

# The Mosaic



Spring 2014



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\*Special thank you to Dr. Lea Graham, and all of the Mosaic contest judges. We appreciate your hard work and dedication to our publication and contributors. Your assistance has not gone unnoticed, and we sincerely thank you.

***Front cover art:*** "Savannah" by: Kathryn Herbert

***Back cover art:*** "BC (2)" by: William Vrachapolous; \****First place winner for the Mosaic Contest in Art***

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\* = Mosaic Contest winners

# *Letter from an Alumnus:*

Hello writers!

I'm so happy to have this chance to write to you all. I should just get to the point and say it right now. LAS, even when the last meeting you can recall is ages ago, even if you're an old fox, is just one of those things bound to inhabit your fondest memories. It's beyond college, and has everything to do with being amongst kind, kindred souls who on occasion will thankfully suspend that kindness in favor of the tough love that makes art really stunning.

I don't want to speak for everyone so I'll speak for myself. This community is the reason I began to share my stuff. I didn't have even a teaspoon of guts when it came to putting my work out there. It's a horrifying prospect, because no matter if your narrative doesn't specifically concern you---every word you put down concerns you, if not just for the fact that you are the root of what arrives unfiltered to the page, or that the bud of an idea is something that moves you enough to build a universe around it. I guess I'm just trying to say that I never feel more vulnerable than when I share my work, and LAS gave me the courage to own that vulnerability and even carry that out in the world after graduation.

In college, where a lot of us have had to determine which parts of ourselves could and could not enter certain rooms or circles of people, having a place where I could show myself so totally is something I still cherish. Also, there's really no better way to battle post college tedium than writing whenever you can, so if your schedule allows it, don't stop!

Though unfortunately failing is very much par for the course, and if I'm honest I have spent a lot of my time post college, failing spectacularly. And it's absolutely a big deal, until it isn't. Later it's just incidental of reaching for what you want. Just keep trying, whether it's writing or finding that job. To be more concrete, during my time as an editor for the Mosaic I knew I wanted to do that kind of work outside of

college and it has taken me a few years to finally secure the right position in publishing professionally.

I only say this because I would've wanted someone to say it to me back then. And for those now feeling that almost-out-of-college panic and malaise, I want to throw some hope to you. College is fantastically bonkers, it may stand to be some of the best years of our lives. But there's a lot of fantastic out here too. Still I hope that you make time to savor everything you love (I'm talking to you, LAS) before you say goodbye.

Miss you all so much and happy writing,

Raven Baptiste

*Class of 2012, former Mosaic editor*

"Spring has returned. The earth is like a child that  
knows poetry.  
*-Rainer Maria Rilke*

**\*1st Place Winner for the Mosaic Contest in Poetry:**

**Sometimes**  
by: Erin Kane

Sometimes

the world comes crashing down around you.  
not all at once exactly,  
but in pieces,  
like a mirror with a crack running down its surface,  
gradually growing bigger, and longer,  
and branching in all directions,  
until the shards start to fall out,  
one by one,  
and they all sprinkle down.

Sometimes

you just can't seem to win.  
even though you've tried every strategy,  
given every tactic a shot,  
approached it from all directions,  
and were so sure – so sure – you finally had it this time,  
but,  
again,  
you lose.

Sometimes

you keep trying and trying and trying again  
you keep that smile plastered on your face  
you keep your chin up

you keep in mind you tried your best  
you keep reciting the age-old mockeries:

“If At First You Don’t Succeed, Try Try Again.”

“Practice Makes Perfect.”

“Live And Learn.”

they'll tell you “don't give up.”  
and you won't,  
but – Sometimes –  
it keeps you wondering



“Jacks, 3”  
by: William Vrachopolous

**Narcissa**  
by: Marygrace Navarra

1. I sat in a half-business half-hippie café in the corner of town talking to Billy. He had asked me on this date and my mother had called me the same day, imploring that I accept a date from “one of my many suitors.” I changed my refusal of Bobby’s coffee date into an unwilling “sure.” So I found myself sitting in this café, remembering my mother’s instructions to sit with my spine pointing toward the sky, but I was slouched over, tired. Billy was talking about something like his bachelor’s degree, and how he didn’t really find himself at Yale but who really does?—and all I could think about were his goddamn shoes that needed a goddamn polishing. I was about to throw myself on the floor and start scrubbing his shoe tops with a napkin and my black coffee. I could only keep myself sitting in that throne-like chair by staring at my own shoes, brand new Steve Madden leather boots that I keep intact.
2. Thursday night, my roommate insisted that I not spend the night pampering myself “and just go out and have *fun* and talk to a *guy* already” so I promised I would head to Murphy’s with her and her co-workers. Admittedly, the lusty red dress I had found in town that week did wonders for my hips and collarbone and ass and, hell, everything else I’ve got, so I figured I’d do the bar a favor. By the time I was sitting on a shitty stool ordering a vodka and seltzer with extra lime, I already had this Wall Street dude up my ass who wouldn’t shut up about some great Thai restaurant that was opening soon and I wanted to say *Do you know what I will personally pay your dentist to whiten those teeth for you and then maybe I’ll let you buy be dinner at What’s-It-Called you boring unoriginal 7 out of 10*, but it would be lost on him. It may not have been his fault that I was so short with him; a mirror on the other side of the bar gave me an opportunity to check my smile, which would of course be compared with his.

3. Two weeks ago I met up with my sad ex-boyfriend in an okay Italian restaurant and I was basically sick with radiation poisoning from his severe inadequacy. The poor slob was begging for me to tell him why I had ended it, why I had insisted that he could not keep up with me. I'm surprised he didn't bring a resume, but he did give me a laundry list of what he had done since our relationship ended: his abs were more toned, his skin was clearer and younger looking, he had bought contact lenses, he was better in bed, he had read my favorite books, he started using ChapStick regularly. (Jason: my abs are better, my skin is perfect, I don't need any form of eyewear, I've been good in bed since I was 16, I'm still more well-read than you'll ever be, and I don't need to name all the boys who've complimented my lips.) He's lucky my wine glass gave me such a clear reflection of myself, or else I wouldn't have had anything to settle my temper with.

#### 4. What's the point?

5. Noah from work came home with me on Tuesday night. I can't really tell you what we did—I was so crushingly disappointed with the difference in our sexual skill levels that I locked myself in the bathroom afterward, only wearing a bra and underwear, and let my eyes wander down my body over and over: hair, face, neck, chest, arms, stomach, waist, hips, legs, feet, repeat. He pounded on the door for a while, but then he went home.

6. One weekend I sat at a bar in my most revealing outfit, ordering cocktails with different types of fruit so I could suck the juices out of them, making intentional eye contact with everyone over 20. I was testing myself. I must have rejected 15 men that night. *Can I freshen your drink?* No. Receding hairline. *Come here often?* No. Under 6 feet. *That dress is very becoming on you, if I were*—no. Incapable hands. *Hi there.* No. No muscle tone. I tried objectivity: are these people good-looking? Are they my type? Are they nice? I don't know. I don't know.

I don't know.

7. I'm naked in front of my full-length mirror. I've positioned it in front of a few pieces of furniture so far: my four-post bed, my wooden chair, my couch. Spread across these things, I look good from all angles. I'm not surprised. Now I'm sitting Indian-style on my wooden floor, staring at myself. Looking into my eyes. Aren't the eyes the window to the soul, or something? *Where are you, soul?* Beside me are a huge bottle of pinot grigio and a few different bottles of pills I've stolen from my housemates. Some are round, some are thick, some capsules. I've taken two of each, so far. I take a fistful of capsules. I'm sitting here, thinking, *What do normal people say when they know they are going to die?* I don't know. That's the problem. Who knows what other people do—who cares? I can feel myself sinking, fading, dissolving—this is very good wine. My smile has never looked so white, young, genuine. What I choke out as I catch my own eye in the mirror and crumble forward is, "I love you, I love you, I love you."

**"Little Bird"**  
by: Jordan Brown

-Dedicated to the Katzmans



## Elegy for the Care-Free

by: Nikki Kalafut

Rest in Peace, my untroubled mind, murdered by Doubt and Responsibility

Age was the accomplice, and School was driving the getaway car.  
We lay daisies and lilacs at the head of your gravestone, along with  
Homer the stuffed dog (still missing an eye) and Beanie Babies and  
Barbies.

“Here lies Me, age 10 and 9 and 8 and 7 and 6 and 5 and 4 and 3 and  
2 and 1.”

Dad can no longer scoop me up in his arms and carry me to bed,  
and he doesn’t sing “A Horse with No Name” to me while I  
drift off to sleep. The long scar on his left knee keeps  
him from dancing with me around the living room.

Mom doesn’t brush my hair anymore. The lines on her forehead have  
deepened as if Time were chiseling away at her.

My sister and I don’t sleep in the bunk beds that our father built, giggling  
late at night;

She is too busy paying credit card bills and I am writing a 12-page  
paper on Kant.

My brother and I no longer take the mattress off of his bed and pretend  
we are

sailing on a boat in our pink carpet-ocean, fishing for pillows and  
steering clear of the man-eating dresser.

Instead he spends hours working on essays for college applications.  
Here lies the time when staying up past midnight was filled with  
movies and popcorn and friends

It has been replaced by studying and doing laundry because 1am is  
the only time that

there are open machines.

We used to make a play-home out of the trees and rocks and dirt in  
that corner section of the woods in the backyard; I would cook

up delicious dinners of pureed acorns with a crushed leaf garnish.

Now we only go back there to trim the bushes and pull out the weeds  
when it gets too overgrown.

Anxiety and Worry have latched themselves onto my back  
And no matter how hard I try to dig you up, I fail.  
The soft dirt we once buried you with has turned to stone  
And all I have left are the beautiful memories  
Of my sweet, sweet Care-Free.

### **Stranger in the Night**

by: Alanna Coogan

You catch my eye  
and I burst into lights.  
The flames of this fire  
have never climbed higher.  
The off chance that we'd meet  
on this cobblestone street.  
The clink of a glass  
as the minutes rush past.  
A glance to the left,  
but we've never met.  
There's something here  
in this fading light,  
For you,  
My Stranger in the Night.

**One**  
by: Christina Coulter

**One**

“Warm ears make for good poetry,”  
She said, punch drunk, thick trunk, stalwart.  
“Write what you smell see think,” she said.  
“Lean against doors, borrow lighters,  
Start fights and conversations and  
Argue and be stroppy and cocky and  
Spill and turn up the volume and  
Wait wait wait on those aspirations,”  
She told me.

And I stared, wide-eyed.

**Two**

You and I, just sacks of peculiarities  
Sunk beneath pensive seas  
Trawled across the muffled ocean floors  
By the shepherd Current, unaware.

A swarm of small gnats  
Form a volatile stratum  
Of conglomerate bug;  
A pestilent upheaval  
Of tiny legs splayed, prostrate  
Against the cold glass,  
Displaced by the rising plumes  
Of my cigarette smoke

**\*1st Place Winner for the Mosaic Contest in Fiction:**

**Journey to the Earth**  
by: Kathryn Herbert

*Day 1*

We have just completed our journey: we have arrived at Earth. To assist us with our research in understanding the human race, we will only be using human measurements, the most common human language, English, (to the best of our ability—and we are quite able); and temporal constraints—hours, days, months, and the like. Humans were obsessed with constraints, especially organizational ones. Their ways of organizing their societies is one of the main points of our research on this excursion. Researchers before us have studied human organizational patterns extensively, yet many have failed to comprehend those patterns. We have travelled to Earth on this expedition in the hope of cracking the human organizational code, allowing us Venusians to follow understand the ways of the humans.

For our records, I must write that we left Venus on July 4, 6057. We traveled 26,000,000 miles to Earth. Now we are in what our map calls the region of “North America,” of the land “United States,” in the province of “Washington, District of Columbia.” From only our map we can see the first evidence of the human obsession with organization: there is a district within a province—my apologies, my comrade says the humans called this a “state”—in the land of United States, in the region—excuse me, my other comrade says this is incorrect. Washington is a district, neither state nor province. So it is the District of Washington, District of Columbia. That seems quite redundant. Perhaps I am reading it wrong. The District of Columbia, Washington District. No, that seems more wrong than before, somehow. Why not simply call this are the state of Columbia? Or even District of Columbia-Washington? My comrade says there is already is already a country named “Colombia,” and to have two Columbias—even with alternate spellings—would be too confusing for the humans. But yet there is another

state, on the western edge of this United States, named "Washington." That did not confuse the humans? Peculiar. Obsessed as these humans were, they were not very good at organization. It is incredible they were able to accomplish anything!

So let me try this once more: we have arrived in the district of Washington, District of Columbia—not the state—in the country, as my comrade now corrects me, of United States, in the continent of North America. Yes, I believe that is correct now.

Each of these lands are slightly different, according to human divisions. A state is a small country, a country is a small continent, and a continent is... I do not know. What is a continent? My comrade informs me that the humans wrote that continents are large lands divided by natural boundaries, mainly massive bodies of water. Our map shows only one large body of water. The humans divided this body into two? Yes, they must have: our map says here "Atlantic" and "Pacific." Why would they give the same object two names? Peculiar. This means that this landmass to the west must be North America, and this one to the east South America.

—No, that cannot be, unless the humans' directions are different from what we have been taught. It seems that to the humans the left direction is north and the right direction is south!

—I apologize. My comrade is correcting me as I write. He says that North America is indeed north, above South America, which is indeed south. Yet this other landmass is not East America, nor is there a West America. My comrade says this other landmass is in fact three continents, that of the "Europe," the "Africa," and the "Asia." These lands, though, are all connected; if they are separated, it is only by tiny inconveniences of water, not by any massive ocean as the human definition states. How peculiar! Would it not have been easier for these humans to label their world "East" and "West," and leave it at that? There are no obvious divisions within the eastern and western lands: they are two whole blocks of land! What point did these humans see in creating divisions where there were none?

Oh, yes: organization.

These humans are proving exceptionally difficult to understand. Using their language is not helping as much as we had hoped.

I do believe this is enough confusion for one day. Tomorrow we shall set out on our first excavation.

## *Day 2*

I feel it important to detail here what kind of human remains we may be in the presence of. The humans of the Americas are Americans. The Americans have placed their source of power here, in Washington, District of Columbia...

...apparently that is not entirely correct. My comrade says that only those humans of the United States called themselves "Americans." The other humans of the Americas called themselves other things. My comrade says that the humans did not identify themselves by continent, but rather by country.

Then why have these "Americans" taken the name of two continents, but not of their own country? I am finding it increasingly difficult to understand these humans. Our research may never be completed.

So then this Washington, District of Columbia is merely the source of power in the United States, to a group of people who identify themselves not as United Statesians, but rather as Americans, as if the name of these two continents were an accurate substitution for the name of their country. I wonder if these Americans thought themselves better than the other countries, and so named themselves after continents instead of their own land to prove their superiority. Curious... but we have no time for human psychology in this study. We must remain focused on organization (of which names are important, yes, but not psychology).

The other countries have their own sources of power—but the continents do not have a source of power. The continents rely on each country's source of power to maintain order. That seems horribly silly,

but no matter. We must only report the facts.

Although, as my comrade and I are now discussing from our school days, we do recall that the humans did organize groups that included several countries in them. These groups were based on location sometimes, other times on common interests. So it does seem that the humans did have some capacity for cooperation within these seemingly illogical systems. One would think that creating inter-country alliances would eliminate the need to have countries at all, but then I suppose that would not fit into the unofficial human motto: organize, divide, organize.

Back to the human sources of power. The purpose of these sources of power, we have been taught, were to maintain control of the humans. There were higher-up humans who controlled lower-down humans, in a sort of social hierarchy. The lower humans had to ask for permission for whatever they wanted to do from the higher-up humans in the sources of power. First they must ask their state source of power. Then their state has to ask the Seat of Power, located in the source of power. Since each country has its own source of power, each country has its own Seat of Power; this human may be called "president," "prime minister," "king," "queen," or "god." These names vary amongst the many organizational divisions of human language, but the essences of the names are the same. My comrade confirms with me that the American Seat of Power is the President. Each state, however, also has its own Seat of Power, found in its own source of power. That seems entirely unnecessary. How did these human manage to accomplish anything with so many other humans to defer to first? Their organizational skills seem altogether illogical.

Now, this President controls everything that occurs within the country. But to whom does he defer? Some say the thing called "god." The President cannot control god, yet claims his country has been "blessed" by god. My comrade has just unearthed a piece of common parchment with the image of the President's house and the words "In God We Trust" written above it. If the Americans trust God so much,

why don't they put him in charge? That seems logical. My comrade seems to have found some coins with the parchment, which also says "In God We Trust." They also say something else, something...strange: E pluribus Unum. That is not English. I do not know what human language that is. Perhaps it is a curse. JYBIPYN! PUT THAT DOWN! IT IS CURSED!

Wait, can a coin be cursed if it is blessed? Maybe that is what "blessed" really means! God has cursed the United States! That is why the Americans did not put him in charge! Who is this "God," anyway? And why does the President have no control over him? The President should not just let people go around cursing his country! My comrade tells the humans could not see God. They could not decide whether or not God was real, yet trusted in him and allowed him to "bless" their country. The humans must keep God separate from the President because combining the two would make the humans very angry. Well, no wonder, when this unseen deity is going around cursing people's land for no good reason. Unless the Americans did something wrong. Did God not like their organizational system? I certainly do not, but I am not going to go around cursing people and waiting for ill to befall them. I do not understand. This all seems unbearably frivolous.

I suppose now I must participate in the excavation, rather than letting my two comrades do all of the work. Perhaps handling human artifacts will help me to understand these humans. Writing about them certainly is not helping.

### *Day 3*

We have done it! We have found not just one body, but three human bodies! We have been busy analyzing and dissecting these humans, and have done such a thorough job that I do believe we understand humans! Or at least these Americans. Oh, who cares about petty distinctions? This is all too exciting for that to matter!

Our first human was wrapped in black and white cloth, tightly bound and all of the same style. My comrades and I determined that

this could not be traditional human burial garb, as the other two humans we discovered were adorned differently.

Upon dissection of the humans' mouths (in the search of food scraps and such, to better understand human diet) we discovered that the humans have three different types of teeth: meat teeth for ripping flesh, flat teeth for grinding grains and herbs, and wisdom teeth for imparting intelligence and understanding. Our first human had all of his teeth except for his wisdom teeth. We have concluded, therefore, that this man—despite his rather impressive garb—must have been an outcast of society. The humans must have commanded outcasts to wear black and white, to distinguish them from the respectable, wise humans. We have not yet concluded why this inferior specimen was then in the source of power. Perhaps he was begging for help.

Our second human seemed to be the exact median of our three humans. This human was dressed not altogether poorly, but less tightly bound than her black and white counterpart. This human—a female by our determination—was found with what we believe are the remains of her partner, as all that is left is a shirt with small sleeves and long blue leg coverings. His body was not preserved like his mate's. This woman was found wearing a long piece of cloth covering from her chest to her knees, which was dyed in three colors. We have not determined that the colors hold any significance.

Upon inspection of this human's mouth we discovered that she had only two of the standard four wisdom teeth. This means that she was of moderate wisdom. We cannot tell based on our small sample size whether or not this result is typical, that most humans have only moderate wisdom. This seems statistically logical, but considering the poor organizational skills these humans possessed, their conviction that these divisions were absolute, and the fact that they no longer exist, I believe it is more likely that most humans were of the black and white garb. That is, of very low cognitive capacities.

Finally, our third human was found wearing very little clothing. What little clothing he has did not survive the ages very well, or

had never been in good quality to begin with. His clothes are ripped and filthy, a filth we did not find in the other two humans. This filth is completely pervasive: it is in every seam and every scrap of cloth this human has. His facial hair is expansive, several of his fingernails missing, and one toe gone—possibly eaten by ancient rats, we cannot be sure. Yet this seemingly despicable creature has all of his wisdom teeth. It can only be concluded, then, that this man must have been highly revered. He must have contained incredible knowledge and invaluable insight into the workings of the humans. It is a shame he is not alive to help us. Beside him is a rather odd artifact, as well. This man lies beside a simple banner that reads: “THE END IS NIGH. REPENT AND YE SHALL BE SAVED.” Perhaps this man was a prophet! We will be bringing his body and prophecy back to Venus with us for closer inspection.

From these telling finds, my comrades and I have concluded that the humans were organized into a three-tiered hierarchy. Those of the black and white garb were clearly the lowest, as they had no wisdom in their heads. Those of the colorful garb were the middle, as they had some wisdom but not as much as the highest tier, those of the poor garb, who were clearly elevated to a higher intellectual standard. This organization system is, so far, the only system of the humans that makes sense. It is a shame they are all dead; perhaps they would have improved had they been able to survive their previous mistakes.

#### Day 4

Our research expedition has now concluded. My comrades and I will leave in a few short hours to make the long journey back to Venus. We have been on Earth for barely four days, yet this planet has grown on each of us. It will be sad to leave it; it is such a beautiful place. There is little point in us remaining, though; there is nothing here for us Venusians to utilize. The land is exhausted, the civilizations dead and buried, the animals extinct and the plants close behind. The humans accomplished nothing more thoroughly nor more successfully

than the destruction of their own planet. I believe this was because of all of their organizational divisions, yet by the way they divided and organized everything, I am sure that the humans would disagree.

I shall share with you our preliminary conclusions. The humans were simple creatures who seemed to enjoy complexity. The more complexity, the better. This can be seen in their incredibly difficult systems of organization. First, the humans took two solid parcels of land and divided them into several hundred countries, based on land or cultural barriers (where these cultural barriers arose from will be the subject of our next expedition). This is all mere explanation of previous research—our bit is yet to come. Now, when focusing on the North America piece of land, we have found that with the area labelled United States there are states and districts. States are then different from districts, as they have different names. Districts hold the Major Seat of Power. States hold Minor Seats of Power. The creation of minor seats of power, we have concluded, is to give the humans a sense of superiority. Those who occupy these seats of power are endowed with the most wisdom, as indicated by the number of wisdom teeth in the human's head. They must perform some sort of medical exam to discover this, as the bones seem quite buried in their heads. Those with four wisdom teeth are the most wise, necessarily; and we have determined that these individuals dress in shabby clothing, allowing the most freedom of movement. We have decided that this is a physical metaphor of how their minds are allowed freedom of movement. Some of these wise people were prophets, as the man we have collected in our ship was. The humans go down in wisdom according to the number of wisdom teeth, in a sort of correspondence with natural order. Those wearing the tight black and white garb are the lowliest, being as constrained in clothing as they are in understanding.

Seats of Power between states and countries and gods must stay separate, though, or else the humans will get angry. Our schooling has taught us that the humans fought massive battles over the mixing of these powers. It seems that each organizational system was distinct

and separate, yet other researchers who studied other areas of the Earth have made findings similar to ours. We may need to return for further research to determine why each system must be kept separate. It seems to have been a matter of dire importance to the humans.

What is odd is that the humans have no continental seat of power. They have country and state, but no continent. Perhaps this is encompassed in the “mingling of powers” problem we mentioned before, but the lack of higher power seems inconsistent. One would assume there would be seats of power on each level, from state to country to continent to all of Earth, yet the system ends at country. The only exceptions, so to say, are the alliances formed between countries, but earlier research tells us that this did not cause the blending of countries. Just the cooperation. This incompleteness of the system seems illogical, and requires more research.

The role of god is still inconclusive. But he seems to have something to do with the well-being of countries. Further research into “god” is also required.

It can only be concluded, then, that to the humans, unity was a curse, and division was salvation. Yet they fought over these divisions, and at times fought for more divisions, and divided and divided until they could not sustain themselves, and so died. We will tell this to our superiors in our final report: *The Destruction of Division: The Fall of the Human Race.*

## **10 Things I Wish I'd Said Before You'd Gone**

by: Lynn South

1. I wish you were smarter.  
That you could figure out what was wrong  
as fast as you could solve an equation.
2. Your 'good morning' kisses reeked  
of stale Heineken and warm affection.  
I still loved them anyway.
3. That cornflower blue tie was atrocious  
but you still were the life of the party.  
And my boss did, in fact, like you.
4. My mom wished you were Catholic.
5. Pillow forts are not the most effective  
coping mechanism for dealing with  
the shitty things life sends your way.
6. Your pillow forts were amazing.
7. Just because you drink your coffee black  
with a shot of whiskey doesn't mean  
you're the next great poet.
8. Stale, leftover beer will not cure  
your hangover, no matter how many  
times Dirty Randy assures you it will.
9. I really, truly, deeply, wanted that last piece of cake.
10. I do love you more than Captain Kirk.  
Sorry for making you believe otherwise.

## **Smooth Sailing**

by: Christina Fitzmorris

*It's always ourselves we find in the sea.  
-E.E. Cummings*

I don't remember a ton of conversations with my grandpa. We called him Poppy. The conversations that stick out clearly, though, are those of his days in the Navy. I imagine him young—handsome with his hair slicked back and parted dramatically to one side. His crisp, white uniform so bright it hurt as you squint your eyes, unable to look at the blanket of freshly fallen snow. His teeth a soft, inviting white as he smiled, laughing with his head thrown back. He told us about all the exotic places he'd been. Usually a man of few words, he was unstoppable once these conversations started. His voice took us away, sailing across the Atlantic to land on foreign shores. He loved the sea, a true Navy man. I see him—small—aboard a large ship, drifting through the magnificent sea as a grain of sand blown by the wind across the beach. Weeks spent on board, he leans against the side of the ship, salt stinging his face through the wind. Smiling, he watches the water and the way they cut through it without leaving a trace to prove they'd ever been there. He is so small. I see him happy.

My dad and his brother stand in the kitchen talking in hushed whispers. It is dark and the lights are off as they rummage through cabinets and drawers. My father holds a loaf of bread in his arms as he turns to his brother, holding a knife and a jar of peanut butter. The ritual begins as the lid is removed from the jar, moonlight shining to illuminate my uncle in an eerie silhouette. A sound. Both boys stand frozen at the creak of a mattress, eyes locked in terror. Simultaneously, they barrel back to their room, launching themselves into their beds and under their blankets, hearts racing. Breathing hard, they listen in the darkness. The door flies open with a deep,

loud roar. They scream as my grandfather launches himself onto my father's bed, laughing with his head thrown back, teeth illuminated in the dark as he smiled. My father knows that the bread is squished.

Poppy died on St. Patrick's Day last year. We think it's fitting—his name was Paul FitzMorris. I was home when we'd found out, my mom had told me. I'd always thought this moment would be different, that I'd break down in tears and hug my sisters, hug my brother and he'd be crying, too. I felt nothing. I felt guilt at feeling nothing. I went downstairs to comfort my dad; I'd never seen him cry. I imagined what it must be like to lose a parent, but couldn't. Despite all rational thought, it was fact that my parents would always be there. Looking at my father, face wet with tears, I was suddenly flooded with thoughts of a life without him. I hugged him and his shirt was damp, and I reached up to touch my own wet face. I imagined Poppy in the hospital, almost taken the night before my dad had planned to go see him. He was so tired. So tired; he wouldn't let his eyes close until he'd said goodbye to everyone. He was there—and well—when my dad had arrived the next morning. I imagined him later holding my grandma's hand, squeezing it and exhaling, smiling as he closed his eyes. Smooth sailing from here on out.

The boat was right next to the house on the left side, and if there were ever a flood we knew we were safe. It seemed to extend half the length of the house, masts rising high, lost among the clouds. We couldn't wrap our heads around the notion of this boat having been built by people as opposed to sprouting from the ground. I still have my doubts. In the beginning, we were lifted aboard the massive body, peering tip-toed over the edge as if giants surveying the scenes below. Later, we'd developed various methods for lifting and climbing atop one another, throwing ourselves into imagination. Poppy would join us sometimes, transforming backward through time. Captain—commanding us, his loyal crew, as we set out to conquer new lands, defend against pirates. The mischievous smile pulling at the corners of his mouth made him appear younger—he was one of us. He'd adjust the

boom, and we'd rush from starboard to port side, ducking and crawling to avoid a blow to the head, scrambling quickly to hike and set the weight of the boat. We continue on through sunset, together maneuvering the rough waters of the backyard.



**“The Walkway”**  
by: Kathryn Herbert

**\*1st Place Winner for the Mosaic Contest in Creative Nonfiction:**

**She Bubbles**

by: Leah Butterwick

Milk.

Children.

Germs.

Sticky fingers—

“Ah, wait. That one doesn’t count. It’s related to children,” I interrupt her.

“Hey. It’s my list.”

She keeps a list of all the things that scare her taped to the mirror of here college dorm room. Precisely placed on the right upper-most corner, she can see it from anywhere in the room: from her neatly organized desk, to her bed covered in a gray and black comforter, to her chair next to a window that is barely visible behind gray curtains. It seems as out of place as the Disney Princess hamper situated next to the closet, but that hamper is the only thing I really recognize of my oldest friend’s belongings.

Each morning, right after she finishes doing her hair, she reads the list out loud to herself. She tells me that she does this to “remind” herself. Of what, I’m still not sure, but I think that I can guess.

We met at age three in the playroom of Apple Tree Preschool. She was polite and said things like “please, ma’am” and “thank you very much.” She was graceful even as a three-year-old. It still confuses me that she decided to be my friend, the girl with the knotted hair and the continuously skinned knees. But she did.

We became inseparable. We bonded over our favorite activities: organizing raids on the boys’ lunch boxes, practicing our dance skills on the playground, and sharing our daydreams while we colored in class. Even our teacher used to call us sisters.

“They’re girls who bubble,” our teacher told our moms. “They

are so excited about everything. Never let that stop." My mom repeats these lines to me whenever I feel defeated: "Remember, you've always bubbled." And my sister-friend bubbled, too, for a while.

In the seventh grade her mom faced her first bought of cancer. She began treatment, moving for two weeks each month to Philadelphia. At the same time, my sister-friend's dad suffered from Guillain-Barré, which left him paralyzed and hospitalized for weeks. While both parents tried to heal, she lived alone in that big house on Rudder Avenue. Her only company came in the evenings, when her aunts would stop by to make her supper. They reminded her that it was her mother's wish that she not talk about what was happening. She swore she wouldn't tell anyone, and she kept that promise. I only found out by accident.

She had dropped something when we were leaving school. It may have been her favorite headband, the one made up of a row of paste pearls. It could have been that ring of different colored ribbons, normally tied to her gym bag. It could have been her charm bracelet, each piece a gift from her family and friends (the silver 13 was from my family). I just remember that I showed it to my mom, and that we made the short drive to her house.

We had pulled up right as she was closing the door. While my mom locked the car, I had run up to the house, cutting through the path of her dad's prize-winning mums. I remember that I paused when I saw them, since they were all dead or dying. I hadn't been invited over in a few weeks, but when I had seen them last they had been beautiful.

I ran to the door, singing out her nickname. She only opened it a crack, mumbling that it wasn't a good time. My mom had just reached the porch, and asked to see my sister-friend's mom. I remember how there was silence for a while, and how my mom then asked her to let us in. When my mom said it again, the door finally opened. Every light and TV was on in the house. A thin sprinkle of dust lined the furniture that had always been so immaculately organized that

we hadn't been allowed to play anywhere on the first floor. The fridge was filled with leftovers and the freezer was filled with boxes of frozen pirogues, my sister-friend's favorite. The only company in the entire house was a line of emergency contact names on a sheet of paper, taped to the refrigerator door.

She and her family eventually survived That Time. Her aunts spent more time with her as her parents recovered, and soon they were a family again. I had hoped that she would return to normal, my bubbly sister. And for a while, she did. But then her dad suffered an infection that left him unable to work. A few months later, her mom slipped into a coma from a new bought of cancer. We were 17 then, about to start our new lives as adults. But, I realized that my sister-friend already was one, that she had grown into an adult during those lonely afternoons over the stove making pirogues for one.

She is just as demur as she was as a toddler. She is still glamorous and graceful, just as she was raised to be. But she doesn't bubble anymore. Instead of texting boys and going on dates, she watches crime shows. Instead of spending time with friends, she plans her career in law enforcement. Instead of calling home each day, she reads a list of her fears to herself. But, after twenty years together, I know that this list isn't really made of what she's afraid of. It's what she would like to be afraid of. If she were honest with herself, her list would read much differently.

Bad luck.

Illness.

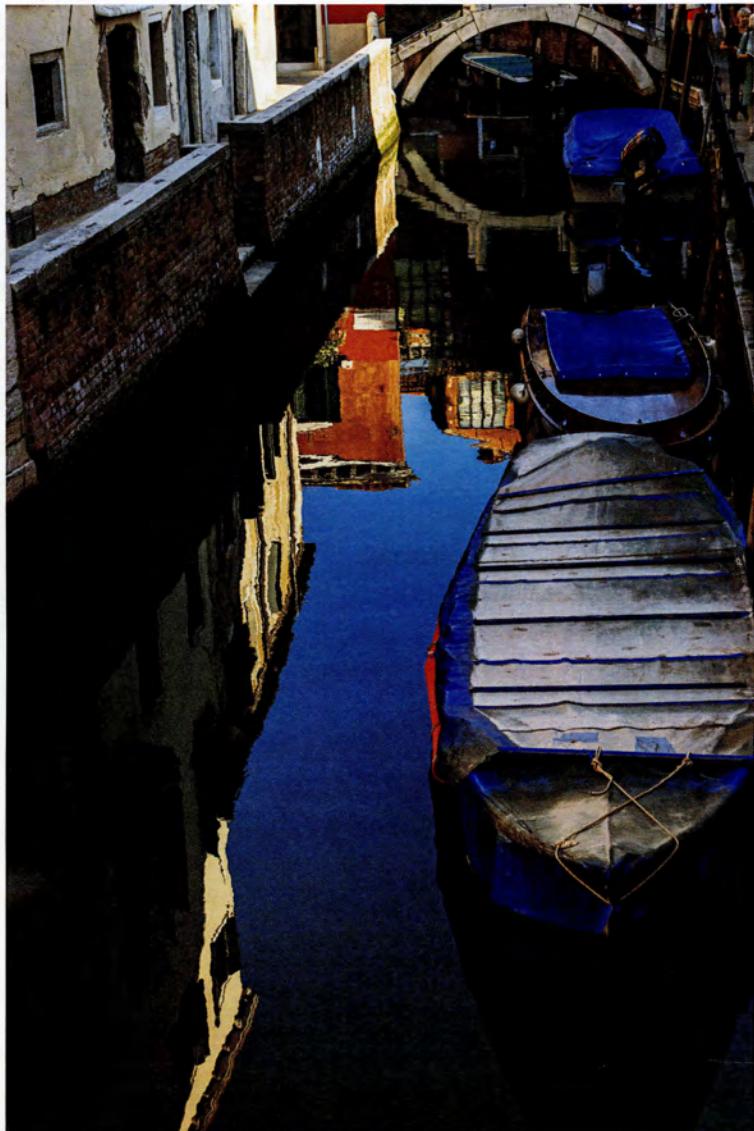
Genetics.

Love.

Commitment.

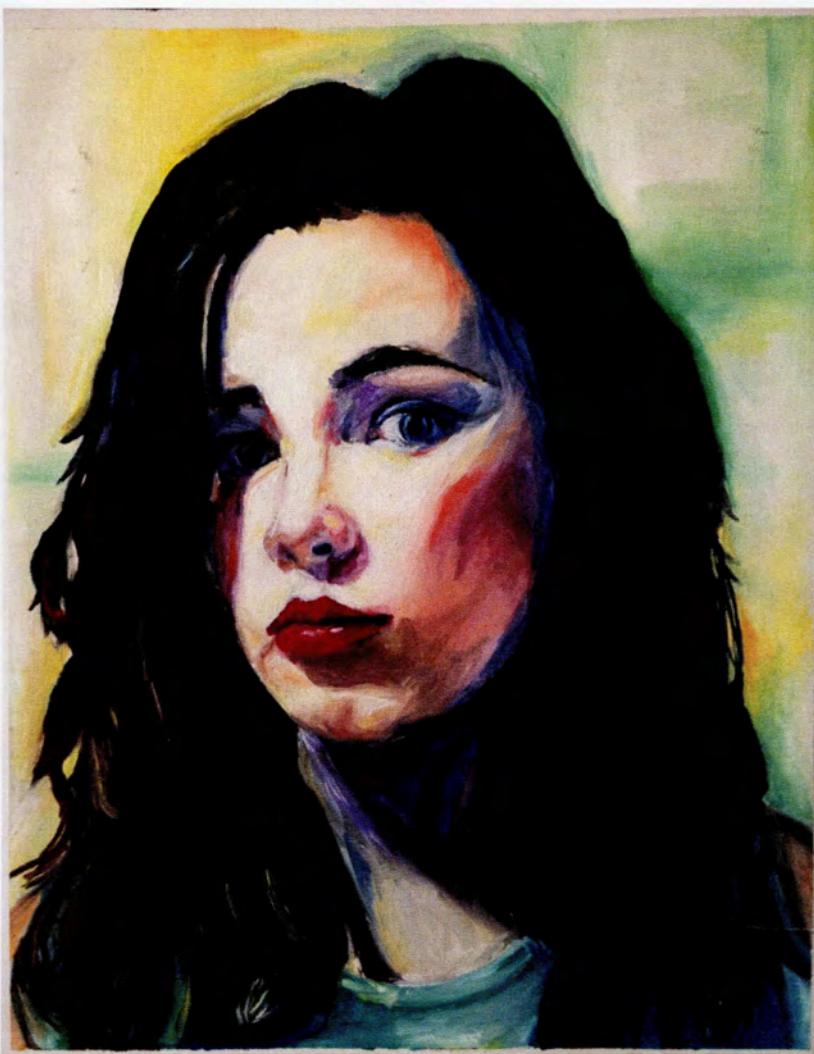
Loss.

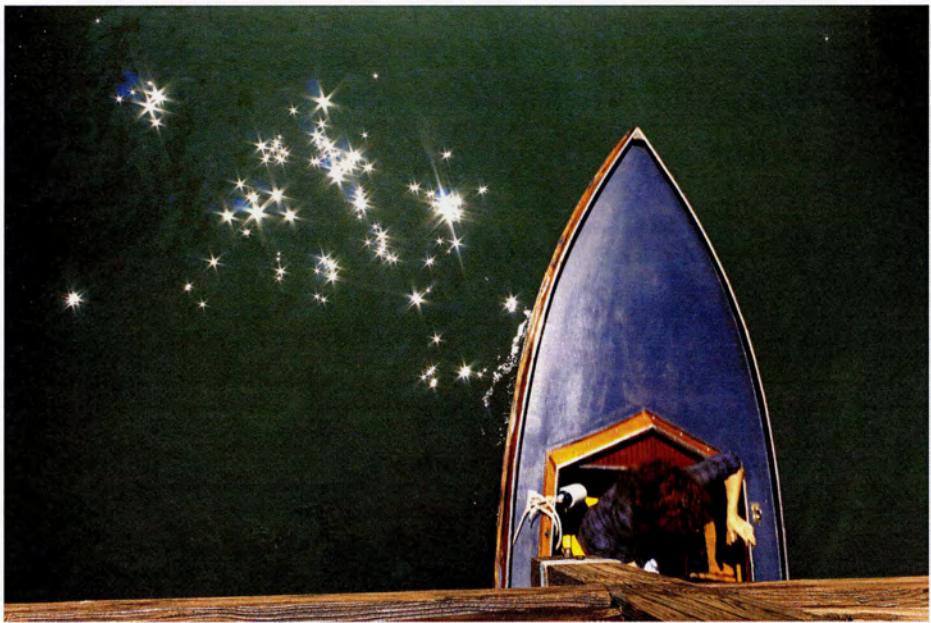
But, after all of these years together I also know what she would tell me if I actually said this to her: "Hey. It's my list."



**“Venetian Reflections”**  
by: Alana Colucci

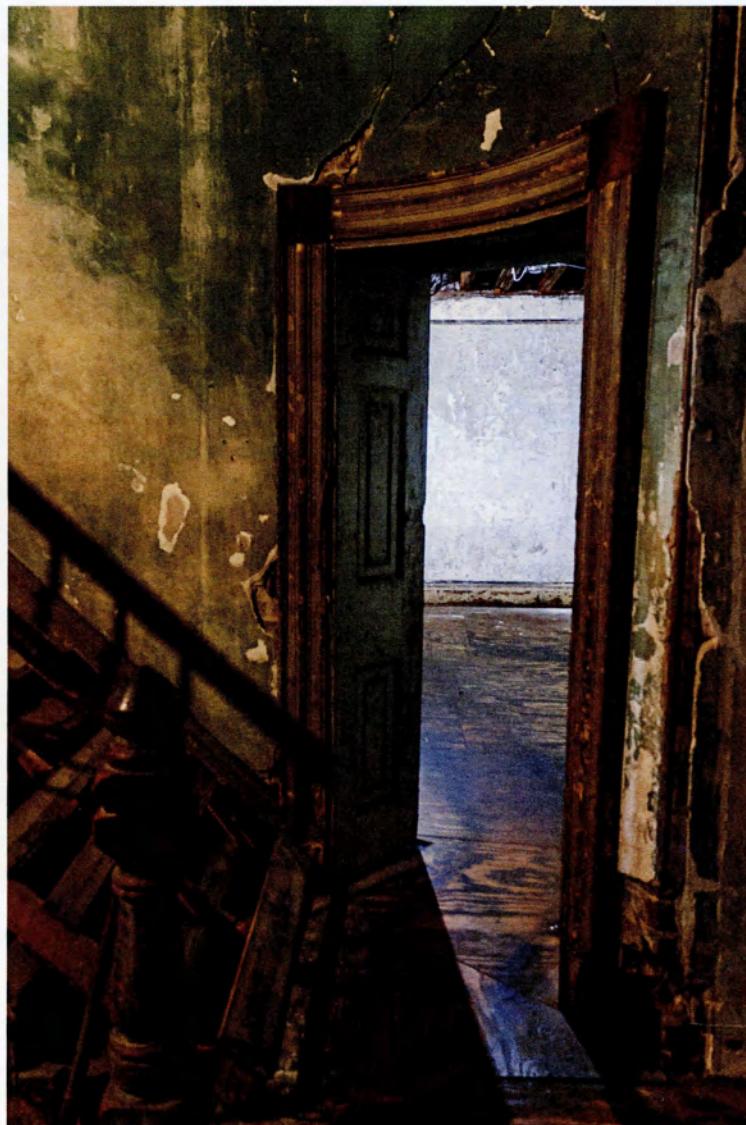
**“Crave”**  
by: Jordan Brown





**"Stars on the Water"**

by: Alana Colucci



**"Above Moon River"**  
by: Kathryn Herbert

**“Wrought Simplicity”**  
by: Alana Colucci





**“Adriatic”**  
by: Caterina Armenter



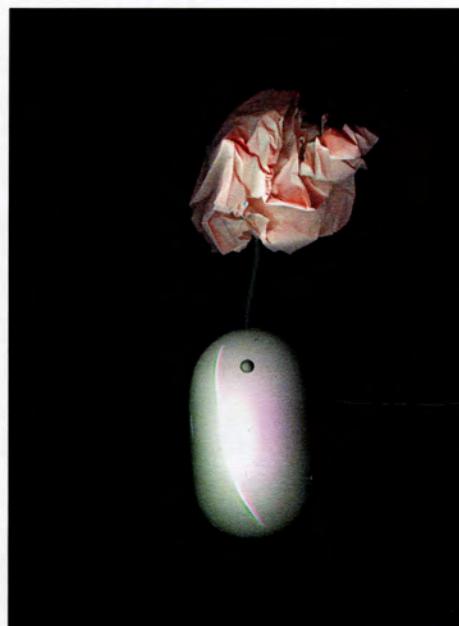
**“Sunset on the Canal”**

by: Alana Colucci



**“Spread Knowledge”**

by: Andrew Maloney



**“Paper Blossom”**

by: Andrew Maloney

**The Mayor**  
by: Steven Roberts

They call him the mayor,  
His followers sing his praise.  
He campaigns at all hours,  
He gains clout throughout the days.

He stops home after work,  
Where his family knows his ways.  
They lock themselves inside the basement; Son and Mother stand and  
pray.

"That's not the mayor! His party members cry,  
"I know on what ground he stands."  
"He kisses children's foreheads  
And holds babies in his hands."

Perhaps it was his carnivorous diet.  
Or the various soda brands.

Oh fatty clot from heaven, you journeyed up the carotid artery,  
Now Mother's home and free,  
And her gold-haired boy,  
Is learning how to be.

## Atomic

by: Stuart South

Seemingly the entire world is sprawled out below you as you sit atop the vista.

You simply sit back, absorb the boundless grandeur that is simultaneously frightening and enchanting.

You grab your flask and take a swig, a buzz coursing through your bustling blood.

You sit alone to marvel, to muse, to wonder, to dream.

Your mind plays with the landscape that is sprawled out before you. It drifts to wondering about the events that have shaped the world.

Kingdoms rise, tyrants fall, war rages, peace stabilizes; events on scales both large and small have guided the world to its current state.

Yet all of those occurrences, eons of progress, are a mere splotch upon the magnanimous gaze of the universe. A gaze that has viewed the formation of planets and stars over billions of years across trillions of miles. And here you sit on a single, lonely chunk of rock.

Your mind endeavors to focus upon the existential crisis that is slowly unfolding before you. You take another swig as you wrestle with how to comprehend it.

You have seen man ascend valiantly into the heavens in an attempt to understand the magnificent scope of all that stands before you. Yet their pilgrimage illuminated the profound insignificance of your existence. Their sojourn revealed just how small humanity is compared to the totality of the seemingly endless universe.

Unfathomable, the notion arrives like a hot crash of lightning. In a flash, your mind is purged, fixated solely on that notion.

A speck upon a blot revolving around a speck which resides within a dot that is a speck floating around the cosmic ether, a being so insignificant that you might not exist at all.

Your presence upon this world is infinitesimal in its influence. You are petrified by the thought, frozen as you come to terms with how

inconsequential you really are.

You stand up, take steps forward, leaning over the vista to get a better view.

You watch the wind carve monuments and thrones to future kings, and the clouds drift above you in the grand expanse of the clearest blue.

You hear the charming serenade of the robin and the proud cries of the eagle.

You smell the crisp, earthen air as it flows upward and outward, enveloping you in its embrace.

You touch the rocks, stones that have experienced millions of years, harboring billions of stories within their earthen walls.

You taste the wondrous bounty that nature has bestowed upon you.

A new notion clicks within your mind as you gaze upon the awe-inspiring landscape, suppressing any previous doubts about your place within the world.

Observation of the ever-changing world is reason enough to live. To watch the beauty of the world, the evolution of existence, to live knowing that your scope in the grand scheme of the universe may eventually be discovered.

You smile as the sun gently caresses your calmed face, content with the knowledge that no matter how small you are, no matter how atomic your existence is, you presence has purpose.

## On a Wednesday

by: Lynn South

He puts cold fingertips to stark hipbones.

Warm palms to thick thighs.

Tips of toes to stubbly shins.

Skin to skin contact  
as often as possible.  
Small touches,  
lightning bolts,  
heat.

There's no chill,  
no static between spaces.  
Small touches.

Like it  
bothers  
him that we have to be two  
separate  
people.

**“Love Lots”**  
by: Kathryn Herbert



**Eupnea**  
by: Miles Wellington-Deanda

Breathing is not like eating or sleeping;  
you can't choose to deny the sails  
that rest in front of your vertebrae.  
They will carry you on the wind  
even as you dig your nails into  
the soft crust of this earth. It's a  
biological compulsion—an evolutionary  
fail safe to keep you riding thermals  
even after you lose the desire to fly.  
Give in to instinct. Breathe deep  
and let the warmth of your full  
sails carry you into tomorrow.

Inhale

hold with lungs full bloom  
pluck the petals one by one  
let your eyes hide behind their blinders  
find the river within the mind  
and follow it bend and twine  
back to the raging delta of its mouth  
that babbles every muddied  
whisper of turgid rage  
sinking to the quicksand below  
silence the tide  
open your eyes  
Exhale.

## **Amphibians and Duct Tape**

by: Christina Coulter

I try to focus my attention on the rattling bumper of a distant tractor-trailer, so as not to stare at the smartly dressed young man walking briskly at the shoulder of the road. Perhaps he catches the attention of other women who drive by every morning; he certainly maintains my interest. Today he wears a cotton dress shirt adorned with thin pinstripes, and has already peeled his sleeves back over his muscled forearms. Sweat permeates through his clothing and pools at his brow in the premature vernal humidity, yet he still maintains a boyish swagger, as though he is aware of the fact that he may be the most attractive boy walking along Danbury Road today.

I often imagine scenarios where he gives me an opportunity to introduce myself; perhaps he'll strike up a conversation with me in the health & beauty aisle of the grocery store over antiperspirant, or he'll find my good looks and quick wit endearing upon hijacking my car. Maybe one morning he'll signal me to pull over so that he can complement my smile and make me blush. Hey, it could happen.

After a heated internal struggle, however, I always avert my gaze and follow the traffic onto I-95. Perhaps it's common sense, but I'm pretty sure it's just because I'm a pussy.

However, this morning I had a particularly impressive amount of chutzpah in me; per usual, a weekend with my mother had left me snagged on the topic of the finite nature of my virility. Although I'd tried to convince myself that hers were merely the superstitious musings of a dated housewife, I couldn't help but notice some newer indications of my age; the sunspots that had developed on my chest and the beginnings of crow's feet tugging at the corners of my eyes weren't subtle enough anymore to ignore the rate at which I was maturing. My dates with Netflix and plates of Pop-tarts just weren't going to cut it anymore. Although, at twenty-two, my breasts and personality were as perky as ever, maybe it was time to break the romantic stint that I'd maintained

since I first hit puberty.

I tried to slow my breathing as I pulled my Nissan to the curb-side, evoking beeps of protest from the frazzled drivers in my wake. The attractive stranger raised an eyebrow as I cut my engine and manually rolled down my window.

"Any chance you need a ride?" I tried to ask in the coolest and least creepy manner I could manage.

He answered in the affirmative and slid into the passenger seat, closing the door hastily after I initially accelerated back onto the busy road.

My mind is occupied during our initial throes of conversation; the butterflies that I felt brought back memories of yellowed braces and Alanis Morissette. Moreover, I had begun to regret my impulsive decision. I wasn't entirely sure that I'd amassed the strength that I'd need to maintain my composure in a sexually tense situation.

Through my wall of internal dialogue, I'd gleaned that my passenger typically took a train out of New Haven into Grand Central Station and that he had an almost indiscernible southern drawl.

His name wasn't particularly memorable; only his family and the local police force would remember it at this point.

He'd acquired my cell phone number by the time we'd reached New Haven, but I was lost in thought as he oozed from the vehicle and strutted towards the platform.

Days had passed since my initial conversation with the man that I'd picked up off the side of the road, and I'd determined that perhaps I wasn't in the right mindset for a relationship. I'd waited for a call or text message, but after a week, I'd decided to stop being such an idealist and to stop losing sleep over a lost opportunity.

My hand emerged from the wreckage mostly unscathed; I'd developed a propensity for successful fax machine unjamming over time. While I'd once managed an impressive twenty-six seconds, it took

me about a minute and a half to tear this particular ripped paper from the innards of the fax machine, evoking an error report and a beep of protest. *Fuck you, too.*

Linda, my senile boss, gives me a condescending pat on the head as she waters an impatient African violet. While a mundane task like this would typically be delegated to me, tending to the plants was a meticulous job with little room for error. Perpetually armed with her gardening tools and a calm resolve, Linda was ever prepared for any botanical disaster that may befall the office, and for this I was eternally grateful. She murmured to the plant under her breath before breaking out of her trance to implore me to pick up the pace, then pivoted and shuffled in the opposite direction. I waited until her footfalls grew faint to type out the remainder of my text message.

I had only sent out one eighth of the three hundred and thirty nine faxes that were being sent to school districts in California that day; I need to wait until about twelve to accommodate the time difference between the east and west coast. Up until then I had been fielding phone calls on the New Parent en Español line, trying my best to appease flustered Hispanic receptionists with my sub-par grasp of the language and obstinate nature. The fax machine is a bit more merciful than a frazzled customer; I don't have to show any restraint, and it's nice to be the one pushing buttons for a change.

Karen beckons to me with a long blue fingernail from her cubicle across the room. She pauses her seventies playlist on Pandora radio to impart a snarky comment regarding the length of a coworker's skirt, punctuated by a verbal eye-roll. I appease her with what I hope is a convincing, affirmative giggle. Before returning to my post, I make a mental note to mention this to Susan, who I've maintained a weekly bet with regarding Karen's habitual gossip.

Office Dog stares at me forlornly, laying its massive head on my foot. With the bulk and wherewithal of a golf cart, the animal does not fit comfortably in the office. Office Dog's daily schedule revolved entirely around food; she knew exactly who would be the most responsive

to her dejected skulking, who had the most appealing lunches to beg for, and would loudly bemoan any slight change in her feeding agenda. She was known to have an occasional indoor bowel movement and to jump on tables to retrieve particularly intriguing cuisine. She reminded me of an equally ungainly animal that I'd kept as a house pet before I'd left my parent's house. I'd never been partial to dogs, but I couldn't make the bad impression that breaking the legs of an employer's dog would inevitably give.

My cell phone buzzes against my thigh while I'm in the midst of peeling a tangerine during my lunch break, rousing Office Dog and bringing me back from an improper daydream. My excitement upon receiving a flirtatious text is almost palpable, evoking a perplexed expression from the animal. *Food?* She seems to ask. I respond with a smirk. *If only she knew.*

A small green sedan captures my attention as it pulls into the parking lot of my apartment complex. Dressed in dark jeans and a silk shirt, my suitor is presumably aiming to impress. After taking a moment to clean his glasses, he briskly walks towards me, sporting an impeccable smile and personable air. My mind is elsewhere as I lean against my doorframe, trying to cram my internal struggle into his last few strides. I affix a smile to my face as I usher him in for a drink.

As a young girl, I lived near a moderately sized patch of marshland. My sisters and I often brought back assorted amphibians to our mother, which she accepted in the way that one accepts a gifted mouse from a cat. While my siblings made sure that their prizes made their way back to the pond, I typically held onto them for a few days. Eventually, years into my frog-catching phase, my mother found the container which I'd filled with various discarded carrion waste—limbs and tiny intestines lined the bottom of the jar in a pool of calcified brown liquid, while the bulkier torsos and heads of the frogs lined the top. She never confronted me directly, but her eyes bulged whenever I brought a small animal home from that point on. I developed the habit of carry-

ing them in my pockets, waiting until I could hear her heavy breathing at night before unearthing the frog jar.

The sediments in the sangria had sunken to the bottoms of our forgotten glasses. The evening progressed quickly; the bottle was half empty before I'd finished my first glass. Casual conversation melted into flirtatious banter, and soon our thoughts got rude and our eye contact became more frequent. When uninhibited, the gentleman's laugh became more of a nasally chortle, and his posture was less guarded. I coyly motioned towards my bedroom.

While I typically dedicated my down time in the office to solitaire, I had spent quite a bit of time on search engines that week. Rophynol is, oddly enough, available via prescription in every developed country other than the United States. Typically used to treat more severe cases of insomnia, roofies hadn't been legal since 1992. I purchased the rest of my supplies at a local Home Depot, giving the sales clerk a bogus story involving remodeling and drywall.

The nylon rope probably would've been uncomfortable around a conscious person's wrists. Duct tape was spread over the neck, mouth, and thighs of my date; hopefully, when he regained awareness, it would hold him in the spread-eagle position that I'd arranged him in. His clothes, which I intended to burn later that night, lay in a dejected pile in the corner of the room, drooping from a plastic bag in a similar manner to my victim's arms off the bed. I'd amassed the implements that I'd need: sandpaper, a circular saw, and a sharpened paring knife. I sat at the edge of the bed, absent-mindedly using my extra duct tape to secure the suitor's legs.

I think that I have a more realistic approach to relationships than my mother.

The moonlit water cascaded off of his torso in broken, beaded sheets. If I looked that notably glorious whilst naked myself, I'd probably never put clothes on again. Well aware of the impressive nature of

his nudity, my new gentleman caller smirked and submerged himself in the dark water. Skinny-dipping in the reservoir had been his suggestion; while I was open to participate in most nude activities, I wasn't too fond of the entire contaminating the local water supply fandango. I was intrepid about the entire thing, but ultimately I was too excited by the proposed lack-of-clothing to pass up the opportunity. In retrospect, the suggestion seemed strange; there were other local bodies of water in which one could use as an excuse to view member of the opposite sex sans clothing that weren't used.



**“Green Girl”**  
by: Nikki Kalafut

**Meditations on Energy**  
by: Miles Wellington-Deanda

3a.m.-lamp bulb buzzing with three hours of bristled-edged energy, light pulsating in protest. Burn out to blackened coils and filaments of overused metals left to fizzle and fume in impotent, continuous, emittance.

3 a.m.-brain matter buzzing with three hours of bristle-edged energy, eyes pulsating in protest. Burn out to static tones and feed-back loops of thought left to fizzle and fume in impotent, continuous, emittance.

Air starts to sit heavy in chest.  
In defiance it pushes back  
against the diaphragm  
sparking short-circuited breath:  
Inha-exhale Inha-exhale  
Inha-exhale Inha-exhale  
Inha-exhale Inha-exhale  
cough. See the spots  
wink on and off the eyescape  
like the burn out of stars  
a trillion miles apart.

Let the bulb rest.  
Turn off the brain.  
The page remains unfilled-  
a void of space.

## Regret

by: Catherine Natoli

**re gret** *n.* 1. The expression of grief, distress, or sorrow; a feeling of lamentation as a result of an external circumstance or event, like a loved one's sudden leaving or purchasing too many losing scratch-offs. 2. Remorse or repentance due to reflection on something one has done or omitted to do, such as screwing the jam lid on too tightly last time you used it to the point where it is impenetrable/ the sting of knowing you should have looked ahead to/ this very moment/ when you are late for work and just needed a quick breakfast./ This very moment/ when you think of the times you said "I'll keep in touch" but never did./ This very moment/ when you think of the times you said "I had a great time, let's do it again soon" or "That steak was cooked just how I wanted" but didn't mean it./ This very moment/ standing before your grandma's open casket, when you think of the thank-you notes you never wrote her/ or the birthday calls you never made./ This very moment/ when you browse through the messages in the Drafts folder/ and wonder how he would have responded to:/ "If you were a sea creature, what would you be?",/ "Crunchy or smooth peanut butter?",/ because I actually prefer crunchy,/ and "What are you afraid of?"/ This very moment/ when you make yourself sick with grief, distress, and sorrow/ thinking of all the things you could have said/ and done/ the places you could have gone/ and the people you could have gone with/ if only you had not been too scared/ to ask/ to call/ to do/ the things you should have/ or wanted to/ or if only you had not been so bold/ so daring/ to do the things you did/ this very moment/ in the way you did them.

**Primavera**  
by: Alanna Coogan

I feel it like the first ocean breeze that's warm.  
like the first tulip that peaks up at you from the barren ground,  
or when the sun side-steps a cloud to bathe your face in  
warmth.

I feel it like the first time you leave shoes for sand  
and you feel your whole chest heave upwards at the glory of  
freedom  
and suddenly you're flying along by your heart, which pulls you  
up into the clouds.

All of this contained in a single moment  
a heartbeat  
a knowing nod  
a smile despite itself.

It's the small victories of everyday life that do it;  
That first kiss of friendship.



**“Toby”**  
by: Kathryn Herbert

**\*1st Place Winner for the Mosaic Contest in Playwriting:**

**Womanhood**

by: Leah Butterwick

**SCENE 1**

*[An OB/GYN clinic. Chairs line the back of the stage, with two chairs center stage, separated by a small table that holds magazines. A woman, late 30's, SANDY, sits in one of the two front chairs. She's smiling and has one hand over her belly, even though she isn't showing yet. She wears a worn old coat, a T-shirt, and a pair of faded jeans. ALYSSA walks on stage. She wears a nice raincoat and dress slacks. She sits in the other center chair and picks up a magazine. SANDY turns towards her.]*

SANDY: Nervous?

*[ALYSSA looks up but doesn't acknowledge SANDY. ALYSSA looks back down at her magazine and SANDY extends the hand that is not on her belly.]*

SANDY: I'm three months pregnant. You?

ALYSSA: *[Looking at SANDY over her magazine.]* I just found out.

SANDY: Aren't you just so excited? My husband and I had been trying for so long, it was all we talked about. *[Pause.]* But, it's worth it. Now I'll be a mom.

ALYSSA: *[Going back to her magazine.]* Congratulations.

SANDY: To you, too! I'm Sandy by the way. *[Pause.]* How long have

you been trying?

[ALYSSA ignores the questions.]

SANDY: 6 months? A year?

[ALYSSA still says nothing. A NURSE enters.]

NURSE: Alyssa?

ALYSSA: [Hurriedly stands and walks towards the nurse. Over her shoulder.] Nice to meet you.

SANDY: You, too.

[ALYSSA and the NURSE walk off stage. SANDY fidgets with the magazines, looking embarrassed. She finally just rubs her stomach and smiles to herself. Fade out.]

## SCENE 2

[Lights up on a bedroom. It's sparsely furnished and simple. A man, late 30's, TOM lies in bed. SANDY walks on stage in a plain nightie. TOM looks up and shakes his head.]

TOM: No, Sandy, I'm too tired. I worked a double shift today.

SANDY: [Playfully] Oh, come on Tom, I got all dressed up for you.

[SANDY walks towards the bed and kisses Tom. TOM seems interested, leaning into the kiss.]

SANDY: Let's make a baby.

*[TOM pulls back and sighs.]*

TOM: Not this again, D.

SANDY: *[Hurt]* What?

TOM: Can't you ever just want to be with me? Does it always have to be about having a baby?

SANDY: It's romantic.

TOM: Well you know what isn't? When you interrupt to say something about positioning your fallopian tubes, or when you say, "You're going to make a great Dad."

SANDY: I don't do that all the time.

TOM: A few day ago? You came to work and brought me lunch? I thought you had been missing me, I thought you were trying to add spice to our sex life. Do you remember what you said?

*[SANDY pulls the blanket up to cover her.]*

TOM: You said "I saw Glenda Rarel at the supermarket. She's six months pregnant and glowing."

SANDY: So?

TOM: So you got turned on by another woman's glow! And I had thought you were turned on by me.

*[SANDY leans over and kisses him.]*

SANDY: Honey, I do, you know I do.

*[They kiss again, leaning back against the pillow. SANDY pulls away.]*

SANDY: Oh, I was thinking that my mom got pregnant by having sex in the shower, so if you want to move this into the bathroom...

*[TOM gets up.]*

TOM: Jesus, Sandy!

SANDY: What? I'm turned on by you, honey, but I just want to get this right.

TOM: I can't do this.

*[TOM grabs his pillow and a blanket off of the bed and walks off stage. SANDY gets up and follows him. Bickering can be heard as they exit. Fade out.]*

### SCENE 3

*[An expensively furnished living room. A wraparound couch sits center stage, a coffee table in front of it. A man, early-30's, AARON, sits on the couch reading a magazine, his feet on the coffee table. A woman, mid 20's, ALYSSA, walks in. She is nicely dressed with her hair in a bun. She looks distracted as she kicks her heels off and sits on the couch.]*

AARON: Hey, babe. How was work?

*[ALYSSA says nothing, just takes her coat off and throws it on the arm of the couch. AARON looks over at her.]*

AARON: Earth to Alyssa. I asked you how your day went, now that you're the big cheese at the office.

[*ALYSSA still has a glazed-over expression as she lets her hair down and takes her earrings out. Aaron touches her leg. ALYSSA startles.*]

AARON: You alright?

ALYSSA: Huh?

[*AARON grabs her hands in his and sits up.*]

AARON: Babe, what's wrong?

[*ALYSSA begins to cry quietly, wiping at her eyes. AARON puts his arm around her.*]

AARON: Did they revoke the promotion? Those bastards. You've worked so hard for that firm, and if they take partner away after everything you've done, I swear to God—

ALYSSA: I'm pregnant.

[*AARON looks confused for a minute. After some silence where ALYSSA stares at him, he nods.*]

AARON: Okay. Okay, well this is great.

ALYSSA: Is it?

AARON: It's not in the plan, but it's okay. [*He looks at her.*] We said someday, right?

[ALYSSA pulls away and stands up, pacing behind the couch.]

ALYSSA: Yes, some day, not today.

AARON: [Turning to look at her.] Well, it's happening now.

ALYSSA: I can't believe this.

[AARON stands up and walks towards her.]

AARON: It's alright babe. We'll make it work.

ALYSSA: How?

AARON: [Pause] I'll take some time off.

ALYSSA: Don't be stupid, you just built that practice. You and Ron finally have enough patients that you can work 8-hour days. You can't blow it now over this.

AARON

Okay. Then—

ALYSSA: [Getting loud] And don't even say I can take time off, because I can't. Just because they haven't revoked my partnership offer doesn't mean they can't. I won't miss work, Aaron.

AARON: I was going to say we'll hire a nanny.

ALYSSA: But I just got you that Mustang, and, no offense babe, that'll take ages to pay off. And we put money down on that new apartment. We can't move into an apartment if we have a baby! It'd need a yard

and—

AARON: Ally we're going to have to make it work. [AARON hugs ALYSSA] We'll have to.

[ALYSSA stares off as the lights dim. Fade out.]

#### SCENE 4

[TOM and SANDY'S bedroom. TOM has a suitcase open on the bed and he is placing clothes in it. He looks rushed. The bathroom door opens and TOM quickly zips the suitcase closed and puts it by the bed. SANDY walks out. She cannot see the suitcase. She looks dazed.]

TOM: I thought you were going to your sisters.

SANDY: My stomach was bothering me, so I went to the drug store.

TOM: Look, Sandy, I have to talk to you.

SANDY: Me, too. You first.

TOM: Look. [He sits on the bed.] I...I've been really unhappy, D. I feel like I've lost you to this whole baby thing. I feel like I've lost us.

SANDY: What do you mean?

TOM: I come home and I'm nervous to be around you. It's like all you want to do is get pregnant. And once we get pregnant, then what? It'll be dolls and footballs and doctors appointments and whether I think the baby is being fussy. Look, I know a baby is the first thing a parent thinks about, and that's right. But I don't want to be the last thing you

think about.

SANDY: I don't know what you're saying Tom.

[TOM gets up and grabs the suitcase.]

TOM: I'm going to stay with my brother. Just for a few days. I need some time to just be by myself.

[SANDY says nothing. TOM walks over to her and kisses her.]

TOM: This isn't goodbye, babe. I just need a little space to think.

[SANDY nods, but remains silent.]

TOM: I'll call you tomorrow.

[TOM walks offstage. SANDY looks down into her hand. She places whatever it is on the nightstand. The audience finally sees that it's a pregnancy test. SANDY looks down at her belly and puts a hand on it. Fade out.]

## SCENE 5

[AARON and ALYSSA'S living room. They both enter, in the midst of an argument.]

AARON: I'm not saying it's wrong, I'm saying that you should have asked me.

ALYSSA: No, it's up to me.

AARON: This is our baby Ally, not just yours.

ALYSSA: Oh? Are you carrying it? Are you going to give birth to it?

AARON: I wish I could, since you obviously aren't going to.

*[ALYSSA looks shocked. She sits down.]*

AARON: You should have talked to me about it. It's ours, Ally. So whatever happens to it, we should discuss it.

ALYSSA: You don't understand.

AARON: Help me! *[Walks towards her.]* Alyssa, tell me what is going on.

ALYSSA: I told you. It's not the right time.

AARON: Will it ever be? Do you not want to ever have children? It's okay if you don't, I just think I should know.

ALYSSA: Why, are you going to leave me?

AARON: *[Stands up]* Ally, I love you. I won't leave you over not wanting children, but I will if you terminate my baby without consulting me.

*[ALYSSA starts crying.]*

AARON: Please, Ally. Tell me why you want to do this.

ALYSSA: I don't want to be a mom right now Aaron. I don't want it.

*[ALYSSA walks out and AARON sits down. He puts his head in his hands. Fade out.]*

## SCENE 6

[A café. Small round tables are centered on the stage, ALYSSA sitting at one. She holds a coffee with both of her hands, a sandwich sitting untouched in front of her. SANDY walks on, a plate in her hand. She sees ALYSSA and pauses. She walks up to her and smiles.]

SANDY: Remember me?

ALYSSA: [Looking up, startled] Oh. Yes, [Beat] Sandy, right?

SANDY: That's me.

[SANDY sits down at ALYSSA'S table. ALYSSA doesn't even seem to notice.]

SANDY: [Gesturing at the sandwich in front of ALYSSA] Is the turkey no good? I knew I should've gone for the chicken breast—

ALYSSA: What? [Looking down at the sandwich] Oh, no, it's fine, I just wasn't very [Beat] hungry.

SANDY: You want to talk?

[ALYSSA says nothing, just tucks her hair behind her ears.]

SANDY: You can talk to me, you know. I get this whole "new mom" thing. I mean, I wanted it so bad that I ruined my marriage over it, and now I'll be a "new single mom."

ALYSSA: How can you ruin your marriage with a baby?

SANDY: Easy. Push for one, a lot.

*[SANDY rips at her sandwich.]*

ALYSSA: I'm really sorry, Sandy. I didn't even know that could happen.

SANDY: I just hope I didn't accidentally ruin my kid's life, too. *[SANDY wipes at her eyes with a napkin.]*

ALYSSA: Hey, you don't NEED a man to be a good mom.

SANDY: No, but you need money. How am I supposed to find a job, and have this baby, and raise it, and earn all of the money for toys and clothes and school and doctors..? Even with child support.

*[ALYSSA stares off, silent.]*

SANDY: I'm sorry. I just worry that...

ALYSSA: That it just won't work?

SANDY: No. That it's too selfish. *[SANDY wipes at her eyes again and pushes away her plate.]* You were right, the turkey is bad.

ALYSSA: *[Reaching her hand across the table.]* Worrying that you won't be good enough shows you aren't selfish. Love is more important than new toys and nice clothes.

*[The two smile at each other for a moment. SANDY eats a piece of turkey off of her plate.]*

ALYSSA: I mean...some women don't feel that way, even when they can afford the stuff.

*[SANDY looks at ALYSSA for a while.]*

SANDY: Well, those women just need to prioritize. What's more important? A baby's' happiness or theirs?

ALYSSA: *[More quietly but still audibly.]* Yeah, that is the question isn't it?

SANDY: And it has an easy answer.

*[ALYSSA looks up, desperate.]*

SANDY: The baby's is more important. It's a huge mistake to think otherwise.

ALYSSA: Those women are just trying to make the best decision.

SANDY: They don't see how big of a mistake it is, what an indelible mark they are making—

*[ALYSSA stands up suddenly, knocking over her drink. She walks out. SANDY turns around, and calls out to her once, but then turns back to the table. She looks down at her belly. Fade out.]*

## SCENE 7

*[A kitchen in the mid 90's. A woman, TRISH, sits at the table drinking a glass of wine. An empty bottle of wine sits in front of her. Two girls, YOUNG ALYSSA and AMY, run through the kitchen. AMY bumps into the table and knocks the wine bottle over. It shatters. TRISH doesn't move. AMY begins to pick up the pieces and cuts her hand. She starts to cry.]*

YOUNG ALYSSA: Mom!

[TRISH looks down.]

TRISH: [In a kind but slurred voice.] Oh, come here. My poor baby.

[AMY walks to TRISH, holding out her injured hand. TRISH tries to reach out to it, but her hands are shaking.]

TRISH: Alyssa? Would you mind taking your sister upstairs to wash this? Then get the medicine from your father's...from the other side of the cabinet. Don't forget a BandAid.

YOUNG ALYSSA: Mom, I don't know how.

TRISH: Sure you do. Just follow my directions. I'll check it when you come back. Go on.

YOUNG ALYSSA: Mom—

TRISH: Sweetie, could you please do this? I'm not feeling so well, and your sister needs you. Go on.

[YOUNG ALYSSA takes AMY offstage. TRISH, with a shaky hand, grabs her wine glass and takes another drink. Fade out.]

## SCENE 8

[A college dorm, set in the early 90's. A young and obviously pregnant woman (YOUNG SANDY) sits on a bed, her hands on her thighs. A young man, MARK, sits next to her.]

YOUNG SANDY: No. I've made up my mind.

MARK: Sandy, just think—

YOUNG SANDY: NO, Mark. I am not keeping this baby.

MARK: Look, I'll get a job, I'll do anything—

YOUNG SANDY: *[Looking at MARK.]* Who's gonna hire a 20-year-old college drop-out?

MARK: Then I'll finish school first. We'll get by on my part-time work—

YOUNG SANDY: And who's going to RAISE the baby, Mark?

MARK: Well...*[Pause]* I mean...

YOUNG SANDY: Exactly. Look. *[reaching her hand out and putting it on Mark's arm.]* We aren't ready to be parents. But this baby is ready to be born.

MARK: What if I work for my Uncle? I'll call him—

YOUNG SANDY: MARK. No. This is what's best.

MARK: *[Pause. Puts his hand on YOUNG SANDY'S belly.]* But we'll never get to know him.

YOUNG SANDY: *[Looking at her belly]* It's okay. *[Pause]* It is.

*[They both look at her belly. YOUNG SANDY reaches her hand towards her belly, but stops herself. Fade out.]*

## SCENE 9

[The OB/GYN clinic. SANDY sits in the same chair as before. She is evidently pregnant, looking almost 9 months so. She looks briefly over at the other chair, and grabs a magazine. ALYSSA walks onto the stage and sees SANDY. ALYSSA looks as thin as she did in the first scenes. She approaches SANDY.]

ALYSSA: Hey, Sandy.

[SANDY looks up and smiles. Her face falters for a second as she looks over ALYSSA, but she smiles again.]

SANDY: Hey you! I'd give you a hug, but...

[SANDY gestures at her belly and smiles. ALYSSA sits next to her.]

ALYSSA: You look great.

SANDY: You, too. How's...how's your husband?

ALYSSA: He's good. He was really shaken up for a while after...He's good though, thanks. How are you?

SANDY: Holding up I guess. Tom and I got divorced, but we're civil about it all. He's going to take the baby on weekends, which will be ... well it'll be. [Smiles.] And I got a job as an Assistant Manager of that coffee place we met last time.

ALYSSA: That's great. [Awkward beat] When are you due?

SANDY: You mean when is little Sarah here due? Three weeks. I just need a quick check-up. [Pause] What are you...well I should say...

you're here for..?

ALYSSA: Just a quick check-up.

[A NURSE enters.]

NURSE: Alyssa?

ALYSSA: Well, that's me.

[SANDY grabs ALYSSA'S hand.]

SANDY: Hey, if you ever want to stop by the coffee place, it'll be on the house.

ALYSSA: Thanks, Sandy.

SANDY: And, Alyssa? [Pause] It's okay. There's lots of time. If you want there to be.

[AYLSSA smiles at SANDY and walks to the NURSE. SANDY looks down at her belly and puts her hand on it. She smiles. BLACK OUT.]

## **Quitting**

by: Sara Kiter

kiss me, kiss me,  
you say I don't taste like smoke anymore  
and you ask me if I'm quitting.

I look past your stupid, drunken  
face and assure you that,  
yes, I am giving up.



**“Booom”**  
by: Caterina Armenter

## Midnight

by: Katherine Fiorillo

I think it is midnight as the bells start to ring. The chapel from which the sound resonates is so close yet the deep chime of the bell seems to part of the sky now, part of the air I breathe in on a night as cold as this one.

One. The stars aren't very bright and the sky doesn't look very deep but it is breath taking all the same. Infinity between my shivering body and the end of space. Everything floats between us: what we said today, the disappointment carved on your face when you woke up alone this morning, the emptiness of un-smoked cigarettes that we pretended to quit.

Three. The sky feels heavy. I sit here on this concrete ledge, frozen, and the cold sneaks through my leggings and bites my legs. The sky sinks down to this earth to kiss my head and let me be. The darkness envelops me and I am left searching the sky for the dim hope of a star to drag me away from this.

Six. He's off in his own infinity, with the help of something strong to cloud his mind. He does not, he cannot, deal with the weight of this evening. Perhaps if he lied here and saw this vastness, he would understand this insignificance of ourselves, this being full of every empty thing in the world.

Nine. Maybe if I looked to the sky I would know something more, something I didn't know this morning. All I'm left with is knowing I still don't matter. My words are only words, my heart and mind are my own and my touch does nothing to scar his soul.

Ten. And there is me. Who am I? What am I... I am far from home and left alone and I have become so good at hiding how I feel not even God himself knows anymore. I am a small girl, lost in a world of her own words. I am a writer but one day I know there will no longer be anything to write. I will have said it all and my mind will run dry and then where am I left, what am I left with except the scrawled poetry

in the margins of well-loved books.

Twelve. The stars are so far away and the depth of the sky is so alluring, it makes me wonder why I am so worried about anything. I am one small person on a planet of seven billion. I am one small person in a galaxy of wonder and I have no weight, no power at all. This life is so small, it is so insignificant yet each day the world appears to crash around me.

Yes, it is midnight, but I don't know where I am at all.



**“Rosendale Rose”**  
by: Kathryn Herbert

**Rotted wood displaces thick undergrowth**  
by: Christina Coulter

Rotted wood displaces thick undergrowth  
Supporting a crass, dilapidated structure.  
Air conditioning units peer out to the street below  
Cooly regarding frazzled passers-by.

Its porch slopes gently into what appears to be  
A dejected, tight-lipped expression.  
The front door leans crossly against its setting,  
Precariously balanced on its lone, stressed hinge.

Two dilapidated strangers appraise me from the doorway,  
Deep-gouged eyes form wary slits;  
And here I know I'm just an anomaly  
Affronted by wearied foundations.

## ***The Mosaic Contest Winners:***

### **Fiction:**

1. *Journey to the Earth* by: Kathryn Herbert
2. *Banshee* by: Catherine Natoli
3. *The Duty of the Artist* by: Derek Rose

### **Creative Nonfiction:**

1. *She Bubbles* by: Leah Butterwick
2. *St. Joseph's Cemetery* by: Kathryn Herbert
3. *Vienna's Lost and Found* by: Kathryn Herbert

### **Poetry:**

1. *Sometimes* by: Erin Kane
2. *The Anxiety of Eating* by: Dana Caputo

### **Playwriting:**

1. *Womanhood* by: Leah Butterwick
2. *You Never Know* by: Diana Dubs

### **Art:**

1. "BC (2)" by: William Vrachopolous
2. "Gloves" by: Nikki Kalafut
3. "Grotesque" by: Kathryn Herbert

Thank you to all of our participants and judges! We hope you will join us for the Mosaic Contest next year!

## Your Spring 2014 Literary Arts Society Executive Board:



*Back, L-R:* Kathryn Herbert, Amber Case, Rose Shannon, Christina Coulter

*Middle, L-R:* Kasey Corona, Catherine Natoli, Devin Dickerson, Hollie Randall,

*Front:* Alex Sideris

