

saw palm

florida literature and art



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Cover Art: *Rapture In The Postmodern Era* by Sydney McKenna

The Upside-Down House Of Sunrise Golf Village, Fla, 1969

Paul David Adkins

To draw tourists to the course,
developers built a model house
upside down, complete
with a tan, '65 AMC Rambler
bolted to the carport floor.

The structure balanced
on the apex of its roof.

My father paid two dollars,
filed us one by one
onto the ceiling inside

where we craned
at the living room chairs
screwed above us to the hardwood.

A bowl of plastic fruit was glued
to the kitchenette table.
A tall man could touch the apples.

The bed sheets were pulled
tight as my grandmother's bun.

Ushered out, I blinked.
Sunlight shot from golf course lakes.

I sat, laid on the grass.
How blue the earth.
How huge my father's hand

extended like a falconer's
coaxing his bird
with clicking tongue
and a stick of Fruit Stripe gum.

These Are the Things that Upset Camilia

Natalia Cortes Chaffin

Camilia's father is wearing a turkey suit. It has fake turkey feathers pasted onto reams of brown crepe paper. The crepe paper crinkles between his thighs with every shuffled step. If only he were slow, or insane, so she could explain away his turkey costume and the American kids in her high school would feel guilty when they laughed. Unfortunately, he wears his turkey costume because he lost his job delivering fancy furniture when the shitty tires on the truck made him nearly kill a boy. He has to dance and gobble so Camilia and her sister and their mother with her rough hands from sewing can have a roof over their heads and all the pan roasted turkey they can eat.

Her father finishes his turkey links. Camilia pushes hers away with a fork. They avalanche over the side of her plate. Her younger sister rescues one from the daisy print tablecloth. She takes a bite.

"Thank you for not wasting food, Estrella," her mother says in Spanish.

Her father slips his arms into papier-mâché wings and turns to her mother so she can secure the Velcro straps.

"Vamanos," her father says. "We are late."

Camilia grabs her book bag and trudges to the door followed by her turkey father who insists on escorting his eighteen- and fourteen-year-old daughters to the school bus.

"I thought you might have gotten a new job by now," Camilia says. The brisk breeze stings her cheeks. Leaves and trash whirl through the air like swordsmen preparing to fight. This morning the weather girl on the Spanish channel, who wears too much red lipstick for the English channels, mentioned a Hurricane Fred and his current direct path to Camilia's overgrown front lawn. Camilia lived through a dozen hurricanes in Cuba, huddled in the bathroom of her family's tiny bungalow, her mother clutching a rosary and her father, because of the

shortage of wood planks, standing in front of the window as a barrier against exploding glass. The houses in Hialeah are sturdy. She figures there's no reason to fret.

"What's so bad about this job?" Miguel blows some debris from the turkey head he's carrying under his arm. "We have all the food we want now."

By now he means now that they are in America and no longer starving in Cuba. By food he means turkey: turkey sandwiches, turkey sausage, turkey dumplings, turkey soup, even turkey meatloaf. The deli owner also gifted them a stuffed turkey for Thanksgiving. Her turkey father has been very good for business.

"You were a pilot in Cuba," Camilia says.

"That was a long time ago," he says. "And I ended up in jail."

"Not because you were a pilot."

"Leave Papi alone," Estrella says.

The school bus pulls up to the curb. Camilia follows Estrella on board and scoots past kids whispering gobble gobble. Giggles float like bubbles she wants to prick. Through the window, she sees her father put on his turkey head and wobble off to catch his own bus. She's reminded of a red robin she once found hobbling on the ground with a broken wing. She wonders how he manages to shimmy through the bus door.

When they arrive at school, the bus driver jumps the curb with her front tire. Camilia blows Estrella a kiss and rushes past football players doing jumping jacks. She sees that Jane Johnson's stupid "Lost My Ring" poster is still taped to the wall right above her locker. Jane Johnson wrote her name in purple glitter that rains down on Camilia every time she slams the locker door. In some ways, the daily purple rain reminds her of Cuba and the swift downpours that always caught her off guard and wearing a see-through dress. But the dress always dried. This glitter sticks like leeches to her sweaters. She has to flick the glitter off with her fingernails. Camilia's never really met Jane, only

seen her swishing around the school in a plaid skirt, but she's reserved a few of her new English words for her, namely bitch.

Camilia pulls out her high school ESL text, hurries to class and slides into the desk with Satan scratched into the faux wood top. She doesn't like to sit at the Satan desk, but it is the only one still open. She can't understand why someone would carve Satan into a desk. It must be an American joke that doesn't translate, like "Knock knock" or "Your mother is so fat."

On the green board, Miss Longfield has already scribbled: Jake loves to eat juyubes. Camilia mouths the words. Miss Longfield aims her chalk at Camilia, marches toward her preceded by a hand grenade of jasmine perfume.

"Yake loves to eat yuyubes," Camilia says.

"Jake," Miss Longfield says.

"Yake."

"Juh...juh...Jake."

"Yuh...yuh...Yake."

"Jut out your jaw."

Miss Longfield stands over Camilia with her red lips pursed and bumpy tongue flattened against the bottom of her mouth. Camilia mimics her. Still, where a J should sound, only a Y blurts out. Camilia holds up a white flag. Miss Longfield taps the desk. Camilia understands these little humiliations are the highlights of this woman's day.

The bell saves Camilia from another round of torture. She exits into the hall. A pony-tailed girl pushing a TV cart weaves around her like she's a traffic cone. She clutches her books against her chest, gets a weak smile from a tall boy who always wears argyle socks. The reason she knows this is because he wears pants that are always too short. She is forced to wear second-hand clothes as well, but this does not make them soul mates. She's not sure she has a soul mate.

"The bus is leaving," Estrella says. She is leaning against the wall by Camilia's olive locker. She unbuttons the white cardigan Camilia wore yesterday.

"We could walk," Camilia says. Estrella frets about being left behind. She's been especially fidgety ever since the Cuban soldiers escorted them out of the country at gunpoint. Camilia tries to explain that everyone lucky enough to get on a Freedom Flight was escorted at gunpoint.

"We're not going to get a seat together," Estrella says. In Estrella's perfect world, Camilia fears they would be conjoined twins and their mother would have to sew them special dresses to accommodate their shared hip.

"We'll walk then."

"Do you even know the way home?" Estrella yanks on Camilia's arm. Camilia forgets about the Jane Johnson poster. She slams the locker door. Purple glitter rains on them both.

"Bitch," Camilia says.

She follows Estrella to the bus. They squeeze through the aisle stuffed with sweaty students, find an empty seat. Her sister is right. After three months in America, Camilia still gets lost in an endless labyrinth of storefronts and gas stations. Her legs insist on believing they are still walking the cobbled roads of Havana, past the *carnicería* and the little store that used to display ribbons of lollipops in the window before it became a meeting place for the Citizens in Defense of the Revolution. She'd slow down at the two-story house of Señor Rafael, wait for Estrella to catch up. Estrella would tiptoe through Señor Rafael's bed of gardenias looking for a perfect bloom she might steal and give to their mother. Head spy Señor Rafael would shout at them from his window, but they figured with his grand house and new young wife, Señor Rafael had more than his fair share of pretty things. Camilia's not sure, but the stealing of his gardenias may have contributed to her father's month-long incarceration.

The school bus chokes to a stop a block from Camilia's new American house, a one-story tract home with a weather vane in the shape of a flamingo. The house is baby boy blue, which makes it stand out from the other houses. Her family did not choose the color, but it's a color they might have chosen.

"Mami's cooking," Camilia says. The smell of frying turkey pollutes the air despite the azaleas her mother recently planted underneath the front window. Next door, the neighbor's three-legged mutt is salivating. His squishy nose pokes through the chain link fence.

"It's not that good," Camilia says.

She and Estrella push through the front door and find Maria in the kitchen stitching faux pearls onto a white bodice. Rice simmers on the stove. Just as Camilia guessed, turkey cutlets are sizzling in a pan.

"How was school?" Maria says in Spanish. Camilia opens the fridge, finds two cups of fruit salad and a jar of mayonnaise.

"Fine," Camilia says.

"Habla español."

"Learn English."

Camilia snaps open a soda. Her mother glares at her, hands Estrella a stack of mail to translate because Estrella studied English in Cuba. This has also excused her from standing dead center on Miss Longfield's firing line.

"Amigas?" Maria says.

"She doesn't have friends," Estrella says.

"I have friends," Camilia says.

"Use phone. Invite," Maria says. Camilia glances at the gold-framed picture of Jesus, his arms outstretched as if he's blessing the top of the TV. Then there's the matter of her parents refusing to learn English because someday Fidel will croak. When he does, the family will beeline it to their bungalow in Havana, forget all this America business, and drink fresh guava juice.

"They're busy," Camilia says. She takes the soda to her room.

To her poster, Jane Johnson has added a picture of a diamond ring. Camilia figures it's about half a carat. The setting is silver or platinum, probably platinum, and surrounds the stone like a circle of snowflakes. The poster says something about the ring belonging to Jane Johnson's grandmother. The poster does not say if the grandmother is alive and well and playing canasta or buried in some cemetery under a small headstone with carved out angels.

Camilia reaches for the poster paper. The bell has rung and she is already late for class, so this seems like an opportune time to move it somewhere else and free herself from the tyranny of purple glitter. She feels a bit bad that Jane lost her heirloom, but not so bad since she herself had to leave everything behind in Cuba, including a grandmother who is hobbling about on a cane, but might as well be buried under a headstone for all that Camilia will ever see her again.

She tugs at the corner of the paper. The poster is stuck to the wall with industrial strength tape. She pulls harder, tears a piece. She hears heels clicking upon the floor. Purple glitter is no reason to get expelled. She heads to class. She'll just have to convince Estrella to help her after school.

"Did you bring us some food?" Miss Longfield is standing in front of the room with a dog-eared copy of *The Joy of Cooking*.

"Perdona. I forgot."

Miss Longfield presses her teeth together and tsks. Camilia sits down at the Satan desk.

"We're going to make an American stew," Miss Longfield says. She laughs. "It's called the Melting Pot."

She asks the class to repeat melting pot. They do. Despite the cacophony of accents, it sounds like melting pot. Miss Longfeld beams, explains American culture is a result of all different ethnicities blending together. "Today we'll honor our heritages." She waves a finger in the air. "Then we will melt!" She fires up the hotplate, pours a can of black beans, a carton of General's chicken and some wiener schnitzel into a

pot. She stirs and stirs the stew-like substance with a long wooden spoon.

"We were all different, but now we are all one," Miss Longfield says.

Camilia wonders when she will melt into the American landscape, become just another girl, if someday, despite all of Miss Longfield's efforts, she'll be on her deathbed still asking for strawberry yello.

After school, Camilia and Estrella stare at the Jane Johnson poster.

"What has she done to you?" Estrella says. She glances towards the metal doors, then at the large clock on the wall. The second hand ticks.

"She hung her glitter cloud over my locker," Camilia says.

"It's not over your locker. It's just on the wall."

Camilia suspected Estrella might not go along with her plan to remove the poster.

"You can either help me or go home by yourself," Camilia say. Estrella looks at the clock again. She bites her lip.

"This is silly," she says.

"Just help me."

"You sure you know the way home?"

"I promise I'll get you home." One way or another, Camilia knows she will. Estrella puts her books inside Camilia's locker.

"America has made you very cranky."

Estrella climbs atop Camilia's shoulders, picks at the stubborn poster edges with square fingernails. Camilia wiggles under her sister's weight. They are women now, not the little girls who used to peek into Señora Alisia's window to catch a glimpse of her lace bras and panties so intricate like frosting on a wedding cake. Señora Alisia was sleeping with Señor Rafael. She could get whatever her blackmailing heart desired. Rumor had it the bras came contraband from a little boutique in Key West. Camilia had imagined the women in America all wore panties like that, hand-sewn from expensive silks with tiny beading that

worked the patience of the shop's seamstresses. Her America was a nation of fancy underwear.

The poster falls to the ground. Camilia kneels and Estrella climbs off her shoulders, picks up the sign.

"What should we do with it?" Estrella says.

"I don't know." Camilia looks at the Js, perfectly outlined in black. "Yane Yohnson."

"Jane."

"Don't you start." Camilia rolls up the poster and stuffs it in her backpack. "We should find the ring."

"Why?"

"It's worth something. Papi can't dress as a turkey forever." Camilia smooths her sister's hair.

"I'll start in the bathrooms," Estrella says.

Camilia heads to the science wing where she's seen Jane mixing test tubes.

Outside the sky is the color of charcoal, the stars hide behind storm clouds. A mangy white cat is curled up against a lamppost hissing at the wind throwing droplets of rain. Camilia grabs Estrella's hand. It is the right kind of warm and moist, like the air in Cuba, right before the black clouds open up to spit on the earth.

They found nothing. Two hours of picking through dust bunnies and searching under toilets produced merely red knees and sniffles. Camilia could hear Estrella's stomach grumbling, but her sister kept right on crawling on hands and knees hoping to discover, at this point, any kind of treasure. Camilia decided they should continue the search tomorrow, head home while people are still out walking their dogs or rushing to change out of their work uniforms.

They leave the school grounds and make a right onto the four-lane boulevard. Brake lights flash. Young men in puffy jackets patrol the corners and alleys.

"We should walk every day," Camilia says. She squeezes Estrella's hand.

"I bet someone stole the ring already," Estrella says.

"Who would do that? Other than us?"

Estrella shrugs.

They continue along the sidewalk, dodging old newspaper pages and mindful of the cracks in the cement. This was not so different from Havana. A bus pulls up to the curb a few feet in front of them. It bears a billboard promoting El Conejo, a Spanish radio DJ. There is a picture of an oversized white rabbit with fangs.

"I think that would take us home," Estrella says.

"What if it doesn't? Besides, in Cuba we walked everywhere."

"In Cuba, we walked nowhere."

Estrella points to a diner with vinyl records in the window and Buddy Holly screaming through the door.

"I can't eat another bite of turkey," Estrella says.

"We need money."

"Papi gave me some."

"Where'd he get it?"

Estrella brings her fists to her chest, flaps her arms and says gobble gobble.

"Of course."

"He knows you pity him."

"I don't."

"Don't you?"

"Let's eat."

The hostess wipes her palms on her apron, picks up two menus and leads them past a cotton candy display to a plastic red booth. The place reminds Camilia of a dollhouse. They order chocolate milk shakes like the ones they've see on the little antenna television their father found in a junkyard inside the trunk of a rusty sedan. Camilia digs out a dime from her purse. She flips through the selections on the jukebox. When Estrella finally nods, Camilia presses the bottom.

Three spoonfuls into a mountain of whipped cream, Camilia looks up and sees Jane Johnson. She's wearing a pink dress, red wig and paper hat.

"Anything else?" Jane's eyes stay fixed on her notepad. Camilia can't tell if Jane recognizes them. She pretends not to know her.

"No," Estrella says.

"Gracias," Jane Johnson says. She slaps the check onto the Formica table. The sisters slurp down their milkshakes, wipe chocolate mustaches from their lips. Estrella carefully counts the bills in her purse.

"We don't have much left for a tip," she says. She plops all their money down and places one of the milkshake glasses over the bills.

Camilia pulls out the poster from her backpack. She unrolls it onto the table and uses salt and pepper shakers shaped like Elvis to hold it open. They hurry outside.

"She wasn't wearing the ring," Estrella says.

"She probably doesn't wear it to work."

"It might still be at school."

"No. You were right. Someone already took it. We have to get home. You know Mami's worried."

Camilia leads Estrella across the street. She recites the directions in her head: right on the big boulevard, left at 6th street. She believes it's a left on 6th. She'll know when she sees the crooked palm tree with no coconuts.

Boys in puffy jackets approach with exaggerated gaits.

"Hey, niñitas, look at you," they say.

Camilia puts her arm around Estrella. They fold into each other.

"You ain't need to be scared," they say.

The girls don't look up or down or sideways. Camilia can feel her sister's body stiffen, she thinks she hears Estrella hissing like the white mangy cat. Camilia puts her lips to Estrella's ear.

"Keep walking."

The puffy jacket boys stop in their path. Camilia and Estrella push through their wall. The boys laugh, surround another girl who is alone,

force her up against the cold bars in front of a closed bridal shop. The girl is silent. Lightning flashing across the sky.

"Let's hurry home," Camilia says. She tightens her grip on her sister.

The crooked, coconut palm tree is nowhere to be found, but there's a neon Lotto sign she remembers seeing from the school bus window. Estrella must know they are lost, but she hasn't said anything yet.

Camilia leads her sister for another two blocks. The wind is singing a battle hymn. Headlights zip past. Camilia spots a small crowd. The people are clapping and wiggling to the faint sound of salsa music. Camilia and Estrella squeeze through the onlookers to take a peek.

Their father is dancing in his turkey costume, doing a little cha cha cha by shuffling his big rubber feet. People are calling him the Latin Gobbler. He is shouting gobble gobble with an accent as thick as the mayo-slathered turkey sandwiches he's hawking.

"Let's go," Camilia says.

"We're lost. I'm not going anywhere," Estrella says.

Camilia tries to shrink into the crowd.

"Niñitas." Her father's voice is muffled by the turkey costume. He stops shuffling, goes over to the stereo, leans forward and presses the stop button with his beak. The crowd sighs. A few people toss dollars at his feet. He yanks off a wing, thrusts it at Camilia and hurries to pick up the bills.

"You should not be out here by yourselves," he says. "Let's go home. I'm not feeling too well anyways."

He waves goodbye to the deli owner. The deli owner hands him a paper bag of spicy turkey wings. Her father starts towards their blue house, making a left at the crooked palm tree with no coconuts. The girls follow his fanned tail as rain bursts from the sky.

The next morning, Camilia finds her father with his head drooped over his turkey links. He stifles a phlegmy cough. His nose is a river of mucus.

"No work today," her mother says.

"Hernando need me. Big sandwich sale," her father says.

"You have sickness."

Miguel gets up so she can attach his wings. He stumbles on his feet.

"You are hot," Maria says. Miguel slumps into his chair.

"I get fired." His eyes are watery.

"I'll do it," Estrella says. She drops her fork on the floor, crawls under the table to fetch it.

"No, I go," her mother says.

"Mami, your knees. I'll go." Camilia says. Her mother could never stand all day on knees that sound like creaky door hinges, and Estrella is too much like nervous prey. Camilia knows it is she who has to shuffle for tips. At least she gets to avoid Miss Longfield.

Miguel steps out of his costume. Camilia hoists it up and slips in her arms. It's still damp from last night's rain. With its layers upon layers of fabric and paper, it's possible it may never dry.

Her father scribbles the directions on a napkin and stuffs them inside the turkey beak. Camilia takes the bus by herself to the deli. Through the window, she watches Fred's black clouds race across a somber sky. The weathergirl said he'd greet them by tomorrow morning. The pavement is already speckled with water.

The deli owner laughs when he sees her bopping down the sidewalk.

"Can you cha cha cha like your papi?" he says.

She shuffles back and forth, knocks over a display of chewing tobacco. She tries to pick up the canisters, but the costume won't let her bend. The deli owner laughs again.

"Good enough," he says. "And be careful out there. Last night a girl was raped not too far from here." He feeds her to the crowd.

Camilia shivers. She thinks of the girl and the puffy jacket boys. She doesn't know if it was the same curly-haired woman who was clutching her purse and the same puffy jacket boys shouting niñitas. She is afraid

to ask. The deli owner pokes his head out the door. The chimes above clink.

"You have to entertain."

Camilia turns on the radio with her beak. It's much too early for salsa, but that's all El Conejo seems to be playing on his morning show. Camilia waves her wings, tries to dance. Passersby either ignore her or snicker.

She moves faster, but the costume is really big on her frame, and the dampness has seeped into her bones. She imagines this is how her grandmother in Cuba feels when she hobbles about on her cane.

"We need to sell everything by five. I'm closing. Fred's coming." The deli owner says. "Get dancing."

Camilia nods, looks at the sunless sky, imagines herself being blown back to Cuba, gliding on Fred's gusts with her papier-mâché wings. She turns up the radio and boogies.

By three o'clock her legs feel like oak trees. She tells herself just one more song, rotates her hips to the Latin version of Twist and Shout. She bumps into Miss Longfield. Miss Longfield seems confused by the oversized turkey. Camilia tries to move out of her way, but Miss Longfield trips on Camilia's oversized rubber feet. She stumbles into the door. The chimes clang. Camilia wants to help her, but the wings might as well be a straightjacket.

"That's some job you've got." Miss Longfield straightens her purple pantsuit. "I guess it's better than begging."

She goes inside. Camilia wants to tell her it is better than begging, that her father's not a hired chimp. That he takes pride in being a good turkey. That he's a better turkey than she is a teacher. That with her pear-shaped torso and red scarf, she looks like a turkey. But Camilia can't say anything. Miss Longfield might recognize her voice and she should have been in school rattling off J-words.

The drizzling begins at half past three. Camilia can't feel the drops through her costume, but she can see them bouncing off the cement. Hernando says screw this and tells her to go home, hands her a black

umbrella. She leaves behind her turkey head so she can keep both hands on the umbrella and not lose it to the wind.

By the time she gets home, she is a dented bucket of cold water. Inside the house, she can hear the rain and wind beating against the windows. The blinds are drawn. Her father is in bed shivering under a quilt. Estrella and her mother are watching the storm on the TV.

Camilia shakes out her hair. She shuffles to the bathroom and shuts the door. She lets the turkey costume drop to the floor. She stomps it down. The feather tail won't flatten. It sticks up in the air. She smacks it. It snaps back up. She wants it to stay down. The tail needs to surrender. She is tired of being the one who surrenders. Miss Longfield wins. The puffy boys win. Castro wins. Camilia just lies down like she's already six feet under and waiting for the dirt to be tossed on her face.

She plucks a feather. Throws it. The feather floats. She plucks another, and another. She hurls them at the bathroom mirror. The feathers go nowhere. She flings more feathers at the tiny window in the shower. The feathers go nowhere. Camilia screams. Her voice is drowned by Hurricane Fred's roaring thunder. She drops to her knees and pounds the turkey costume. She yanks out every last feather until she's sitting in the middle of a turkey costume carcass.

There is a soft knock at the door. Camilia takes a deep breath, reaches for the knob. Estrella kneels next her, smooths her sister's wet hair.

"I'll get the sewing box," Estrella says. Camilia nods. The costume lies in tatters. Fred howls outside the window. Something, somewhere shatters. Camilia reaches for the feathers, begins to gather the day's remains.

Liberty

Azor Bray

I was ten when my parents bought a farm, one hundred and twenty acres in north Walton County, Florida, in a place you'd be hard pressed to call a town, only a church and a few houses strewn along a state highway. A green and white leaning road sign disclosed its name: Liberty. At the time, at least to me, it took an eternity to drive from where we lived to that semblance of a town. It was miles beyond the last intersection where you turned left and headed north. This last turn, the one before venturing deeper into the Southern woods, was in a rural community with a hardware store built of black-painted bricks crowned with towering gold letters declaring its sovereignty—King's. Across the street were train tracks, steel sutures that closed the incision cutting through the belly of downtown. Beyond these few details, I remember little else about these places.

The memories from those years that have entangled themselves the most with me are the ones rooted to the farm. Though they are numerous, they're nothing more than snapshots, disordered and unidentified, tacked to the back of my brain. It had been twenty-five years since I'd last gone to that farm, that distant place and time; and it was during those absent years I'd come to realize it was a place I wanted to remember fully, but remembering it was more difficult than I had imagined. Repeatedly I'd close my eyes and study the grainy photos of my youth.

There's one of a house with a corroded screen door. Chalky green shingles fall to the ground one after another under their own weight like leaves from the ancient elms that stand threateningly overhead. And another is a shadowy, stale bedroom with an open closet holding a handful of limp dresses rotting on rusty hangers—clothes no longer needed, left behind for some unknown reason. And there's the still image of the barn—dark and sad, a silent witness to hardships as cruel

and sinister as its face—filled with the faint smell of corn, long gone grain for hogs and cattle and field mice, their cobs left as anchors for the spiders’ sticky threads.

After fifteen years in the City of Webs, Los Angeles was becoming too much for me. My career gnawed at my bones, and before it spewed me out, I chose to go where they say you can never return—home. I moved back to the state of my upbringing and close to the city of my youth.

I bought a house in the town where the hardware store, now mousy gray, could barely muster its name; where the train track sutures were blanketed with rust; and where remembrances didn’t come any easier and my desired memories still would not emerge. In fact, the closer I moved toward those memories, the farther they slipped beneath the muck of recall, pulling my childhood along with them.

A newfound friend and I often talked about Liberty and the misplaced and unrecorded part of my past. I’d describe the property to her time and again in ever-failing and muddled details: the church, the dirt crossroads at the entrance to the farm, the bend in the road as it passed in front of the house, the rise and the dip leading to the bridge that straddled the creek that meandered across the land—a murky creek filled with cow-eating gators. But the more I searched for particulars, the more they remained confused and unclear. No matter how I scoured the anemic pictures in my mind, I came to believe that this mystic farm would never be found again.

Then one day over coffee, my friend said, “Let’s take a ride.” Gunning her black pickup truck north, we headed through the dense Florida backwoods, a tangle of scrub pines and palmettos.

There in the chirp and hum of endless green, time held its languid breath until, pulling off the highway, we carved a river of dust behind us and our tires threw handfuls of gravel into the bland face of a lonely country church.

“Places like that aren’t worth a dime,” I said. “I’ve seen dozens just like it over the years.” But I didn’t realize I had seen this particular

church dozens of times decades ago. In less than a mile there was a crossing of roads, a bend in the dirt, then a rise, then a dip that led to a bridge spanning an ill-defined creek.

The countryside came to a halt. I walked onto the bridge, knelt, and looked into the creek's garbled face; a boy, ten years old, stared back at me.

And in a rush I was remembering things that I didn't understand, things that excited me and things that frightened me because I was ten years old. I remembered things like horseback riding headlong into the wind and the high school boy who sat hunkered behind me smoking a cigarette as he controlled the reins of an uncontrollable horse. I saw where he lived, a high-peaked farmhouse made of buckled wood that had lost its pride years ago, remote and surrounded by a yard of Johnny Jump-ups. I remembered the acrid taste of hand-pumped well water, and to his family plumbing meant throwing used dishwater over the back rail of the porch that faced an infinite corn field, a field an arm's length away soldiering with seven-foot stalks that rustled and never rested, shaking their silky heads like horses flashing their manes in an autumn azure sky. I remembered feeding sows severed chicken legs and watching Aunt Pearl gather eggs from Guinea nests inside a wire pen which was surrounded by trees laden with tiny sour plums, green and hard as hail, plums that made the hens run helter-skelter for their lives, kicking up dust, wrapping me in the pungent smell of their droppings. I remembered the Christmas my family was gifted a quilt, handmade from cobbled bits of battered shirts and fraying sheets and flour sacks, backed with batting and lined with fabric that God would have rejected. I remembered Pa Herring giving me the skull of an alligator that had killed one of his cows; its toothy grin and socket eyes made me smile.

But memories shift like leaves floating downstream beneath a bridge; both dart and move and slip into darkness. These were the things, the ones hidden so long from the light, I hadn't wanted to remember, but I did.

The castrations. The skinned squirrels. Relieving myself behind the barn. The moans, the guttural cries of want, drifting through a curtainless window, sounds of suffering cutting through the stillness of the summer heat. Our two families gathering for lunch at a table, crude and covered by a cloth, flanked by benches instead of chairs. And Pearl's daughter—nineteen, twenty years old, or older—being carried into the dining room; she's emaciated and brittle with disease. Her head jerks as she writhes in her mother's lap. She thrashes the vacant air with an uncontrollable arm and keeps her thumb clenched tight inside the palm of her hand. Her body thrusts forward wanting to eat. Pearl wants us to be together. My parents want to be polite. I don't know what I want; it's hard to know when you're a frightened city boy only ten years old.

I closed my eyes but the images remained. Why had I wanted to return to this place of mystery?

To break the vision I forced myself to stand. All the things I had wanted to remember I had remembered, and a few things I had wanted to forget returned. The bridge of yesteryear now seemed smaller, but I was exquisitely aware of the miles of creek water that had passed under the bridge without me being there and the countless miles of my life that had also passed without me being there.

So many of the things I hadn't understood twenty-five years ago and twenty-five minutes ago, I now understood. The webs of childhood had been swept away and their vagueness was brought into focus. The headlong wind, the suffocating desires. The buckled wood, the buckled hand. The dark, the light. Life, death. Past, present. I had found my lost Liberty and we were reunited, picking up where we had left off.

Liberty: lopsided, distant, and nearly forgotten. It was there where I found beauty in so many things, especially Pearl and her daughter and that God-rejected quilt fabric.

Gunfights and Florida History: An Interview with Tim Dorsey

Alan Shaw

Tim Dorsey was born in Indiana, moved to Florida at the age of 1, and grew up in a small town about an hour north of Miami called Riviera Beach. He graduated from Auburn University in 1983. While at Auburn, he was editor of the student newspaper, *The Plainsman*.

From 1983 to 1987, he was a police and courts reporter for *The Alabama Journal*, the now-defunct evening newspaper in Montgomery. He joined *The Tampa Tribune* in 1987 as a general assignment reporter. He also worked as a political reporter in the *Tribune's* Tallahassee bureau and a copy desk editor. From 1994 to 1999, he was the *Tribune's* night metro editor. He left the paper in August 1999 to write full time.

Tim has since published thirteen novels in several languages: *Florida Roadkill*, *Hammerhead Ranch Motel*, *Orange Crush*, *Triggerfish Twist*, *The Stingray Shuffle*, *Cadillac Beach*, *Torpedo Juice*, *The Big Bamboo*, *Hurricane Punch*, *Atomic Lobster*, *Nuclear Jellyfish*, *Gator A-Go-Go* and *Electric Barracuda*.

He lives in Tampa with his family.



Alan Shaw: Your main character, Serge A. Storms, has this irrepressible fascination with the state's history. Where did that come from? Was this

a deliberate decision on your part to show something about the state, something to add depth to the character?

Tim Dorsey: His obsession with Florida is totally me. He's my mouthpiece on those things. I started putting that in the book and I kind of held back because I felt like I was being indulgent. I didn't want to bore the reader by doing that, but I found out that it was a connection that I made. Either people who had lived in Florida a long time liked hearing about old trivia, lore, or history, or people who hadn't felt like they were getting some insider's peek into Florida. It was one of those accidental things that I got feedback from, so I just let it go. I opened it up and let Serge be the guy through which I would channel these things.

AS: Has this encouraged you to find out more unusual or darker things about Florida's history?

TD: It's helped a lot because readers will email me, pointing out things, or when I'm traveling around the state doing a signing, readers who are in tune with the books will point out places or take me to places, so it's growing as the series goes along. I don't have to put in a lot of effort. I know a lot of the stuff to begin with and the rest is happening because promotion for the books takes a lot of travel and a lot of that is around Florida.

AS: Florida seems to have this split personality. We're the sunshine state, the Disney state, but we're also the state where the cocaine wars were fought. How do you wrestle with that in your writing? What do you choose to show?

TD: I don't make the choice; I show both. That's part of living here. I grew up here, I couldn't live anywhere else, and that's the way I feel about it. You know, am I crazy to stay here, but at the same time I couldn't live anywhere else.

AS: In the decade and a half that you've been writing about the state through Serge's eyes, has it changed for you, the way you see the history?

TD: What I've noticed as I've been going along is that a lot of the places in the books have disappeared. A lot of the cool nooks and crannies are getting closed down. But at least I'm writing about them while they're still around, so they get their due. But it's happening fast. You look at just in the ten years of the series, the fact that the places are vanishing, that's the big thing. The state's so young but at the same time it's happening so fast; things are coming and going over night.

AS: Can you name one of those vanished places?

TD: One classic place was the Big Bamboo Lounge in Kissimmee. It was in the book *The Big Bamboo*. It went pretty quickly; it was on its last legs for a while. People loved it and were trying to keep it going, but it disappeared.

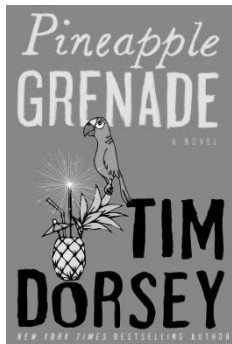
AS: How do you avoid falling into clichés about Florida? Land, politics, history, tourism, and Disney?

TD: Well two things, I'm not sure I always do avoid falling into them, and I'm not sure that's a bad thing. But I think that if you live here, if you have a subscription to the newspaper, then you follow what's going on. We're very dimensional, and the clichés are part of that dimension, but you can write it out, so that it's not completely cliché driven. Geographically, we're like Europe, a bunch of different countries, almost, just going county to county. But there are some of the same themes coming up and you can't really avoid them and have it still have that Florida feel.

AS: How do you manage to go beyond the character stereotypes of other Florida writers? Are there any you are aware of? What do you think they are? Do you try to defy them?

TD: Can I answer that in a different way? I think we have a great Florida subgenre which departs from the stereotype of writing genres in other parts of the country some times, but we have a great group of writers and I think we'll look back and see that we had it good in this area.

These writers are practically writing the history of Florida in real time because, like I said, it's young. We're growing and a lot of people are fostering it, but there's less heritage here than in other places.



I mean you look at Carl Hiassen, James Hall, Randy Wayne White, Edna Buchanan, there's just a whole bunch of great writers who are covering Florida. A lot of them have a journalism background or are still in journalism. A lot of people think this Florida gang, they're out on the edge, they're way over the top, but actually they're closer to reality than a lot of people realize if they're not from around here, and they've created an appetite for Florida-based fiction. They were my heroes and my inspiration. I never thought it would happen, but I feel fortunate to have in a small way joined them, by getting a few books.

AS: You said before that Florida writers are writing our history as it's happening, so do you see that as being similar to the way people treated the West and stories of cowboys?

TD: Sure, the analogy of the Wild West is perfect. They even used the term the Cocaine Cowboy Wars to describe what happened down here

in the Eighties. To a degree it has been mythologized, but by the same token it's a real enough frontier that you don't have to stretch the story much and still have the truth.

As a matter of fact, Carl Haissen wrote an article responding to the question of what's with Florida writers. They have this off-center view of things, what's with their imagination. His answer was that, and I'm paraphrasing, you almost have to subtract imagination. He said that these are stories that you have to back away from. Real life stories from the newspaper, because they would seem like fiction. That's how plentiful the material is and the strangeness is down here.

AS: You were a newspaper writer for several years, and Florida almost has a tradition of turning our newspaper writers into crime writers. Do you see this as a natural transition?

TD: Yes, a lot of people think it might be a difficult transition, because you're used to just the hard facts and then you go to fiction, but it's actually a natural progression. Journalism gives you a solid writing foundation, and it affects your style as a writer, I think, in a positive way. You can often tell if a writer has been a journalist from the way they write.

I deliberately went into journalism by design. I wanted to work for newspapers because that was my plan to learn the craft and ultimately write novels. It ended up being indispensable, and in that time I also built up a reservoir of material to write about. It makes complete sense to me that people in the Florida crime genre came out of that background.

AS: Did you ever expect the main character of your books to have such longevity?

TD: No I didn't. I was pragmatic. I had a dream, and I was going to keep pursuing it, but I knew it was a real long shot just getting one book published. But it turned into a series which keeps continuing and continuing. That was completely unanticipated. Probably the fortunate thing was that in the first book I just went with what I loved, which is writing about Florida, and I had a good character to be my spokesperson. When the publisher wanted more books I just continued along. What I chose for the first book was fortunate because it lent so well to continuation because it was so close to my heart.

AS: I've always been curious about Hemingway in your stories. He shows up often as impersonators. You have the Running of the Hemingway lookalikes in the first book. In another book you have an Invasion of Normandy-style scene with them. What was the impulse with this?

Was it his history with the state as a literary figure or going after sacred cows?

TD: I think it's a bit of both. His was definitely a unique American talent. A legend and an influence on modern American writing. Plus he was an inhabitant of Key West for so long. So there's that whole part of it. And I've been to the Hemingway house numerous times, and it's just fascinating

And then the other side of it is how Florida makes things tacky. If you've ever been down there [Key West] and seen the Hemingway lookalikes, it's a scream. It's so Florida. We have this top shelf literary figure and yet at the same time we have these guys at Sloppy Joe's drinking beer and comparing beards. It was irresistible.

[Your comma has found you]

Erica Bernheim

Your comma has found you.
It will steal your autograph, your
sun-battered minds, your clean
noses and dirty uniforms, your upper
hand, your back and shoulder, another
speed guy digs in. Your eye is lost. I

can make it up to you in other ways.
For instance, all the food is poison.
It's easy to detect from the general
declines in toughness. I imagine teeth
into the cylinders of different mouths:

one says *it tastes like fruit*. Another will
peel away from its incompatible
corners, its mono-narrative of a rain-filled
afternoon, of layers of gray and you
will want to use the world as your plunger

for the second time in one day. The dead
can help us, comma, they make us one
of their own, they offer us cool, dry feet,
a choice of shakes or cones, ejected from
the need of want, beginning in the front,
ending in the face.

Your comma has found you, less you each
time you. There is nothing for the other
mouths left.

Aspen

Erica Bernheim

And I did turn back to that world, bulletproof water,
the sounds of kindling deliberate in the warm night.

I don't want to hear you. Leave, rural and Illinoised
by me. It seems a start, these past years. It's up to

you to mix chemicals, to stay to the side, to allow
the trickle. Two swallows with a mouthful of remora

are not dangerous. Think of it as meat coming free
of the bone. The fingers, with any luck, never leave

the hand. After the dinosaurs came beasts, then lions.
In front of a blue screen, who wouldn't seem brave?

Darlings, if you are still asleep, stay sleeping. A pilot
does not exist without the containment of an airplane.

A picture of a picture in front of another larger picture.
If flight were the choice, we might have made it happen.

High Definition

Erica Bernheim

And after all, what is this business other than the best
part of housesitting, a new life circadian in other people's
dirt, watching it skim the surface of a dusty bathtub mess,
colder than your own, your body less soft and rippled

than the water inside a thread of silk beads, an anchor,
different movies here than the ones at home, the tree
of woe, the treachery of the prehistoric bikini, the furor
of each lamentation forgotten, food you buy just to watch

it rot, destabilized and obliterated, rudderless, led by the sun, the room,
and the sky, the same things sprung.

Watch the fight scenes again in "Conan the Barbarian,"
how the men on horseback anticipate their own falls, young

enough to ask if your cod has too long worn its same piece,
that stench of mildew, what was it and who are you to recall nothing of
it? None of this is what you expected to see. None
of it will leave, but who wouldn't want to try it on for size.

I Have Felt the Water Pull At Me In The Past

Erica Bernheim

To taste this is to wonder, *why did I deny myself* this
pleasure of the bitter senses, this predictable movement
towards the light and the predicaments. The myth

of textiles predicts cloth will do the work of keeping
our fears under wrap. The lease was in our names.
I worked for a long time. Here is a good reason to keep

your arms on a leash. The answer to some question will
always be *Dostoevsky* and the freedom of purchase against
the rocks that would take you down. I was born for the intensity

of this failure, this glorified mess, my hair out of place,
my face lost in the sheets, my dreams of landing on an
island of rays have never been more bright.

Pantano's Florida Flash With Denise Duhamel

Daniele Pantano

1) Why Florida?

Manatees, bougainvillea, and lime green parrots.

2) Your best-kept Florida secret?

Sushi-Thai on Hollywood Beach.

3) Your strangest Florida?

A momma duck and her babies using the crosswalk.

4) Your silence before the storm?

Not being able to scream for help in a nightmare.

5) Your six-word Florida memoir?

I didn't die. Mermen administered CPR.

This interview was conducted on 1 October 2011 via email.

If You Ask Them Nicely

Karin C. Davidson

Minnows. Fat, green minnows. Lizzy tries to grab a smaller one and misses. The lake water is clear in the shallows. She stretches too far past the minnows, and sand swirls up, a milk-white cloud. The fish disappear for a few seconds and then reveal themselves below cypress roots, out of reach.

Lizzy squats by the roots, and water inches up her bathing suit. The roots are like smooth, brown, tangled fingers. Reaching between, she doesn't think of the water moccasins that might be hiding, the ones that her cousin May says are there, waiting to bite with a fierceness beyond any ever known. Lizzy just wants a minnow.

"What *are* you doing?" asks May. She stands on the shore, hands on her hips, her smocked dress and bare feet dirty.

"You know what I'm doing," says Lizzy, frowning. "Looking for minnows. I almost had a baby one a minute ago."

"I know how to catch the babies," says May. She leans forward and shades her eyes from the bright sun. "You want me to tell you how?"

Strips of birch bark litter the sand. One rests against May's ankle like a sandal strap. Beyond, the stand of trees reveals bald patches, a seven-year-old's small afternoon of work.

"No," Lizzy answers. "You shouldn't bother me. Nana said so."

"Well, I'm going tell you anyway. I'll tell you and then you can try it, okay?"

Tired of squatting, Lizzy stands. The minnows are too hard to reach with her hands, and she looks for a stick. Her swimsuit sags, and lake water drips from it. She glares at May. "You can do whatever you like, but you can't make me listen."

May strides into the shallows, her long, skinny legs sending the water in all directions. And then she stops and lingers. The water pools around her ankles as she observes her reflection—a wavering, white-

blond child. Sunlight bleaches the lake, and May squints. Suddenly, she drops down and lies flat. Like sea grass, her dress floats and then slowly falls around her body. Lizzy stands over her, stifling an urge to kick. The air is still and hot.

"It's like a bathtub that Nana ran the tap for, see?" explains May. "You know how she barely fills it?"

May lies farther back, the lake level with her ears, and Lizzy steps over her, still looking for a stick.

"You just lay here real quiet-like," says May, "and the babies come to you. They come and start to nibble at your toes and fingers, like they're looking for meat. And then, just then, if you ask them nicely, they might even let you hold them in your palm."

After days of lazing on their grandmother's backyard beach, Lizzy knows exactly what May means. More than once, chin down in the sand, Lizzy has held her hands in the water and watched the little fish, their glassy eyes staring at nothing, their blue-green bodies wriggling around, tickling. She's seen their backbones right through them, gray-yellow with tiny notches.

"I call 'em miracle babies," says May.

Lizzy glances back at May. The afternoon sun shines through her cousin's knotted hair. Drifting on the water's surface next to May is the perfect stick. Lizzy crouches down and picks it up. She balances the slim wand of cypress between her fingers. Several drops of water fall onto the lake surface just above May and her smocked dress, the same dress she wore to the fair a few days earlier.

Multi-colored confetti lay scattered in the midway, imitating the raised polka dots of May's dress. When Nana gave each of the girls a quarter for treats, they decided on the bright sugar-spun candy that wound around a white paper cone. 50 cents, read the sign. A giant Ferris wheel revolved behind them, the sunset sky cherry-pink between the spokes and tilting seats, while the fat lady at the concessions stand twirled a gauzy web of burnt, flying sugar onto their cone. May held

her hand out, her head angled in expectation, and Lizzy turned to watch the lights, the evening edging in.

A small child on the Ferris wheel screamed for the ride to stop. Farther out, clouds traced lines of violet across the fading daylight. The unmistakable smell of burning sugar swept around her, and for a single moment Lizzy felt lost, as though the twilight expanse would swallow her. Thoughts she usually pushed aside surfaced, spinning amid the carnival lights and laughter. Missing fathers, desperate mothers, and the war that separated them. The blur of the wheel slowed to a sharp, distinct stop, and May nudged Lizzy, offering her the cotton candy. All that was left was a small, wadded stump of crushed pink at one side.

Lizzy's fingers tighten around the algae-covered stick. May rests in the lukewarm shallows, her eyes closed. Around her, minnows gather, slowly swimming into the spaces at the crooks of her elbows, the curve of her neck. Bright little fish, they surround May's body, encircling her shape, until there are so many minnows that they become May's shape, another May entirely. A cerulean, flitting, opaquely fishlike May.

Wisps of hair fall against Lizzy's brow as she tilts her head, considering her cousin, this day, so many days. The shoreline slants down past May into darker depths, where lily pads and weeds grow thick. May stole pennies, May lied that their fathers would return and their mothers would stop crying, May lingered over mean stories in the middle of the night. But she was always there.

Standing over her cousin, Lizzy feels certain and calm. May is as silent as the silver fish flickering around her. Mesmerized, Lizzy holds the stick away from her body, even with the horizon, and drops it into the water. A small, plunking splash, and the minnows explode from May. Like a star departing itself, luminous and bursting, they dart and flee, little particles, little miracles of another afternoon.

Interview with Pete Zuccarini

Exploring the Art of Underwater Cinematography

Darrell Nicholson

Did humans, in our evolutionary march from the sea, lose a crucial means of perceiving reality? Are we now sensory exiles of a planet that is nearly two-thirds water? Or do these “underwater eyes” still lie dormant somewhere in our hindbrain, waiting for the artist to re-awaken them? These are just some of the questions that acclaimed underwater cinematographer Pete Zuccarini touched on during a recent interview with Darrell Nicholson, co-editor of creative non-fiction for Saw Palm. (The full interview is available on our website www.sawpalm.org)



Growing up on the barrier island of Key Biscayne, just a few miles from downtown Miami, cinematographer Pete Zuccarini was 11 years old when he began shooting his first underwater photography of sharks, dolphins, and stingrays. Shortly after graduating from Brown University with a degree in semiotics, he launched into documentary films. Even Zuccarini's earliest made-for-Disney documentaries, “Sea of Sharks” (2000) and “Everglades: Home of the Living Dinosaur” (2001), demonstrate his talent for transforming murky water, difficult lighting, and chaotic underwater scenes into unforgettable images.

Today, the 44-year-old filmmaker is regarded as Hollywood's go-to guy for almost-impossible underwater shots. When a Hollywood

director requires a camera crew in a shark-filled lagoon (*Into the Blue*, 2007), the crashing surf beneath a sheer cliff (*Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*, 2006) or a crocodile-infested section of the Amazon River (*Motorcycle Diaries*, 2004), Zuccarini is the man they call. His recent work includes the last four films in the Pirates of the Caribbean series (2003-2011), *Into the Wild* (2007), *127 Hours* (2011), *Piranha* (2011), and *Dolphin Tale* (2011). In 2010, he teamed up with Dolphin activist Rick O'Barry for a daring exposé of dolphin trade for Animal Planet, and handled the underwater cinematography for Ang Lee in the film version of Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi* (to be released in 2012).

Zuccarini's craftsmanship extends into the technical side of filming as well. He has been instrumental in designing innovative underwater housings for the bulky cameras used for 3D films and developing lenses to deal with the challenges of filming in the "boundary layer" where water and air meet. If there is a "signature" Zuccarini shot, it is one long take that gives the impression that the camera is in the arms of the sea itself; the horizon is undefined, the interaction of light and water is other-worldly, and the mind's eye suddenly becomes weightless. Through these images, Zuccarini strives to capture the meaning and beauty of the world we left behind so many eons ago.

DN: You've done a lot of underwater natural history work all over the world, but much of your work has been done right here in Florida. Is there a particular Florida animal that you associate with?

PZ: I have a lot of complex relationships with Florida animals, but one that I stayed interested in was the eagle ray—what we used to call as kids the leopard ray, because it has these striking spots. As a boy, I was initially interested in the striking pattern and the fact that they were flying under water like birds . . . If you spend a whole day following around an eagle ray, you find they have these periods of the day when they are alone and feeding, and then they gather in these large social groups. As a boy, these were the kinds of things that fascinated me.

There was this opening of these veils of secrecy . . . as the animals slowly began to reveal themselves.

DN: Given your success with Hollywood blockbusters, what draws you back to nature documentaries?

PZ: I believe there are still many lessons we can learn from the ways animals solve problems in a given environment. But to understand this, you almost have to rewire your brain from the way we are taught to learn. . . . Animals have their own ways of communicating knowledge or what we might call “intelligence” that is very different from our own. You have birds that fly halfway around the planet every year, you have sea turtles that circumnavigate, coming back to the same beach they were born on—all these things that are so amazing, and offer us a chance to learn about our world and ourselves. With all these things that we know, there are still these fundamental mysteries in the natural world. Unfortunately, most people today are so far removed from wild animals that is hard for them to recognize this. . . . In Florida, we are lucky in that respect.



DN: How does the underwater medium affect the way you tell a story?

PZ: As artists we are trying to communicate feelings, connections between things that we see, trying to make these radial associations with an image or a word. Photographers are working with light, and

water catches light some unique ways that you don't see on land. Particles in the water and the texture on the surface of the water directly affect colors, softness or hardness of light, visibility, clarity—all the things that can create mood. . . . For example, in a moving picture, swimming through murky water gives you a great opportunity for these “reveals.” There are these shafts of light moving through murky water and all of a sudden there's this face of an alligator, white teeth in your face, literally glowing as the particles in the water catch the light that is reflected off the alligator's teeth. That's a very interesting thing about water—the fluidity of the lens or filter that it creates between the camera and your subject.

DN: You said in one interview that you try to film the way the water sees things. What do you mean by that?

PZ: In addition to the optical characteristics of water, things that live in water have a completely different relationship to gravity. In air, when you jump, you come down back to square, so your horizon is a very big part of the way you perceive things. . . . But there are creatures that live in the water that have no respect for the horizon. For me as a photographer, I try a little to break that tendency to orient to a horizon. Photographers do this on the land as well, but for me, in some respects it's easier, because I'm not actually feeling the gravity. I'm generally neutrally buoyant; I tend to balance the cameras so I can spin them around. In this way, I can focus on communicating what's in the photographic frame, rather than its relationship to up or down.

On a deeper level, I am trying to embrace all the things I know and feel while I'm in the water, and I try to use these to help me grow and learn. I ask myself, what other sort of vestigial terrestrial perspectives am I carrying with me into the water that are preventing me from really breaking through to the other side? I think there are a lot of really interesting artistic and intellectual pursuits to try and understand how

humans are bound by the way we perceive things. Most of the “eyes” on the planet are probably in the ocean, so, wouldn’t most of the perceptions of “the way things are” probably exist in the ocean?

DN: How do you find new ways to look at the ocean?

PZ: One of the things I’ve gotten really interested in lately is including scenes that transition into the water from the air, or from the air into the water, shots that include the two different worlds in one movement. In this way we can really feel the differences. The photographic version of this would be called a split-level shot, but in a motion picture, you can really explore the dramatic changes as you move from the optical clarity of the air, where you are bound by gravity, to the water . . . where the character and the camera become weightless, and the water becomes a lens. There are a lot of technical challenges to this.

DN: How have you tried to deal with these kinds of technical challenges?

PZ: [Underwater camera housing pioneer] Steven Ogle and I have put a lot of development into the curvatures of the glass that goes inside the waterproof housing. If you look through a (diving) mask underwater, everything is magnified 25 percent. We experiment with that a lot when we do our water-level shots. Not only is it interesting to see the effect of different glass curvatures, it is also important to see how the water interacts with the surface of that glass. There is always that problem of not being able to control how the water sticks to glass, so we began experimenting with various coatings to control that. We have found that in some of these situations, a wet lens is preferable to a dry lens, so we’ve had to learn more about how you keep a lens wet for long periods of time.

DN: You've been in some animal activist films, and clearly care about the marine environment. Do you ever worry about over-dramatizing sharks as "man eaters" in films?

PZ: The interesting thing about monsters is that the thing that makes them so frightening is also the one of the things we admire . . . As an artist, I can show you how efficiently sharks move through the water, how beautiful their form is—and we all admire that—but if I leave out the part that bites, . . . then I'm not showing you the part that you are most afraid of and most fascinated by. An artist who cares about these animals is sort of stuck, because if you don't represent the part that makes them dangerous, it's not even accurate. This is where the suspense and drama lies, but this is also where it gets sticky, because drama leads to sensationalism . . . which can lead to misinformation.

DN: How do you handle the collaboration with different artists?

PZ: At a certain point in my development as a filmmaker, I realized that making films was not about how to make myself into this auteur, that there was something to embrace about all these talented people coming together . . . If you bring together a bunch of artists who are enthusiastic about a project, the communication that goes on between them is often the brightest part of the art form. The people I work with sometimes know more of what I want than I do myself, and vice versa . . . it verges on telepathy when it's going well. I'm not a musician, but I would like to think that there are times when we get together . . . we solve a problem in a way that musicians might when they are jamming.

DN: Director Ang Lee is known for his stunning cinematography; can you describe some of the challenges you faced when you were filming *Life of Pi*?

PZ: The thing I'm trying to do more assertively is to try to craft scenes in which the camera moves in extremely dynamic ways, to really take advantage of how the water allows you to move around a subject and offer a range of perspectives—above, below, or around—so that shot can tell its own little story. In *Life of Pi*, we shot a scene, which in the movie is referred to as “The Storm of God.” . . . During the storm, the main character, a boy, gets knocked off a lifeboat. There's a wave, and a giant wave thrusts him down under the water. The director [Lee] wanted the boy to go through a series of perceptions in one long breath hold. . . . We did another shot where the boy is running around some spiral stairs and then goes down into the water and back up again. The shots that go into and out of and back into the water are the most challenging, and I am very interested in exploring and perfecting those kinds of shots.

DN: Are there any feature film moments that you could connect with on a personal level?

PZ: We shot only a few sequences for *Into the Wild* [a film based on 24-year-old Chris McCandless' death in the Alaskan wilderness in 1992], and for one of them we went rafting down the Grand Canyon, with the director, Sean Penn, and the rest of the crew. It was a very different environment than your typical Hollywood movie; we were sitting around the fire, telling stories, eating together, waking up together. . . . There was something about Chris McCandless' story that I could really relate to. The story was as much about living his life in a free-spirited way than it was about being in the wilderness, and I felt like there was once a period in my life that I was doing the same sort of the stuff that he was doing, asking the same sort of idealistic questions he was asking. One of the scenes that we filmed was when the actor playing Chris McCandless (played by Emile Hirsch) walks out into the surf on the Oregon coastline. The narration was really great. It was about how everyone should, at least once in their life, do something that was truly

challenging—challenging for them, not for anyone else . . . It asked that big question: Have you ever lived if you've never truly lived?

DN: Is there some watery place in Florida that stands out as particularly beautiful or unique where a water-lover might “truly live,” so to speak?

PZ: The springs [in north central Florida] are an amazing natural phenomena. There are these giant tubes of absolutely clear water that has been stripped of almost all chemicals and particles, and [the water] flows out into this pond setting and brings all kinds of life—alligator, gar, turtles—animals that are usually found in murky water. So these springs allow you to see all these swamp creatures in a completely surreal, clear-as-air water. There is one place in particular that was always mesmerizing to me: Devil's Ear, where the very tannic rust-colored water of the Santa Fe River runs next to this very powerful outflow of baby blue, perfectly clear water. You can be sitting 40 feet down at the bottom of this spring, looking at the trees and the sky above—it's so clear that you can see the acorns on the tree—and then this mushroom-shaped cloud of tannic water swirls over the surface of this water and because your eyes have adjusted to the blues of the spring, the rust looks blood red. It's a really striking experience.

The Horse

Vanessa Blakeslee

Night.

The humid downtown street of a Southern city
teems with drunken, swaying congregates.
Red-white-and-blue police cruisers creep through the crowd.
Overhead, a man's voice crackles on a megaphone:
"Sinners, repent tonight and you may know everlasting life."
At his feet, three bearded, ragged men beat the bottoms
of waste cans. The crowd pauses, grins, blends into
the line for Gino's Pizza carving an "L" around the block.

One street over, someone knifes another.
The women step over the blood in their stiletto heels.

Three blocks distant, men drag a cross up the aisle
toward a priest with folded hands. Worshippers slide out of pews,
one by one, and amble forward to kiss the cross.
A woman stands up at the back of the church.
"Beware, beware," she crows. "The beast shall be born.
I saw supermodel Cindy Crawford dead in the back of a car,
and the horsemen gallop the skies like a storm."
The congregation shuffles forward but shifts an ear.

Two ushers drag the woman out into the warm night.
The worshippers drop to their knees and pray.

Hours before dawn.

The streets run empty but for the unclean and homeless,
huddled below the skyline of dark towers.

Within the floors, hundreds of unsold, cavernous condominiums,
the moonlight gleams across the untouched granite countertops.

The stale air still smells of new carpet, mattress-soft.

On the street below, a man fumbles to light a cigarette but can't.

His fingernails have turned to claws; they get in the way.

His belly rumbles like a beast's.

Lightning flashes, the wind gusts. Clouds sweep the sky.

Strange weather, the man muses, for the darkness before dawn.

Thunderclouds roll behind the condominium penthouse.

A horse's neigh echoes amongst the high-rises.

Pantoum for Bruce Grossman

Vanessa Blakeslee

Fasten seat belt. Life vest under your seat.
Bruce Grossman of Maitland worried about deep vein thrombosis.
Pull cover of emergency exit and assist others.
He was trampled and drowned during a water evacuation.

Bruce Grossman of Maitland worried about deep vein thrombosis.
Unfasten seat belt and walk about the aircraft.
He was trampled and drowned during a water evacuation.
Please notify flight attendant if you do not wish to sit in an exit row.

Unfasten seat belt and walk about the aircraft.
Bruce Grossman left his seat and took a restless stroll to stretch.
Please notify flight attendant if you do not wish to sit in an exit row.
He did not want to help in the unlikely event of an emergency.

Bruce Grossman did not want to operate the slide.
He felt up his girlfriend in the restroom, braced for crash on the toilet seat.
He did not want to help in the unlikely event of an emergency.
Please ask to be reseated if you do not wish to travel in an exit row.

Facts, Pt. 3

Gregory Sherl

Florida is the state of fake lakes, ugly mirages and serial killers. My psychotic breakdowns never came with streamers. I always shave before a flight. Soup never keeps me full past mid-afternoon. K always makes sure there is low-fat milk in the fridge. I deleted my Facebook because I never wanted to get into scrapbooking. Who wouldn't want to watch bears breathe fire out of their mouths all day? Death deconstructed: everything green is brown and everything brown is fed to the fire-breathing bears. We bought a big screen TV but still, I nod off through the entire preseason. Sometimes I forget I took a Valium so I take another one and then it's really obvious I took the first one. There are anti-missile missiles, what the fuck? Being so close to the equator you'd think you'd be able to see it, but you can't. You wouldn't even know it was there if I didn't tell you. I bet you probably couldn't even point to it.

Bloom

Gregory Sherl

Florida never stops sweating. Does it get sick of feeling like it always just got out of the shower? In my dreams my hands are big enough to touch every side of a cloud. Medicine cabinets are overrated. I just open my mouth and they fit right there. In my dreams I am always sticking my head under dripping faucets. In real life I have a big burned heart. You should know it is hard opening your mouth when you have a big burned heart. Before K I wondered if it were possible to hitchhike to old age. Now I am always going home with my big burned heart and there K is, at the front door, holding a pitcher of flower water.



Tar Baby

Denis Gaston



Gold Rush

William Speer

s a w  p a l m



Gold Rush

William Speer



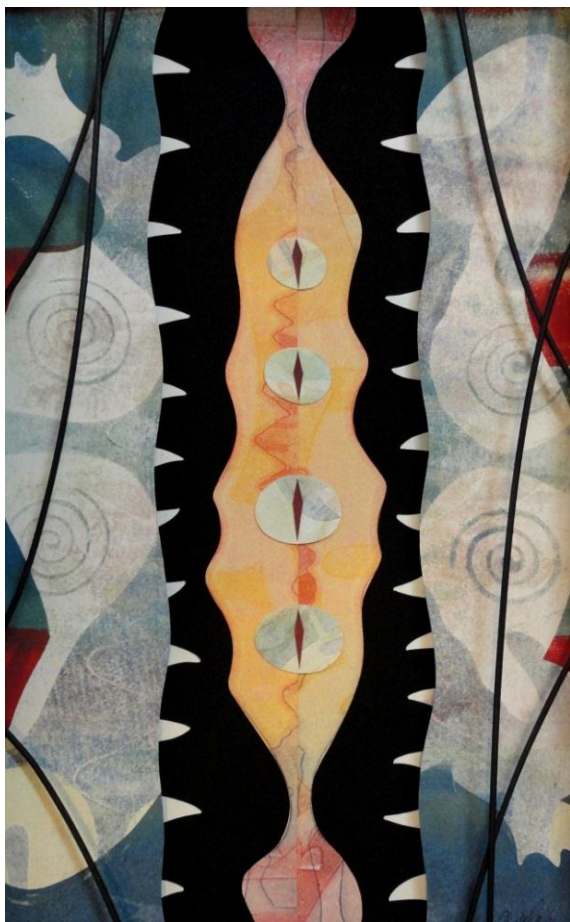
Gold Rush

William Speer



Gold Rush

William Speer



Predators

Anita Dallar

s a w  p a l m



Python Hunter

Anita Dallar



Chicken Feed

Marjorie Greene

s a w  p a l m



The Things She Told Me

Andrea Pejack



Farmer's Market

Patrice Burkhardt

s a w  p a l m



Second of September

Jo-Ann Sanborn



Moonrise

Jo-Ann Sanborn

s a w  p a l m

Welcome to Silver Springs, We Hate to See You Go

Tina Egnoski

Clay and I had been together three years when we rescued the stray, and in that time I had never seen him so worked up by any single pursuit, nor even me. Our affection was slow burn. When Clay returned from a road trip, I welcomed him with hand on cheek. He said *I missed you* with arms wrapped around my belly as I stood at the sink, hands in suds. Finally, his third or fourth night home, we undressed and met full-body between freshly laundered sheets. A deliberate reunion.

He worked for Coastal Produce, the largest employer in town, hauling fruit and vegetables—mangos, strawberries, dates, okra, cauliflower and asparagus grown in the phosphate-rich soil of Silver Springs—to the dusty plains of the Midwest, the paved turf of the urban Northeast. I waited tables at The Silver Skillet, a middle-of-nowhere diner that attracted field hands, plant workers and truckers. We coordinated days off as best as we could, and on those days Clay was restless. He wanted to be on the move, in the driver's seat. So we got in the car and scuttled the back roads of central Florida in search of antique and junk shops. We rummaged through other people's castoffs, purchasing treasures like the mounted swordfish we found in Micanopy or the set of woven-bamboo coasters I sent to my daughter.

That's how we found the dog. She was on the highway, turning wall-eyed circles in the median. We thought, stupid mutt, not enough sense to cross when the traffic was light. At the time, we didn't know cars were her true love. That grassy strip was an amusement park for her favorite scents: chrome, rubber, gasoline. Clay pulled over and opened the door, gave a long whistle. She climbed right in, blinking, cocking her head, a what-took-you-so-long look.

She was in sad shape: thin, spent, her claws ragged, fur patchy and full of burrs. Around her neck was a piece of rope with a tag attached. No address or phone number or rabies information, only the name Sadie. I gave her a bath and flea dip. A cur, she was part coonhound, part beagle, with the coloring of a Doberman, black saddle, tan underbelly and muzzle. Her floppy ears were soft, responsive to a hard scratch. Someone had loved her once, she had good manners. If she was hungry she sat patiently in front of the food dish, if she needed to go outside she barked once at the door. Given the typical obedience commands—sit, paw, down—she followed orders.

Since Clay was often away for two weeks at a stretch, Sadie quickly became a steady companion, a warm body, which I liked, especially on those nights when she jumped in bed and curled into the hollow of my bent knees. During the day, as I cleaned or got ready for work, I often discovered myself confiding in her, blowing off steam about the diner or filling her in on the details of my life.

"I know I don't look old enough to have a grown daughter, but I do. Her name's Linda and she's married and living far away. In Arizona."

"My momma would have liked you, but only from a distance. She didn't care for sweeping up dog hair."

"Listen to this. We have a new short order cook named Shorty." She stared at me with soft, but intent eyes, as if she got the joke.

One evening—it was September and we had had Sadie a month—Clay let me know his plans for the dog. She was young, no more than two, and he figured, with steady training, she would make a decent retriever. Guy Abbott, who owned a feed store in town, led monthly hunting trips, weekends of trekking through the swamp, stalking ducks and geese. A real boys club and Clay wanted in.

"She's a mongrel," I said, eyeing him. "One that chases cars. I doubt she can compete with Guy's pack."

"That remains to be seen," Clay said. He smoothed his moustache with thumb and forefinger, a gesture I had always thought charming.

We sat on the patio with a couple of beers. Sadie was beside me, leash tied to the chair. A passing car set her off, barking and tugging. I almost said, *See, I told you*, but held it in. Certainly Guy would take one look at her and laugh Clay right off his property.

"From now on, she stays outdoors," Clay said, with the force of a possessive father. "Too much coddling will squelch her instinct."

She was a hound, he reminded me, and had to get used to the life of a hound, hunting and tracking, sleeping under the stars.

Clay was a Littlejohn, born and raised not thirty-five miles from here, in Ocala. His family owned a thoroughbred horse farm off Interstate 75, owned most of Marion County really, along with families like Westlake, Murphy, Pierce. All my life I had heard those names mentioned in the same breath as senator, mayor and school board commissioner. The Littlejohn farm had produced two Derby winners: Southern Dancer and Gold Rush. If you ever drive by, you'll see the groomed pastures and the red clay racetracks, surrounded by miles of wicker-white fence. Like a movie set. Not one blade of grass out of place.

I grew up in a rented house on Renway Avenue. When I was young my mother stood on the porch, day after day, thumping the rail, calling for me to hurry it up as I walked home from school. She wasn't waiting with lemonade or a plate of cookies. She needed to get back to work and this short break was only to see me safely inside. *Don't leave this house while I'm gone*, she said and left. I pulled aside the curtains and watched the other kids play street ball, listened to their cheers and unruly arguments about scores and fouls.

As a maid, my mother worked for people like Clay's parents, scrubbing floors and toilets, making sure their children had clean clothes and did their homework. She got off around eight and I'd have dinner warm in the oven. It was the only time we had together, maybe an hour before she limped off to bed, feet blistered and swollen, hands bleached raw. By then, my father was long gone. A migrant worker, he followed the harvest circuit from Florida to Georgia to Alabama, a neat

triangle of oranges, peanuts and cotton. For years we waited for him. My mother insisted we keep the house spotless and put all the money she earned into the bank. She refused to move away, believing my father would return and settle into retired bliss. He never did.

To me, Clay was fresh air, not like the others, men I had known all my life, some I had dated, one I had married, with their hard tobacco laughs, callused hands and stooped shoulders, men who worked the assembly line or repaired machinery for Coastal. When Clay first showed up in Silver Springs some accused him of slumming. Maggie, a fellow waitress and my best friend, thought it clever the way he came to the diner every afternoon to learn names and eavesdrop on the latest gossip. Soon enough he had wedged his way into a group of locals who gathered for endless bull sessions. By the time he got his job, he was in an awkward position: liked well enough, but held by some at arms-length. In the minds of old-timers, one Ocala horse breeder was like another. He wasn't *our kind*.

I knew the attitude. There was a three-generation feud between the Littlejohns and Dickie Carter's family, though no one could remember how it got started. Probably horse-trading. Not that it mattered. With these men, ancient quarrels were embedded in crimped brows. Foolish pride was clinched between set lips.

On our first date, Clay showed up at the diner just as I locked up. The movie theater was already closed, so were the nearby restaurants. Clay suggested we drive to Lake Delancy. When he wasn't on the job, he drove an '86 Triumph Spitfire, the top down. We hit the highway doing seventy-five. I untied my apron, stuffed it into the glove compartment and unpinned my hair from a tight bun. The wind carried away the bitter grease and stale smoke: hazards of work collected in every pocket of my body.

"It's such a nice night," he said as he parked at the lake. "The moon is full and the humidity has lifted, why not enjoy nature's splendor." Sometimes he talked like that, like a man in a play. He told me that for all its beauty and mystery the moon was nothing more than igneous

rock. Basalts and anorthosites to be exact. Sweet talk, these words that were a foreign language to me. Still, I liked his voice, resonant and velvety, his Southern accent tamed by a boarding-school education.

"My daughter used to say the moon was a peppermint," I said. "When it was half-full that meant the astronauts had taken a great big bite out of it."

"Sounds like a smart kid."

"She's all grown up now."

"I'm sure you raised an upstanding young woman," he said. Such beautiful straight white teeth, such finely shaped features.

I couldn't help listing Linda's accomplishments: all-A's report cards, commendation for leadership in Girl Scouts, volunteer work at the hospital, engaged to an accountant. Clay asked about her father and I told him we were divorced and he lived in California with wife number two.

Water beat against the tall reeds and cattails that surrounded the lake. A strong breeze kept the mosquitoes off our arms. Clay took my hand and talked some more. After high school, he had left home, joined the Peace Corps and traveled to parts of the world I had never even heard of: Borneo, Western Samoa, Jakarta. His last overseas trip was in the army in Vietnam, where he served two tours of duty. When he returned, he spent a year in the VA hospital, having and recovering from multiple surgeries, and a few years at the family farm training horses.

That was the only reference to his family I ever heard. As far as I knew he had no contact with them or with their money. Rumors, though, soon let me know there were secrets. Some of the good citizens of Silver Springs said Clay left the farm because of angry words with his father, some said he gambled away profits. Others claimed he had a zealous and unusual way of breaking a horse. A little mystery was okay with me. We weren't kids. I had things I didn't tell either. For one, my mother's occupation. There was plenty of time to discover each other's pasts.

Not long after that night, Linda married and left for Arizona. I moved in with Clay.

Sadie continued to chase cars, fast and hateful, hugging the fender and lunging at the tires. Her biggest rival was the red Duster owned by Winston Perry, a neighbor who didn't care for the dog, any dogs. Once Sadie got away from me and in no time was at Winston's feet, growling and biting at the hem of his jeans.

"Let the dog have her fun," he said with a sneer. "For now."

There were two places I walked her, an old cemetery and a forsaken housing development. In both, there was no traffic to worry about. The development was a maze of twisty-turny streets. Before any houses went up the contractor had run out of money. What should have been lawns was overrun with weeds and wildflowers.

On Clay's first day off in October we went to see Guy Abbott. The store, in a barn west of town, smelled of dirt floors and new-cut hay. Guy picked Sadie up, all forty-five pounds, and placed her on the counter. He stroked her flanks and checked her teeth, much like a horse breeder studies a stallion.

"She's flat out quick," Clay said.

"She might have a chance. Hard to tell," Guy said.

I hadn't expected this. Sadie put her front paws on my chest and licked my face. I scratched her back, felt the quivering muscles under her skin.

"Cut it out. She's not a pet," Clay said.

"Maybe she is," Guy said. That was just like him, playing both sides. "How about we give her a couple more weeks and I'll have another look."

Clay beamed, a stupid grin that made me *hurumpf*, like a petulant child.

Behind the cash register, pinned to the wall, were photographs of flannel-shirted men in orange vests, dead fowl, shotguns and loyal retrievers at their sides. Clay studied them. There were brothers Dickie

and Shane Carter, Hank Lowe, Stanley Mitchell and his cousin Pete. All had been high school classmates of mine. They came into the diner now and again, still telling dirty adolescent jokes that began *A naked woman walked into a bar*. These days I thought of them simply as nice fellows. Simple, but nice. Clay, on the other hand, saw them as an exclusive fraternity aimed to keep him out. Belly-sick, that's how I felt standing next to him at the counter. Guy would keep Clay on the hook, toying with him, reeling him in a little bit each time we came, then cut him loose.

The bell on the door rang as another customer came in. Sadie sniffed the air: tractor fumes on overalls. Taking her collar, Clay dragged her out. The sun had fried the car seats and my legs stung as I sat. We stayed in the parking lot several minutes. Across the street, a group of pickers was in a field of loquat and cherimoya. They placed ladders against trunks and shuttled down the line with bags around their necks. The leaves of the loquat were tough but fuzzy like the skin of a peach, the edges serrated. Those men probably had cross-hatch cuts all over their arms. Even in the humid Florida climate, the cherimoya tree was difficult to grow. The fruit was heart-shaped, the meat white and pulpy, tart as citrus; I loved the taste.

A truck, loaded with empty crates, turned into the field. The pickers gathered around it. From her jump seat, Sadie snapped at the air, eating dust and exhaust. Clay turned, clamped a hand over her snout and roared, *Stop it now*.

After that, Clay, on his days off, took Sadie to Haynes Prairie for training runs. I was expected to go along, as a show of support. He held a decoy under her nose and unhooked the leash. He kept his distance, watching her dart between tallowwood and sumac, splashing through cypress marsh. Nose to the ground, what was she after this far from the highway? Squirrels held her attention only as long as it took to tree them. Quail barely caused a stir. She flushed them from palmetto hovels and kept going.

I hated these trips, the outcome all too predictable. When Clay whistled for her to return, she ignored him. His temper reared and off he went, mad as fire. His calls echoed in the dense underbrush. I'd rather be antiquing, trolling country roads for a good buy, or at work, or, perhaps next to Sadie, on the go, full throttle.

Between the pine scrub, I caught a glimpse of Sadie's black-and-tan coat. She baited him, stopping long enough for Clay to catch up, then continuing on her way when he got close. She might never be a first-rate bird dog but she was crafty, a quick-study. Finally, they emerged from the woods, both panting, Sadie back on the leash. Clay half-smiled, in resignation or all-out defeat, I wasn't sure.

Two weeks later, I had a chance to talk with Guy Abbott when he came into the diner. The lunch rush was on and we were busy, busy. I covered the counter and several tables of regulars, two of those occupied by Coastal executives. It appeared they had made a previous stop for a round. Or several rounds. When Jim Randall, a ringleader at the plant, snapped his fingers to get my attention, he also let out a liquid burp.

The diner had been my home for fifteen years. Ten miles off the interstate, it wasn't much of a tourist draw. Active in Chamber of Commerce, diner owner Bill Flanders put up plywood cut-outs of a man in dungarees and a straw hat, Bill himself, tempting travelers with a promise of the *Best Chocolate Butterscotch Milk Shakes in the County*. On your way out of town, you'll catch Bill dabbing his eyes, weeping, *We Hate to See You Go, Come Back Soon*.

Occasionally, out-of-towners stopped on their way to or from Mickey Mouse Land. During the shifts I worked with Maggie, for amusement, between serving BLTs and refilling ketchup bottles, we made up stories about these anxious, lost-looking customers. Like the time a man came in wearing a three-piece suit and clutching a briefcase to his chest. Maggie thought he had embezzled a million dollars from his company and it was right there in his case. No, no, I said, wrong. He had just

discovered a cure for baldness—something he was sorely in need of himself—and his briefcase held the one and only vial of secret formula.

This afternoon, though, we didn't have time for games. I flipped my order pad and said to Jim, "What will it be, friend?"

He asked a few questions about the specials, then closed his menu and patted my backside.

"Hands off," I said.

"Ah, we're just teasin' with ya," he said with a beery slur.

"Come on now. No harm done," said Willy Banks.

They all laughed and then Jim with a fake French accent said, "Just call me Pierre. Let me take you to the casbah."

"Yeah, and I'm the Duchess of York," I said. "Are you ready to order?"

Maggie came by and offered to trade tables. She was slowly making her way through all the bachelors in town. She had the big hair and petite figure some men appreciate. One after the other they moved in, only to move out when Maggie turned up the heat on the commitment burner.

Guy Abbott came in and took a seat. I told Maggie she could have Jim Randall and his crew, I'd take Guy. When I handed him a menu, he said, "Sweet dog you got there, Anita."

"Let me ask you a favor," I said. There were two ways I could go: ask Guy to give Clay a chance or ask him to stop to the whole thing right now. He had the power to do either.

"Now, I can't grant you any favors on an empty stomach," he said, meaning, don't ask.

He ordered a tuna melt and cheese fries and after a pause asked if we had any of Bill's homemade peach muffins left. There was one, I saw, in the glass display case, hiding behind a high-top rhubarb pie.

"Sorry, we're all out," I said.

Back at the counter, I slipped the muffin out of the case and wrapped it up. Helen, our only homeless resident, sat at the counter, a plastic garbage bag of belongings next to her on a stool. She never asked for

food, but Maggie or I gave her free coffee and the occasional pastry. I handed her the muffin.

"You enjoy this, Helen," I said. "It's the very last one."

My daughter Linda called. She wanted me to come for a visit. At her age, a smug twenty-four, she believed the world should conform to her whims. She had little patience for my excuses about money or lack of desire to see the desert. Sure, I wanted to spend time with Linda, but as for a vacation, I saw myself in the Caribbean, with miles of white beach and waitresses serving *me* tropical frozen drinks.

When I told her about Sadie, explaining that I couldn't come now, the dog was just getting used to our routine, Linda scolded me for taking on a puppy. Hairs stood up on my arms and I felt the need to defend myself.

"She's not really a pup, but she's feisty."

Out in the yard, Clay had Sadie on a long lead. He threw the decoy and when she retrieved it, sat down and chewed. Clay, simmering, pulled her back with the rope.

"I'll send you the money, Momma," she said.

"Money's not the issue," I said. "Listen, we'll see. I'll talk to Clay."

After I hung up, I stayed by the window, watching, knowing the real reason I didn't see a vacation in my future: no way would I leave Sadie alone with Clay.

Why was he so tough on the dog? Did he really see her as the remedy to his outsider status? I imagined him as a boy, running through the pasture with a dog of his own, possibly a herding breed, a brash and independent border collie that liked to slip through fences and chase the retired thoroughbreds. Ten-year-old Clay must have loved that dog, so when it ran away or was caught in the blades of a field tractor, he vowed never to get close to another animal. That was the story I came up with to justify his actions.

Clay left for a round-trip to Delaware and we, Sadie and I, had pleasant days. Mornings, we walked in the cemetery and then I took her with me to work. She stayed in the storage room, waiting patiently for someone, usually Shorty, to bring her a treat, usually bacon. At night, she slept with me, wet nose on my feet.

On the Friday after Clay returned, without asking for company, he took off with the dog. Determined not to let this slight get me down—I didn't want to go to the prairie anyway—I went on with my day. I paid bills, stocked the refrigerator and put a roast in the oven. Toward evening, I set candles on the table and opened a bottle of wine. I thought we could have a nice dinner, talk it all out. Maybe if I greased him with a few drinks, he would tell me why the dog had lit a spark.

I heard the car in the driveway. Clay put Sadie in the pen and, something new, tied her to the doghouse. He stomped inside and went to the cupboard, took down the scotch and drank two shots. Winston's Duster went by and Sadie had a fit, barking and springing at the fence. Clay tapped on the kitchen window and told her to shut up.

"Just leave her be," I said.

"She's disrupting the whole neighborhood."

I blew out the candles and went to Sadie. Growling at the vapor left by Winston, she dug her front paws into the dirt, ready to pounce.

"Maybe next time you'll get him," I teased, heading inside.

When we sat down to dinner, Clay was on his third scotch.

Winston's engine fired and at the same time we heard the collapse of the doghouse. Sadie was loose and halfway out of the neighborhood. Clay picked up the car keys and left. Outside, the wood of the doghouse was a crumbled heap of scrap—she had tried to take her home with her over the fence. I stood on the sidewalk, searching for either Sadie or Clay. It was dusk, the sky pale blue against the hard outline of trees, live oaks immense and rattling in the wind, guardians of the night.

The Triumph appeared around the corner, at a crawl, maybe five miles an hour. Clay had Sadie by the collar, dragging her alongside. He stopped, his face red and sweating, one hand tight on the wheel. Sadie

coughed and tugged at the collar, trying to pull it over her head. Revving the engine, Clay rocked back and forth, the way you try to free tires from mud.

"Let go," I said.

"I'm teaching her a lesson." It was a voice I had never heard before, deep and gritty. To the dog he said, "You want to chase cars so bad. Let's see, then. Let's see how fast you can go. Can you keep up with me?"

"Stop it, Clay. You're gonna hurt her."

He hit the gas. A Triumph can go from zero to sixty in ten seconds. Clay never reached that speed, but down one side of the street he kept the dog sprinting at a steady pace. He turned around and headed up the other side. Sadie could barely keep up, her legs one blurred limb. High-pitched yelps rang through the trees. The dog was choking. At one point, she stopped running and Clay dragged her some twenty yards before the collar snapped. Sadie skimmed across the asphalt and landed in the weeds, a bundle of muscle, fur and blood.

I never locked my doors or took the keys out of my car or worried about closing the diner alone late at night. This was a small town and my neighbors were trustworthy. I believed people were good-natured at heart, I believed that the customers I served—with their never ending demands and quick tempers, smirks on their faces and the dirt of Silver Springs under their nails—were worthy of my time and attention. After I wrapped Sadie in an old quilt and carried her like a sleeping baby into the vet, I lost that blind faith.

For weeks, Sadie required steady nursing. Since she wouldn't come into the house, I changed bloody bandages and force-fed antibiotics as she lay on the soft patch of dirt. I took her to work, where she sank into cautious sleep, half-listening for the sound of a zealous Triumph. At first, I couldn't get her to eat anything. Maggie and I even dangled scraps of sirloin in front of her nose. Finally, I used the turkey baster to squeeze water mixed with baby food between her clenched teeth. About

Clay, Maggie said to *throw him back*, as if she were talking about a river trout with no visible meat on its bones.

At night, when I closed my eyes, it was hard not to see Sadie's paws grinding into pavement. Just before Clay hit the gas pedal, I saw his face in the last light of dusk, taut and mean, the face of all the other men in Silver Springs, and, face it, I was no different from the women, like my mother and Maggie. They kept the nest clean and waited for a man to return from the road; they invented cute little stories to sweeten their bitter but safe arrangements. As Clay rocked the car and clutched Sadie's collar, I didn't move, didn't go over and pull the keys from the ignition. I watched from the safety of the sidewalk, the same way I had watched the neighborhood kids play in the street after school, a pane of glass separating our worlds.

Clay stayed away. I wasn't sure and didn't give much thought to where he might be. When he returned, on foot, he informed me that he had sold the car. Why he had let things go so far, he didn't know, but his days of dog training were over. He'd stick with truck driving. Sadie could be an inside dog again. Hell, she could eat at the table and take a bath with us if that's what I wanted. He was sorry. Too late for all that, I said.

At my insistence, Clay slept on the sofa. His sheepish face and his somber pleas for forgiveness—I couldn't stand it. For weeks we were like buzzards, circling, neither one of us wanting to be the first to land and begin picking at the truth, which was, if I wanted out I had to be the one to leave.

Sadie healed and signs of damage faded. The hard black scabs around her ankles fell off and fur began to grow back thick and shiny. Her limp lessened and her jaw, where the collar had held her, was as strong as ever. Still, she recoiled when Clay tried to come near and after a while when I brought her food and water, scooped waste from the pen, she merely tolerated me.

She never chased a car after that, didn't even tread the border of the fence. Mostly she sat in front of the rebuilt doghouse and watched the

steady movements of the neighborhood. One afternoon in mid-November, I returned home to find the rope chewed clean through. Sadie, like me, had been bidding her time.

The following Tuesday night I had the closing shift. The diner was slow, slow, slow and I felt low, low, low. Helen sat by herself in a booth and a couple shared a milkshake by the window. Maggie had left early for a date with Jim Randall. The place was nothing but old coffee and half-empty relish jars. A dirty mop bucket waited to be poured down the drain.

The couple got up to leave and I could tell by the way the woman hung off his shoulder and kissed his ear their evening wouldn't be a waste.

"Have a good one," I called as they got up to leave.

My story about them was this: new love, fourth or fifth date, they've slept together once and the taste of each other's body was still new and yummy, like thirty-three flavors of ice cream. You want to be together all the time, hate to even be apart for a few hours.

Of course, it would wear off. Love is as fussy as a bruise. It begins dark and full, purple as a hibiscus blossom, hot to the touch. You don't even know where it came from, what doorjamb you stumbled into. The color begins to fade and you finger it less, the burn not so urgent. Finally, you're left with a yellow stain, a tender spot on your forearm, like a thumbprint, like he pressed just that-much too hard.

Helen placed a dime on the table and shuffled out. Leaving a tip, even one this small, I assumed, preserved her dignity. Where would she spend the night?

I got everything from locker: a change of clothes, a week's pay plus the night's tips, car keys. That was enough. Closing my eyes, I replaced the image of my hometown, citrus groves, pecan orchards, warm-cozy-mildewy houses, one main street with one traffic light and that stupid hillbilly sign of Bill Flanders—I replaced this with an aerial postcard

view of the Arizona desert, sunny and arid, a brittle landscape broken up only by the green of all those golf courses.

Sadie had been gone for a week and not a word about her passed between me and Clay. Certainly by now she had chanced upon another home, a good one, one with a girl or a boy who fed her under the table and tossed her a ball in the large, fenced backyard.

A car passed in front of the diner, lighting for a moment the gray stretch of highway, then nothing. Darkness hugged the windows. I checked the clock over the counter. It read eleven-thirty. Time to shut off the lights, lock the front door, break my leash and run.

Palm Beach Ballet

Lani Scozzari

In the weeks of late October
our parents came to
observe, sat in the back of the studio

as our legs pounded Grande Allegro. In the mirror
my mother's eye—expecting. Cornered
shadows on the walls.

Oh, how I danced—
not for her—

but for the cookie, and the orange and black
cupcake she never let me have.

In the wake of Hurricane Frances

Lani Scozzari

I.

Our house
has lost its address. The mailbox
blown into the river. Banyan
trees teeter sideways, as if
the ground threw up
its roots. Too rigid, the trunk
split in three.

The earth is bowed,
sprung, with eyes as black as oil.
Palms snapped
at their base. Sudden. Still.

I move around—a blue
crab, stranded on land.
Pretending nothing has changed.

II.

First a flutter,
an uplift of dust. A quiver
of fronds. Eastern rain mists
delicate on our tin roof.

And then
the eye—silent
as white, hollow,
safe. Birds, still
as the sabal palm in the paralyzed
air.

80

s a w  p a l m

A new wind spirals
from the west,
the sky loosens, thick rain
whips our house like hate.

Your weight holds
our glass doors as they bellow and bow—
concave. The river surges over
the sea wall, into the cracks
of our foundation.

Broken Hearts And Body Parts

Joe Clifford

I had to find her. The back of my head was sticky with blood. I knew something was wrong the moment I tried to stand up. I couldn't breathe, couldn't get entirely upright, nothing moving as it should. I could feel the broken parts jangling inside me like chips of ceramic. The hot Miami sun beat down in waves. I didn't see her. Nothing but palm trees and saw grass and white, hot light. Cars were stopped along the median and breakdown lanes of the A1A, people standing on the side of the road, staring, pointing, talking on their cells. I heard muted ambulance sirens in the distance. I coughed up some blood. A stopped motorist grabbed my shoulder and said I should lie down, that the police would be there soon. But I had to find her. I'd fucked a lot of shit up in my life. And I'd lived with it. I couldn't live with that.

The second divorce had hit me hard. It was more than just losing a wife this time and feeling like a two-time loser. The first marriage's failure I could chalk up to a lot of things. Being young. Having a drug problem. Her schizophrenia. But this time I should've known better. At thirty-four, I should've listened to that little voice when it told me April was bad news. I should've known not to marry a twenty-two-year-old in the first place. But everything had lined up so perfectly, like a cosmic decree, all as it should to be.

I'd just gotten sober following ten years of heroin out west in San Francisco. After cleaning up in a long-term rehab in my home state of Connecticut just in time to see my mother and father die, I had reenrolled in classes at State, where I'd amassed a few dozen credits back in the '80s. When I met April in a creative writing workshop, she seemed too perfect. Tall, cute, devoted, she made it clear that she wanted to be my wife. She played the part well. Her folks took me in, and it was like I hadn't lost any time, that I hadn't just buried a mother

and father; I had a new family welcoming me with open arms. This is how it works. You get clean. Get an education. Get married. Find a job. Buy a house. Have kids. Just like the regular people do.

The plan was going swimmingly. I'd logged in some serious clean time while at CCSU, pouring all my redirected efforts into school and wholesome extracurricular activities, like helming the university's literary magazine and joining the Honor Society, hanging out with English professors, who encouraged me not to run from my past, but to embrace it, write about it. And I did. Soon I was winning awards for poems, and then I was getting paid to tour the state and read these poems. In the spring of 2005, I received a full ride, plus stipend, to get my MFA down at Florida International University in Miami.

Late that summer, after April and I were married in a big ceremony on the shores of her parents' gated, lakeside community in New Fairfield, I took my new wife with me down to sunny South Florida.

Whereas just a few years ago, I'd been fishing meals out of dumpsters, now I was getting paid to get my Masters. Things were looking up. I had arrived.

We'd been married about eight months when I found out about the affair, which began via e-mail exchanges April was having with one of my oldest friends in Houston. Right under my nose, I was oblivious. So much so, that when April asked that we fly out over Easter break to visit him, I hadn't suspected a thing.

On Easter Sunday, I flew back to Miami, alone.

Within days, her things were shipped to Houston, Mom and Dad stopped returning my calls, and she was out of my life. And I sort of fell apart. I started drinking and using again, and even when I stopped the using pretty quickly, I was still drinking more than I should've been, which was not at all. I was back up to two packs a day. I started to fuck up my studies. I hoisted that chip back on my shoulder, and was unbearable to be around. I didn't know anybody in Miami. Classmates, sure, but how hard can you lean on people you've known for less than a year?

I guess the motorcycle was my consolation prize to myself.

I was displaced. I couldn't stand Miami. The armpit sweat stain of America. I know there are people who love the city, how it makes all the Top Ten Places to Party or Hottest Spring Break Destination lists every year, the nightspots, South Beach, the fashionistas, but it did nothing for me, all that reggaeton club thumping, the ungodly heat and Amazon humidity, the dopey girls with their augmented body parts and cockroaches the size of plums. You could have it. I could hardly wait to finish up my degree and get the hell out of there.

I started hanging around with this one guy in my graduate program, Trevor, who lived down in Surfside, and he and I became pretty close. He'd just gone through a break up of his own, and we spent a lot of nights at his place, drinking, smoking cigarettes and watching on repeat *High Fidelity*, the lines of which we were soon able to quote by heart.

"If you really wanted to mess me up," Trevor would say.

"Then you should've gotten to me sooner," I'd finish.

Which is what Rob tells his latest girlfriend when she walks out on him in the movie. This was our favorite line. Because you can't break what's already been broken.

I had a condo up in Hollywood, about fifteen minutes away. One of my few joys was taking my motorcycle on I-95 back to my place. It'd be really late when I'd leave Trevor's, 3 a.m., no traffic, tall palms lining the highway, ocean smells coming in from the beach, harbor lights blinking on the bay. There were long stretches where the highway straightened out and I could crank the throttle, really open her up.

I'm a pretty big guy, but my Shadow Spirit was only 750ccs. I'd seen how bad the drivers were in Miami, where the use of a directional is treated like a distasteful afterthought, and figured I was better off getting something a little smaller. Not that it mattered that time of night. There were hardly any cars out. I could still easily get up over a 100, crouching down and weaving between the lines. Riding those late

nights alone, I was finally able to put April and the divorce out of my head and just be for a few minutes.

Over the summer I flew out to San Francisco for a visit. April and I had already bought the tickets, and there didn't seem any reason not to go. I still loved the city, despite my troubles there. It was as much my home as anywhere, now maybe more than ever. I stayed with an old friend, a guy I'd actually grown up with on the East Coast. While I was there, he and his wife set me up with a friend of theirs, Darla.

"I'm not ready to date," I told him.

"What's the harm?" my buddy said. "Trust me, she's a nice girl. I think you'll like her."

Then he showed me her picture. Blonde. Curves. Gorgeous. My ego had taken a blow after April, and it's always nice mending a broken heart with a girl prettier than the one who has just broken it.

We went to a French restaurant. Darla was even prettier in person. And she was smart, sweet, sophisticated. And she seemed to really like me, which was more than she should have. I felt like I was being a terrific bore, still hung up on my ex-wife; it had only been a few months, and I don't think I was hiding the fact that well. But she was just getting over a split too. So maybe she understood.

Darla slept with me that night. I've never been good at the one-night stand, but I promised myself I wasn't going to get tied down this time. I flew back to Miami a couple days later. Darla and I started talking on the phone, e-mailing goofy You Tube clips of chipmunks playing the piano, and next thing you know, she's flying out to Miami for a weekend, I'm flying out to see her. Over Thanksgiving break, we met up again in San Francisco, and I got to do all the touristy shit I couldn't when I was living there, hanging out in Union Square, taking trolleys, sitting at sidewalk cafes, drinking lattes, people-watching. I was comfortable around her. We stayed at this little bed and breakfast in Nob Hill, *Le Petit Something*. We had lots of sex and ate at fancy

restaurants, and unlike April, Darla and I were the same age, so we actually had stuff to talk about.

Our last night together, while we were making slow candlelight love, Darla whispered she loved me.

I did not say it back.

It's not like I didn't have feelings for her. I did. But my divorce from April had really done a number on me. It was like a switch had been tripped, and I was taking that old gambler's advice to heart: never bet more than you can afford to lose.

When I got back to Miami, my divorce papers were waiting for me. I got shit-faced that night at Trevor's, calling Darla all night, talking too loudly, laughing like jokes were funnier than they were, before passing out in his bathroom.

We hadn't talked about being exclusive, but it was pretty clear Darla wasn't dating anyone else, but I didn't let that stop me. I tried to sleep with as many girls as I could, and no strategy was too low, like when I picked up a nineteen-year-old still living in the dorms after she mistakenly stumbled into a memorial service at a coffee shop for a dead classmate. (Like me, he, too, had had a problem with the spike.) My behavior deplorable, I hit on undergrad after undergrad, refusing to let myself commit to Darla.

Getting back and forth to class on the Shadow Spirit continued to be the best part of my life in Miami. I'd leave the beach and zip along the A1A, salt spraying off the sea, sand beneath my tires, up and over the William Lehman Expressway, or even better coming back from an all-nighter at Trevor's and catching the sun coming up.

I finished a draft of my thesis novel as the 2006 fall semester drew to a close. I turned it in and flew up to CT for a quick holiday visit with my sister and brothers for Christmas, then back down to Miami where Darla was flying in for New Year's and going to spend the week.

She caught a red eye from San Francisco, and took a taxi straight to my place. I was surprised at how anxious I was to see her. It was more than just the sex, which was fantastic, her body like a Playboy

centerfold, everything hard, tight. I was falling for her, no matter how much I denied it.

We'd just finished fucking. It was good fucking, heightened by the mutual awkwardness of having not seen each other for a month. Hot stranger fucking. Trevor was throwing a New Year's Eve party the next night, and had asked me to pick up blood orange juice mixer. Blood orange juice is a specialty item, not sold at the Publix. The only place you could get it was at an Italian market off Biscayne past 163rd.

After Darla and I showered, we got dressed and hopped on my motorcycle. Once we picked up the blood orange juice, I planned to take her to the jewelry store to pick out the ring I was giving her for Christmas.

I'd been riding since I was kid. I never wore a helmet. Both my brothers have bikes. They don't wear helmets either. I dusted off the one helmet I owned, and gave it to Darla.

When I was kid, my father always had motorcycles, Harleys, Sportsters, King Cruisers. He bought me my first dirt bike when I was twelve. I'd grown up around them. I knew how to scan ahead for potential problems, what to do to avoid them. I had complete confidence in my abilities, and had never been in an accident.

This day, I wanted to turn her on. Like Bruce to Wendy, her hands strapped 'cross my engines. I've done practically every drug there is, and the only high that rivals shooting up is riding a motorcycle. I wanted Darla to feel that good.

Having someone on the back of a motorcycle, even someone as light as Darla, affects the way a bike handles. With Darla, I was careful not to speed. The sun was out, the sky blue and cloudless. It was a little after noon, traffic sparse. I stayed in the slow lane.

I saw the black car positioned to make the U-turn, but didn't think it would attempt it; there wasn't time.

Then the car is in front of me.

Millions of thoughts fire through your brain, and yet your mind is completely blank. You're going to hit. There's nothing you can do but lay the bike down.

Laying the bike down means you are out of options. No braking, no swerving is going to get you out of this. Now it is a matter of how best to control the impact and cut your losses, minimize the damage.

I shifted my weight and dropped the bike into a slide, which beat our other option, which was remaining upright, smacking into the car head on, and getting flung ass over elbow into the middle of the highway. I heard my bones snapping as we hit the ground.

I found her, crouched in the saw grass, on her knees. Her helmet was split in two, but she was moaning, alive. The stopped motorist told me I really had to lay down, because now I was spitting up a lot of blood. I stumbled, dropped into the tall weeds next to the train tracks, tasting iron.

Fire and Rescue strapped me to a gurney, secured my neck, and brought me to the Ryder Trauma Center at Jackson Memorial Hospital.

"Is she all right?" I asked, slipping in and out.

I saw the paramedics starting to fill a syringe.

"I can't have morphine," I said. "I'm a recovering addict."

"You need morphine," one of the paramedics said.

"Is she all right?" I asked again.

"Kid," he said, "I wouldn't worry about the girl. She's doing a hell of a lot better than you."

At the hospital, they pumped my body full of all the opiates I was no longer allowed to do. I don't remember them even screwing the pin through my knee to hold my broken leg in place or when they draped the two 5-lb. sacks of water over the footrest to forcibly keep my acetabulum away from my busted hip socket.

The next few days were frantic. My brothers and sister drove twenty-four hours straight from Connecticut, Darla's mother flew in from San Francisco, doctors and nurses and surgeons came in to talk

about the plan of action, explain to me how much blood I'd lost and how I might need a transfusion, to tell me how lucky I was to be alive, how they'd have to wait for the swelling to go down before they could go in and operate again and put my hip back together. We'd later find out the cops stole my wallet, that's how little chance they were giving me not to die.

And of course I saw Darla. She came in that first night as I recuperated from my first surgery, a little after one a.m., walking on her own, bit of a limp, smiling best she could. She had a bruised tailbone. That was all.

The final tally of my damage: shattered pelvis, fractured femur, broken acetabulum, broken back and lower traverse lumbar, three cracked ribs, and one collapsed lung. My legs and flank were red, raw slabs of exposed muscle and nerve, road rash like being flayed, and my back was so bruised it was black. Not black and blue—black—that's how much blood had spilled inside me. They lubricated and bandaged what they could to keep me from sticking to the sheets. The water sacks kept me locked firmly in place.

But the tolerance for pain is a funny thing. You've got a bum right shoulder, you bang up the left badly enough, and suddenly you don't feel the right anymore. My head was what was hurting, and not from smacking it on concrete. All I could think about was Darla, how I should've been able to do more, as if will alone could've kept her from harm's way.

When my friend Trevor found out about the accident, he sent off e-mails to my professors and classmates, detailing the events, and the fact that Darla had survived virtually unharmed he played up to some sort of Superman motorcycle maneuvering on my part. Which was cool to read. Because I felt like shit. But it wasn't true. I reacted best I could. Did what I'd been taught, but the rest was up to luck, or God, or whatever you want to call it. How I was able to walk on a broken leg, with a broken back and pelvis in more pieces than a jigsaw puzzle? I was in love, man.

Darla and I never got to talk about these things. We talked about the accident, obviously. And for a while after she flew back west to start nursing school, and I had some more surgery before being sent home in a wheelchair and told to not even try walking again for six months, it may've even brought us closer, temporarily, the way any mutual, shared tragedy will in its early stages. But we never got to talk like this. I never got to tell her how much she'd come to mean to me, how that if given another chance I would move the mountains to make sure she was never hurt again. I never got to tell her just how much I really loved her. She'd trusted me and I'd let her down. I was still too wounded and proud. Too many parts were broken.

The challenge was in the little things. Not being able to reach my coffee. Not being able to get into a shower by myself. Having to piss in a Gatorade bottle, then having to wheel over to the toilet and empty it every morning, and if I forgot to put a bottle by the side of the bed before hoisting myself out of my wheelchair the night before, I was screwed. It's not like I was paralyzed. I could get to the bathroom. It was just a pain in the ass, a twenty-minute ordeal simply to piss, and when I was done I couldn't fall back to sleep, which was tough enough in the first place, since I couldn't turn on my side and had to lie flat on my back, like a beached sea turtle unable to flip.

Back in Berkeley, Darla was finishing classes to be a nurse. We'd still call each other occasionally, but we talked less and less each time. Then we stopped talking at all.

Eventually, I heard she got back together with her ex.

Several months later, just before I graduated from FIU, Darla called me. It was a sad conversation, weighed down with regret and missed chances, my voice raw from too many cigarettes.

"It wasn't your fault, you know," she said.

"I know."

"There was nothing you could've done," she said. "I'm thankful I didn't get hurt worse. I'm glad you're alive." She paused. I thought I maybe heard crying. "I'm glad that I got to know you."

It was nice to hear that she didn't blame me. Though she should've. Not for the accident. That wasn't my fault. I knew that. Everyone who was there testified that the car had cut me off, that I was without guilt. The other driver was cited, not me. It could've happened to anybody. Wrong place. Wrong time. But I was far from blameless. I hadn't been in love with my ex-wife, I'd been pissed off over an injustice committed against me, and I'd used that fact to act like a selfish jerk. The whole time we were together, I gave Darla nothing of myself, because I wasn't going to be the one hung out to dry this time. And of course the joke was, that's exactly what happened.

I ended up moving back to the Bay Area shortly after graduation, but aside from one brief, awkward run-in with friends a couple years ago outside a restaurant, I never see her. I hear about her, that she's doing fine, that she's gotten married. I can only assume it was to her ex. Last summer, around the time I was getting married for a third time, the same friend who'd set us up told me she'd just had a baby. I think of calling her once in a while. But what would be the point? It's all broken hearts and body parts in the end.

Because there isn't only one person to love; there is always somebody else to take her place. And this new love will be wonderful, too, I promise you. Everything heals. You'll start moving again. It's just those late nights when you're left alone, your house on the hill quiet, your wife and kid safely asleep, when you watch the cold fog creeping over the bay, thinking about the places better left undisturbed, that these broken parts can feel like they're rusting inside you, weighing you down, heavier than stone.

Cypress Dome

Wendy Burk & Eric Magrane

An alligator moves in and begins to dig. With
each inch, water ponds. In time the cypresses
grow larger: they rise as an island and taper
into prairie.

With muddy shoes and
poles we approach. The
canopy rises and water
engulfs our legs.

We stand at the edge of the gator hole.
The cypress dome frames open sky.

At this edge, for a
moment, we will let what
we know dissolve. We
will reach

into time, the water will churn and smoke, the
dragon will bellow and we will be travelers in a
myth, standing at the rim of a caldera, trying to
find a way to the other side.

Blackbird

Wendy Burk & Eric Magrane

Falling asleep, I hear the red-winged
blackbird's metallic sunlight. Eyelids fill with
the dapple of the mangrove tunnel; vertical
roots weave the basket. One last pull bears
us into open afternoon, blinking at ripples
on the surface of the water. Instant,
heraldic: sound then sight of the black bird.

Sleep and memory speak loud.

Florida's History of Hurricanes

(after Teresa Cader)

Yolanda J. Franklin

Because we could not know —
we hid dogwood branches used as switches, snapped cigarettes sound
as green-beans, not-knowing
a lighter lures dogs from fields with its flame,

her papier-mâché-screens surround the house: a boxed lit-candle where
banana tree leaves bend next to the bike shed

master-locked — weighted by birthright,

not chivalry,

and Gamma's second husband, a strapping man fisting a Budweiser
escorts her at night through the screened door in the country

a magnolia tree roots the yard's soot and square-stone tablets
in the years she lay legless, cancerous

waiting for the oncologist or endocrinologist, praying — Then

in the season of barren dearth and futility
it must begin, the season of her casualty

∞

No southern gospel on the radio, no radio, no choir
No voices rebuking—no Voice—fugue of clotheslines, an eyewall

Because we cannot know, we imagine

What will happen to us without you?

∞

I know most things I remember —

A Category 3 pruned oak tree limbs on lawns
in Indian-descent Black neighborhoods
Uncle Randy threatened to ride his bike like the green Witch
to dare a police officer to write him a ticket for speeding

∞

*Like months of remission—
the eye shifts*

the papier-mâché-screens
bored behind calm curtains —

and how could she learn to drive after that fire,
a woman who'd never seen brick return to clay?

∞

Downtown the seventh graders in their Bealls' Bermuda shorts
extol, Science rocks. *Black Cloud: The Great Florida Hurricane of 1928.*

We all remember one;

a speeding train, sheets of rain—

indications

the Panhandle's obsequious: Kate Amputates Leon County.

∞

The sky cannot remember its clouding—

around her bed, stolen limbs haunt kneecaps

still, troubles a pack, hair hot combed Sunday-straight

over a gas stove,

urged to slip one between your lips to drag

yourself from this life in a smoky halo—

I worried you would forget to check

the horizon in time.

Interview with Dick Hyman

Mark Feinman

Throughout a busy musical career that got underway in the early '50s, Dick Hyman has functioned as pianist, organist, arranger, music director, and composer. His versatility in all of these areas has resulted in film scores, orchestral compositions, concert appearances and well over 100 albums recorded under his own name.

He has served as composer/arranger/conductor/pianist for the Woody Allen films *Zelig*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, *Broadway Danny Rose*, *Stardust Memories*, *Hanna and Her Sisters*, *Radio Days*, *Bullets Over Broadway*, *Mighty Aphrodite*, *Everyone Says "I Love You"*, *Sweet and Lowdown*, *The Curse of the Jade Scorpion* and *Melinda and Melinda*. His encyclopedic *Century of Jazz Piano*, an extended history on 6 discs, has been released by Arbors Records.



Mr. Hyman has been a guest clinician and performer internationally, including appearances at the University of South Florida. In 2004, he received an honorary doctorate from the University of South Florida.

***Note:** This interview took place at Mr. Hyman's office home in Venice, Florida, which is beautifully decorated with a Grand Piano, wall-to-wall LPs, CDs and cassettes, memorable concert posters and two rooms with carefully organized sheet music in manila envelopes on shelves floor to wall.*

Mark Feinman: How long have you lived in Florida?

Dick Hyman: We became Floridians about 17 years ago, and we gradually moved down a little over 20 years ago. We made some serious decisions and got rid of the stuff at our places up north, so we've been here ever since.

MF: Does living in Florida motivate or inspire your art?

DH: The ease of life here makes us feel calm and productive. There's much to be said for the other point of view, that the tension of life in NY makes you become productive in a driven sort of way, and that's true too, but after a while ease wins out. We like it here because it allows us to do long projects. I don't exactly do three gigs a day like in NY. I do a lot of writing here at home and I go out and do gigs around the country from time to time and concerts here in Florida.

MF: Before composing, arranging or choosing music for a film, do you read a script or synopsis?

DH: There are a couple of procedures when writing music for film. The neatest way is to have a script that everybody has OK-ed, and you go through it with the director and decide where you'll have music. That's an obvious way, but there are other circumstances too. Many of the things I did with Woody [Allen] came at the other end of that process. What sort of band would play at this kind of place or circumstance? I was supplying information without regard to the entire film, without knowing the foundation of things. Woody has everything firmly in mind I suppose, but occasionally a bit secretive about what it was. Sometimes a composer works that way; you think about, suggest, or supply music for a given sort of scene with your presumed expertise, but you do not have the big picture for a while.

MF: In the movie *Sweet & Lowdown*, the music is completely integral to the film, because the film's main character is a musician.

DH: I understood, but I didn't have a script, but I knew what the film was about and who the character was. I don't think Woody [Allen] always has a script at the beginning also. In *Sweet & Lowdown*, I knew the character worshiper of Django [Reinhardt], so I was asked specifically if we can find a guitarist who understands the Django tradition, but not a copycat. That was my friend Howard Alden.

MF: Is there a connection/collaboration between literature and music?

DH: I was thinking we ought to look at a couple of thing I've done like that. I've set Shakespeare songs, and I've set a bunch of light verse by a man named William Esby.

Note: Mr. Hyman was neighbors with Mr. Esby and began composing music to his poems without him knowing at the time. Those compositions are still performed today.

MF: What would you say to a musician or writer who is looking to collaborate with one another?

DH: A collaboration is necessary if you're going to write a song, unless you are one of those very gifted people who can do both music and lyrics, if you want to write songs, then you have to find somebody to write whatever it is that's not your specialty. I suppose it might be easier today with the social network; you can get online and find all kinds of people who are interested in collaborating.

Note: After the interview, Mr. Hyman took me to his favorite lunch restaurant, a small and cozy NY style place, where everyone knew his name and he knew everyone by name too. He ordered his usual and I ordered the same. As we drove back to his house, he stopped the car in the street, pointed at the palm trees and then to the sky and said, "Look how beautiful, this is why I live in Florida."

The World's Smallest Horse

Jaclyn Sullivan

The sign is right past Mile Marker 55: See The World's Smallest Horse. The billboard is bright orange and showcases a crude painting of a bodiless hand with a Chestnut mare galloping around the palm. I love the idea of a horse so tiny it can fit in a hand. I love it.

"I have to go to the bathroom," I say when the sign has passed. "There's a stop up ahead."

"We don't have time," Philip says. He shifts in his seat, snaps his seatbelt and sets his jaw.

"We have time. You just don't want to stop."

"To see the world's smallest horse? No. I don't want to stop for that."

"I said I have to go to the bathroom."

"You're lying."

"I'm not."

"Rosalind. Stop."

Things have been rocky between Phil and me since his mother passed away. We're on our way to the funeral. I'd never say it to him, but I didn't care for her.

I'm not a good passenger. My father used to threaten to leave me at rest stops when I'd beg to stop for Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and Dr. Peppers. He says he has no tolerance for begging, but I always got the impression that he secretly thought my dramatic arguments for why stopping would be a great plan were funny. My mother would pop aspirins and sip out of a decorative flask when we took family trips. I don't know what it is that makes me so restless. A few years ago, my best friend, Merle, and I took a trip up to Jacksonville to see a band play. Really, to see the guys in the band. It was the best time I've ever had in my life. During that trip I turned Merle on to tourist traps. I have a weakness for them. I don't care how ridiculous they sound, I

love all of them; The World's Biggest Rocking Chair, See The Horrific Swamp Thing, Head of a Beautiful Girl, Body of a Snake—whatever the road has to offer, I'm on board. I can't resist the promise of a freak show. Merle loves it. Phil doesn't get it. He's no fuss, no muss and I guess we really do make an unusual couple but we've made it work for long enough.

I met Phil at an ice cream shop. He was getting a tall soft serve vanilla in a sugar cone and I made some bad joke about real men and real ice cream. He turned around to see who I was talking to before realizing that the joke was on him. We talked. He didn't even blink when I got mine with sprinkles. Rainbow. He gave me his card.

I should have been tipped off by the fact that he had a card.

And now, here we are, three years later, right past Mile Marker 36 and it looks like I'm going to miss out on The World's Smallest Horse.

The first time I met Phil's mom I was wearing a red cocktail dress. I never even thought about the potential repercussions of that choice. I bought it on a pretty good sale at Macy's and I liked the way it felt around my thighs. It had gold thread running through the bust. I thought it was pretty fantastic. When Phil picked me up, he tried hard not to show any expression, but I could see it in his eyes. The dress was a mistake.

"What's wrong?" I asked. I didn't want to screw anything up.

"Nothing."

"Clearly, something is wrong."

"Well."

"Well?"

"Well, I just thought you'd wear a black dress or pants. Something not shiny."

"I'm a happy person, Philip. And everyone likes red." I smiled, flashed teeth.

"Okay. It's fine. You look great."

Of course it wasn't fine and Phil didn't warn me. Phil's mom defined the word severe. It explains a lot about Phil, really. She didn't hesitate to tell me my dress was inappropriate for dinner. The evening was followed with a series of questions I stumbled to answer followed with withering nods and blinks, finished off with expired creamer in my coffee. She opened a fresh bottle for Philip after topping me off.

Merle and my mother have both warned me against getting involved with a guy who's too close to his mother, but I have my reasons for being optimistic about us. Phil likes to do dishes, at least more than I do, and he looks good in maroon, which is my favorite color. He's a good kisser and drinks his gin straight—I like that in a man. There are things about him that remind me of my dad and I know people think that's weird but it's in a good way; he'll always make sure guests have drinks in their hands, for example, and he remembers to put the toilet paper back on the holder instead of leaving it on top of the toilet like other guys do. He's nice to little kids but gruff when it comes to business. He grows a good beard and buys streamlined furniture. I like to see the best in people. That's what was so hard about getting to know his mother. There really wasn't much to like other than her contribution of Philip to the world and a quality beef brisket—not at all dry.

We're listening to AM oldies radio in the car. My choice. Philip would just as soon drive in silence but my weakness for oldies radio is only rivaled by my weakness for tourist traps. He's zoned out anyway. Preoccupied. I get it.

We pass the exit for The World's Smallest Horse and I sigh, just a little. All the same, Philip's eyes roll to the back of his head before refocusing on the road. I desperately want him to find this trait of mine endearing. After three years, you would think he'd be able to appreciate these things about me. I think that if I'm persistent, the roadside attraction thing will grow on him, just like AM radio.

The first time I introduced Phil to my parents was at the county fair, where I planned to run into them. Phil was wearing a short sleeve

button down shirt in an ocean-water blue that I picked out for him and encouraged him to buy. I liked the way the blue looked with the gold in his hair and his beard. He trimmed his beard short that day, shorter than I liked it. He kept it short most of the time, when he didn't shave it off entirely, which happened sometimes. My parents were sharing a funnel cake when they met us in front of the Ferris wheel, just like we planned. I told Phil we'd be meeting them there and if he was nervous at all he didn't show it. He shook my father's hand firmly and hugged my mother gently. They talked about what a rip-off carnival games are while I smiled and picked off sections of funnel cake and enjoyed the moment.

The wake is at 6:30. We're already dressed just in case we don't have time to stop at the hotel. The heat is too much. It's almost making me cranky. Philip is already there. We stop at a Waffle House and he complains about the ball of butter on his waffle, about the waffle's crunchiness, about the carbonation in his soda. He sucks his breath when the waitress says it's cash only and I stroke his knee under the table.

"I have cash. We're okay."

I'm trying to be gentle with Phil. I realize that he and his mother were close and to me it's not a problem for a man to be close to his mother. It's endearing. Men who are nice to their mothers and sisters tend to make good husbands, I hear. Merle thinks now that his mother is dead he'll finally propose. She's the one who said "finally." I've been patient. I'm in no rush. I get it; I appreciate his desire to take it slow, to not rush. He's not a rushing kind of person.

When Phil got the call about his mother, I did what made sense. I took extra care when making the bed because I know he likes that. I took the laundry out of the dryer right when the buzzer went off so that the clothes wouldn't wrinkle and I put everything on hangers. I made a fresh pitcher of sweet tea and I baked a key lime pie, his favorite, with real key limes I got from the farmer's market.

I baked a key lime pie.

We've been driving for a little over six hours and I start to worry that Philip will fall asleep behind the wheel if we don't start talking. He's still upset about the waffles and maybe a little bit about The World's Smallest Horse, too. Gladys Knight and The Pips sing for us from crackly speakers. I think we're losing the station.

"I always forget how long Florida is."

"Mmmhmm."

"It just takes forever to get out of here. I drove to New Orleans once and it took damn near thirteen hours."

"You've told me."

"Yeah, that was a fun trip, though. I've never walked so much in my life."

"Ros, please."

"What?"

"I'm just not in the mood to talk. My mother is dead." He turns the radio up and then fiddles with the tuner until he finds a clearer signal. He glances at me sideways to see if I can be satisfied with Norman Greenbaum and I suppose I am.

My parents are meeting up with us for the funeral and we have breakfast plans for the following day. I think it's very good of them to come to support Phil. They like him well enough, more than they liked some of the guys I dated before him. My dad thinks he needs to loosen up; my mom thinks he's just not used to being in a relationship. We arrive just early enough for Phil to join his brother, Mark, at the altar without people whispering. I sit with my parents, to the left of my mom. She presses her face against mine and winks. I told her I was going to wear red underwear under my black dress as a tribute to Phil's mom. I couldn't help it.

The funeral itself is pretty great. I wouldn't mind one like it for myself, someday. The hors d'oeuvres are tasty and the wine is flowing; there are no gardenias so I'm pretty happy overall. Philip gets busy grieving and thanking people for coming. I stand by him until it's

apparent he doesn't need me anymore and I join my parents by the crudités. They ordered a nice spread, Phil and Mark, and I'm impressed—brie and raspberry preserves in puff pastry, antipasto, beautiful steamy pans of lasagna, marked vegetarian and meaty, and baskets of fresh garlic bread. The food is not what their mother would have prepared or paid for. I wonder if Mark's wife had a say in it, or if she planned the whole thing herself, regardless of what they wanted. She's that way. I wonder what her relationship with their mother was like. My dad is sniffing the ranch dressing and a bit gets in his mustache. My mom dabs at his face with a napkin and he wrinkles his nose.

My parents are adorable together—thirty-five years of marriage. I wonder how many napkins my mother has dabbed at my father's face and how many times he's wrinkled his nose at her with that same smile.

"How was your drive, Ros?" my dad asks.

"Hot. Black dresses are not road trip appropriate."

"Well, they're funeral appropriate, honey," my mom says. She's holding a chocolate truffle up to the light, as if it will help her see what's in the middle.

"Yeah, but it's too hot. When I die, I want people to wear whatever they want."

"Rosalind, don't talk about dying, it isn't nice."

"Mom, it's chocolate. It's going to taste good no matter what. There could be a bug in there and the outside is still going to taste good."

"Well, you know."

"What do I know?"

"Oh, you know. Don't be a pest."

This is typical. I laugh and my parents do too. Then I remember that laughing at your boyfriend's mother's funeral might be frowned upon, particularly by said dead mother. I tip my glass back.

"Did you guys pass the billboard for The World's Smallest Horse?" I ask them.

My father chuckles. He's a chuckling kind of guy.

"Your mother pointed it out. She said you'd want to stop."

"I did! Remember when I told you about the trip Merle and I took when we stopped at about five of those things?"

"And spent at least thirty dollars doing it."

"Yeah, but it was fun. We had a good time."

"How is Merle?" my mother asked.

"She's okay. Living it up in Virginia. She's dating some guy who's going to be a doctor."

"It's nice that she got into that school she wanted to go to."

"It is nice. I miss her."

"You could always go visit her."

"Yeah, but now with Phil's mom it's just not a good time. I don't know when he'll be back to normal."

My parents exchange a look I don't like and I don't ask them what it means. I know. Phil and I have a good thing though. I don't want to ruin it.

"Anyway, Phil didn't think we'd have time to stop for it. I really want to see it on the way home though."

"Mmmhmm," my mother says.

Phil comes up behind me and rests his hand on the small of my back. My parents aren't like his mother and they don't mind this. They probably don't even notice. He never would have done that in front of her, I know.

"Thank you both for coming," he says, shaking my father's hand. My mother takes him into a light hug and kisses his forehead.

"Of course we came," she says.

"How was your drive?" he asks.

"Good, good." My father coughs. "Rosalind said you kids missed The World's Smallest Horse. She's just heartbroken about it."

Phil chokes out a laugh and takes a sip of gin.

"Well, we needed to be sure to be here on time. Mark would have burned me alive if I had been late. Maybe we'll catch it on the way back."

"That would be really nice," my mother says.

It's nine o'clock in the morning and we've checked out of the hotel, had breakfast at Denny's (paid with plastic) and are back on the road. Mile Marker 76 going east advertises The World's Smallest Horse at Mile Marker 55. I cross my legs and wiggle my eyebrows. We're listening to NPR because we're out of range of any AM oldies.

"Rosalind, I really just want to get home. We had a long day yesterday."

"I know, but it would be fun. I think we could use some fun."

"Ros, my mother is dead."

"I think it would be nice for you to have a distraction."

He doesn't respond. I pause. I have to play my cards right here. He's in a bad way and I really want to see The World's Smallest Horse.

"Phil, I know you won't believe me, but I'll miss her too. I really will. I know we didn't really get along but she did give birth to you and raised you and I can't help but be sentimental about that. You know how I am."

Phil smiles a little, just a little, and he sighs.

"I really want to get home."

I give up. I curl my legs to my chest and close my eyes. Click and Clack are rambling on about cars on the radio and I've lost interest.

"Okay," I say, and I mean it. I do.

Phil shakes me awake right when I start dreaming. It's an abrupt awakening and I can't place who or what was going to be in the dream. I rub my eyes and shake my head to get my bearings.

The World's Smallest Horse's stable is right in front of us. We're parked in a dusty lot with room for three more cars. A wooden sign advertising \$3 to see The World's Smallest Horse is directly in my line of vision. I smile and grip Phil's hand.

"It better be good," Phil says.

I smile at him again and unbuckle my seat belt. I can't wait to see it.

An old man, really old, with liver spots on the top of his shiny head and silver-tipped copper hair around the edges smiles a mouthful of yellowy teeth at me. He lets his fingers brush mine as I hand him a five and a single. Phil takes my hand and we walk up to the gate.

A miniature horse, maybe thirty inches off the ground, sleepily munches on some hay. He has a blond mane and brown spots on his miniature beige body. A sign says his name is Rosebud. He doesn't look at us or appear to care about us at all. An Indian family is on the other side looking at the horse, a little Indian boy and a little Indian girl clapping at the sight of the mini horse. The mother of the children smiles at me and I smile back at her. I hear the old man telling another interested party outside that they need to pay three dollars each if they want to see the horse.

The animal lets out a little whinny, presumably for the benefit of the children. He's good. Really good. The kids can barely take the thrill. I laugh at their excitement and envy it. I turn to look at Phil. His face is red, mottled. I feel my heart beat into my throat.

"What's wrong?" I say.

"Rosalind. It's a Shetland pony."

"Yeah, not quite small enough to fit in your hand, but he's still pretty cute, isn't he? Did you see those kids?"

"Rosalind. It's a fucking Shetland pony."

Phil turns and walks out of the stable. The children didn't seem to hear, but their mother glares at me, for Phil's language, I guess. I mouth "I'm sorry" to her and leave the horse and the children and the yellow-toothed man.

I walk back to the car slowly and calculate how long it will take us to get home from the stop. I wonder if the attraction has a restroom I could use and I consider running back to check so I won't have to ask Philip to stop for the rest of the drive. But I can't go back. I can't go back and look at that mother and her children enjoying The World's Smallest Horse without me.

Philip sits in the car, letting the engine idle. The radio is off, the air conditioner off, and his eyes are closed, brow furrowed, jaw set. He starts the car when I open the door and allows me the time to put my seatbelt on before he peels out. I hate the smell of tire smoke.

We get all the way to Mile Marker 27 before he finally says something to me, head shaking, and mouth twisted ugly as he reiterates my wrong.

“A fucking Shetland pony.”

The Sanctity of Marriage

Derold Sligh

Pierce my nose like an Angus bull
perforate my eyebrow like a hooked great muske
prick my organs like a sickle
impale me like a pick through nappy curls.

You love me so, you love me not,
love-me-knots, this ring.
My right-knee raw, this ring.
My bruises and debts, this ring.

In the city, never is a promise—
the riff-raffs, the prostitutes,
and the sewer-mouths of steam.
O Saginaw, your pubs are better
than the simple hell of Mount Pleasant
but by dawn, I must find that ring.

The misery of being wedded
to impossible things—
to the dogs and worms aroma
of Spring; to vacancy,
to the flamingo colors
of a fading world;

hitched to you, my unattainable.
When you are here, our love blinds
like wildfire, everything ablaze
and consumed—the flowers withering,
the wood ibises scattering (such silhouettes!),
the crackle of pine.

I need you in my nose
like wild white violets,
salt marsh, mimosa.
Touch me, my symmetry like a diamond,
a diamond ring!

Saw the house in half, pack the limbs of our children in a box,
the frequent flyer miles—you can have it all if it doesn't work out,
but until then,
please continue to sing, sing.

We could make a promise and a cake.
Do not forget the butter, do not forget the sugar,
do not forget the sanctity,
do not forget the ring.

Envyng the Hippopotamus

Derold Sligh

To love as if at the top of the food chain—

like a hippopotamus.

Not bothered, squatting crocodiles

and humans with my tiny tail.

Ah, to be left alone by humans

and crocodiles.

Then I could love you

barefoot and gloveless, hat-less

and covered with hair

like a Whitman poem—

feel your boundaries with my whiskers,

and when you leave me, I know your return

by the tiny vibrations you create in the earth.

I envy you hippopotamus—

you lie on a hill of scorched yellow grass,

one wispy chalky cloud in a sky of elastic blue

as the skylark sings all day

and day not long enough.

Greenway

Susan Hubbard

He said she had a talent for hiding. That was high praise, coming from him.

They'd been living in the woods for two months now. Every week her senses grew sharper, her feelings less numb. City living is a drug, he told her. Jobs and mortgages make you an addict, make you lose your edge.

She'd lost her job, and she never had a mortgage, but she'd always thought she had an edge.

This morning Jess heard someone walking along the trail, a mile away. She smelled sugar in coffee and a fainter scent of soap. They hadn't used soap since they came here—they bathed in the river at night. For a moment the smell made her long for a hot shower. Then she caught herself: it was a chemical smell. She wouldn't want to smell like that.

They weren't the only ones living in the woods. Two miles south was a homeless camp, and maybe three miles west was where the gangs hung out. He said most thefts in East Orlando could be traced to those gangs.

She never asked how he knew so much.

He told her she didn't know enough.

Yesterday he came to their tent carrying two bundles of leaves. She asked what they were.

Dollar weed. And in his left hand, pepper grass. He said he was surprised she didn't know. He said she needed to learn the names of common things.

For dinner they ate dollar weed and pepper grass salad, seasoned with wild garlic and violets. Afterward she told herself she wasn't hungry. Her clothes hung loosely now, but her muscles swelled from running and swimming.

He taught her to be unafraid of snakes and gators, not to mind mosquito bites. She lost one fear after another, so fast that sometimes she wondered what had happened to herself—the old Jess. Was she still living with the fears in downtown Orlando, working nine to five and paying rent?

Last week they met a teenaged boy and girl, walking off the trail. The boy asked how to get to the city.

He told them, Follow the trail.

The girl said they'd run away from Cleveland. And where in Orlando could she get a pregnancy test?

Jess said, Any drugstore.

He said, What difference would it make?

The teenagers went back on the trail and headed west.

He looked after them and said, They won't last long.

They'd met a year ago at the Haven Lounge. She came with friends to hear the band. She was ordering vodka at the bar when he came up. You dance like nobody's business, he said. She waited, but he didn't ask her to dance, or even ask her name. He went back to his table and watched her. Later, when she was leaving, he was waiting in the parking lot. He said, Want to take a walk sometime?

He wasn't her type. And she had a boyfriend. But she gave him her phone number.

Most people came out to the trail to exercise, or to appreciate nature in small, safe doses. They didn't come at night, when the river went black.

Through air thick with pollen she watched a garish sunset. He'd been gone a long time. She never asked where he went or what he did. He always came back for dinner, and he usually brought food with him.

In the firepit she lit the wood and cooked up broth from purslane, chickweed, and bracken fern, mixed with river water. She stirred it with

a stick, and when she tasted it, she wished she had salt. Then she reminded herself: salt was a chemical, unhealthy and nonessential.

She hugged her knees to her chest and waited. A bird made a sound: part sob, part scream. She'd never heard that one before. But it was spring now, and new birds must have arrived. She knew the names of the winter birds. Later he'd tell her what this one was called.

The soup smelled green and savory. He wouldn't mind if she had some. But she wanted to share the ritual of dinner. She lit the kerosene lamp and, watching its yellow glow, felt a pang of loneliness so sharp it made her bend over, clutch the soft grass. Her mother had lit candles each night before dinner—that was *her* ritual. Rose, her mother, wasn't much of a cook, but she set the table with candles and cloth napkins and real china.

Jess hadn't seen her mother in nearly a year. What would Rose make of him?

Bushes being pushed aside, footfalls on the ground: someone had stepped off the trail. It wasn't him—he'd never make that much noise. Someone was coming toward her. Maybe the lantern light caught his attention?

She put out the light.

She knew exactly what to do, but she felt weary. Better to wait a bit. Too much trouble to climb the tree.

More bird cries. Was it an owl? Her old self had been afraid of owls. Her sister told her about an owl who picked out people's eyes. Was it a fairy tale?

Out in the dark someone coughed.

She made herself move to the tree, grab the spike he'd driven into the trunk, pull herself up. Its trunk smelled like burnt toast, and a shard of bark scraped her elbow as she climbed. He'd told her what kind of tree it was. He chose their camp site because of the tree, called it their home security system. Once she made it to the fork she'd be hidden by leaves.

Something bit her forearm.

He'd told her, Stop saying *something*. Listen to yourself: *I saw something*. Or, *Something's swimming in the river*. Learn the names.

Once she climbed high enough, once she was hidden, she would have time to find out how deep the scratch was, how large the bite. She'd have time to assess the damage and the danger, time to try to remember the names.

Guide to Edible Florida

Christopher Tozier

This is the land of teeth.
By the millions they rise;
porcelain and stone,
the nurse in the backyard,
the bears on the beach.
Under our feet,
ebony teeth tumble
like musical notes in the white sand.
Duskies and cookiecutters
wiggle up, hatched
by summer rains.
The mako, the lemon,
the isosceles and serrated
blowing up springs,
rinsed out in the runs.
Tusk and gnarl,
molar, incisor, tiger,
whites, and bulls.
Relentlessly they rise,
the gator, the dire fang
river-honed, enameled smooth.
The cartoonish snaggletooth,
the megalodon, the mammoth.
They stalk and swim beneath us,
and tonight they rise to feed
an unsatisfied hunger.
Calusa ivories and crackers
gather under the misty streetlight
to love the memory of food

while the good citizens sleep
who, by morning,
will only notice a biting sun,
a pause as if the table were already cleared.

Geronimo Imprisoned in Florida

Christopher Tozier

On this spot where Geronimo languished
120 years ago in a malarial stupor
old horses drag tourists down asphalt rivers,
their hooves glittering, manes braided.
Gentleman shoot alligators on the banks,
pull the fullest pens from the egret's ruffle.
Wives marry the humidity
and tropical mosquitoes
unknown in the high desert
attack their bloody veils.
The sun like a cane-press
pinching sugar from the husk,
crate upon crate of citrus
blurring time.
He once strangled his own dog
so he could quietly escape
this consequence.
He once shot the innocent family
that fed him in his darkest hour.
He sold buttons, posed pictures.
Taffy, plastic coconut, lotteries,
three-for-ten-dollars t-shirts,
watered down margaritas.
South of here, naturalists swarm the glades,
each island of trees home to a particular liguus snail
brightly spiraled and in love with summer rain,
then set the islands behind them on fire
so no rival could ever collect that species.
North of here, neighborhoods vacate

extravagant days that couldn't survive.
Cars, new furniture, dogs abandoned.
Each new child hears war in the distance,
the last burning barely grown over.

Fireflies

Eleanor Swanson

The girl on the other side of the wall cried again last night, a sound that seeped into Will's skin and left him aching, as if with a fever. His duplex was located across a dirt road from a woods of scrub pine and saw palmetto. He listened to the drone of the air conditioner and stared out his small front window, thinking of the girl. It was only eight, but he could tell it was hot by the way the light fell across the road, a sharp summer light, reddish and fiery, the color of cheap gold. It was so quiet, that he put his ear to the wall with a kind of anguish, waiting to hear signs of life. He'd try to time it so that they'd walk out together and he'd introduce himself. She moved in a week ago, at night, emptying the contents of a small U-haul into her duplex. Around midnight, he'd heard her cry for the first time. By morning, only her car sat parked in front of her place, a blue Volkswagen. He'd left for the university without seeing her.

On the third day, Will caught a glimpse of her getting in her car in the morning, long, gleaming brown hair flying loose in the hot wind. He was in his underwear reading another history of the Crusades, Tyerman's *Fighting for Christendom*—an account his advisor hated because it was neither "magisterial" or "epic" enough—and he hurried into his pants, but by the time he stepped out the door, she was gone. A faint puff of dust marked her route out the drive and down the road.

That night his brother called. Will heard the clink of coins. "Where are you?"

"I'm sleeping on the beach."

"Erik..."

"I'm okay." Erik's voice rose on the final syllable, insistent but scared, Will thought.

He told Will he was living with the homeless. He was one of them now. He'd dropped out for good. He dreamed of dying, but was okay, everyone has to die sometime, he said. He was twenty.

The next night Erik called Will again, and he heard the same clink of coins, a harsh music. "I'm okay," he said. The same rising inflection. Harsher, touched with panic now, Will was sure.

"You're tripping."

"I *am* tripping, man. I am so tripping, I can see under the sand, to where the earth's poisons are. I can see people's hearts beating right through their skin. I know what the end of the world will look like."

The end of the world. "Where are you?"

"South Beach. I have a place with some other guys. Near 14th and Jefferson. Ready for the wrecking ball."

Electronic voice. "Please deposit two dollars."

"Erik!" Will shouted. "Wait," he called, but Erik was gone and the line was dead.

Will dreamed of the woman next door. He still didn't know her name. He held her above the thrashing surf, treading water until pain ran through his hamstrings and calves like fire. "Swim," he gasped air and shouted. "Swim parallel with the shore until you break free of the current." His shout woke him, and he lay in bed, in the midnight dark, shaking, wondering if the woman had heard that warning cry.

They met the next morning by chance when they stepped out of their doors at the same time. "You've just moved in," Will said, somewhat stupidly, staring at her smooth, bare shoulders, then imagining her face above a froth of water. He thought of the wrenching sound of her tears.

"Yes."

"I'm Will." He held out his hand and she took it. He expected her hand to be soft, but it wasn't. She had the grip of someone used to work—sculpture or gardening. She actually shook his hand before she

let it fall. She smiled, belying the soft tears he'd heard through the wall. He felt as though he'd invaded her privacy without her knowing it.

"Alma," she said. She lifted her hair from her neck for a moment before letting it fall. "I'm not used to this heat," she said. "I just moved here from Cape Cod."

"I've been there," Will said like an eager child. "I spent a whole summer working at the Nauset Surf Shop in Orleans. And surfing," he added. He was making more and more of an ass of himself.

Sure," Alma said. "I know Gordon. We grew up together. I might have been away the summer you were there." She didn't offer any more details. "I'd better get going," she said, turning away and getting in her car.

Will felt starved. He wanted to know everything about her. But she was backing out the drive. She looked at him and lifted her hand.

Later that night the people in the duplex just down from theirs strung colorful paper lanterns in the woods that separated the two buildings. Fireflies blinked on and off in the strange colored light the paper lanterns cast. Someone had provided a keg. A big gray dog lapped beer from a paper plate. Will left the door to his place open, so he could hear the phone when it rang. He was going to have to drive down to Miami Beach. Get some time off. Find Erik. Finishing his dissertation could wait. His heart raced as if he'd just woken up from one of his nightmares. He thought of the last one. People screaming inane things like, "Hang on! We'll throw you a rope." Will didn't ever want to have that dream again, of Alma struggling through a riptide, fighting for her life. He looked around for her, but then he heard the sound of the phone, a distant ring. He thought it was coming from his place, and he ran toward his open door. When he picked up the receiver all he got was a dial tone that sounded like the drone of an extraterrestrial insect.

He stepped outside and closed the door behind him. A cloud of mosquitoes whirled noisily around his head.

He made his way back to the party. The paper lanterns glowed weirdly up next to the trees, ghostly silver Spanish moss threading down along their pleated spheres, like snatches of hair. Hundreds of fireflies drifted here and there, some in mating clusters, their preternatural glowing torsos softly snapping on, off, on, off. A hand came out of the semi-darkness clutching the neck of a bottle of Myers rum. "Pass it around," a voice said. Will took a long, deep swig, and felt the heavy bittersweet taste run through him like a current that mingled familiarly with his blood and filled his belly with alcohol warmth. He took another drink and looked for someone to pass the bottle to, but he was standing alone at the edge of the little clearing. The air smelled faintly of rain, of the hurricane season ready to steamroll the already-subtle vestiges of spring into a summer of humid and blistering afternoons where the only relief from the heat would come from a massive and quick-moving thunderstorm. His brother wouldn't be safe if a hurricane came up the coast and hit the beach. He heard a voice and turned.

"I'll share," she said, and took the bottle. Fireflies spiraled around her hair. Alma. Will imagined her naked, the fireflies circling her and casting their mysterious flickering lights on her body.

"How are you?" he blurted, his tongue already thick with drink. If she'd noticed, she gave no sign.

"I'm wonderful," she said mysteriously. "Hey, I feel like I know you. After I found out you worked with Gordon. I feel like I *should* know you."

What did she mean by that? Suddenly, even through the laughter and party talk, he heard it, even behind his closed door. The phone. "Excuse me," he said, reaching toward Alma, but not quite touching her. "My phone. I hear it." He turned and half-ran, branches snapping under his feet. When he opened the door, the only sound was the drone of the air-conditioner. A drone that rose to a whine and ended in an exhalation and a spattering of drops on the vinyl tile. Will listened for a while, as if he could summon Erik by thinking of him. They used to do

that as kids, try to read each others' minds. Sometimes it worked. *Call me again*, he thought. Then he said the words out loud. "Call me, Erik, please." He stood there helplessly for what seemed like several minutes, imagining his brother picking through dumpsters, his skin burned brown, his eyes looking straight into the sun's fire. *Soon he'll be blind*, he thought absurdly. Or full of visions. No. He was already full of visions. Hallucinations. He walked out of the tiny duplex and let the door slam behind him. In the clearing, people were dancing to Abba. He looked for Alma and suddenly she was beside him.

"Did you get your call?" she asked.

"No," Will said flatly. He wanted more rum, to keep that hot feeling swirling in his stomach. To quiet his brain. He wanted to stop thinking for a while. Of Erik, of his work. Studying the Crusades had sucked him into a nightmare. One of history's worst nightmares.

"You're upset," she said. "That's forward of me to say to someone I hardly know, but you really seem upset."

He imagined her in sunlight, on the dunes near Marconi Sound on the Cape, her dark hair flying in the wind, the breakers thundering.

Alma seemed to read his thoughts. "You might have known my grandmother," she said taking a drink from the bottle of Myers. "I'm forgetting to share. Maybe I'm a bit like her. She's the town drunk, but so elegant about it, up on the hill in her fancy house. She has red hair. She's a young grandma. Rich too." She sounded bitter but then she laughed happily. "I love her better than anyone in my whole fucked-up family. Drunk or sober, she can tell a story that can make you laugh. She can tell a story that can make you cry, too. Sometimes it's the same story." She looked at me. "She's French-Canadian. Her name is Martine. Do you know her?"

Will thought of the time he'd spent in the drugstore, or the hardware store buying supplies for the shop. He imagined her: bright red hair, tall, somewhat loud, big, old car. Maybe a Cadillac. "No," he said flatly.

Why are you upset?"

He told her about Erik.

"I think I might know him."

"But I thought you just moved here."

"I've lived all over."

What he'd told her wasn't much. Erik was twenty. He'd finished college in three years, and now he was sleeping on the beach, doing hits of acid and reading Will passages from Lao Tse while his time on the pay phone ticked away. Will had told him to call collect, but he never did. Will didn't tell her how they'd grown up. Two years apart. Close. Yet not close. Erik hadn't ever really been close to anyone. Will taught him to play chess, and after Erik learned the game, Will could never again beat him. They'd sailed together, canoed Flamingo Bay, argued philosophy and politics (though they were usually on the same side), hiked the Prairie Coastal Trail, dated the same girls. They were best friends. Sometimes Will thought of them as twins.

Alma put her hand on Will's wrist. "Let's dance," she said. "Let's party, and then I'll tell you something. Something you need to know to help Erik. I think I *do* know him. Or someone just like him."

Will didn't want to dance and he didn't want to party, but he followed Alma into the clearing, because of what she'd said. Because a pulse pounded at the base of his throat. Fear or desire. Or both. Because he had to rescue Erik.

Alma pulled him near. "In Malaysia fireflies fill up whole trees, all flashing at once. The river men use the firefly trees for navigation. Luciferin," she said. "That's the chemical that makes them light up. From Lucifer. Weird. It meant light before it meant Satan."

She held Will's hands and began to dance. His steps were clumsy. He wanted to call Gordon and ask him about Alma. He pulled away. "I need beer," Will said, heading for the keg. She followed and handed him a cup. She took a cup herself. He filled her cup, then his own. "Tell me what I need to know. Tell me now," Will said, and his voice was harsh because he was afraid and half-drunk and he didn't know why she wouldn't give him the information he needed to help Erik.

"Relax," she said. "Don't be angry. Erik's a five-hour drive away and we can go to him soon, but not now. Tonight is the night of fireflies. Look how many there are. I'm going to go to my place and to get a gauzy scarf to gather them so I can wear them in my hair."

Instantly, she was gone. Her words echoed: *We can go to him soon.* We? Will's brain wasn't working. He'd had too much to drink. Yet he thought of the drive he and Alma might make through the Everglades, hot wind flowing through the car. He tried to stop himself, and started to walk toward her place, the place they almost shared. Just a thin wall between them. He wanted to see how she was going to garland herself with fireflies.

Lucifer— morning light, light bringer. Fire keeper?

He was living in a nightmare. He knew that sounded melodramatic, but it was true. Night after night he woke up sweating. If it wasn't the dream of Alma caught in the riptide, it was some amorphous dream he'd had of Erik, perishing just out of his grasp.

He danced in the little clearing and drank more rum and beer, waiting for Alma to come back with her lovely corona of fireflies. He danced until the air smelled of skunk and beer breath and beer-soaked earth. How long had it been since Alma left him?

Not long, he found out in the morning. He remembered crawling through twigs and branches and letting his face rest against the cool concrete stoop in front of his duplex. He remembered the yellow bug light shining full in his face as he drifted toward some time in the truly indefinite past.

Will didn't know how he got into bed, but that's where he found himself as the first light seeped into his room. He was alone. The moment he opened his eyes he remembered Alma's words—*I'll tell you something you need to know to help Erik.* His head was pounding, but he fumbled through his drawer for his address book. It was Saturday, nine o'clock. Gordon would have opened the shop a few hours ago. A great May morning. A great morning for renting surfboards.

Gordon picked up the phone after two rings.

"My man," he said, when he heard Will's voice. "Come home. Forget the Crusades."

Sometimes Will wished he'd never told Gordon about his dissertation. "Hey," he said weakly. "I met a woman I think you know."

Gordon laughed. "That wouldn't be hard. I know women everywhere."

"Yeah. Okay. Her name's Alma." He waited.

"From here?" he said. "Not from here."

Will told him all about her.

"Oh," he said, "oh man."

He took a deep breath, like he couldn't get enough air. "Alma. She died last summer. She was hit by a car at the family fruit stand. On the highway."

For a few seconds, there was silence on the line. "Alma," Gordon said finally, his voice catching. "My God. I wonder if it's Hannah. She took it really hard."

"Hannah? I feel like I'm going crazy, Gord."

"What does she look like?"

Will described her. He tried to be objective.

"Yeah, no doubt about it. Hannah's a knockout. A beautiful woman. Go easy on her. I didn't know she was moving to Florida, but it doesn't surprise me. The whole family just about went crazy when Alma was killed. Seriously Will, you coming back anytime soon?"

"I'll try to make it up there sometime this summer. How've the waves been?" Will wanted to tell him about Erik, how his life was on hold along with Erik's, but somehow he couldn't.

"They've been really great. Except last week a woman from Boston was walking along the beach and she got picked off by a rogue. They didn't find her body until the next day. Everybody's still talking about that."

Will didn't know what to say. He had heard about rogue waves, read about them, but couldn't imagine what it would be like to be taken out to sea that way. You wouldn't have much of a chance, especially if you were alone. "Nobody could save her?" he asked finally. Will thought of his dream of Alma...Hannah...struggling against the riptide, waves stretching toward Erik where he slept on the beach.

"The woman's daughter swam out after her. She almost drowned herself. Hey, I've got some customers, but give me a call back and let me know what the deal is with Hannah."

"Sure, in a couple of days." Will hung up and stood in his sparsely-furnished living room, staring at a pool of sunlight on the linoleum, thinking of what he'd say to Alma. Hannah. When he heard her voice at the door, he didn't know whether to be upset or relieved.

"Hey, I know you're in there. I heard you snoring a while ago."

Will opened the door and looked at her, standing in sunlight, her beautiful hair. He wondered if she'd taken on more of her sister's identity than just her name.

She put her hands on her hips. "When I got back to the party you were gone. What happened?"

"I passed out in the grass. I'm surprised you didn't have to step over me." Will decided to wait and let her tell him what she had in mind for helping Erik before he asked her about her sister. Suddenly her lie seemed both endearing and terribly sad, and he knew why she had been crying on the other side of the wall.

"Can I come in?"

"Sure." Will closed the door behind her. "Alma?" he said when she turned to face him. He watched her expression.

"Yes," she answered calmly, as if she now carried her sister's name—her sister—inside of her.

The effect was chilling. "I...I'm sorry about what happened last night."

"Don't worry about it," she said breezily. "But listen, let's plan our trip to Miami. I told you I could help you find Erik."

"Sounds like you're psychic." He smiled, a mistake.

"I'm intuitive." She raised an eyebrow seeming displeased that he hadn't valued the distinction. He stared at her, wondering when he'd find the right time to ask her about her sister.

"You don't know very much about me at all."

They stood awkwardly, a few feet apart, looking at each other. His response was clichéd. "I'd like to know more."

"Let's take that trip, then. We can leave first thing in the morning."

From I-75 Will turned onto Highway 41, Tamiami Trail. The air-conditioned car—hers—was like a space capsule. Yesterday, when they'd planned the trip, she insisted that they take her car, and that Will would drive. Alma said she didn't need to start her work in the studio right away. She was a raku potter and sculptor. They agreed. Erik was the most important thing right now. Finding Erik.

Now the Everglades was rushing by on either side of the car—a mosaic of greens, green light, green shadow. It was impossible to imagine horses, shields, armor, swords, this thicket of vegetation and flowing water as a great battlefield. Will was an idiot to think he could write his dissertation on the first Crusade and the concept of medieval death—men transfigured by warfare and rage. The apocalypse at hand. He was an idiot to think he had wanted to.

"Why the Crusades?" Hannah asked, breaking a long silence.

She was psychic after all, or she'd intuited that his introspection, for once, had nothing to do with Erik. She touched the back of his right hand where it rested on the steering wheel, and his skin burned with the lightness, the delicacy, the faint imprint of those two fingers. He resisted the impulse to look for a mark. "Today's world isn't so different. Darkness and depravity in the name of God," he half-muttered. "Death." Death by the legions.

"What do you know about death?"

He could feel her staring at him. "More than I need to know. More than I want to know."

"I don't believe you if it's only academic."

He tried to change the subject. "Tell me what you know about finding Erik."

"I know what it's like to try to save someone."

He thought the ruse should be over now. "Hannah," he said, glancing in her direction. She didn't look over or even move. Several long minutes passed as the Everglades flashed by.

"It was stupid," she said softly. "I wanted her to become one with me. I want her to still be alive and she's not." She looked at me, her face shining with tears. "I'm not crazy. There are different types of crusades." She paused. "Some of them are worth more than others. "I'm so tired," she said. "Do you mind if I sleep a while?"

"No, of course not." She turned toward the window and leaned her face against her folded hands, like a child. Two hours to go before they got to Miami. Will looked at the stretch of shiny asphalt ahead, and then at Hannah, whose cheeks were flushed pink. Her chest gently rose and fell. He wondered what she dreamed.

For almost two hours Hannah barely stirred, but when they reached the city limits, she sat straight up in her seat, stretched, and leaned toward the dash, watching as they passed block after block of dingy strip malls on the outskirts of the city. Will stopped at a light and rolled down the window. Instantly, hot, humid air filled the car like an invisible fog.

Hannah looked at him. "I was thinking of the other night, at the party when I came back from getting my scarf and you were gone. The scarf was so thin," she said dreamily, "that it floated in the air like a cloud and it was easy to catch the fireflies in it, there were so many. All that sexual energy. All that light."

He hadn't rolled up the window. The heat in the car was worth it, because he could smell salt on the air, slight, but unmistakable—the ocean. "I'm sorry I missed seeing that." He imagined Hannah walking through the trees, the fireflies surrounding her, lighting the woods.

Within twenty minutes, they'd reached South Beach and checked in to a modestly priced hotel room on Washington Avenue, just a block from Ocean Drive. They were as close to Erik as they could get without knowing more. The window air conditioner blew a steady stream of cold air onto their faces where they sat side-by-side on the bed. Hannah was talking about the pastel deco colors of the restored beach hotels, how the color of the water on either side of the causeway was like nothing she'd ever seen before. She wanted to swim, she wanted to walk the streets looking for Erik, she was hungry, she was a bubbling cauldron of words, overflowing. Then she stopped. "I shouldn't be here."

Will felt ashamed. "We've just come into town. I...we...hardly know each other," he managed to stammer.

"That's not what I'm trying to say at all." She looked at her hands. "I was supposed to be working at the stand that day. I'm the one who should've died." Will wanted to take her in his arms. Would she begin to weep as she did on the other side of the wall? He wanted her to let him hold her while he said, *but you didn't die. And it wasn't your fault.* But he said and did nothing, while more questions ran through his brain like spires of heat. How would he find Erik? He was in a huge metropolitan area. Erik might have already migrated away from the beach. And now Will could no longer even wait for Erik's elliptical phone calls full of the grief of the living mourning the living. Will imagined Erik swimming out to sea, farther and farther and never looking back, his long, fair hair flowing behind him. Will imagined taking Erik's name, his causes and his rightful, righteous anger. Will needed to find his brother.

They sat outside, at a little deli across the street from their hotel, developing a strategy.

"When he called you the last couple of times, what did he say?" Hannah asked.

"He said he was sleeping on the beach, with the homeless. Then he said 'I have a place.' But it was about to be demolished, near 14th and Jefferson."

"Let's get over there."

They stared at the pile of rubble.

"We'll look for other buildings...under construction. Or like this one was, ready to go down. Will, didn't you and Erik grow up here? What about your parents?"

As much as Will disliked the questions, he loved hearing the sound of his name on her lips. A sudden breeze lifted a strand of her hair. Now he could really smell the ocean, and he wanted more than anything to be in the water. "We grew up here," he said finally. "Our parents..." he stopped, not knowing how to explain. They were evangelicals who had turned both Will and Erik out of the house when they said they wouldn't follow the ways of the church anymore—that they were atheists. "Let's just say we're not in each other's lives anymore." And that they were one of Will's motives for writing about the Crusades.

"A lot of things can tear families apart." Hannah quickened her step and he had to half-run to keep up with her. She glanced over her shoulder. "Can we walk on the beach? I miss the water. At most times in my life, it's meant everything to me. I hope you remembered to bring Erik's picture."

It was in his wallet. He followed her to Ocean Drive and down a beach path fringed by sea oats. She took off her shoes and headed for the water. Will took off his shoes. Hannah waded in, and then dove into a wave. He let the water lap to his knees. He watched her. When she came out, water streaming from her clothes and hair, he said, "We could've gone back to the room for our suits."

Hannah shook herself from head to toe like a dog. "It doesn't matter. It's hot. I'll be dry soon."

Hot and humid. She was wearing a tank top and a bra and the wet fabric clung to her. Will stared at the outlines of her breasts and taut nipples. She headed away from the water, toward a coconut palm where a weathered-looking man sat in a small patch of shade.

"Will," she called to him. "The photo."

Will walked over and pulled out his wallet. In the photo, Erik was standing in a pool of sunlight in the tiny backyard that Hannah and Will now shared. Will had taken it three months ago, after Erik had hitchhiked up to see Will. It was the last time they'd been together. Will showed his brother's photograph to the man, who took it from his hands and studied it. "Haven't seen him out here lately." He handed the photo back and looked at Will so long that Will felt a flush rising to his already-warm face.

The man stood up and brushed the sand off the back of his legs. "The resemblance is plain. No one who's really seen you both could miss it. He's your brother. He's our brother too, but I don't think he's been out here in a while. There has to be a brotherhood out here in the elements. I hate to ask, but can you spare a dollar?"

Will was still holding his wallet.

"Wait." Hannah put her hand between us. "When's the last time you saw him, here or anywhere else? You know this is his brother. They need to find each other." She took Will's wallet and pulled out a ten. "Please, maybe you could show us some places where we might find him."

"Lady, you don't need to try to buy me. I'll tell you what I know because Mars is an intelligence." He tapped his forehead. "A large consciousness. Someone the world needs. But a ten would get me through quite a few days on the street."

Mars? Will didn't want to ask.

Hannah handed him the ten.

He sat down and patted the sand. "Sit," he said. "My name is Adam."

Hannah and Will introduced themselves.

Adam pulled a pad of paper from a canvas rucksack. He began to draw a map.

The pad was small, maybe four by six. Adam finished the map, handed it to Hannah, and then started on another. He said the maps would be to scale. He knew the beach's underground well. That's what he called it, the "underground." Will imagined a subterranean city—a strange fantasy at sea level. By the time Adam put his pad back in his pack, they had ten small sheets of paper, ten maps. Will wasn't sure why he expected Adam to start out with them on their journey, so when it was clear that wasn't going to happen, he was surprised. Maybe it was because of what he'd said about Erik, but that was already beginning to seem to Will to be generic and corny. As much as Will hated to admit it, he suspected Adam had never met Erik, never even seen him. Adam stood up and walked away, toward the beach. When he was about ten feet from them, he turned and raised his hand. "Peace on your travels," he said.

"What are we doing?" Will asked Hannah as they studied the first and second maps to see if the streets were interconnected. Adam had numbered each of the maps, and printed numbers, street names, the occasional explanation or instruction in tiny, precise, neat-as-typescript lowercase letters. The first map bore an X, and the notation: you are here. Will resisted the urge to run after him. "This is absurd," he said.

Hannah sorted through the small stack of paper. "He drew these so fast I didn't realize how intricate they were," she said. "One of them looks like a labyrinth. We'd better get started."

Map number one took them about five blocks away, to a boarded-up building with a graffiti scrawl across the front: Dead Artists Don't Eat. Cigarette butts, fast food wrappers and empty soda cups littered the sidewalk in front of the building. A spray of glass fanned across the sidewalk at one end of the storefront, as if someone had pitched a bottle against the plywood as hard as he could. Despite the "No Trespassing" signs, they made their way around the building. No one had crashed

here, that was for sure. The place had been boarded up like a fortress. The graffiti reminded Will that he was alive. Sweat trickled down his neck. It was just past noon, and he was hungry. Hannah looked a bit disheveled from swimming in her clothes, and he wondered if they should make a stop at their room. "I need to grab a sandwich or something. Do you want to go to the hotel?"

"No. We've got to get something to eat on the run and follow more of these maps."

They stopped at a deli for subs and kept walking, following the second map, which was linked to the first. This was a much longer walk and they were miserable by the time they reached this map's destination—one of Miami Beach's most famous restaurants—Joe's Stone Crab. Will got the message. Adam had played them for fools so far—artists facing poverty and death, then the super rich gorging themselves on one of the sea's delicacies: stone crab claws. It was early and the back door, the door to the kitchen, was open. A guy about Will's age with blonde dreads stood in the doorway smoking a cigarette. Will walked over to him. "How's it going?" Will asked. The guy nodded in response. Will showed him Erik's picture. "Ever seen him?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"I'm his brother. I'm afraid he might be in trouble—not with the law. Sleeping on the streets..."

"Are you Will?"

"Yeah, I'm..."

"Man, I can't believe this. I'm Percy." He put out his hand and looked at Hannah. "Your wife?"

"My friend, Hannah. "

"Mucho gusto, Hannah. You're a very good friend." He looked at her and took her hand for a moment, and then he turned back to Will. "Mars told me all about you, Will. You're the medieval history scholar. You're writing a dissertation on the Crusades, right?"

Will shook his head. "Not any more."

"Ah, come on. Don't say that. I'm an amateur history buff, amateur philosopher. You and Mars are scholars. We need you."

"My brother...Where is he? Why do people call him Mars? My brother hates war."

"He's a man on fire. That's different. His is the kind of fire that needs to be kept alive."

"Where is he?"

"He worked here bussing tables until about a week ago, and then he left. Lance might know where to find him, but Lance won't be in until tomorrow."

"Can I phone Lance? Go to his house?"

"Lance doesn't give out that kind of information. But he'll be here tomorrow."

Hannah showed Percy map number three. "Where does this take us? What do you think it has to do with Erik?"

Percy turned the map slowly, 360 degrees. "It's a map to Matheson Hammock. It starts at a bus stop about four blocks from here." He pointed. "I don't know what it has to do with Mars. Who drew these? A crazy person? They're like little art projects." .

"A guy who sleeps on the beach and calls himself Adam. Do you know him?"

"Nah." Percy looked at his watch. "Gotta go. Come back tomorrow at three."

They decided to go back to the room before they set out on adventure number three. They agreed that now it seemed as though Adam had a plan for them. When they were in the room, they showered and lay on the bed together. Will tried to remember to breathe. The air-conditioner was turned off, and the air, neither warm nor cool, settled around them perceptibly, a comfortable but ghostly presence. After a few minutes, Hannah moved closer to Will and stroked his face. He took her hand and turned to her, running his hand from her fingertips to her shoulder, then down her back. He traced the

curve of her hip. They kissed, and then slowly made love. At the end, she arched her back and cried out. Then he came himself, muffling his own cry. Sweet little death. They fell asleep in each others' arms.

Later that afternoon, they were standing at the bus stop.

"A hammock," Hannah said. "What will we see?"

"It's a sort of tree island. This one's right in the middle of a mangrove swamp," Will said, watching the beginning of a red-orange sunset. "Red sky at night..."

"Sailor's delight."

"We can only hope."

By the time they arrived, the air was lush with smells of the bay and ocean, and of the hammock itself, thick with sabal palms, gumbo limbo, and cocoplums. Will had no idea why Adam had sent them to the hammock, except that it was beautiful. Was that enough? They headed down one of the trails, where it was nearly dark because of the dense vegetation around them.

Hannah leaned close to him. "What's that light ahead?"

Will saw a pattern of flashes before he realized someone was coming toward them on the trail. In minute, he saw a man holding a small flashlight.

"Please excuse me," the man said, making a slight but graceful bow. "I hope my light didn't frighten you. I am trying to attract *Photinus Lamyridae*, 'hotaru' in my country. Here you call them fireflies. I always look for them on my travels."

"Have you seen any?" Hannah asked.

"Unfortunately, no. But I've enjoyed this trail through the trees. We have nothing like this in Japan." He held out his hand. "Munkata Sanraku, from Tokushima province, where the hotaru are plentiful. On a summer night like this you can see them everywhere, speaking poetry with their fire."

Will took Sanraku's outstretched hand. "I'm Will," he said, "and this is my friend Hannah."

"Are you also on holiday?"

"No," Will said. "We're here..." he hesitated, "to see my brother."

Hannah told him about the fireflies in their clearing. "We live in Tampa," she said.

"Ah, Tampa. I'm visiting the whole state so I'll go there to see the hotaru." He laughed softly. "Their drama of love and death means a great deal to me. Many Japanese people believe fireflies carry the souls of the dead."

"I think that's just a fairytale." Will said. "A way of coming to terms with transience."

"Perhaps," Sanraku said. "But at the least, the hotaru are a metaphor for devoted love."

In the deepening twilight, they spoke for a few more minutes before wishing one another well and setting off in different directions. As Will and Hannah walked to the bus stop, it started to rain. Within minutes, they were in a pounding storm, and by the time they got on the bus they were soaked.

"Rain all day tomorrow," the bus driver said. "Thunder, lightning. Strong winds. They've already posted riptide warnings on Miami Beach."

When they got back to the room, they undressed and lay in each other's arms in the dark, listening to the ferocious wind and pouring rain. Tomorrow, they had more maps to follow, and a meeting to keep with Lance. After that, they'd find Erik and these frightening days would come to an end.

Tomorrow, no one would swim or even go near the water as long as there was still a riptide. They'd protect each other in all of the elements. Tomorrow night, they'd all be together in this room, and Will would drink from the mystery of that as if someone held a chalice to his lips. They'd pledge never to be separated, and to keep each other safe from then on, and Will would know with certainty that his own crusade had ended.

But as Will's sleepless night slowly unfolded, he stared at the dark ceiling, listening to Hannah's quiet breathing, thinking of what Erik's vision of the apocalypse might have looked like. The earth was already a great battlefield. He regretted his dismissive response to Sanraku's description of the fireflies and how they enacted the drama of love and death. Will had spoken arrogantly. Hannah had begun to thrash and moan in her sleep. Will finally understood that he was certain of nothing. Under the window, the hotel's neon sign made a sputtering sound and went out, like an extinguished flame. But elsewhere, all along the beach and throughout the city, such signs still glowed in a hundred carnival colors, seductive and full of fierce life.

In Town

Brian Maxwell

He had not been back long before he realized that leaving her that way had been a mistake. The drive from Arkansas took all night but he didn't feel relieved when he found the exit and headed toward the beach; already whole neighborhoods were shuttered up, the windows boarded over with sheets of plywood. Everything here in Florida seemed very low to the ground after the months away. He drifted past the beer bars and secondhand stores but it wasn't until he pulled in at the ocean lookout and found the sun creeping over the blue line of the horizon that he knew he was home. The hurricane was headed straight for the coast, but for now everything was calm and Russell listened to the sea gulls while a warm breeze pushed through the car window.

Summer had been hot even in Arkansas. Annie found a pond in one of the hollows and they hiked over to swim once a week, staying close to shore because she was afraid of water. She didn't believe in living by the coast either and made it clear that when he went back to Florida, she would not come see him. He'd laughed at this and she smiled, but Russell understood later that she'd been hurt. They still sat on the porch at dusk as the cicadas sang, and later they crawled into bed, but she wouldn't let him talk. "Russell," she told him. "It doesn't matter what you say." That she never got angry about his leaving only confused him more.

Here on the beach, his sister's truck wasn't in the driveway but he knew Sally wouldn't have gone far. The dog was there to greet him in the kitchen and there were pictures on the walls: one of him with a surfboard, one of Sally and him together, shaggy and sunburned. There was a picture of their mother too, holding Sally's girl Felice. Her face was frozen in a tight grin, and Russell looked away.

He found beer in the fridge and thought maybe Joe Cory was back from Mexico. Sally never kept a boyfriend long but Joe Cory had made

it a few years. He'd settled down the way people did after thirty, and though he still spent most of his money on surf trips, Russell had begun to accept that he might always be around.

The dog led him to the garage where he found Sally on a folded chair, smoking a cigarette while the radio reported on wind speed in an expressionless monotone. He noticed her split lip but she would only tell him that her truck was over at Raimie's house. "You're here," she said, looking away. "I didn't think you were coming back this time."

Later, he dropped his bags in the kitchen. Felice was still asleep and Sally sat with her hands in her lap until Russell convinced her to take his car to the store. The storm was set to make landfall in a day or two. "I need to board the windows," he said, which was true, but he also couldn't stand to see her face that way. When she was gone he went back to the garage. Joe Cory's surfboards were lined up on the wall in a neat row, held snug in place by a series of dowels; otherwise, the place was a mess. He couldn't find a drill but he did find a hammer and nails and a few half sheets of plywood left over from some project. When he dragged them into the yard the wind had already switched; thick gray clouds hung in the distance and he knew there was lightning bundled inside. Joe was still in Mexico and hadn't called in weeks. Sally had a busted lip and now her truck was parked at Raimie's, which the last place he wanted to go right now. Russell had only been in town a few hours and everything was the same old mystery.

He met Annie one summer when his car broke down on the way back from seeing his father in California. That was the year their mother died. Russell only had a phone number and wanted to tell him in person. The country was much bigger than he imagined and he drove as fast as he could across the middle states. The first day his father didn't answer the phone and Russell slept in the car, but on the second day a woman answered and told him plainly that he worked in a warehouse shaping surfboards. When Russell delivered the news the sun was bright and his father stood squinting in his apron. He didn't

take off his spray mask either, but pushed it high on his head like a hat. They had to shout over the noise and afterward Russell didn't stay. By noon he was in the desert and after that he abandoned the highway and began winding his way through states he only recognized by their license plates.

Annie was at the counter at the Quick-Stop when he walked in, having left his car a few miles back. They didn't have a parts store, she said. But he could get a tow in the morning. When Russell thanked her and turned to walk back she told him to hold up. Annie was very tall and her teeth showed in a way that made her appear to be always smiling. She had black hair that seemed to have never known the sun and wore men's work boots over her jeans. It was her idea to check the fuel pump and when they took her jeep to retrieve a new one from the chain store they stopped to see her brother, Cray, and borrowed some tools. Cray immediately left his food on the table and opened a beer, and soon they were all drinking Budweiser in the kitchen. When the conversation lolled, Cray lit a joint. He said it was impossible to get good pot anymore with the crackdown on meth and shortly after that Russell told him that he could bring it up from Florida by the trunk-full if Cray knew how to get rid of it.

Annie had to work her second job that night and left Russell to fix his car. When he finished packing the tools he got lost trying to find the road to her place and had to backtrack several times. Annie slept in the den because the roof over the back bedroom had begun to collapse; the whole place was crumbling, really, and wet with the smell of mold and wood. But as he pulled up into the meadow and killed the engine that night it looked to him less like a house than a secret tucked into the hillside. After midnight the sound of her jeep razed him from his spot on the porch where he'd been listening to the crickets, and when he stood and almost stumbled he realized that the light above his head was coming from the stars.

When the windows were boarded, Russell checked on Felice and then dragged his duffle bag into the spare room and shut the door. He'd

lived here off and on for years, helping with rent when he could, leaving his few valuables deep in the closet. A queen-sized mattress and a mess of boxes took up most of the floor and with the window covered the room felt at once too dark and too small. He unzipped the bag and beneath the dirty clothes he found the money, a few thousand dollars tied off in a thick black garbage bag. There wasn't enough to pay Raimie for the weed, since he'd stashed some under Annie's sink in the shoebox where she kept her letters. It was a box he wasn't supposed to know about but she would've refused otherwise. He was staring at a water spot on the ceiling when the front door slammed and he went to help Sally with whatever she'd found at the store.

They stacked the supplies on the table. She'd remembered to get candles and Russell set them in a row while Sally let the dog in and he ran down the hall. "He'll be back," Sally said. She wore her dark glasses inside and Russell wondered when she'd started doing that, if she always had. "He's gone to wake Felice," she said.

When his niece came around the corner, he greeted her with a hug. Her blond hair hung in curls, her face a map of uneven freckles. "Hi uncle," she said, sleep thick in her eyes. When Felice saw the candles she insisted. "Please," she whispered. "Please, please." She was clapping her hands over the flames to make them dance when the lights flickered overhead. "That's it," Russell told her, snuffing the candles. "If we lose power we'll need them."

Later they sat at the table listening to the wind. It felt much later then it was because of the boarded windows. Sally had made Ramen noodles and Felice picked at hers, smothering them in ketchup. When she reached again for the bottle Sally grabbed her wrist. "Eat," she said. But Felice was more interested in the lightning; every few minutes the glass doors pulsed white, followed by thunder, slow and deep, like a wave crashing.

After a bit, Sally lost her temper. "Eat, damn it. Eat your food." Felice didn't listen or cry. She sat for a few seconds, waiting for the thunder, then walked back to her room. But not before pushing in her chair.

"She's impossible," Sally said, but she wasn't eating either. When Russell didn't say anything his sister looked up. "She's like me I guess," she said. "Like us." She laughed at this and so did he, but then it was finished. They were alone in the kitchen and Russell pushed away from the table.

"Where you going?" she wanted to know.

He stood silently, waiting for the storm to answer.

"You shouldn't go over there," she said. He expected her to say more but she didn't. He thought the swelling had gone down on her lip.

"I need to see Raimie," Russell said. "Anyway, we should get your truck."

For a long time she didn't move. Then she put her head down on the table and when she raised it her face was different, as if she'd forgotten the matter entirely. She got up and took the dishes to the sink and turned on the water, mumbling under her breath. When he asked, she glared at him. "I said forget the truck," she said. "I'm not taking my daughter over there even for a moment."

Outside the sky was going black and Russell took the side streets, tracking the storm on the radio. The ocean lay just beyond the small motels that ran along the beach, and he could hear the waves crashing against the shoreline. There were lights in a few windows and he hit the wipers when the rain began to fall in fat drops across the windshield.

He pulled into the Chevron, idling by a dumpster. Raimie lived around the corner in a low-slung cinderblock house he'd inherited from his dad. Russell had known the house as long as he could remember, first as a kid in shorts learning to surf and then as a teen, but now he only stopped in to pick up or to drop money. He never stayed long enough to talk about old times.

Ahead of him a scraggly kid leaned against the payphone, illuminated by a beer sign in the window. Russell didn't know him, but he looked like every other guy in town: shaggy hair, tattoos, sun-burnt face. He wore flip flops and long shorts, cut below the knee. There was something ugly about him, the way he stooped to compensate for his

height and drank out of a paper bag, the receiver tucked tight against his chin.

Russell opened the car door and stepped into the wind. He walked by the guy on the phone and went inside to grab a case of beer. It seemed like a better idea to grab two. He would bring one to Raimie's and bring one home. He would also fill up the tank. Then he would find out what had happened to his sister's face. He'd pay Raimie for the weed and find out what happened and that would be that. It would be a casual affair.

The first trip back to Arkansas went well. He stayed with Annie and only drove into town to drop off the weed with Cray, who paid him up front. Annie still worked nights at a bar and sometimes Russell would tag along and sit while she served cans of beer and poured shots. He spent most of his time on her porch listening to the turkey buzzards during the day and then the insects at night. Occasionally a mining truck rumbled past, but by the time the sound came over the tree line it had been softened so much that it sounded like the hills themselves making highway noise.

One morning Annie showed him a firebreak that led to the top of the hillside. From there you could see the town clustered together in a mess of odd-shaped buildings and mismatched roofs. Beyond that was Fayetteville, but the ridge was only high enough to spot the railroad tracks heading north. Annie told him the trains used to run coal all day and night, winding through the hills and hollows like an enormous snake.

Cray drove up one day in his Scout and he and Russell drank their way through a twelve pack waiting for Annie to return. They flattened the empties under their heels and fired the smashed cans into the woods. Cray had come to fix the wood stove, which he did in less than an hour to Russell's surprise. After that they sat in silence, the beer gone, and just when Russell was going to offer to fix supper they heard the jeep begin its climb along the uphill grade. When Annie pulled in,

Cray reached his meaty hand out for Russell to shake and said so long, see you in a few months. Then he waved to Annie and climbed into his Scout, and before he disappeared down the red dirt road he waved again. Russell knew that things had worked out fine, and when Annie came waltzing across the meadow, smiling without trying, Russell thought that things had worked out even better than that.

Now all of the lights were on at Raimie's and the driveway was crowded with work trucks and an old Dodge Fat Boy. None of the windows were boarded. Sally's Chevy S-10 was run into the lawn and Russell noticed Raimie's Harley in the tall grass by the garage. The front door wasn't locked but the music was loud, and no one noticed when he entered. A group was gathered around an enormous TV, watching the weather channel and for a moment Russell felt invisible.

"Where's Raimie?" he said, realizing at once that he sounded too harsh and also that he'd forgotten the beer. "I need to see him."

The music stopped and a man Russell didn't know came forward. He was short and thick with a shaved head, his face like a bruise, and Russell balled a fist instinctively. He heard voices and felt himself turned around and then he was shaking with his free hand. Jack Whit was there and Cobb and Red Peter, and they guided him to the kitchen as rain began to clap against the roof in what sounded like a series of gun shots.

"Just in time," Jack Whit was saying. Cobb had opened the fridge and lifted a can of beer from the door. After he handed it to Russell he grabbed one for each of them. Russell held his but didn't drink. He asked again after Raimie, but Cobb had already gone back to the couch and Red turned to follow. It was only him and Whit in the kitchen.

"He's got some mainland girls he's trying to impress," Whit said. "I guess they ain't rode out a storm before."

"Who's the thug?" Russell said. He regretted it immediately but Whit answered anyway.

"You know Raimie," he said. He drank off the can and placed it on the table. "It's not like it used to be, Russell." Then he told him that he'd had to move off the beach. He was pouring concrete again and hoped for plenty of storm damage. "I have to head home," he said. "But let's you and me go see him first."

Raimie came around the corner before they could move, shirtless and gleaming with sweat, his tattoos shimmering over the muscles on his chest and arms. He locked eyes with Russell, his smile a loose thread. Jack slipped away and Raimie watched, his face unchanged. "Long time," he said finally, turning back to Russell. "Welcome home, buddy."

They walked down the corridor and into the back room—Raimie's room. The girls were putting their clothes on in front of a mirror but they weren't in a hurry. Raimie was still smiling when he told them to finish getting dressed. Both were blond with visible roots, their faces painted in dark hues that made them look older and bright red lip stick that did not. Russell stood in the doorway trying not to watch as they slipped back into their mini-dresses, smirking at each other in some triumphant language.

Then Raimie closed the door and sat on the bed. He told Russell to sit but there was only a love seat in the corner stacked with boxes. One of the girls had left her purse on the floor. The bed was tucked in against the block walls and the floor was terrazzo, unpolished and dull. A single window faced the ocean but from this angle only the light from the street lamp shone in. Raimie asked him again to sit but Russell remained standing.

"What happened to Sally?" he said.

Raimie's smile disappeared and he turned toward the wall and then back to Russell. Instead of answering he reached for a pack of cigarettes and lit one with a match. "Sally," he said, exhaling. His eyes watered for a moment but it was only the sulfur. The girl who left her purse started banging on the door.

"I've got your money," Russell said. He could feel a headache working behind his eyes. The girl stopped for a moment and started

again, this time with both fists. "But if you don't tell me what happened, I'm gonna kill you."

Raimie didn't move and he didn't look surprised. The cigarette hung from his lip, smoldering away, and his eyes were still watering but he didn't say anything. Finally he took the smoke between his fingers and coughed loudly, flicking it at the door without bothering to stub it out. One of the girls was yelling while the other laughed. "Fuck," he said, looking up. "Russell, man. I'd wanna kill me too."

Each time Russell returned to Arkansas he stayed a bit longer, and each time Annie put him up without question. He would drive straight through the night and arrive mid-morning to the sweet smell of eucalyptus and park beneath the stand of old-growth apple trees that surrounded the house. Annie would be waiting on the porch, her head turned away until the very last second when he cut the motor and stepped out of the car.

Then they'd drive the valley road into Fayetteville to meet Cray. Russell liked that he could unload and get paid up front, though it gave him no reason to stick around other than Annie. At first they remained tentative, testing small talk and gesturing with their hands. They kept their eyes on each other, talking without touching, and this lasted at least until that first night at her place where they stumbled into the house and fell slowly onto the lumpy pull-out couch that she had already arranged for them.

This last summer there was a heat wave and they drove straight for Fayetteville, weaving through the dusty roads because of a string of construction projects. Annie wore a baseball cap low over her forehead, and the open windows did nothing to cut the heat. They crept past decrepit houses and crumbling sheds stuffed with old appliances and scrap metal, the yards littered with tires and rusted trucks. Sections of leaning fence cropped up beyond that. Russell listened to the whine of the engine and didn't speak. Instead he twisted the radio dial until it ran out of room and then began to run it back the other way.

When they got to Cray's he wasn't home, and they let themselves in and sat at the kitchen table. Even inside the heat was too much and Annie told him to shower. Go ahead, she said, and she took his hand and led him down the hall. When he stripped down and slid beneath the cold water he felt better. Annie had returned to the kitchen and he gave in to the easy feeling that everything was alright, that they both knew what they were doing even if it was hard to put into words.

Then he heard the shouting. By the time he made it to the kitchen Cray was storming off across the yard toward his Scout. He didn't drive away or start the engine, but just sat there staring straight ahead as if there was something beyond the windshield other than scrub brush and the pine tree canopy like a green sea covering the hills in all directions.

"It's nothing," Annie told him. "He wants me to give up the house and move to town."

Russell was shirtless, still carrying a towel. He felt the sweat beading on his forehead. Cray didn't seem the type to get angry, but it dawned on him that this was a stupid assessment. What did he know, anyway, about Cray, or about his take on anything?

"I aim to stay in the hollow," Annie said. "I do." She was still looking out the window into the blinding sunshine but Russell had been invited into the conversation. Instead, he hung the towel on the back of a chair and went to retrieve his shirt from the bathroom.

"The money's in back," she said over her shoulder. "Let's get it and go." As they left, her brother still sat behind the wheel, his hands flat on the dashboard as if he were afraid of losing sight of them even for a moment.

Cray didn't come around for a month and when he did finally pull up in his Scout he looked at Russell as if he were surprised that he was still there. But the moment passed and they lapsed into their polite silence, drinking on the porch after Cray had checked the pipes in the cellar. When Annie arrived in her jeep he nodded and drove slowly down the hill. This time he didn't wave.

Then one night Annie didn't come back from her shift at the bar. They'd worked their way into a routine and Russell fell asleep on the porch waiting. When he woke, the hollow felt much too quiet, but it was a trick of sound; what he heard was bird noise, and just over the ridge the sun had begun to warm a small spot in the sky. There were lines of cloud to the east and the crick in his neck told him that he'd spent the night outside. Annie had not woken him because she had not returned.

He hung around most of the day waiting. Finally he hiked up to the bluff and over the hillside, returning only when he heard the familiar grind of the jeep on the rutted road. By then it was late afternoon. Annie didn't tell him where she'd been and he didn't ask. She disappeared in the back of the house for a while and later Russell found her asleep on the couch just as the sun began to set. Shortly after that he heard about the tropical storm on the radio. When the storm grew into a hurricane overnight, he knew it was time to leave for Florida. The season had changed on him and he hadn't even noticed.

They went to the garage to talk and Raimie stood shirtless in his blue jeans, smoking another cigarette while the garage door shuttered in the wind. There were surfboards everywhere, leaning on the wall or racked in the rafters, and there was junk—junk tools and roadside trash and car parts. A single uncovered fluorescent bulb hung in the middle of the room and they sat on empty buckets while the light flickered overhead.

"Joe's not coming back," Raimie said at last. "He didn't go down to surf this time. He went down to stay."

Russell had been waiting for answers, but this was not what he expected to hear.

"I thought Sally knew," said Raimie. He was staring over Russell's head, blowing broken smoke rings in the air. "But then she showed up here. She was drunk."

"So you told her?"

"I didn't mean to," he said. "But I'm glad I did." He smiled somewhat, a slight upturn of his cheek as if he was embarrassed. "She came at me with a knife, Russell. She might not remember that."

"But you hit her." Russell didn't say it as a question and Raimie didn't answer right away. Instead he stood and looked down at Russell, considering.

"She was hysterical," he said. "So I took her home. End of story." The bulb flickered over his head and he fiddled with it but it didn't do any good. It was the storm outside playing off the power lines. "I'm not a monster," he said. "I made her leave the truck."

"I'll bring your money," Russell said. "After things calm down." The bulb went out for a long second and they listened to the garage door as it shook in the dark. Then the light was back and Russell started to get up.

Raimie shook his head slowly. "You might as well keep it," he said. "We're done here anyway." There wasn't much in his voice. The light flickered again and Russell stared at the ugly cement floor beneath his shoes. Then he waited for his friend to turn his head and when he did he took a wild swing, missing wide and clipping him in the ear instead. Raimie stumbled over an engine block but managed to keep hold of his cigarette. As he propped himself on his elbows he stuck it between his teeth. "Russell," he said. "My man." Then the light went off for good and he was laughing in the dark, saying it over and over again.

The neighborhoods were blacked out and the rain was coming steady when Russell pulled away from Raimie's. The wind howled steadily too, but the lightning had moved on and with it the thunder had stopped. He passed the Chevron without stopping though the payphone was empty. It wasn't too late to call Annie but he had already made up his mind.

Sally was on the couch and he covered her with a blanket and lit a few candles. Felice was sleeping too, snoring with the dog at her feet. Russell filled the tub with fresh water and found a few blankets in the closet. There was a crank radio around and he needed batteries so he

carried a flashlight into the garage, taking tentative steps in the dark. The roll door was still open to the night and the wind filled the room immediately; outside a row of palm trees bowed in reverence until the gusts let up and then stood back at attention. The dog rushed past him into momentary calm as a generator hummed down the road and he guessed another hurricane party must be gathering strength.

Russell stood in the open garage, waiting. Joe Cory's surfboards were lined up to his left and he tried to remember the last time he'd been in the ocean. The boards were all different sizes, each a graceful projection of simplicity—the best way to glide through moving water, to cut and rise evenly across the clean face of a wave. Russell remembered the blue one, a perfect little squash tail that Joe loaned him one day after Christmas. Joe had moved in that month, and the next morning they went paddling together while the girls slept. Joe rode a larger board, one that Russell also admired: the smooth glass job, the perfect angle of the nose, and the slight concave pressed into the fiberglass. They surfed for hours and when they returned Sally was making pancakes and they ate all together on the floor.

Now Russell just wanted the boards gone and he decided to toss them out into the wind. He dropped the flashlight and lifted the blue squash tail from its spot on the rack. It was sturdy in his hands but also light, buoyant, and he went through the open mouth of the garage and into the driveway. The wind picked up again with a shriek and Russell held the board at arm's length. With a flip he could send it sailing over his head and across the yard, maybe straight over the roof like a kite. If he timed it right the board might sail up above the palm trees and disappear into the night.

When the dog came crashing through the bushes, barking wildly until it reached the safety of the garage, the sky seemed pressurized, like the whole neighborhood was under water. Russell stood with the board in his hands as the dog whimpered, but he didn't think to look down until he felt the crabs brushing against his bare feet. Then they were everywhere all at once, hissing against the pavement and brushing

over his toes and ankles. Russell knew they were fleeing the storm surge, running from the beach and into the neighborhoods, and he also realized that they knew more than he did about what was out there. When the power came back on in a sudden charge of light he saw first the bright blue shape of the board in his hands, and beneath that the hard pink mass of crabs scuttling sideways, so many that they covered the ground and made it appear to vibrate and heave like an exposed lung. He began to kick his way back to the garage, slowly, holding the board over his head, but every time he swept a path with his feet it filled again in seconds.

The wind whipped and tried to take the board from his hands but this time he resisted, frozen in place, one leg stretched out in front of the other. Standing there in the driveway he didn't think of Annie alone in the hollow, her silhouette on the porch those times when he climbed out of his car and waited for her to turn her head. He didn't think of his sister either, her busted lip and her sunglasses, the lines along her cheeks like cracked glass. Instead he closed his eyes and leaned forward, hoping that when he opened them the light would be gone so that he could walk back to the garage in darkness. He stood, crouched slightly, holding tight to the surfboard as the dog cried out in the face of the storm and the wind whistled past his ears like a secret rising in the night.

Catch and Release

Robley Wilson

The bookstore entrance reminds her of the french doors in her lover's apartment, the ones between his living room and the sunporch that overlooks the river: stained oak with many panes of glass that admit the world in discrete small rectangles. When she sits on the red sofa, reading, or writing the first draft of a term paper on a legal pad, her view of him sitting on the porch at his laptop is conveyed, just so, by the shut doors, the wooden strips that comprise the interstices between panes dividing him into a grid of broken light. *Interstices*. It is one of his favorite words; it shows up often in the poems he composes, shut apart from her as he is.

But as she enters the store and makes her way to the service desk, she has to give herself a nudge—is it *figurative* or *metaphorical*, this nudge?—to remind herself that he is no longer her lover, present tense. He is past tense; he is *ex*. He is back at his West Coast university, while she is home, in Florida, spending a few weeks with her mother. She hasn't seen him or talked to him since July, and it is already September. He is, she has to remind herself, *history*—or possibly an eventual memoir.

The young woman at the service desk is small and dark-haired, wears a name tag that says *Miss Lacy*, and looks expectant.

"Edris Merrill," Edris says. "You have a book put aside for me."

Miss Lacy turns to the shelves behind her and lowers herself to one knee. She finds the book—it is a novel by Dawn Powell, a woman who has become important now that she is long dead—and delivers it up to the counter. When she hands it over, Edris notices that the index card tucked into the top of the book reads *Edith Morrow*.

"Thank you," Edris says.

"No problem," says Miss Lacy.

Edris doesn't check out immediately, but instead turns toward the center of the store, where bookshelves open off both sides of carpeted

lanes and where easy chairs are set randomly for the comfort of browsing customers. *Chains*, such stores are called, but Edris thinks they are *grids*—just like the entrance doors, the doors to her former lover's study—all the space divided into rectangles of category: *Best-Sellers. Fiction. Self-Help. New Arrivals*. On and on until the chrome rail that surrounds the coffee shop puts a halt to them.

Her sometime lover, her *ex*, claims to dislike such stores. They squeeze out the independents, the small businesses, the people who truly love books and believe in literature. The ideal bookstore, he says, is the one a block away from his apartment: an old frame house with reinforced flooring where used books fill three stories of room upon room and a tortoise-shell cat greets customers in the paneled front hallway, when it isn't asleep on a windowsill across from the poetry corner.

"It isn't a real bookstore if it doesn't have a cat," they have agreed—though Edris notices that when he travels to do readings from his books he chooses to read at the big chain stores, not the independents. *Marketing*. He reminds her that a poet needs readers, that sometimes art is obliged to compromise with commerce. *Or there would be no poetry, would there?* He says this sadly, ominously, the question mark at the end of the sentence intended to remind her she is *student*, he is *professor*. She understands what he tells her—the practical side of things—though there have been occasions when she wonders what the world would be like if there were in fact no poetry. Who would miss it? What would be the consequences of its absence? Might she someday write a paper on this topic, footnotes and all?

"Poetry," her former lover had one day announced to a seminar he allowed her to audit, "is not some vague, visceral goose," meaning, she supposed, that it was *mind* he intended his students to bring to the poem, not *gut*. Or not gut only, for later that same day—the two of them lying half-naked together on the carpeted floor of his apartment, the music from his stereo a palpable bass-line pulsing in the floor under

them, the late afternoon sunlight a radiant wash through the room—he had conceded the visceral.

"It's more than craft," he admitted, "more than skill, more than facility with the language. There's emotion too—but the emotion's in the audience."

She saw, clearly, that he meant the poet to be a cool customer, a behaviorist, provoking and manipulating—*goosing*—the reader like the man in Koestler's *Age of Longing* (he had made her read it) who had conditioned his mistress to climax when he pressed her nipple.

While they lived together, the question of her academic education, her performance in the classroom—sometimes his course, usually another's—was rarely mentioned. It was enough for him to remind her that she must write, write, write. "We learn as we go," he was fond of saying, and when she showed him her new poems he kept them for a day or two then handed them back. "Keep at it," was what he told her. His work, not hers, provided the center point their days and nights revolved around; it was unusual for him to interest himself in any activity of hers—except, of course, her lovemaking. That activity absorbed them both; he referred to the two of them as in its *throes*, and the word—like *interstices*—punctuated his verses. He was, Edris often reminded herself, her *first grand passion*.

It was only in retrospect, bringing herself up short and looking back over the months of their living together, she saw that what she had at first responded to was the flattery of his attention—a famous man, celebrated and honored, fatherly without the stigma of actual fatherhood—not anything like love. And as for him, he had once said to her, "If I'd known you were a virgin, I'd never have taken up with you." *Taken up*. Afterward she had lain awake, remembering times her favorite uncle had taken her fishing, how they would catch fish—a perch, a sunfish—then work the hook carefully out of its mouth, one lidless eye facing up at her like a horrible glassy marble, and slip the fish back into the lake. The image hurt her: the poet was telling her he

should have thrown her back.

Soon of course there was another love, a writer, a colleague who lived abroad, a woman with whom he collaborated from time to time. This affair, this *collaboration*, was perfectly consistent with her uncle's behavior: slip the fish into the lake, rebait the hook, reel in another. Catch and release. *Take up, throw back*. What did she expect from a poet? Having left her teacher's bed, she saw, poor fish, that she had been hungry for anything, never mind that it was only bait, not sustenance.

She ought to have thought harder about this—all this and more—the first time she stood in his kitchen cooking something out of a foxed and dog-eared paperback of the *Fanny Farmer Cookbook* called "Orange Poached Chicken Breasts"—a microwave recipe that served four, so that she was more or less preoccupied with dividing everything on the ingredient list by two, from time to time thanking her stars that the arithmetic was no more challenging than one-over-two. *I lie and I lay, / I plumb and I play...* The lover's lines shimmered at the forefront of her vision, somewhat getting in the way of the Poached Chicken. The poem was coarse, but it was about her; she knew it was about her, with *him*. He had read it to her, in the bedroom. But that was one-over-one, she told herself; no way the fractions of this innocent recipe should have reminded her of sleeping with the famous poet.

Here was something else to think about. She knew she was not the first. She knew of at least three other women who were rumored to have spent nights (and occasional afternoons) in his bed, or perhaps bent, half-dressed, across the desk in his Marlow Hall office, three flights up, overlooking the lush green Common Park that centered the college. All of them, of course, had graduated and left the campus long before Edris arrived on the scene. Only their names lingered, like old songs, words without melody. The poet himself—the *ex*, the once-grand passion—seemed oblivious to gossip, as did his admirers in the larger world, the world outside the confined California campus, that continued to heap honors upon him: *this prize, that medal, the other* coveted foreign award, most recently for translating the work of the almost equally-honored

Moroccan poet Magdalena Larmes, said to have become his latest conquest after an international literary conference in Prague, where the two had sat elbow to elbow, through several rounds of toasts, at the concluding banquet.

Unkind stories had no noticeable effect on the numbers of students who signed on for the poet's writing courses: the undergraduate reading course and the graduate writing seminar offered in alternate semesters—whenever, that is, the poet was not on sabbatical or visiting at some other campus in America or abroad. Considerable demands were made upon his time; he was fortunate to have the understanding, the encouragement, of a college administration pleased to preen in the shade of his reputation. He was expected to become the next Library of Congress appointee, or perhaps the one after that; he was said to be on the short list for the Bollingen—perhaps even, *someday*, the Nobel, especially should that Committee happen to deadlock over two Third-World candidates.

Edris remembers that she was imagining herself standing at the poet's side in Oslo, letting applause wash over them both, attending almost in a trance to the actual food before her, when he emerged from the sunporch and leaned in at the kitchen door.

"Can I help?" he said.

"You startled me," she said. "What have you been doing?"

"Working."

"Something new?"

"Translating. French stuff." He stood behind her, nuzzled her neck and shoulder; his arms were around her, his hands flat against her stomach. "What's all this?" he said.

"Chicken breasts. Poached."

"Why is the orange juice out?"

"The recipe calls for it." She began slicing a small onion, also called for. "French as in *Moroccan Moonglow*?"

"Good guess. Can I help with the chicken?"

"They say you've slept with her."

"With Magdalena? Who says that?"

"They. People."

"Students?"

"Students too. Is it true?"

"You haven't answered the question," he said. "Can I help?"

"Will you answer mine?" She was only half through with the onion. She stood, flat-footed, with the heels of her hands against the edge of the counter, the knife handle damp in her fist. The celebrated poet's arms slid away from her; he took one of her shoulders and turned her to face him.

"Silly Eddie," he said. "I've met the woman once."

Eddie. It was the nickname he used when she was being impossible, or careless, or wasn't thinking. *Eddie*. It was a *diminutive*; it diminished her.

"Yes, you *may* help," she said, stressing the auxiliary. "You may mince one garlic clove for me."

She was thinking about his non-answer, especially the word *once*. Meeting a woman once seems harmless, but her now-out-of-date lover travels a lot—a week here, a week there—and who is to say that a Moroccan poet is always in Morocco? It is not *de rigueur*.

She watched him mince the clove of garlic, how he slipped the skin off the clove between thumb and forefinger, how the stripped clove glistened like pale skin. This was an *image*, almost poetic, though it would become an inappropriate *metaphor* added to the catalogue of her memory. Better to concentrate on the mincing itself, the knife blade clipping the clove into tiny shards.

He used the blade to scrape the garlic into a short, neat line on the cutting-board. "What else?" he said.

"You could find the measuring cup and pour a quarter-cup of that orange juice."

"Done," he said.

"But after all that," she reminded him, "you still didn't answer the question."

He took a glass measuring cup from the cupboard behind her, unscrewed the cap of the orange-juice carton, poured the juice to the 1/4 mark.

"You're not paying attention to the process," he said. "I do a rough translation of her poem and mail it to Magdalena. She makes suggestions, responds to my questions in the left margin with her answers in the right margin, sends the poem back to me. Everything's by mail. That's hardly a recipe for sleeping together, is it?"

The Powell book is hugged against her chest, the index card with its misspelled name a small white blur just at the low edge of her vision. As she is riding the escalator up to the store's second level she hears a man's voice, a phrase, a rhyme coming down the steps to meet her: someone is reciting poetry, one of *his* poems—she knows it well; it is one of her favorites, a poem she memorized long before she met him. When she reaches the top of the moving stairs she sees that a small group is gathered on a kind of balcony that overlooks the main floor, and at one side of the overlook a middle-aged man—bald, bearded, wearing thick glasses—is standing, reading from an opened book.

The people who make up his audience, seated in blond-wood chairs arranged before him in careless semi-circles, are what the poet, the *ex*, would have called *civilian*—a word he pronounces with condescension, his lip curled in a half-sneer, half-smile. There is a woman in a wheelchair, a couple of teenaged girls in skirts and cardigan sweaters, a youngish man in Levi's and polo shirt. Set between Edris and these listeners, these *fans*, is a table on which a small tent-sign reads *GROW*, and below that word is an explanatory *GReater Orlando Writers*. These are amateurs, given space by the bookstore for their meetings, treated generously in the expectation that they will buy books.

Next to the sign is a small display of the half-dozen volumes that constitute the poet's *oeuvre* and—a surprise—a book she has not seen:

Poems New & Selected. Of course; the galleys had arrived during their last week together—their end as a couple. She hadn't expected the book to come so soon off the press, but here it was, in plenty of time for Christmas giving. Leave it to her *ex* to be sensitive to the timing.

She takes up a copy of the new book and slips into an empty chair at the rear of the group. Perhaps he will have dedicated it to her, or, at the very least, thanked her in a preface for her assistance in proofreading the manuscript. But as she leafs through the early pages she realizes he has made neither of these gestures. At least, she is relieved to see, he has not dedicated the book to Magdalena.

"It's a gorgeous book," says a voice close by. "The best of his best."

She looks up and sees that it is the woman in the wheelchair, who seems to have wheeled herself backward in order to speak to Edris.

"Judith Beasley," the woman says, and holds out her hand, which Edris touches. The hand is damp and cold, and startlingly white.

"Edith," Edris says. "Edith Morrow." She will think of it as her *pseudonym*, possibly even as a new identity.

"That man," and here Judith Beasley points to the poetry book Edris has rested in her lap, "he writes the most beautiful sentiments in the world. He moves me to tears, both of joy and sorrow. I'd dearly love to tell him so to his face, but I don't believe he's ever visited Orlando."

"You're a poet yourself?" Edris says.

"Oh, I try," the woman admits. "My hubby laughs, but words are a consolation to someone like me, who can't get out as much as some others do. My cousin Jacob—that's him at the lectern there—he's the real family poet."

Edris smiles at *family poet*, a phrase that suggests a poet could be a mascot, a pet. How her lover, her *ex*, who is the author of beautiful sentiments, would be amused. How he would savor the joke of it. "Every family should have one," he would tell his classes. "Poets are clean and quiet, and easily housebroken."

She looks down at the book in her lap. It lies face down, and from its back cover the poet smiles up at her. *Hypocrite*, she thinks. *After everything I did for you.*

She remembers that the first time she sat in the poet's classroom he wore a mustache and beard, the graying hair sparse over his cheeks, but that in their last few months together he took to shaving again and cut his hair short—a crew cut, like the style the college's athletes affected. Edris is the one who had argued that he was not old—though she knows he is in his early sixties—but that the gray beard made him *seem* old. She told him this one night after they had begun sleeping together, and she takes credit for the disappearance of most of his facial hair. Now he wears only the mustache, trimmed with the same sort of painstaking care swimsuit models give to their pubic hair in order to show off the high-cut swimsuits ordinary women don't wear.

She is thinking about this past of hers, ignoring the Beasley woman, when her attention is claimed by words the woman's cousin is reading:

"From balcony rail / to suntan chaise / a red spider sails..."

My poem. She nearly speaks the words out loud. She recalls precisely the time and place of its writing: a week on the California coast with the poet, a balcony overlooking the Pacific, the spider's web spun from a plastic chair to the rail of the balcony and, hovering above the web, a wasp. She remembers imagining that the wasp was too large to be held by the web, and she waited to see what would happen.

The poem is short: a dozen lines in three quatrains. She wrote it that evening and read it aloud to her teacher-lover, who liked it so much, he asked her to read it again. Now, apparently, he has adopted it.

She opens the book under her hands, scans the table of contents looking for her title, "From My Balcony". There is no such title, but another arrests her. Here is a poem called "Spider & Wasp"; she is sure it was not in the manuscript she spell-checked for him.

She turns the pages of the poet's new and selected work. An italicized dedication appears at the beginning of the stolen poem: "*After*

Magdalena Larmes". She feels tears start, but blinks them back. How clever of him to admit that the poem is not his, and yet keep credit for it by pretending it to be a free translation. How subtle, to give the poem to the woman who replaced her, to leave Edris with nothing.

*From balcony rail
to suntan chaise
a red spider sails
its summer lace...*

She reads all three stanzas of the perfect little poem taken away from her, feeling over again the sense of pride in its perfection: the unforced quality of its internal rhymes slant and true, of "summer" and "shimmer," of "sun" and "spun," of "wasp" and "grasp." How generously the poet praised her for "seeming artless while being so artful," and how ardent he was in his lovemaking that night—as if her work justified his interest in her. But the praise, the ardency, even the rational construct of their pleasure in bed are, after the fact, turned into nothing. Edris is helpless with rage and frustration, for who would take her word against his?

And what's a poor girl to do? Edris can almost hear the poet's sarcastic voice.

The reading is over. The audience disperses, Jacob—the real poet—leading the way to the escalator, while the Beasley woman wheels herself in the direction of the nearby elevator.

"Enjoy his poems, my dear," Judith Beasley stops to say. "They can change your life."

Indeed, Edris thinks. *Or not*. It is every bit as likely that his poetry has merely set her back to square one—to that grid on the game board of life where she was poised as she entered graduate school and signed up for the poet's first workshop. Did she really believe she might someday be a new Emily Dickinson? The poet would have none of that. *Unearned sentiments*, he scrawled across her first offering. *Labored imagery*, across

her second. At the top of the third assignment he wrote, *See me*, and they began there: adversaries—"getting our blood up," he said later. And when she objected to what the two of them were doing together—"Where will it end?"—he was triumphant. "That's why you're not a poet; not yet. Because you know from the start how your poems will end, but the true art is in discovering the ending you didn't expect."

Edris realizes that Judith Beasley is still here, still before her. She has produced a cell phone and is bent over it, poking at numbers on the keypad.

"I have to call my hubby to come and get me," she tells Edris. "Do you mind my company while I wait?"

Edris, who does mind, hesitates, but sits patiently through the call. Then she says, "Would you like to talk to *him*?" She gestures with the poet's book, open to the stolen poem. "I know him pretty well."

"Actually *talk* to him?" Judith Beasley is wide-eyed. "Who wouldn't?"

"Let me borrow your phone."

"Oh my, certainly." She hands Edris the phone. "Jacob will die when I tell him. All of them will. They'll just flat *die*."

Edris dials the poet's number and waits. She imagines the impulse of the call leaping from cell tower to cell tower across the country, Florida to California in a matter of seconds. And now the poet's phone rings.

"Yes," he says. Never *Hello*. Always *Yes*, as if he is open to any adventure the voice in his ear might offer.

"Hi," Edris says. "It's me."

There is the briefest of silences until he realizes. "Eddie," he says. "I'll be damned. Where are you?"

"I'm in a bookstore in Florida."

"What a surprise," he says. "Who'd have thought Florida has them?"

"I just picked up your new book," Edris says. "I hadn't realized it would be out so soon."

The old marketing thing," he says. "You know: time it for the holiday gift giving."

"I was interested to read the spider poem," she says. She keeps her voice as level as she knows how. "I noticed you gave the credit to your so-called collaborator."

Now the silence is pronounced. Edris glances at Judith Beasley, who is hunched forward in the wheelchair, eyes still wide, one hand partly outstretched as if she is already reaching for the cell phone, her lips already forming the effusive words she will say to the famous poet.

"I get it," the poet says. "The woman scorned."

"People used to tell me how you stole your students' work," Edris says. "How you seduced the smart ones and ransacked their talent." She sees the Beasley woman's eyes widen. "I never believed a word of them."

"So you've learned something," he says. "*Mathein pathein*. You know the phrase?"

"It's Greek to me," Edris says.

"Anyway, I never claimed credit for your precious little poem," he says. "But I was there, intimately, when you wrote it. It all depends on how you define *translation*. Now, if you don't mind, my lunch is waiting for me."

He breaks the connection. Edris lowers the phone as Judith Beasley reaches out to take it from her.

"I'm awfully sorry," Edris says. "He said he had to take another call."

Later, looking down from the balcony onto the bookstore's main floor, the first thing Edris notices is a scowling Judith Beasley being pushed toward the front of the store by a man probably her husband. Readers in various postures are pulling their feet back under their chairs as she passes. A uniformed security guard—a sign of the times—crosses in front of the checkout counter, dressed in white shirt, dark trousers and necktie, a pager clipped to his belt. Miss Lacy stands behind her Customer Service desk, prepared to minister to who knows how many more pseudonymous clients.

Edris is still hugging the poet's books against her chest, though she cannot think what she will do with them. She has wandered to the poetry section—a modest space among the store's many larger categories—and browsed the shelves for more of his work, but his place in the alphabet is empty. It is apparent that all her ex-lover's books were displayed on the table at the reading, which means that her arms are embracing the store's entire inventory of his work.

Returning to the overlook, she chooses the newest book and rips out the "Spider and Wasp" page first, leaving a ragged tear that half-reveals the text on the following page. She crumples the poem—her poem—into a ball and drops it over the balcony rail. A young man walking below pushes it indifferently with his shoe and disappears under her on his way to the music department. She gathers another half-dozen or so pages in her left hand, rips them out of the *Poems New and Selected*, and tosses them over. The pages separate and flutter downward like leaflets.

Now she tears the front cover off the book—easier than she had expected—and sails it, Frisbee-like, toward the bookstore entrance. The cover arcs upward, appears to encounter turbulence, then hooks sharply to the left and dips to the carpeted main floor. Edris sees that she has already caught Miss Lacy's attention; she waves—*Hello, it's Edith*—before she throws in the clerk's direction what's left of the poet's latest book.

In all, she has fewer than a dozen books to dispose of—the poet often lamented the shamefully meager poetry selections of the large bookstores—and they are slender volumes. But she must hurry. Miss Lacy is leaving her desk, trotting toward the checkout—to call attention, to alert Security. Edris finds the three paperback copies of the poet's first book—the title that brought her to his campus—and tears them one by one along their spines. She flings each half-volume to separate points of the compass.

The security guard is on his way to the escalator, cell phone at his mouth as if summoning further assistance. Miss Lacy trots in his wake.

The store's patrons are beginning to catch the fever of some sort of crisis; people are stopping to look up at Edris.

The last page of the last book is fluttering downward into the half-circle of the curious under the balcony when Edris feels a firm hand on her shoulder.

"Miss," the security guard says, "you'll have to come with me."

She turns to face him, her hands empty except for the one book she has come here to buy. The guard is a stocky young man with unruly red hair and a look on his face both stern and apprehensive. *Is this woman insane? Will I have to subdue her?*

"Of course," Edris says.

He takes the Powell book from her and examines it, as if he is surprised to find it intact. Then he reads the index card tucked into it. He hands the book back to her and gestures toward the escalator.

"This way, Miss Morrow," he says.

As she arrives at the main floor, those customers who have not already gone on about their business make way for her. No one talks to her, nor do they seem to be talking among themselves. Two or three people are occupied in picking up pieces of the books she has torn apart, but she can't tell if they are customers or clerks.

What amazes is how her rage is not used up, how each book she wrecked rekindled her anger and turned destruction into celebration. In her perfect little poem the wasp died suspended in a snug shroud of spun silk, while the spider swayed, serenely asleep, in the center of its handiwork. In reality, by morning the wasp had escaped, leaving a wide tear in the web that the spider had not repaired by the time they left the hotel.

Do No Harm: At an Epicenter of America's Anti-Abortion Movement

Jonathan Fink

1. Arrival

The time is 5:15 in the morning, and I am sitting alone in my car in a parking lot in Pensacola, Florida. The sun has yet to come up. Thirty feet in front of me, a man fumbles with materials in the back of his convertible Mustang. He is middle-aged and has close-cut hair. His polo shirt is tucked neatly into his khaki pants. He is wearing running shoes and a braided belt. He takes a poster-board sign from the trunk of his car and places the sign face down on the ground. He does a couple of deep knee bends, stretches each arm across the front of his chest, and then removes a roll of duct tape from the trunk of his car. As the man works to secure a post to the sign, I think of my shoddily assembled art projects from middle school and high school. My car's engine and lights are off, and the man sees me for the first time when he closes the trunk and lifts the sign from the ground.

The front of the sign contains an enlarged image of an aborted fetus with the word "Murder" printed along the bottom of the image. The image is instantaneously unsettling. The fetus appears both human and nonhuman. Body parts are recognizable (hands and fingers, arms and legs, eyes dark behind thin eyelids). The fetus is covered in blood and viscera, and the fetus's body, which has been dismembered (presumably from the act of the abortion itself), has been reassembled proportionately on a lab tray. Before the photograph was taken, someone placed a dime beside the fetus's head (the fetus's head is slightly larger than the dime) for scale. The image itself has been tinted red and, for the protester's means, the authenticity of the image is irrelevant. The intent of the sign is clear: to frighten, shock and criminalize any woman arriving at the clinic to receive an abortion.¹

The man standing behind the Mustang eyes me uncertainly. The placement of the abortion clinic—along a busy road in a primarily business-centered section of the city—requires that protesters and abortion clinic volunteers park next to each other in a strip-mall parking lot across the street from the clinic. Because I am new, the protester doesn't know if I am a fellow protester or a clinic volunteer (or some arbitrary stranger in the public parking lot). I wait for the man to cross the street. That the protesters, clinic volunteers and even the clinic patients must share the same public parking lot seems both strangely absurd and stereotypically "American" in its democracy, clash of ideologies and bureaucratic hassle. I can't help but think of the beginning of the cartoons from my youth where Ralph and Sam—the wolf and sheepdog from *Looney Tunes*—greet each other and punch in at the time clock together before proceeding to torment each other over the course of the cartoon.

Across the street somewhere is Bill Caplinger. Bill is the organizer of the escort volunteers at the abortion clinic. I have never met Bill. When I talked with him on the phone, Bill described himself as being 6'4 and heavyset—hard to miss. The clinic is surrounded by a six-foot-high gray picket fence. The only parking available at the abortion clinic is for the clinic staff. (I will soon learn that, because clinic patients must find their own parking, the navigation of parking becomes the central component in the escalation or diffusion of tensions between the protesters, clinic workers, volunteers and patients.) The clinic itself resembles two 70's-era townhomes. The gray paint on the building matches the gray of the fence and the entire look and feel of the complex resembles a moderately rundown office complex. The building could easily be mistaken for a struggling real estate office, or lodging for indifferent college students.² The entrance to the clinic faces the clinic's small parking lot. The clinic parking lot and buildings are surrounded entirely by the fence except for the entrance to the street. All individuals must use this entrance to access the clinic and the protesters

have set up just beyond the fence on both sides of the driveway entrance.

Looking across the street at the protesters, I understand their effect. My stomach tightens, and I don't want to get out of the car. There is a part of me that feels absurd for being afraid. The fifteen or twenty protesters who are setting out folding chairs and lifting or unrolling signs appear to be predominantly middle-aged-or-older men, their wives and children, and different forms of youth groups. Do the young women arriving for the abortions know the protesters will be lining the street? Have the women been prepped in some way to anticipate the collective will that rallies against them—a will that rallies simultaneously, the protesters would argue, for the unborn fetuses?

The protesters are quiet when I cross the street. Several of them eye me, and one protester says under his breath (his tone more menacing than suggestive), "You don't have to go in there." Inside the fence, a man is setting up two camcorders to bracket the driveway and record the actions of the protesters. In a low voice, without raising his head (though watching me closely), he says, "Do you have an appointment?"

"Are you Bill?" I ask. "I talked with you the other day on the phone. I'm Jon."

"Jon," he says. "Welcome. We've been expecting you." He extends his hand. He's wearing a Hawaiian-type shirt and draped across his shoulders is a small towel. With his other hand he takes the towel and wipes the sweat from his forehead. "Let me introduce you to the police officers," Bill says.

2. The Need for Police

When Dr. David Gunn was shot and killed in Pensacola on March 10, 1993, he became the first abortion provider killed in the anti-abortion movement in the United States. The incident received national news coverage. The *Pensacola News Journal* described the circumstance:

About a dozen protesters were in front of Pensacola Women's Medical Services when the gunman approached Dr. David Gunn at the rear of the Cordova Square office on Bayou Boulevard. Gunn, 47, of Eufaula County, Ala., was shot three times at point-blank range at about 10 a.m.

He died during surgery at Sacred Heart Hospital just before noon. Gunn's death is the first violent incident connected to abortion protests locally since Christmas morning in 1984, when two doctors' offices and a women's clinic were bombed. Michael F. Griffin, 31, of the 8500 block of Olympia Road, was arrested and charged with an open count of murder after he walked to the front of the clinic where the protesters were demonstrating.

He told two police officers there, "I just shot someone and he's laying behind the building," a Pensacola police report said.

John Ellis, a witness, said Griffin calmly walked up to Gunn and fired three bullets before dropping his .38-caliber handgun and approaching police.

"He didn't try to get away or anything," said Ellis, who jumped in a bush after the first shot fired.

Griffin never spoke to Gunn before firing his weapon, Ellis said.

Police recovered the blood-smeared handgun in the grass behind the building.³ (Lamb and Tritschler)

In July of 1994, fifteen months after Dr. Gunn's murder, Dr. John Braynard Britton and his escort, retired Air Force Lt. Col. James Barrett, were shot and killed by Paul Hill in front of a Pensacola abortion clinic. In a retrospective article published September 1, 2003 (two days before Paul Hill's execution by lethal injection), the *St. Petersburg Times* described Dr. John Britton as a "gaunt, bedraggled man, a father of four whose wife died of lung cancer in 1983. He lived in Fernandina Beach

and took over as clinic doctor after Gunn was killed in 1993.” (LaPeter) The article continues by describing the events of Dr. Britton’s and James Barrett’s murders:

In early 1994, Britton and Barrett, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel who occasionally drove him to and from the airport, were profiled in GQ magazine. The article pointed out that Barrett, a small, tough-talking man who was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Pensacola, carried a gun and was willing to use it.

Some clinic supporters did not want Barrett to carry a gun.

“We wanted to counteract the idea that there were two armed camps,” says Bill Caplinger, a clinic escort and member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Pensacola.

Caplinger had a good-natured conversation with Barrett, but the disagreement was unresolved. Still, the night before the murders, Barrett called Caplinger. “By the way, listen, don’t worry,” Barrett said, “I’m not packing.”

“The next morning,” Caplinger says, “he’s killed.”

Hill always has said he spent eight days thinking about the shootings. On the morning of July 29, 1994, Hill says he woke at 4 and prayed. Then he went to the clinic, hiding his shotgun in the cardboard tube he used to carry his protest signs.

He hid the gun in front of the fence. When Barrett pulled into the Ladies Center parking lot, Hill retrieved his gun and shot [Barrett] as he stepped out of his Nissan pickup truck. Barrett’s wife, June, sitting in the jump seat, threw herself to the floor. She knew her husband was dead.

Hill ran behind an oak tree on the other side of the car, knelt down, reloaded and aimed at Britton. The doctor, wearing a homemade bulletproof vest, darted his head back and forth, trying to avoid the blasts. Hill fired and missed. He lowered

his aim and fired again, hitting Britton in the body. He fired three more shots. Britton stopped moving. Mrs. Barrett was taken to the hospital with injuries to her chest and arm.

Caplinger, the clinic escort, visited her there. After her husband was shot, she told Caplinger, Britton asked: "June, do you have the gun?"

"No," she said.

Caplinger recalls: "And I said, 'June, I don't know why I'm saying this, but I'm glad there wasn't a gun in the car.'

"And she said, 'Bill, I'm glad there wasn't a gun in the car either, because it wouldn't have made any difference, and I'd hate to think of anyone spending their last few seconds of their life scrambling for a gun.'" (LaPeter)⁴

3. The Routine

Two side-by-side doors mark the entrance to the abortion clinic buildings. The door on the left leads to the medical facilities. The door on the right leads to the waiting room area and the bathroom. Bill leads me through the door on the right. An aging television crackles with a newscast in the empty room. Dorm-like furniture sparsely fills the space. Bill reaches down and lifts a yellow mesh half-shirt from a pile beside the television. The half-shirt says "Clinic Escort" across the front and back, and Bill asks me to place the half-shirt over my t-shirt. Bill leads me back out of the front door and through the door on the left to the clinic itself. Sitting at a folding table are two officers: a lieutenant named Doug and another officer with a flattop haircut and sunglasses. Both men are heavily muscled and say "hello" and nod to me in such a way that I interpret their body language as implying that they see me, but don't necessarily need to speak to me. Doug is African American and I wonder what his experience has been like navigating the complex racial tensions and histories of the area.⁵ Bill and I do not go any farther into the clinic. We step back outside. Another officer is standing on the

steps. He nods at Bill, and Bill introduces me. The officer shakes my hand without breaking his gaze from the protesters.

Two other clinic escorts have arrived since Bill and I went inside. Steve and Kelly also wear the yellow half-shirts. Kelly is in her early twenties, pixyish in stature, and ebullient in personality. She says “hello” to me with the sort of chime a person might expect to hear at a high school reunion. Steve appears to be in his late fifties. He has white beard stubble and wears a baseball cap. Several of the protesters trill greetings to Steve, liltily calling, “There’s the photographer!”

“I took their pictures last week,” Steve says, “and they didn’t like it very much. One of them had a sign that had that symbol for family values on it from the license plates, and I thought I would get a picture of the sign in case they weren’t allowed to use the image. It’s kind of fun to get them stirred up sometimes. Shake the cage a little, you know?” Steve is a retired chemical engineer. He says he worked here and in New Orleans but was displaced for a while after Katrina. Bill has gone over to arrange plastic lawn chairs and traffic cones near the entrance of the driveway to create a traffic lane that guides cars around the tree in the middle of the parking lot and points them back out towards the street. After the cars complete the progression around the tree, the passenger side of the cars faces the clinic door, approximately fifteen feet away. Bill places a sign in the front cone. The sign instructs drivers to continue driving all the way around the tree and not stop upon entering the lot. “O.K.,” Bill says, “let me tell you about the routine.” Bill explains the following rules and guidelines governing the ways in which the clinic escorts interact with the patients arriving at the clinic:

1. The first step is to make sure that the drivers continue to drive all the way around the tree. If the driver stops the car when he or she enters the parking lot, other cars will bottleneck and cars with patients will have to stop in the middle of the protesters. Having the cars stop in the middle of the protesters is always problematic—an unnecessary escalation of tension.

2. The clinic escort should ask the driver if the patient is receiving I.V. sedation.⁶ If the patient is receiving I.V. sedation, then the driver has to come in and sign that he or she is going to drive the patient home after the procedure. If the patient is not receiving I.V. sedation, then the driver can either drop the patient off and come back and pick her up, or the driver can park somewhere and come back and wait at the clinic for the patient. If the patient is not receiving I.V. sedation and is by herself, then she can go park and we can meet her wherever she parks and walk with her back to the clinic if she doesn't want to walk through the protesters by herself. If the patient arrives alone and is receiving I.V. sedation, then we have to turn her away because she is required to have someone drive her home after the procedure.

3. Patients cannot park at the clinic because there are only spaces for staff. There are one or two spots next to the fence that can be used at our discretion, but, in general, patients can't park at the clinic. We also can't tell patients where to park. The best thing to say is, "You can park anywhere it is legal, and we can come meet you at your car and walk with you if you like." We used to park the cars for the patients, but this caused too many problems. We parked them at a service station down the road, but the protesters kept calling the police to try to get the cars towed. Cars can't be towed unless there is a sign specifically stating that cars will be towed for parking in that spot. The best thing to say, again, is, "I'm sorry, but I'm not allowed to tell you where to park. You can park anywhere it is legal." Most individuals end up parking in the strip-mall parking lot across the street. Their cars can't be towed there because there is no sign prohibiting parking, but we can't tell them to park there because we don't own the lot.

4. We always have to make sure that the entrance is clear when the clinic doctor arrives. If the car carrying the doctor stops in the middle of the protesters, then the scene could turn ugly. When we find out that the clinic doctor is on his or her way, we make sure to clear the drive so that the doctor can enter the building as quickly as possible.

5. Abortions are only performed on Friday mornings. The clinic usually sees 25-30 patients on a typical Friday. Not all of the patients arriving are here to have an abortion. Some are returning for follow-ups. We try to keep an idea of how many people are inside the building, including the staff. The protesters have someone counting on the street and if the number passes the occupation limit, the protesters will call the fire marshal and have the building evacuated. If we feel like the numbers are getting too high, we will sometimes ask the arriving patients to leave and come back in 15-30 minutes so that the numbers can go down a bit.

"Got it?" Bill asks. "Walk with me over here and I'll tell you about some of the protesters." Bill and I stand at the front of the abortion clinic building, and he points to the individuals in the crowd. Bill has a measured way of speaking, pausing periodically: "That man standing on the corner there, his name is Mark Farmer." Bill explains that Mark Farmer has been protesting at the clinic for many years. Mark has a chest-length beard and he wears a mesh baseball cap. In his flannel shirt and jeans, he resembles a contemporary, western version of Santa Claus, if Santa were also standing behind a cheese-board sign containing the image of a fetus's head missing a lower jaw and part of the skull. Bill says that Mark has been arrested previously for disorderly conduct during his clinic protests. Mark is Catholic and is being represented in the case by the American Catholic Lawyers Association.⁷ Adjacent to Mark is a group of young people varying in age from approximately ten to twenty. Bill explains that the eight individuals standing there are all the sons and daughters of the pastor at Clear Spring Baptist Church. All of the children are modestly dressed in pants or ankle-length skirts. The young women wear their hair pulled back in long braids or combed straight, hanging past their shoulders. Bill says that he hasn't seen their father, Pastor Brown, out protesting for a few weeks. Two of the women stand on the opposite side of the street where they have unrolled a 12-foot-long sign that

reads, "Thou Shall Not Kill." On each end of the sign is an image of a smiling baby.

Bill points out a local pharmacist standing among the protesters. The pharmacist holds a young boy in his arms. The boy is sleeping with his head on the pharmacist's chest. The pharmacist also has unrolled a vinyl sign that reads, "Abortion is not health care!" On the sign there is the image of the caduceus (the wand with wings entwined by a double-helix of two serpents: the symbol of the medical profession). Interspersed among the protesters are other adults and children, some sitting on folding lawn chairs. "See that guy standing on the corner there?" Bill asks. "His name is Nathan Monk." I have heard of Nathan Monk. I have been told by my university students that he is a young priest in town and several of my students have informed me about his work with the homeless. He is wearing jeans and a black shirt and a priest's collar. One of his friends—a young man with quarter-size disks in his earlobes—is standing next to Nathan. The time is approximately 6:00 a.m. Bill begins to say something to me, but then a car pulls into the clinic parking lot and Bill steps out to wave the car through the cones and folding chairs and around the tree.

4. The Fervor of Irreconcilable Ideals

The protesters, clinic escorts and police officers standing in the parking lot and along the road remind me of the abandoned souls in Greek mythology who, without the coins to pay Charon the ferryman, must wait for 100 years along the shore of the river Styx while the paying souls are granted passage on Charon's boat. I've always imaged the mythological scene as a mix of inactivity and boredom juxtaposed with intense fervor when Charon and the paying souls arrive. When the first car containing a patient pulls into the lot, the protesters focus all of their energy on the young woman in the car. One protester lifts a small bullhorn from the ground and repeats, "Don't murder your baby!" Another male protester starts yelling in falsetto, "I love you, Mommy. Don't murder me! Don't throw me in a blender, Mommy!"

Like the introduction of a flute or oboe in a symphony, the voice of a female protester modulates the other voices by calling out, "Your baby will love you if you give it the chance. Your baby has a heartbeat and fingernails!"

After the car pulls around the tree and stops in front of the building, Bill motions for the man driving the car to roll down the window. The man cracks the window a few inches. In the backseat, a woman holds an infant. The driver looks scared, nodding solemnly as if he has been pulled over for a traffic violation when Bill asks the driver questions about I.V. sedation and if the driver is going to stay. When the woman steps out of the car, the pitch and volume of the protesters intensify. Kelly leads the woman (who is still holding the infant) into the left door of the clinic. As the man asks Bill where to park and Bill explains to the man that Bill can't tell the man where to park, another car pulls into the lot. The second car is a dented Dodge Durango driven by a young man. I do not see a woman in the car. Steve hustles to direct the Durango around the tree and talk to the man driving the car. As the first car exits the clinic lot, Kelly comes out of the clinic office and says that the man driving the first car needs to come back, that the woman can't bring her infant into the clinic, and the man needs to come and sit with the infant in the waiting room adjacent to the clinic. Bill nods his head and watches the car to see where the man parks.

Steve has been talking to the young man driving the Durango. Steve instructs the young man to park in the back corner of the clinic lot. I ask Steve why he asked the young man to park there and Steve says that every story is different and the clinic escorts can use those one or two spaces at the escorts' discretion. He says that a young woman, covered with a blanket, is lying down in the back of the Durango. Steve says the driver explained that the young woman is Catholic, and she is worried her priest might be protesting outside and will see her. Steve says he and the driver are going to help her into the building. The woman will wear the blanket over her head. As the young man and Steve begin to assist the young woman under the blanket, the protesters yell to the

young man: "You don't have to do this to her. You will face God's judgment for this. You're not a man if you help her!" Bill returns from the parking lot with the driver of the other car, and Kelly steps out of the office as a large pickup truck pulls into the clinic parking lot. I step up to the sign and the makeshift lane of plastic chairs and traffic cones and wave the driver around the tree. When he pulls around the tree I approach the driver's window. As I talk to the man, he shakes his head and stares at the protesters. The woman next to him in the truck sits calmly with one hand in her lap as the other hand holds a cigarette.

"Who do those fuckers think they are?" the man says and nods towards the protesters. "They don't know me or my situation." The large truck idles loudly and seems to shudder in unison with the man's anger. I ask him if he is going to wait with the patient or if he is going to return. When he says he is going to wait with the patient, I ask him if he would like for me to meet him at his car and walk with him back through the protesters. "Where can I park?" he asks. I tell him that I can't tell him where to park, and he looks at me as if I am mocking him. "We're not allowed to tell people where to park, but I'll tell you where I parked," I say. "I parked in the parking lot across the street." He nods his head and the woman steps out of the other side of the truck and takes a long inhalation on her cigarette. I feel an impulse to tell the woman that she shouldn't be smoking if she is expecting a baby. Seeing the woman smoking shakes me more than anything I have seen. William Butler Yeats claimed that a person's most important arguments are with himself or herself, and when I see the woman smoking as she steps out of the truck, something rises in me. I want her to protect the child that is inside her. I want to help the woman feel safe and loved. Instead, I say nothing, and the truck engine roars along with the protesters. She drops the cigarette to the ground and puts it out with her tennis shoe and follows Kelly into the clinic. "I like your top," Kelly says to the woman and smiles. "It's cute." The woman nods and smiles back. I watch the truck pull across the street to see where the man parks, so I can go walk with him. The first man has now returned, and,

holding the infant, he steps into the adjacent waiting room. Bill stands beside me and places his hands on his hips. I ask him why they can't have an infant in the clinic. He replies, "Can you imagine having an abortion and hearing the sounds of a crying baby? Don't you think that would probably be pretty traumatic for the patients?"

As I walk across the street to meet the man at his truck, I see the first signs of daybreak. The sun can't be seen, but there is the sense of light permeating the horizon. There have been few days in my life where I have been awake before sunrise, and the transition from night to morning has always felt restorative to me, like the slow tuning of a musical instrument. The protesters' faces and forms begin to take definitive shape. As I wait for the cars to pass before I cross the street (traffic is picking up and the tension of the scene is underlined by the anxiety of crossing back and forth across the busy intersection) the protesters speak to me directly: "We know you're new." "You will sit in judgment before God for your sins." "You will spend eternity burning in a lake of Hell fire." Nathan Monk stands next to me on the curb, and he tells me not to listen to the other protesters. Unlike many of the other protesters, he doesn't hold a sign. I nod at him then jog across the street.

When I reach the man's truck, the driver steps out of the driver's side and fumbles with his keys as he presses the lock button on the keychain. His hands are shaking, and he mumbles to himself. The man says, "Thanks a lot. You guys are doing a great job." I don't know how to respond. We walk quickly towards the clinic. The man leans forward slightly as if he is walking into a headwind. "The best thing is to just ignore the protesters," I say, even though I don't know if this statement is true. The mother and one of the daughters from Clear Springs Baptist Church call out to the man as we pass them, and a muscle flutters between the man's jaw and collarbone. We cross the street, pausing in the middle of the left-hand turn lane as cars speed past, some of them honking. I am unsure if the cars are honking in support or opposition to the demonstrators, but every time the cars honk, the protesters wave.

As we pass between the protesters standing on each side of the clinic driveway, a young woman yells out to the man walking beside me: “God is going to judge what you do here today, Sir. You will answer for these sins one day.” The man stops, turns and points his finger at the girl. His face is flushed, and his voice cracks as he says to her, “You should shut your mouth. You don’t know nothing. You should pray for me and not hate on me!” His entire body quivers with these words. The girl standing on the corner can’t be over fourteen years old. Her hair is pulled back in a ponytail, and she wears an ankle-length dress. The sleeves on her shirt reach to her wrists. Because she wears no makeup, the fear on her face is more readily seen. Her mouth is drawn into a tight grimace, and she clutches a Bible at her waist, her arms stiff. She tears up, and her eyes swim as the man yells at her. Two other young men, whom I assume are the girl’s brothers, move to her side. On the other side of the driveway entrance, Nathan Monk yells out, “Trust love, not hate.” I am uncertain if he is speaking to the girl, the man, me, himself or everyone.

The protesters are all very aware of the physical boundaries of the scene. They are not allowed to step onto the private property of the clinic, and they cannot physically obstruct the patients or escorts in any way. The ground seems to have taken on literal and metaphorical power, reminding me of the imaginary games we played in childhood where different sections of the earth were partitioned into patches of lava. I place my hand on the man’s arm to encourage him to keep moving. The fear and anger in the girl’s eyes are also directed at me. Standing between the crying female protester and the yelling man, I feel for the first time the full depth of complexity surrounding the abortion debate: Everyone at the clinic this morning has taken sides—through our actions and choices, we have all chosen to support or renounce the medical procedure of aborting a fetus—yet the implications (morally, emotionally, and physically) of these choices are as debatable, varied and elusive as the different circumstances of the women arriving for the procedure.

The man I am escorting skulks towards the clinic waiting room. Bill is at my side, whispering quietly that the doctor is on his way and we need to keep the driveway clear so there is no hesitation in the doctor's arrival.

5. The Doctor's Arrival

Some of the clinic escorts have never seen the abortion clinic doctor. I am surprised by this fact. The abortion clinic doctor is driven to the clinic by a police officer in an unmarked, tinted-window car. Bill explains that before Dr. Britton was murdered, the protesters owned some of the land surrounding the clinic and they built scaffolding around the fence of the clinic on which to stand and yell down at the patients. After Dr. Britton was murdered, the clinic gained control of the land, the scaffolding came down, and the police started driving the doctor and escorting him or her into the back of the building. "If a patient pulls in right now," Bill says, "it's imperative to pull the car off to the side to keep this lane clear. We can't have the doctor's car stopping in the midst of the protesters."

The protesters' voices swell when the black car with tinted windows arrives. No longer a collection of singular voices, the protesters seem to yell in unison. If the car were to stop among them, I imagine the force of their words and their wills crashing down on the car like the head-high waves I have seen during hurricane season on the usually-placid Gulf Coast—the way the water builds as if some beast is propelling itself below the surface until (unlike the long-curling waves of the Pacific) it overloads and dumps itself at once, plunging downward. A single night of these waves will re-carve the coastline.

After the car carrying the abortion doctor speeds quickly to the back of the building, Bill says, "Ok, we can relax now." One of the police officers comes out of the building and asks to speak to Bill. Bill and the police officer step aside as another car pulls into the parking lot. Steve directs the car around the tree and talks to the driver. When the patient steps out of the car, the protesters begin to call out to the young woman

as Kelly escorts the woman to the clinic door. "I like your top," Kelly says. "It's cute." "Thanks," the girl says and smiles. The driver of the car exits the clinic, and Bill waves all of the escorts over to talk to him. "Ok, here's the thing," Bill says. "Evidently the police officers are frustrated because one of the men who came in the clinic told the officers that we told him to park across the street. And they're upset because they have told the escorts many times that we can't tell people where to park." I feel a sinking feeling not unlike the initial downward descent of an elevator.

"I think that's my fault," I say. "I told a guy that I couldn't tell him where to park, but that I parked across the street."

"Well, evidently he told them that we told him to park across the street and the officers aren't very pleased right now," Bill says. "We should all just give them some space for a bit. I'll talk to them and everything will be fine. Let's just all take some deep breaths."

We nod in agreement and then Bill steps forward to meet another car that pulls into the clinic lot. I decide to move out of the way for a few minutes. As Bill talks to the driver of the car, I walk to the street. Traffic has built to the point that the sound of tires whirring past on asphalt cycles constantly—the rise of pitch as the cars approach and the fall of pitch as the cars recede. Nathan Monk waves me over, and I introduce myself. Nathan is younger than I imagined. Behind his beard, I see the face of a man in his early 20's. Though not necessarily at ease (as we talk, Nathan alternates between looking over my shoulder into the clinic lot and looking back out to the street for arriving cars), Nathan speaks openly and frankly. When I ask him what he is trying to accomplish by protesting at the clinic, he explains that he wants to provide a different voice than the protesters with the signs: "It's very easy to understand why these women would hate the church," Nathan says, "if the first thing they see when they come out of the clinic is someone waving a cross in their faces and calling them a murderer. This is when the women need the church the most. We want to provide them options, to help them understand that they are not alone. Maybe

some of the women who are coming here feel pressured to have an abortion by a boyfriend or parent, and the women don't feel like they have the means of support for raising a child, even if they want to keep the child. We want to let them know that the church can help fill that void."

As Nathan talks, I envision a young mother cooing over an infant in her arms as she is fussed over by friendly adults at a church picnic. This scene transforms in my mind to the watercolor image (ubiquitous in the church nurseries and church youth departments of my childhood) of Christ teaching lovingly, surrounded by attentive and adoring children. As I start to walk back towards the clinic entrance to join Bill and the other clinic escorts, Nathan mentions that he has a wife and child of his own, and I am confounded by this statement, but I do not ask him how he can be a Catholic priest and have a wife and child. My admiration for his dedication tempers with my suspicion that, if he is not officially a Roman Catholic priest, he disingenuously wears the priest collar and shirt in an attempt to manufacture authority.⁸

6. Every Story is Different

The sequence of patient arrival, protester objection, escort assistance and police oversight continues over my remaining ninety minutes at the clinic. While the pattern of interaction remains the same, the range of experience contained in the different individuals around me constantly shifts and evolves, deepening the complexities of the scene:

1. In one of our conversations, Bill tells me that he decided to visit Clear Springs Baptist Church when the pastor's family first started protesting at the clinic. "I wanted to see what they are all about," Bills says. "I drove out into Alabama and went to Sunday school and morning worship. The wife and one of the sons, both anxious and tense, sat next to me the entire time, never moving from my side."⁹

2. When an African-American man and woman arrive at the clinic, the protesters yell out, "1 in 3 African American babies are aborted! Don't participate in genocide!" As the man walks from his car to the

clinic after parking in the lot across the street, one of the older children from Clear Springs Baptist church walks beside the man, explaining to the man the protester's view that abortion in the African-American community perpetuates the disenfranchisement of African Americans.

3. A young woman exits the clinic, and Kelly asks the woman if the procedure was painful. I bristle at what I perceive to be Kelly's invasion of the woman's privacy, although I am admittedly interested in hearing the woman's answer. "A little," the woman says. The young woman wears a t-shirt and pajama bottoms. Kelly places her hand lightly on the woman's arm, and the woman smiles.

4. Among the protesters I see a young man and woman holding hands and praying silently. The couple resembles coiled springs: the muscles tense around their closed eyes, their mouths moving quickly, their hands clenched.

5. I notice the man with whom I walked from the truck (and who shouted back and forth with the female protester) standing on the steps to the clinic and talking to the officers. He speaks amicably with the officers, discussing the types of guns they use and the guns he owns.

6. One of the female protesters yells out to one of the patients to think about why all of the escorts are men. While this statement is untrue (Kelly, of course, is female, and Bill has mentioned other women who volunteer as escorts at the clinic), I am intrigued by the implications of the protester's statement. Later, the same protester yells out that the escorts are "getting rich off the murder of babies." None of the escorts are paid in any way and, again, I am intrigued by her assumptions. What do these statements reveal (if anything) about the protester's relationships with men and finances?

7. A woman and her daughter arrive on foot and, virtually unnoticed, walk through the protesters and up to the clinic.

8. I ask Bill how the officers are assigned the duty at the clinic and he says that the duty is not required; the officers select (based on seniority) the clinic duty and receive compensation above their base salaries. I am

uncertain if the officers' motivations for requesting the duty are financial, personal, political, moral, or a combination of factors.

9. The protesters sing a cappella hymns at one point in the morning. Later, when a protester begins an impromptu sermon on the megaphone, Steve says, "This guy's not so good. Not a lot of style. The other guy they used to have? Now he had style."

10. While waiting for his wife to have an abortion, a young man sits quietly on the steps of the clinic. "We have two other kids," the man says to me, "and the doctor told us my wife's pregnancy is a dangerous one, and she might die. We thought about it and prayed about it and this choice seemed the best for our family and children." He nods towards the protesters and says he doesn't have any hard feelings towards them.

7. Your Brother's Keeper

In contrast to the protesters' yelling when the patients arrive, the protesters are relatively quiet when the patients leave the clinic. The protesters frown at the exiting cars; the decisions of the patients have been made, and the consequences of the patients' choices proceed from the clinic into the paths of the patients' lives. While no two emotional experiences of the patients are exactly the same, I imagine one commonality of all women arriving at the clinic: No matter what choice the women make, the implications of that choice take form immediately in the women's lives once the decision to have or not to have the abortion is made. Rarely is a person faced with a choice that marks such a clear division. Or, perhaps more accurately, rarely is an individual made so aware of a choice that will mark such a clear division in her life.

The image that stays with me most from the abortion clinic is the sight of the young woman with the blanket overhead being led by Steve and the young man into and, later, out of the clinic. The young man who brought her in the dented Durango turns out to be her brother. Waiting outside the clinic, he says to me, "I didn't even know my sister

was pregnant until this morning. She called me at five in the morning and said, 'Can you take me somewhere and not ask me any questions?'" He explains that her boyfriend was supposed to drive her, but he never showed up and will most likely not be seen again. "I bought her that truck less than a year ago, and she's already dented it up," he says, pointing to the fender and the clear, red tape across the broken taillight. Beneath the blanket, the young man's sister is as anonymous as the abortion clinic doctor whisked to the back of the building, the priest she imagines on the street, and the child inside her.

While I feel the impulse to characterize her experience and image as metaphors for the abortion debate, the act of symbolism itself feels like a deflection. For the young man who brought her to the clinic, the woman beneath the blanket is not a symbol or metaphor. What would he not do for her if asked? Where would he draw the line? What are the limits of love? He looks out at the protester preaching through the megaphone as the protester calls out, "You are your brother's keeper." The statement is a distortion of a line from the book of Genesis. The actual quotation is not a declaration, but a question, and is spoken by Cain and not God. God asks Cain in Genesis 4:9, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain replies. The hardest questions are answered by questions in turn. Such is the nature of the abortion debate, and I imagine the brother and his sister arriving at her house and the brother helping her from the back of the car. Is she in tears? Is she frantic? Is she relieved? Is she distant and withdrawn? Does the brother speak to her softly, or is he sullen and dismissive? Will this day bind them together or tear them apart? Who cries? Who remarks how quiet the house now seems? Which sibling moves first to comfort the other?

Notes:

¹ The Clear Springs Baptist Church website states, "While those spoiled with philosophy and vain deceit might try to argue, the picture of the murdered baby is always a convicting witness to what abortion really is, and what it really does. These pictures give an undeniable testimony to the fact that 'Pro-choice' is synonymous with 'Pro-murder.'" (Clear Springs Baptist Church)

² The abortion clinic will close approximately five weeks after my initial visit to volunteer as a clinic escort. I will volunteer three separate times at the clinic before its closing. A November 6, 2009 article in the *Pensacola News Journal* states, "The Community Healthcare Center, one of two Pensacola abortion clinics, is closed because of its failure to pay a \$413,000 fine to the state for a licensing violation. The North Ninth Avenue clinic, in operation for more than 25 years, was licensed as an abortion clinic as well as a clinical laboratory for blood testing. In January, a survey by the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration determined that the center's lab license had been expired for 413 days. A fine of \$1,000 per day was imposed. AHCA is responsible for the licensing and regulation of health facilities and for administration of Medicaid. Since January, the abortion clinic has remained in operation while the lab has been shut down. But on Oct. 30, still unable to pay the fine, the clinic voluntarily shut down, said Tiffany Vause, AHCA press secretary. AHCA lawyers have offered a settlement agreement, which has not been accepted or rejected, she said. She would not reveal the amount." (Allen)

³ In March 1994, Griffin was sentenced to life in prison for killing Dr. Gunn.

⁴ When asked for his last words before his execution, Paul Hill stated, "The last thing I want to say: If you believe abortion is a lethal force, you should oppose the force and do what you have to do to stop it. May God help you to protect the unborn as you would want to be protected." (Clark County Prosecutor)

⁵ Later that night a 17-year-old African American man on a bicycle will be run over (the intentionality of the event will be heavily debated) and killed by a white police officer in a predominantly African-American section of the city. The young man's body will remain under the car for four hours before the body will be removed. When I see the photographs online in the morning, I recognize Doug among the officers on the scene.

⁶ Floridaabortion.com states, “Intravenous (I.V.) sedation provides a tranquil effect and helps to relieve the anxiety that women who undergo an abortion sometimes experience. We recommend intravenous (I.V.) sedation to our patients for the tranquil effect it provides and to relieve the anxiety that women who undergo an abortion sometimes experience. I.V. sedation gives an almost immediate calming effect without the pain associated with an intramuscular injection or the prolonged delay when given orally.” (All Women’s Health Centers)

⁷ The American Catholic Lawyers Association website states, “The American Catholic Lawyers Association, Inc., ACLA, is a non-profit religious organization dedicated to the free legal defense of the Faith and the rights of Catholics in America. Conceived and formed in 1990 as a Catholic answer to the American Civil Liberties Union and other left-liberal activist groups, the ACLA engages in a wide range of activities aimed at countering the forces of secularism in our society.” (American Catholic Lawyers Association) In reference to Mark Farmer’s specific case, the website states, “In Pensacola, Florida, ACLA attorneys are preparing for the upcoming criminal trial of pro-life activist Mark Farmer. Mr. Farmer, a diabetic who has had open heart surgery, is undergoing criminal prosecution because he and several other pro-life advocates vocally objected when they saw a young woman being pushed inside the door of one a [sic] Pensacola’s abortion clinic. Mr. Farmer, who has been demonstrating at this abortion mill for more than a decade, was arrested, handcuffed, booked and charged with ‘disturbing the peace.’ ACLA attorneys are conducting pretrial depositions of the State’s witnesses in preparation for the trial, which is schedule for April 2009.” (American Catholic Lawyers Association)

⁸ The Saint Faustina Old Catholic Church (of which Father Nathan Monk is listed as the pastor) answers the following questions in the “FAQ” section of their website. In response to the question, “Are you Roman Catholic?” the website states, “No, we are not a Roman Catholic Church.” (St. Faustina Old Catholic Mission) In response to the question, “How can you be Catholic if you aren’t under the pope?” the website states, “The word Catholic has two meanings in the Christian world. First, it means universal so in a certain since all person [sic] who are Christians are ‘catholic’ in a particular way. But secondly Catholic implies orthodoxy and remaining true to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the

Apostles. There are numerous Churches that are 'catholic' with out [sic] having Rome or the Pope as there [sic] head. The Antiochian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox are the ones most commonly known of." (St. Faustina Old Catholic Mission)

⁹ The Clear Springs Baptist Church website states, "One Sunday, [an abortion clinic escort] came to our church. We were quite surprised when he showed up for both Sunday School and the morning service. This raised a new question for us. If he continued to come out and tried to be our 'friend,' how far was it Biblically acceptable to fellowship with him? We consider it inappropriate to have extended fellowship with someone of his disposition. He is not a brother in Christ, although he likes to call himself a Believer. If 1 Cor. 5:9-11 forbids us to keep company with fornicators and extortioners, it would also not be appropriate to fellowship with an unrepentant accomplice of a baby-murderer, which is exactly what a clinic escort is." (Clear Springs Baptist Church)

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Private Literature

by Suzannah Windsor

Every man's memory is his private literature. ~Aldous Huxley

It's still early when the neighbors see old Margaret slicing through the face of the water in her red canoe. She paddles through the haze with a detached rhythm (up, out, huff, slice, pause, huff). Sweat beads in the creases of her face. Flies circle and land in her nest of hair. The sound of the paddle as it cuts through the water keeps her going, helps her focus, helps her remember where she is. She hears it slurping as it breaks suction, or tinkling like the bamboo wind chimes dangling over her porch, or something familiar, a song or a name that rings far in the back of her mind, a foggy place she can't quite reach.

Ahead stands the shore. There is no sandy beach on this side of the lake, only a soil-and-rock ridge with exposed roots, cut straight up from the water. Margaret squints at the cottage, empty black windows and paint curling in the sun. She imagines removing her slippers and standing on the ridge, hearing the crunch of grass beneath her feet, letting it tickle her toes. Imaginary-Margaret gathers an armful of maple leaves and tosses them, lets them catch the wind.

But there she is again in the canoe, uncomfortably perched on the damp foam-covered seat, still far from the land, dipping her paddle into the cool blue and hearing its sucking whirl.

George Hutchins casts his line in the water, watches the buoy bob not far from the end of his dock. He calls to his wife: someone had better call Arlene and let her know Margaret has slipped away again. After all that business about the veggie patch last week, better safe than sorry.

In the garden, Sylvia Hutchins hums 'Amazing Grace' as she uproots weeds at their roots. She turns to the lake, sees Margaret in her red canoe. Sylvia feels sorry about the whole situation—really she does—

but everyone agrees there are limits to how much one can take. She drops her trowel into the soft soil and pads toward the house.

The residents and cottagers of Trout Lake are acutely aware of Margaret Archer's presence. Many have known her and Arlene for years, since intending to settle into quiet retirement on the lake's shore. Others—middle-aged renters or young couples with roaring motorboats—know her only by reputation. There are questions regarding Margaret's illness, but never answers. They all agree prodding Arlene for information would be impolite.

When they bump into Arlene at Superfoods during their Sunday run to the city, they call to her like old friends, wave with quick hands, ask with forced smiles how her sister is doing. But when Arlene moves toward the hum of the freezers out of ears' reach, they exchange words and cocked eyebrows with the cashier at the checkout. Poor Arlene, they say. What a task. That sister of hers is a nightmare.

Trout Lake is no more than five hundred meters wide at its narrow end. Residents find the water's natural ability to carry sound infinitely useful for facilitating the transfer of necessary information, for keeping abreast of local issues and emergencies. Every shout or cry or crash of a silver tray can be heard, and they all agree neighbors have an obligation to help one another in times of trouble.

Naturally, it isn't long before people hear of Sylvia Hutchins's most recent difficulties with Margaret. Sylvia's veggie patch is the best on Trout, perhaps the best in three townships. Brilliant orange carrots with feathery green tops, crisp heads of lettuce, fragrant spring onions. It isn't that Sylvia is stingy enough to deny Margaret a walk through the patch or even a small sample, but the line must be drawn somewhere. One can't allow common lunatics to eat up one's hard earned work. There are limits, even to charity, they all agree.

Of course, on the far side of the lake, no one hears Sylvia's cries of protest, or what she later describes as Margaret's "feral growls." No one hears George Hutchins' threats or Arlene's subsequent pleading. Only one cottage stands on the far side of Trout Lake. Without a road leading

there, it can only be accessed by boat. And most imagine that the cottage—having been deserted as long as anyone can remember—will remain silent always.

Margaret stands on wide spread feet, stoops to hold the sides of the canoe and steps into the water. The hem of her skirt skims the lake as she sloshes toward land. She scales the side of the ridge and slithers over the grass until she is able to stand, smears the dampness from her hands across her shirt. Removes her wet slippers, leaves them near the ridge, treads barefoot past a patch of wizened blueberry bushes.

The grass is too long, choking out the cottage steps, growing up the side of the porch. She climbs the slanted planks that lead to the front door and pauses at the top to look back at the lake. Voices echo through the trees, hover over the face of the dark water. The untied canoe begins to drift away from the ridge, and Margaret thinks the handle of the paddle sticking out of the canoe looks like a hand waving goodbye. It cannot wait for her. She will have to swim back.

She cups her hands over her eyes to block out the sun's glare and leans toward the cottage windows, but the shades are drawn from inside so she can only see slivers of the room at angles where the blinds and window frames do not quite meet. One moment Margaret is frantically jiggling the tarnished brass doorknob, and the next she is standing inside the cottage wondering how she has gotten there. She steps over the maple branch and shards of glass that lay on the floor like crushed ice.

Margaret cocks her head to the side and inhales the pungent aroma of pine. The light from the doorway casts a long shadow on the floor, and she moves to the windows to draw up the blinds so she can see. On one end stands a round wooden table and chairs, a glass vase with pink silk roses. Across from it, an empty bookshelf and a hump-backed sofa shrouded in white linen. On the far end, a washbasin and brown cupboards.

She walks to the basin and picks up a faded knit washcloth laid over its edge as if someone has just finished cleaning. She likes its delicate pink trim. She'll bring it to Arlene as a gift. Arlene is always doing the dishes.

"Hello?"

"Oh, hi, is that Arlene?"

"It is."

"It's Sylvia calling."

Arlene bristles. After all that nonsense about the veggie patch last week, what could be next? A stream of dishwater trickles from her hand to her elbow. She folds her dishcloth over the side of the sink before moving toward a kitchen chair. There's something so familiar about the act of doing the dishes, of wiping counters, of sweeping floors. A sort of obligation, one she doesn't mind. Arlene tucks her free hand beneath her thigh to keep it from fidgeting. Then cautiously: "Sylvia—how are you?"

"George and I are fine, thank you. But, I thought I'd best let you know: we were outside a few minutes ago and we noticed Margaret out in the canoe."

Arlene straightens her spine and sticks out her chin. "Margaret's been asleep for half an hour in the sunroom. She isn't feeling well this morning."

"Listen to me Arlene." Sylvia's voice has lost its even tone. "Go check the sunroom yourself. She's gone across to that cottage again."

Arlene's heart sinks into her stomach.

"Oh, and George thinks he heard glass breaking, so you might want to bring a dustpan."

Arlene is twelve when she saves Margaret from drowning. The water is murky gray with the reflection of thick clouds overhead, gray with the stirring of sand from their feet. Arlene wears a hat to protect her pale face, though the sun hides. Margaret's hat is buried on the sandy shore while she dips in and out of the water. Hair clings to her face as

she bursts from a crouching position and splashes her sister, but Arlene doesn't like to be splashed. She trudges out to the sand and wraps herself in a towel.

Margaret wants to swim to the other side of the lake. It isn't far, and Father says he has been to the old abandoned cottage. He says there are fairies and water nymphs that guard it. He says there are blueberry bushes. She and Arlene can swim across and be back before Father returns from town. They can have blueberries and cream for afternoon tea, just like when Mother was still with them, before she went away to the dark place with the cold hallways. They can capture a nymph in a jam jar to show their friends.

But Arlene doesn't like to swim. And it looks like rain. There are no such things as nymphs. Father will be angry if they go without asking. Father has left Arlene in charge, and they are *not* swimming to the other side of the lake. She goes inside the house, leaves Margaret paddling in the water.

Margaret is big for her age, and a good swimmer. Father has taught her the breaststroke, how to kick her legs like a frog, how to put her face in the water then come up to suck at the air. Arlene isn't watching from the window anymore, so Margaret practices the stroke (kick, breathe, duck, push, kick, breathe, duck, push). She only imagines she is swimming across the lake, calling out to the blueberry nymphs. She doesn't intend to push out so far. She practices for so long she hardly notices she can't reach the floor anymore. Reeds tickle the soles of her feet like eels. It isn't a very deep lake, and it isn't very far across. She wants to see inside the cottage. She can just imagine, can't she?

Arlene blames herself as she drags Margaret's limp body from the water, leaving deep tracks in the sand. She rolls her sister on her side, thumps her on the back until she stirs. Margaret chokes, a hint of blood at the corner of her mouth where she has bitten her tongue. She begins to cry, high-pitched and breathless. Clutches at Arlene's bathing suit with weak hands, baby bird claws, and calls for her mother.

Arlene uses her hand to wipe away the blood and sand caked to Margaret's wan cheek, and bends to kiss her. This is what Arlene was born to do. She has always wanted to be a mother.

In the dimly lit bedroom, its window crudely boarded up as if by a child, Margaret explores a slumping stack of cardboard boxes. On the top of the pile is a series of spines neatly lined up, and she sits on the edge of the bed, brings the box to her lap. Feels the weight of it in her hands, runs a gnarled finger down the length of each spine. She squints through the haze in her eyes to read the words. The titles sound familiar. Has she ever read Hardy?

Margaret tears into the other boxes: long dresses of cream lace and lavender, lopsided straw hats, beaded handbags, gauzy neckerchiefs. She lifts the arm of a ruffled blouse to her nose and inhales, drawing back when a larder beetle emerges from a crease. She holds up the yellow blouse by the shoulders and lays it against her abdomen before poking an arm into one sleeve. It is tight over her own shirt and, before long, she flings it aside in frustration.

As she sifts through the rest of the garment box, something sharp grazes the back of her hand. She continues to dig and lifts out a wooden picture frame. The faces of a couple with a small child peer back at her. A long moustache following the curve of tightly smiling lips, small hazel eyes and a heavy brow, the twisted bridge of a nose. Then, soft rose cheeks, round baby-blues hooded by dark lashes, a gently upturned mouth. In the woman's arms is a white eyelet bundle, a bonnet tied with a satin bow under a dimpled chin.

Margaret wonders which of these people spent their life poring over Thomas Hardy novels.

Henry Eider is reading the paper when a knock rings through the house. Arlene's twisted face is at the door (trouble with Margaret again?) asking if she can borrow his canoe. Now, Henry has always prided himself on being a generous man. Hasn't he always donated money to those cancer people and others who come knocking on his

door all hours of day or night? But a canoe is something entirely different. People can't just go around asking for canoes—only God knows what that animal would do to it. But would a donation help? He has a fiver in his wallet.

"Please," Arlene pleads. "Margaret's gone off in our canoe and she's stuck at the other side of the lake."

Henry wonders if her words are meant to inflict a sense of fear. They are spoken dramatically enough that someone less acquainted with the situation might feel obliged to offer the canoe without question. Still, Henry thinks he's more likely to offer it on the basis of Arlene taking Margaret away, rather than bringing her back.

"Well now, I'm not so sure about all this. It's no secret Margaret doesn't have the best track record with other people's—"

"She's not a monster, Henry. She may have—well—episodes, but she still has feelings."

As the argument continues, Arlene's face grows more and more twisted until finally she turns her back on Henry and goes straight to the overturned canoe on the front lawn. She drags it through the narrow strip of sand that lines the shore, plunges its prow into the water, ignores his cries (Thief!) and abandons her shoes, gingerly steps onto the canoe's floating floor. Struggles to maintain balance as she pushes off. She may not be as spry as she once was, but by God, she's not dead yet.

Henry looks over the bay, scoffs at Arlene's weak limbs lifting and stroking, her pale underarms swaying in the morning light. He spits off the side of his deck and yells for all of Trout Lake to hear that lunacy must run in the family.

Margaret is lost in a cream lace and lavender dream. She is the lady with the round eyes, feeling the eyelet bundle in her arms, stroking a finger over the dimple. She shuts her eyes tightly and imagines she is waiting to hear the man's voice. She listens to hear him tell the

photographer to hurry before the child becomes restless, waits to feel his hand rest on the small of her back.

Margaret, she hears him whisper, but his voice sounds miles away, drifting through the shattered door, through the windows, through the rustle of leaves stirring on the cottage porch. It sounds so familiar.

Margaret.

But then she hears a splash outside, a thrashing. Something struggling in the water, choking on fluid, loud cries echoing through the lake. Incoherent cries. A baby bird clawing at the water around it, desperately calling for its mother. Margaret is sure that's all it is—a baby bird. A little sparrow. It's fallen from its nest and its mother doesn't know. She's looking for her baby bird and she can't find her.

Margaret is a good swimmer, but she is paralyzed by the horror of the sound, the sucking water. She cannot breathe or will herself forward. She doesn't want to see the baby drown. Her feet are leaden. Her head is tight and bursting with the ringing noise in her ears.

Margaret.

She looks down. The sleeping child in her arms has vanished. The drowning sparrow's cries have fallen silent. The man's voice rushes past her, pulsates through her.

What have you done?

Margaret opens her eyes, and she remembers. She remembers everything. But a moment later, it is gone.

Gone.

Henry Eider sits on his patio with his copy of the Daily so he can watch the thief and his canoe. He's glad to have a witness in George Hutchins down the beach, should anything happen to it.

Arlene has always seemed like such a nice lady, so levelheaded. But Henry won't be played for a fool again. Wolves in sheep's clothing, that's what they are. His charity ends here. No more donations for those bloodthirsty cancer people either.

He flips past the world events section of the paper and concentrates on the sports scores, looking up every now and then to check on his stolen property. The obituaries come next, and he glances over the names because, at his stage of life, he sees at least one dead friend or foe every Saturday. He remembers last year seeing “ELIZABETH MARY EIDER” in boldface type at the top of the page, remembers the way the once-familiar letters looked foreign, cold, unreal.

Today, Henry is relieved to find none of his friends or family have died. No former work colleagues from the city. But there is one name that sounds familiar:

JOHN EDWARD ARCHER. 76 years of age. Heart attack. Survived by daughter Anna Fielding (nee Archer), son-in-law Stephen Fielding, and grandchildren Emma, Thomas and Matthew Fielding. Predeceased by wife Eleanor Archer (nee Johnston).

Though he can't place the name, Henry guesses the poor wretch might be one of Margaret Archer's lunatic relatives from town. He's always wondered why the Margaret and Arlene don't share a surname—one of them must have been married at some point. Then again, maybe “Archer” was just the name of one of those canvassers who'd come around looking for a donation. He can't remember.

Arlene and John have come to an understanding, and they agree it's best if Margaret doesn't know. It won't be long before the pain slips away, before the memory dissolves deep into the lake. It can't be long. Arlene is, by far, the one most qualified to look after her. And after the accident, no one can expect John to take any more risks with Anna.

Margaret has a placid smile on her face the last time Arlene watches the red canoe heading back from the cottage, Margaret's sanctuary. Little Anna happily picks at a container of blueberries with pudgy fingers, juice staining her lips and tongue. Margaret paddles up front and John steers from the back. Between them is an empty box that had carried supplies, just enough to sustain them for a few days. The last few days. Just long enough for Margaret to once more escape into her

books, into her dreams. Just long enough for them all to imagine her well again.

But Arlene, unlike Margaret, is a realist. Her imagination does not take her to the same places. Margaret isn't getting better and Anna is too much like her mother. They know Anna must be taken away before that likeness becomes a danger.

John has closed up the cottage, shrouded its furniture, drawn its curtains. He hands Arlene the key. She does not want to know where he and Anna will go, though John leaves a phone number and assures her they will never be far if they are needed. But when they are gone, Arlene takes the liberty of doing what both know to be necessary: she tears the paper into exactly one hundred pieces and takes them out with the garbage. She will save him the obligation of her sister; Arlene will carry the obligation instead. John will meet someone new, someone who will help him care for the girl. They will be fine, all of them.

Margaret spends a full month in her wicker chair on the porch, staring out over the lake. She cries sometimes, like an injured bird, cries because she has lost something, but she isn't sure what. Sometimes she calls for her mother when she wakes from a dream. But there is something else too. Something she has lost.

One day Anna will know the truth. It's all set out there in John's will, a full confession. A wish to be understood, to be forgiven. They acted in love, they did what they thought was best. Surely it was for the best.

Every morning when Arlene wakes, she says a prayer on Margaret's behalf for the baby girl they all loved so dearly, somewhere in the city, the country, the world, who grows a year older each third of June. A little girl—now a woman—who may always fear water.

Arlene's underarms are wet with perspiration, shirt seams chafing her skin as she paddles. She reminds herself it isn't far to cross the lake—she's done it many times. Keeping everything at the cottage in order, making sure the mice don't make it their home. There is something that makes her want to clean, to see the wood grain shine, to

keep the books lined neatly in boxes and preserve mementos. To wipe away anything polluting the sanctuary's image. She likes to think it is she who keeps it alive, for dear Margaret.

Margaret is still sitting on the edge of the bed, the covers wrinkled beneath her bottom. She holds the photograph in her hands. "Look," she says, holding up the frame to face Arlene and smiling crookedly. "A beautiful family. A beautiful child. I would like to have a baby some day."

Arlene turns away until she regains composure. "Yes, darling." She can see something in Margaret's eyes. Her head is cocked to the side like she is trying to remember. A wide-brimmed straw hat is perched on her silvery curls.

"They like Hardy, you know. I think maybe I've read him before."

"Yes, you've always loved Hardy."

"Do you think they would mind if we borrowed some books? You could read them to me. My eyes get so tired."

Arlene places an arm around Margaret's shoulders, strokes her hair the way she did when they were young. "I'm sure they won't mind. We'll take them with us."

They sit for some time, looking at the photograph and not speaking. Arlene feels Margaret's shallow breathing as her hand rests on her back. She wonders what it would be like to forget. Sometimes she feels that Margaret is the more fortunate for it.

George Hutchins is still fishing off the end of his dock, Sylvia on her hands and knees tending her veggies, when they see Margaret and Arlene paddling back across the lake in Henry Eider's canoe, towing their own behind with rope.

"How many times is that now?"

Sylvia looks up from her carrots and hisses at George to lower his voice. "Twice this season at least," she says. "Arlene had to board up that window early in June, remember? I don't know why she doesn't have the whole thing knocked down—save herself the trouble of

cleaning it up every time Margaret goes on a rampage. Besides, who was daft enough to build a cottage where there's no road? It's an albatross."

"The cottage or Margaret?" He laughs and clucks his tongue, congratulates himself on his wit. "She's nuts, I say. She should be properly looked after by professionals."

"Positively wild. One never knows what she'll do next."

The canoe passes, and Sylvia moves to the end of the dock next to George. She waves to the sisters. "Found what you were looking for?" she calls with hands cupped aside her mouth.

Neighbors have an obligation to help one another, they all agree.

It is still early when Arlene brings out the silver tray — Earl Grey, two slices of buttered toast, half of a meticulously sectioned orange. Margaret will agree to nothing other than the tea, as Arlene coaxes a fork-speared orange crescent closer to her mouth. Margaret raises an arm to shoo it away, mumbles that she's tired.

Arlene gives up. "Shall I read you some Hardy while you snooze?"

Margaret's eyes snap open so sharply that for a moment, Arlene wonders if something has triggered a memory. The expression on Margaret's face is a mixture of surprise and disgust. She raises an indignant hand to her heart. "Do I like Hardy?"

Before Arlene can sigh, the phone rings. She bristles at the thought of speaking to Sylvia again. No one else ever calls.

Margaret hears Arlene in the kitchen, hears her cautiously answer the phone. She hears the silver tray crash on the floor and spin like a top. There are gasps, tears, but each fresh reaction is gone from Margaret's mind in a moment. Each is new, then old, then gone quicker than she can absorb it.

She squints, peers across the lake at the gray cottage. She likes to look at it and wonder who lives there. She doesn't remember ever seeing anyone coming or going from it. She marvels over why someone would

build a cottage where there is no road—a genius idea. Perhaps she'll go there one day.

As the breeze blows through the sunroom, Margaret drifts off in her wicker chair—not to the sound of Hardy as proposed, but to the sound of Arlene's voice cracking, crying into the telephone, sobbing a familiar name over and over—*Anna, Anna*—a name Margaret can't quite place. And all the while, dreaming of the little gray cottage, wondering if one day she might see a beautiful family slicing through the water in a red canoe, crossing the lake to get home.

Gator Love

Lisa Roney

"We terminate them," Larry said, darting his good eye back at me warily.

"But I was told you relocate them."

"I'm sorry, ma'am," he said. "They used to relocate gators back when they was endangered. But now it's the law that we have to terminate them if they are over six feet. It's too dangerous to trap and transport them. I wouldn't want to risk my own life." Silence fell between us. What he said made sense, but I didn't want to have anything to do with the death of an alligator, and I certainly didn't want to have alligator murder going on in the front of my house while I was saying my "I do's" in the backyard. I guessed it was better than the whole children-having-their-legs-bitten-off thing, but either kind of violence and mayhem would not augur well on my wedding day.

Two days earlier, one of the neighbors pointed out to my husband-to-be the bubbles rising to the surface of the rain-swollen pond, and then the two protruding eyes, unlikely little marbles floating there, vigilant. "Honey, come and look," Bruce beckoned from the front door. We stood shoulder to shoulder, watching and watched. Occasionally, we would see the scales on its back rise into sight, then sink again.

It was like being in touch with the mysteries of the universe until the neighborhood kids started coming by to look for it, some of them towing their morsel-sized Chihuahuas and Lhasa apsos near the edge of the black water. And, of course, until the gator came up on the bank to sunbathe its eight feet of hide.

Larry had driven up in a truck so scarred I couldn't tell what color it had once been. He jumped out while it still rolled and presented his card bearing the title of Florida Wildlife Commission Nuisance Alligator Trapper Agent. In Florida, as elsewhere, we make up for a lot with fancy titles. He'd stuck out his hand, which was missing the end of

a finger or two and rough with grime and callouses. Larry himself gave off a murky odor and had a face crisscrossed with more wrinkles than an elephant. I shook his rough hand, my own reeking of household cleansers.

I knew better than to judge him. As a 49-year-old woman about to marry for the first time and having dealt all week with a flooded yard that I was trying to drain, up to my knees in dank rainwater, out in that yard for all my neighbors to see, I myself had been the recipient of numerous *you-can't-be-a-bride* looks. So many, in fact, that I had begun to question my fitness for marriage. I'd been having a hard time fitting into the elegant bride image, and all my lurking fears of the more homely wifely role also came pouring down. I was the one here at home scrubbing the house in preparation for the wedding and dealing with alligators (in lieu of children, I suppose), while my soon-to-be husband was at the office. There were reasons other than sheer chauvinism, but the hair nonetheless prickled my neck.

Without another word, Larry began unloading equipment from the truck and set up a boom box-size machine that made a sound not unlike a bunch of teenage boys farting for entertainment purposes, evidently an imitation of gator noises. Noting a lack of transport space in the gear-loaded truck, I started getting a creepy feeling. That was when I'd asked him what would happen with the gator.

After Larry had explained that he'd have to kill it, I skulked back to the house to come to grips with how oddly this whole wedding thing was playing out. Bruce and I had struggled hard not to get caught up in what one friend referred to as the Wedding Industrial Complex. Amid the complexities of two mid-career lives, our friends and family being strewn across the globe, and the real estate bust, we'd tried to keep it simple, not to be too wasteful or ridiculous, not to give ourselves over to too much of a heteronormative and heterodox fantasy. After all, we are people who use such words and we thought we knew better.

We had bought wedding rings made from recycled gold and platinum. We had asked our gay Episcopal priest friend to perform the

ceremony and one of our Buddhist friends to ring a ceremonial bell in honor of our missing loved ones. We had arranged for our caterer to recycle all the bottles and cans from our drinks. A substantial portion of our flowers came live so that we could plant them after the event. I had bought a \$200 dress from an online catalog, not a \$20,000 one, and it would be comfortable enough for me to wear all day while we entertained our friends and family in our backyard. A friend would play classical guitar before and during the ceremony, and a jazz trio had been donated by another friend who had won their performance at a charity auction. Our wedding, held at home, would be low-key yet elegant, or so we thought.

We hadn't planned for the torrential rains and we certainly hadn't planned for the eight-foot alligator that moved into the pond across the street the week before our wedding.

If we'd thought about it, we might have foreseen the possibility. After all, our new home occupied a plot of land less than three miles, as the crow flies and the alligator crawls, from Lake Jessup, ten thousand acres of water and home to approximately one gator for every one of those liquid acres, probably the largest single-lake gator population in the U.S. We'd chosen our house partly because the lake shielded us from the rampant development ubiquitous in Central Florida. It also provided habitat for all kinds of birds that we enjoyed, including bald eagles, hawks, ibises, herons, and the exotic anhingas that dried their outspread wings like so many mythical phoenixes.

Now one of the lake's less lofty species had come to our doorstep. All the small ponds in Central Florida are connected by underground aquifers and surface creeks, and these had risen with the spring rains. Not to mention the fact that it was breeding season. Gators were on the move, and one had moved in on us.

Though I had scoffed at the idea of princesses and Bridezillas, I was starting to feel a bit high-strung, even Biblical in my fears. With Wild Beasts and sort-of-Hail checked off the list, I wondered if it would be Frogs or Boils next. As a person whose identity had been bound to my

long-term single status, I also wondered if I was doing something against nature. And though I wondered all this idly and with a sense of humor, I wondered nonetheless.

After the alligator trapper failed to bring up the prize, he hung a bait of deer meat on a hook on the far side of the pond and told me that since I had the best view, I was the contact. I should call if the gator writhed on the hook, and he would come to kill it as swiftly as possible. "But I'm getting *married* in two days," I whined.

"Sorry," he said.

When Bruce came home, he found me nearly in tears. "Honey, what is it?" he asked.

"They're going to kill it," I said. "It seems like a bad omen."

As he so often did, Bruce understood my narrative impulse to foresee the story's end before it came. Once again he foresaw the possibility of a happier ending than I did. Once again I was reminded why an independent critter like me might get married. "Wait and see," he said. "We don't know what will happen."

Over the next few days, as best we could in the midst of our preparations, Bruce and I watched the bait, even made jokes about the fact that at least there wouldn't be any flies in the backyard with that to attract them in the front. The receptionist at the vet's office told us that an alligator made it a Florida wedding, and that if an alligator killing happened, it would just be a redneck Florida wedding. We laughed, as people so often do at painful, unavoidable realities.

When the wedding passed without alligator murder, however, Bruce and I breathed one mutual sigh of relief. Our party turned out beautifully, and we could now really joke about all the threats beforehand—rains, gators, doubts. We hailed the creature, who, after all, was only following its instincts, looking for its own version of love, in that profoundly embedded urge to find companionship. Like our own, its instinct went on and on year after year in spite of the encroachment of suburbia and traps of various sorts, including humanity's tendency toward stereotyping, whether brides or gators,

who are both relatively peaceable creatures on the whole. No doubt the gator had continued its search in spite of partnerships that didn't work out and some that were characterized by betrayal and misunderstanding. We hoped that, like us, it had found its roaming worthwhile and that, having eluded capture, having slipped away from scrutiny, it rolled with its mate now back in its deep, deep lake.

Contributors

Paul David Adkins grew up in South Florida and lives in New York. He attended Mercer University and Washington University, St. Louis, MO.

Erica Bernheim was born in New Jersey and grew up in Ohio and Italy. She holds degrees from Miami University, the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop, and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her work has appeared in a number of journals, including *The Iowa Review*, *Boston Review*, *Court Green*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, and *Gulf Coast*. Since 2008, she has been Assistant Professor of English at Florida Southern College, where she teaches creative writing and directs the Honors Program. Erica Bernheim's first full-length collection, *The Mimic Sea*, will be published by 42 Miles Press in September 2012.

Vanessa Blakeslee's work has been published in *The Paris Review*, *The Southern Review*, and *Green Mountains Review*, among many others, and her short story "Shadow Boxes" won the inaugural Bosque Fiction Prize. She has been awarded grants and fellowships from Yaddo, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Ragdale Foundation, and was a finalist for the 2011 Philip Roth Residency at Bucknell University. An alumnus of both the Bread Loaf and Sewanee Writers' conferences, she also earned an MFA in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Azor Bray worked professionally in Los Angeles in theatre, film (including *Forrest Gump*), opera (LA Opera), and television (helping garner an Emmy for outstanding costume design in 1987). After moving back to the South to be an educator, wordsmith and mentor, he has written six produced full-length plays, including *Frankenstein*, or *The Modern Prometheus*. Works of his have appeared in the Emerald Coast Writers' *SandScript: A Journal of Contemporary Writing*, and he's published *The Enfoldeds*, a book of healing for those who've experienced the passing of a child.

Wendy Burk and Eric Magrane, three-time National Park Service Artists-in-Residence, have written collaborative poetry in Isle Royale National Park, Michigan; Buffalo National River, Arkansas; and Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida. They are also co-authors of *(F)light*, a choral song cycle about the U.S./Mexico and U.S./Canada borderlands set to music by Erica Quin-Easter and

premiered in May 2011 in Portland, Maine. A 2012 exhibit at Big Cypress National Preserve, "The Preserve: Nature and Culture in the Wilderness of South Florida," includes broadsides from their collaborations at Big Cypress.

Patrice Burkhardt is considered a Southern Impressionist. Receiving her B.F.A. in Drawing and Painting from Louisiana State University, she began her focus artistic in figurative drawing, painting and sculpture. It was the emotional effects of expressionism, the use of bold and bright colors to explore shapes and boundaries that first steered her interest. But once she glanced upon her first Monet, she was forever persuaded to become more expansive with her brush strokes, more aware of light and its ever changing qualities. Gulf Shore Life said of Patrice Burkhardt "Impressionistic figurative landscapes that bare the slower pace of Southern life." The Florida Department of State, Cultural Affairs remarked "her artistry captures a traditional, yet, mystical and serene adventure." www.patriceburkhardt.com

Joe Clifford is the producer of Lip Service West, a "gritty, real, raw" reading series in Oakland, CA. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Big Bridge, the Connecticut Review, Drunken Boat, Fringe, Shotgun Honey, Thuglit, Word Riot, and Underground Voices, among others. Joe's work can be found at www.joecliffordcandyandcigarettes.blogspot.com and www.joeclifford.com. He has been to jail but never prison.

Natalia Cortes Chaffin grew up on Long Island, the daughter of Cuban and Argentine immigrants. She now lives in Las Vegas with her husband, three daughters and a neurotic mutt. She has a B.A. in American Studies from Cornell and an MA in U.S. Cultural History from SUNY Binghamton, and is currently pursuing an MFA from UC Riverside at Palm Desert. Her short stories have been published in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Stone Canoe*, *The Potomac Review*, *The Coachella Review* and others. Her piece is part of a linked story collection about a Cuban family. She also recently completed her first novel set in Las Vegas.

Anita Dallar has a Bachelors Degree in Studio Art with an emphasis in printmaking from San Jose State University in California, an Associates Degree in Art History, and Florida Professional Educators Certificates in Art and ESE education. Anita teaches visual art classes through the "Center for Diversified ART" in Citrus County Florida, published an anthology of poetry "Dreams and Visions", and arranges and plays 5-string banjo instrumentals as a hobby. Her mixed media collages are exhibited nationally. Anita's series "Florida and the

Everglades” embodies a deep reverence for Florida’s vanishing natural landscape and wildlife and was inspired by childhood memories of the Ocala National Forest and Everglades National Park. More information about Anita Dallar and her work can be found on www.anitadallar.com

Karin C. Davidson is originally from the Gulf Coast - Florida and Louisiana - and now lives in the Ohio River Valley. Her stories have appeared in *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *New Delta Review*, *Precipitate Journal*, *Filigree*, and *Prime Number Magazine*, among others, and have been shortlisted in several writing competitions, including the *Faulkner-Wisdom Writing Competition* and the *Bridport Prize*. She has an MFA from Lesley University, and her writing can be found at thunderonathursday.blogspot.com.

Tim Dorsey was born in Indiana, moved to Florida at the age of 1, and grew up in a small town about an hour north of Miami called Riviera Beach. He graduated from Auburn University in 1983. While at Auburn, he was editor of the student newspaper, *The Plainsman*. From 1983 to 1987, he was a police and courts reporter for *The Alabama Journal*, the now-defunct evening newspaper in Montgomery. He joined *The Tampa Tribune* in 1987 as a general assignment reporter. He also worked as a political reporter in the *Tribune’s* Tallahassee bureau and a copy desk editor. From 1994 to 1999, he was the *Tribune’s* night metro editor. He left the paper in August 1999 to write full time. Tim has since published thirteen novels in several languages: *Florida Roadkill*, *Hammerhead Ranch Motel*, *Orange Crush*, *Triggerfish Twist*, *The Stingray Shuffle*, *Cadillac Beach*, *Torpedo Juice*, *The Big Bamboo*, *Hurricane Punch*, *Atomic Lobster*, *Nuclear Jellyfish*, *Gator A-Go-Go* and *Electric Barracuda*. He lives in Tampa with his family.

Denise Duhamel is the author, most recently, of *Ka-Ching!* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), *Two and Two* (Pittsburgh, 2005), *Mille et un Sentiments* (Firewheel, 2005) and *Queen for a Day: Selected and New Poems* (Pittsburgh, 2001). A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, she is a professor at Florida International University in Miami.

Tina Egnoski is the author of *In the Time of the Feast Flowers*, winner of the Clay Reynolds Novella Prize, and the fiction chapbook *Perishables*. Her work, both fiction and poetry, has been published in a number of literary journals, including *Cimarron Review*, *Folio*, *Hawaii Pacific Review* and *Louisville Review*. She grew up in Florida and currently lives in New England.

Yolanda J. Franklin's work has appeared in journals such as Crab Orchard Review, Saw Palm, Sugarhouse Review, SPECS, and The Hoot & Howl of the Owl Anthology of Hurston Wright Writers' Week. Her most recent awards include a nomination for a 2012 Pushcart Poetry Prize, several scholarships to write and study, including a summer at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Indiana Writer's Week, and Colrain Poetry Manuscript Workshop. Her collection of poems, "Southern Pout," was a finalist for the 2011 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Award. Yolanda is a third generation, north Florida native, born in her state's capital— Tallahassee. She also enjoys Krav Maga, ballroom dancing, and dessert.

Denis Gaston, originally from West Virginia, grew up in West Florida's flatlands. He received a BA from the University of Florida, and worked for twenty years in the graphic design field. In 1984 Gaston embarked on a fine art career, maintaining an art studio in Dunedin for 25 years. He now has a similar studio in Clearwater. Gaston's mixed-media paintings draw inspiration from many world cultural traditions. In 1990 he received a Florida Individual Artist Fellowship, and his works are in many collections, including Raymond James Corporation, Holland and Knight Law Firm, St. Petersburg College and Polk Museum of Art.

Marjorie Greene holds a BA degree in Printmaking from The Philadelphia College of Art where she studied with Jerome Kaplan and Lois Johnson. She then received a Masters in Art Education from Tyler School of Art, Temple University. For the past 16 years she has been teaching at St. Petersburg College. She is an Associate Professor in the Fine Arts Department, Clearwater Campus. Marjorie uses nature and classical Japanese wood block printing as her inspiration. Her work is meant to delight the eye and bring the viewer to a thoughtful place. The work she is creating now is based on the studio and surrounding landscape of Kim Kirchman and Mark Fiehls, two local potters. Her work has been shown at The Rutledge Street Gallery, in Camden, S.C. and in a variety of shows sponsored by The Florida Artist Group.

Mark Feinman is a drummer from the Tampa Bay area. He has had the opportunity to play with many talented musicians. Mark has extensive performance experience ranging from private engagements and musical theater to various concert venues including a big band tour of Italy and France with performances at the Umbria Jazz Festival and Jazz a Juan in Juan Les Pins. Mark

has studied Jazz Performance, first at the University of South Florida and then at SUNY Purchase in New York. He currently lives in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Jonathan Fink is an Associate Professor and the Director of Creative Writing at University of West Florida. His poems have appeared in Poetry, New England Review, TriQuarterly, Slate, Virginia Quarterly Review, and The Southern Review, among other journals. He has received the Editors' Prize in Poetry from The Missouri Review, as well as fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs. More information is here: jonathanfink.com.

Susan Hubbard's seven books include The Season of Risks, Blue Money (Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize) and Walking on Ice (AWP Short fiction Prize). Her Ethical Vampire novels (Simon & Schuster) have been translated and published in more than fifteen countries. Her short fiction has appeared in TriQuarterly, The Mississippi Review, Ploughshares, and other journals. She coedited 100% Pure Florida Fiction, an anthology. A former president of AWP, Hubbard has been a guest artist at Yaddo, the Virginia Center for Creative Arts, the Djerassi Resident Artists' Project, and Cill Rialaig. She's received teaching and research awards from Syracuse University, Cornell University, and the University of Central Florida. Currently a professor of English at UCF, she is working on a novel set in Buffalo, NY. Her website is www.susanhubbard.com.

Dick Hyman has functioned as pianist, organist, arranger, music director, and composer throughout a busy musical career that got underway in the early '50s. His versatility in all of these areas has resulted in film scores, orchestral compositions, concert appearances and well over 100 albums recorded under his own name. He has served as a composer/arranger/conductor/pianist for the Woody Allen films Zelig, The Purple Rose of Cairo, Broadway Danny Rose, Stardust Memories, Hanna and Her Sisters, Radio Days, Bullets Over Broadway, Mighty Aphrodite, Everyone Says "I Love You", Sweet and Lowdown, The Curse of the Jade Scorpion and Melinda and Melinda. His encyclopedic "Century of Jazz Piano" an extended history on 6 discs, has been released by Arbors Records. Mr. Hyman has been a guest clinician and performer internationally, including appearances at the University of South Florida. In 2004, he received an honorary doctorate from the University of South Florida.

Brian Maxwell is currently pursuing his PhD at the University of North Dakota, though he grew up along the Space Coast and still calls Florida home. His fiction

has appeared in *Fugue*, *Evansville Review*, *Louisville Review*, *Beloit Fiction Journal*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Red Rock Review*, *580 Split*, *Rio Grande Review*, *Trachodon*, *South Dakota Review*, and others.

Sydney McKenna holds a degree in Visual Arts from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, and attended graduate studies in 1996 at the Cortona, Italy campus of the University of Georgia. After returning to the states, she opened the Sydney McKenna Gallery in St. Augustine in 1997. Sydney's paintings are found in corporate, public and private collections, including Capital One's corporate collection of American art, (McLean, VA), The Museum of Florida Art, (Deland, Florida), and the private collection of retired opera star, Patrice Munsel. To read her full vitae and view samples of her work, visit her website at: www.sydneyckenna.com.

Darrell Nicholson is a writer, editor, and a graduate student in the University of South Florida Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program. In his 25 years as a journalist, he has held a range of newspaper and magazine positions and is currently the director of the marine division at Belvoir Media Group. His award-winning travel writing, profiles, and features have been featured in *Islands*, *Escape*, *Cruising World*, *Sail*, *Sailing*, *Ocean Navigator* and other sailing, news, and travel magazines. He lives with his wife and two boys in Sarasota, Fla., where he is working on a young adult novel set in Florida and the Caribbean.

Daniele Pantano is a Swiss poet, translator, critic, and editor born of Sicilian and German parentage in Langenthal (Canton of Berne). Pantano's most recent works include *In an Abandoned Room: Selected Poems* by Georg Trakl (Erbacce Press, 2008), *The Possible Is Monstrous: Selected Poems* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, and *The Oldest Hands in the World* (both from Black Lawrence Press/Dzanc Books, 2010). His next books, *Oppressive Light: Selected Poems* by Robert Walser and *The Collected Works of Georg Trakl*, are forthcoming from Black Lawrence Press, New York. Pantano has taught at the University of South Florida and served as the Visiting Poet-in-Residence at Florida Southern College. He divides his time between Switzerland, the United States, and England, where he's Senior Lecturer and Director of Creative Writing at Edge Hill University. For more information, please visit www.danielepantano.ch.

Andrea Pejack is a graphic design student at the University of South Florida. Most recently, her work was showcased at the Donna Gordon Gallery and in her own exhibit, *Shelter*, at Studio@620 in St. Petersburg, FL. Her art has been seen

at the Mainsail Art Festival and the Morean Arts Center, as well as several shows at the Studio@620 including last summer's production of Canteen!@620, and The Girlie Show: Under the Big Top. Andrea's artwork has appeared on several program covers for the Palladium Theater and at the Studio@620 including Bosikom. She is the winner of the William R. Hough & Co.'s Christmas card competition, the Mainsail Young At Art Award and Scholarship, and the recipient of two Gold Keys and three Awards of Merit from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. Her artwork and murals have been commissioned around the bay area at private residences as well as other institutions such as Grace Lutheran Church and School and the Safety Harbor Public Library.

Lisa Roney lives in Winter Springs where she tries to keep the peace between her husband, three cats, the neighborhood hawk, lots of raccoons, and the occasional alligator. She is the author of the memoir *Sweet Invisible Body* and short fiction, nonfiction, and poetry in *Harper's*, *Sycamore Review*, the new renaissance, *Red Rock Review*, *Writing on the Edge*, *Waccamaw*, *Willows Wept Review*, and other publications. She is on the creative writing faculty at the University of Central Florida, and she blogs at <http://joyouscrybaby.com>.

Jo-Ann Sanborn is a well-known artist in South Florida, and has exhibited her paintings from Marco Island to Gloucester, MA. Her strong compositional arrangements combined with uncommon colors bring a simplicity and integrity to the unique Everglades landscape. Sanborn has had a number of solo shows and been granted numerous awards for her paintings. Sanborn teaches workshops on color and the Florida Landscape, and has become a member of the growing phenomenon of daily painters. In addition to her website, she maintains a painting blog where she highlights her daily paintings and writes about her work, the Everglades, and the Marco Island art scene. Jo-Ann's paintings are in corporate and private collections throughout the US and in Europe. She lives and works on Marco Island, Florida, where she maintains her studio.

Lani Scozarri recently graduated from Sarah Lawrence College where she served as Senior Editor of *Lumina*, their graduate literary magazine. Lani won the Massachusettes Cultural Council Finalist Award for a body of work titled, *Ballet's Children*. Her work has appeared in *Comstock Review*, *Whistling Fire*, *DeComp Magazine*, and several anthologies. Currently, she teaches poetry to young children and mothers her very young daughters.

Alan Shaw is a recent transplant to the Tampa Bay area, having earlier lived in north Florida for most of his life. He writes speculative fiction and creative non-fiction, mostly memoir pieces, and occasionally, and shamefully, dabbles in poetry. His writing has appeared in publications online too minor to mention, with more hopefully coming soon. He teaches writing for the University of South Florida.

Gregory Sherl is the author of *Heavy Petting* (YesYes Books, 2011), *The Oregon Trail* is the *Oregon Trail* (Mud Luscious Press, 2012), and *Monogamy Songs* (Future Tense Books, 2012). He is always too much sun because he is always too much Florida.

Derold Sligh was recently hired as an English instructor at Daegu University in Daegu, South Korea. He received a BA and MA from Central Michigan University and an MFA from San Diego State University. His work has appeared in journals such as *American Poetry Journal*, *Mythium*, *Chamber Four*, *Status Hat*, *Konundrum Engine*, *Central Review*, and *Web del Sol*. He has taught creative writing workshops for San Diego State University, *Gear Up* and *King/Chavez/Parks* and was also a guest poet at the Theodore Roethke Memorial where he ran a workshop for African American fathers and sons.

Jaclyn Sullivan is a graduate of the University of Central Florida's MFA program. The story that appears in this issue is the first in an unpublished collection titled *We Will Make Your Head Explode*. She teaches creative writing at a private university in Orlando, FL, freelances, and volunteers at a children's bereavement charity as a grief facilitator. While fiction writing is her true love, she has most recently published a children's book series about nutrition. She's managed to avoid most writer stereotypes but has two cats. Nobody's perfect.

Eleanor Swanson's fiction and poetry have appeared or are forthcoming in a number of publications including *The Missouri Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, *High Plains Literary Review*, *The Denver Quarterly*, and *The Southern Review*. Awards include a Fiction Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Colorado Council on the Arts Fellowship in Literature (fiction). A native of Miami, Florida, she now lives in Denver and teaches environmental literature, and fiction and poetry workshops at Regis University, where she is a member of the English Department faculty.

Christopher Tozier happily lives deep in the sand pine scrub between Paisley and Cassia, Florida. He has been selected as a 2011 State of Florida Artist Fellowship recipient. His first book, *Olivia Brophie and the Pearl of Tagelus*, is a middle-reader fantasy novel scheduled to hit the shelves in March 2012 from Pineapple Press. His poems have appeared widely in journals such as *Tampa Review*, *Post Road*, *Saw Palm*, *San Pedro River Review*, *The Literary Review*, *Cream City Review*, *The Florida Review*, *Maryland Poetry Review*, and *The Wisconsin Review*. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Artist website www.christophertozier.com.

Robley Wilson has been a Guggenheim Fellow in Fiction and a Nicholl Fellow in Screenwriting. He is the author of three novels, three books of poetry, and six short-story collections, most recently *Who Will Hear Your Secrets?* (Johns Hopkins, 2012). He was for thirty-one years editor of the *North American Review*. He lives in Orlando with his wife, Susan Hubbard, and their five cats.

Suzannah Windsor's short fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Sand Hill Review*, *Grist: The Journal for Writers*, and *The Sand Hill Review Anthology*. In 2011, she was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She currently lives in Australia with her husband and two sons.

Pete Zuccarini, a native Floridian, is regarded as one of Hollywood's most talented and innovative underwater cinematographers. His recent credits include the last four films in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series (2003-2011), *Into the Blue* (2007), *Into the Wild* (2007), *127 Hours* (2011), *Piranha* (2011), and *Dolphin Tale* (2011). In 2010, he teamed up with dolphin activist Rick O'Barry for a daring exposé of dolphin trade for *Animal Planet*, and handled the underwater cinematography for Ang Lee in the film version of Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi* (to be released in 2012). He lives in Key Biscayne, Fla. with his wife and three children.

contributors

Paul David Adkins	Dick Hyman
Erica Bernheim	Brian Maxwell
Vanessa Blakeslee	Sydney McKenna
Azor Bray	Darrell Nicholson
Wendy Burk & Eric Magrane	Daniele Pantano
Patrice Burkhardt	Andrea Pejack
Joe Clifford	Lisa Roney
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Yolanda J. Franklin	Jaclyn Sullivan
Denis Gaston	Eleanor Swanson
Marjorie Greene	Christopher Tozier
Mark Feinman	Robley Wilson
Jonathan Fink	Suzannah Windsor
Susan Hubbard	Pete Zuccarini

Cover Art:

Sydney McKenna: Rapture In The Postmodern Era

