to reach her home. He didn't know if he could do it. In fact, he

didn't know what he was doing with his life. But who did?

He was a heavy man, by some standards an ugly man, a black man, a lower middle-class man. Wherever he went, he was used to preconceived notions of who he was, who he was supposed to be, who he could become. But Deborah saw him for who he was, independent of another's gaze. No one else looked at him the way she did. She made him believe in his own sense of worth. She made him proud and humble, beautiful and smart, valuable and loved. She made him him.

He smiled. Pull yourself together, he whispered. You're about to change your life forever. He opened the box and saw that glimmer of silver explode from within. The moon looked full and regal in the winter ocean of sky. He felt a pain in his chest. Down his left arm. His hand...

## VI

She couldn't believe it; after months of abuse, months of locking herself in the bathroom, months of hiding bruises with makeup, months of anxiety over the smallest mishaps, she had finally done it. Hopefully that rotting piece of fucking garbage died with grief.

A small duffel bag lay messily at her feet. She brushed some hair out of her eyes and handed the smiling conductor her ticket. She stared out the window, still in a state of disbelief. Soon snow began to fall, lightly, like a powder sprinkled on pastries, and the earth was covered with a blanket of white. Those falling crystals seemed to dance with flourishes as they descended into the river's embrace; the river seemed to gulp up those watery minnows like a great big whale. The pine needles of evergreens vibrated when nature took a breath, and everything seemed peaceful. But nothing ever was. Humans were such terrible creatures.

To freedom, she repeated over and over again. But parts of her knew nothing else than abuse and subjection. She felt anxious with the dizziness of her freedom. Maybe she could go back? He was terrible, a monster, an evil sociopath, a symbol of everything wrong with humanity. But he was also a constant. And she knew that part of him loved her in his own way. Yet how could she return to that?

The train entered a tunnel and she closed her eyes. Platitudes are pointless; there's never any light at the end of life's tunnels. The sooner one realizes that the absence of light is the presence of light, the sooner one can salvage some false illusion of happiness. A solitary tear escaped from her eye and trickled slowly down a black and blue cheek. She would get off on the next stop and return home. She couldn't believe it.

## VII

Ben loved to sleep on trains. He closed his eyes and nodded off into a dreamless slumber. Ben loved to sleep on trains.

# VIII

He sipped his water carefully, but drops of water still fell onto his chest. Mario was 83, and nothing could be done easily anymore. But Mario woke up every morning with a glimmering smile. God was good, Mario knew, and everything had its purpose.

Today marked the tenth anniversary of his wife's death. Her body lay peacefully under a cherry blossom tree; her soul reclined gracefully with God. Every year since her death, Mario brought a full picnic to that cherry blossom and spent that day talking to her spirit. He would lay out the quilt she had knitted so lovingly, unpack the sandwich she always used to make for him (he butchered it, or course, but that wasn't the point), uncork a bottle of wine, and lay supine under the pink explosions of flower blossoms.

"I went to the hardware store yesterday," he would begin. "I saw Leslie. Remember Leslie? You never liked her, hahaha! I always thought she was cute, but I would never admit it. Hahaha! Oh, and last week I finally started learning bridge. What a game! You'd have hated it, hahaha! But I think I'm finally starting to understand some strategy!"

"Excuse me, sir," a young, tired, smiling conductor said. "Ticket, please."

"Here you go, ma'am. Have a wonderful night."

She smiled. "You too."

Mario stretched and felt every bone in his body. Being old wasn't too bad when you grew accustomed to a certain style of living. And soon he'd be with his wife and with God. Mario smiled. From the spring of eternal happiness and hope he sipped.

# IX

He held the manuscript in his lap and closed his eyes. This was it; he was done, done with opening himself up, done with the artificiality of something supposed to be genuine. He was done. But he wasn't really. Ian had been a writer his entire life and knew nothing else (although it was hard to call him a writer; at 43 he still had yet to get something published).

Each rejection was harder than the last. To write the way he did, to fill your heart with ink, pour it out onto paper and let the paint brush of your soul craft something wonderfully personal, this made everything he wrote an extension of himself. And each rejection was by extension a rejection of who he was. Gradually his soul had been beaten to a such an extent that he wasn't sure there was anything left to lose.

I'm worthless, he thought. I'm a shitty writer. I write words on paper and when I read them back it's all shit. Fucking garbage. My entire life has been devoted to writing and all of my creative work is forgettable. I'll never have a fucking legacy, alright? Why does it matter what I fucking do if it's all fucking forgettable. It's...it doesn't fucking matter.

And then, by extension, I'm a shitty person. I'm fucking garbage. I - I'm forgettable.

His stop was coming up. He breathed deeply and tried to compose himself. The gun lay hidden somewhere in his sock drawer. He wouldn't need to write a note because, just like all of his other written work, no one would read it. He wasn't afraid of death. Life is tenuous, and convictions dissolved into nothingness, convictions he never knew he held.

## X

It would be glorious.

The pressure cooker bomb was in his backpack.

The train began to slow down.

It was time.

He walked over to the front of the train and pressed the button.

It would be glorious.

## XI

The metal wheels scraped against the rails as the train pulled into the station. Police cars were waiting, their sirens screaming into a bone-chilling night. When the train finally stopped and some exhaust billowed out like a pyramid of clouds, I could swear the the metal walls seemed more relaxed, the dirty windows more at ease, the flickering lights less paranoid. But it was probably just me.

The man had stood up with his backpack held over his head and yelled something about glory; then a seizure hit him like a ton of bricks and two strangers had to hold his neck so he wouldn't hurt himself. We looked in his backpack and found it empty. Initially, some people were terrified when he first stood up on his seat and began shouting. But I knew better; I've ridden the train so many times that Jesus Christ himself appearing out of thin air wouldn't phase me.

They took the man off on a stretcher and that was that. Most of the other passengers got off as well; there were only two more stops after this, and one of them was the train depot. There was a tired-looking man with a loosened tie, a mother lovingly holding her sleeping child, and a million other faceless faces I'd forget within minutes. But just before the doors closed, a middle-aged woman leaped onto the car with a weird, nonchalant grace and sat down in the opposite aisle seat.

"And then there were two," she said with a laugh as she took off her scarf and closed her eyes.

But there would never be two. I knew it would always be me.

The train was warm, warmer on colder nights for some reason. I snuggled into the leather seat that an infinite number of people before me had sat on and closed my eyes. I rode the train because it was warm, warmer than the streets. Everything on the train was warm. Even the metal.

# ARABESQUE IN TACTICAL BOOTS

Joe Lozano

Her body froze in cambrè,  
A crescent moon  
In the sky above the Capitol,  
In suspension like plastic horses in the park,

Merry-go-round the midnight carousel  
Illuminated autumn leaves caught mid-air;  
Paratroopers over Normandy advance the battalion and  
New season breaches the sidewalk.

Lamina and stem wear the wounds of a Tuesday in November and  
Mild breezes carry the fallen to shore,  
They ebb onto the dew-tipped lawn  
And sink deep beneath footsteps in reverse,

Rubber stiff souls that support fantasies of greatness  
On grounds that have never been; the sea roars in  
Rebellion against a fourth reich, waves crash upon the streets and  
The spirits of Omaha join with those Trumped and trampled

Like the dirt beneath soldiers' feet en pointe,  
Trenches born from landmines scattered domestically,  
Protesters pirouetting across the battlefield  
Plowed by stolen hands on taken land by a supremacy

Whose legacy is the shepherd of history.  
Whose flock stampede the borders.  
Whose wool clothes the compliant and

Whose hooves prance on graves behind reservation lines.

Dakota calls for the wolves to unbury the pipes  
And stop the Flint faucets from breathing fire  
Into the glasses of the thirsty and scared,  
Revolution in promenade

Like a ballerina in a music box without sound,  
Her cries silenced in a room full of trumpets  
Playing Taps to grieve the same grief for  
Veterans of the American ballet.

## TIDSOPTIMIST

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Bria Goeller

thin mints boiling on the sunroof of your caramel-frosted mercedes-benz twenty-five years old i'd tell them as we watched chocolate skin drop off the skeletons patiently waiting to lap up the soggy cookie puddle and for the first time all summer appreciating the violent louisiana heat elbows perched on the door handles eyes glued to the sun patterns adorning the makeshift pan circular (no ruffles yet) doubloons pinning it to the sunroof of your car like some kind of luxury goosefeather paperweight your car that took us to the dry cleaners and let us pull its headrests from their sockets as we watched mom's navy silhouette squirm inside tweed basket of lollipops next to the cash register pretty please bring some back cherry on top for what seemed like eternity and a half      your car that we begged you to move hands clasped in eager submission so we could scratch rainbow chalk roads into the pavement for our driveway towns *no the dotted lines are yellow i know it* your car from which we scraped cookie dough iceballs *too much flour will make them tough* that one magical time it snowed dusted snowed and we danced around like it was christmas morning four buttery days too early

your car that aunt becky steered before the cancer froze her bones and leaving it and potted plants and a rocking chair with my name to *bribri december xmas 1998 from aunt becky i love you* on the bottom in her wake she escaped to a quiet corner to watch us with eyelashes hugged by sea salt      watch us giggle in the backseat and use the armrest as a divider *blue is my cubbie red is yours yellow is for sharing* when our cheeks blushed red at problems more stony-faced than any we'd later come to know and as a twenty-third-century touchscreen pad *when you call me a picture of you shows up on my side and when i answer a picture of you shows up on my side* when we had superpowers greater than any we'd later cultivate  
watch us sit on top of it like the movies to stare at glitter when you weren't watchin  
watch you scream that we'd scratch the paint when you found out  
watch you care for it and mend its wounds and try to explain to us its digestive system and pretend not to notice when our attention drifted to the neon pink skip-it in the corner of the garage and to the toads in the ditches hiding from our algae green rubber nets and to the red crepe myrtle dandruff curling off its scalp *little red bugs underneath if you try to peel it off i think they're harmless but they're red bright red red means toxic it's how the bugs show the animals not to eat them don't climb it the bugs'll climb all over you* waiting to become blood-enriched charcoal in our shiny artist knuckles

watched it gather snow

inches this time

when we moved north

watched it sitting in the  
driveway

abandoned

after you left

and then watched it

sold to a stranger

after a year

## ANIMAL TRAP

Sarah Lieberman

Henry set the ant trap carefully, squeezing a bottle of honey in a curved line that led to the sticky paper. He didn't know if the honey would work—if it would make the ants any easier to trick—but he wasn't worried. He didn't really want to kill the bugs, anyway. But Chrysanthemum, oh how she hated them. She hated them with every bit of her: her toenails, her bendy arms, her chapped lips. She would get home from a day at work, and even though her whole body would beg for her to climb into bed, she would, instead, march into the kitchen and bend down, so she was eye-level with her precious counter, which she never cooked on but always sat on, and howl at the line of tiny, black babies. She would hound and haze them until they wished that they had never been born. He saw no choice but to euthanize them.

Henry knew that they wouldn't have little bugs in their little home to begin with if it weren't for the window boxes. The ants would be outside where they belonged if he hadn't stayed up for a whole night building those wooden boxes and planting half-asleep blooms in them. But if he hadn't, he never would have seen Chrysanthemum come home in her teacher dress, which had buttons from her knees to her neck, and put her nose in the flowers, and then look up: struck by joy. She kissed him through the windowpane that day. She held his hand on the evening walk. During dinner, she sat in his lap. She did at least one of those things most every day, but to have one day filled with all of that affection, well, it was worth the sleepless night, and it was worth the ants.

Henry didn't have much to do but wait for his wife to come home from work, anyway. He was a reporter on early morning local radio, and he wrote his novel during the day. But the novel was shipwrecked. Lost forever, maybe. And although he tried to look for new jobs in the newspaper, he usually only made collages to give to Chrysanthemum, or did crosswords halfway to fax to her at work, so she could finish them while the kids were at recess. He hadn't told her about the death of his novel yet. He was afraid to see her face when she heard the news. She would want to do something like research Shiva and then sit it for seven days, or send his novel out into the ocean on a burning raft, or something else that would be silly but make him feel better. He didn't care to feel better.

He didn't revel in looking at the job listings. He didn't savor the reminder that he should've finished his damned degree. Even his flimsy radio job was only a favor from his father-in-law. If he looked at the listings too long, he had to go throw up in the toilet, and Chrysanthemum would find him there, sweating through his shirt. She would hold a glass of cold water to his forehead, just as he liked, and whisper stories about the Jellyfish Off the Coast of Indonesia, or The War



that Broke No One's Heart, or something else that would be silly but make him feel better, even when he didn't care to feel better. He never felt as cherished as he did after he threw up, maybe even more than after the window boxes, but he felt chagrined too, so he didn't ever find a new job.

They had married when Chrysanthemum was only nineteen years old. Henry had been in his last year of schooling, but against all reason, he left to always be in their little house with the window boxes when she came back from class. They would sit cross-legged on the woven rug in the living room, throwing popcorn vigorously into their mouths as she told him of ancient regimes, and species of tropical birds, and Virginia Woolf. Then, she would want to hear about what he had learned, and he would mutter about his worthless accounting classes and then avert her attention by proposing a card trick or a trip to the park. She would kiss his lips so eagerly, and he'd wonder if he could keep the secret about quitting school from her forever. He couldn't, and she cried when she eventually realized (when she stalked out, spied on him, and saw the truth). She climbed into the bathtub, and covered her eyes, and cried, and cried about how she had cheated him out of a happy life.

"Oh, Chrysanthemum—" he'd tried, but she wouldn't let him disturb her grief. She got him his job the next day.

She kept going to classes, just like she had promised to do every time they had ever talked about getting married, and the day they finally decided to, and when they had told her parents, and his parents, and on their wedding day, when she brought it up during her tipsiest toast. She kept her promises, even if she strained herself silly in the process. She got her teaching degree, and got herself a job, and did everything she had intended—just as she said she would. He was constantly reminded that he, on the other hand, was unreliable. He kept secrets, changed his mind, and disappointed her often. She continued loving him, despite all this, just as she said she would.

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After setting the ant trap, Henry read the newspaper and happened upon an offer that left him feeling propitious. He paced the halls of the little house, keenly watched out the window for Chrysanthemum, threw up, and washed his hands. He had something very important to propose to her. It would be after she'd kicked off her teacher shoes, after she marched into the kitchen and bent down to breathe some fire. Maybe there would be no ants, and she would look at him aghast, and he would explain his day's work, and she would sit up on the counter, grab him by his shoulders, and say that he was the smartest man that she'd ever met, as she often did. After all that, he would talk to her about the newspaper posting. He was nervous. He had thrown up three times without her there to hold him. He washed his hands hastily, and then put on lotion, hearing Chrysanthemum's scolding voice in his head as she held his bleeding hands, kissed them, looking exasperated but still loving. She never stopped looking loving.

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It was four o'clock before he could believe it; the time must have went by while he hung over the trashcan, hunched with worry. Chrysanthemum blustered in the white door after kissing him through the windowpane. By the wildness of her braids he knew that it had been a troublesome day. She said her kind hello, and then she stomped into the kitchen. There she found many, many ants. He scrubbed at the big, sticky mess as she swung her legs off the edge of the kitchen counter, licking the popsicle he had tossed her after quipping that she looked like she needed it.

"What's that supposed to mean?" she moaned, her tongue turning redder by the minute.

"Only that it's hot outside," he recovered. It was hot outside. It was nearly the end of her first school year as a second grade teacher. The paychecks were tiny, but her fulfillment had taken to sea. It would fade, the other teachers had promised, but she wasn't worried. She left most of the worrying for Henry. Instead she just loved her students, loved the books they read and the games they played. The job tested every bit of her (her bendy arms most of all), but she would come home, and there would be good stories to tell, and popcorn to eat, and Henry, who she loved, and loved, and loved and would continue to love—she was so sure. He had faxed her the crossword this morning, and her favorite solution had been "gratitude." The clue was, "Something you feel for someone who has only done you good."

He had something to talk about, this she knew from the way he rubbed his cracking hands and the sour smell of vomit—the smell that she pretended to never notice. She was a good teacher for the same reason that she was good for Henry: her patience. She learned it young. Her mother suffered a brain injury long ago, destroying much of her ability to create new memories and recall old ones. This came with so much need for understanding, for waiting, for kindheartedness. She grew to expect the stove to be left on, for the mail to be thrown away, for her mother to begin screaming at the grocery store, unsure of where she was or what she was doing. Chrysanthemum entered all these scenes with as much gentleness and good humor as anyone could. No matter how radically misfortunate the mistakes, she acted like the mess wasn't out of the ordinary, as if she had been expecting this all to go wrong all her life.

Henry and Chrysanthemum had met in the grocery store during one of these screaming fits. Henry bagged groceries part-time and had run towards the sounds of shouts, thinking someone had been hurt. He found a slightly ruffled but still beaming fifteen year-old-girl, leaning over her mother, rubbing her back, and going on about Lemon Squares, and How Ducks Flap Their Wings in the Water, and All the Good Movies Coming to Theaters. It was silly, but it seemed to make the lady feel better. He started waving at them whenever they came in, bringing them cold water whenever he heard some commotion. Chrysanthemum was so young, but her voice had the calming quality of someone who had seen the world, died, and come back to life to tell us all to be less preoccupied. One day, he built a bouquet himself to hand to her when he bagged her groceries.

"You should take her on a date already," her mother had mumbled grouchyly at him. Chrysanthemum looked apologetic in the most secretive way—a way that could never have hurt her mother's feelings. He knew that, by now, she had given that look more than ten thousand times: every time he vomited in public... every time her mother forgot his name.

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"Sheep," Henry explained, watching her try to bite the tip of her popsicle.

"Sheep?" she asked.

"I found the listing in the paper."

"Someone's giving away sheep?" she probed, looking more curious than confused.

"Yes, they're completely free," he said, seeing the black print splayed out in his mind: FREE SHEEP.

"How many of them?"

"Just five." He chewed his lip, hoping five wasn't too many. She let that number roll around in her head for a bit. Five. Five sheep. She loved the idea, honestly, but it was her job to be pragmatic when he was behaving so boldly. The doctor had taught her how she could best help him. For his compulsions, she could really only watch sorely and clean up after him. Hold him when he hurt himself. But with the ups and downs, it was all about strategy. Planning ahead, seeing the signs; things she got good at with her mother.

"Where will we keep them?" she asked.

"In the living room," he said.

"Will they fit?"

"Oh, they're small. Only lambs," he said. She tried to hide how sweet this news was. She tried to work through the details of the plan without letting a smile seep through. She crumpled, of course; she always seemed to falter when it came to being serious. So, they would get the sheep, and it would make Henry happy, she hoped. Maybe the sheep would be his window boxes. She called her mom that night and whispered the news, even though her husband was asleep behind closed doors.

Chrysanthemum had become a bit troubled by the idea of the sheep. She lost the momentum she'd contrived from Henry's nervous energy. She knew that he'd had farm animals before, but the history had been far from fine. When he'd lived with his father, they'd had cattle or something, but they all became ill and died one by one. She wanted to work this through with her mother, reconstruct her composure before the early morning radio show—before Henry read the weather. She hoped it wouldn't rain.

Her mother usually didn't give much reassurance, always more focused on filing her nails or finishing a crossword. But, today, her bothered brain took to the situation.

"Maybe he wants to do it again, so that he'll have a happy ending," her mother said. This made sense to Chrysanthemum.

“Henry’s always wanting to fix things—things that aren’t even his fault.”  
“Then let him fix it,” her mother said.

Chrysanthemum was grateful that the brain injury came before Henry. Her mother didn’t have the memory to be vehemently opposed to anything that happened as leisurely as their falling in love did, and her father didn’t have the energy to contest her early marriage while bailing water out of his own boat all the while. They had been consummated covertly, in the dead of night. Chrysanthemum hung up the phone but still couldn’t sleep. She paced the halls, knowing that Henry would be up in an hour to get ready for work. Maybe she would have coffee ready for him like he always did for her. His days were done before hers had even started. She wondered how his novel was going. She thought of all the times that Henry had worried about the cows dying being his fault, and had thrown up, and had washed his hands, and had begun worrying again. She didn’t want the sheep to make it worse, but it was hard to let go of the possibility that it could make it better. Pets did the heart some good, anyway. She switched on the coffee pot and then fell back under the covers, heaving his arm, leaden with slumber, over her bendy body. She tried to ease out of her concern, like slipping off her shoes.

The next day, Henry picked up the lambs. They all fit in the backseat of his car. He had stumbled while reading the morning news, unable to bear his excitement over five new things to love in his little house. The sight of his wife with those lambs was too sweet to see in his head. His head was mostly dark, but today it was animated. He drove 45 minutes in the rain to a house just outside of town. The man who he’d spoken to over the phone wasn’t there. Instead, there was a note posted hastily to the wooden gate: THANKS.

So, he took the little lambs to his little home, and he watched out the window for Chrysanthemum to arrive, shaking away his sudden apprehension. Sure, they were sweet, but they put him on edge. He knew he couldn’t fully enjoy them without her there. Half the pleasure would be seeing the expression on her face, he thought. The time went by slowly, and he managed to feed them a bit of hay, while looking the other way. He threw up in the toilet. He paced. He cried a bit. He couldn’t get the image of the first cow out of his head. He didn’t know why. Of course he knew why. He could be so dense sometimes. Dumb and stupid. Feeling fuzzily nauseas, he leaned his head against the wall and then hit it there hard. He felt dizzy.

He touched one of the lambs without looking. It was soft, soft like Chrysanthemum’s bendy arms and long, long hair. He wanted to kiss her when she got home. That’s what he would do—when she got home from work, kiss her before he even showed her the lambs, he thought. This made him feel better. He was already starting to hate the sheep a little bit. He put that thought away in his dark head and waited for Chrysanthemum to get home. But all that worry had exhausted him, and he slipped into sleep on the couch, missing his chance to catch her on the porch for a kiss—his chance to burst through the white door and push his lips against hers,

happily and hard.

Instead, she found him curled up on the couch, overlooking five little lambs that were making the house smell less like vomit and more like a barn.

"Oh, they're so sweet," she said, bending down to pet the nearest one's head.

Henry snapped awake. Jumped up. Ran to the bathroom to throw up. She followed him there, after filling a glass with cool water. She talked to him in her soft voice about The Man Who Made a Slinky Go Down the Stairs for the First Time. Henry brushed his teeth, and then he kissed her, and then he went to show her the lambs that she had already seen.

"I love them," she said.

They spent a lot of time playing with the lambs that night. They made her laugh. She would toss her head back, and her shoulders would come up, and her nose would wrinkle, and his mind would lighten for a moment. Still, she could tell he wasn't feeling well. She offered to return the lambs as they were getting into bed.

"What? Of course not," he said. "You love them."

"But do you love them?" she asked.

"I do," he whispered, and then he pulled the covers to his chin, closed his eyes, and dreamed of dead cows.

Chrysanthemum didn't dream at all. She couldn't sleep, so she spent time with the sheep instead. She thought of some joke about counting them to lull herself to bed. Maybe she would write it in the margins of the crossword if he faxed it to her tomorrow. She hoped that he would. The geography lesson was going to be so dull.

But the crossword never came. Henry was preoccupied with building a pen for the lambs. He worked, and worked, and worked, sawing the wood, forming hinges. He wasn't sure if zoning laws permitted any of this, but he couldn't stop his mind once it was sure. He hoped that he would be able to breathe better with the dead animals outside. The alive animals, of course, that was what he meant, but when he looked at them, all he could see was a fog full of fatality falling over the house. He only paused his work to throw up. When Chrysanthemum got home, wearing a teacher dress with buckled straps over her soft, blue blouse, she didn't drift to the pen weightlessly, she didn't dip her face into it to breathe in the smell of oak wood and hard work. She wasn't struck by joy. She looked like she was hiding her worry behind a windowpane. She pulled his head into her chest, and one of the metal buckles from her jumper left an imprint on his temple.

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He finished the enclosure at about four o'clock the next morning. He had to immediately move the alive animals into it before he left for work. Chrysanthemum came downstairs to help. They carried them out, one by one. She held them up against her neck, leaving kisses on their soft head. He did the job with his arms extended out in front of him as far as they could reach. She planned

to drive the lambs back to their original owner, without his permission if that was what it would take, but she feared his retort. She feared the way his mind, riddled with memory, would read their disappearance. She feared check-ins at the hospital, paperwork. She feared a sedated, gloomy Henry who didn't love her at all. She feared that their marriage had worsened his condition, that maybe she should leave in the night and hope he'd learn to live alone—write his novel without her there to watch. She could take the lambs with her. She didn't do any of this, of course she didn't. She never did anything to upset Henry on purpose.

There had been times when she had upset him on accident, and she hated to think of this. One time she went out drinking with her teacher friends and woke up without a lick of memory in the assistant principal's bed. The police found her there and told her Henry was in the hospital. There was also the time that she'd tried to kill herself, overwhelmed by how immensely she loved him and how little she could do to help him. The police found her in her hospital bed and told her Henry was lying next door. No matter how badly she ached, how anguished she was, or how ill—Henry would be worse off, and it was her task to see to him becoming better. It was how their marriage operated. It was how the two of them stayed alive.

Henry left for work, after they moved the lambs, with bloody hands and the smell of sickness in his collared shirt. Chrysanthemum kissed him goodbye, but he barely felt it. He kept his eyes straight in front of him as he walked out the white door and straight to the radio studio. Oh, how he hated those lambs. How he wanted them dead. At work, he couldn't get a movie out of his mind, one where he came home, and all the sheep were lifeless, and he kissed Chrysanthemum for a long time, encircled by their former pets. But this wouldn't be true. He would come home, and then she would come home, and she would be stroking their heads, and he would abhor the whole thing—despise himself for believing this would be better. Just like always, Henry went home, but there was no crossword to be done, no job listings for him to weakly glance at, no novel to write.

It was a cursed fate, but anyone could have predicted it. The croaking cows had been too toilsome for Henry; there was no way for him to bear it again. He gathered his tools, trying his hardest not to picture Chrysanthemum coming home, trying not to see her face when she saw what he had done. He loved her. This was what he had to do to keep their love unalloyed. He hoped that she wouldn't hate him for this. Who was he kidding? Chrysanthemum wasn't capable of hate. She loved, and loved, and loved all day long, and this was why he had to do it. He threw up, one final time, before he did the thing. But after it was over, the nightfall of memory floated out of his mind, and he felt fine, fifty pounds lighter.

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Chrysanthemum walked home, thinking up a story to tell Henry for when she would arrive and find him inevitably vexed, rancid. Oh, how she adored him. Her love filled her entire body and made the rest of everything else—all that encumbrance—nearly unnoticeable. She came up to their little house with the

window boxes, and the white door, and the little lambs. She didn't waver when she saw it all—Henry, and the five sheep, and the fog of sickness and death. She unhurriedly put her leather teacher bag on the ground and went in the white door, as if she had been expecting this all to go wrong all her life. She took off her teacher shoes. She walked to the phone and dialed her mother's number, just as she always did when Henry did something that she couldn't fathom, hoping another unwell mind could explain it to her. The phone rang, and rang, and finally her mother answered:

"Hello, who is this?"

"It's Chrysanthemum."

"Oh, how are you?" her mother asked. Chrysanthemum paused, trying hard not to answer, knowing she would be shipwrecked as soon as her saddest words slinked out of her chapped lips.

"Mother, Henry's dead," Chrysanthemum said softly, and then she hung up the phone, walked upstairs, and climbed into the bathtub.

## SHADOWPLAY ROMANCE

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Elias Diakolios

Lonely and fragmented, a silhouette  
Of a limelight statue, vivisected  
By two lamps on a darkened courtyard,  
Dances a shadow-play of clockwise romance.  
Dying in the faintly glow of mornings,  
Every night she's left to aimless wallow,  
Until a stone-cast miracle had shattered  
The scalpel-bladed light which kept them halved,  
And death became the harbinger of marriage.



# DEADWOOD

Sylvia Claire Onorato

That's why you went for the stairs, where  
     robins hope to come off staccato  
 along several yards of railing eroded  
     by the stippling squirrel-claws  
 leave each time an acorn attempts  
     to germinate on the deadwood  
 under your feet, where you wonder how  
     many people forget the difference  
 between gracias a Dios and gracias adiós,  
     and how many of them are cops  
 and how often the one who forgets  
     is you – that's why you need  
 the songbirds with woodwind-reed tails  
     on top of all the splinters,  
 in that dim-dappled place  
     halfway below the deck.

## CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

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**Kimberly June Blacutt** is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture at Cornell University. She enjoys observing and comparing different types of landscapes, and hopes to someday create original and evocative spaces. Born to a Bolivian father and an American mother, she is bilingual and bicultural. Previous to her university studies, she lived in La Paz, Bolivia; Tucson, Arizona; and Surrey, England.

**Elias Diakolios** wears a lot of black and likes to create things. He leaves a certain impression.

**Bria Goeller** is just a dedicated student of life attempting to understand this profound experiment that is being human—whether through paper, a shiny black lens, the strings of an instrument, or the tiny blinking cursor on a computer screen. She grew up in Louisiana, but currently lives in North Carolina. She is currently pursuing an English/Creative Writing and Interdisciplinary Studies double major at Emory University, exploring how art can forge bonds of empathy between very different groups of people and increase cultural vitality.

**Meghan Gunn** is a senior at Washington University in St. Louis studying Art History, Psychology, and Creative Writing. She will be teaching in Malaysia as a Fulbright Scholar following graduation, but until then you can find her eating avocados in a hammock somewhere in Missouri.

**Sarah Lieberman** is a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences at Cornell University from Lawrence, Kansas; studying English; loving her father, mother, brother, soul sister, and first two readers (both named Julia); and being thankful for HCR, who taught her that two can be complete without the rest of the world. She is coauthor of the book *Consent-Based Sexual Education: Parenting Teens in an Internet Age*, coming out later this year, and is a part of Rachel Maddow's 2017 summer news team.

**Pablo Llambias** is a sophomore at Cornell University studying Computer Science. He has a repugnant propensity to perpetuate a lexicon that permeates and possibly promotes a pernicious increase in an immoral inequality, a fact that he rationalizes with some vague and lame justification about how veracity in the expression of emotions is seldom realized and often substituted for with unsatisfying generalizations about a sense of empathy for individuals, or something along those lines. He thinks he understands that this might be a mechanism for applying complicated solutions to simple problems, a favorite hobby and key flaw of his.

**Joe Lozano** is an undergraduate in the English Department at UT Austin with a certificate in Creative Writing (Poetry) and a minor in Psychology.

**Andrew Older** is a sophomore (junior when published) in the College of Arts and Sciences at Cornell University, majoring in English and minoring in Philosophy and Cognitive Science. An aspiring poet and writer, Andrew loves all things literary, especially things that confuse and bewilder him. This is his first time being published.

**Sylvia Claire Onorato**, a sophomore at Cornell University, lives by Emily Dickinson's words, "if I can... help one fainting robin / I shall not live in vain" (5-7). If the salvation of one robin—a seemingly simple act of kindness—crowns a person's existence with meaning, why not try to help as many robins as possible? As a future professor of American literature and a creative writer, Sylvia hopes to inspire her fellow "robins" to discover writing that resonates with them.

Born and raised in the small suburb of Parkville, Missouri, **Sara Parolin** now studies English and Political Science at the University of Washington in Seattle. As a community organizer, Sara embraces poetry as a form of resistance and healing. Sara writes poetry incorporating her love for lush, not-yet-gentrified land and the simpler aspects of life—budding tulips, free armchairs, and all.

**Brian Wiora** is a senior English and Creative Writing major at Emory University. He has attended the Tin House Summer Writers Workshop and the New York State Summer Writers Institute. He has been published in *Outrageous Fortune* and *The Grated* and is an editor of Emory's literary magazine, *the lullwater review*. He will be attending the MFA program at Columbia University starting in the fall of 2017.

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#### Submission Guidelines:

We only accept e-mail submissions. Send all submissions to [rainyday@cornell.edu](mailto:rainyday@cornell.edu). You must include the submission as an attachment, preferably a “.doc” file. Please make sure all the formatting is correct. The subject in the email must be “RAINY DAY SUBMISSION.” Also include within the document your name and contact information. We accept multiple submissions, as well as submissions from colleges and universities throughout the U.S. Send all inquiries about joining the staff to [rainyday@cornell.edu](mailto:rainyday@cornell.edu). Further information, as well as back issues, can be found at our website: <http://orgsync.rso.cornell.edu/org/rainyday>.

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