



Inspiration

I would like to be a great author, but, honestly now, that's not my talent. It is my private opinion that one must first have an inspiration, and never have I been blessed with a single inspiring thought. I have wrestled and wrestled with the muse of literature but heretofore she has refused to abide with me. Some people say that if you just rest free and easy the proper inspiration will come to you. All day long, I have sought to be inspired in order that I might write an informal essay. But, pshaw! there is no use! Not a single inspiration has come to relieve my tired mind. My brain becomes muddled and my eyes grow tired. Perforce my thoughts take wings and soar out into the wide unknown.

Inspiration! What is the derivation of that word which is so elusive? My dictionary says that it comes from the word "inspiro" which means to breathe [sic] in, together with the Latin suffix "ation" which means the act of.

Therefore my deduction is that inspiration means the act of breathing in. Now, say, isn't that a queer thing to seek when you wish to write something? But my desperation is such that I am willing to try.

Here goes! Now all together! Take three deep breaths! Perhaps in this "breathing in" process something of worth will be taken in. Pshaw! There's no use! Not a single inspiring breath! Inspiration? Bah! I am at my wit's end. Shucks! I believe that writing means putting in, not taking in.

Perhaps this will be of value to you. In this intricate process of deduction, I have come to this conclusion. If you have the gray-matter, don't wait for an inspiration, but get to work and mayhap an inspiration will await you.

Mae Armstrong
The Orion, 1918

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NOTES

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A black and white photograph of a worn, four-spoked steering wheel. The wheel is heavily textured with peeling paint and rust, suggesting age and use. The word "Foreward" is written in a white, cursive script across the center of the wheel. The background is blurred, showing parts of a vehicle's interior.

Foreward

In honor of Anderson University's centennial, the frontispiece in this volume is "Inspiration," an essay by Mae Armstrong, from *The Orion*, Anderson's first literary journal. Since its publication in 1918, the journal has assumed many names, including *The Postscript* and "Footnotes" from the Manuscript Club. In May 1964, *Ivy Leaves* was born. The style has changed a bit from century to century—we rarely say "Pshaw!" these days—but the certainty that inspiration comes if we listen, surprises us if we look, and shakes us into wakefulness, if we'll let it, doesn't change. The writers and visual artists in this

volume are wide awake: see a Hindu temple, feel a subway seat, hold a crossbow, catch a glimpse of love for a parent, a child, an ancient oak, an expanse of snow. Imagine a baseball surrounded by shattered glass, a silk gown shimmering beneath an enormous fur coat, a bird nibbling the sky. Welcome to the eighty-fifth volume of *Ivy Leaves*.

The Editors

Fiction

Nonfiction

Poetry



Snow

The window is open,
and the snow, unblemished
at the base of a tree.
The chilled air settles
on the shoulders of his deep blue coat;
the sun washes over
his downturned eyes.
He can't find the words.
The letter white against the oak wood desk,
the guilt and ink not yet scattered
upon the page.

Bethany Wade

Returning

Everything is returning now,
The sun to an earth
That once worshiped it,
The forests to the colors
They have always been,
The migratory birds to places
They have not forgotten,
And yet still I am leaving
I think sometimes only
So that I may return.

Yes—someday prodigals
And even I will return.

Jake Dunn

Ancient Oak

Its dying came so slowly, no one noticed until one day the thin old roots released their fingers on the rain-soft ground and without warning, did what the old and tired do, sought a place to rest.

It was only half a tree anyway, part of it broken away ages ago, but no one expected it to go as it did, the sides splitting into pieces like broken ribs protruding from the top of a dirt brown frock.

Sprawled on the side of the street for nearly a week before carried away, it lay like a broken headstone beside an open grave, the rich brown earth surrounding the gaping hole, like soft garden soil ready for spring planting.

Margaret B. Hayes

The Farmer

Granddaughter, you were there to watch
the selling of my barns, the neglect of my fields,
the cutting of my trees. But were you not
with me as I plowed the garden, crumbling
the earth over, making ready for the rains?

You are the seed from the seed from my seed,
my first one, my strong one, my fiery one,
and I ask you, remember the land. Start
the roar of the bush hog, feel the tremble
of ancient tractor meet the tall grass.

Plow my fields and move the earth, take
sweet potatoes in your gentle hands, dust
the red dirt from their crevices. Do you remember
when you were a child and we did this together?
I remember how you dug your toes into the earth.

Casey Certain

John Lankford Gentry

As the name would not suggest,
I am from much humbler origins.
I lie with no wooden panels
of haughty oak and steel, but still
I lie amongst my friends,
cool wigglers of the earth, my friends.
Their incessancy I now know well,
for incessance remains as I lie still.

Anna Davis

Ghost Veins

By the broken wall they fed
the chipmunks and listened
to the last train leave St. Almo.
It was too late in the year
to expect any tourists,
too early in life to give up.

On the porch of their general store
she cradled a rifle while her brother
boarded up the windows for winter.
The telegraph lines she used to operate
muttered in the wind, empty messages
for the last two in St. Almo.

The shadow of the mountains
grew colder that year. The men
who wrung money from the mountains
walked away, leaving the Brown Trout
in the silver veins of the streams
around St. Almo.

From the porch they threw the last
of the seeds on the ground
and shut the door. The sun
settled behind the Sawatches
and left golden streaks
for the last two in St. Almo.

Brianne Holmes

Hoosier

When we drove away from kudzu and dirt
redder than any lipstick I could ever make you wear,
and changed clothes in the car to impress your parents.
Just over the Kentucky border a truck hit a deer and we pulled
over to maneuver the body onto a tarp, and into the brush.
In the headlights I saw that her fur was turning gray.
I couldn't tell if this was from age or winter. Before I could
leave her, we heard a fawn calling for its mother. The last
few miles were colder than we had expected; we kept
the windows down to air out the smoke that lived in most
of my things. That night, in your family's guest room
I kept mistaking the cigarette burn on my left hand
for a smear of blood. Sleeping that night was too hard,
knowing I wouldn't remember where I was in the morning.

Rafael Alcantar, Jr.

Vacant

They left to,
or were going to,
or he did
and he was
and she liked it.
She came or she was,
rather she planned to
and he wanted it.

Rafael Alcantar, Jr.

A Cat Called Catastrophe

I guess you thought you were clever—
naming a cat Catastrophe.
And I bet you would have lots of
witty things
to say,
if those ridiculously red lips
ever moved.
Instead, the shoulders of your custom-cut
tiger print
blazer
point accusingly at our ceiling.
Purple pant-legs sit acute
with the floor.
I've taken time to sit with you
and stare at that wall.
I don't see what you see,
and I probably won't.
I wonder what you're thinking—
are you considering a new wig?
I think you should.
I may,
possibly,
rip that one on top of your head
to shreds.
Never mind the black bow,
that one perched on your skull
like a bat,
it's obnoxious—really—but you may keep it,
if you must.
Because every day you get up,
bones cracking in protest,
to feed your Catastrophe.

Casey Certain



From the series *Unlearning My Fears*
Encaustic on canvas

Hannah Leonard

Monument

by
Jake Dunn

“This is the last time,” she said. She was standing barefoot on the abandoned oak floor, her wrinkled clothes in her hands. “The last time.” She glared at him. He smirked. She shook her head and laughed. “You are so bad.”

“Me?” He looked around the room, feigning disbelief.

“We can’t keep doing this. You know we can’t.”

He smiled. “We could.”

“I’m serious.”

“So am I. We always are.”

She slapped at his shoulder. “This is closure. That’s all.”

He laughed. “Call it whatever you want.”

She turned away. “You haven’t changed much, have you?”

“You haven’t changed at all.”

As they gathered their things from the abandoned farm house, she was quiet. He watched her lips begin to move, then suddenly stop.

“Yeah?” he said, pulling his shirt over his head.

She looked up at him. “Am I still pretty?”

In the dim light of the room, the sun breaking through cracked walls, her heart was bare. He could see the words spelled across it. The blades of light did not hide the years that had passed so swiftly. She was older now, her curves fuller, but she was still pretty.

“You’re beautiful,” he said. She always had been. He wanted her to believe him, and she seemed to. He wished he still meant it. “We should get going,” he said.

They walked out the front door, leaving old selves behind. In the car, she held his hand in her lap. As they descended the valley, the gravel dust was churning, rising behind them. In the rear view mirror, plumes of gray painted the sky. In the distance ahead, they could see the lake, the bridge. She stared out the window. As the sun fell through the burnt, blackened pines in quick flickers of light, she could see the charred landscape passing by her. As if God had struck a match, the land was burnt as far as they could see. The lake was all that remained. It was all that was left untouched. Through naked timbers and bare hill tops they could see it, the afternoon sun glancing off the water.

“Do you remember the way it used to be?” she asked.

“Just barely,” he said. “It seems forever ago.”

“It was the most beautiful thing.”

“I wish it didn’t have to change, to end up like this.”

They watched the lake go in and out of sight, the rise and fall of the staggered hills rationing it into quick, passing views. Following the deep ruts in the road, they disappeared into the crease of the burnt hills, words written in the folds of a well read letter. On the other side of the hills the land was flat, level. From here they could see the graffiti-strewn bridge, its rusted trusses like cathedral arches, its stone columns like giants rising from the water. As they neared, they slowed to a stop on the

dusty shoulder of the road. Just below them, steep banks plummeted to jagged rock and broken glass.

Leaving the car behind, he walked toward the bridge; she followed, clinging to his arm like a child. Together they stood on the edge of the hardwood planks suspended above the lake.

Below them the water was quiet, still. His eyes never leaving the water, he lit a cigarette.

“You know that’s going to kill you,” she said.

He took another drag. She laughed. As he looked out over the lake once more, she stole the cigarette from his lips and brought it to her own. She breathed in a long, deep drag. It had been a long time. As the smoke filled her lungs she could feel the familiar sensation returning. She knew it would not last, but, while it did, it was always worth it.

The day slowly fading to the drab colors of dusk, they shared the remainder of the cigarette, passing it back and forth until nothing was left. As she blew the last breath of smoke from her lungs, she leaned back against his chest. She wrapped his arms around her like a coat that she could not grow into. Fixed on the edge of the bridge, they were perfectly unmoving, the lines of their eyes falling in the same trajectory. As they looked out over the water, they could see their reflections staring back. Between the ends of the bridge they stood like a monument, unpunctuated looks in their marble eyes.

Grande Caffè Latte

by
Drew Welborn

As I pulled into the parking lot, I was fortunate enough to grab the last available space. This was my favorite time to venture into one of the local coffee shops. Today felt like a Starbucks day, and there was, of course, nothing like spending a nice afternoon in the most popular Starbucks in town. The afternoon crowds always seemed special, always unique. They fascinated me.

I quickly surveyed the front patio—empty, probably because of the stifling heat wave that’s been boiling our town for the past month.

Stepping out of my golden, sun-cripsed sedan, I noticed the vehicle next to me. Spotless and brilliant, the glistening black exterior nearly blinded me. In my dazed stupor, I could envision the predictable ad accompanying the SUV: “Luxury on wheels—all for the reasonable price of your soul.”

I examined my reflection in the tinted windows. The detail was astounding, urging me to replace my own bathroom mirror with this very car window. I resisted and returned to the matters at hand. Somehow, the left sleeve of my gray shirt had upturned and I hurried to undo it. How embarrassing if I had walked inside without noticing. I leaned in closer, thinking I saw a spot of dirt on my cheek. Rubbing my finger over it, I remembered it was only a small mole I intended to have removed. The possibility of cancer worried me, but, frankly, the fact that it looked terribly unsightly terrified me. I straightened up and turned to walk away. Stealing one last glimpse at the window, I had to admit I would look just fine in a ride like this. My reflection winked in agreement.

I gathered myself and made my way toward the door. Getting closer, I saw a young girl ride up on a dingy, pale yellow bike. Her stuffed brown backpack clung tightly to her dreary gray t-shirt-covered back. She was probably studying—a common occurrence in the afternoon Starbucks crowd. She dismounted, and I could see what must have been her school mascot on the front of her top: some ridiculous creature with horns. The local students did always provide a treat for the eyes. These days, they came in all shapes and sizes and crazy colors.

We reached the entrance at the same time, and I conveniently opened the door for her. She smiled as she passed by, but I didn’t acknowledge her. Something else stole my attention.

The driver-side door had opened on the black, mobile mansion. Imagine my surprise as I realized someone had been sitting on the opposite side of the glass during my earlier spruce-up session. Fortunately for me, the picturesque figure that stepped out surely understood my needs.

She was chatting away on her phone as she closed the car door. This woman—*this woman*—must have leapt out of the pages of *Vogue* and into the parking lot of this local Starbucks. Squeezed into a pair of slim, dark denim jeans, she wore a flattering, red blouse accented by a black belt. Her chestnut hair flowed to a stop just below her shoulders. Large, black audacious sunglasses adorned her face, and an ornate necklace hung loosely around her neck. Strutting towards the door, the heat waves rising

from the parking lot seemed to part as her red heels clacked along the asphalt.

I had to wonder if her phone was gold-plated. As she stepped up onto the sidewalk, she ended her conversation and I could see it as she placed it in her purse. Sadly, no gold. I realized I should have already been inside, but I felt the need to graciously keep the door open for *this* woman. I smiled as she passed by, but she didn’t acknowledge me. I followed her in.

We took our places in line behind, oddly enough, the young student. She had her right foot hiked up, tapping the toes of her plastic sandals lightly on the ground. Two absent-minded employees were talking behind the dual cash registers, ignoring the poor girl, who was now leaning forward on the counter.

The whole process obviously wasn’t fast enough for the exquisitely dressed woman directly in front of me. She stepped out of line and planted herself in front of the open cash register. Springing to life, one of the employees walked up and began taking her order.

I watched the sequence, mesmerized by what I was seeing. To the left, a beautiful woman, precisely outfitted and standing erect—commanding attention. To the right, a young student, clumsily dressed and hunched over—pleading to be noticed. The student stared with wide eyes at the pair to her left. She muttered, in desperation, “Excuse me?”

Without looking at her, the employee answered, “Someone will be right with you. Now, what can I get started for you, ma’am?”

She should have ordered something extra ludicrous, but instead, the woman opted for simple ludicrous, replying, “A grande caffè latte with three shots of vanilla, one extra shot of espresso, and non-fat milk. And make it on ice.”

As she whipped out a credit card, the other employee finally addressed the young student.

The girl responded, “I’ll just take a tall decaf, little cream and sugar.” She paid in cash.

By the time the student received her simple cup of coffee, the woman was being handed her latte. What happened next still puzzles me. I’m not quite sure how they didn’t see each other, but they didn’t. They turned toward each other, trying to walk away in opposite directions.

incredibly stupid the young girl was for causing such an accident. Once her rant subsided, she demanded help. I immediately knelt down by her side.

“I-I’m so sorry,” stammered the student.

She took one step toward us, but slipped in the spilt coffee. A loud thud sounded as she landed amongst the coffee cups and the woman’s belongings.

The two employees, for once quick off the mark, rushed around the counter, carrying towels. They sped past the student, knocked me out of the way, and began assisting the woman. One attempted to wipe the coffee off her while the other collected what had fallen from her purse. They helped her to her feet, all the while apologizing for

I reached her before she got to the door. She extended her arm, and I placed the mirror in her hand. She slipped it into her purse and opened the door.

Pausing before leaving, she said, “You know, you have some dirt on your face.”

She said it so matter-of-factly, without bothering to face me. The woman left, and the door closed behind her. It was the only time I ever saw her in this Starbucks.

I turned around and saw the young student making her way through the crowd to the restrooms in the back of the store. Instead of wiping up her spilt coffee, one of the employees had casually placed a wet floor warning next to the coffee cup carnage.

*“She was sporting a new accessory:
a warm layer of coffee.”*

They collided—a cataclysmic encounter of delicious, swirling coffee. I could see the sunglasses fly off of the woman’s head in slow-motion as she rocked back. I recoiled, trying to avoid the liquid shrapnel.

Once I was sure I had seen every drop of grande caffè latte and tall decaf hit the floor, I realized the beautiful woman had fallen. She was sporting a new accessory: a warm layer of coffee. Her purse lay open, with the contents thrown all around. The young girl stood in shock, her gray t-shirt drenched in coffee. Her mouth gaped open.

As we all came to our senses, the woman on the floor broke the silence. She brutally berated the student, letting the entire store know how

the mishap and mopping up the spilt latte. Claiming she couldn’t be seen in such a distasteful manner, the woman returned her sunglasses to her face and began to walk toward the exit.

I turned to the young girl, who was sitting up. Our eyes met, and she just shook her head in disbelief. Next to her I spotted a small item the employees must have missed. As I bent down to pick it up, the student inched forward. She must have thought I was going to help her, but I wasn’t. I could tell by her face when she realized that I wasn’t reaching for her. Frankly, it didn’t matter to me. I grabbed the last item—a silver compact mirror.

Hurrying after the woman, I cried out, “Wait! You might need this.”

I noticed that the only cup remaining was the student’s. Someone had picked up the woman’s.

I glanced down, making sure no coffee stains decorated my clothes. Once I was positive I was clean, I remembered that I hadn’t actually ordered anything. I approached the cash registers. Behind the counter, the two employees had resumed their earlier conversation. I began to nervously tap my toes against the ground as I waited for one of them to take my order, but neither took notice of me. I leaned on the counter. I looked down again in one last effort to ensure I was spotless. But I could see only one thing: just another gray shirt.

Swords and Arrows

by
Brianne Holmes

I had no experience robbing bookstores. And that's all I have to say in my defense.

It was exactly 11:27 p.m. on a Friday when I flung open my car door, slammed it shut, and threw myself headlong through Books-A-Million's glass front doors. I had to do this before I lost my nerve. In retrospect, it might have been nice if I'd lost my nerve.

I charged past the startled couple sipping their Joe Muggs coffees, past a teen with a Manga comic book. I bet I looked like a scrawny version of the grim reaper in my black cloak and hood.

A tall, gray-haired man looked up from the register. His eyes goggled like an enlarged insect's. Without further adieu, I pulled my loaded medieval-style crossbow from under my cloak and pointed it in his face. I read his nametag. It looked like Mark

the Store Manager was in for a bad night, thanks to me.

Behind me, someone squealed.

"Please—" I started when my voice squeaked up at least an octave too high. I sounded like a little girl. And anyway, what robber says please before he steals? I needed some serious practice.

Mark the Manager cleared his throat.

"There are no concealable weapons allowed in the store, sir," he said in a mechanical voice. He swallowed and glanced from the end of the bolt notched in the crossbow to my finger on the trigger. I tried to hold my finger steady. The manager didn't need to know that my heart was probably outpacing his.

I tried again. "Hand over the cash from all these registers, Mark, or I'll shoot."

He looked startled. Maybe it was because I'd used his name.

I heard feet thumping and someone talking urgently in a loud whisper. Calling the police, no doubt.

I gripped the crossbow.

"Now!" I shouted, and it came out sounding harsh and maniacal.

The manager jumped and started punching buttons on the nearest register.

It was harder than I thought it would be—robbing a store. I had to follow him from register to register while he pulled out the tills. I expected to hear sirens any second.

When all the money was together in a shopping bag, I snatched it from him, trying to hold the bag and stabilize the crossbow with one hand while still keeping my finger on the trigger with my other. I turned and dashed wildly from the store.

Out in the parking lot, things got worse. Out of habit I'd locked my car,

and finding the keys proved problematic. I had to hold the cash and the crossbow in one hand, and my cloak kept getting in the way of my other hand as it groped for my jeans pocket underneath. The keys came out of their hiding place suddenly, and my shaking fingers let them slip to the asphalt. I bent to pick them up.

The soft crunching of shoes on the pavement nearly sent me into a panic attack. I jerked up suddenly, keys in hand, and my hood fell off. Several feet away, a man was taking pictures of me with his camera phone. Bad. Bad. Very bad.

I jammed my keys into the lock and dove into my car. I fully expected the police to show up at my apartment that night and arrest me. Lying awake all night, I wondered what my sister Courtney would say when she came and visited me in jail. But the cops never came.

Four weeks later, I sat on my bed staring at the latest blackmail note. As usual, it demanded more money than I thought I could pay. As usual, it was a typed letter signed “The Businessman.”

The first note had explained everything completely, professionally, sterilely. The guy with the camera phone—The Businessman—was in the parking lot and saw the whole robbery through the store window and then calmly walked over to take my picture. But he hadn’t gone to the police. He’d looked up my license plate number on the DMV website and found my name, my address, my place of employment.

He said he’d release his pictures of me to the newspaper if I didn’t supply him with cash. So much for paying off debt with the money I stole—now I was in deeper debt than when I started this fiasco.

I couldn’t go to jail. Because of my big sister. I couldn’t let her down. I promised her a year ago that I would try to get out of debt, and somehow I don’t think a bookstore robbery was the method Courtney had in mind.

I ran my hands through my shaggy blond hair and had the sudden urge to pull it all out. Yeah, that was going to help with my headache.

I glanced at the sword and bow collection that covered my bedroom walls. For the umpteenth time, I considered selling them.

“It’s your fault anyway,” I told them.

Well, that wasn’t entirely true. My debt, and consequently the robbery, was caused by the video games too. And the electronics. And the reenactment troupe. And the mountains of books that covered the floor. But that was beside the point.

I threw the blackmail letter into a drawer along with others of its kind and several eviction threats. I checked my watch. 7:40 a.m. Work.

I dragged myself out the apartment door. 7:40 was much too early after working at Wendy’s till 2:00 a.m.

I slumped into my ’89 Buick Park Avenue and fired up the engine. As I bumped to the end of the parking lot, a familiar brown pickup truck appeared in my rear view mirror. The arrow on my speedometer jumped in sync with my pulse. I slammed the brakes to avoid

zipping into the road at the end of the parking lot. I took a closer look in the mirror. I relaxed. Wrong truck.

I looked both ways and pulled out onto the road, my hands shaking on the wheel. I checked the rear view mirror again. The brown truck had turned the other way. It wasn’t even from the same manufacturer, but at a glance it had looked too much like the truck that had periodically followed me for the last month. I’d seen it parked in front of my apartment early in the morning when I left for my day job. I’d seen it idling in the parking lot of Wendy’s at 2:00 a.m. Clearly The Businessman didn’t have a life. Maybe that’s why he needed money.

Swinging into the parking lot of Albert’s Swords and More, I pulled into a space and put the car in park. I listened to the engine hum and dug through my glove compartment in an unsuccessful search for Advil. I glanced at the pile of books sprawled across the passenger seat and the floor. Frodo looked back at me from the top of the stack, and Harry Potter peaked around the corner of Ted Dekker’s *Circle Trilogy*.

“Is this how you felt when the Black Riders were chasing you?” I asked Frodo.

He didn’t answer. I imagine he felt nobler than me. After all, he was trying to save the world. I was just trying to save my skin.

Frodo wasn’t in a talkative mood, so I climbed out of the car and slouched into the sword shop.

“Good morning, Justin,” said Albert, my boss, in his booming voice that just didn’t jive with early mornings and sleep deprivation. Albert was dusting some

*“There was always jail.
Was that such a bad place?
I heard they got free healthcare.”*

falchion swords—beautifully curved with a single, sharp blade—that were hanging up high on the opposite wall. Height had been overly generous to Albert, and he didn’t even need the step ladder to reach the swords. Albert’s grown daughter Liz sat at a computer pretending to e-mail a supplier, but she was really playing solitaire.

“Morning,” I said, none too cheerily.

Moving mechanically through my morning duties—un-boxing some new deliveries, pricing the merchandise, making sure a customer’s special order was being processed—I kept a nervous eye on the parking lot, hoping no more brown trucks would appear. So far The Businessman had done nothing but follow me. So far.

The bell over the door jingled. A cop walked in, and my blood pressure skyrocketed before I recognized Kurt, Liz’s fiancé.

I nodded to him, determined not to look at him directly. I wondered what would happen if I walked over to him and said, “Hey, man. Would you like to solve the crossbow robbery case? Bet you would. Pick me, pick me! I’m your criminal!”

I stuffed the thought into the recycling bin of my brain before I could act on it.

I pulled up the step ladder and started dusting the longbows. It was the crossbows that really needed cleaning, but I couldn’t bring myself to touch them—the kind I’d used for the robbery.

All I’d wanted was money to keep me in the apartment and pay off one of my credit cards. And maybe, just

maybe, buy a new katana—a curved Japanese sword.

Courtney would call that “an unnecessary expense,” I suppose. I started spending a little recklessly as soon as I got my first job at the age of fifteen. That was shortly after our mom died and Courtney became my legal guardian, even though she was only eighteen.

After my eighteenth birthday I moved out, and in the two years since then I’d managed to rack up quite an impressive amount of debt. Right before I robbed the Books-A-Million, my landlord had slipped an eviction threat under my door—the last one before the real thing, he claimed, even though he still hadn’t kicked me out. I wondered where homeless people slept.

Liz giggled shrilly, and the sound hurled daggers into my aching head.

The bell jingled again. I glanced over and saw my sister walking through the door.

“Oh, hey, Court,” I said. “Just give me a second. I gotta go take care of something in the back.”

“Justin—”

I don’t know what else she said. I hurried to the back room, breathing hard. I hadn’t seen her since the robbery. Before then, we got together at least twice a week. Now she called me on the phone, constantly concerned, begging me to come over and hang out—to tell her what was wrong.

I knew I shouldn’t talk to her face to face. Courtney had a way of getting the truth out of me when she turned serious and planted her sharp green

eyes on me. I didn’t want the truth pried from me. Not today.

I sauntered back into the shop. Courtney was leaning her elbows on the counter, staring into space. As I reentered the room, she smiled and tried to hug me, but I put my hands on her shoulders before she had the chance.

“So what’s up, Court?” I said casually. “Why aren’t you at work?”

“It’s Saturday,” she said. “Justin, are you okay?”

My pulse spiked. “Yeah, why?”

“Well,” she exhaled. “You’ve turned me down for dinner five times and I haven’t seen you in a month and your home phone line is disconnected and you haven’t been at church and I don’t know.” She ran breathlessly to a close and then sized me up. “And you look awful,” she added.

“Thanks. Way to boost my self-esteem,” I said.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” she asked.

I faked a short laugh. “I’m fine,” I said. “You worry way too much. What was it this time? Did you dream again that Sasquatch ate me?” If you could bottle imitation joviality like imitation vanilla, I could have filled a lot of bottles.

Courtney’s mouth twitched. She was trying not to smile. “That was a long time ago,” she said, regaining a straight face. “I’m talking about real life.”

She tried to catch my eyes with hers, but I wouldn’t meet them.

“Relax,” I said. “I’m just really busy. I got a second job at Wendy’s.” I lowered

my voice. “The sword shop just isn’t paying enough.”

“Justin, is this about your debt again?”

I turned red and glanced around to make sure no one had heard that.

“Really? Do we have to talk about this right now?” I asked, slightly irritated.

“Fine.” Courtney crossed her arms, but didn’t volunteer to leave.

I turned, climbed the step ladder, and started dusting the longbows again.

“Justin, I was thinking,” Courtney said.

“You were thinking?” I interrupted. “That’s fun. When did this hobby start?” Ah, yes, a chance to act normal. This was the sort of teasing Courtney expected and probably secretly liked.

But she ignored me. “I was thinking. Are you doing anything tonight? You want to come over for supper? Please?”

I sighed. “Listen. You’ve fulfilled your big-sister obligation. You’ve pestered me to no end on the phone, and now you’ve come in person. I’m sure Mom would be proud. If your wayward brother disgraces the whole family, that’s his fault, not yours.”

Whoa. Slow down.

I turned around and kept dusting before she could see the panicked look on my face.

Courtney’s voice was gentler when she answered. “I didn’t accuse you of disgracing anyone.” She paused. “Dinner tonight?”

“Maybe,” I said, my head still turned away from her. I wasn’t planning on going, but I wanted to appease her.

“I’ll take that as a yes,” she said.

I didn’t get off work till six that night. My landlord was knocking on my door when I got back to the apartment. He handed me a yellow piece of paper.

“You have 48 hours to clear out,” he said. “You’re three and a half months behind in your rent.”

I stared at the paper in my hand and nodded. I’d expected it any day, of course, but just seeing the eviction notice in physical form meant this was now reality.

I opened my door and wandered into the bedroom. Collapsing onto my bed, I stared at the walls hung with stray pieces of weaponry like dead branches on a tree. I glanced at the stacks of books on the floor. Where was I going to put all this stuff when they forced me to leave in two days? For that matter, where was I going to put me in two days?

There was always Courtney’s place. She would probably take me in temporarily, but there was no way I could keep a secret like mine while we shared a roof. There was always jail. Was that such a bad place? I heard they got free healthcare.

I should probably at least tell Courtney about the eviction.

I got up and opened my closet, looking for a set of clothes to change into. My black cloak stared back at me. I slammed the door and looked around my room.

I thought about numbing my mind with a little *World of Warcraft* role play. I opened my laptop and gazed at the background—a desert scene that looked remarkably like Tatooine from *Star Wars*.

They were staring at me. All my swords were staring at me.

“Just stop! Would you just stop?” I said.

Standing abruptly, I jerked open the drawer full of blackmail and eviction threats and ripped them all.

“You don’t own me,” I told my landlord and The Businessman, even though they weren’t there to hear it. It sounded like they must own some part of me, the way my voice brimmed with frustration and helplessness.

I scattered the confetti, marched out the door, climbed into my car, and headed toward Courtney’s apartment. The traffic zipped by in a colorful blur. I kept my eyes glued on the road in front of me.

“What do you think?” I asked no one in particular. “How much do I tell her?”

I couldn’t tell her the whole truth. Of course not. That would put her in a moral dilemma: turn her brother in to the police or inadvertently be his accomplice. Courtney didn’t deserve that. No, this time I would successfully hide my thoughts from my sister—for her sake.

But what if The Businessman told on me? He would soon. There was no way I could keep up with his demands, and he knew it. I was going down, and he knew it. And when I was arrested, I wouldn’t have the chance to tell Courtney the truth myself.

I almost missed the turn into her apartment complex, but I jerked the wheel just in time. Pulling into a parking space in front of building C, I let the engine idle while I unproductively banged my head against the steering wheel.

That act of penance done, I dragged myself from the car, climbed up the

flight of stairs, and knocked on Courtney’s door.

The door swung in.

“Justin!” Courtney’s face split in half with a grin. “So you decided you had time for your big sister after all?”

I stood there feeling like a little boy, helpless, in trouble, wanting someone else to fix it. Courtney hesitated and then attacked me with a hug. I didn’t try to stop her this time. Instead, I let her squeeze me while I stood limp like a wet spaghetti noodle.

After she had squashed me to her satisfaction, Courtney grabbed my arm and dragged me into the kitchen.

Intriguing Italian smells wafted from the oven. Cracking the door, I peered in at a homemade pizza.

“Please tell me you weren’t planning on eating that whole thing yourself,” I teased, wondering if that comment sounded natural or forced.

Courtney shoved a plate into my hands.

“I was hoping you’d show up,” she said with a grin and filled two glasses with water.

I sat down at the table and sighed, leaning back in the chair. Courtney’s apartment always made me think of the duplex our mom raised us in. Maybe it was because Courtney had kept so many of Mom’s old things: like the wall hanging that said, “Love makes a house a home” or the plaque of her favorite Bible verse, “Love covers a multitude of sins.” In the warmth and safety of the kitchen, my muscles started to relax for the first time in a month.

Courtney was chattering—about something funny that happened at her choir practice, I think. She pulled the pizza from the oven and placed it, steaming, on the hot pad in the middle of the table. She prayed, and we dug in.

For a few minutes, we chewed in contented silence. In between her second and third pizza slices, Courtney looked up at me. Her green eyes had that perceptive big-sister look in them. Like the time I shoplifted a *Star Wars* novel at the age of eleven, and Courtney made me return it and apologize—all without ever telling our mom.

I tried to avoid her eyes, but they kept finding mine. I looked down and fiddled with a coaster, flicking it and watching it twirl.

“Justin.”

I looked up automatically and instantly regretted it. I ducked my head and devoted my rapt attention to the coaster.

"Justin," she said again. "What's going on?"

"You don't want to know," I muttered. The coaster spun in mesmerizing circles.

"Yes, I do. And I won't leave you alone until you tell me what's wrong with you."

My mouth was as dry as the pages of an ancient manuscript. I had to tell her something, but if I wasn't careful it would all spill out. I chose my words carefully.

"Remember that time I borrowed money from Matt down the street so I could buy the new *Mario Brothers*, and then I ran out of money and didn't pay him back, and he beat me up? Yeah, it's kind of like that. Sort of."

Courtney's eyebrows drew together as she analyzed my cryptic analogy. "So you're in debt and someone...Justin, please just tell me."

"Okay, fine. I'm getting evicted."

I looked away so I wouldn't have to see her face.

"What was it this time?" she asked quietly. "A thousand dollar sword that you just had to have?"

"No."

"A new set of armor for the reenactment?"

"No." I felt unjustly attacked. It wasn't over something petty. Well, maybe the original debt was over something petty, but not this blackmail debt. "I just...made some bad choices," I said vaguely, hoping it would pacify her. Quite the contrary.

"What did you do?" Courtney's face turned pale, but her voice was level and controlled. She'd played a motherly role in my life long enough to know how to act like a mother when the situation

demanding it. And her eyes were begging me. Just tell.

I could feel my resolve melting. "Courtney, stop," I said. "Just stop."

I scraped back my chair and blundered into her tiny living room. As I sank into the couch, she knelt by my feet and looked up at me. So much for avoiding those eyes.

"Listen to me," she said in her most firm, authoritative voice. "This has gone on long enough. What. Did. You. Do?"

I wanted to tell her, but I didn't want to see the look on her face. She had given up her life to finish raising me. She'd given up college, her traveling choir, even her boyfriend when he wouldn't take me in the marriage bargain. And I had betrayed her—her and Mom. I was a coward and couldn't tell her what I'd done.

"Justin?"

I looked toward the door, but I was out of places to run. Well, except one. And to think I had been spending thousands of dollars to stay out of jail. I could have just saved everyone the trouble to start with.

I looked back at my sister. She was waiting, anticipating, expecting me to tell her the truth. Because I always had before.

I got up and headed for the door. Courtney was right on my heels.

"Don't you dare walk out that door," she said.

"I'm sorry, Court," I said and meant it. "I'm really, really sorry."

I reached over and abruptly wrapped one arm around her shoulder. She hesitated and then squeezed back. I didn't deserve a hug from her.

Courtney's face was full of confusion. "Justin..."

"I'm sorry," I repeated and slipped outside.

I shut the door carefully behind me and slowly descended the stairs. Opening the passenger car door, I pulled out *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. I tore out a blank page from the back of the book, found a pen in my glove compartment, and scribbled a note to Courtney that I slid into her mailbox. I was a genuine coward.

Going around to the driver's side, I collapsed into the seat and cranked the engine. I looked up at the yellow light coming out of Courtney's window. To the right a familiar brown truck sat idling. What did he think he was accomplishing, sitting there? I smiled grimly.

"You don't own me," I said.

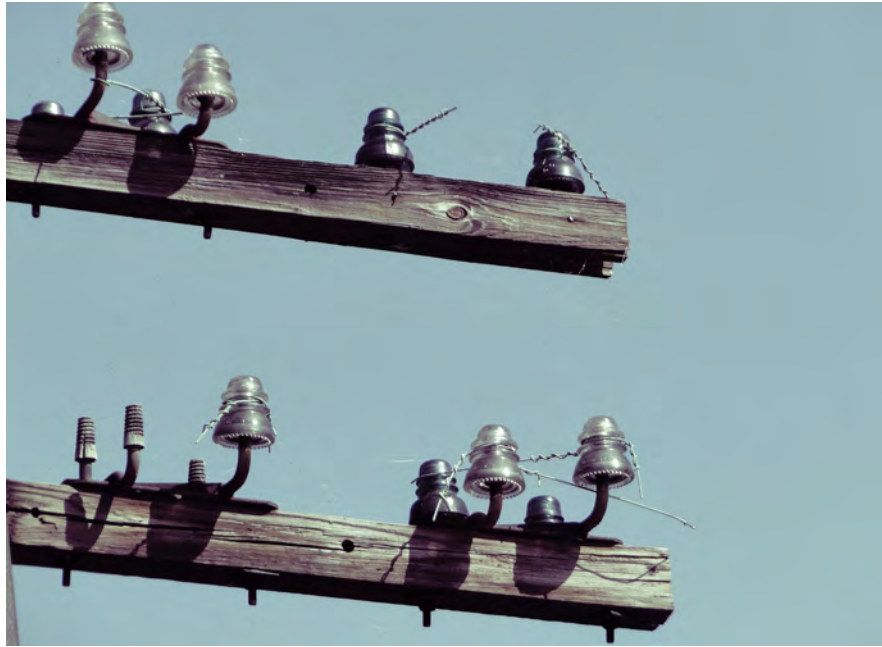
I rolled down the windows and let the evening air into the car.

It was getting dark outside when I pulled onto the road. I drove slowly, letting all the other cars whiz by and get on with their busy lives. The brown truck stayed behind a few car lengths back. I didn't care.

After a few turns, I saw what I was looking for. I pulled into the police station's parking lot and slowly climbed out of my car. I bet Mr. Businessman wasn't expecting this. The truck hesitated in the road in front of the police station, then drove on by. I guess he didn't think a police station was the best place for him tonight.

I smiled a sort of tight-lipped smile as I crossed the parking lot. Beneath a security light over the door, I paused.

"You don't own me," I said and opened the door.



Did You Ever Wake Up with a Cat on Your Head?

Did you ever wake up with a cat on your head?
"It's one of those mornings," Felicity said
As she opened her eyes with the warm, fuzzy weight
Of a very large cat fast asleep on her pate.
The cat known as Victor had crept up the stair
And decided to sleep on Felicity's hair.
That morning Felicity woke with the sun,
But the cat was determined to sleep in until one.
His sharp, hookish, claws made the woman's hair tangled.
In Felicity's face, Fat Victor's tail dangled.
Felicity sat up, on her face was a frown.
How she hated to wear an old cat on her crown!
*"Fat Victor, I wish you would get off my skull.
You're big, you're bulky, and too heavy to hull."*
But Victor kept on with his marathon rest,
Curled up as if Felicity's hair was a nest.
She dressed and got ready as best as she could
While Victor slept on like a great block of wood.
She tried to go shopping, she tried to go joggin'
With the cat known as Victor asleep on her noggin.
How Felicity hated the looks of disfavor
The grocery store clerk and pedestrians gave her.
Soon Felicity's head started throbbing and aching,
But Victor slept on and showed no sign of waking.
*"I look like a fool with this feline toupee,
But I won't let this lazy cat ruin my day!"*
It was ten before noon, and the weather was warm,
But some ugly black clouds were suggesting a storm.
And soon the big raindrops started to patter,
But to sleeping Fat Victor, the rain didn't matter.
If you've never been through this, you don't know the pain
Of a cat on your head that is drenched by the rain.
Her purple umbrella was simply too small
For a very fat cat, and a woman who's tall.
*"I look like a fool, or a very drowned rat,
With this soggy, pathetic excuse for a cat."*
Felicity sniffled and unlocked her door.
*"I'm catching a cold. I can't take this much more!
If you left me, Victor, just see if I'd miss you."*
Felicity sniffled and reached for a tissue.
She sneezed and sneezed – she couldn't stop.
She sneezed sleeping Victor clean off of her top.
The cat was awake, shaking with fear,
Clinging to Felicity's glass chandelier.
"Ha!" said Felicity. *"Take your naps up there.
You're stuck and you're stranded. See if I care."*

Anna Franklin

Who Threw the Ball

A father and two boys sit on
the creaking sofa, faces down,
none of them stirring, all silent.
Glass lies on the floor, the sun
hits the shards and glares off
in disarray the living room, and
the burgundy baseball glove
lies on the table, empty-handed.

Steven Bailey

Teaching Rachel

Warm damp midnight,
this is our noon
and this is new.
What's in my ears
is a crisp collage. Magazine clippings
of music, laughter, and night.
...heavy shutters at the end of a day,
my eyes allow what they can:
smoke marbling the black sky
under industrial peach streetlights.

Adam Davis

Piaf

The cigarette smoke passing my parched, burning lips
making shapes in the darkness.
My head swims, no thoughts passing through
Just numbness, a black hole
that I have become accustomed to.

I long to be in Paris, feeling the silk of my gown
shimmering beneath my enormous fur coat.
I want pain in my ankles radiating from
striding over stone streets in pumps.
I want my mouth stained red, dark and pouting.
I want tears over rosy cheeks, my blue eyes spouting
like a fountain. I want your breath cold in the rain
to brush my nose as you turn back, one last time.

I want to be a dancer in Paris,
drowning beneath the lights.

Brittany Hughes

Soul Mandolin

The guitarist strums the strings
then puts an harmonica to his lips,
and blows. His fingers move from
the fret board to his mouth, jumping
notes. He sees the mandolin cold,
strummed by dust. He twists the pegs,
searching for the G. If he stops, it
will be with G. He twists the pegs,
huffing and puffing, fingers reddening.
Strum, twist, strum, twist, strum, twist.
There's a note, velvet and humming,
rubbing the ears with a tickle. He gasps.
The hum now growls, burning the bridge.
The ghost is here, grabbing his fingers.

Steven Bailey

Joshua Whitaker

I remember you from college,
the girl who baked cupcakes
and laughed through her nose.
You don't know this, but I mocked
you then, while I ate your cupcakes
with all our friends. Back then,
I thought your laugh was a cover-up,
artificial and perverse.

Your coffee cup sat between us
the day you said, "Your frown
could darken a planet."
I laughed in your face and left
to fight in Iraq. Through three
deployments, a roadside bomb,
and the Second Great Depression
you stalked my mind,
while I tried to forget your honesty.
You made too much sense.

I saw you in the newspaper
six weeks before my first heart attack,
"Loving wife, mother, and grandmother."
You probably died laughing.
I put down the paper and fingered
the crease between my eyes.

Brianne Holmes



Writer
Spotlight

Rafael Alcantar, Jr.

Rafael's trusty Moleskine notebook is a constant companion to his life and his writing. He says many writers and artists look at their journals as friends but also have love-hate relationships with them. Rafael said his is "like a little puppy—a German Shepherd-Husky mix kind of puppy." He admits to neglecting it sometimes and feeling terrible when he does. Most of the time, though, he's attentive; he writes down lines, memories, and events that strike him during the day. These fragments are the seeds he uses when he's typing new poems; he never uses paper. He draws on the ideas in his journal, but, "Sometimes poems write themselves, and that's what good poetry should do," he said.



Rafael Alcantar's journey as a poet began in fourth grade, when he wrote a poem for a children's book about constellations. It was something about Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, but the memory is fuzzy to him. Although the poem didn't make it into the book, that early setback did not stop him from returning to poetry in high school. Enrolling at the Greenville Fine Arts Center, he began to cultivate his gift and passion for poetry under the direction of—and at the urging of—Sarah Blackman, an instructor in the creative writing program. Upon graduating from high school, he visited Anderson University and felt that it could become a home to him. And it has—a writing home.

At Anderson, Rafael has indeed become a member of the writing community: a student in creative writing classes, a tutor in the Writing Center, an author in *Ivy Leaves*, and president of Writers' Block, a club for writers who share their work and critique it. "It's super important," Rafael said, referring to the writing community. "Trusting someone to trash you is having a huge amount of faith in someone; it's the only way you grow."

His ideas and inspiration for poetry come from the various elements and experiences in his life. "As you get far in life, it's not about what you come from, it's what you do with it," he said. His metaphor for life, for managing life, is a kitchen stove with each burner

representing an important part. In order for some to burn hotter, others need to be turned down. This balancing, this focusing, shapes his life and his poetry. Rafael lived in Chicago, Illinois, before moving to Greenville, South Carolina. Fine details, he says, such as the differences in the soils, provide his poetry with fresh images, one of his favorite things about poetry. Short, simple poems rich in fresh images are the kind he enjoys reading and the kind he tries to write. "It is what it is," he says, talking about his poetry. "I'm not trying to hide anything from you. I try not to hide things from readers."

Many of his poems, and some of his favorites, are about his niece. Rafael seeks to be an example to her,



a role model. In fact, it is primarily for his niece that he attends college. "I want to give that hope to her. I do it in order to lay out a path for her," he says. He wants to do as much for others, too, through writing poetry, through inspiring and teaching high school

students. And he wants to be famous one day, remembered for his writing. He wants to embrace his life and tell others about it through poetry in order to connect with people. "I'm alive and I need to write about this," he said. "I've lived and someone needs to know it."

*Article by Josh Overstreet
Photography by Andrew Higgins*

Cassatt

When you were less than half your size
you found me sprawled out like your dolls
and begged me to fix you. So much money
was spent buying you things you didn't need,

but splinters were always free and always
made for the best memories or you hated
them and I made the best of it all. I couldn't
explain to you how your body works or

you wouldn't know how to listen and just
forget as soon as you went on a new adventure.
I couldn't help but watch you run back outside,
stand on your table and catch the wind in your mouth.

Rafael Alcantar, Jr.

Tell Me About Everything

I just missed you so much it hurt
to bend my knees and pick you up,
or the pieces you had laying around.
Like your first bike, rather, the wheels
that you never knew how to use;
you removed them to use as décor.

Though you were five and couldn't even spell
the words I used to describe you or even wrap
them around your mind; unlike your favorite
hat which your head grew around. In that
plain white dress picked out at the supermarket,
you sat in grass and watched birds nibble at the sky.

Rafael Alcantar, Jr.

Living Rooms Were Never Safe

Before you could open your mouth
I told you I would never make it to thirty.
And because I never lie, I am resting
in dirt darker than any found in South
Carolina. After nine years of knowing
you, under moonlight, you bury a tin
box full of my cigarettes, journal, pens,
and a picture we took when we were
young and full of ourselves. All of this
you do when the earth cools down,
in the peignoir I bought you for your
birthday. Inside, you lay down and
wait for me to tell you another story.

Rafael Alcantar, Jr.

The Ballad Of Love and Hate

by
Valine Mullen

He stands over six feet tall and weighs just over 230 pounds on a good day. He started going bald before twenty-five and began shaving what was left just after thirty. Most people tell him he looks like Mr. Clean, but I'm pretty sure it's just because his head always stays so shiny. He's never been one for earrings or tight t-shirts, or even cleaning. He's never been much for anything, come to think of it. He's always been a hard worker, but I think that must develop from working manual labor for so long. He bounces around from factory job to factory job, and he's equally discontent with each one. Every day he thinks about how things would be different if he had more than that high school diploma.

But things aren't different. During his days off, he works on cars for a hobby. That's always been something he enjoys. And he watches a lot of football—NFL only, no favorite team; he used to bet on any of them, and he would always bet too much. One day I overheard him on the phone with his bookie, wagering a dime on one of the Sunday afternoon games. I thought it silly to bet ten cents on a team—until

about seven years later, when I discovered how much a dime was worth in the eyes of a bettin' man. I would entertain myself by placing twenty-five cent bets on the side with the coolest uniforms, while he would stake one thousand dollars on the side with the best defensive line. How annoyed he must have been with me when I would naively cheer for Team Best-Dressed even after his chosen defense didn't pull through.

What's always bothered me most about my father is his drinking. He's been an alcoholic as long as I can remember, and he's had one hell of a mean streak as long as I can remember. I remember the way a can of beer always found its way into his hand after a long day at work, and the disgusting odor it faithfully left on his breath. It always proved to be a good way to deter me from speaking to him, not that I ever had much to say to my absentee father. And most of what he had to say wasn't directed at me anyway; he usually saved his choice words for his wife, especially if the house didn't meet his standard of clean or the dishes weren't done or she spent more money than allotted

from her own paycheck. He could always justify the anger he felt toward the woman who served as a household help and a nuptial hindrance, the woman he had spent the last twenty-three years regretting ever having married.

But this woman he's always thought so little of—his wife, my mom—is a woman of strength and grace. Her 5'4", 160 pound physique isn't very strong in a physical sense, though back in her younger days she was a muscular sight to see. And she isn't very graceful in a physical sense, either; she's always been quite clumsy. Her formal education ended after her high school commencement, though she went on to receive her cosmetology license shortly after turning fifty. Neither document does her much good now: her career came to a close in 2001 when doctors told her she has two herniated discs in her back, making it painfully difficult and sometimes impossible for her to do any kind of work. And when most people look at her, those are the things they see. However, none of these shallow facts come close to defining the depth of my mother because, when

it comes to hardships, her endurance is inexhaustible; when it comes to mercy, her forgiveness knows no end. Grace has never been a challenge or a concept or a good deed for her; grace is who my mother is.

When I found out my father was having an affair in 2001, my mom informed me that it wasn't the first time. He had been seeing other women for years, she told me, but never once did she think about leaving his side. And she didn't stay for *my* sake, the child's sake, as so many other parents claim to do; staying together "for the kids" is often the last tiny thread holding two miserable

Carolina Panthers pennant—or the nights he would stand at the front door yelling that he would leave and not come back this time.

But his threats were empty; he always came back. Not that it really would have mattered if he hadn't, since he had already done a great job of making his absence more familiar than his presence. But my mom has always been there. Her loyalty speaks when her tears choke back her words. Her faithfulness is evident when her joy is not. Her devotion is found in the way she loved her husband when he didn't care to love her in return, in the way she

alcoholic, though he never drinks when I visit. He doesn't succumb to the same anger that once defined him; now there is a gentler, more patient way about him. It's almost as if he thought that age fifty-two would be a good time to finally get his life together. Or maybe he decided it was high time to make some adjustments after realizing his family had fallen apart and he was the one to blame. We spend five days together out of the year when he flies me to Tampa to spend Thanksgiving with him. We have our own "traditions" for when I visit, like enjoying one of many theme parks just over in Orlando,

"Her forgiveness knows no end.

*Grace is not a challenge or a concept or a good deed for her;
grace is who my mother is."*

people together. My mom stayed for a more powerful reason: she loved her husband. She's always loved that middle-class, self-centered, two-timing drunk, and she always will.

I have distinct memories of my parents while growing up; a few of them are pleasant, most of them aren't. Some of our family vacations still bring a smile to my face when I think about them, like when I recall the weeks we spent at Myrtle Beach and Disney World, or the summers we spent camping on Lake Michigan. They always made an extra effort to get along then—maybe that *was* for my sake. Then there are other memories that I wish I could forget, like their innumerable screaming matches that now all seem to blend together. It's hard to differentiate between one fight and the next—they all sounded the same from behind the locked door in my bedroom where I would regularly retreat. But there are a few fights that stand out more vividly: the time he threw our bar stool through the open screen door and onto the front lawn, or the time he put his fist through their bedroom door—a hole my mom would later cover up with a

fought for her marriage even though everyone told her it was a waste, in the way she tended to my brokenness and pain despite the fact that her own heart had barely healed.

The separation occurred in 2007. My father sold our house and moved to Florida, my mom moved in with her own mother who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, and I moved to Texas for an internship opportunity. It could be said that 2007 marked the year of my mom's failure, that the marriage she nurtured for more than twenty years had finally died. It could also be said that she's better off, that she deserves the freedom her husband's abandonment brought her. But she wouldn't say any of that. Four years later, she still says how much she loves her husband, how much she misses him. "I'm praying for God to change his heart," she tells me. Her forgiveness knows no end. Grace is not a challenge or a concept or a good deed for her; grace is who my mother is.

Since moving to Florida, my father has changed; he's not the man I knew growing up. He doesn't bet anymore, and he rarely even watches football. He still openly admits to being an

and running a 5K together in Clearwater on Thanksgiving morning. We try to keep ourselves busy with places to go and things to do while I'm in town because, if and when silence befalls us, we both realize neither of us has anything to talk about. It's hard having a conversation with someone I've known for twenty-two years but have never really known at all.

Every Christmas I return to Ohio to visit my mom. She still takes care of my grandma—a full-time position that earns most women \$14 per hour, but she continues to do at no cost, simply out of love for her mother. The last few years have been wearing for her—living apart from her husband and her only child—but she remains steadfast in strength. The increasing strands of gray in her blonde hair and wrinkles in her olive skin are beginning to show her age, though her beauty has not yet begun to fade. The grace and benevolence that characterize her never once have wavered, and her spirit of love and forgiveness is demonstrated not only in the way she cares for her mother everyday, but in the way she lives her life.

The End
Justifies
the Means

by
Anna Davis

Mistakes happen, no sense in condoning or justifying—they are inevitable, unavoidable, but perhaps necessary. Perhaps it was meant to happen all along. Some call it fate, others predestination, but I call it reason and *that*, is something worth happening for.

A bright June day, 1987—the seventh, four in the afternoon, and the Bell Tower Mall gets painted. Foot by foot he climbs, eighteen to be exact. He is a specialty painter, high-rise steel runner—six foot one, strong as an ox, twenty-three years young. He was supposed to be in Hilton Head, painting the boss' beach house—but he never made it.

He had just finished rigging the steel so the others could walk. He did that too. He could do everything actually, except be where he was supposed to. Blame his wife for that. She, young, alone, and in love, would not allow him, so he stayed—reluctantly.

Two guys up on the rig—eighteen feet in the air. Both are competent enough to do the job, but only one is skilled enough to love it.

“You know that dream people have about falling?”

Yes, the falling dream. It is said that death is waiting at the bottom. Most people wake up before reaching the destination though, due to the uncomfortable and overwhelming feeling of panic and distress. He enjoyed it—that nauseating adrenaline.

“It's relaxing,” he said, but he wasn't sure why, but I am.

“I've been two hundred feet in the air, nothing attached to me, just the cohesion between shoes and steel,” he said. The feat satisfied him. Twenty-eight feet was nothing.

Stroke by stroke the brushes glide, traveling through the air like the birds around them. It's four in the afternoon. He is hot, and bothered by both heat and a missed vacation. The two guys ascend the ladder—another story to paint, ten more feet. The ladder breaks—they fall twenty-eight feet. One guy suffers broken arms and

snapped wrists. This guy fought gravity and lost, but the other guy didn't. He drifted.

“I just got back up,” he said. He fell twenty-eight feet, landed on his head, and endured. Pain surged throughout his body, but he stood—he walked.

He goes home and tells the young, lonely, loving wife (now terrified too) about the mishap. She drives him to the hospital thinking *he's fine, he has to be*.

“He walked!” she proclaims, “How can anything major be wrong if he can walk?” Nothing appears broken. He is in pain, but that's to be expected from a three-story fall. He had to have been fine—this was the seventh.

The results came back. She was right, nothing was broken. He lost an inch because of vertebrate compression. He then stood six foot none, but still strong as an ox, twenty-three years young, and walking—a miracle. The sighs of relief had just begun to swell, until the real news came:

“You have a brain tumor.”

A brain tumor, a juvenile pilocytic astrocytoma, located at the base of the brain stem—malignant.

“We accidentally set the MRI too high,” the doctor admitted. He had gone in for a standard lumbar MRI, just from the Atlas down, but they messed up. The technician programmed the machine too high, but must have thought that the extra two inches would have no effect—he was wrong. The discovery was a mistake. The fall was a mistake, two strong men on a sturdy board. That board wasn't supposed to break; it shouldn't have broken. This shouldn't have happened. Two men fell off a building that day, the seventh. One broke bones, the other landed in cancer—June, 1987.

Until then, this particular tumor was found only in six-year-old children. Why then was a twenty-three-year-old adult being diagnosed with one? Turns out, he had always produced higher amounts of calcium. A calcium shell had, for roughly

seventeen years, encaged the beast. That is, until the fall. He landed on his head, unlocking the gate, releasing the monster that began consuming him. He endured radiation; twenty-four months of radioactive materials violently attacking an unwanted life form in his brain, but the life form fought back. He withered: six foot none, weak, twenty-five years old, defeated, but surviving.

Three months later his wife grew pregnant, despite the promise of sterility. It was not a mistake; she did not cheat; she did not use alternate types of fertilization; it just happened. He did not know why, nor did she, but I do.

Nine months later a beautiful baby girl is delivered. Head full of dark brown silk—like his—seven pounds, nine ounces, a healthy baby girl. Smooth labor for four in the afternoon—the seventh of June, 1990. Things happen.

“I never would have had children if I hadn't fallen. I was gone all the time. I did not want to be that kind of dad.” I was born on a bright June afternoon, 1990—the seventh. My conception was due to a radiologist's miscalculation. I never would have been thought about, have lived, had even happened, had it not been for my father's fall—the great fall that ended his career, left him disabled, weaker, older and shorter. The cancer essentially led to other complications and problems that plague his well being, and although I see myself as the result of a ruined life, my Daddy doesn't. What father would?

We do not just happen to live life, but rather life tends to live us. Are there really mistakes then? One road leads to another, and then leads to another. Mistakes lead to another and then another until some form of redemption is reached. Is it even fair to label them “mistakes” if ultimately everything happens for a reason? A dad fell, a dad lost, a dad suffered, but then a dad gained. I am the blessing after a beaten life—I am my Daddy's little girl.

Barefooted Passion

by
Cara Dillon

In his best selling book, *The Life of Pi*, Yann Martel paints the comparison of Hinduism and Christianity with this imagery: “If Hinduism flows placidly like the Ganges, then Christianity bustles like Toronto at rush hour” (72). I’ve grown up with an understanding of this monotonous “bustle” of Christianity. Each and every Sunday for eighteen years, my mother would rush our entire family out the door by eight o’clock for Sunday school. Then we attended a traditional church service with a strict itinerary, clearly outlined each week in the bulletin. We would return for another service again later that night, and for a third on Wednesday evening, as well. Each scheduled service was predictable and routine: singing, preaching, praying and more singing. It is not hard to see, then, how Hinduism, a religion with no timetable, stands in stark contrast to my religious practice. To help me appreciate and grasp the depth of such a foreign faith, I visited a Hindu temple in India where I was able to absorb the complexities of Hinduism while realizing the fervor, focus, and depth of experience that my own methodical faith had lost.

Hinduism is a life-encompassing faith. The temple is positioned on a mountain top and the entire city can see the structure from miles away, standing as a reminder of Hindu devotion. A skinny, well-worn staircase stretches miles up the side of the mountain and ends at the foot of the temple entrance. A local woman informed me that some devout followers hike for hours up this staggering staircase each day as physical sacrifice to the gods. The temple’s silhouette against the backdrop of hills and valleys was striking, but the ornate framework was awe-inspiring when examined close up. The building is constructed entirely of stone, weathered by centuries of erosion and baked by the

sweltering Indian sun. Deeply engraved in the stone are intricate designs, twisting and streaming up the walls until they stop abruptly where the ceiling should have been. Instead, it opens up to the clear blue sky.

To enter the temple, I was required to wear traditional Indian clothing: a salwar suit, consisting of a long loose top and pants that covered my ankles, and a duppata, a long scarf draped over my chest and shoulders that I also used to cover my head while inside. I wish I could say I was inconspicuous, but ivory skin like mine is difficult to disguise in India.

I discarded my sandals next to the stairs leading into the temple because it is deemed disrespectful to enter into any home or place of worship while

wearing shoes. This ordinary action instantly reminded me of the Biblical account of God appearing to Moses in a burning bush and telling him, “Do not come any closer, take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” I enjoyed the feeling of the warm stone and dirt under my feet. The bare physical connection to the temple made me feel comfortable and connected to Hinduism’s centuries of history in India. At the same time, I had a laugh to myself at the thought of throwing off my Sunday shoes and standing in my nylons in the church sanctuary back home. I could already sense that I identified with the natural simplicity of this environment, and I was eager to pass through the doorway and begin my journey.

I walked into the first hallway-like area of the temple. On my left, the long wall was lined with vendors selling sacrifices for the worshippers to buy and offer to the gods. Everything from trinkets and toys to flowers and fruits crowded their tables, begging to be purchased. Again, my thoughts flashed to a familiar Bible story: Jesus entering the temple in Jerusalem and turning over the vendors' tables. That image became more authentic to me than ever before. In Bible studies, that story was just that: a story. But there, as I surveyed offerings and heard the vendors' petitions to potential customers, it was tangible and authentic. I don't think there's anything more ironic than having a revelation about your own religion while being in the temple of another.

The second wide, arching doorway led into another large open-air room with at least a half-dozen dark, closet-sized inlets cut into the stone walls. A statue of a god, sacrifices, and worshippers were tightly packed into each one. As I peeked into each small alcove, I noticed that each god was drastically different from the next and so were the sacrifices offered to them. Some gods were large and ornate golden statues of animal-like forms while others were just simple stones, marked with red paint to denote their worth. A few were lavishly decorated with flowers and surrounded by trinkets, while others stood alone.

I knew beforehand that Hinduism was a polytheistic religion, but I didn't understand the significance of each god. I asked my high school friend, Dhaval Patel, about the distinctions between the gods after I returned home. He told me that there are millions and millions of different gods in Hinduism, but they each have a purpose and a meaning and stand for something that helps build Hinduism as a whole. Dhaval explained to me that, in Hindu tradition, the type of request determines which god

followers appeal to. Hindu followers can have shrines to some gods in their homes, but believers come to this particular temple to worship Hanuman, the Hindu monkey god. There were dozens of monkeys walking around and climbing the walls just feet from where I was standing with no barriers between us. Generally, Hindus will offer food to the monkeys as their sacrifice to Hanuman. Until this point, my only experience with monkeys was limited to stuffed animals and zoo visits. Naturally, I was somewhat uneasy in their presence but I watched in awe as a nearby monkey approached a man, who proceeded to feed him from his hand.

But worshiping the gods isn't limited to physical and material sacrifices; the final room in the temple is much larger than and different from the others. While the previous rooms were darker and exhibited a reverent mood, this room represented the zeal at the heart of their faith. There is a golden god adorned with flowers at the front of the room. About twenty worshippers stood facing it—singing, playing tambourines, and dancing barefooted. I couldn't understand a word of what they were singing, but their worship was absolutely uninhibited and authentically passionate. I could have stood there for hours listening to their heartfelt exclamations, watching their spirited movements, and feeling keenly the contrast with our dispassionate singing of hymns back home. Even the colors in which they dressed were bold. The room was crowded with the intensity of their rich red, orange, and purple garments adorned with hand stitched beading. *Beautiful* barely begins to describe the moment.

I observed the full scene and couldn't help but notice there was no bulletin or schedule of events. There was no practiced preacher who spoke at the crowd for an hour. Not a single

person seemed bothered by those who chose to worship differently. People prayed loudly and simultaneously. No one seemed concerned about where to eat afterwards. All worshippers behaved as if the outside world were waiting on them to finish before it proceeded another instant. It was a sight to behold, a sight that made an impression on my beliefs and echoed in my heart.

I left the temple with a new understanding of what Yann Martel was trying to say. Hinduism doesn't happen for a scheduled hour a few times a week. It's not an incident like a traffic jam where everyone involved is simply concerned about its ending. But I don't think his statement was completely accurate. The passion of Hinduism flowed continuously from the heart of each Hindu believer, yes, but it was evident to me that Hinduism was anything but placid. It was both free-spirited and reverent. It was unpredictable and intensely focused. It flowed fervently and unrestrained. But passion is not religion dependent nor is it determined by a method of worship. Passion cannot even be created or commanded by human will. Rather, passion originates in a desire and willingness to seek depth and meaning beyond finite experience. For me, their spirit was contagious, their simplicity and passion inspiring. Faith is not limited to a Sunday morning experience; it's a way of life.

Works Cited:

Martel, Yann. *The Life of Pi*. Canada: Random House of Canada, 2001. Print.

Westbound on the New Haven Line

It begins when the sliding doors ring.
This old railroad car will carry you
past the river and into a world of harsh
steel, phone calls, and unmet expectations.
At each stop others just like you enter
and exit as they would a cramped elevator:
quiet, uninterested, pressed for time.
“Your comfort is not my priority,”
is heard from your rigid seat as you settle in.
They are the exact words of your boss,
your co-workers, your confining workspace.
Don’t make eye contact, just read your *Times*.
Hurry; the doors are about to open.

Sarah Dobrotka

An Axis-I Diagnosis

See the pantomime slip—
arms outstretched against such strength,
and from within it seems
they are watching you, the others too,
cold bodies arrest the cochlea,
neck crook spun catatonia—
but it's just another study from the outside.
They hardly seem to care
with their concave glasses and incognizance.
You were found asking the upholsterer
to reupholster these walls, again
so that this next time you might escape
their prying eyes and black pens.

Anna Davis

Scarlet

You stand there in your red sequins
a jezebel—
lips painted, curled hair
pinned back and dark.
Your eyes hard,
your cheeks stained,
your heart heaves under velvet,
you struggle to breathe;
under pressure
you face them—
fearless but scared,
outspoken but dumb.
She grabs your gloved arm,
drags you to face them,
their teeth bared like fangs
ready to consume you
and spit out your sins.

Brittany Hughes

Fessler Pond

Today I return to Fessler
for the first time in ten years.
Pulling over onto the snow covered
shoulder, I sit with the car in park,
pausing before I walk down
the hill to the pond's frozen edge.
I look down at the children below
and watch as they glide freely
across the icy sheet, laughing.
They skate figure eights
around each other, unaware
of the numbing water underneath.
Looking around I notice
the blue cross they put up
a week after the accident.
The one that took the life
of my best friend's father
Christmas Eve ten years ago.

Kate and I heard the sound
of scraping metal from the pond.
Our view of the road obscured,
we shrugged it off and finished
our race to the other side of Fessler
as snow cascaded down around us.
It was not until we arrived home
that we learned why Kate's father
had not returned from work yet.

My thoughts return to the children
down below, happily skating past
each other on six inches of melting
safety; their innocence still intact.

Sarah Dobrotka

Harvest Words

The fields are thick—
grains standing tall
The trees are heavy—
fruits full-grown
and I—I am the
harvester—
And the
harvest
these words, my crop—
my yield
they will sustain me—
justify me
By them I will starve—
I will feast
By them I will be
known—
I will remain.

Jake Dunn

The Realities

For homeland.
For glory.
For freedom.
Against terror.
Against tyranny.
Against our enemies.
These are the reasons.
Bullets.
Blood.
Bombs.
The dead.
The dying.
The left-behind.
These are the realities.

Bethany Wade

Writing That Poem

Another massacre
with a gun.
What if anger
found a better way?
What if, in class,
he had been asked
to write a poem?
What if the questions inside
had exploded on paper,
and the rage,
slipped through his fingers
into the black ink
like venom,
and escaped on the page?
What if he had written
that poem?

Margaret B. Hayes



From the series *Decadence Pointe*
Digital Photography

Jivan Davé

Art
and
Design





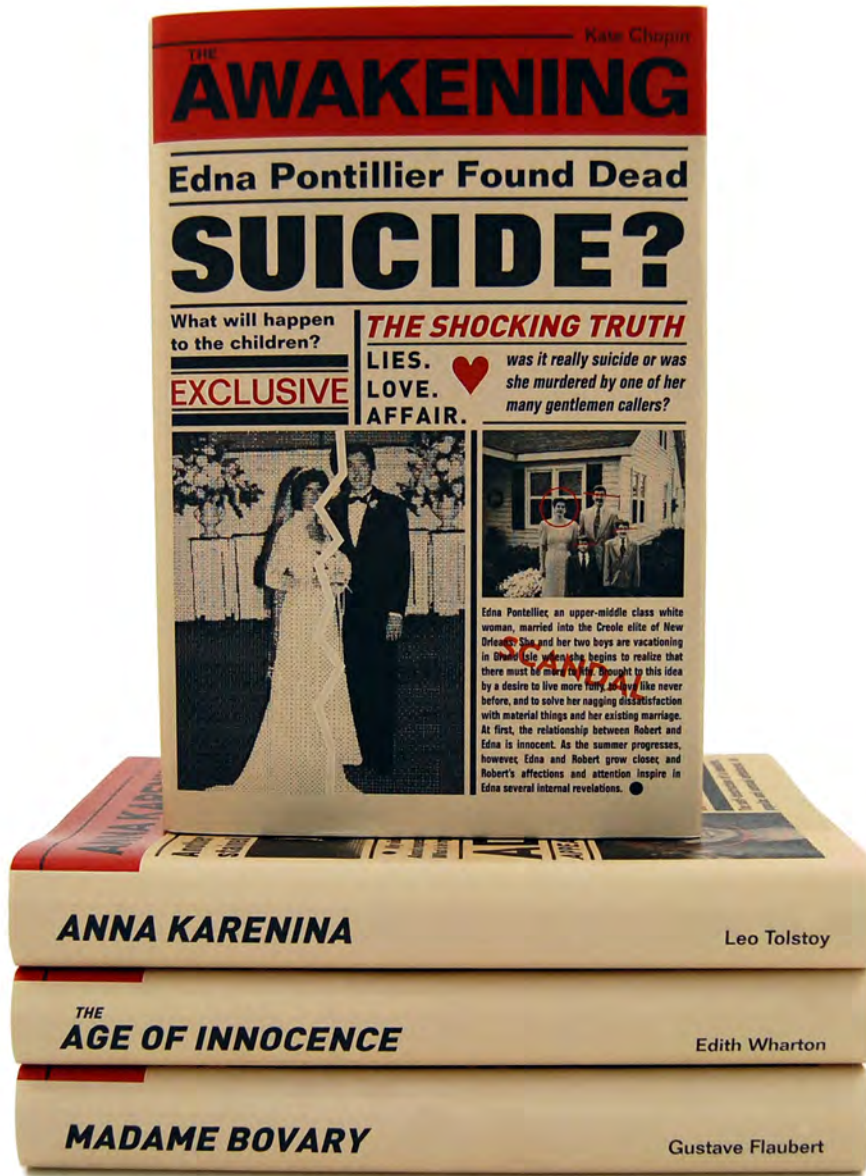
Where Did You Come From? Where Are You Going?
Oil on Canvas

Hannah Leonard



Threadz
Stoneware Clay

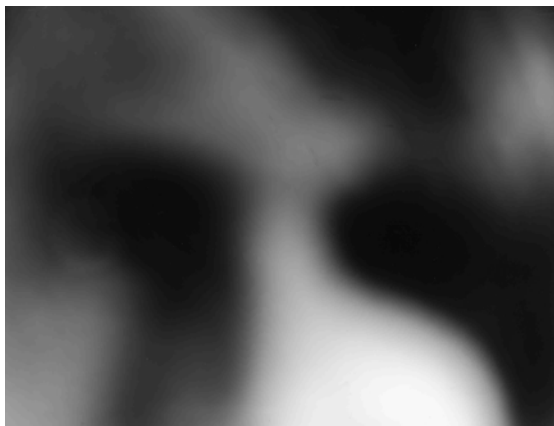
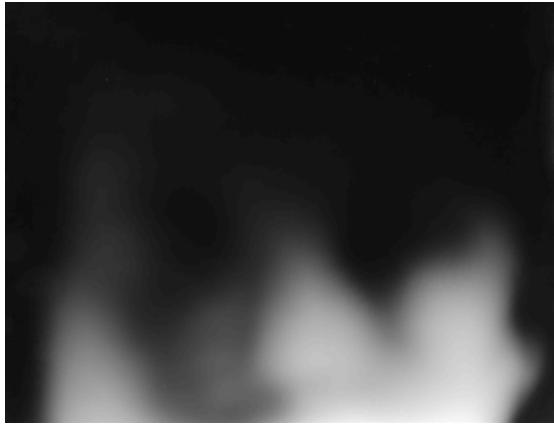
Chelsea Riley



Scandal in the Classics
Book Jacket Design

Winner
2011 AAF Greenville
Silver ADDY Award

Philip Belger





Through Thick and Thin
Stoneware Clay

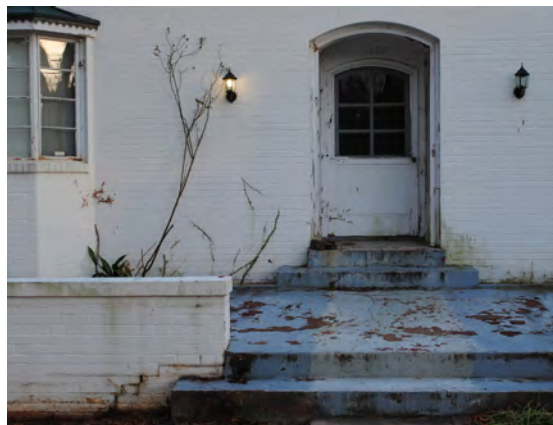
Kolby Watt



Mooch Chocolate Mix
Package Design

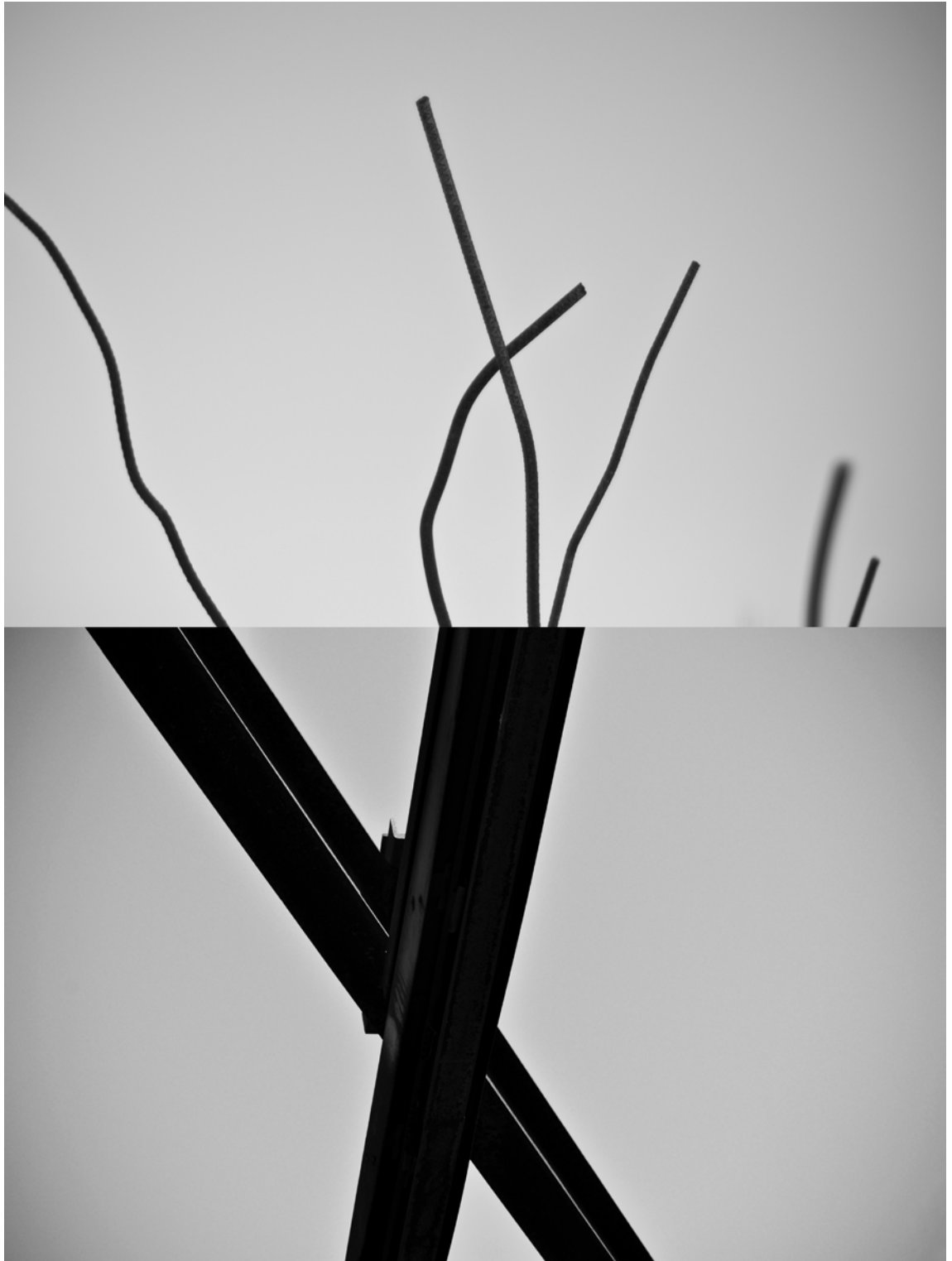
Winner
2011 AAF Greenville
Gold ADDY Award

Beth Cooper



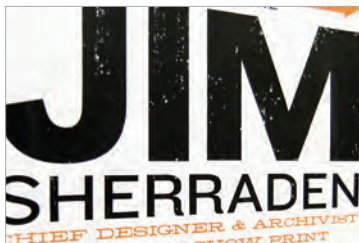
From the series *Diamonds*
Digital Photography

Philip Belger



Negative
Digital Photography

Kelly Johnson



Jim Sherraden Promotional Print
Screenprint

Jivan Davé



Munchsters
Package Design

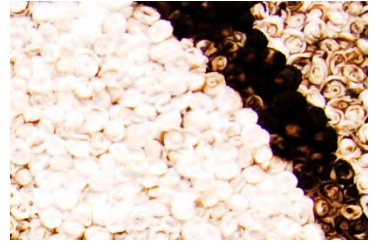
Winner
2011 AAF Greenville
Gold ADDY Award
Student Best of Show

Lindsey Dilleshaw



Robin's Bowl
Stoneware Clay

Nikki Smith



An Homage
Burnt Cotton on Canvas

Hannah Leonard



Artist
Spotlight

Weston Frazor

Donning his mammoth beard, Weston Frazor is a staple in the art department. On the rare occasion that you might find him outside the painting annex, his irreverent sense of humor will surely lighten your mood. Weston ('Wes') spends most of his days in the studio working his heart out, listening to a band you have probably never encountered. He has not only taken on major feats in the art world, but has also risen above the challenges of being colorblind. Don't let his comedic nature fool you: his immaculate attention to detail and meaningful approach to painting make him one of the most successful artists at Anderson University.



*Interview by Jennifer Hall
Written by Philip Belger
Photography by Andrew Higgins*

What is the concept behind your *Art History is Dead* painting series?

My feeling is that the traditional standards of art are no longer necessary because of Marcel Duchamp's readymades coupled with Post-Modernism. These principles had been evolving for thousands of years of since Ancient Greek Art through the Renaissance, up to the early 1900s; but by the early part of the 20th century it is thrown out of the window, and essentially becomes 'dead'. What I do is take those original, pre-Modern pieces and literally 'kill' everything that resembles its intentional classicism. A lot of my later works have been getting into more subversive ideas, giving the subject matter a multiplicity

of interpretations, building upon conclusions drawn by previous artists. For example, I tend to explore how death and beauty interact at different points.

What are you most influenced by in terms of contemporary culture?

Definitely Street & Graffiti Art along with extreme sports. I'm very interested in pushing boundaries, which these movements do, and that has always sort of been my mindset, a 'that's already been done, let's do something better' ideal. I feel compelled to do this in my art.

Where do you see yourself ten years from now?

I will be in the largest city that accepts me into its MFA program, painting, and playing music on the side.



“Desperate Man” (above) is an appropriation of the Gustave Courbet work “Self Portrait (Desperate Man).” The major divergence in this piece from the remainder of the *Art History is Dead* series is through the application of cropping to the source image. The original composition is not much larger, but presents the figure in a more open space and reveals the full span of his arms. By focusing only on the face, I attempted to bring the viewer physically closer to the figure. This approach allowed me to alter the composition in order to achieve my chosen goals while still maintaining the distinction of the source work.

To view the source painting visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gustave_Courbet_auto-retrato.jpg



“Orphan” (above) is based on the painting “Orphan in a Cemetery” by Eugene Delacroix. I selected the piece to complete a series of works based in a similar time period. The dark subject matter of the romantic work of Delacroix lends itself thematically to the *Art History Is Dead* series. On a technical basis, Delacroix’s work is painted with a significant build up of paint – a technique that goes against my natural tendency to “stretch out” the paint. It was a real challenge to push the large amount of paint used in the original piece and still maintain control. I plan to develop a series based around other works of Delacroix to closely understand his approach to painting and learn his techniques.

To view the source image: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orphan_Girl_at_the_Cemetery



Robinson Davis
Album Sleeve Design

Rachel Spoon



Unitize 25
DVD Package Design

Jivan Davé



Things Change
Oil on Canvas

Lucy Nordlinger



Against All Odds
Book Jacket Design

Brittany McKinnish



From the series *Bloodletting*
Digital Photography

Lee Rubin



The Runaway Garbage Truck
Oil on Canvas

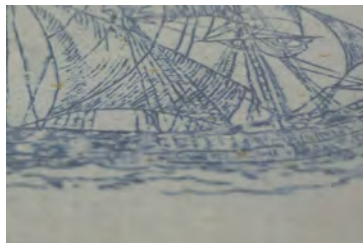
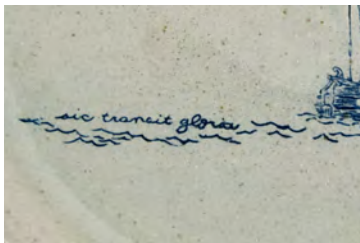
Andrew Higgins





Symptoms May Include
Stoneware Clay

Lee Rubin



Sic Transit Gloria
Stoneware Clay

Laura Jones

HIGH

THE MUSEUM OF ART ST. LOUIS

Georgia O'Keeffe

the poetry of things collection

November 7 - December 14, 2010



Georgia O'Keeffe:
The Poetry of Things
Poster Design

Winner
2011 AAF Greenville
Silver ADDY Award

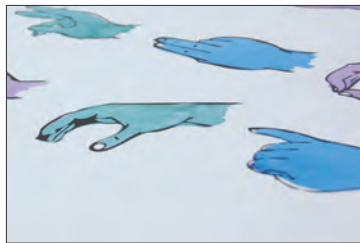
Heather McIlrath



Skinny's
Packaging

Winner
2011 AAF Greenville
Silver ADDY Award

Ashley Ganahl



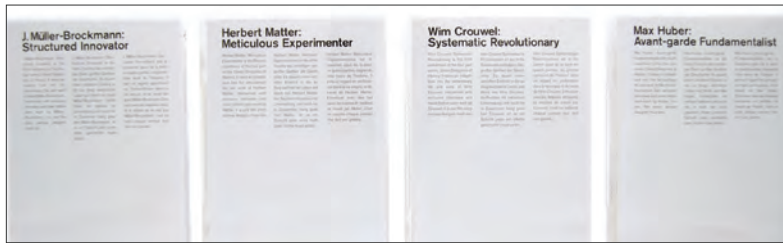
The Curious
Album Sleeve Design

Caryn Karriker



From the series *Bloodletting*
Digital Photography

Lee Rubin



The Great Designers
DVD Series

Rachael Spoon



Things Change
Oil on Panel

Lucy Nordlinger



The Puzzled Face
Puzzle Pieces on Board

Kate Mase



Notorious Thugs
Acrylic on Wood

Ryan Walker



Amanda
Burnt Cotton on Wood

Hannah Leonard

**SIR
PHILIP
ANDREW**

**&
THE
SAVAGES**

***The Orange Peel
May 3
9 PM
Doors open at 8 PM***



Teefums
35mm Photograph

Paige Morse



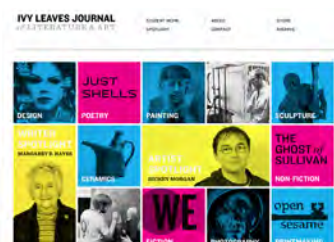
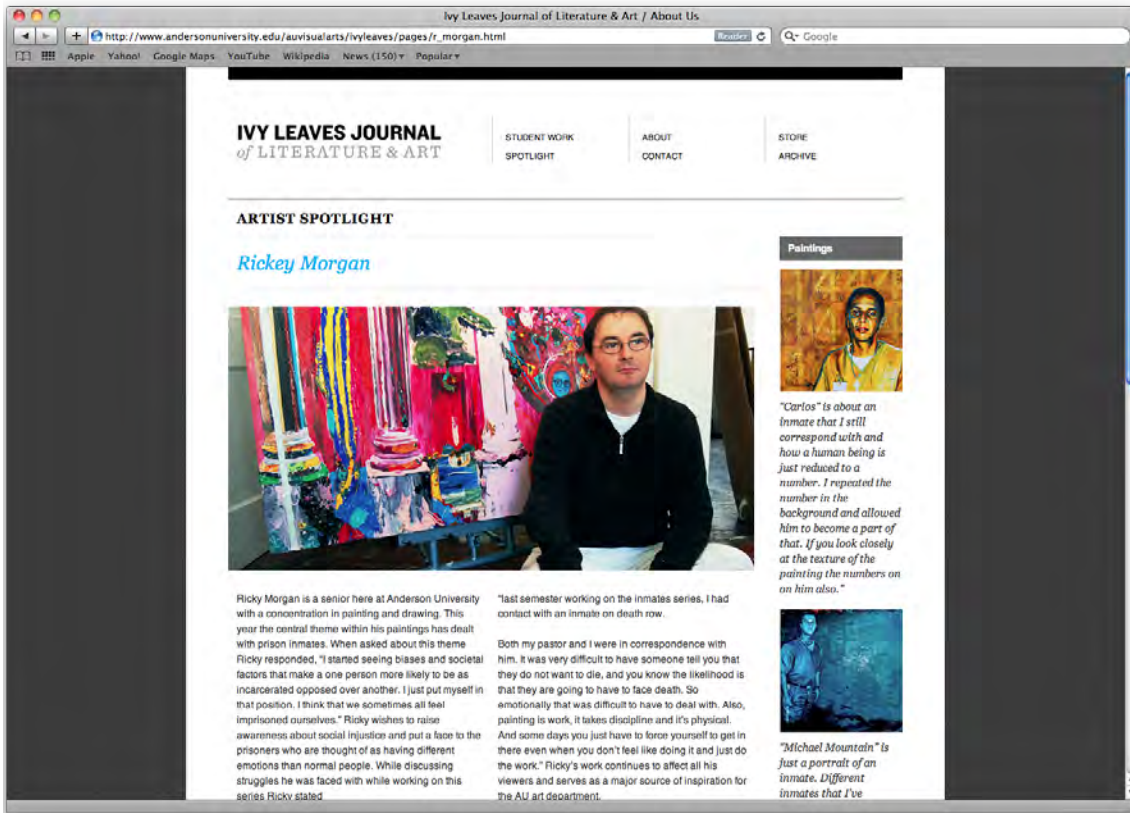
Harmonically
Album Sleeve Design

Mandie Wines



Toats Granola Cereal
Packaging

Philip Belger





Villains
Book Jacket Design

Lindsey Dilleshaw



Who Were You Born to Be?
Book Series Design

Chelsea Riley



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