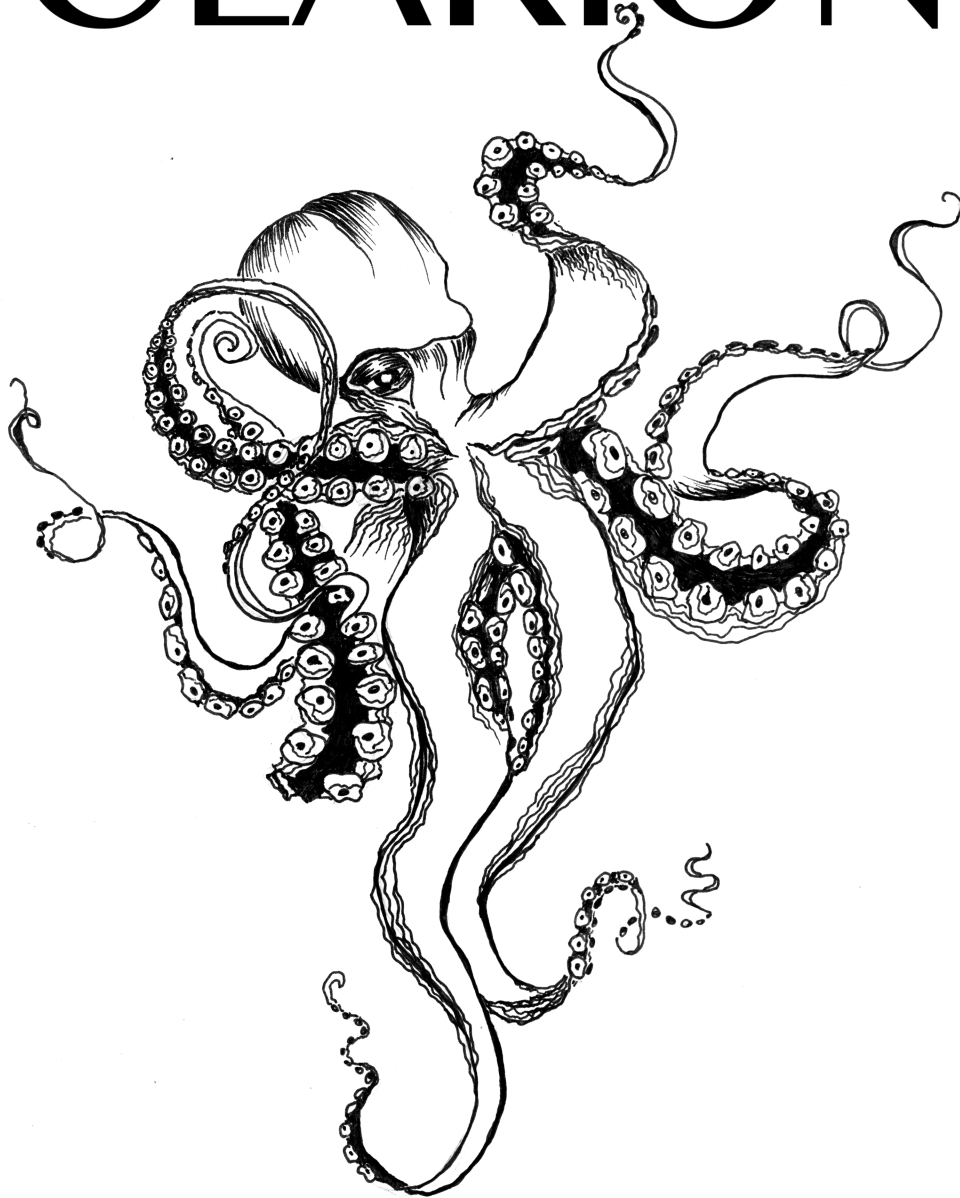


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Who Dat in the Woods



—Corilie Green

Family Reunion

She was my great aunt
and they told me she was loving.
She was a big woman
gone from dirt-poor barefoot Canadian princess
to middle-class, apron wearing, Lancing Lane, American queen.
In the car on the way to New York
Mama would lean back from the passenger seat and
say to the pirate-booty smeared me
that Tante Poule
(for that's what we called her — Auntie Hen)
was caring.
That she loved me very much
she could just be rough sometimes....
And then Mama would pull at the skin of her hands and
frantically tug a brush through my hair
lips tight and breath quick
remind the car to
“be good”
—I think she was saying that for all of us.
And then we'd get to Mimière's or Uncle Vince's and
I'd be shaking in my stiff, flowery Hannah Anderson dress
and mom would hold my hand until my
fingers were white and my wrist was purple. And then
there she was
eyes of a hen on me —
“Eh bébé tu est vraiment plus grande”
lift me onto her chicken-oil smeared apron bosom
and kiss me
with hard lips on my mouth
and when she set me back down
the acrid bitter taste of smoke
told me she was back on the cigarettes

-Rhea Fitzpatrick

Elegy for a Jug

Each day I wait here. The lights come up in the morning and go down in the night. My 1% and almond brothers sit beside me, but never stay for long. The iced glass doors open briefly and a hand snatches one of them up. They are gone forever, but a new youngling comes to replace them soon enough. I am the only elder here. I have been on this shelf for generations. Thank goodness I was pasteurized in my youth, or I would be wretched by this point. Still, why does it even matter? I know my fate is sealed. Regardless of if I was an Oakhurst or a TruMoo, I am destined to perish here. Nobody likes skim.

-Paul Biberstein

The Best is Yet To Come



-Maggie Riendeau

How To

So you wanna be a lobsterman? There's a few things you'll need to know. You'll start with an old decrepit boat that isn't pretty and sometimes isn't even functional. Unless you're rich, if that's the case people will say "daddy bought your boat" but you can't let it get to you. The traps you'll start with will need more work than their worth. You'll spend plenty of time patching them and replacing rotted old runners cause chances are the traps are as old as you. The rope will be hand-me-down and full of knots referred to as rag rope. The knots you'll find in them will mostly be shitty and hard to untie, either way, they'll all need to be taken out. You'll try to paint your buoys nice and clean only to realize that it takes too long and slap the paint on there like an abstract painting. You've already spent more money than you planned on and your bank account makes you cry. Once you've finally got your gear in the water you think money is gonna be made, only to find out that your best day is the guy next to your worst day. You'll spend more time re-hauling strings than hauling other ones because you set over someone. You think you know the tide, it goes in and out right? Wrong! it works different in every spot and you get angry that you can't set in a line straight. You lose track fast of the amount of time you say "fuck it, it looks good enough". You'll probably take a friend as a sternman, that's a fun mistake. You can't scream at a friend the way you can someone who works for you. They'll be full of fuck ups and you gotta break it to them that they suck nicely. They'll show up late and hungover most days and end up fired and then your enemy. You start by thinking spending your day on the water is fun and you like the views, only by the end of the season like spending your days on the water so you don't have to deal with people. At the end of the day even though you didn't catch much you still made more than your friends down at Mc Donalds and that makes it worth it.

-Josh Todd

Canoo2



-Adam Chamberland

Room 103

She sat in the back of the small room, staring blankly at the tall blonde head in front of her. She kept running the list of essential words over and over in her mind as she went back and forth between the head, the window full of candy skulls, and her almost completed test. The words seemed to be mocking her—she knew all but two. She should've studied more. She should've crammed before class started. She should've done literally anything other than stare at the flashing chili pepper lights that bordered the whiteboard. Now she sat in the corner of the room, head completely blank, and heart beating rapidly while she raced the invisible clock. Finish before the bell, she thought. Don't leave any spaces blank. Don't wear hats or hoods. Don't use fidget spinners. Don't use red pen. The class rules ran through her head, ever present

as the day she learned them. She glared at the words on her paper, hoping if she stared at them long enough the Spanish translation would magically pop into her head. No such luck. A two minute warning is called out, and she starts to panic. She scribbles a random combination of letters into the spaces, hoping that they at least passed as Spanish and not some made-up language. She sighs heavily, body visibly slumping in the faded metal seat. It was indeed an unsatisfactory ending to what she hoped would be her first victorious Spanish test.

-Rhea Fitzpatrick

Blue



-Corilie Green

The Man with the Purple Latex Gloves

Posters line the yellow-beige walls of his office. They all have cartoon teeth drawn next to an oversized toothbrush with the words “Don’t forget to brush!” written in thick, red block letters. The fluorescent light overhanging the plush recliner in the middle of the room is the sight that terrifies most children and many adults. Metal tools lay neatly on a tray, ready for the next patient. A little girl, around the age of seven, walks into his office. She’s wearing pink bows to tie up her hair. She smiles innocently as she shyly sits back in the recliner. He snaps the purple latex gloves onto his hands and straps his mask around his mouth.

“Don’t worry, Hannah: It won’t hurt a bit,” he says with a grin. She’s noticeably nervous. Staring at the wrinkles on his forehead and watching his eyes shift back and forth, she waits. He lifts the pliers out from underneath the table and clamps down onto her right molar. He rips it up, letting out blood that splatters onto the walls behind him. She screams ear-piercingly loud. The little girl then begins to kick her feet and squirm out of the chair. He wraps leather straps from the arms of the chair around her wrists and buckles them so tight that her hands turn red.

“Quiet,” he snaps at her, “this will be easier if you’re silent.”

She looks to the ceiling where a poster of a fish tank was hung crooked by white thumbtacks. She tries to hold back her tears. She can’t: they fall slowly down her face. He moves over to the left side of her mouth and begins to line up the pliers once more. The crunch of the tooth ripping from her gums echoes in her ears.

“Good job, kid. This one’s worth at least a thousand bucks!”

The pain paralyzes her. She is unable to move, unable to hear, and unable to process what had just happened. He unbuckles the leather straps around her wrists, letting the blood flow to her hands. She sits up silently — almost robotically — and thanks the man. As she approaches the door, he hands her a piece of paper. It reads: Thank you for cooperation towards getting our country out of debt, every tooth matters. At the bottom of the page is a signature signed President Donald J. Trump. As he waits for this last patient of the day, the dentist begins to clean off the two large molars that he had just plucked from Hannah’s mouth. He places them both into an envelope addressed to the White House with Hannah Demarky written in red ink on the back. He shuffles over to his laptop where a list of children’s names covers the screen. He places a check mark next to Hannah’s name. A little boy then struts into the office and sits down in the chair.

“Don’t worry, Jacob: this won’t hurt a bit.”

-Becca Pierce

Untitled

When you first land on the moon you are welcomed by the dark endless pit of our solar system. Taking your first step out of the shuttle expect to fall a few times, the change of oxygen levels making it harder to maintain an equilibrium. Once you gain your equilibrium you will be able to explore, create, and practically glide. The Moon is one of the finest planets in the solar system. It is split up into four sections in which they have different atmospheres(not literally) and activities to experience.

My first time visiting the moon was when it was in its trial phase. I went with the intention to get away from earth and find peace of mind. There are places you can go on the moon to meditate and do Monk like things to bring you closer to your spirituality. I still ended up having an unbearable amount of fun while I was up there. They have a restaurant called Zero Gravity and the drinks you buy are sitting on a cloud of nitrogen smoke. The food is served on a weighted plate making it float a couple inches above the table but also making it a little harder to pick up foods like macaroni. The best part is that all the furniture is grounded so you can finally take a break and rest your legs.

Before leaving the moon don't forget to see a concert or even take gliding lessons. Gliding lessons as you can tell are very useful on a zero-gravity planet. You can clearly tell the people who have taken them apart from who has not. People will be gliding around uncontrollably for days before figuring out how to slow down and land. You can always hear bands and or rappers performing at the Fly Stadium. The Fly Stadium is the most popular of the 6 scattered around the moon's surface. If you go and see a concert expect to see weird things like bras flying around and people on the roof of the stadium screaming. I didn't get the chance to visit the moons gift shops but I hope you can before your stay on the moon ends.

-Xavier Adams

Half Empty



-Maggie Sinisi

How to Eat a Box of Chocolates

Dark, white, milk, or semi-sweet. Solid, filled, or hollow. Each one—a delightful surprise. They melt slowly in your mouth and become a nectar so sweet and luxurious that you become addicted. It's a romantic gesture from your lover. Your farm boy. You can taste his enchanting love even when he's gone. He would be with you if he could, but you have been separated. Not to worry, he will always come for you. You melt a dark raspberry crème filled chocolate in your mouth. Slowly. Imagining it's sweetness to be his tender kiss.

The dark wind of night begins to flood your room, so you close the window. Before resuming to the comfort of your scarlet sofa, you dress in pink sweatpants and roomier t-shirt that reads *The Princess Bride* on the front. You bite into a milk chocolate and let its caramel filling wrap around your tongue—imagining it's toughness to be his strong embrace.

You light your “Buttercup” candle on the table beside you. You are now thinking you will never love anyone the way you love him. It is true—you have tried—but they always disappoint. They wouldn't save you from a group misfit bandits, a pit of quicksand, or a ridiculous prince. He's the only one who would. You turn up the volume to drown out your despair. A voice yells from downstairs, “Nancy! What are you doing? Turn off that damn TV! You should be doing homework if you're not going out. It's Saturday night for god sake! Go see your friends!” You turn down the volume and scoff at her suggestion. Why would you subject yourself to the townspeople's judging eyes and smug smerks? Why would you leave your castle if he is not outside waiting for you? You nibble on a white chocolate heart—letting each piece melt before taking in another. You imagine it's soft taste is his gentle hand reaching out for yours. Looking to the empty space beside you on your scarlet sofa, you frown. You remember typical Saturday night viewings once included Susan and Julie, and the Sunday morning after when Susan moved away to Colorado. She was the only one who truly understood you. You had the same idols, dreams of romance and happiness, love for writing, and loyalty to old music. She was your only friend who had to buy the same sizes at Express and Poore Simon's. You'd only ever go together—just in case any of the townspeople decided to give you judging eyes and smug smerks. At lunch, you and Susan always sat together and talked as if your conversation was too urgent to have any time to eat; when in reality, both of you were too embarrassed to touch your food in front of everyone. Julie would sit across from you and Susan. Her slender fingers would pop potato chips and M&M's into her mouth, and a boy would usually come over and ask her to a movie on Friday night. She would tuck a strand of her shiny dark hair behind her ear, revealing a gleaming gold hoop, and say, “Call me later tonight when I've had time to think about it.” When the boy left, you and Susan would say that all too familiar line in your best Jessica Rabbit voice. Julie would roll her eyes

while you and Susan laughed with each other. After Susan was gone, there was no one to laugh with, no one to shop with, no one to dream with. By the next school year, Julie had been seen at the movies with the better half of the boys at Lincoln High, and made friends with the girls who went out with them after her. A familiar voice interrupts your depressed reminiscing and makes you look up from the empty space beside you, "Nancy I'm serious. Either get out of this house or turn that TV off and go to bed!" You turn the volume down even lower and get up from the sofa to sit on your purple fluffy rug that's closer to the screen. Susan is not coming back. Julie has moved on. Your mom is an evil queen. And you wonder: is he ever coming for you? A warm tear streams down your cheek and stings a little like salt in your heart's wound. You realize you are as empty as the hollow sphere of semi-sweet chocolate you just crushed with your right molars.

You grow exhausted from fretting over the possibility of indefinite loneliness. You lie down on the fluffy purple rug, and the last thing you see before you close your eyes is that damn box of chocolates. You later awaken to credits, but you don't get up until you hear a car door slam. You open your window and look outside. It's your neighbor, Rebecca, being taken home by Lucas after their date. Rebecca was diagnosed with leukemia six months ago. She didn't speak to anyone but her family for weeks, and she'd tried to push Lucas away. But he showed up at her doorstep everyday with flowers and a box of chocolates. Rebecca's parents said he couldn't leave chocolates outside their door anymore because the raccoons were starting to get into them. So, Lucas would knock on Rebecca's door, and when she didn't answer, he'd come over and give them to you. You watch as he leads her to the front door. He takes the blue winter hat off of Rebecca. He kisses the top of her bald head. She goes inside. Lucas turns around and walks back to his car. He sees you looking out from your window at him. Before you can turn away mortified, he yells up at you, "Hey Nancy! Have a wonderful night, okay? Oh! And great shirt. I love that movie." He winks at you and gets into his car. You smile and back up from your window. You turn the TV off. You happily indulge in a coconut filled chocolate and imagine that true love is as sweet as chocolate, but not without shreds of coconut inside: bumps in the road. You crawl into bed and think of your lover. Maybe he's not a charming farm boy, and maybe he won't have to save you from anything or anyone. But he will be kind to you. He will be patient with you. He will fight for you. He will love you. And he will come for you someday.

-Camden Donald

In Loving Memory



-Jessica Minieri

Whole School Assembly

During the whole school assembly, Anna punched Jess in the face. Kids were talking about it, saying it was as simple as that. Well, kinda, they would add. Anna's face had turned purple before she had punched Jess. And she had screamed, "You nasty little bitch." But that's not what people remembered. She had punched her in the cheek with her hand covered in studded rings. She had cut Jess' cheek open in three places and left a bruise that covered from below the eye socket, to just above the jawline. The teachers had gasped, one even fainted, the students gossiped. Only a few of the students had cheered, and they were Anna's close friends; the ones she smoked with behind the broken down house on My Fair Lady Lane. She had punched Jess so hard, some kids said part of Anna's rose tattoo had smudged off. Like all stories, this one spread like spilled oil in the ocean. Soon, Anna had punched Jess, then ripped a chunk of her long brown hair out and swallowed it. Some said it was because Jess had called their mom a chunky bitch, and their dad a worthless bastard, but no one had the proof to make that certain. Others said it was because Jess had stolen the car, their pink 1980's Mercedes convertible, right before she was supposed to take it to the movies with her boyfriend, Dan. When it came down to it, no one really knew why Anna had attacked her sister, but it made for a fun story to tell.

Anna stared at the picture frame on Jess' table. Dan's head was tilted back in laughter, and Jess was nuzzled into his neck. Dan had a glimmer in his eye as though he had never been happier. She felt the tears fall from her eyes, and she smashed the glass frame onto the floor. Jess had stolen her beloved human—the only thing that was Anna's—and claimed it as hers. He looked happy, which made her mad. Dan looked happy, but Jess looked smug, which killed Anna more. Jess' expression wasn't one of content, but rather a look of redemption. Anna felt her heart getting ripped out of her chest and smashed into thousands of pieces. She took handfuls of her sister's meticulously made bed and ripped them. She threw Jess' cheer trophy at the ceiling fixture—they had called it the boob light when they were kids—and watched the broken pieces of glass crumble to the floor. It was that day that, during the whole school assembly, Anna punched Jess in the face.

-Natalie Crawford

Untitled



-Dena Arrison

Sorek

The train was late, but not unaccountably so. One needed to predict such things. The executive world was above the regular one; traffic could stop, the streets could flood, God himself could proclaim the Rapture, but you must be on time to a meeting. These were the people who had money most men could only dream of, and knew it; a hundred, a thousand dollars were nothing to them, a mere fraction of a fraction of their wealth. The one thing they did not have, that the world refused to give them, was time—the sun, against the combined might of a thousand industrialists, refused to set one minute later than on their lowly workers. They could buy the obedience of entire governments, but not buy a single second—so each one was valuable to them beyond compare. Time was a commodity more precious than oil; to waste it was unforgivable. So, predicting the lateness of the train, Antonius Sorek left exactly fifteen minutes early for the eight hour train ride to his meeting; a prudent investment.

Sorek, being a proud member of that self-declared executive class, had brought paperwork he calibrated would take six of the hours, and kept some Sun Tzu for the rest. He had ascended to his position far in his youth, rising high through his strict discipline. Soon, he was the top of the company; the world only addressed Antonius, if they were permitted to at all, as ‘Mr. Sorek’. Everyone else was long gone. He boarded the train and navigated to his cabin as efficiently as possible, stopping only to glare at those blocking his way. He slotted his bag into the overhead bin, started playing Beethoven, and reclined in his seat, prepared for a productive trip.

Then the dog came in, bounding over the seats.

It shook its coat, leaped to Sorek’s lap, and panted in his face. Registering his shock as acceptance, it plopped at his feet, displaying its stomach in case Sorek deigned to scratch it. Sorek did not. He instead worried about his suit; it would take too long to dry clean before the meeting. He would have to spend an hour getting a new one, so he would not be able to set up at the hotel; a necessary sacrifice. But what would he do about the dog—the English Boxer, as he realized with a start. One of them lived near his home, long ago.

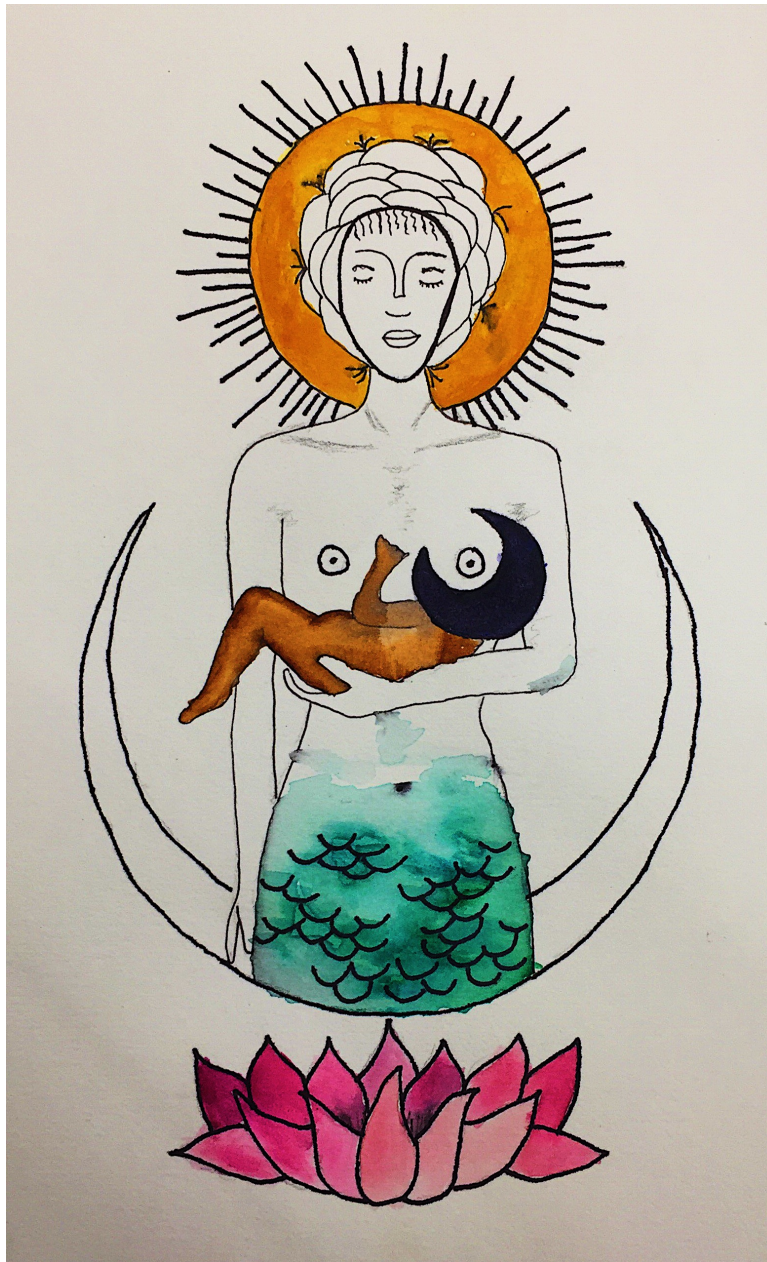
His home, on the island, with five other children and too many animals and not enough food for them and too much competition between them, anyway, for them to each get a share. Where the dogs ate rotting avocados and the people yelled at each other and the birds squawked above as the sun lazily shone down on them all. Where everybody knew him and greeted him and called him ‘Anton’. There were no trains on the island; no reason to be on time at all. No reason but the wealthy businessmen who came, and demanded everything exactly as they wanted it. And they always got it. Or did they? They always seemed so angry, back then. Or it seemed to him at the time.

They'd kick the dogs in the street– always on accident, but always without apology. They had their places to be.

Those who looked after the dogs were furious, then. Dogs take time. One had to get them registered, and walked, and fed, and do twenty other things besides for them to hopefully die peacefully at the old, old age of 15 after providing nothing and doing nothing besides pooping on the floor and chewing possessions. Not to mention the fleas, the vomit, the allergies, and the twenty other problems they have and create.

Anton knew this. He became a full two and a half hours late to his meeting.

-Peter Sachs



Mother Nature

-Emma Tieman

Innocence

These flowers-
 Wedding gowns of white lace
 left to grow in the grass
A true blanket,
Like one of my great-grandmother's
doilies my mom uses as table runners

My great-grandmother
Mother at fourteen by a man in a
 dangerous kitchen
Oh,
 Babysitting doesn't sound so easy anymore.
Oh,
 If only she had grabbed the
 butcher knife in the drawer
 next to the sink

If only she had done something

If only I was a worm so I could live in this
flower-kingdom
forever.

These flowers-
 Like young billygoats hiccupping
 in the defiant joy of a spring day
Like an old woman in cotton on the way
to brunch,
smiling at the blue-milk sky.
Flowers that call teenage girls to tumble into them
to tumble into them and talk about
exclamation points and Anne of Green Gables.

Flowers like forget-me-nots
 Like remember-me-forevers,

Like remember my great grandmother
in her baby-blue mumu
shucking peas on the summer sun
porch.

-Rhea Fitzpatrick

How To Be Gay In a Straight Man's World

Being a closet gay in a straight man's world isn't as difficult as one would think. Man has been practicing it since the dawn of time. As long as you're able to suppress your emotions, fall into a deep denial, and "man up", you're practically good to go.

For starters, let's disambiguate the term "glass closet". It may sound fancy, but it's essentially shorthand for "you're pretty shit at acting straight." Just remember that glass is easy to see through and can shatter quickly. Channel your inner iron closet. Can't see through iron, now can you? It's absolutely vital to make sure you're an complete facade to everyone you encounter. Make sure your clothing is something that would make your gay inner self scream. Commit a few crimes against fashion: some ill-fitting pants here, a pair of neon New Balances there. Your clothes really need to say, "Hey! I don't give a shit because I'm a ~dude~." This is extremely important for when you don't want to be noticed by another gay man—one who's loud, proud, and out. A stained flannel and a ratty Olympia Sports shirt really screams, "Keep your goddamn mouth shut." to any potential passerby.

Another part of being a closet gay in a straight man's world is not showing your emotions. Now as tempting as it sounds to curl up with a cheap bottle of rosé and cry about how Tracy Chapman hasn't toured since 2009, this won't do. You don't drink rosé, that's for queers. Instead, you pop a cold Sam Adams with the boys and watch some football, where lots of men tackle and jump on top of each other. As much of an oxymoron this may sound like, it's what straight guys like, so just roll with it. Football seems to be the greatest common denominator among straight guys to drown out the emotion of real life. An excuse to drink and direct your anger at a TV screen while eating whatever's in front of you is the closest thing to a therapist the straight man will ever achieve. You'll get used to it after a while.

Finally, always remember to deny your inner self. This is really important because you might make others feel uncomfortable with your sinful nature and create an overtly tangible effect on their lives. Oh how you wouldn't want to belittle good ol' Barb and Doug's hetero union because like Dougie always says, "It's Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." Doug hasn't kissed his wife since '98 and Barb is too busy posting on Facebook about the "damn Mexicans stealing our jobs" to reciprocate any

affection, but it's still important for you to remain unhappy because protecting the sanctity of their marriage comes first. Everyone else's happiness needs to come first.

Remember that you're just confused and that mom is "praying for you, sweetie."; that closets are no good if the doors are left open, that you're better off just making other people happy and living up to their ideals, and that you're not like everyone else. You're just not. Go find a wife, settle down, blend in; the way the good Lord intended. And until that day comes when trying to blend in won't suffice, continue to remind yourself that everything's gonna be okay.

-Jeff Lane

The Courthouse in the Square

In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. In dry weather, the streets became parched and cracked, grass wrinkled on the sidewalks, but the courthouse sagged just the same. The courthouse was old. In fact, it was older than the town itself. Long before the fields became hotels, long before the trees became local bars, the courthouse had stood watching over Delmonico Valley. There wasn't anything special about the courthouse. The white trim had ceased to be white long ago and the tall supporting beams had begun to rot, leaving fragments of paint strewn across the yard. Even the big window, directly below the peak of the house was broken, a spidery crack running across it. Locals had thought of tearing the old courthouse down, but something about the old amidst a sea of new had kept it standing in the town above the valley. Long after the old building had ceased to serve a purpose, no longer marking the spot where the members of the small town of Delmonico would meet to discuss the crop production or Mrs. Basel's unusual case of the chickenpox, it stood in the square, sagging just the same.

The courthouse had watched as the town it once knew had slowly dissolved around it. The tall pines had gone one by one and in had come small grocery stores and a local barbershop. The courthouse had watched as the two farmhouses that had once made up the small town had sunk to the earth and turned to nothing, had watched while the red dirt that now made the road through town had been pushed over the the spots where those old houses had once stood. The courthouse had even watched as the owners of those farmhouses had passed from the world, leaving behind children that had changed the world as the old courthouse knew it.

On a warm day in October, the courthouse fell. It wasn't the result of a machine, the result of a crowbar or the result of the a stray football from the town kids game of touch. No, the courthouse simply came down on that fall day because it had seen all it needed to see. The sag of the roof, weighed down by the things it had seen in its town was simply too much. The supporting beams were the first to go, crashing down on the

soft, rotted floor below. With those gone, the courthouse lost its shape and the roof caved. By the end of that fall afternoon, all that was left of the courthouse was a mound of wood, beams clinging to nails, shingles crumpled below. The townspeople burned it the next night. As the wet wood caught fire, a hissing sigh came free, a whine as if a great pain that had been bottled up inside was being released. As the tall flames leapt into the starry night, the whines receded. Soon, all that was left of the courthouse was a pile of smoldering ash and the occasional crackle of a shifting ember. It watched no more.

-Finn Johnston

The Machine

The sun rises at its scheduled time, greeted by a deafening silence. Its rays do little to disturb the thin layer of dust on top of the synthetic wooden desks, all lined up in uniform rows facing an empty whiteboard. The clocks also take little notice as they unflinchingly march onward. As they approach eight the dust becomes evicted by towering piles of textbooks, notepads, laptops, and calculators. The minute hand inches past nine, and again the ecosystem receives its scheduled disruption. Shoes move with unthinking purpose, trained so regularly where to go that they no longer need instruction of where they are headed. As the sun towers over the cracked brick exterior, the roaring sound of a thousand zippers echos through the hall, producing chips, apples, and celery sticks. The minute hand drags his little brother past two, while backpacks become gluttonous and overstuffed.

And in this sea of desks, one chair remains unmoved, apart from the rest. The wooden tabletop becomes peppered with drops of water, shielded from the world by a canopy of hair. The metal seat shakes slightly underneath its trembling occupant. And from it comes the sound of a single heartbeat, echoing throughout the school. A sound so foreignly human that for a single second, the gears become still. And the machine stops all at once, in a moment perceived interest.

And together it looks at her. It pokes and it prods her, trying desperately to make her stop. It stares for a moment, and tries to understand the difference between them, something it cannot fathom. So it picks her up, eyes still wet, and drops her, chair and all, into a spot far into the corner. And it turns round and walks away. And just like that, in the blink of an eye, the chair becomes empty.

Bells begin to ring, pistons begin to fire, and the dull sound of slow movement resumes. And in the chaos of the ordered movement, one more empty seat goes unnoticed. The stain of tears are wiped down, and a locker becomes empty while it sleeps. Everything remains as it was before, as the being methodically soldiers on.

The bell rings at its scheduled time, greeted by the movement of a thousand homogenous organisms all standing in unison. And the sun begins to count down until his return the next morning, as he does every day.

-Liam Grogan

blue pt II



-Grace Abbott

Time is a Funny Thing



Among Gold

The grass is right up to my knees. Yellow and brown it shows golden in the sunlight and glitters like stardust as a light breeze passes through. Stretching down the hills and taking up miles and miles of otherwise empty land, the contrast between the warm colors of the ground and the vibrant blue of the sky is simply surreal—almost as if you were stepping into a dream. I speak of this place with familiarity, a twinge of longing in my voice mixed with the subtle tones of nostalgia. The landscape before me is someone's home—just not mine.

Truthfully, I've never been here before. States away from what I would consider my own home, the familiarity that I find in this realm holds no common characteristics

to my own. The grass that touches my knees is nothing compared to the buildings that used to tower over my head. Blue sky barely visible behind shiny glass and steel, the silence that I find here was non-existent in Chicago. Crammed quarters both in the streets and in my studio apartment, the vastness of the open fields that I find here leaves me in disbelief.

“Amazing isn't it?”

Turning away from the golden planes, I nod my head at Avery. Having left the old pickup truck behind on the road where we'd stopped, he'd followed the same path that I'd made through the grass and now stood next to me.

“It really is... Honestly, I've never seen anything like it.”

Breeze pushing us from behind, its gentle touch moves us further away from the truck and down into openness. I'm glad that I decided to put on a jacket before leaving the warmth of our vehicle. The breeze turning into a wind that whipped around us, it sends my hair billowing out before me. Pulling his hat further down onto his head, Avery's large ears are just barely covered.

I have a weird urge to just stand here. Amongst the golden vegetation, the cold wind that beats against me feels like nothing. Its aggression strangely calming, it continues to whisper into Avery's and my ears as we now stand still in the center of it all.

Clouds racing above us, the wind pushes them across the sky. Traveling along the curve of the earth, they disappear before my eyes as they blend into the horizon. I'm at peace here, even in the fury of the wind: I'm at peace. The tragedy in Chicago now behind me, this place calls to me. It calls to me to take it as my new home. A place so remote that no name represents it on our map, nothing can touch us here: nothing can touch this place.

It will stay like this for decades, perhaps even centuries. The human world now halted, this landscape doesn't have to worry about the plague of pollution or human development. It won't be targeted like Chicago because nothing resides here; it is its own little world: an independent form that will remain unharmed by the war that destroyed my own home. I now know that the feeling that overcame my body when I arrived wasn't one of familiarity; it was one of pain and sadness in response to something that I could never return to.

They fell onto the city like stars, but when their light disappeared, only then could you see the devastation that they left behind. My life, a boring but consistent mirage of internships and part-time jobs, could've never prepared me for this. There were mass evacuations, but many chose to stay behind—friends that I had known for years never to be heard from again. My belongings shoved into a singular suitcase; thankfully, I wasn't alone in my escape. Avery choosing to leave the city too, we decided to go together. Moving far enough into the suburbs where we didn't have to

worry about the falling stars, we hunkered down at an old motel where the television was always on. Live video of it all being replayed over and over again before us, though we were miles away from the flames and rubble that covered the streets—the screams felt like they were right outside our door.

We could only stay there for a month, for soon the neighborhoods surrounding major cities were being targeted, too. A truck that Avery had kept from high school our only means of escape; we joined the thousands of other cars on the highway as we tried to get out. Crossing west into Iowa, the car radio was our new television. The anchor's voice provided us the visuals of what was happening in the midwest and along the east coast. It was a miserable day when we turned the radio on only to find that his voice had faded out. Alone now in our expedition, we decided to turn off the highways as the stars also began to fall on them.

For weeks we traveled west staying away from major cities as we crossed through Missouri and Kansas. Days would pass before we saw another car on those endless country roads. Some would pass us without a second glance, speeding towards a target only they knew, while more commonly we would see people standing on the side of the road. Cars pulled over, they would wave out to us, some chanting “Pull over! Pull over!” as we drew nearer. But we never did stop. Even out on these desolate roads, we learned the hard way that kindness was something that many took for granted. Looters targeted cars just as much as the abandoned homes and department stores; and food, water, and gas were now treated like gold.

“Laura? We should get going.”

Turning away from the endless field, I see that Avery has left my side and has started to make his way back to the truck. Days spent on the road passing through miles of open land just like this, we had crossed over the state line into Nebraska not long ago. Our map indicates that we will soon come to a divide in the road. We have yet to decide if we will continue west to the coast or north to the Canadian border. Our radio still silent, we have no knowledge what lies in either direction—varying from safe haven to devastation, we just hope that the stars wouldn’t follow.

“Ok.”

Following behind Avery, I climb through the long grass back up to the road. The wind parting around me as I cut through, it kisses my face in farewell. I spare one final look at the landscape around me. The wind dances and the grass waves goodbye at my far-off figure. Twinkling with the sunshine, fields of gold fade to a dull brown as we speed down that long road.

-Corilie Green

How to find your soulmate

First, you must understand that this is a different type of soulmate, you will never marry this person, or even think about it. They will simply be a soul that matches yours. Secondly, the concept of soulmates means nothing to you, not yet...

You are 9 years old and swimming in circles alone, you are usually alone. It is late August and you are at the annual back to school picnic that your mother insisted you make an appearance at. The other girls are showing off their new bikinis nearby. You are supposed to be friends with these girls. You are not friends with these girls. They are not like you for reasons you cannot pinpoint yet. In later years, you look back and wonder why it is that little girls so closely resemble animals in the wild. Anyway. There is a new face this year, she is timid like you, with big brown eyes and dimples. In this moment you are to be overcome by an indescribable urge to speak to this girl. You swim over and make an introduction. It is years later that she will admit to remembering those first words you said to her, "It's a bit of a heartbeat, isn't it?". Neither of you will ever understand what that means exactly, only that it was the right thing to say.

School will begin approximately a week later. The girl smiles at you on the first day. You will start reinventing your definition of the word friend. Days will go by, and you'll learn the way her spine is crooked, and that she will always beat you at spelling bees (an activity at which you were once the undisputed champion). Months will go by and you'll find out she has a big yellow house in a field like the ones you would read about in books, and in that house tuesday is always taco night. Oh, and most importantly you are always welcome. Before you know it years will have gone by and you will have memorized her dad's CD collection — your favorite song being a Bob Dylan one entitled "Everything is Broken" —, seen her bed in three different corners of her room, cried in two of the three corners and danced on every square inch, written stories of double homicides on Christmas tree farms, and songs for the first boy you wanted to marry... the same for both of you.

Middle school will end, even though at one point you believed it never would. You will both go to different high schools, craving the change and resenting the goodbye. The first few weeks will be the hardest, but you look forward to hearing her voice each night as you dissect each other's lives in 5 hour phone calls. If you tell her everything it almost feels like she is still experiencing it with you. Time will continue to pass, as it does, and you both become busy with your new existences... but your new friends will

want to meet the girl behind the stories. Your duet becomes a quartet, a combination of worlds, and more love than you ever believed you could feel. Although your original duo has expanded, there are moments of quiet you still share with her. You find out that her back is still crooked but her ambitions have only grown stronger, learn that she won a full scholarship to college, memorize the feeling you have as you watch her become everything she spoke of after the lights went out on one of the many Friday night sleepovers.

You are 17 years old and climbing into bed alone, you are rarely alone. Your phone will ring and it's her (no surprise there). You pick up and begin the familiar banter of two people who will never run out of things to say. An hour will pass in what seems like seconds and she is the first to say goodnight — something about too much homework — “I love you, too” you'll say then go on to vocalize a thought you had earlier “It's like we're soulmates.” Her dimples appear on the other end of line. “That goes without saying. Sleep well!”

And there you have it: a soul that matches yours.

-Maya Andreson



Untitled

-Abby Fortune

HOW TO FANTASY FOOTBALL

It all starts when you see an advertisement on www.ESPN.com. “Want to make easy money every weekend?” The ad entices you. Of course, you want to. Clicking on it brings you to a new page, www.Fantasy.ESPN.com. You sign up, and it directs you to join a draft. How hard could this be? You think to yourself. “THE DRAFT ROOM” flashes across the screen. You and nine others are thrown into this “Draft room”. You wonder what you should call your team? It has to be funny, witty, maybe a little punny. You decide on “Deflated football”. With the required city being Boston. You snicker to yourself as you know many Patriots fans are reading your name with a bitter hatred. Looking back at your screen, you notice the draft has started! However, a pop-up has blocked your view. It prompts you to enter your debit card information in order to contribute to the winner’s pot. Everyone would have to contribute \$10, with the winner getting all \$100. You comply, giving yet another website your personal info in hopes they don’t sell it to some faraway country. Now you may finally draft. You’re slotted to pick 4th out of the 10 possible picks. You feel good about yourself. As the first two picks go by, you feel confident. You decide on who you want to pick. You like his college, and his hair pops out at you. You like him, he has a smile that you trust. His name was Julio Jones and you were going to pick him.

Oh god, what are you going to do?! Julio, the man you had your heart set on drafting was taken from you, by the team drafting third. What will you do? You only have two minutes to decide. So many decisions. Brow furrowed and beads of sweat running down your forehead, you click the button titled “Auto Pick” and your stress subsides. Who needs Julio. You look back thirty minutes later to see your team is all nice and done. You’re happy with the Boston deflated footballs. Unlike most of New England.

Sunday rolls around and you know it’s time for your first game against the San Diego Flexseals! You log in and check to make sure that no one is injured and that everyone is where they’re supposed to be. Your star wide receiver is suffering from a sore ankle but you’re sure he’ll manage. He better manage. You come back to see how the team is looking, and you your quarterback is injured! Son of a bitch. Clicking on his name produces an injury report, you read off the diagnosis out loud “A TORN PATELLAR TENDON??” You feel as though you might faint. Your other players seem to be performing sub-par as well. In order to avoid possible cardiac arrest, you neglect to go back onto the website until the next morning.

Waking up you feel a sense of dread as you hop back onto your laptop. Across the screen reads Boston 56.8 points and San Diego 134.4 points. You start to cry to yourself as you look over at the FlexSeals top scorer, Julio Jones.

-Josiah Kearns

Untitled



-Dena Arrison

Holiday Gift

Uncle Greg had always been a drunk. He was drunk on Christmas, New Years and his birthday, drunk for the fourth of July, valentines day and pretty much everyday in between. I've never really seen the guy sober, other than this one time it was the day after his birthday and my family and I stopped by to give him a present, which of course was beer. But honestly he wasn't that bad sober, it was only after the present that I wanted to leave. Uncle Greg isn't a funny old drunk, he brings up things that happened in the past and always finds a way to make someone either embarrassed or just extremely uncomfortable. I've never really had a relationship with him, neither have the rest of my cousins. This year we got him a few tools, he likes to work on old cars and engines in his spare time. He thought it was an alright gift but he brought out the same old comment that beer would have been better. I really enjoy being around my family I just can't stand my Uncle Greg, maybe he wouldn't be so bad if he actually sobered up.

-Bailey Davis

Untitled



-Edie Hayden-Hunt

Code Red

Our generation is young. We're too young to have a name. We're too young to be defined by a set of characteristics, like the Millennials and the Baby Boomers are. But one thing that has defined our generation is code red drills. School lockdowns. Sandy Hook. Stoneman Douglas. This is what is defining our generation: we are the generation that has grown up with school shootings as practically everyday occurrences. The generation of kids that saw the pictures of dead first graders and watched the interviews with their distraught parents. The generation who realized that kids our age were dying at school, and there was nothing we could realistically do to prevent the same thing from happening to us.

When the Sandy Hook shooting happened, I was in sixth grade. My parents didn't tell me about it right away — I found out the day after. I'll never forget the terror that gripped me for weeks afterward. Any public place I entered, I would look around, seeing every stranger as a potential shooter. What was in that guitar case? Did he have a gun under his jacket? At school, the atmosphere was heavy with dread. Kids were scared, teachers were scared, the administration was scared. I'll never forget the talk my sixth grade science teacher gave to us the first day back at school after the shooting. She told us that if a shooter ever came to our school, she expected us to climb out of the window and run to the houses that we could see. She had made a rope out of old bedsheets in order to lower us down to the ground safely from her second-story classroom, and she kept the rope stowed in the closet. After that, I envisioned our escape constantly. Looking back on this, I am struck by how absurd it is that teachers have to fear for their lives while simply doing their jobs. Police, military personnel, and firefighters go into their jobs knowing that their lives will be at risk — I suppose that teachers should be added to this list. Back then, I remember feeling completely helpless. Going to school everyday felt like I was being sent to my execution, and I can't imagine the fear that my parents felt. There was nothing we could do, as sixth graders, to protect ourselves. I assumed that such an enormous tragedy would certainly prompt change. We're in danger now, I thought, but the government will do something. They'll protect us. They care about us. Now that it's kids being killed, action will be taken. Or so I thought. An abundance of thoughts and prayers were sent to the grieving families. But the rest of us scarred children got nothing. Life moved on. We continued to grow up. The world moved on, but we never forgot.

We're here today to say exactly that: we remember. And we know better than to leave our fate in the hands of people who have shown that they don't value our lives. School shootings may have defined us up to this point, but we are defining ourselves now by how we react to them. We are taking matters into our own hands. Passive children no more, we are standing up for ourselves because no one is willing to stand up for us. And this is what will define us. Not only for this issue, but for every problem that we

face as a country and as a global community. Every problem we have in this country and around the world can be solved by activism and participation in government. The more we make our voices heard, the more powerful we become. I hope that we will be remembered as the generation that took action in the face of inaction, and the generation that cared enough about each other and our future to make a difference.

-Lily Horne

Tears



-Emma Tieman

The Ten Targets

We walk in the doors and collect the pair of shoes worn by many but new to us. We sit down and put on the shoes and find them to not fit very well. As we are only wearing them for a couple hours, we decide they are fine and move on. We walk to the rack of colorful orbs. We slip off the uncomfortable shoes and put on our own; bringing them to the counter where we began; each a different size and weight. We choose our weapon and slip our fingers inside. Each of us carrying our own, we walk to our alley. It is among many others, but this one is all our own for the next hour or so. Some are filled with more experienced participants; however, some are filled with those who are here just to have fun. We talk amongst ourselves and project our names on the screen above. The screen which will reveal our scores to everyone else who is curious enough to look, and show who in the room is most experienced.

I'm up first, so I take the weighted orb and bring it close to me. As I walk up to the line, I bring my arm back, push forward, and release. It hits the floor hard, as I'm not experienced, and rolls forward. We all watch closely as the sphere gets closer to the targets. There's a loud cracking followed by a thud as the targets are displaced. Five are still standing. I patiently wait as the machine slowly reaches down, effortlessly cleaning up those which had fallen while leaving those that I missed. As it goes back up, I get ready for my last chance to defeat the targets. As I bring back my arm again, I tell myself to release straight. The weight hits the floor a bit smoother than the last time and I watch again as it rolls. This time it appears to be going to the middle when it suddenly curves back and goes straight into the cavern on the side of the alley. I feel defeated and I turn around as I know my turn has finished. I sit down in a seat as the screen displays my new score, 5, and highlights the name of the next person.

We slip off the uncomfortable shoes and put on our own; bringing them to the counter where we began. After a spray in each shoe, they're placed back on the shelf for the next person who decides to choose their own colored orb and try their luck at conquering all ten targets.

-Brooke Toothaker

Pamola



-Ayanna Hatton

Another Date Night

Maybe the blood on the counter had turned him away. Before entering the house, I felt we had a real connection, you know? At the restaurant he pulled my chair out for me and took my jacket. We made small talk, I pretended to laugh at his jokes, the usual. I mean, he wasn't very funny, or very interesting, but I liked his smile. His perfect, straight, white teeth. You could tell they

were well taken care of, like he flossed not only once, but *twice* a day. When he smiled they glistened in the low light. My hands twitched.

Halfway through dinner he held my hand across the table and complimented my eyes. I resisted the urge to roll them, and giggled instead. He paid for dinner and left a tip for the waiter, flashing the fifty dollar bill obnoxiously so that I would notice the generous donation. I smiled at him and he smiled right back, displaying his sparkling white teeth. When he walked me to my cab and held the door open for me, grinning all the way, I invited him to my house.

In the dimly lit cab, his clammy hand rested persistently on my knee, the radio playing softly in the background. The air was humid, and the open windows of the cab tousled our hair and let in neon lights from buildings outside. I looked at his teeth. The sharp purples, blues, and pinks reflected off of his pearly whites like a carnival at night. He was speaking, but I wasn't listening, my jaw clenched in concentration.

When we arrived at my place, I felt the annoying pressure of his hand on my lower back while I unlocked the door. My fist balled briefly, before I opened the door and let him in with a tight, closed-mouth smile. I took his hand and led him through the living room and into the kitchen, all before turning on the lights. It had its usual scent of faint bleach and saline, and my nose welcomed the burn. I placed my purse on top of the counter and toe-d off my heels.

"Where's the lightswitch? Can't see a damn thing," he laughed.

I said nothing in response and brushed by him, my hand on his shoulder as I flicked on the switch.

The hanging light bulbs above the counter illuminated the room with fluorescent light. The light glinted off the pristine fridge and clean microwave. The stove was scrubbed spotless, a task completed this morning, and the kitchen looked as though food had never been present.

The only dirty spot of the kitchen was the countertop. Maybe I should've woken up earlier to clean it, but oh well. This would be a fun surprise nonetheless. The light iron scent of the old blood spattered on the surface was so tangy I could practically taste it.

"What the hell..." he trailed off quietly, backing away from the counter slightly. He bumped into the shelf behind him, jostling it.

He turned around abruptly and came face to face with the huge jars arranged neatly on the shelves. I noticed the tenseness in his shoulders as he registered what was stuffed in the polished jars. Once again he slowly turned to face me, a scared look in his eyes as I stared at him.

"What the fuck is going on?" He asked angrily, his eyes betraying him and revealing his fright. What a wimp. A grin stretched across my face as I stared at his mouth, tightly curling my fingers around the pliers on the counter.

The teeth in the jars on the shelves glimmered from behind him, as if they were tempting me to *do it already*.

I advanced towards him, lifting the pliers, already imagining the satisfying *pop!* that would be followed by a stream of dark blood. His teeth would make a lovely addition to my collection.

-Anna Labbe

How to get a reputation as “that driver”

Every group of friends has “that driver”. You know, the one when in the driver's seat everyone buckles up and grabs onto the “oh shit handles”. You kind of have to get used to the subtle comments such as “holy shit!” or “did I just die?” they will hurt at first but will soon grow to be humorous as the months go on. Step one is locating your gas pedal, the gas pedal is your friend, use your gas pedal... excessively. I've discovered that rapid accelerations provide the best reactions. Step two is to now locate the brake pedal. You won't need your brake pedal too often but just in case you going a tad too fast in the direction of a solid object its good to know how to use. Step three, Once you've got step one and two down all you need to know to be up and running is how to yank that steering wheel. Sudden turns get the reactions you're going to be looking for. Slight body roll over is protocol so don't be worried when it happens. Once you've mastered the First three steps you now must learn how to use them in harmony. The seamless combination of all of them makes for the driving you've been looking for, as well as decreasing your usual point A to point B time. Takes five minutes for you to drive to school? Only takes two now. Thirty-minute drive to the mall? How about fifteen. When you arrive at your destination make sure you take a look at any passengers you may have in your car at the time because as the car comes to its final halt, the faces of terror/relief can be seen most clearly at this time. However, arguably the most important rule of them all, you **MUST** and I repeat, **MUST** watch out for the dangerous wee woo cars, otherwise known as cops. They have flashing red and blue lights and can cost you lots of money if they see you completing steps one through three in any fashion. Some people try and use steps one through three to escape from these so-called “cops”. Those are the ballsy ones, we respect them but we also stay away from them.

-Alex Caisse

Flower Garden



-Emma Tieman

Personal Narrative

Out of all the pictures that have ever been taken of me, there are only a few I can stand to look at. I've never particularly enjoyed having my picture taken. Some are okay, like ones of me as a baby, a tiny bundle with eyes that are a startling shade of blue on someone so young. There's a few of me as a toddler I don't mind, grinning up at the camera, not yet sure how to smile for it. Most of them, however, I hate to see.

From about fifth grade to now, I've avoided cameras at all costs. I don't like to see myself. Especially, if it's a photo from my middle school years; I'm so obviously uncomfortable in every one. It is painful to look back. Those pictures are always the same. My hair messy, wearing ill-fitting clothes, with a smile I forced myself to plaster on. It was hard to get photographs of me even on special occasions, like before a choir concert. Those concerts—everything about them, not only the pictures—still stick out clearly in my mind. I always wore the same thing. We had a dress code, yes, but I took it a step further. Every year without fail my mother would be scrambling to put an outfit together for me because I refused to wear skirts. It was black pants and a white shirt every time. There were only a few times I had to wear a skirt, and I hated it. I distinctly remember looking in the dressing room mirror thinking how it all looked and felt wrong. The outfit was worn begrudgingly, and I faked a smile for the one picture my family was permitted to take. There's only one more recent picture of me I like. I'm standing outside, smiling genuinely for once, not bothering to protest. It was the day I cut my hair.

With the help of the internet, I had recently learned about the transgender community. Someone said, "I don't feel 100% like a girl all the time." My first thought was, "Who does? I never have." My next thought was, "Wait." Suddenly everything changed. I was scared, uncertain, confused. So many things now made sense: why I disliked the way I looked so much, why I felt the need to wear what I did, why I was so uncomfortable learning about the changes to expect in years to come. For years I had been feeling this sense of "wrong, this is bad, I don't like this, make it go away" without ever knowing why. The feeling had been there in the background for years, ignored because I didn't understand or know how to deal with it. But once I acknowledged the discomfort, I couldn't keep hiding from it. The prospect was terrifying but couldn't be ignored anymore. I wasn't a girl.

Adjusting to all the changes was hard. I know most people still see me as a girl I never really was. I don't look the way "normal" boys do. Living with that knowledge and the discomfort that comes with it every day is difficult. It's like a physical pain, every time I have to read the wrong name or when teachers still call me "she." Most of my family will never accept me for who I am. But I have loving parents, a supportive brother, and many understanding friends who are always willing to stick up for me. So I will continue being the boy I was meant to be and know someday things will be better. For now though, I'll look back on the photograph of me beaming at the camera on that day, and I will smile.

-Anonymous

look in



-Grace Abbott

Sleep Demon

I got a bed last month. My bed is fluffy. It's fuzzy and white. I can spread out wide. I can kick and pout. Or, if I want, I can wiggle my heart out all night long. I can jump on this bed because, this bed is mine. All mine. I love my bed more and more every day. It would be my favorite place if I didn't dread the thought of sleeping each night. In my fluffy, comfy, warm and fuzzy nest. With my freshly washed cotton sheets, upon the coziest pillow in the house, concealed under my unbreachable blanket that protects my toes as well as my nose—I lie wide awake. I'm wide awake because my head won't stop thinking. My mind won't stop spinning. My stomach is churning and I can feel

every muscle in my body surging. I am exhausted. I would love nothing more than sleep. My exhaustion is as if I haven't slept in years. I shift my body to the side and I finally feel my body crumble into the warm relief. I glance around, finding details of the chipping paint walls of my room before I let my eyes close ever so gently when a calm sigh whisks me away into an almost sleeping dream that is fluffy, gaseous and tests the bonds tethering me to a lead body below.

I'm so close. So close. Too close. My head takes over.

All the stress from today that had distracted me from the stress of tomorrow, which protected me from the distress of yesterday, all of my distractions melt away and at last the subconscious is in control. Finally free to play, dance and wander at will. You see, night is where the mind runs free, free to believe, free to create and live within a dream.

My subconscious has a night friend, and we don't bother to speak his name. He cannot exist in the sunlight. He is left steeping in jealousy and engulfed in his resentment. He is abandoned in silence, and for that I must pay.

My eyes rip open. I'm launched upright in bed. I recall nothing after vainly grasping for threads that disintegrate upon touch. I'm shaking with rage and crying in fear. I am confused which feeds the embers of anger hot. I feel dumb and helpless. Lying back down I recognize the chipping paint on the wall by the door and I remember I'm ok. Exhaustion again. Finally I remember. I am exhausted. My mind won't stop spinning. My stomach is churning and I can feel every muscle in my body surging. I am exhausted. I would love nothing more than sleep.

-Lucy Whittaker

How to understand Hunting

Maine: One State in one Country. Something that may seem so small to this world, but gives the opportunity to find life's treasures. Maine gives the gift to hunt across the untouched forest that grows tall and strong of wintergreen pines. Start with a hunters breakfast, a runny egg placed on a crispy english muffin. With the stomach warm, and the smile wide you grab your gun, start your car, and leave for the adventure that awaits early in the cold morning.

Always sit under a great Pine. With the fresh smell that covers your odor and the dark background to hide your silhouette, you will see the treasure. The smooth dark wood that's formed to make a sturdy stock, fits the hand like a glove. You need a gun that suits you well, a gun that tells a story, a gun that creates new stories to tell others. It's all a privilege, the time, the adventures, life itself. Finally, patience. The most important action man can have. With patience, you'll be able to experience the rush of the woods. You then can watch the relaxed, steady treasure trot and stop, weaving between the

thickets in the woods. It's the white fluffy tail that tells you the next move. If it's scared, if it hears a disruptive noise, or if it smells an unfamiliar scent. You learn so much with the action of a tail: watch it.

Pull that custom fit hardwood to the socket of your shoulder. Firmly hold the gun, but with a gentle touch. Look at the treasure that flows through the woods like a rolling stream over riverstone rocks. Close the weak eye, aim, and squeeze. Listen for the crack and feel the whistling bullet rip through anything in its path. Without noticing your eye that once was open shuts faster than light. Everything is dark, time is frozen, but a ringing noise stays constant. Feeling your eyelashes slowly untangle, peeling apart, you start seeing the forest colors. Your eyes first rush to the scene of the shot hoping to see a reddish patch painted on the side of its fur. But you never see the patch of red. You only see the flash of white. With the tail pointed up frightened, you watch the white dart through the thickets grown in the woods. You look down at your hands, only to see them shake like a level seven earthquake moving to the top of a skyscraper. Following the path of the bullet, you finally reach its destination, where you look down hoping to see the bright red color that paints the internal organs.

You look for hours and hours only to find empty pockets of leaves holding the midday frost. Although you have missed the deer, you have won the real treasure. Maine, something so small, but gives so much.

-Kaleb Barrett

Tracks



-Asa Austin

A Just World

No one was surprised when Mr. Corrigan died. He had spent the past day walking around the neighborhood, talking glumly to everyone he passed. He made Mrs. Roberts promise to keep his general store alive; it had been in the family for years. Mr. Green was called upon to provide his son, Mark, with food in case he “went somewhere soon.” Nobody traveled, not in their part of the city. He made similar arrangements with the school superintendent, as well as his landlord. He even went up to Mr. Jules, his longtime rival, and begged his forgiveness for the many years of hostility, beginning with a fistfight at the pub long ago. This came as a shock to everyone (most of all Mr. Jules, who had started said fight), but ended with several drinks, another fight (for old times sake), and a brief prison trip. That was when they struck.

The day before, one Jonathan Frizola had entered Mr. Corrigan’s shop. Everyone knew the Frizolas; but if asked, they would deny it vehemently, unless it was a Frizola who was asking— then they were the best of associates. When asked anything by a Frizola, it was generally advisable to keep a positive demeanor at all times, and to make sure that all of their needs were met; you never wanted to meet an angry Frizola. And when he entered the store, Jonathan Frizola was happy— joking with his friends, complaining about his teachers, and fooling about with the merchandise. Mr. Corrigan, a traditional man, disapproved of his conduct. But he knew the Frizolas, no need to ask him; he kept his mouth shut. And he would’ve kept his mouth shut, too, if Jonathan Frizola hadn’t decided to buy a rope, some duct tape, and a condom. If he hadn’t just bragged about what he planned to do with that rope. Mr. Corrigan refused the sale, withstood the following tantrum, and started putting his affairs in order.

Everyone loved him, afterwards, and kept their word: Mark would be provided for. But Mark Corrigan refused to stay sane; he took the Frizolas to court. Mark couldn’t just be *given* food, then— *everyone* was the best of associates with the Frizolas. Groceries had to be thrust through windows in the dead of night, and rent had to be demanded loudly without conviction or enforcement. The DA was new, and from out of town, and thus decided to prosecute to start a glorious crusade against corruption (that would die, quietly, in three months). The police chief was told to bring Jonathan Frizola in, and then politely asked by the family to let him stay at the chief’s home instead of a cell. The chief, a wise and prudent man, had already arranged for his daughter to stay at friend’s house; he immediately agreed.

On the day of the trial, Mark Corrigan was coached by his counsel to speak clearly, stay on topic, and to not lash out; Jonathan Frizola was told just to not call the judge ‘uncle’. The lawyers argued, the witnesses cried, and the jury deliberated; the defendant was found Not Guilty. And the birds chirped outside the courtroom— for it was a lazy summer day, and the sky was clear, and the law was proclaimed, and the

communities were strong, and the heavens themselves looked down upon the world, smiling, as the dead kings and prophets and politicians saw what they had left behind—for it was a just world.

No one was surprised when Jonathan Frizola's mangled corpse was found, weeks later.

-Peter Sachs

Two Worlds

"Bamp, let's go take a walk—bring your Walkman if you want to listen to the Sox game." It was the slow undoing of something in my life that was so beautifully familiar. Everything was so unexpected. My grandfather, lovingly known as Bamp, was unwavering with his love and unmatched in his kindness. His wisdom made me feel both lucky and safe. As I watched him slowly slip away, that safety turned to anguish and eventually awareness.

Seven years ago, Bamp was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. At the start of his illness, he continued to hold his job as reporter, host, and producer of forty years at Maine Public Radio. People who knew his distinct voice from the radio described him as "having the ability to put anybody at ease." To me, he was always someone I related to and felt soothed around. Whenever something was wrong, Bamp would stop everything to listen to me. Never offering any unsolicited advice, he would encourage me, reminding me I could handle more than I realized.

For a while, my Bamp remained the wise, sharp man I had always known him as. The first change I noticed was the frequency with which he alluded to the past. He began continually telling me stories from when I was young, like how we built "snow dogs" together. I reminded him how important those moments were to me, hoping the words would stick with him even through the confusion.

Over time, I could see my grandfather's condition worsening, yet he always used his witty sense of humor to lighten the mood. He eventually retired from the job he loved. He turned to his favorite old Walkman to listen to the news and Sox games. Sometimes I would forget that his thought process was not how it used to be. You could tell he was questioning where his ideas were vanishing to.

One of the things that I'll never forget is Bamp's heavy reliance on his little, red notebook. I remember going to his house, where he was perched in his brown leather chair. Next to him was a small, white stand on which he would keep his notebook, coffee, and MPBN pen. It occurred to me that this notebook was his way of feeling connected to his family as best he could. He would rush over to me with the notebook and his pen and read off highlights about the game he had listened to. It dawned on me

that he wrote down talking points, so he could feel involved. His note-taking practice made me aware of how deeply he cared about me and maintaining our relationship. Often I had no clue what he was talking about when it came to Red Sox statistics or players, but I went along because I understood his passion: his passion for staying linked to the people he loved and communicated with.

I want to hit rewind. I want to make sure that I enjoyed each moment with true awareness. I was challenged beyond measure as I watched this man live between two worlds. Along the way, I realized how significant it is to take time to remain bonded to that which we cherish the most, like Bamp and his love for the Red Sox, reporting, and all of the family surrounding him.

-Sophie Height

Untitled



-Emma Barry

How to be a Politician

You have to start at a young age. Maybe in elementary school. At Thanksgiving, an uncle will ask you what you want to be when you grow up and you'll reply "president," which will make everyone say "aww" and make dumb jokes, confusing and slightly annoying you. This will keep happening whenever you're around adults until you're smart enough to keep your mouth closed.

Hold onto your dreams, though. Don't run for student government in Middle School, that would be too obvious. Think about running for president freshman year of high school, but be too scared to follow through with it. Be the president of some clubs instead. Buy lots of semi-formal button downs and wear them every day, feeling a slight sense of superiority over everyone else dressed in t-shirts. You are presentable. You are professional. Reacknowledge your political aspirations. Let it become your identity. Junior year, get involved in the election. Go door to door talking to voters. Try to not pay too much attention to their perfectly mowed lawns, or the smell of fresh dinner that wafts out when they open the door. You don't wish you were home, just somewhere else.

Take college admissions very seriously in your senior year. Don't be overly worried about burning bridges, you won't need these people very soon. Carry your acceptance letter around with you for days, showing anyone who speaks to you. Hide the rejections under your bed. Head out the doors after graduation and promise you'll never look back.

When the plane touches down in D.C., steel yourself and head to campus. Shake hands firmly. Smile and laugh at the orientation staff's jokes. Don't make friends, but make lots of acquaintances. Make up stories — about your family, about your major, about anything — so people like you. Make liberal use of study groups but only in one direction. Start looking for the best internship for the summer. Its college admissions all over again, but this time there's more competition.

You end up back home for the summer, working on a losing campaign and living with your parents.

This repeats your Sophomore and Junior summer.

Don't go back for senior year. You're tired of being inadequate.

But you can't go back to your parents

Go somewhere else. Anywhere else. A small town deep in the woods, where people haven't heard of defamation ads and super PACs. How refreshing. Meet a girl at the bar. She'll ask you what you want to be when you grow up. You're not sure but the words slip out of your mouth anyway: "happy." She'll pity you and take you home for the night. Then the next, and the one after that. She has a kid, but no husband.

One night, the kid calls you daddy.

There's a school that the kid attends. They have a board. Everyone in the town gets a say in who's on the board, and then they make choices about what goes on in the

school. What a novel idea. You get elected to the board. You get to work to improve a community you care about. You're happy. *-Paul Biberstein*

Felicem Diem Natalem



-Jessica Minieri

Today It Was Petunia

It wasn't anything monumental—at least, it didn't seem as such that day. She was walking to work, as usual. She was too early, as usual. She had a word stuck in her head, as she did constantly: usually they were harsh words, pecuniary and castration and maladroit, but today it wasn't. Today it was petunia.

Why? She stomped across the asphalt, avoiding the cracks. Her shoes were wobbly and pinched at her ankles and were completely unreliable on this kind of street; her mother would have been complaining about the misuse of her tax money, “you know, Gretchen Carlson said that—” and then she would look at her daughter and tell her she needed a new shade of lipstick.

Why petunia? The sky was steely grey, as usual, and all the buildings around her were grey and might as well be melting into the pavement. She stared down the street—it was all very grey—and wondered if she would even notice if her vision switched to black and white. She decided she wouldn't as she walked into the building.

She unlocked the doors and turned up the heat and threw her coat (grey) onto the coat rack and *why would a word like petunia be stuck in her head on a day like today*. Her grandmother grew petunias, big, voluptuous purple ones tumbling out of baskets and into the sky. They would shuck peas there, on the porch, under the hanging flowers. Gram's rocker squeaking like a dying pig. Dying—vanishing, expiring, moribund. That was a good one, moribund, universes better than petunia. She hummed that to herself as she got sorted at her desk, rearranged the sharpies from last night, righted the sticky notes. It worked fine for her until she began typing at her laptop and the keyboard erupted into a garden of flowers. Petunias.

She stopped.

She stood up.

She rubbed her eyes, as those who experience a miracle are want to do.

She steadied herself on her office chair and when she lifted her hand, a patch of purple crocuses were breaking through the grey, faux leather of the back. She sank to the floor.

She sat on the prickly office carpeting and peered at her hands: they looked how the always did, pinkish, dry, a freckle right above her heartline. And yet when she reached out her finger and hesitantly poked the handle of the filing cabinet, a single sprout began to grow where she'd touched.

She watched, unbreathing, as the flower unfurled, its leaves separating from the stem and fanning out, a bud emerging, swelling until it burst, blooming into the shining golden face of a dahlia. It swayed there, stooping from the weight of its blossom, the bloom leaning down towards her.

Silence in the office.

Breathing now, short, shaking breaths, she edged her face closer, her fingers trembling as they reached out and caressed the soft yellow petals, and they were real alright, they were definitely there, and then she was up on her feet and screaming because it was real, it was all real, and all around her now the stalks were snaking, climbing roses coiling up her desk and marsh hibiscus scaling the back wall and ostrich ferns fountaining out of the waist-basket. She backed against the cabinet and columbines were in her hair and climbing towards the ceiling and now there was wisteria hanging from the lamp and thyme was spreading rapidly across the carpet. In a frenzy she rushed out the door and out of the office building and into the street, gasping for air, her hands deep in her pockets. She didn't stop running until she was inside her apartment and had locked the door behind her.

Just before sunset, the clouds evaporated. Sunshine poured down into the grey city, onto the gas-station and the doctor's office and the waitresses walking to work. Her apartment was a jungle and she lounged in the bathtub with the waterlilies.

-Rhea Fitzpatrick

Childhood

Dreaming of past days and times when it was all easier is a breeze. Jumping through the trees like monkeys, searching through rotten tree stumps for red salamanders and caging tiny frogs in homes we thought they'd like. Playing in the dirt patch we'd get mud and dust stuck in our lego figures and matchbox cars. The cars would rust after we leave them out in the rain when we'd go inside and watch Scooby Doo and stay up until nine when my dad would fall asleep and forget about our bedtimes. Spending nights alone in a small tent outside just because I wanted to be closer to nature and hear the rain pound down on the ceiling of the tent as if I were in a rainforest. My favorite outfit was an orange polo shirt, tan cargo shorts and purple and black sketchers and of course my signature haircut—hair slanted at my chin and uneven bangs cut by my mother outside after dinner the night before. This is what I wore to my first day of school, the other girls laughed because I had gotten my clothing from the boy's section of Old Navy while theirs were from Claire's and had shiny rhinestones and jewels; I didn't want any of that—too impractical. How do you hold your toys when you don't have 15 different pockets? After school I didn't have any plans but my own since the girls at school never wanted to play in the mud. I would go inside, hug my mom, put my backpack in the closet grab my green hand-crank radio and head into the woods to my fort. I would spend hours there, finding something to do. I would whittle sticks and pretend to be the world's best javelin thrower, throwing them at innocent trees.

-Reilly Lefebvre

Untitled



-Corilie Green

sleep

the darkest hours, the day's closing, the nightmares to come,
that takes away from all productivity, kidnaps the mind, destroys thought, and claims
control, shuts down the body like an eight-hour death
the eerie quiet that separates all bodies in the household, submits you to vulnerability,
falls weak to minds awake,
creates a coma of distraught, tossing and turning,
words left unsaid and actions undone,
the day's events eating away at the unprotected imagination

on the contrary

the vitamin of life, the solemn slumber,
the warm hug of homemade quilts that comfort with familiarity and smell of home
the freeing of the mind, the releasing of all stress and commitment,
the submission to beautiful and colorful dreams
a time to breathe
a resetting of the mind that eases an argument, swells an excitement, cultivates the
energy needed to survive the long day ahead,
a cure to pain and illness that extends beyond the body to the mind,
the treasure that waits on a pillow and under a comforter as a reward for for hard
work
suffering, and emotional exertion,
a navy blue peace, speckled with white, glittery hope and illuminated by a content
curiosity for the unknown
...sleep is

-Maggie Riendeau

Dreams Contest

This year, we asked FHS for their best pieces on the subject of dreams, however they chose to interpret that. Here is our favorite.

Dreams of Reality

My mind floats away to a different reality
One that exists both here and there
One full of heinous cruelty
One where love thrives everywhere

And I long for a world that is different
Where hope wins out against hate
But in a world run by the ignorant
This *hope* is all that will sate

In a world mirroring ours, I see blood
That of freedom, who was imprisoned
And it is here that I hope for a purifying flood
For this is a nightmare; uncommissioned

And these worlds collide within my mind
Shattering peace for all that I can see
From inside where they were confined
It's *my* skull they shatter, looking to be free

And then I emerge back here
Returned to reality by my own sigh
How quickly entire worlds can disappear
Remembered only behind my own eye

-Halorie Kivler

Holy Cats Ordain the Clarion



-Abby Fortune