

RAINY DAY

Volume XLVIII, No. 2 / Fall 2018



Dear *Rainy Day* reader,

Welcome to Cornell's little corner of student publishing! *Rainy Day* has been a proud part of Cornell's campus life and literary scene since 1969, and is still going strong. We bring submissions from undergraduates across the country to Cornell's community and to the online world. Through weekly meetings with a dedicated staff, we produce this product; a sampling of incredibly talented writers at the very start of their careers.

Contained in these pages are some of the first works of these authors; they range in subject and style, and paint a vivid picture of what it means to have a voice in this age. Here at *Rainy Day*, we think words are important. We think expression is important, and language and writing are powerful tools. This magazine includes poetry and prose of all types. We hope these works inspire you, and make you contemplate and consider, as they did for us. And we hope they introduce you to authors whose names you'll hear far into the future.

I'd like to thank the staff and editorial board of this magazine for their tireless work in bringing these voices to light. Week after week, they take time out of their busy schedules to ensure the future of this publication and the authors featured in it.

As a reader, you are witnessing a beginning here. Thank you for taking the time to encourage these voices, and to make them heard. Without you, this magazine would not exist. Happy Reading!

All the best,
Audrey Marek
Editor in Chief, *Rainy Day*

RAINY DAY

an independent student publication

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Letter from the Editor 1

Poetry

SOPHIA DUROSE '21 (*University of Pennsylvania*)
Two to Six Months..... 4

K.T. MOORE '18 (*University of Pennsylvania*)
Going Home..... 5-6
Book Fair..... 7-8
Tatai Arorangi..... 9-10

SARAH SUMMERSON '18 (*Franklin and Marshall College*)
a list of things that fly..... 28
Self Portrait After Cutting My Own Hair..... 29

CORAL BELLO-MARTINEZ '20 (*Franklin and Marshall College*)
Abuela's Café..... 30-31

DAKOTA BRAGATO '20 (*Cornell University*)
hey space buns..... 32

MAWI SONNA '19 (*Kansas State University*)
Mother, I only know how to make paper boats..... 38
Endymion..... 39

BENJAMIN STALLINGS '19 (*Lee University*)
Americans Commuting in Beijing..... 40

SYLVIA CLAIRE ONORATO '19 (*Cornell University*)
Tripe Feature, Same Cousin..... 41
Foundations..... 42
A Day with the Baby..... 43

ALYSSA SANDEFER '21 (*Cornell University*)
file under: things to question only in the dead of night..... 44-45

Fiction

JACOB KIND '20 (<i>University of Pennsylvania</i>)	
<i>A Dog Barks</i>	11-19
ALEXANDER SCHAEF '20 (<i>Cornell University</i>)	
<i>Me and My Party</i>	20-27
MADELEINE DAY '18 (<i>Cornell University</i>)	
<i>Carpal Tunnel</i>	33-37

TWO TO SIX MONTHS

Sophia DuRose

He stole sofas from Warner Bros,
 And slashed lesson plans through the sand,
 Slapped fishing rods in my little hands,
 Connected freckles like dots in a map to space,
 Siphoned his faith through a cheese grate
 And squared up against science, Democrats, my mom,
 Anything—as long as he could prove it was wrong.
 He forgot birthdays, school plays, this and that,
 He knew how everything was made
 And never let me forget it.
 He shot rockets into the sky,
 Building them from homemade anger and fuses.
 He kept his guns in a white cabinet,
 Stained with half-hearted excuses.
 He loved my dog and fed her whole bagels,
 Taught me to surf in the elbow crook of a storm,
 Told me stories about having a pet bat,
 And accidentally setting his kitchen on fire at ten years old,
 Held me tight when my small body got cold.
 He wrapped himself up in frayed edges—
 Like there was safety in being alone.
 He didn't tell me until the liver disease
 Was almost set in stone.

GOING HOME

K.T. Moore

i watch the wind turbines turning
from the plane window, the blades seem still
from this distance

i— ike these turbines—am all loop and no
beginning;
closure seems too violent an end
in the sweep of the propeller wash

i am no longer a man
grown amidst this place, in my reminiscence
i fear the wave-capped waters
and grinning tiki carved from greenstone

perhaps nostalgia is this anxiety:
an unappeased
yearning for return;

and perhaps that is why i am
drawn to trains and station platforms
because they are folded along fractures in time.

These tracks trace a fault line
rendering the coast mute, compromised;
it is always raining here, but the foliage
is all static,

a radio signal returning from another star.

There is a dairy and a dresser and an auto shop
on my street
and in my thankless vigils,
i wait for something to happen

i want to knock on the door
i want to get my hair cut
i want to pick sea glass on the shore
i want to get something back,
but i don't know what that something is

Still, the bones of my childhood are no longer
for the taking
i have stolen them away from the guts of this island
where the memories all run to the colour of the jade

in the interim, i wonder, did i assign chapter and verse to
the stone and grass, marking the geography
with a superimposed significance; to think, that i could actually
walk my old street and inhabit its contradictions

but i have grown afraid of these decohesions:
home, Curnow's house and land, ruched like a ball gown.
This return is a crease
a ruffle
ripples radiating

continuously outward

towards closures

continuously
retreating

BOOK FAIR

K.T. Moore

from this vantage, i can see the lights
 from the passing tankers
 and trawlers; they fugue into ambiguity, so
 i cannot tell if they belong above
or below the waves—there's nothing
 better to do in these moments than
 indulge the lack of congruence, wait for
 the anagrams to resort themselves. i remember:
there was talk of a marae out here, but
 an upmarket Wellington apartment
 threatened to hold up
 waterfront development, claiming it
owned the legal rights to the Maori word;

 they waved aloft a piece of paper bleached so
 bright it was painful to look at; i am reminded, in
 my somnambulist introspections, of
a peg-in-hole chess
 set i bought from the secondhand book
 stall in Te Raukura:
 one of the white pawns was missing.

i wonder, then, if the developers felt as though
 everything had conspired to fill those few
 remaining spaces; to me, the landmarks
 are so familiar that
i could stumble blind
 across the rocks, moving and merging
 without pattern or design, like tatty paperbacks
 with curled up corners and hardbacks
with their glossy dust jackets missing:
 wanderings without name or end.

 there is a beat against the breaker
 where i remember
nothing, hear nothing,

but water along the quay, the stones in
 my belly and
 my shoes threatening to drag me under
 to where only the most listless of creatures
 swim: a leather bound volume with
 peeling gold lettering, assorted travel
 books, biographies, a Te Reo phrase book,
 large encyclopaedias,
 their bindings cracked;

 these hermits, these seers, these
 distant historians of books and bone carvings,
 where did they vanish?

TĀTAI ARORANGI

K.T. Moore

“...when Ranginui, the sky father, and Papatūānuku, the earth mother, were separated, the god of the winds became so angry that he tore out his eyes and threw them into the heavens...”

when i wake, i fold the keels
from the hollow bones
of a birdwing, trace davits in paper
margins, unfurl sails across eclipse
and wax constellation;
i am carried here in a kite
without a cage, so every mote
of light could rise at night
to converse with me—

the silence names me hermit:
a holy man, a lantern lighter
seeking solitude in its most pure
form; in a piquancy
of dust, a black that breaks
into atoms caught in perpetual
Brownian spirals, a continuity in
the crushed glass cast
across the sky—

perhaps now, when all that
haunts this place is the white
powder particles raining from
high aphelion, we will find peace;
i throw my arms wide in the open
spur and the mountain yawns
to provide me shelter, but i am
an unworthy subject
of this providence—

i think i have been thrown into
 the sky several times before; it
 is too thin for this transit, the
 winding out of the line as
 the kite ascends;
 my undulation marks my
 voyage stark, left to suffer
 delusions of transcendence—

i am my own shoreline, just as i
 am becoming these stars, so this kite
 becomes my transceiver, flung
 from burning synapses, the
 stones, the sky: a press of serrated rock, teeth
 grinding over the edge of the grain,

a light that casts a signal, and a
 calling from this great height;
 all my mind
 as supernal motion—

A DOG BARKS

Jacob Kind

A dog barks at the table behind my mother and I want to kill it.

We are sitting at a small table outside the bar across from our home. My mother ordered the Omelet Du Jour. I ordered the Korean tofu sandwich on naan. We got a side of fruit and a side of fries. We also ordered two coffees.

Neither of us speak. We both understand that if we start, we'll get in an argument.

We are too hungry.

And I can't hear my own thoughts, let alone form a coherent sentence.

All I can hear is the duo at the table behind me.

The woman is speaking with a raspy, self-assured voice. The man speaks with a calm, drawn out Mid-West accent. "Yeah, and I'm like, 'you're not my main—you're not *Blue Lilacs*,'" exclaims the woman, "so I don't know what you're expecting?" Like I just got wired for the *Blue Lilacs* gig. That was what? About a thousand? And I mean, like I feel bad for them, but at some level they have to realize that unless they start pumping out hits, they're not going to be my focus. I'm like, 'just write! You need to write.'"

"Do they not write a lot?"

"I mean, sort of, and in general, they're doing well. The band is making like six figures a year. But it's not going to them. And I mean, they certainly are not making six figures themselves, you know?"

"Yeah."

"It's like to make millions you got to make millions."

"Yeah."

She pauses. I assume she's taking a sip. My mother makes the drinking motion with her hands.

I knew she was listening.

"They have a lawyer, they have me, they have the label, and then there's four of them. And we require them to always keep funds in their band account," she says as she coughs. "So that's about, I don't know, fifteen-k? We give them like four each and they're like holy shit four grand!"

"Yeah, it's like that general cycle."

"Exactly, like when people my age are freaking out over a thousand, I'm like where are you? Who are you? You know?"

"Yeah."

"Like, my rent is over one thousand a month. And I could blast through one grand in a week. Champagne tastings are my shit. I can go to two a week, you

know? And so, it's like of course, yeah, four grand right now is good, but you just know man, you just know?"

She clears her throat violently.

"Of course, yeah, it's like that general cycle."

"So, whatever. I'm talking about my life too much. What've you been up to?"

The waitress comes with our coffees. I already downed a whole glass of water, and I go to refill my cup. I refill my mother's.

My mother's on her phone either for work or on a dating app, but I can tell she's still listening. Her back is ever so slightly arched. Her head is angled for maximum ear shot enhancement. And she's wearing that pouty smile.

I laugh.

She nods.

"I hate when people ask me how I'm doing in the morning."

I have no idea how they got here.

"I'm like I would rather you tell me I gained weight than ask me how I am in the morning," grumbles the woman.

"No, yeah, same."

"Like I hate it so much it energizes me."

My mother looks at me. She wrinkles her forehead and sips her coffee.

"I woke up drunk this morning. Alone," she says, "but it was pretty chill."

"Yeah, I feel like I've only seen you drunk in the best way possible."

"You haven't seen me drunk then."

I sip my coffee.

"I need to get some ibuprofen," my mother tells me.

"Really? Now?"

"Yeah, I'll be right back. You need one?"

"No."

She takes a sip of her coffee, crosses the cobblestone road and enters our house.

"Damn, she's just going to brush her teeth real quick," I hear the woman say. "Must be nice. I mean, I live right across from the Memphis Taproom, but their drinks suck, man. The food is okay, but sometimes if I'm just feeling shitty, I'll head over, half drink a tasteless Bloody Mary, and head back to my house to watch shit TV."

"I got you."

I sip my coffee.

I look at the dog. Its hair is graying.

The dog does not look at me.

"Whoa, that was quick," I say.

My mother shows me two small blue pills resting on her tongue. She downs her water and shoots me a look as if to say *what did I miss*.

I shake my head and roll my eyes. *Nothing.*

She smiles and adds sugar to her coffee.

The woman asks for another champagne.

“So when did you and Alice break up?” she asks him.

“About a month ago.”

“I was dating this 27-year-old, which was rare to begin with, you know, because I usually date older.”

“What happened?”

“Probably daddy issues.”

“No, I mean what happened between you and the 27-year-old.”

“Oh man, I broke up with his ass. He was an artist.” She coughs.

“Musicians always seem to go after you.”

“No, like an actual artist artist.”

“Oh shit, was he good?”

“Incredible. But like he was an *artist*. He had no phone. No bed. Just a sofa. Half his head was shaved. Awful hipster haircut. Just not good.”

“But he was a good artist, right?”

“Of course.”

“Okay good. Because I feel like if he wasn’t, it wouldn’t be worth—”

“No, he was incredible. But he was impossible to get in touch with. Like he had this iPad, but didn’t have a charger. So he would charge it at work. He worked at Dmitri’s on Second, and he’d juice it up so I could contact him, but he’d also be working. So it was just stupid.”

“Yeah, so stupid.”

The waitress makes a round and the man asks for another beer.

The waitress tells him *of course*, and as she reenters the bar, a glass shatters on the sidewalk.

“L O L,” says the woman.

I glance over my shoulder.

The man is stretched out on his seat: his left arm extended over his leather jacket on the empty chair next to him, his legs spread wide apart, and his shoulders slouched. He has short hair. He wears a white shirt and black jeans. I can’t see his face.

The woman has sharp black bangs that dangle along a pair of black sunglasses. She has red lips. They sip on her champagne. She slumps in her chair with her chin resting on her chest. She looks at her broken glass and spilt water with some disappointment.

The waitress returns, and after seeing the mess assures her customers not to worry.

I sip my coffee.

The couple with the dog at the table behind my mother attempt to calm their barking pet. The dog saw a squirrel. However, the squirrel climbed up a tree

decorated with unplugged Christmas lights. The owner tells her dog to sit. And so, the dog sits.

The woman behind me laughs. It startles my mother.

"I was like settle down, Jon Bennet," she cackles. "But that didn't go over well with my sister. She was like, 'If you ever call my daughter that again, I swear Margie!' But seriously, she's got blue eyes and blonde hair, while all the rest of us have that dark brown hair with these damn black eyes."

I look back, pretending to hear a random noise, and watch the woman flick up her sunglasses and point to her pupils.

I turn back around.

"So he wanted to paint her nude. And I was like she is sixteen! Over my dead body, Beckett! And of course he didn't understand. And so, of course, I was like, 'bye.'"

"Bye!" The man laughs.

My mother looks at me. And I avert my gaze. But I can see her lips twisting into an uncontrolled smile. I sip my water.

She pours more sugar into her coffee, picks up her fork, stirs the drink, and continues to stare at me.

She whispers, "Over my dead body... *Beckett*."

Water comes out my nose. I grab for my napkin, but it fell on the ground. I go to pick it up and I see the waitress' shoes.

Our food arrives.

I compose myself and we begin to eat.

My mother remains silent. I understand her and remain silent as well.

We rejoin the conversation.

"No, but more so, it's like I bought her her first leather jacket, her first pair of boots, her first fake makeup palette! When she was young, she'd be like, 'I want red lips and tattoos like Margie!' I just feel like I can communicate with her in a way my sister and John can't."

"You're like a real Uncle Jesse. You—"

"Wait, yes, exactly. Oh my God. That is incredible. Uncle Jesse. Yes, that's perfect."

My mother starts humming the *Full House* intro song.

I bite into my sandwich. It is dry. With a full mouth, I whisper, "Please stop."

She stops humming.

"Yeah."

"I'm like that dark cloud. She's like the poster board child mother."

"No, yeah, of course."

"So, I don't know... Hey, are you gonna eat that?"

"The bread? It has raisins in it."

"Jesus Christ."

“What?”

“Raisins. What has ever been made better with raisins?”

“L M A O.”

“No, seriously, like why the fuck are raisins a thing? Raisins do nothing. I get nothing from raisins. No one gets anything from raisins. We need to ask for bread without raisins.”

They sit in silence. I assume waiting to ask for bread without raisins.

My mother finishes chewing a bite of her omelet and relaxes her shoulders. “How much do you think she makes?” she whispers.

“A lot, probably.”

“No.”

“Really?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“I see it.”

“What is she, a musician?”

“No, I think she’s a manager.”

“Oh.”

I sip my coffee.

“Probably a little under six figures, like ninety,” I say.

The waitress passes by.

“Excuse me,” coughs the woman.

The waitress nears the duo’s table.

“Can we get *bread*?”

“Of course.”

“No, but like with no raisins. Like not *this*.”

I tilt my head clockwise. I push my eyes as far to the right as possible and see the woman wiggle a piece of raisin bread in the air.

The waitress smiles. She returns to the bar.

The duo remains silent.

“You need to make the dentist appointment,” my mother tells me.

“I know. I don’t have time right now.”

“Okay, but you see what Bubby and Zayda are going through right now?”

“I don’t wanna talk about it.”

“It’s costing them an arm and—”

“I know. Please stop.”

She stops.

I sip my coffee. I finish it.

“Thank you,” says the woman.

I assume they received their bread.

The couple with the dog gestures for the waitress. She walks over to them, passing our table and looking at our mostly finished plates. The couple asks for the check. The waitress pulls out a black rectangle from her apron and places it on the

table.

I take another bite of my sandwich. It is not pleasing.

"This bread! My God. So good right?"

"Yeah."

The couple pays with cash. They untie the dog leash from the metal chair and head towards Second Street. I stare at the dog while he walks away. I don't see his face.

They walk to the corner of Laurel and New Market and wait. The lunchtime rush has just picked up and drivers are getting confused by the two-way allowance in a seemingly one-way street.

A squirrel skitters down a tree on the far side of New Market. The tree is not lit with Christmas lights and the squirrel seems quite regular. The dog, however, seems to fancy the squirrel. He runs after it into the street, but a minivan runs him over.

That night, after I finish my Arabic homework, I Facetime my friend Hu. As I wait for him to answer the phone I stare out my window at the few splotches of blood still painting the cobblestone on New Market. The splotches shine in the lamplight.

The minivan hadn't stopped when it hit the dog. Both sets of tires had bumped over the dog's body. The bumps were louder than I would have expected. They tried hosing off the road, however the cobblestones prevented a smooth clean up.

"What an angle," says Hu.

"Hey," I say, realizing I'm giving Hu full double chin. I pick up the phone and reposition it on the windowsill.

"You still down for boba?" he asks. He readjusts the screen as well, and I see his grandmother next to him.

She is hooked to her oxygen mask. I pretend I did not notice her.

"Yeah. I'm gonna walk there from my mom's house though. I'll be there in 30."

"Okay, sweet, meet you there. Vivi Bubble Tea?"

"Of course. I have nine bobas on a buy ten get one free card. So we're set."

"Sweet. Okay, see you there." He turns to his grandmother.

"Wait, Hu."

"What?"

"I saw a dog get run over by a minivan today."

"Fuck. What kind of dog was it?"

"I don't know, some kind of mutt."

The bad connection pauses on his face. He's rubbing his lip. He has splotchy patches of hair above and below his lips. I stare at the screen, awaiting his

reaction.

It loads.

“Damn. L O L, okay.” He smiles awkwardly.

Pause.

“Well, okay, adios amigo!”

“Yeah. Okay. See you in 30,” says Hu. He turns to readjust something for his grandmother and then the screen goes black.

I pack up my bag: computer, keys, camera, sketchpad, Muji pens, wallet. I double check my wallet for the Vivi punch card. I yell to my mother that I am leaving and that I love her, and I walk out onto New Market. I reach the bloody cobblestones, take a photo, and head towards Chinatown.

My number is 63.

Hu’s number is 62.

“She’s pretty good,” says Hu. He looks ahead at the tea shaker machine. It is deafening. “They had to take out a lobe, but she’ll be fine.”

“Can she breathe?”

“Yeah.” Hu bites at his fingers. “She’s actually off the oxygen mask and back at the shop.”

I look at him. He looks at me.

The tea shaker shakes.

“59!” yells a lady in a bright pink apron behind the counter. Her name is Fiona.

A forty-something-year-old man comes up to the counter. He does not look where he is going. He is on his phone and on the way to the counter he throws out an empty bubble tea cup. He takes his drink, leaves the receipt, and walks back to his seat next to another forty-something-year-old-man.

The man is playing Pokémon Go and after a few dozen seconds he realizes he forgot a straw. He makes his way through the crowded shop back to the counter, nearly drops his drink, and picks a purple straw. He returns to his friend.

“A Charmander!” his friend screams.

“Already on it,” says the man.

The tea shaker shakes.

“Well, I’m glad she’s back at it,” I say. “I don’t know where else I would get my Hello Pandas in bulk.”

Hu laughs.

“61!” yells Fiona.

A guy in a Penn shirt mutters, “Where the fuck is 60?”

“Next time, Winterfell. Period,” says the girl on his arm.

Hu laughs.

I punch his arm.

“So what happened with this whole dog death today?”

“Oh. My mom and I got brunch today at Jerry’s Bar, you know, the place across from our house.”

“Ah, I love Connie.”

“Yeah, well, we both hadn’t eaten breakfast or had coffee, so we were ready to commit murder, and this dog would not shut the fuck up?”

“Are you seriously speaking poorly about the dead right now?”

“Yes, yes I am. No, but seriously, that is my biggest pet peeve.”

“No pun intended.”

“But yeah, and like this other duo at the table behind me was also so loud and obnoxious.”

“How so?”

“The woman said something that sort of summed up the entire conversation they had been having: she called her niece Jon Bennet as a joke.”

“Jesus Christ.”

“Right! But isn’t that incredible? I think my mom was about to shit herself.”

Hu laughs, “Yes.”

“So, all this was happening, and then just when we’re—”

“Here you go, boys.”

Fiona hands us our drinks.

“Thanks Fiona!” we say.

“Wait what were you saying?” Hu hands me a straw.

I puncture the lid. “Um, oh yeah, right, when we were finishing up, this damn dog just runs out into the street after a stupid squirrel?”

“What the fuck? Where were its owners?”

“Right there.”

“Damn. What’d Connie do?”

“Nothing, she’s not like that. Oh my God, but in the afternoon, the owners came back with flowers and put them on the corner, right in front of our house and guess what she did?”

“No!” Hu smiles and sips his tea.

“Yes, she took the fucking flowers and now they’re in a vase in our kitchen.”

“What a fucking savage!”

“My idol.”

We move to the back of the tea shop where the lounge area is. I get us our usual deck of cards and sit next to Hu. The lounge is nearly empty.

“Hey can I ask you a question?” Hu asks as I shuffle.

“Of course.”

“I promise you I’m not a sociopath.”

“Damn, really? I was finally starting to like you.”

Hu smiles. His smile fades.

“Was it loud when it happened?”

“What?”

“The dog thing.”

“The bumps were. And the owners screamed.”

“But the dog was silent?”

“Yeah.”

“The dog didn’t like bark or whimper?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

I start to deal.

Hu sips his tea.

“The dog was silent.”

ME AND MY PARTY

Alexander Schaeff

The holidays are, well, are, I'd say, a swelling, trigger-worthy stretch, full of stimulating substances and fantastic spells! – one of reconciliation (ravenous urge, transformation, smiling for no good reason, suffocating on ginger snaps and chai, too, to name a handful). I hold this season very, very dear. It's all right, now, it's perfect, I render! Snow's fallen, Santa came, he drank almond milk mugs and fudge, and ho-ho-ho'd back up the chimney. It's a remarkable cycle really, and I'm parked on our mezzanine rug, giggling.

So now, here's my voice, hear my voice. I, occasionally, when ruminating over nights I've enjoyed myself fully, perhaps too much – those I've engaged in sprees of indulgence, with beautiful visitors, and awoke in the deep end, or when we all made merry cries, like old-old times, just to spite our keepers, naughty not nice – I lock myself in cavernous daydream. And that's just about it, being well-behaved and intimate and all; it's more exhausting than envisioned, you follow? You agree?

Well, my imagination, plain and clean, is this: if my hoodie's open, I zip it up, if it's broiling, or I spot a tear in the seam, I take it off. Tonight, New Year's Eve, is a battered blend of the two. I've shut out the switches (all except a holiday, blow-up penguin doll, a shower nightlight, and the candelabra piece) and I'm a forlorn shag, feverishly gawking about nigh the first floor outlets. It's a quarter past, party's thirty after, and I'm anxious as ever, all a' sudden I am. As usual, I spark a cigarette on the patio, spend some seconds breathing, lingering, insults and injury in the wind. I wait 'til my gut tempo's complementary with the world, my exhale harmoniously pulsing with my heart, and once that's in order, I'll ash the bugger out, flip the chandelier, fireplace and beer bin, head in, and let loose.

Words of barstool-ridden Foster Dad tin-tin around my head. "Wintry air eases all tensions, Son." I find he's right here, cheek by jowl beside me, most of the time perfect. It's freezing and we should be hunched up the smokeshaft comfy, "don't stay up too late," "turn the gas off when you're finished," he'd say, just hibernating. Tough nuts tonight, I think, his voice quickly dissolving. Everyone's RSVP'd, gotten pampered and slicked, now jumping on buses to my place. Thence, catching z's is unsuitable, if not repugnant to the masses. I'll talk to Papa later.

The neighborhood stray cat swaggers through the hedge, into my lap. I get spooked first, her composty claws stroking my cardigan like switchblades on streamers, and she winces. "It's okay Mr. MeowyPaws," I tell, allowing her to sniff and nose the stitches about my pelvic area. She knows I'm sharp, got no food, nor do I have the nicety to care. Judging by her perfume, she's already been around – eaten a fair share of rotten Christmas scraps and chum from the neighbor's dustbin – so,

woefully, she plumps her bony carcass between my legs. I appreciate her company, contemplating between drags whether or not she appreciates mine. A gust tussles her whiskers, my moustache, then a faint trickling sound surfaces. To my disbelief, Mr. MeowyPaws is peeing, vigorously, all over. I fling her, airborne, yards over, to the doorstep. She squeals and darts beneath the garage. I sourly scrutinize the expanding yellow-brown disgrace on my jeans.

Bursting inside to swap clothes, I make it halfway to my room, then the doorbell jangle rattles. Cripes! It's half-past! A stampede of rat's-nest-huddled bodies and little feet come scuttling in. Doggone, no-good, darn, darn, panic, rush of animals! My being's a numbing corpse, but I manage to slip on some loose-fit trousers (the extra saggy ones that guiltlessly expose my squirrel-tail Jockeys) and a white pullover, then reappear in the common room. My son-in-law kisses both cheeks saying "Hi-ya," and hands me a basket of roses. I place them next to a box of itty-bitsy almond cakes someone's brought. The arrival brings zest and zing back into my empty suite, and I find myself laughing, loudly. Let's party!

Get-together guests continue shambling in, each with extraordinary lies, new sparkle rings, cufflinks, and vacation photographs to show. The usual ritual: whisk off white flurries, tip hats, extend his hands to hers, plant kisses, forgive and forget, exchange high-strung smiles, and squirm through muster to the cocktail bar. Tonight, the menu's a kaleidoscopic smear of dart frog intestines – vibrant booze, dizzy scars, and the like – I'm very proud of it. Steadily being drained and refilled are these rainbow jugs, purchased earlier from Frank-the-antique-freak's barn of treasure, all blessed with a unique concoction of drunken passion. The *pineapple prosecco punch* and the *salted sangria spritzer* are my specialties, although many would sermonize the *moonshine-infused-melon Moscow mule's* a ten of ten. DJ "Sad Sack," an office co-worker I recently learned endures a double-life, starts juicing the wing-ding up with a crowd-pleasing ditty, but something's not right. The atmosphere, the feng shui, I don't know, it's off. I twiddle the striped straw 'round my tongue real slick, eyeing all who enter, the whole enchilada's wild.

Lots of unfamiliar faces this evening. It's exciting and strange, assuming the worst. My dastardly deed's a bewitching ruse; I'll be bending beside the mirror, rocking and rolling, and notice there's happiness at the bottom of my drink. It's all around. I down the glass held, then another, another, and lurch like the cookie monster, wanting more, I want more.

There's a large hole in the spider-lamp shade – it's from when grandma's partner, Burttie, slapped the crap out of a stink bug last Thanksgiving brunch – so thinking straightly and strategically, I stick my foot through, up to the crotch, just to prove it's so. It makes a nice dirndl skirt, at least Clarice, the family gardener, says so, and Pugsley the barber spansks me hard. This is all so nice, great company. I'm dancing with my shoulders bouncing, family and friends, arms flapping, feet tapping, a terrific celebration.

Chimes on the porch ring. It's Mother Nature's organic rhythm. I find

myself humming what must be that kindergarten ‘*put your shit away*’ hymn. A radiator’s popping along with the beat, doing its best to provide a bassline while combating the cold. Within this symphonic brainteaser’s the murmur of a TV set someone left blaring. It restlessly displays the local news station: amateurish reporters, sweaty weathermen, tragic, insignificant accidents, we’ve all been there. A scene covering a triple homicide one street over flashes. Breaking news! It’s always breaking news, but this might actually be. I observe wrapped up, bloody bodies getting packed into an EMS trunk like Lego pieces. The story sends me into a burning funk, am I safe? I get real anxious again, always anxious again. Like a mountain canyon, with slathers of century-born intensity crashing in every wave, carving limestone and ribbonlike layers, I’m hungover as heck, waiting to release my grievance. A good old one-two punch should do the trick, where’s my drink?

It’s a pretty chill vibe despite the new news and the fact that nobody seems to care. Come get a load of my existence, I’m open! People! People. People everywhere. They’re busy babbling, chewing the fat off each other’s language, spitting it out like wash detergent. It’s also freezing inside, the windows ajar, I didn’t do that. In December, sweat turns to icicles in bats of eyes, so I bolt and lock ‘em snug, whole while grumbling curse words. The toasty sangria jugs, scattered across dresser tops like pimples, ‘aint finished, and that stuff can warm a grizzly bear! That’s my cure, lime twisted and grazing fawn broths, it’s nevertheless healing.

I’m still humming patiently, little jitters here and there, but... uhm... and... uhm... and I can see myself in the mirror, bending over for who knows who, I’m almost there. Minutes pass, all’s charming, it’s not cold no more, and ever since I scooched behind the bar to mix one up, I wonder if it ever was. High spirits always, then caustic lows usher in hot. The Pope’s speech rings on TV, bad news, bad news. His voice is buried by the static warble of migrating grasshoppers screeching out from under the electrical box someone’s kicked. I know for certain now; everyone, myself included, is completely done for.

I’m finished crying, I decide, and by crying I mean being this way and that, always paranoid, obtuse, fidgety, it’s not like I can control anything, right? Can’t say I’ve ever been alive yet. But, something, perhaps a slithery sprite, the bogeyman in my shadow, is telling me yes. I leave the bar, can’t sit ‘cause doctor’s pills got me worked, and budge over to the book stacks where purple-haired Rue’s telling her enlightenment story to a group of grotesque teens. What a heroine she is. After traversing the shadowy pit of non-belonging, opioid addiction, succeeding her partner’s passage, she found “the light within herself,” with help from our Lord, Jesus Christ, of course. And I’m realizing how useless I really am. There’s eye rolling and head shaking here, but there, there’s sterling signals of fascination. Green lights only. Damn.

That’s it, had enough. It’s time for darker episodes, like the mishap at fishing camp on the Blackstrap, or more like something of bobbing around in this Air B&B, just doing crazy stuff, and no more smaller talk moving forward, that’s it.

Scowling at various lake and rindle paintings cloaked amongst the cupboards, chit-chatting partners, and the many hands/overflowing drinks, I'm actually not unnoticed. My son-in-law breezes by again, slapping me on the shoulders and smiling. "Hi-ya." I smile back. Earnest? Not sure. Knowing the show's all about you is harsh. I want to get out, gotta get out, fast.

I'm thinking of an escape, possibly to a parade (there must be one somewhere, isn't it that time of year?), or pickpocketing Norman, the town druggie (I've had little wet dreams about him, hush!), and tripping to where contentment's at. I want people, people who do what's not done, usually done, on Saturday nights, like guzzling, snickering, or being cool and all. I snicker sometimes, right? I can do whatever I want, right? You'd think so. I can't. I resolve to stay. Not cool.

Party's heated, destruction's entertainment, enjoy it while it's here. I keep telling that to friends of friends, and on television, a man's pounding the brains out of some net-caught octopi, *boom boom boom*, 'til they gloop, dead, red globs, into a large bowl. The beach he's at looks stunning. I'm aware I get distracted easily, but I really do hope, pray, that they get cheffed up and eaten raw by wealthy, five-star customers (not me).

Getting nowhere, I spit through my teeth. "Right on!" my ex Wendy yells from the mosh. Smirk. I smell something like smoldering plastic and notice that the five-pronged, European outlet by the toaster's smoking. I shove seasonal napkin braids into the teeny, black tunnels. Well... uh... that's just devastating. I need to leave bad, but things keep engrossing me... What's the plan? Where are my guys?

A man enters. He's wearing a construction worker costume, waving his hard hat around my face as if it's a bundle of cash or a posy bouquet, and kissing all the ladies. Cool guy, eh? Last weekend I saw builders out at the soon-to-be-motel, now tomb, standing in rubble and dirt after the structure was disintegrated by winter elements. They were ruined, if not contemplating ending it all. Makes me hee-haw a little inside, especially with this guy all berserk and stuff, can't lie. Guess I'm not the loving kind, nor am I the wait-until-desert type, let's-build-a-motel-down-the-road type, or the let's-be-playful-with-props and shoving em' up in my business. Damn, those people got me shook. Winter storms in Saskatoon are the worst, horrible, literally cannot see my kneecaps when I step off the balcony, windshield's a sheet of faded denim frost too. Several feet of fresh powder are accumulating by the hours now, so a getaway's most unlikely I imagine.

Snow looks prettier the more I drink, I think. What about storms up the ticker? I always ask this when I wake up to nothing but white. I'm talking about some good love, and other people wanting things you may or may not be able to give. We're in a difficult situation, and I speak for everyone at this shindig when I say; nothing's easy. Nothing's definable. Matter-of-fact, I think we can all do better. Whether here or there, now or then, we're all waiting for that miracle, a revelation, rare forms of wonder, it's sad. In reality, the meaning's got to be simple as counting cows. It's the ordinary routine of day-to-day insignificance that keeps us straight, I

think. Whatever. It's problematic.

Ten minutes. Ten minutes 'til the ball drops. People are boogieing at it, blasting away to God knows where, and I'm kept aloof, partially up the stairs again, beverage in each fist. Shooting pains emerge in the vicinity, surrounding my jaw and spine, leaving me speechless. I've been here before. Been having minor attacks since preschool, always during the most unfortunate, awkward moments, and my therapist says I should see another therapist about it. I know the hotline suicide number in case, yet choosing none other than agony, I'm abandoned all day long. These late-at-night varmints surely grip tight. Saying this is hard isn't enough, everyone's sunk to the bottom, gossiping hilarious shrills, curtains been pulled open for a while, and I must go on. Dusk to dawn, on sir!

Breathe deep. I'm a tsunami of coral, birthed again with every sangria swallow, yet endangered to the topmost extent. I imagine chirping crows swooping down to bite chunks of bedridden biscuit out my cuticles. The feeling's nice but... I don't know... it's unnerving and poverty-stricken, just guesstimating, how unrealistic! Darwin was misled the entire journey. Natural selection? My scalp's no meal, and no matter the scroungers I'm magnificently me...and will evolve permanently. It's helping my nerves.

So. So, there's one foot there, in the lampshade, and I'm thinking what's next. The answer's gotta be close, there's only so much longer I can feel, and more intruders spill and crash every second. With the other... hmm... spot a bone-handle duffle bag. It's going in there! I snatch up the strings and room number nametag with my big and pointer toes, slide the daisy-wheel, horse-fuzz suitcase around my ankle, over my trousers, and up to my butt cheeks. "There he goes again," travel agent Prianca cinders with a grin, I wave back.

What else? There's a cheese platter with witch and broom pictures clayed on. I throw that through the screened door, creating a thundering, largely ignored thump. I've got that bird vision you see on films. But somehow, I'm blind to the cardboard boxes of discs and dishes wrapped in linen perched a step below, and I stumble on top of them, over them, sent into a topsy-turvy throng of unruliness, splashing red spritzes. Still, the event goes unnoticed. An elderly, Norwegian-looking woman spots me facedown below the bar, cradling a colossal origami snowflake. She laughs, I laugh along, she walks away.

I find my balance on the edge of the toilet, Mt. Fairweather I've named her, my throne. I'm aligning my demons, creating a solace, clean forgetting the meds shouldn't be mixed with alcohol. It's coolheaded. Every time I exit the bathroom, at any party, I am reborn. Really, I feel like a crisp slate, raw in the middle, and the Norwegian woman's stealing a Q-tip, waiting to shit. The Q-tip comes out woolly brown, and I give her one of those spiteful glimpses, showing my teeth and nostril. We rub forearms. I count the seconds she spends locked in the restroom. I can hear her dry heaving, shoving fat fingers down her throat. The fragrance of vomit's intriguing. Thirty minutes go by.

Right as I begin saying “Bye-ya” and prick up on my legs finally, she exits. Ha! I send a dynamic burp of film and musty beard dregs straight into the woman’s open blouse, watch her closed-eyed face contort, and stumble to the dartboard. Then, it hits me; this is my moment to be all of it! The attack’s over, and suddenly I’ve got the liveliness of a hollow-horned Billy goat chasing hens and what-not. Like a little boy, I leap skyward to the buffet counter. The table bolts jolt out and clinkle to the tarnished wood floor of the dining room; that’s where I make my next move. Drifting around the stairway railing, I ascend, shriek, then reverse dive down. The force of my fall thoroughly destroys the table, leaving four large pieces of glossy lumber, which the construction man promptly props against his chest, pretending to straddle a tunnel boring machine, along with some antique glass-lily urns, which get trampled to shattered ash near the sill. “Yeah-Yeah!” cousin Earl shouts.

For a moment I am aware that the audience (my son-in-law, his girlfriend, and the hundred-plus unrecognizable gutterpups) are jamming and thrilled! I take a lanky swig from a lone whiskey tumbler, a pinot noir, then terminate a bowl of mint-gin limeade. Onto the next.

There’s a basket. I snatch it, fill it with fresh strawberries from the icebox, and carry it above my head around the disco spot, much like a South Asian water temptress returning from a tributary. “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you” – the Book of Proverbs, verses 25:21-22. I’m remembering ‘bout when Foster Dad took me to those places, we prayed for money and bigger dicks in the aisles, (that was the first time I tasted wine), and rumbaing into the crowd of party people.

I feel connected to the Promised Land, whatever that is, and recognize this apartment as my private hunting grounds. The weight of the fruit is dense, these are my burdens, and dancing quality wears away bit by bit with both arms raised (they don’t teach you that in church). So I’m just socking it, popping it back, rollin’ in it, all the while wowing a screaming army of swain... And swing! The whole harvest goes soaring into the chandelier. It’s a direct knockout! The kids (I’ll call them kids so I feel sophisticated) holler. Ecstasy! “Wahoo!” Son-in-law feels me.

Glass shards from the shredded chandelier frazzle my already-bleeding brow and upper lip. This contrast of wine/blood on unscrewed plasterboard panels, makes the establishment swoon for construction worker action. He’s shirtless on a couch, being straight-from-the-shoulder and all, with women groping. He’s my opponent, but also my flaming torch. You get the idea? He’s holding up a large rubber boot now, pretending it’s a forklift, shoving ice and ornamental pillows into the boot’s mouth and lifting the heavy load above everyone’s head. For heaven sakes, again and again, I take off into intricate consideration, and the next twinkle I’m assuming I can lead a normal-ish life. Maybe with construction guy or maybe alone. Routinely, I grant permission to self-destruct, so that theory’s tossed to Hell.

My stitches are coming back fierce, another attack’s impending. I’m quite

undone with the entire scene, and in my voicemail I hear a wink; there's a little girly downtown who wants me. Massaging my ears, nothing but disappearing tricks left, so I scram. Little girly, Camari-Cora (her name has a hyphen in it!), makes my veins macerate and writhe, just fantasizing. I leave the ruckus and am lickety-split past the stoop, she's waiting.

Vrooming fast now, sprinting, past triangle yields, glimmering street lights, blinking boutiques, and the most splendid thing I've seen all night: a text. "Love you," from Son-in-law. Can you believe that? I'm lost in my cell and such connections, so lovely, loving. The affection's totally in reach, I'm tasting it. Don't remember the last time I remembered a decent memory, but I know I'm afraid of growing up, and the idea that he'll eventually be taking care of *me*, this one's one I can't get over.

Pausing outside a Dunkin Donuts, I tuck my phone in a pocket, making my trousers droop to my shins, light up a gasper, skim scarce, ignorant pedestrian figures with hoods up, headphones in, some drunk, others scared, some overflowing dumpsters, draw in, and wait for Camari-Cora's call.

Ten pulls later I drop my smoke, lose hope, can feel the tears. I wander past the cinema, 'cross the back alley, around a couple flower shops, stumbling dizzy. I taught her how to put on a happy face. It was the day I swept her off the ground, showed her my wounds, and she yelped like a forest fox. We darted into a theatre to catch comedy flicks. We swiped scoops of salt-butter corn from the couple seated ahead, both well-knowing the guy's hair's covering half the screen. With a poof of liberation, we were dead on our asses, embracing one another, rolling in the aisles, strangers. I kissed her down there, but as they do, the drinks wore off, and my body became a throbbing tumor of soreness. We stopped, adjusted her hoops, but it didn't end there. Over steak and Zinfandel, we saw one another, more composed, later that week. She's been kind to me since, why is that? Where's she now?

I whip out the exhausted inhaler and start gasping like mad. No one's out to discover me, in need of repair, panting. There's magnificence around the corner, it's ready for me, if only I could stop choking. It's there, past regret and the city, far beyond the pulverized dump I call home, wait up! I'm... uh... I'm panicked forever. I foresee this, paranoid I'm a defective one, wishing to be sent back; maybe that's the reason I get it so good when I'm so bad. Gotta get home, to the party, or to hers, to nibble her neck and pearls. Please Mr. Syndrome, no squeezing my palate no more, it's severe and excruciating. Please.

The pain gets intolerable; I'm loitering, pulling hard on loose hoodie threads to distract myself. I pull so hard the entire pleat draws out. A sleeve is flung backwards into a handicap spot, exposing my cuts, fingering the tail. Flustered, I use the mile-long string of confetti-colored confusion to pull myself together. The morning light slides around skyscrapers and cement, walky-talky policemen are approaching. I dart behind a gyro stand, but the officers come through the duskiness, real close, neighing my bare arm, their presence swelling my eyes, my esophagus is

sealed tight. What happens next is a masterpiece.

A cop's busy desecrating me with his flashlight beam, reaching around his tangled-tooth belt for handcuffs, as I fight for breath and whimper to myself. From within a rising smog haze, a blistered body limps wayward, grabbing the cop by his white wrist and finger waving his bleak, quizzical grimace away. It's the Norwegian woman! She's en voyage home after my party, hosting fortune cookie bits in her blonde-grey hair, and a feasibly clean maxi pad, with adhesive wings latching onto her exposed nipple skin, frozen on her blouse. She says some lengthy-smart sentence to the confused pack of officers, more or less along the lines of, "he's with me," "he's mentally ill," "I told him to stay in bed," "we'll be on our way now." Brilliance.

The woman helps me to my feet, coughing and spattering snot between mini giggle outbursts. We spend split seconds face to face, examining each other's party-inflicted injuries. "Hi-ya... and uh... Thank you," I tell her, "It's been quite a time, tonight, and all..." She grabs both my shoulders, steadying her tipsy self, resembling a deer, maybe Bambi, mourning a murdered father. Instead of crying, she heaves me forward into a passionate hug. Minutes of being locked together go by. Swaying, she steps back, pulls the pad off her chest, chucking the dirty, white oval into a stack of rubbish and dead leaves, and we begin walking nowhere in silence. Miles in silence. We go as far as to reach the edge of the city, a spot overlooking the awakening, argyle suburbs.

I see pools on rooftops, the moon, dwindled to a pale fleck of dust, and there's a man in a window stretching his arms. Weakly, she speaks. Winking on accident, clearing her throat, clenching teeth, wobbling pretty, she speaks. "Do you, would you, like to split some ale, a pitcher, possibly?" There's a poignant, boundless silence as we eye the half-naked man garb himself in dapper suit and graphic tie. "We might need two," I exhale. Chuckling. We turn to face town, and head home.

A LIST OF THINGS THAT FLY

Sarah Summerson

After Gwendolyn Brooks, "the sonnet-ballad"

the airplane went oh
 no out of the sky I called my mother
 mother mother
 please mother where
 is
 happiness
 I wish they
 knew god and took
 him out of my
 hands. The poor lovers
 don't know about the tallness
 of trees flying off
 to
 War

SELF PORTRAIT AFTER CUTTING MY OWN HAIR

Sarah Summerson

poor sad blue girl you
with the puffy hair and
split end eyes you
little chameleon thing, is
this a revelation
again?
last time you swallowed pearls and
roses, men shouted the narrow
streets of morocco, not even the sun
could protect you. you
drink lemongrass from the air and
hope to breathe in happiness, you
curl the morning, the pale car alarm song
like the absent geese honking

ABUELA'S CAFÉ

Coral Bello-Martinez

Celia Cruz plays
 as *Abuela* brews her *café*
 at the crack of dawn.
 The autumn sky,
 pastel orange,
 hugs her pale skin
 as it peers in through
 our project window.
 She looks at me
 strutting, hips swaying
 and swishing
 like warm oceans
 back home.
 She knows,
 I love my *tumbao*.

My Hair coils
 around my ears and
 whispers, *Este pajón*
is the lovechild
of colonization.
 I think I understand
 why *abuela* tried to erase,
 strand by strand,
 the history left twisting
 on my head.
 She always needed her *café*
 with a bit of *leche*.
 A pair: oppressed
 and oppressor dancing
merengue in her cup,
 in my blood.

She pours her *café*
into her tin cup. Her straight,
black hair falling
against her blushing cheeks.

She looks at me,

¿Quieres un chin?

I wonder why I don't
resemble her.

Dime si quieres

que te heche más café.

I look at her,

Ya tengo más.

HEY SPACE BUNS

Dakota Bragato

hey space buns
hoop earrings, cheekbones
hey mood girl
Latina Korea perfect
hey slinky slither rhythm
guava juice explosion
hey flawless
DANGER DANGER
misty mauve milky ways
smirk eyes
girl, you got gravity
hey cobra
hey killer
hey space buns

CARPAL TUNNEL

Madeleine Day

The dead are looking down on us, they say, while we are washing our hands or making a sandwich. This one's tuna, slathered in canned tomato paste because the grocery store's thirty seven-point-two miles too far. I can't taste the difference between real and fake tomato. But I can taste the time it would take to drive to the supermarket and back every time I wanted fresh fruit. Hours, wasted like calcium in my bones. I take a bite now of that saved time and the paste runs down my fingers, softer and sweeter and redder than the real thing.

"Don't I get one?" Ev asks, hunched inside the fold of the Franklin News Post with a bright green pen. He's colorblind but won't admit it. As far as he knows, my sandwich is green, his pen red.

"Tuna's probably good for the arthritis," he mutters into the crease of his paper. "High in protein."

"If your wrist is bothering you, you should just take a bath. Make the swelling go down." I smack the soppy bread and fish underneath my tongue, recalling the seared tuna Niçoise crostini we used to serve at dinner parties, before Ev threatened it all.

"And if I take a bath will you bring me a sandwich?"

I shoot Ev a look as I dab the crumbs off my lipstick, but I know he doesn't see.

"On second thought," he says. "There's been something wrong with the plumbing ever since the garbage disposal clogged. We never got around to fixing it after Nanette."

Not in the mood to fight, I take another dusty plate out of the china cabinet, and pull out the can of tomato. Ev grunts in approval and turns his attention towards his half-empty cup of instant coffee. He seems oblivious to the dark, damp rings that have accumulated on the finished wood.

"Here you are, sweetie," I coo, my tongue feeling slick as Tang as I peel the Post from his hands. I love the way his face falls as he sees the crust I've placed in front of him, neatly trimmed by my teeth and topped off with a spoonful of thick red garnish. The skin around his eyes looks like the undersides of spoiled fruit, sagging with juices and a secret or two. "Not hungry? Oh honey, you must hurt something

awful. Let me see here..."

I pick up Ev's wrist, feeling for all the little bones. There are dozens of them, soft like tomato seeds. He yelps when I reach the median nerve, shifting his tendons mercilessly underneath my thumb, back and forth, back and forth.

"Connie, stop! Stop!" He finally meets my eyes. I drop Ev's hand on the table, and his mouth flattens into a thin line, pressed with his annoyance, or hunger, or pain. "Stop it now."

"But if it hurts so bad, dear, then why don't you just go to the doctor? My massages don't compare to Nanette's, I guess."

"I'd have to drive all the way to Emporia to get anyone halfway decent." Ev remarks, ignoring my mention of our old housekeeper. "Won't let some unqualified leech drain up all my time."

"That's true, you have a lot of important things to do. You still have to put your finishing touches on the spackle, right?" I gesture to the middle of the kitchen, where Ev had punched a hole in the wall a few weeks prior. The insulation still bulges out, exposing the house's swollen pink intestines to the open air. If he leaves it till the summer comes around I'm worried it may start to smell.

Ev shrugs.

"I'll tell you what, Ev." I put on my mock-investigator's face as I walk over to the counter, where last Wednesday's paper has been buried under the greasy containers of scraped-clean microwave meals and used tea bags. "We need help. Ever since Nanette left us, we've been falling apart, and you know it."

The kitchen was the worst of it; when Nanette was here the counters had been crisp and crumbless. Now they were studded with bowls of blackened fruit and fly carcasses that gathered on the windowsills. Two pounds of venison still sat in the icebox, souring, seeping, and wrapped neatly in brown paper and string with Nanette's signature bow.

"Connie, we've talked about this already." Ev sighs, air slipping out from between his teeth like a long last breath. "I've said I'm sorry a million times, and I'm still waiting for you to do the same. We're both responsible for this."

"I'm not talking about that. This is about you needing someone to make you sandwiches, to drive you around." I pose, studying my orange nails at arm's length. There's a chip in my favorite shade of polish, *A Good Man-darn is Hard to Find*, which

only Nanette had known how to order special. “Because god knows it’s not me.”

“Now, Connie—”

“Don’t you see?” I slap the paper down on the table in front of him. An ad for an in-home staffing agency, gouged by my heavy red handwriting, faces up. We both try to ignore the bold letters and the blown-up photo that reside in the next column over, the one with our names in it, an image of Nanette.

Connie and Evan Bright, loyal Franklin citizens, are offering a reward for any information regarding their missing housekeeper... I had put the ad in last week. The town of Franklin knew us, the Brights, as ‘that childless couple’ that spent their fortune on private dinner parties and Cadillacs that never left the garage. I have that image to maintain.

“Ev, I’m giving you the chance to have another whore in the house. She can live in the guest room under the stairs. You won’t even have to sneak out at night. Easy as pre-made pecan pie.”

“Easier to catch, you mean.” Ev mumbles. “Easier to dispose of.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

After thirty years of marriage there were only a few things I’d change about Ev. The first would be stitching his lips shut. If I told him anything of interest, his mouth would run like a deer through the woods, fast, but not fast enough to escape the bullet of a hunter in pursuit. The ragged pink hole in the kitchen wall is proof of that; the very house’s inflammation from the toxic secrets contained in its walls.

“I found an agency you’ll like. Here.” A Clean Get-Away: *Franklin’s Premier Cleaning Crew. Weekly, daily, or live-in housekeeper. No task is too big or too small.*

“Think they’ll take you on?” I ask, smirking.

“You know, I don’t feel like looking at this,” Ev stands, as if he were going to leave. “All I really want right now—”

But I grabbed him again. My hands are small, so when I pinch the median nerve it seems like an accident.

“—is a sandwich.”

He screams when I press down hard, his knees falling to the floor, one at a time. Seeing him like this is as sudden as dropping an expensive dinner plate and watching

it shatter. Broken, no matter how you try to put it back together. At times like this I have to work hard to rearrange my impressions of Ev, so I can stand him. So I can stay married to him. So we wouldn't appear in the *News Post* yet again.

"Oh honey," I say, sliding and saccharine. I help Ev back to his chair at the table and sit him down, panting. "I can fix that, you just wait here."

Off the table I take his plate and dump the old crust in the garbage disposal, careful to rinse off the scabbing paste. The drain keeps coughing, with clots of red spurting back up in the sink.

Moving quickly and without looking I feel around the kitchen for food. In the icebox, each drawer I open brings back a familiar stench, an old memory: moldy, overly sweet strawberries for the scent that Ev used to carry when he came home too early in the morning, and rotting venison for when I recognized it as Nanette's perfume. Tied up neat with a bow.

After a few moments I find a tomato—a real one, not too rotten—and slice it up using a carving knife, the only one I can find. I struggle to open the can of tuna. Savor the prolonged shriek it makes when I finally pry it open. Top it all off with two pieces of thin white bread.

When I turn back around to give Ev the sandwich, his face is pale.

"Protein is good." He mutters. "For my arthritis."

"Yes." I cut the bread in half diagonally, one corner to the other.

"Nanette told me that."

"Yes, she told you lots of things." I pick up a triangle of tuna and probe Ev's lips, trying to get him to bite.

"Nanette loved me." He says with his mouth full. He swallows, his eyes watering like he's been chopping onions. Inflammation. Passion.

I stand. I didn't realize the knife was still in my hand until it came down, a hollow thud, followed by the neat halving of the china underneath.

Ev's moans sound more relieved than pained. The bone of his wrist makes a sharp noise, like a fork scraping against the plate as he moves it around.

First the blood dribbles over the sandwich, to taste, then too much. It floods the

plate and wipes away the coffee rings further down the table. I hold Ev's hand close to inspect all the little seeds. To scrape out the irritants that have caused all this pain.

"If you want this for the road, I can put it in a baggie for you?" I shrug and pull out a gallon-sized ziploc. For minutes on end Ev's dark eyes roll wildly in his head, quivering with every labored breath. I watch them until they stop. When it's over his cheeks are translucent as glycerin. I'm almost tempted to lick them, or kiss him goodbye. His mouth hangs open in a deep black 'O'

"Oh dear." I come around, carefully placing the baggie next to him. "Oh silly me, I've forgotten the tourniquet."

As I clean the kitchen I start to hum. The only other sound is the clinking collection of knives that I pull from the dishwasher, unclean. The same set as I used with Nanette. It took dismembering her to help me realize how much I liked bodies; to understand that we were really just fruits, husks of humans that can be so easily cracked open.

So I take my time. I reduce my husband like a fine sauce, watch him become smaller and smaller. I feed his body to the kitchen sink. I ziploc his bones for the dog that I will buy, to keep me company in my old age.

All morning I'm on my hands and knees, cutting, scrubbing, until the kitchen floor shines. I empty the icebox. I clean up the broken things. I rearrange the furniture. I think about parties I'll host for Christmas, Easter, the Fourth of July.

For Ev's wake, I decide, I'll hire a catering company. Dark, tannic wine to compliment the ashes that I'll pretend are his. And tuna Niçoise crostini, balanced on waiters' bent wrists as far as the eye can see.

MOTHER, I ONLY KNOW HOW TO MAKE PAPER BOATS

Mawi Sonna

hold paper like you would a mother language
and fold it until words are no longer needed.

//

if nothing else,
all I want to know is why jellyfish imprint values of immortal ancestors
like my muscle memory of making paper boats,
but will not birth babies like mothers.

//

for what it's worth
I want to hear their sea songs, their lullabies,
I want to know what comes after paper boats
even if her stings bring crystal urchin scars,
they're the scars never made for me.

//

if nothing else, I need to know why these ten steps I fold
are not enough, but enough to call myself a jellyfish.
when all I have learned is this story always ends at ten
and nothing more comes after.

//

maybe a thousand paper boats are floating
above my mouth,
but all I know is they will leave empty words and empty sounds.
how do I tell mother she is beautiful
when glassfish decorate her tails?

ENDYMION,

Mawi Sonna

only for your drowsy hazels, Selene abandons sleep to watch
your slumbering chest rise with each tiny breath for all time.

though she craves the quirked freckles dappled on your skin,
her dull expired craters could not compare to our shared time.

and those virgin sunflowers betraying their sun to sing sweet
lulls to your tiny earlobes reek as noon embraces night time.

still, I cannot see how asters hold all heaven's constellations,
when their dull light must have burned away long before time.

while they bend in vain to kiss your purple lips with stardust,
they swathe like psychotic gnats I must fend off every time.

but see those quiet pearl oysters bathing upon the shore? oh –
how I forget. let me whisper about them just one more time.

when we sat under the willows near your cave, she saw your
kind spirit, now lost to bless nature's gaze through bitter time.

so I hold close your sleeping head, with hair entwined at hand,
clinging like pollen clings to her bee – to stay and to stop time.

those warm cheeks, those cold eyes. I know you are not with
me, but why must these tears still drip so endlessly into time?

when did you feel evening primrose seep into your bones with
me? a churning tempo much like drunken waltzes in erred time.

remember when shy fingers teased bay tulips under cradles of
wet grass? you decorated my body with baby lilacs each time.

but when I forget laughter, and when I forget rain – when I no
longer stay, don't forget I tried to save what had been our time.

AMERICANS COMMUTING IN BEIJING

Benjamin Stallings

Since you were nine,
you and I have sat
on the 653 by the knee joint
in the middle
of the bus—opposite sides
with headphones in.

You could never keep
your feelings and thoughts safe, warm
padded inside you
like filling in *baozi*.

You have, in you,
a bite, releasing
steam and sweet garlic comfort scent
in the middle
of my days—you open me,
my boiled dough.

Around us, there are
millions of kind commuters,
none of them speaking
our secret, native tongue.

TRIPLE FEATURE, SAME COUSIN

Sylvia Claire Onorato

So much darkness hangs
on the coffered underside
of her cranium I suggest
we brave the salty gravel
from the dregs of popcorn bags
all over the floor and shuffle
through the snowy mess
to seats of our choice,
then sit down just in time
to get up again. We plow
a new path through
the mess of our own making
whenever our blinks start
to get heavy and the spell
of the giant screen pops
discreetly as a soap bubble.
When we trudge to our last seats
we know they're our last
because the theater closes
soon and we'll have to go
home with our soles stuffed
full of kernels no amount of floss
can ungunk even if we agree
to keep stumbling through the dark
together, to keep playing hide-and- seek
with boredom as the hunter.

FOUNDATIONS

Sylvia Claire Onorato

My father is enchanted by old barns,
the kind that flake like bark of living trees
and shelter silver-dollar stares of owls
above an open loft, where he hopes
to build a studio and paint by day
the landscape in the early blaze of fall
before his children write their names in frost
on his abandoned tractor. My sisters and I
once followed deer trails through the balding woods
beside our house until the grass gave way
to briar mazes, saplings tied with vines
to older trees. Beyond the bristles we found
a wall of stones stacked neatly in a square,
the lichen scabbed foundations of a barn
without a gambrel roof, or walls or door
to boast of while it lay in wait for winter.
We ran to tell our father right away
about the ruins he found long ago,
and years from now I know he will pretend
that his skyscraper office is a loft
as doodles of three girls among the stones
bloom in the margins of his legal papers.

A DAY WITH THE BABY

Sylvia Claire Onorato

I

My baby cousin calls
Wednesday “wings-day,”
as if she were scheduled
to flap away on a colicky wind
and see the weather vane rooster
up close.

II

The prettiest ring of all
has no diamonds, but five
puffy little caterpillars
that pull the firmer twigs
of my hands wherever
whim will wander.

III

She pets an empty
pillow case on the bed,
the blinds drawn
in the white room,
a one-person conclave
quiet
save for her blinks.

IV

Twelve at night I lay down
to the faint scent of desitin
clinging gently to the sheet –
and I know if I could
travel back one half day
my little cousin would appear
curled where I now hold
air, covers, wrinkles, night.

FILE UNDER: THINGS TO QUESTION ONLY IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT

—after *The Band*, “*The Well*”

By Alyssa Sandefer

I.

it all happens so quickly:
you & i are laughing in the sun-drenched kitchen at
noon, boiling water slowly so the frog won't jump out
as one of your old record players hums static close by
when the microwave timer beeps &
suddenly

the needle jerks &
all the oxygen in the room becomes
full-color vibration & i
b l i n k
but you've already burnt down
to ash that won't
phoenix itself
no matter how nicely we ask
for the world to be different,
although we'll ask anyway.

~~somewhere the record is still spinning, silent;
take it apart & i'm sure i could splice together a metaphor.~~

II.

all that's left after is to dissect memories in hollow
moments: we were finished before we even began,
did you know? set to spin endlessly at the wrong
speed, half-aflame & half-doomed &
unwilling to apologize for any of it;
i turn back time & ask myself
Please
for my own sake
in the meantime,

teach me - hourglass,
teach me - kaleidoscope,
teach me - surrender,
teach me - goodbye.

~~how do we become anything other than
destruction set to music? i ask the air choked with dust
& receive no answer.~~

III.

tomorrow i wake tangled in cold blue sheets
& this is still only the first draft of a love story.
even back then we knew; the sky is quiet & gray & i'm beginning
to grow tired; don't ask me to approximate something sublime—

~~please do not mistake me; this is not a sad story.
i whisper this softly to the now vacant room.~~

IV.

something changes.
white noise explodes into
melody—I don't know what time it is.
you're gone & these lungs
collect dust & this might be a dream
but my blood strains to
listen as

somebody sings,
“are you looking for love or
are you looking for trouble
are you looking for
looking for
looking for love
for love
or love
love
love—” [detonation]

the record screeches.
the music stops.

~~i never know how to respond to these questions.~~

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

My name is **Coral Bello-Martinez**, and I am nineteen years old. I grew up in Harlem and the Bronx where I gained most of my educational training in writing and gained inspiration from my lively Dominican household and my community. I have been writing poetry since the third grade and have been practicing spoken word since the ninth. I attend Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA where I major in Creative Writing with a minor in Africana Studies.

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Sylvia Claire Onorato is a senior English major at Cornell concentrating in American Literature and Creative Writing, with a minor in Spanish. Her poems and

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Alyssa Sandefer is a sophomore at Cornell University studying English and Biological Sciences. She invariably reads more books than she has time for, enjoys stitching lies together until they resemble something true, and believes no creative work to be finished until she has considered lighting it on fire at least once. This is her first poetry publication.

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