

Red Weather is the literary and art magazine of Hamilton College. Our publication is dedicated to showcasing the diverse creative talent of the Hamilton community that varies in genre, theme, and style. A publisher of poetry, prose, and art, Red Weather seeks to embolden the Hamilton campus with creative work that challenges accepted modes of expression and experiments with language.

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Fall 2010

RED WEATHER

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This fall in Red Weather we look both to the magazine's past and to its future. In these pages you will find an interview with Red Weather's founding editor, Jo Pitkin K '78, and a student-run literary magazine that seeks to honor the tradition of enthusiasm and innovation that she established.

This magazine consists of the fruits of an unprecedented number of submissions across poetry, prose, and art, evaluated by an editorial staff twice the size of the previous issue's. As a publication we have grown both in size and in diversity of genre and style.

With this issue we are also proud to continue the expansion and evolution of Hamilton's literary community. Beginning this semester, in addition to the outpouring of creative work from on campus, the pieces under consideration included submissions from Professor Doran Larson's creative writing workshop held inside Attica Correctional Facility.

As always, we strive to embolden the Hamilton campus with creative work that challenges, delights, and reveals to us what we and our fellow community members are capable of.

Olivia Wolfgang-Smith '11
Editor-in-Chief

March 17th, 2046

Jeremy Adelman

Whenever I chance to look a person straight in the eye - not askance, mind you, but straight, so that pupil locks with pupil - if by chance this should occur, I gaze into the recesses of my mind and there I see a date. Each and every person who walks this planet, each has his or her own date, some soon, some far away. Should we encounter in passing someday, perhaps over a cup of coffee in my favorite café, perhaps while walking our dogs in the park, I will learn your date. You will smile, and go upon your way, never knowing your fate, for better or for worse, is eternally sealed. For the date I see is the date of your death.

Ah, but now that you know my secret, surely you will prod me for the incredible knowledge I possess. Try as you might, I shall never tell, for it is of no consequence; whatever immortal being assigns these dates is a callous god who writes upon stone. If we should encounter again, by some stroke of luck, years from now, after you quit smoking and lost thirty pounds, your eyes would bear the same message; indeed, I may even remember your date - it compliments a person like a subtle, distinctive scent. Ah, I am an old man - my memory is hardly what it used to be - and as the years roll gently forward like a babbling brook, the dates of passersby blend into one. But that is not merely in my mind, no, for the power that decrees life and death is even more terrible than you would believe; I will not tell you your date - never! - but I will tell you this: you, and everyone you love, shall die on or before March 17th 2046.

How, you ask, can I make such a horrid prediction - we have never met, and yet, with unfeeling certainty, I have placed a bound upon your mortality. But is this truly what is jarring? If I were to declare you dead in two hundred years, you would laugh at my foresight, and yet you know it true. No, it is not your mortality you fear, but the morality of those around you; upon your deathbed there is solace in those who live. I am here to extinguish this fleeting comfort; the sun may rise on March 18th, in full glory - reds, yellows, greens, blues - but no human eye shall behold its splendor. For, they, like you, shall die that day.

As far back as I can remember, I have possessed this strange ability, though many years elapsed before I fully understood its gravity. My mother - how could I forget! - had a most wonderful date - October 7th, 1972, right in the middle of a beautiful autumn. My father was less fortunate - March 26th, 1970 - amidst the dreary pour of cold spring. Of course, I knew what these dread dates portended long before they arrived, and yet, I regret to say, I did not fill my hours with them while they still walked this earth. So it is with every child; we forget our parents even while we hope to follow them to the grave.

As a schoolboy growing up during the Second World War, I was surrounded always by death, and yet in the ignorance of youth I believe I never made the obvious connection. I have a vivid memory of my Uncle Max (December 3rd, 1988) embracing my Aunt Mabel (June 7th, 1994) in my parent's living room the day after Pearl Harbor. Tears streamed down her face as she wrapped her arms around his waist and begged him to stay, for she couldn't bear the thought of living without him should he die in battle. I did not comprehend, for I was young, then, merely ten years old, and war and death were simply plots on the silver screen.

No, the day I deciphered the truth behind those dates was well after the war, on November 1, 1949. My older sister (May 21st, 1998) was to be married, and my parents and I were to arrive by plane. As we walked through the airport, we chanced upon a cluster of people awaiting departure; I could not help but notice that every person in that group bore the same date upon their eyes, and furthermore, it was that very day. I never approached them with my instinctive apprehension, and cursed myself thereafter, but what good could I do - the dates are set upon stone.

The plane crashed, of course, struck a fighter plane while on approach. The story covered the news, and my mother never dared fly again. I was jarred for a different reason, crying because those dates I read upon the faces of my classmates, some now all too near for comfort, were final.

While in college, I met the most wonderful girl to ever set foot upon this planet. Her name was Molly Wilson, and she breathed a unique, compelling vivacity from her tender lips. One minute with her, and I was completely smitten, the deepest love I had ever then felt (and undoubtedly ever will feel). But even with love at first sight, there were drawbacks; when I glanced into her eyes I read a date I could not believe - July 4th, 1954. Could this beauty, this perfect girl really have but two years left upon the earth?

We dated for a year - I believe with all my heart that she expected to marry me some day, but I could not bring myself to accept the pains of knowing, all along, the specter which loomed above her, without the means to halt the approaching doom. She married a doctor, instead, and died with him in a car crash on the way to his parent's house to celebrate Independence Day. Surely, you say, if I had married her, she never would have died so young, but there you are mistaken - the dates never change; whether by illness or accident, she was to leave upon that very day. A year later, I married Ellen - quiet and plain. Her date (January 15th, 2002) has come and gone, but after forty-six years, I was ready - perhaps it is because I loved only her existence, and not her essence.

It was about this time that I first foresaw that dread date, which has become my everlasting nightmare. I chose, as my vocation, to teach mathematics at little high school outside of Boston, and, as the years washed steadily forward, became privilege to the ultimate secret of wave after wave of eager teenagers, the dates moving steadily into the future - 2020s, 2030s, 2040s - Then, without warning, the progression stopped.

Freshmen, in those days, took algebra. As the students shuffled into their first high school math class that year, I could not help but notice that a full four of them bore the same date - March 17th, 2046. Before there had been numerous occasions where two students were destined to die upon the same day, but four, in one class - I could hardly believe my eyes! But it is true, of course, or, perhaps more accurately, will be true.

The next year, eight bore that curious date; the next, ten, then fourteen, then a full twenty. Soon, half the freshmen class were destined to die upon the same day, and, by my retirement in the late nineties, it was rare to encounter a student not among the coming exodus from the realm of the living. I kept silent as the lemmings ran forward, always hopeful that each new class would bring that one-in-a-million student who bore a later date, but my search was fruitless. Even now, when I chance upon a young child on my morning walks, I look her in the eyes, always to be greeted with the same blinding vision: March 17th, 2046.

I have often pondered this imminent apocalypse, a wonder for which I surely cannot be faulted. At first, I felt only gloom and despair at the unstoppable demise of humanity, and chased all thoughts of Armageddon from my mortal mind. One day, though, a thought struck me; I see every date for everyone who catches my eye, and yet, I cannot see the time of my own departure. During my

less prudent moments, I have tried to learn my dread hour, but my gift turned upon its master is fruitless - I have tried mirrors, cameras, and a whole host of other optics to no avail. Perhaps then, this date - March 17th, 2046, was my own date, and some constraint of nature prevented me from seeing beyond the time of my own death. I found solace in this theory for a time, but as I age, I fret more and more about the billions of human deaths which await planet earth. I would be 117 on March 17th, 2046 - not impossible, you say, but undoubtedly unlikely. Now I give you the most terrible news - not for me, perhaps, but for the world we hold dear; the doctors say my cancer has spread into the lymph system, and I have at most six months.

I do not speculate as to what terrible demon awaits upon that day. Certainly, it is not a plague or a famine, or even an errant asteroid, for there would be some survivors, even if but for a short while. Nuclear holocaust is possible, of course, as is the unleashing of a destructive power yet unknown to man. Either way, I can offer no closing words of warning, for it is written; on March 17th, 2046, humanity dies.

Rumpus

Kate Bennert

her tainted breath wrinkled the air
 behind my mouth
 and her terrible eyes
 gobbled me up and spit me back out
 as her fingers wove through me
 like vines
 and tied themselves around my insides.
 i smiled and screamed
 so she laughed
 and made me her queen
 and carried me far away.
 where there were four wild trees
 that grew from the corners of her bed.
 their branches were trying to
 scrape the plaster off the walls
 pining to make her backyard
 come alive at midnight.
 like the time when her brother
 lit the grass on fire
 and i watched it all turn yellow.
 after that, she left
 and her backyard became the world all around,
 wild and gold like new orleans.
 it smelled like saxophones and cacophony
 like salt water and destruction

like motor oil and corruption
 like cigarettes and seduction.
 like tears
 and turpentine
 and stars.

i am still the queen
 of everything,
 but I take off my crown in the morning.
 so i can lick the scars off of her chest
 and put on my worried shoes.
 “please don’t go
 i’ll eat you up
 I love you so.”
 that was the first time i ever said “i love you”
 because before that
 it was never true.
 and then she called me and told me
 that she wanted to say it first
 and in person.
 so i let her,
 while i sat in the bathtub and pretended like it was a boat
 with sails the color of the sky
 which was black at the time
 but in my mind it was pink and brown and grey and white.
 and i cried.
 then i called everyone I knew
 to tell them where i was going.
 but no one answered.
 so i turned on the faucet
 and capsized.

i began to fill up with water
 which surprisingly made me feel hollow
 and only slightly sea-sick.
 i licked my teeth and felt each one
 in my mouth like a hot, sharpened stick.
 which made me think:
 could a wolf lick its own teeth
 without bleeding
 from the top of its fat, purple tongue?
 or maybe that’s why wolves howl.
 perhaps they can taste their own ferocity.
 and maybe when they shake their fur
 they swear to god the feathered bird
 whose blood is running
 down the inside of their throat
 didn’t feel a thing
 and wasn’t hurt.

i shook my own past off the hair of my back.
 that’s when i became a wolf .
 i kicked and growled and howled and screamed at everything
 because I could.
 because no one ever told me I couldn’t
 because suddenly this sea-change
 wasn’t just a reverie
 leading me astray
 or far away from home.
 i am crossing a desert
 by myself in combat boots
 that don’t fight wars
 they kick down doors

that stand between me and the world.
 now i'm questioning the wisest owl
 whose squawking's only nonsense.
 i'm threatening the tiny town
 whose prophets are dishonest.
 and i'm wandering the water's edge
 looking for my boat
 to float beneath my feet
 and take me back
 to her backyard
 where i'd gladly let her
 eat me.

Refrigerator Notes To My Three Male Roommates

Catherine Boyd

i.

This is just to say
 even if I say "yo dude sup" when
 I answer the phone
 and let you fart in my bed
 then talk about farting with you dudes
 I am not a dude
 and I don't want to play videogames.

ii.

This is just to say
 don't buy grapes
 and stuff for nachos
 eat the nachos every night
 and leave rotting grapes
 in the fridge.

iii.

This is just to say
 even though I pretend it's cool
 when you come in without knocking
 on a Saturday morning
 and ask me to drive you later
 to Five Guys
 while I'm sitting in my panties

clipping my toe nails,
it's actually
kind of awkward.

iv.

This is just to say
when I said it was cool
to turn our suite into
a menclave
I thought you were all joking.

v.

This is just to say
I have decided maybe
sometime I'll play Mario Tennis
but seriously
stop sneaking Smirnoff Ice
into my coat pocket
before we go out.

Relating

Catherine Boyd

Jeff's dad chopped his finger off on the Juan Way Tour's one-year anniversary. No joke: the guy was splitting wood in the backyard with Jeff, caught his ring finger between the splitter and the stump. Jeff had to yank the splitter out himself. He told this story to me, called me up while he was waiting to hear back about his dad at the Yale hospital, and I tried to cheer him up by reminding him of that summer, the Juan Way Summer, when we had to chop wood for that family in Louisiana and the son there was missing his thumb and pointer finger. We never asked about it, trying to be polite, and in fact we didn't even notice for the first couple days.

I didn't really know how this story was meant to cheer him up, but my go-to plan for being supportive of people is to come up with a way to relate to them. Juan Way was all I could think of, and it seemed to work as we began reminiscing about that summer. The long stretches of driving, playing guitar together in that converted old school bus. It was me, Jeff, and Ali for most of it; Adeline, Peter and Phoebe hitched along for parts, but didn't do the whole cross-country thing.

My sister who's a year behind us thought we were a bunch of pretentious assholes. I saw her point. We spray painted the outside of the bus with elaborate drug-inspired stencils, stripped the inside and added bunks and a toilet, converted the tank to run on veggie oil. Played music, lived with strangers, took pictures across the whole USA. And bragged about it. Like I said, I could see what she meant, but I tried to explain anyway: that night when we were in no-man's land western Texas, and me and Phoebe stuck our heads out the window and looked up. I had never seen so many stars in my whole fucking life, never saw a sky so big. You think we all share the same sky, but we don't. It was life changing, I told her. Of course I didn't tell my sister that after sharing that life changing moment, Phoebe and I fell asleep in the same bunk, and after months of wanting, I finally got to thread her curly black hair between my fingers.

Two days later in Albuquerque, Phoebe took the Greyhound bus back. "Not nearly as glamorous a ride," she said when she kissed me goodbye. In hindsight, I should have savored that last kiss, should have kissed a piece of paper to seal it away in an envelope so I could open it and remember

that optimism years later. We didn't find out until we returned home that Phoebe's sister died that day. Cut her own throat. I didn't even know people did it that way. I never cried until a month later, watching some sitcom, and some minor piece of dialogue rang like a gong in my ears down to my chest and I just sat there with my cheeks wet for an hour. I never called Phoebe. Didn't know what to say. Didn't know how I could relate. The only thing I ever thought of was how Phoebe's sister did it in the bathroom, just like people always seemed to cut themselves in the movies: in the bathtub or over the sink, a vain attempt to clean up after themselves, like it's something that can ever be wiped clean.

Jeff's dad turned out fine. The doctors reattached his finger, and said with therapy and future surgeries, he'd regain the majority of movement and feeling back. They're using leech therapy on him now, to get the blood flowing. That sounds like pretty much the coolest thing ever. Modern medicine, with stem cells and CAT scans, but there's still a place for leech therapy. And, shit, to think that something trying to suck the blood out of you is what's going to heal you.

The Piano

Ryan Cadigan

His actual object unclear, Travis began his quest for a cigarette. He did not leave the cemetery shaking or shivering; he moved quickly, keeping his heart rate up. The cemetery was in the middle of town, and three neighborhoods away, the cashier at the only convenience store in town open twenty four hours was watching public access television between cigarette breaks. Not that it mattered on a Thursday at four, on the fourth of March, a date Travis could not bring himself to, due to an unspoken rage, avoid buying cigarettes on. He could not say it. At noon, the sun-burnished wind had driven off the rain, and from the lampposts to the lilies, the water and light had played a rhapsody together.

But now it was four, and rain was threatening again. Travis could feel the shouts falling behind him—they had to be for him—and without looking back, he strode through the grass and sand, and up onto paved wet road. He felt like running, hard for as long as he could, like a deer trying to outrun its wound. He'd seen one run like that, once before on a hunting trip, the only one they ever went on with Uncle Chad. Travis's cousin Albert had brought his crossbow, despite the protest of his father, and when they came over a buck twenty yards in from the turn-off, Albert tagged it in the hip. Travis remembered the sound it made, that hiss or groan of terrifying pain, and he remembered how it had run—too fast to follow, too fast for its other body, which just stood there, looking at you. They tracked him for three miles, blood stain for blood stain, and never found him again. He outran them to die. When they finally gave up, Uncle Chad had walloped Albert upside the head and taken away his cross-bow, and Travis and his father had traded that knowing look, one part snide bemusement, one part gratitude.

"I need a cigarette," Travis growled, closing in on the Xtra Mart, feeling an unprecedented urge to scream a noise like that buck made. He brushed back his mat of wet hair. Now his hand was trembling, now his hands were shaking. He saw an earring on the ground of the parking lot, flat, silver, probably worth nothing. He didn't pick it up. He plowed through the glass door like a linebacker and nearly eats it on the wet tile in his flat-soled shoes. The cashier turned around from the television, which lived like a spider in the top shelf of the tobacco and lottery tickets tower. Travis

swallowed and regained his composure, adjusting his wet collar and trying not to let his hands shake.

* * *

“Listen to me,” Travis’ father had said, “My son won’t be having cigarettes in my house.”

His impulse had been to say something stupid, and as he had been finding out ever since he turned sixteen, Travis was a slave to his impulses.

“Why?”

“They’re going in the trash, immediately. Leave ‘em in their pack, just throw ‘em out, and tie up the bag.”

“I’m not going to throw them out!” Travis had exclaimed, almost laughing. He’d been having a nice fit all day just waiting for them. His father stared.

“In the trash.”

“Dad, come on—you’re being unreasonable.”

“Get rid of them, Travis.”

“I will—I’ll take them off your property. See,” he started backing out of the garage.

“I’m not kidding, Travis. Those cigarettes are about to disappear, one way or another.”

“I’m not throwing them out.”

His father did not move; Travis half expected to be chased. He almost looked forward to it.

“Don’t get in the car. I don’t want your cigarettes in my car.”

So Travis had to smoke them, all eight survivors, right there in front of him. And now, due to a sick twist of fate, the vomiting had been conditioned to his feeling of anger, not the taste of tobacco.

* * *

His hand shook like a dinner bell as he pointed to a pack of American Spirit. At least cigarettes no longer made him sick to his stomach, any sicker than he already was. It had been something like ten months since he’d bought a pack.

“That’ll be nine seventy five,” said the cashier, reaching into the carton without taking her eyes off her customer. She was middle-aged the way a European peasant might have been, the wife of the man who owned the mill, the fat one. Travis wondered how he must appear to her, brown hair

black with water and his suit soaked the same. He could be one of many things liable and dangerous, he probably was; the woman handed him his change. He tried to grimace a smile as he put it in a jar for cats.

Travis strayed into the snack aisle—they were all snack aisles, all four—and let his mouth imagine food. It seemed for a moment that he could eat a great deal. He felt suddenly empty, suspended by a balloon of hunger in his middle. There were drinks, too. Twelve hour old coffee, hot coffee, black liquid preserved in glass and cannisters to extend the life of its heat, and soda, too, and beef jerky. While he stood examining the beer, the phone rang, and a tremor ran up his thigh.

“Hello, twenty four hour extra mart,” the woman said in a background voice, much more normal than Travis expected.

“Uh-huh. Yes. We have it.”

His own phone was vibrating in his pocket. Travis pulled it out and hit the cancel button almost before he read the name; he didn’t need to read the name. There was a missed message, too; he read that. Didn’t they trust him for ten minutes? Couldn’t he be alone two miles from his home? He felt a blast of rage and swore that he would never eat again. Travis sauntered up to the counter.

“Excuse me? Could I have some matches? Please.”

The cashier was chewing gum and looking him over. She handed the matches out automatically, and Travis felt like a kind of hero.

“Here you are sir,” she said. Travis felt blood charge into his face.

“What did you just call me?”

“Excuse me?”

“Never mind.”

Travis stormed out the exit, which of the two doors, opened automatically. He could have sworn the cashier called him *Dylan*, after his father—not that it was possible she knew either him or his father. It didn’t fucking matter. A real power stormed inside him. He needed a hundred people to know. But none of them could see him; no one was allowed to touch him.

“Weird fucking kid,” the cashier muttered when he was gone, and went back to her soap.

Neither the matches nor the youth seemed to care about the first spit of rain; both noticed the wind though, and neither could stand it. The first three flames gasped sweet life and were done. Travis dropped the pack twice, and by the time he finally cupped a flame to his cigarette, it almost

fell out of his lips. But then there was hot, unmistakable smoke in his lungs. He took long drags and held them in. A trolley rumbled past him, a gimmicky roving billboard with never more than a half dozen passengers, not even an excuse for transportation, but an ironic retelling of a joke about it. Travis missed the city; he missed the lights in the tower windows, the understanding of and between strangers, and the theater. His university had a gorgeous arts building, the type of gray gothic stone that put teen angst in perspective—not this feeling, smaller emotions, the petty injuries of high schoolers. That used to be him. God—how Travis wanted to get away from his home, the rules, the constant, obtrusive oversight. *You'll come to love this little two-horse town*, his father used to say. *I don't think so*. He didn't think so. This place had no life, it had seasons, and PTA meetings, and a police department. It may have had a historical society; Travis didn't care. At school, he could go to the Museum of Natural History. But all he wanted right now was a hot dog. A hot dog right off the street. And, somehow, he remembered—God—there is street caterer, Bob's Barbeque, less than a block away. Bob operated out of a truck painted such shades of dark brown and yellow that did not so much scream 'tasteless' as simply 'rape,' (there had been some rumors about Bob). A seagull took off from the railing of the bridge as Travis crossed, heading uptown towards Bob's and still seeing its red-ringed eyes.

The flavors of hot oil and meat wafted out from Bob's glowing window, and a dark skinned man leaned out to take Travis's order. The rains had begun for real, now, and Travis flicked the butt of his cigarette onto the ground.

"What's it gonna be?"

"Just give me a hot dog!"

"One hot dog! That gonna be it; you want a drink?"

"Nah, I'm good."

"You got enough of that already!" the vendor laughed, and frowned in a sympathetic manner, clearly not the real Bob. Bob had been a short bald man with a significant moustache and a perpetually furrowed brow. Wind and water swept across Travis's back and he tucked his hands under his belt, the last spot of warmth on his body. A piece of paper, a flyer, tumbled by, and Travis rubbed the half-circle scar on his left temple, a reminder of his only serious bicycle accident. It was a moment of extreme pain, not pain from the blood and the ringing in his ears, but from the realization that he had ruined his favorite bicycle, the black mongoose, his father told him. From the sizzling interior, a hand stuck out a hot dog.

"One hot dog, for the sharp-dressed man!" the vendor gazed up, over Travis's head to the audience in the left balcony. Travis gratefully accepted his dog, went for the mustard, and thought the better of it. He would only get it all over his suit.

"It's pretty cold out there. You gonna be ok?"

Travis started, not realizing the vendor was talking to him—not that there was anyone else around. He nodded and smiled widely and assured him he would be, not bothering to conceal his shiver, but caring enough to walk away quickly when, without warning, he began to cry.

The tears were a funny thing. Travis had cried when his first girlfriend broke up with him; he couldn't remember a time since then. He almost cried when he broke his leg, but never at any moments of joy. That was not like this. This was miserable, but it was something else, too. He felt them jumping out of the corners of his eyes like sparks. Back on the bridge, where he'd seen the seagull, Travis had to pause to regain control of his breath. He was choking, cold, and steaming, beset by the feeling that ten people were cooped up inside him, thrashing, wailing, seven white molds festering, three screaming voices. Travis leaned over the concrete banister with the lash of water on his back and a river pouring beneath him, and all he could think about was not death or salvation, but the way his father looked when he showed him his first acceptance letter. The hot dog was delicious.

What was it—the taste of tears in his mouth, the warmth in his eyes—how did it get to be this way, that he could not control his body or mind, that the day of standing and weathering had become chaos of liquid and soul. The banister was solid, Travis clung to it; he might have looked sick to a passing car, or like a child who has dropped his toy over the railing. He would like to see something fall, like a stick; he would like to see a splash in the water. Travis waits but there is no splash, no sign. He contemplates the future through the essence of breath, one at a time, wondering how many more are to come before something new happens. What was it that his father had said? Travis cannot remember, he cannot even remember where he is, only that it was nighttime, and someone was playing music.

In the end it was not the cold or the darkness that causes Travis to stir, but the rain, which did not pour constantly, but like all things, ebbed in its strength. But it was still raining. Travis pulled himself off the railing but let himself linger by the dam where the river spilled. His phone was off—one of his hands must have done that. He had seen, for the first time, the truth the future held, a truth of sadness and misery and forget. What else had he lost? How many birthdays, how many Christmases, how many baseball games on the television had he already forgotten? Because now he

can only remember highlights, toys, songs, and disappointing innings. It was more than sadness; it was fear. What did his father sound like? What was the last meal they ate together?

Oh, but Travis remembers that one.

* * *

In the room with blue curtains, Travis had sat with his food, listening to the hush that extended from his silverware, which would not touch his plastic platter, to the muted television, to the solar planes, tumbling in through the narrow window. There was only that one sound, the rise and fall (why is it always a rise and fall?) of the respirator, and he had been listening very closely, adeptly, his teachers might have said, because Travis could hear in nearly perfect pitch. It must be, it must be; but to him it was no noise, no more than the rest of the hush. Because as closely as he had been listening, Travis could not hear any breathing.

How had it been? Travis knew, somehow, what the world looked like that day, though he had not been there to see it. It had not been night or raining, but one of those last days of winter, when the world was covered in melt. Water will creep everywhere in February, animate as it changes state. He could see his father, Dylan, as he stepped out onto the loading dock, pissed off with the managers inside, and thumbing for a cigarette on the inside of jacket. He was too tired for this, too blistered by it, his arms hurt for no reason, and he was as gassy as a Republican. A flame popped from the lighter. Dylan was falling; his tailbone had struck the steel rim of the concrete step, and winded him. That thing in his chest, just like the fire. The lighter had bounced down the steps, making a hollow, skipping sound. He had reached for the chipped steel railing, stunned, dizzy; terrified. He couldn't get up; he couldn't breathe.

Travis had sat watching his cup of jello, conscious that the same mechanical force which made the green cubes quiver and jacked up his father's ribcage. He had not missed, not so much missed his father, as he had wondered where he was. Some time passed before heels on tile had broken the spell of silence, and his mother had come in, and they had talked about the tests, they had agreed, and known that the—the plug must be pulled. But he was more concerned with, where was he?

* * *

Travis couldn't remember any caution: he saw a glowing white pedestrian flicker, and went for it. When the first car blared, he realized that he was alone, stumbling the wrong way across the street; hands in his pockets. The traffic grew raucous as he trespassed the pavement before it, angry machines, and Travis fled to median, for a moment isolated from all humanity between vehicular conduits. Perhaps it would never end—the traffic would only get faster, and Travis would slowly lose himself between north and southbound flows, flake by flake. Then, it stopped. A cigarette flew out the window of a Chrysler; the pedestrian light changed to 'walk,' and, on his island, Travis had no way to move. From, the silver Chrysler beside him *A Little Night Music* climbed out with the cigarette. It couldn't be real, Travis had never learned Deutsch, but Amadeus played on, waltzing with a plastic bag down the street. The vehicle idly stroked its wipers and Travis peered in. The driver, a man with a sunken chin and thin blonde hair—not a pianist, or a district attorney, and probably not a father—stared back at him, and Travis flinched. The window whirred up, suffocating the sound, but the song plays on.

People hear *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and imagine Versailles and Arcadia, but Travis has heard something more. It could not be contained in floral gardens or marble temples; it was more than a fountain of feeling or story. From the windshield, a restless-eyed young man, auburn hair slicked brown, gazed back at Travis, reflecting, and then he disappeared, splitting across the road, hoping to make it in the last few seconds of the count-down, always followed by the music that he can neither lose nor explain, music articulating weightlessness in space and the catalyst of bubbles from thermal vents. It was not a song of notes, it was a series of moments and tones, plucked from across his life, returning, a refrain.

When Travis met the piano, he was six and a half. He had seen it before—the thing had been in his house for as long as he could remember, which wasn't very long at that point, but still long enough to shock the little boy when his father said, "Watch your fingers, Danny," and folded back the heavy cover.

"Go on," Dad had said, "try a key."

Travis had put his finger on a bone block, and, as if launching a missile, rang the treble G. He had felt a kick somewhere deep within as the vibration climbed his arm. Before the noise was spent, his father punched down a dozen keys, and the air was haunted by music. Travis had gazed at the black flower carved on the centerboard, perplexed and compelled by its spirals, its feathers, its iris,

and feared suddenly that the piano had lived in his bright yellow house before he had.

His father showed him the 'C' chord, and already he was making beautiful music. "I think I'm going to start playing again. Would you like to learn with me? You'll be a great musician some day."

The feeling passes before it begins. It has all only been one moment, one point of refraction on the car window that speckles with the light of a passing movie theater. Travis closes his eyes, almost home.

Notes climb up from C.

Dylan stands alone in cold, and quiet; "I wish it would rain again," echoes in a box in the attic of his mind. He is at the cemetery, the bookstore, his home; he is at a street corner with life strong in him, but almost too feeble to stand. A car passes his by, striking white in the darkness. The last note of a sonata rings in his ears, all notes. He has seen sundown, night has arrived, and the dead are still dead and the living, alive. Dylan misses everything, down comforters, wood-stoves, the infrared glow of human bodies, but he is thinking about a piano, while his son hurries home to play.

Two Beds Smiled Mockingly

Sarah Destin

At least I hadn't burned the chicken. Adam hated it when I burnt his chicken, not that that would make up for anything, for he would still be displeased. The table was not set to his standards. It was Wednesday, the white tablecloth tonight. The china was to be set out, the wine to be opened and poured before he walked in the door. Wednesday, no flowers were to be on the table on Wednesday. His mother had died on a Wednesday. He hated flowers on Wednesday.

I glanced at the clock; he would walk through the door at any second. His dinner was to be at six o' clock sharp. There was no point in trying. Hopefully he would only yell. After the yelling, another silent dinner. No thanks for the meal; eyes glued to the television screen.

If it had been a good day, Adam might make small talk. Light gossip about the other men in his office. Or about their wives. Or, better yet, their children. If Adam was bored with me, he wouldn't pass saying hello. Even then, it came out gruffly.

Yet, something about today was different. Adam walked through the door slowly, instead of barging in, and simply stared. At me. Into me, more like. His eyes scrutinized my every move. Maybe it's the chicken; maybe Adam had chicken for lunch. Maybe he doesn't want the chicken.

"Is something wrong, dear? I made chicken, I made chicken the way you like it," I said quietly, throwing in the 'dear' I knew he liked. 'Dear' is what wives are supposed to say to their husbands. Adam liked it when I pretended this was a normal marriage.

"It isn't ready," he muttered coldly.

"It'll be ready in a minute," I replied as sweetly as I could muster.

"I just got a phone call," Adam said ignoring me, pulling his chair out from the table to sit down. Why he wasn't muttering some remark about not having the table set was an oddity enough in itself. Adam never sat down before drinking the first glass of his wine.

"Ohhh, from who?" I said smiling with false enthusiasm.

"That's what's wrong," he said, beginning to breathe heavily. "Our daughter called."

"Lee called," I said almost to myself.

At least I hadn't burned the chicken. Adam hated it when I burnt his chicken, not that that would make up for anything, for he would still be displeased. The table was not set to his standards. It was Wednesday, the white tablecloth tonight. The china was to be set out, the wine to be opened and poured before he walked in the door. Wednesday, no flowers were to be on the table on Wednesday. His mother had died on a Wednesday. He hated flowers on Wednesday.

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"Lee called," I said almost to myself.

"She's coming home. Your daughter," Adam said as we locked eyes, as if he were daring me to contradict him. This was my fault, of course, all my fault.

October 6, 1959. Six pounds, three ounces. At least that was what the doctors had told me. I had been betting somewhere between two and three hundred pounds myself. Or maybe that was just me, swelled stomach and stretch marks galore. Clown feet, breasts that resembled watermelons.

There was no beauty in pregnancy. Adam had warned me, back when he would just warn and never yell. Back when it seemed like he might actually love me.

"All it's gonna be is a little whining, pooping thing. All a baby does is create more pain and work. And let me tell you, the last thing you'll ever find me doing is changing a diaper," Adam had scoffed when I first brought up having a baby. But I had begged, and I had whined, and I had really believed the things that I had said.

"Adam, dear, I know it's work, but I'll love it. You just watch, you'll end up loving it too," I said, though I never did end up loving it. Maybe motherhood is one of those things you can't learn to love, like asparagus. Maybe you're either oeing and aaing your life away or feeling like you're eating grass. Asparagus had always tasted like grass, regardless of the amount of mayonnaise I would put on it. You just can't sugarcoat that stuff.

Three shattered plates. The good china, since it was Wednesday. He liked the good china on Wednesdays. Better shattered plates than shattered bones, I thought, leaning down to sweep up the last of the plates. His voice still rang through the room, a poor excuse of a woman, a wife. He only asked so much of me, when he provided everything else. It would be fruitless to remind him that I too could work, could get a job. In a previous life, I had been an English teacher.

"What could *you* possibly teach anybody? Who would even hire you, you can't even empty a goddamned dishwasher!" Adam yelled if I even dared bring something like that up. Something that made it seem as though I was worth anything. At such thoughts, Adam would merely laugh me off with another sip of whiskey. And yet, he was right. I hadn't had a job in over twenty years, and there was nothing I could teach anyone. Literature had deceived me with thoughts of happiness for far too long.

"Mama, look at me, Mama!" Lee would shriek. Every time I walked in it was Mama, Mama, Mama. I simply could not stand it. No sane person would stand for it. Sane people would mix themselves a little martini and maybe prop up their feet for a few minutes, just to relax when they got home. A sane person would certainly not be leaning on the whims of a three-year-old.

"I'm tired, Lee," I would weakly reply.

"Mama, just look!" she would say and begin to jump around me, dance around me, sing around me. Anything for my attention.

The plates had been from my mother, a wedding gift, I realized, as I emptied the dustpan into the garbage can. A gift from Joan Lee Anderson, a woman who hadn't given many gifts. Not her fault, I hastily reminded myself, Mama did what she needed to keep us going. And, to Mama, that had meant moving from trailer to trailer. Her life given up to whatever was needed of her, everything from cleaning women's homes to being with their husbands at night. Mama had escaped her marriage, and the escapee's life was far from glamorous.

Yet, Mama relished in it. *I'm a businesswoman, Emma darling, your mama is a businesswoman*, she would always say. And I couldn't help but scoff at her, a poor woman scrubbing floors in order to buy food was more my idea of poverty, not business. How ignorant I was, unable to see how far ahead of her time Mama truly was. Trapped in an era when working women had no real options, no real education, and yet were being forced to solely support their families. And to still be *simply glamorous*, as Mama always was.

But, she had been a mother, a real mother. Throughout it all she had sung lullabies and baked cakes. Mama had had such a light to her, a spirit that she rode so high on. It was that spirit that had prompted me to name my daughter in Mama's memory. In hopes that Lee might inherit some of that light that I could never quite possess.

If I had wished for Lee to be anything like my mother, the results had astounded even me. Lee resembled Mama's every feature, from her laugh to her ears. I oftentimes found myself wondering where Adam had even played a part in Lee's DNA. But then again, fatherhood confused me far more than anything else. Given, Lee and Adam were distant from one another, yet it always seemed that Adam was forgiven all his small murders whereas mine were kept tallied up. The same was said for Adam; he forgave Lee for her mistakes. For me there were no mistakes, only all the things I did wrong.

Maybe I was just jealous of their relationship, I wasn't sure. But, when they would talk, or when they would laugh with one another, I would feel like a foreigner watching through a glass wall. Invisible, but more so perplexed. I had never seen fatherhood firsthand before, what a father could be. Lee deserved a father, even if Adam didn't deserve a wife. So I stayed.

I silently crept back to my bedroom, careful not to disturb Adam. It was a Wednesday night; Adam sat in the living room and drank his nightcap on Wednesday nights. I considered saying goodnight, but he was reading. He didn't like noise while he read.

As I opened the door, I couldn't help but wonder why we still slept in the same bedroom. Oh, we slept in separate beds of course, but why not just separate bedrooms? Because this is what married couples do, I thought. If I wanted to leave the bedroom I might as well have left the house.

The two beds had always seemed to smile at me mockingly, as though they remembered a better time before their existence. I remember the day we bought them, a rather unusually cold day in August of 1966. It was almost funny how quickly the past twenty years with these beds had gone by.

Adam had found me repulsive after Lee was born, sparing no opportunity to remind me of it. There were affairs; I knew that, though never really cared. Other women talked, but I didn't talk back.

Even as I attempted to sleep, my thoughts remained with Lee. The later days with Lee, the teenage years I so often went back to. The years I must have disappointed her the most.

I had never been a PTA mom like I should have, I didn't bake cupcakes like I should have and I didn't take Lee to school like I should have. Every day had seemed to only get worse, I slept in later, not for my own selfish reasons but simply because I had no purpose out of bed. The housework remained unattended to and Adam's rage increased.

I stopped getting dressed in the morning. There wasn't anywhere to go, I didn't even have a car in those days. I would sit at the kitchen counter in my pink nightgown, smoking my cigarettes and drinking my coffee. *Horrid habit*, I would always say before I lit up. They'd warned us long enough ago about smoking, though I knew why I still did. It was one of the only things I had left.

"What are you doing still in pajamas?" Lee would ask when she came home from school to find me there, at my counter. I always saw it, the look of disgust that passed over my daughter's eyes. A look of disgust my own eyes were all too familiar with. A trait of sorts passed on through the generations, the eyes of a daughter to judge her mother.

"Well, you know me. I got caught up with all my things, never did manage to get around to it." I would answer for, Lee couldn't understand. She was a child, she needn't understand. *I'm miserable Lee*, I had always wished to yell. *I'm pathetic and I'm miserable. Can't you see that?*

The phone rang and I lunged out of bed to pick it up. Adam did not like answering machines and the phones were my responsibility, always my responsibility. He was busy; he could not be bothered with phones ringing.

"Hello," I mumbled, still half-asleep.

"Mom?" a woman's voice asked tentatively.

"Lee? Is that you?" I asked.

"Yes," Lee heavily replied. She sounded tired, if she was tired she shouldn't be driving.

"You sound, your voice, it's different. Different than I remember."

"It's been...a while."

"You shouldn't have called so late," I said, harsher than I would have liked for it to sound.

"I forgot about Dad and phones," Lee apologized, and I grimaced. She needn't have to apologize.

"Yes, well..."

"I wanted to see you."

"Yes, your father told-" I started to say, but Lee interrupted me.

"I wanted to see you. I'm at Bryn Park, where we used to walk to."

"I don't remember us walking..." I began to murmur almost to myself. I wouldn't have been able to remember us walking to parks, even if we had.

"I want you to meet someone," Lee said, ignoring me.

"It's been..."

"A while."

"I've missed you, Lee," I said, but it sounded insincere, almost as though I was mocking her. Kind words had always sounded forced coming from me.

"You knew the number," Lee snapped, and I felt I could almost breathe again. The anger I could handle, but the kindness was far too foreign.

"I didn't know how to call."

"You should have known."

"I should know how to do these things."

"Yes."

"I'll drive over now," I said, hanging up. For once, trying to do what I should have.

The park was dark, but certainly not dark enough for me to hide my expression. As I walked over I could vaguely make out Lee sitting on a bench, holding something I never imagined I would see.

"She's five months old, my little Cara." Lee practically whispered, as I stared down at my granddaughter. Lee began to stroke her, her tiny little gorgeous hands. Five months, I thought, five

months. What have I been doing the last five months? *Laying out tablecloths and roasting chickens.*

Lee was thinner than I remembered her to be. Her hair was thinner too. I wondered if she had taken up smoking. Maybe if she teased her hair she would look like how I had looked on that afternoon in August of 1966.

But, oh, Cara was beautiful. I couldn't possibly imagine a baby with bluer eyes. Maybe one day back in 1929 my eyes had been that blue, but I wouldn't know. She was so tiny. I hadn't been this close to a child in so long. Maybe it was because this child wasn't my responsibility or my burden, but I felt as though I could love this child. That I could pick her up and really hold her. That I could kiss her little rosy cheeks. That I could love her in the ways that I could never love Lee.

"I meant to be there for you, Lee, I really did," I whimpered, tears beginning to flow, though I hardly seemed to notice.

"I know," she said far more defiantly than I would have expected. Lee didn't know about all the problems with Adam. She didn't understand what happened to me.

"Lee,"

"Yes?" Lee asked, as she leaned over to unbuckle the seat belt on Cara's stroller.

"Should I have left? Should we have left?" I asked. And, for a moment, neither of us spoke. I watched Lee, like the way I used to watch her as a girl. I watched my daughter pick up Cara. I watched my daughter be a mother.

"Do you see that woman over there, walking?" Lee asked, motioning across the park at Mrs. DuBois. She seemed nice enough when I saw her, though I had always envied her as I did most of the women in town.

"Yes,"

"Maybe when she comes home tonight her alcoholic husband will beat her. Maybe she'll get a phone call that her son's been arrested. Maybe her teenage daughter will tell her she was raped last night. They all have their problems, Mom," Lee said, pausing for a moment.

"Here, hold Cara."

It was a demand, but a demand given with love. As I bounced Cara in my lap she began to giggle and I couldn't help but smile. When she laughed, I saw her little dimples. Lee's dimples. My dimples. It's a strange sensation, seeing your features on another person. On a baby.

"Babies! They cause all the problems, and yet seem to solve them all at the same time," I exclaimed, and immediately regretted it, afraid it might offend Lee. Though, she didn't seem to care,

or maybe she just didn't realize what I meant.

"Treasure her, Lee. She's lovely. I'm only sorry I couldn't have met her earlier," I said, musing over this little baby in my arms. Even if I wasn't here, she would still have at least a bit of me in her. Feelings I hadn't had since that cold October day in 1959 came rushing back, though Cara wasn't mine, she was Lee's. Yet, she was mine all the same.

"It's never too late to be a grandmother, or, for that matter, a mother. And it's never too late to leave," Lee whispered. She was right, I had always known that it wasn't too late to leave. It was just the wonder if there really was somebody still left waiting for me that had always made it so unclear.

This Morning I Wrote A Poem

Robert Exley

This morning I wrote a poem
 about everyone I've ever met.
 My mother, my father, my brother,
 even Durp—my imaginary friend from first grade.
 Every teacher, up through now;
 however they taught or didn't teach,
 however they lied for the sake of innocence.
 All the friends I made, far and wide,
 the friends that loved and those that bit
 when I could not bite back.
 A chorus line of femme fatales
 either frequent or otherwise fabricated.
 The voice of that GPS navigation system,
 with which I fell so hopelessly in love
 during our long, impeccably directed drives up the seaboard.
 Her mechanized voice—how I swooned!—though
 towards me she seemed resistant in her affections.
 Even the dope that I smoked
 —who knows how much?—
 and the dewdrop mist that gave me away
 (I counted them too).
 I wrote a poem about all of them,
 about everyone I had ever seen; stranger and familiar
 and the moral of the story is this:

You—all you zombies, as Heinlein would say,
 you stamp lickens, you ass kissers,
 you bugle blowers, you drum drummers,
 you rising stars, you fucking comets;
 you keep shining. For me,
 you keep burning.

Country Station

Antonia Farzan

Cat Country 98.1 WCTK

Man pursues woman in bar.
 Woman shows apprehension
 towards flirtatious male cowhand.
 Man often makes poor choices
 when chasing attractive women.

Man has pride in his small town.
 Man appreciates John Deere tractor.
 Woman demands marriage proposal.
 Man is ready for a drink.
 Man enjoys off-roading.

Man prefers woman to truck,
 dog, baseball team, and barbecue.
 Woman makes bad decisions
 under the influence of alcohol.
 Woman laments extramarital affair.

Man converses with elder,
 learns value of patience with women.
 Man seeks wealthy wife.
 Man attracts women with his truck,
 which offers four-wheel drive.



Catherine Ferrara
Storage, 35mm film photography



Catherine Ferrara
Suspent, 35mm film photography



Sophie Vershbow
Commonplace Angel, digital photography



Sarah Cocuzzo
Arno #6, digital photography



Sarah Cocuzzo
Fairy, digital photography



Ryn Steck
At Dusk, photography

Amy

Maeve Gately

Maybe it was the bones, ancient
 And covered in caked dust
 Which she spent her days scrubbing,
 Elbow-deep in Minoan decay
 Or maybe it was her laugh, short
 And surprised, the way it bubbled
 Out of her, sudden and breathless
 Or her love of French movies,
 And curried lentils, and Thai
 Food on rainy days.

There's just something about you, he said
 And later, I agreed
 Driving through the Cretan night,
 Radiohead playing
 Her hand on my thigh
 She was electric, alive
 And there was something about her
 That made me wonder.

Somehow I think it was her hair
 The color of copper, of fire
 Of my own, the way
 She pinned it back in an elegant knot
 How it got tangled in the salty air

That night she slept up on the roof,
 And how it looked the next morning,
 Flecks of gold caught by the sunrise.

Red hair is caused by sugar and lust,
 She quoted
 And ruefully, I agreed.

My Now-Estranged Father on Christmas Eve

Molly Haughey

You once told us about
 an Indian man whose twin lived
 inside his belly. You motioned with your arms in big
 circles and leaned back as you sauntered around
 my apartment, your beer spilling onto my rug.
 “It was like *Alien!*” you said, the latter half of the sentence
 distorting as you belched.
 You laughed as you brushed the droplets of beer out
 of your beard with the back of your hand and what
 remained on the little hairs looked like
 seawater on an algae-covered rock.
 The laughter subsided and then there was
 an unearthly grumble.
 You glanced at your stomach, eyes wide in fear.

Pillowcases

Daniel Keating

Kyle began to strip the sheets off his bed, starting with a drool-stained pillowcase that had survived for almost a decade now. It had a whole host of designs on it, which he used to like when he was six. Now, twice that age, even though sports were still cool and all, little football, baseball, and soccer players playing catch where he slept just seemed wrong. And to make matters worse, the “blanket” for his bed was really a “comforter,” which was just unacceptable to have if friends came over. Kyle was folding up the comforter when his mom came down the hall. She had to use crutches because she had developed a stress fracture in her foot, after taking up running again for a week, and running about twice as many miles as ever before. When she came home from the doctor’s with the x-ray results, she had been oddly proud of them. As though overtraining was a mark of bravery, rather than stupidity.

She saw Kyle folding the blanket, and asked him if he had just washed it. Kyle, although he knew a lie would get him out of a chore, answered, “No.” His mom delivered the verdict he expected, since she hadn’t washed the blanket in months and it was beginning to smell. And while he was at it, could he do all the sheets, too? And hold on a second before he started it up, she yelled down the stairs, she was going to have him put his sister’s sheets in, too. Kyle cringed, imagining the pile of sheets being flung down onto his face. His sister’s sheets smelled like the rest of her room; a combination of twenty overwhelming odors designed to eliminate the ability to breathe oxygen.

When he was measuring out the detergent, Kyle heard rising voices winding their way down to the laundry room. “So you’re running up our cell phone bill and can afford to buy all these clothes that you only wear once?” His sister was in yet another argument with his mom, and Kyle’s dad would soon join in, although he never knew which side his dad would enter on. Kyle’s sister, Beth, was sixteen and about to enter junior year of high school. Kyle started up the wash because there was no way he was going to stand downstairs waiting an hour for the argument to end. By then they would have forgotten about the sheets anyway.

The laundry room was relatively cold during the summer, since it was half-buried in the

ground. Kyle liked the laundry room, but not because he enjoyed clean clothes or anything related to laundry. The laundry room's air always seemed more breathable, perhaps because it was so far from his sister's perfumes. Last week he had scouted it out and determined that it would work well to conceal his childhood treasures. There were plenty of shelves to store pillowcases containing comforters, little toy cars, and his stuffed animals. His friend Carl, who had a girlfriend, had made a joke in social studies about stuffed animals being "for little girls," even though Carl's girlfriend had them.

Carl talked trash about his girlfriend all the time, which seemed to be what she liked about him. He would insult her and she'd playfully hit him on the head with a textbook and then bite her lip and look longingly at him. And then she'd leave and Carl would say, "Stuffed animals are for fucking pussies." He'd smirk at his cleverness, which was the only way the group knew to laugh, because most of them hadn't understood "fucking pussies" had two meanings since Carl was thirteen and "sexually active" as they say in health class. They were all still twelve and "developing," in awe of him. Kyle knew that what made Carl better than them was how "normal" he was. He never said anything weird or naïve or controversial, he grew up at exactly the average age the health teachers expected, he dressed in the clothes everyone would be wearing in two weeks. Kyle needed some white sheets and pillowcases. Something more mature and neutral.

Kyle, having loaded up the last blanket, knew that this was the perfect opportunity to remove his childhood without anyone bothering him about it. Kyle had been at his friend Ben's house when Ben's mom was cleaning his room and found a bucket under his bed full of all his old Halloween costumes and kept showing them to Kyle and Ben. Neither of them enjoyed the show, and Kyle was not going to let anything like that happen when he had friends over. "Why can't we ever hang out at your house, Kyle?" Carl had said. Kyle imagined Carl smelling the perfumes coming from his sister's room, and his smirk as his parents yelled, "You're using up all the family's minutes! What if we need to call for help and we don't have any money left?" and his sister snorting in response, faking laughter. He could have all the stuffed animals and sheets hidden in fifteen minutes if the argument kept up.

But at each creak of protest from the old stairs Kyle's confidence in his ability to get rid of the animals weakened. His stuffed animals were already aware that he was trying to get rid of them, preparing pleading faces that couldn't be hidden in a pillowcase. Now, his plan to stash them in the laundry room, it reminded him of the black bag an executioner placed over next victim's head. But he wasn't killing them. He was just moving them out of view so that he could keep his real friends.

Kyle walked down the hall and opened the linen closet, making sure his parents were still occupied by the argument with his sister. Who knows how they would react to his sudden maturation, if they even noticed. Perhaps his mom would start yelling at him for "becoming distant and COLD and hanging out with the WRONG CROWD" like his sister apparently was, or maybe his dad would say "you don't make the decisions in *this* household," or, worse, maybe his sister would point at him and his clean room and drag him into the argument on her side, "How come you never yell at *him*? He's getting rid of everything you've ever given him!" If only they did yell at him. He had to put the car keys in his mom's hands if he wanted a ride somewhere. Otherwise she'd forget. No, his mom would more likely walk past him casually pulling six old pillowcases out of the closet and tell him, "Your sister is a bitch just like your aunt always was," to which he would just nod and continue pulling out the pillowcases, as though this was what boys often did, or perhaps he was planning to be a ghost at Halloween and was planning several months ahead to give himself time to sew.

He looked down the hallway into the room, his parents framed by the doorway like a painting done from the wrong direction. His father stood in khakis and a nice white and blue striped shirt like a model from a catalog. His hair was combed and short in back, the bulb at the end of his nose just barely visible as he turned his head left and right towards a pacing Beth, whose dyed blonde hair swished up into view over his dad's shoulder as though trying to make itself noticed. Maybe if Kyle grew his hair out as long as his sister's he could fling it up as he talked to get some attention. His mom wore some sort of unflattering brown and purple flowery dress that came down to her knees, and her short, curly brown hair bobbed up and down as she kept attempting to shout over her daughter's shrill insults.

No, there wasn't even that interruption. Maybe his friends would think his parents were cool for how little they paid attention to him, instead of noticing how completely unimportant he was. Looking back, Kyle figured they must have bought all his stuffed animals for him just to stop him from pleading with them so they could go back to arguing with his sister. It seemed like they'd never done anything but. "AND THE CELL PHONE BILL?" his mom screamed, and his sister screamed something back with so many swears that he was rather expecting to hear a slap as his sister was reminded who made the decisions in the household. There was a short silence, so Kyle picked out six of his oldest pillowcases, hoping they'd be enough so he wouldn't have to make a second trip. He wondered if the squeaking noise of the closet door closing would make his parents look down the hall towards him. Kyle had to admit the only attention his parents had paid him of late was when his sister pointed the

finger at him, trying to rope him into the argument; “he thinks it too but just doesn’t have the guts to say it to your face,” or, when Kyle would be trying to get his mom’s attention to drive him to a friend’s house, “even the baby just wants to use you,” and Kyle would always have to ask for a ride from the friend as his mom and sister started arguing even louder.

His parents did not turn to look down the hallway and were still standing framed in the doorway the silence broken by his sister complaining about how she couldn’t bring boys over. His mom started to scream about what a terrible daughter Beth was, and his dad trying to calm everyone down. Kyle wondered why the phrase “calm down” even existed; he had only heard a “DON’T TELL ME TO CALM DOWN”s in response.

Kyle closed the linen closet, taking care that everything was back as it was before, so his mom wouldn’t go off on anyone. He half-expected one of his parents to come barging out of the room, having reached the limit of tolerating his sister. Kyle didn’t know why they bothered to argue with her, since all it did was make everyone dislike each other. And they were always telling her to be more like Kyle, a nice, docile kid, as if he was a lovely pet who had lived for twelve years in their house. His parents hadn’t asked him a question about his life in weeks, they were always too busy complaining about Beth being unreasonable and Beth is flirting with the wrong kind of guys and why does she have to buy another type of conditioner?

Kyle entered his bedroom, pillowcases in hand. “I should just go live with my boyfriend, and get the fuck out of this shitty family once and for all.” Kyle wasn’t aware she had a boyfriend at the moment, since she had just broken up with two of them in the past month. Where would she go? If she was pregnant, she could always get the apartment and child support payments from the boyfriend when he left her. That’s what Carl’s older half-sister did, and no one dared ever bring that up in front of Carl, because his family had disowned her once she decided to keep the baby. She wasn’t even twenty yet when it was born. Ben told them after he heard his mother talking about Carl’s family once, probably because he was embarrassed by Carl’s mocking. He then made them promise not to tell anyone, and they all crossed their fingers behind their backs and promised.

“Maybe you should, you little slut.” Kyle paused at the entrance to his room, holding the pillowcases in his hand. Was that the end of it? He had never heard his sister called a slut before except by high school boys who knew Kyle was related to her, but they always said “hot slut,” with a certain tone of ironic respect. Kyle was afraid to move during this silence, afraid that he might be able to live in this house either after this argument. His sister might point a finger at him to try and spread

the blame and his mom would send him off to live with his sister and her boyfriend. He was more of a house guest, anyway, who used the same bathrooms and took up a room that could’ve been a nice study across from the master bedroom if only he hadn’t been born.

But Beth would not be put in her place: “And how did I become your daughter?” Kyle heard his dad once again used the word “calm,” perhaps in a heroic self-sacrifice as his mom turned her screaming outburst towards him. Kyle stepped loudly into his room, determined to hide all these things that his family must have bought just to keep him quiet in the gift shops, planning to stuff the sharks and penguins and zipper pouch kangaroos into pillowcases where he wouldn’t have to remember that these things were fake and immature and his family.

He had not wanted to meet the gaze of his stuffed animals as he put them into the bags to carry downstairs, but, to his surprise, none of his stuffed animals seemed to be pleading to stay. They seemed resigned, with blank stares towards the walls and ceilings, colder than the linens he found deep in the bottom of the closet. Kyle knew if he hesitated now he wouldn’t be able to do it. He just couldn’t put his mom into a pillowcase and store her in the laundry room when his friends came over, and he couldn’t lock his sister’s door from the outside, and he couldn’t go live on his own, because he was only twelve. But the animals would fit where his mom couldn’t, and would sit on a shelf without flicking their hair up for attention, trying to escape. Every animal he put into the bag felt like a betrayal, their fur synthetic as his fingers gripped them. He remembered begging for a number of them at the aquarium and at shops up in Maine on vacation. He remembered how he used to pet his stuffed seal before he went to bed as though it could feel. They all seemed to be content with their fate even though Kyle had never told them why he had to do this. Perhaps they had heard enough arguments as well.

The sound of zippers came from his sister’s room, probably from the countless bags she owned. Perhaps she was packing things away; Kyle briefly felt like he had something in common with his sister. He picked up the final stuffed animal, the small brown bear that his parents had given him as his first stuffed animal, and put it into the fifth pillowcase. It turned out he didn’t need the sixth. Since he had it, he put it over the pillowcase with all his favorite stuffed animals as added protection. The bags were surprisingly heavy as he carried them down to the laundry room, making it in two trips. The yelling had stopped, as his parents had apparently finished arguing with his sister. He went back to his room to see the end result. The bed looked like it belonged in a hotel room now, with the blankets and sheets stripped off. Carl wouldn’t notice a thing, and Kyle would seem as normal as him,

as long as Ben's mom didn't know about Kyle's family.

Kyle stepped into the hallway and closed the door behind him. His parents were still standing in the entrance, although they had changed their posture. The vertical stripes on his dad's shirt leaned to the right against the wall, their straightness defeated. His mother had a hand across her forehead, and had shifted so that Kyle could see Beth sitting on the floor of her room with pocketbooks, combs, and her cell phone in her hand, texting. She looked up at Kyle and then back to her cell phone. Kyle clicked his door fully shut. The only other sounds were the creak of the floor as his balance shifted, the little buttons of his sister's phone being pushed, and the rattle of the washing machine echoing up the stairs.

A Warm Low End

Daniel Keating

When that girl walks by don't use the dead fret,
 play high up on the neck where the notes resonate smooth
 and you feel them pulsing and blending in your ribs.
 The bridge on your bass says "BadAss II," but tell her
 that even though the pickguard is red tortoise shell
 no animals were harmed in the making of this song.
 Yes, we are recording this session, but not on video
 because looks don't matter, only the transition
 from the chorus to the bridge, and it better not be a bridge
 just to have a bridge, just to mess up an otherwise good song
 for the sake of messing it up. Just because the Beatles did it
 doesn't mean you have to, you can play that augmented fourth
 and cringe and slide it up to the perfect fifth and release like it's yoga
 and suddenly your singer cuts in, and he's making up the lyrics on the spot
 so every other word is 'you' and his best lines are mumbles, and you want to join in and say
 'yeah' over and over again like it's the only word you know and it means something
 when all it really does is distract you from the blood blister forming on your thumb
 because you just *had* to strum those warm
 thumbstroke chords, arpeggios and tremolos
 because you know sleep doesn't get titled
 and this dream is being recycled.

Wet Leaves

Daniel Keating

Do you remember when we were wet leaves, lounging in puddles, leaning up against the ridges in the old wrinkled roads? When we would stretch out and look upwards with exposed veins, talking about how that tree there got cut up so the power lines wouldn't get entangled? Do you remember the choking smell of the cars driving past, trying to take us with them? I remember how one of those cars sucked you up off the wet pavement into a muffler, how sharp the grey curb felt as I leaned against it and let the sun drain the color I had left into the puddle clinging to my edges.

Potato Salad

Amelia Mattern

Fish skeleton clouds remind me of home
and mayonnaise-less potato salad.

The silver bowl will cry chilly tears,
weeping in the heavy heat of the evening.
Chiropractor hands will chop celery
and onions while the potatoes cook.

Do other mothers know
when potato flesh is soft enough?

Rosemary's Boy

Chip Sinton

(Quite kempt, Rosemary sits on a nice wooden chair facing the audience. She is wearing pearls, a sundress, white shawl and white floppy hat. She begins the monologue with stylish black sunglasses on. They are probably some demure brand name – reflective of the mainstream boutiques-and-department stores couture of early 40s wealthwives below the Mason-Dixon line during the G.W. Bush years. Her voice betrays a mélange of nouveau-riche privilege and southern sensibility, planter-bred consideration of each word.)

Rosemary: I am an American, of course. But I think I would say I'm a Christian-American, as much as I hate hyphens before this country. I believe there is a higher power, a higher purpose.

Jesus.

I think it's a good thing to believe – and I'm serious about it. Me and a few ladies have a bible study group at the Club. Nancy said I should really join so I did, and I just think its all very – oh, what's the word? Enlightening.

Anyways though, I have to tell you that so you don't think this story makes me some sort of *liberal* or like *atheist* or anything. I love God and this nation, and my husband is on the Board of the Pemberton Park Boy Scouts and donates a lot of money to veterans. And I always tithe, you can check my checkbook. But we were driving home from Mass on Sunday and we had to idle on the avenue for a few minutes because the *Gays* were marching. Well, more like dancing in their skivvies. And it was so interesting, some of them were just like regular people, kids even, holding signs about how they just wanted to love and hold hands. I thought that was awful sweet.

But then, a bunch of jerks wearing those black ski masks with the holes for your eyes and your mouth

came from the alley – you know, the one across from that cute shoe boutique, Martha's – and they just started hitting them, the gays. And the police were right there and they didn't even do anything. And my husband tries to reverse, but there are cars behind us that aren't moving. Then this one guy – I swear he looked like the oldest Jones boy, the one on the football team who leads Fellowship of Christian Athletes, uh, uh, Charlie, the masked guy looked just like Charlie Jones – he slams this kid who looks like he's 15, just smacks him into the side window, my side window, just smashes his face against the Buick, just

(Rosemary claps her hands together as loud as possible and then grinds them apart. Silence. She removes her sunglasses, adjusts her back posture and continues)

And Bill, well now Bill is furious. He's honking his horn. The car behind us finally moves and Bill is gonna pull away but I'm still staring out the window and I'm seeing this masked athlete type just kicking this boy, this gay I suppose, just kicking him and stomping and then I'm not even listening to Bill anymore because it's like all I could see was this boy. And the jerk, the big hulking Charlie Jones - I mean, I don't know it was him for sure but a mother has a sense - this big Charlie Jones jerk just spits on this boy and slinks away like all the other *thugs*. And now I see this boy there, just on the brick roads, just curled up, and there is blood trickling from his nose and I swear that at that moment he looked just like my son, just like Baylor did when he was 15. He even had that little cowlick on his cropped hair, and I'm staring at that cowlick and the spit from the jerk and its running down this boy's face and mixing with the blood, and the frothy mix is dripping onto the ground and I'm looking for the tears but they weren't on his face, they were on mine. And Bill is yelling and I just turned around and I just raised my voice and I never do that, you know that, and I just raised my voice and I just channeled my grandmammy and I just said "Bill, you're stopping this car right now," and I just got out of the Buick and stepped into this chaos.

And I walked over to this boy, because everyone needs a mother, and I just knelt and I just held him. I mean, hindsight is 20/20, we had a first aid kit in the glove compartment but all I could do right then is hold him. And I just cradled this child, this child of God, and he's bleeding and I'm crying and I just ask him "Why? Why are you out here? Why take this risk?" And he just coughs and he just says, "M'am, I just want the government to say that I'm ok, that this body and this soul is ok." I'd never

really thought about the government and people's bodies I guess. Not really. But at that moment, holding that sweet and bloodied child, I've never felt so much anger. So much anger at those, those, those *jerks*.

I helped him up and I brought him to the bench, the nice one outside that little bakery. I helped him sit, but at this point it was more slumping than sitting. I took off one of the white gloves I wear for church and I dabbed his face, his cuts. He smiled feebly, but his teeth were stained red. I had to look away. One of the officers approached us and he looks at me and he says "M'am, you need to move along, this is a parade route". Said it like nothing happened, said it like this boy wasn't bleeding all over the sidewalk and the bench. So I ignored him and kept cleaning. And then, would you believe it, the officer started again. I let him get to 'm'am'. "Like I said, m'am," he started to say, and I just whirled around, and (*Rosemary stands up and slaps her hands together*). And I know violence is wrong but it just felt so right. I shot him one of those steely glares, the type my ma would give me when I gave her lip, and the officer walked away.

(Rosemary kneels down on the stage now, as if helping the boy.)

And this boy, this boy is just staring at me in disbelief. He was holding his side now - his rib was probably broken. His simple cotton shirt, emblazoned 'Equality', was streaked red. I cradled his chin in my ungloved hand and I asked him what his name was. With enough strength to make St. Peter proud, he extended his arm to shake my hand and told me his name was Tristan. What a beautiful name. Well, at this point I was close to sobbing and he hadn't cried a bit. I clasped his hand and told him I was Rosemary and that everything would be alright. I used to carry this wooden rosary with me, for years I always brought it to church. I put it in his hand and I said "Tristan, Jesus loves you, and he'll always protect you."

(Rosemary stands up to face the audience now.)

The steel in his face went away like that (*Rosemary snaps her fingers*). For the first time, he looked like a normal 15 year old who just got the living daylight kicked out of him by jerks of the first degree. His eyes welled up and he looked me straight in the eye, just right dead-center.

"Much obliged Miss Rosemary, but I don't think Jesus gives a shit anymore."

And he began to cry. I held him to my shoulder, like I would when our daughter Margaret would get dumped. I just held him to my shoulder and we cried.

We cried because we knew he was right.

(Scene.)

The Runes Hidden in Sidewalk Cracks

Chip Sinton

Sundrenched, I watched Love drown in the East River
while the Brooklyn breeze teased my lonely soul.
Trudged sullen on concrete dust crushed by
at least a million before me.

Oppressive city, towering bricks accused me of meaninglessness
Sea of shadow people showed me nothingness
In the eyes of the cookie-cutter hipster I glimpsed
the madness of the abyss.
I averted eye contact and saw my sadness
reflected in a stream of homeless piss.
I've whiffed my doom and sadly reality is hit
or miss.

I missed my chance by falling soul-first into this universe.
Destined to live unrequited, cradle to cremation –
let my ashes silt the relentless stream of time.
I fell for the one who couldn't even trip.
I dreamt awake of passion poems, snuggled away Sundays and those
fingers' fleeting touch – a passing laugh, a clever smile,
kitsch kisses from drizzle dawn until
a fruited brunch.

Beloved grins popped with culture
as blinking commercial night lights illuminated my face,

fallen like autumn leaves and humanity.
Eyes dumping empty glares of pure insanity
into air pungent with the stench of irony
(it smells of flowers, ironically, but that only makes me hate it more....).

Scenes are built by adexec directors and performed
by people acting like life is a stage
and not *the only fucking thing* that matters.
I thirst for sincerity, realness, vulnerable people baring their souls
because the pain and pleasure let us know we are ALIVE.
I even ditched my hypocrisy and tried.

But I fell for the one who couldn't even trip.
Sundrenched, I watched Love drown in the East River
while the Brooklyn breeze teased my lonely soul.
A cigarette sighed its last tobacco breath
and floated to its death beneath a
bridge ferrying nobodies in their purring worldkillers.
I was tempted to follow suit.
But I'm tired of following suits.
So I turned & trudged sullen on concrete dust crushed by
at least a million crushed before me.

An Interview with Jo Pitkin K '78

Olivia Wolfgang-Smith

Jo Pitkin K '78 received a BA from Kirkland College in Creative Writing and Literature and an MFA in Poetry from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. While a Kirkland student, she founded and edited Red Weather, and won the George A. Watrous Poetry Prize. Finishing Line Press published her chapbook, The Measure. A former editor in Secondary English at Houghton Mifflin Company in Boston, Jo has worked full time as a freelance educational writer since 1983

What prompted you to found Red Weather? Why did you choose the Stevens line for the title?

Hamilton has had a number of college-funded literary magazines. I recall both *Wintersetl* and *Watermark*, for example. In my freshman or sophomore year at Kirkland, I joined the staff of *Dessert at the Plaza*, the literary magazine at Kirkland and Hamilton at the time. In the spring of 1976, the outgoing editor persuaded me to run for his position. After I was elected, I decided the magazine needed both a new name and a new look.

To me, *Dessert at the Plaza* had a connotation of urban life: breakfast at Tiffany's, rush hour, taxis. I wanted something more relevant to Clinton and the Mohawk Valley. I talked about the search for a name replacement with my writing professors. At the time, Michael Burkard was reading Wallace Stevens and suggested "red weather" from the final line of "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" as a possible title. My staff deliberated on a short list of favorites and voted on Michael's suggestion.

To us, this title seemed to better reflect life on the Hill. Our instincts must have been on target; Red Weather has lasted nearly continuously for the past thirty years!

What was the magazine like in its early days?

I edited six issues of *Red Weather* from fall 1976 to spring 1978. We produced three issues a year. Not only did I change the magazine's title, but I also reduced its trim size from 8½ x 11; created separate editorial, production, and art staffs; contracted with a different area printing company; and introduced the use of blind submissions. All these changes were designed to make the process more democratic and efficient and to create a more aesthetically pleasing magazine.

Our early issues were rough but gradually improved as we got comfortable using *The Spectator's* photocomposition equipment and doing page layout with pica rulers and X-acto knives. Remember, this was before computers! The layout was done by hand. We typeset the magazine from manuscript in room that smelled like vinegar from the fumes of film developer.

Despite an obvious shift in technology, *RW* then and now are pretty much the same. My issues included student art, photography, poems, and fiction, just as *RW* does today. Much of the work was created on campus as a result of workshops and studio art classes; some of it was created independently outside of the classroom.

Like you, I tried to get a diverse sampling of submissions. I advertised with posters and ads in *The Spectator*. I tapped whatever sources I could. But I never thought of holding a launch party to celebrate the arrival of an issue. All I remember is waiting for the printer to arrive with boxes of freshly minted copies of the magazine. Then I ran around campus with some of my staff to distribute it in obvious places: the libraries at Kirkland and Hamilton, Bristol Campus Center (which at the time was a central gathering spot), and so on.

Once I started writing articles for Kirkland's new interactive archive (www.kirklandalums.org), I delved into some of the history of *RW*. After all these years, I suddenly realized that I had most likely been the first woman on the Hill to edit the student literary magazine. At that time, it was unusual for female students to head campus organizations at Hamilton. It was so unusual, in fact, that several of us were interviewed about the experience for an article entitled "Women in Charge." After I graduated from Kirkland, a number of Kirkland women succeeded me, including Barbara Berson, Vicki Kohn, and Francesca Richardson.

Could you describe Kirkland's creative writing program?

Kirkland had one of the earliest undergraduate programs in creative writing in the nation. It was housed within the Arts Division (rather than in the English Department where it is at most other

colleges). When I was a student, there were only two dozen colleges in the United States that offered a B.A. in creative writing, so it was fairly distinct.

I took the Intro to Creative Writing class with Bill Rosenfeld, and later studied poetry with Michael Burkard and Tess Gallagher. I also took an Advanced Fiction workshop with Bill. There were other writers who taught creative writing at Kirkland prior to my arrival, including the poets Naomi Lazard and Denise Levertov.

Many of us went on to earn MFAs. A few years after Kirkland, I attended the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, where I studied with Larry Levis, Donald Justice, Jane Cooper, and Sandra McPherson. I had to write a book-length poetry manuscript for my MFA thesis. Believe me, this was easy compared to doing my Senior Project in creative writing at Kirkland. I felt so well prepared for graduate school as a result of my Kirkland training. Our Senior Project was an independent, self-designed project that was intended to reflect the culmination of our studies. The skills I learned from my Senior Project (which primarily focused on the writing of a sequence of poems based on Russian literature and the producing of a broadside) have been invaluable, especially in the work world.

One thing that has stayed me all these years is the wonderful sense of community that developed among the writers at Kirkland. We supported one another, celebrated one another's accomplishments. We still do. I regularly look for and read work by my Kirkland classmates. I just did a reading on the Hill with Nin Andrews, who arrived at Kirkland in 1977, and I'm editing an anthology, *Lost Orchard: Prose and Poetry from the Kirkland College Community*. To date, I have approximately fifty submissions from Kirkland alumnae as well as from former faculty and members of the administration.

You have worked extensively in educational writing and editing in addition to writing poetry. What are the challenges and rewards of working with both technical and literary writing at the same time? Do you have a favorite form or genre?

I credit my work on *Red Weather* with my interest in the field of book publishing. I enjoyed the feeling of producing something and working collaboratively. Six months after I graduated from Kirkland, I was working at Houghton Mifflin in Boston. I eventually became an editor there.

Now I earn a living as a writer. That's a huge reward—and a relief, too. I can use what I've studied and worked hard at in a most practical way. I primarily write educational materials for K – 12

students, so I apply what I've studied to writing grammar and composition, literature, and reading textbooks.

I find that the discipline of writing every day under a deadline helps me be more disciplined about my poetry. On the other hand, I have less time than I would like to devote to my creative work. This is a challenge, though, that I would face if I worked as a professor, a plumber, or a psychotherapist. It doesn't bother me that I juggle two distinct forms of writing at a time. I just wish I didn't have to work so much to earn a living!

In recent years, I've had the experience of writing something for a textbook that stuck in my mind. In particular, I wrote a short story about luna moths. I later turned some of the imagery from this reading passage for kids into a poem, which will be published next year in a terrific magazine, *Little Star*.

Who are some of your favorite authors?

There are many! Favorite poets include William Carlos Williams, Robert Frost, H.D., Louise Bogan, Elizabeth Bishop, Francis Ponge, Tomas Tranströmer, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Sylvia Plath, Louise Glück, Gillian Allnut, Ahkmatova, Tsvetayeva. Of course, I read the work of my many Kirkland and Iowa classmates and teachers.

My short list of favorite fiction writers includes Stephen Crane, John Banville, Willa Cather, Bruno Schulz, Edith Wharton.

What projects are you working on now?

Projects I'm doing for money: I'm currently writing a children's trade book for a new history series called *Once in America*, and I'm writing online instructional materials to give students extra help with state-based reading tests. In 2011, I'll be writing several biographical sketches for a trade series called *Notable American Women*.

Projects I'm doing for love: Besides the Kirkland anthology, I'm also working on two chapbook-sized series of poems. I have a new full-length manuscript of poems in the works, too.

*Integer gravida sodales nunc, imperdiet erat lacinia leo ven
lamcorper nibh, sit amet feugiat magna red weather sollici en
tudin volutpat. Etiam feugiat tristisque dapibus. Nullam tem*

