# Printer's Devil Review



### Fall 2013





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We do not accept postal submissions. Please see the submission guidelines on our website.

## Duly Noted

We have the pleasure of welcoming Kate Jovin to our staff as *PDR*'s new communications and marketing writer.

KATE JOVIN is a 2007 graduate of Brown University, where she concentrated in literary arts and Slavic studies. She explored careers in publishing, teaching, and selling artisanal chocolate before landing in the world of public libraries. In her free time, she can be found taking classes at Grub Street, hosting bar trivia, talking about gender, going to readings, and defending the role of children's books in the literary world.

We are also pleased to announce our nominations for the 2013 Pushcart Prize, three of which appear in this issue:

"Projective Verse' and the 'Open Text' Considered as Practices of Body" by Sam Cha
"To Dwell" by Adam Clay
"Morning Sickness" by Olga M. Feliciano
"Set Yourself on Fire" by Maggie Golston
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HARRIET "HAPPY" BURBECK is a New Orleans comic artist, illustrator, and musician. She has shown her work at a number of galleries in the Crescent City, including Mimi's in the Marigny, Du Mois Gallery, Zeitgeist Multi-Disciplinary Arts Center, and the Candle Factory.

DORIELLE CAIMI was raised in New Mexico. Her mother is Hispanic and one of thirteen siblings whose family goes back over ten generations in New Mexico. Her father is Italian-American and a second-generation artist. Her early training began with her father's instruction. In 2003, she began studying painting at Central New Mexico Community College, followed by a few semesters at the University of New Mexico. She then transferred to Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle where she graduated *summa cum laude* in 2010 with a BFA in painting.

CALEB COLE has received numerous awards for his work and exhibited at a variety of venues, including Gallery Kayafas (Boston), the Danforth Museum of Art (Framingham, MA), Photo Center Northwest (Seattle), Good Citizen Gallery (St. Louis), Childs Gallery (Boston), and Jenkins Johnson Gallery (NYC). He is represented in Boston, where he lives, by Gallery Kayafas.

GEMMA COOPER-NOVACK is a writer, writing coach, and educator living in Boston. Her work has appeared in *Hanging Loose, Aubade, Euphony*, the *Saint Ann's Review*, *Rufous City Review*, *Blast Furnace Review*, and *Lyre Lyre* and is forthcoming in *Amethyst Arsenic* and *Spry*. Her plays have been produced in New York and Chicago, and her article on writing coaching and disability in higher education, co-written with Eileen Berger, appeared in the NASPA Knowledge Communities Publication. Gemma intends to travel to all seven continents before she turns forty.

GILLIAN DEVEREUX received her MFA in poetry from Old Dominion University and works as a writing consultant in Boston. She is the author of two chapbooks: *Focus* on Grammar (Dancing Girl Press, 2012) and *They Used to Dance on Saturday Nights* (Aforementioned Productions, 2011). She has work forthcoming in the *Midwest Quarterly, Sundog Lit*, and *N/A*, and her poems have appeared in numerous journals, most recently *Handsome, Anti-*, and *The Good Men Project*. The source text for her erasure poems "Hauntings: Apparition II" and "Hauntings: Apparation III" are *Tender Is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, respectively. She can be found at gilliandevereux.com, streaming pop music from the cloud. KEITH FRANCIS is a 1989 graduate of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth now based in New Bedford, MA. His current recent solo exhibitions have been at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) and at the Colo Colo Gallery (New Bedford, MA). Current and recent group exhibitions include *Giornata del Contemporaneo*, The Present Art Space, Milan, Italy (2013); New Bedford Art Museum; and University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

MAGGIE GOLSTON is a poet and songwriter from Tucson, Arizona. Her work has also appeared in *Ploughshares, Spork, Sonora Review,* and on Kore Press. Her album, *Spaceman*, was released in 2005. She teaches writing and humanities at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona.

KATHLEEN HELLEN is a poet and the author of *Umberto's Night* (2012) and *The Girl Who Loved Mothra* (2010). Her poems are widely published and have appeared in American Letters & Commentary, Barrow Street, Cimarron Review, Evergreen, *Nimrod, Poetry Northwest, Prairie Schooner, Rattapallax, Sycamore Review,* and *Witness,* among others, and were featured on WYPR's The Signal.

DAVID MCALEAVEY's most recent book is HUGE HAIKU (Chax Press, 2005). His poems have appeared in *Poetry, Ploughshares*, and the *Georgia Review*, and since 2010 in dozens of journals, including *Poetry Northwest, Denver Quarterly, Poet Lore, Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review, diode poetry journal, Innisfree, Praxilla, Waccamaw, Epoch, Poetry East*, and *American Letters & Commentary*. More poems are forthcoming at *Stand* (UK) and elsewhere. He teaches literature and creative writing at George Washington University in Washington, DC.

NATE PRITTS is the author of six books of poems, most recently *Right Now More Than Ever*. He founded H\_NGM\_N, an online journal and small press, in 2001 and serves as director and prime architect for its various endeavors.

JADE SYLVAN'S first collection of poetry, *The Spark Singer*, was published in 2009 by Spuyten Duyvil Press, and she's had work in *PANK*, *Bayou*, *basalt*, *The Sun*, *Word Riot*, *Decomp*, *The Pedestal*, and others. She won the 2011 *Bayou* Editors' Poetry Prize and was a finalist for the 2012 *basalt* Bunchgrass Poetry Prize and the 2012 Write Bloody Book Competition. *Kissing Oscar Wilde*, a memoir about her experiences as a modern working poet in Paris, has just been published by Write Bloody Press. AMBER TOURLENTES received her MFA in photography and computer arts at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1998. She taught new media and digital photography at Princeton University, 1998–2000. From 2000–2011, Amber taught photography at Massachusetts College of Art, Emerson College, and the ProArts Consortium and School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Amber currently teaches at Emerson College and Harvard. Her solo and group exhibitions include: Smith College, Lesley University, Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mass College of Art, APE Gallery, WORKS, Harvey Milk Institute, ArtSpace, CyberArts Festival, Essex Arts Center, Boston Public Library, Danforth Museum, Mills Gallery at the Boston Center for the Arts, and others. In 2005, she received an individual Massachusetts Cultural Council grant.

DAVID VARDEMAN is a native of Iowa and a graduate of Indiana University Southeast and the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. His one-act plays have been staged by New England Academy of Theatre, Bellarmine College, Acorn Theatre's Maine Playwrights' Festival, Mad Lab Theatre in Columbus, Ohio, and the Theater Company of Lafayette, Colorado. His full-length play *Because It is Bitter, and Because It Is My Heart* was one of six finalists at the Palm Springs International Playwriting Festival in 2004 and received a staged reading. His short fiction has appeared in *Crack the Spine, Glint Literary Journal, Life As An [insert label here],* and *Little Patuxent Review* and is forthcoming in *The Writing Disorder.* He lives in Portland, Maine.

MARC WATKINS has published stories in the *Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses* XXXV, Poets & Writers, Boulevard, Slice Magazine, Third Coast, StoryQuarterly, Texas Review and elsewhere. He also served as guest fiction editor for *Pushcart Prize: Best* of the Small Presses XXXV, and is the current nonfiction editor for New Stories from the Midwest.

#### NATE PRITTS

#### Effusive Again for No Reason

#### while driving

through the neighborhood I grew up in snow lining the streets in big piles & the day is the kind of day that doesn't seem like it might end which is exactly what happened to every day before it.

How does a single person being of vast & complicated chronological mind make sense of the fact that each one day that is happening is sometimes not connected to the many single days that already happened.

I take two sips of coffee in honor of that. I look at all the people in the room that aren't people I know & say goodbye to them.

In my new poems I'm forsaking the sentence. I'm becoming suspicious of any theory that relies on logic or pretends there's sense anywhere though it occurs to me it might be fun to write poems that have strong bodies but are so wrong in their heads.

The kids in my neighborhood duck behind snowbanks when my silent car skims through the February air.

## **First Meeting**

ON A COLD WINDY NIGHT, Daniel Buchbinder came down from his rooms and walked through the narrow streets along the riverfront until he arrived at the Stockyards Café. Inside, the owner, Frank Botto, a surly, bear-shaped man with one shrunken ear, greeted him with a rush of air from between his teeth. Despite his effort to conceal his agitation, Daniel's hand shook when Botto handed him the menu, which he knew by heart but always accepted. He liked to have something on which to train his eyes while waiting for his order to be taken. It was late on a Sunday evening, and he was the only customer in the place.

As Botto turned away, Daniel said timidly, "I'll need another menu," moving his vision vertically up and down the page to pretend to study it and to avoid Botto's glance. The café owner hung over him and snatched a menu off the table behind his, throwing the menu down opposite Daniel as if insulted Daniel would have an ally in the room while he had no one with whom to share his thoughts on this bitterly cold night.

These two saw each other nearly every night, for despite Botto's inhospitality, he was an excellent cook. Besides his livelihood, Daniel was a bumbler at nearly everything and would starve in short order if he had to cook for himself. He was fortunate to live within walking distance of one who followed the command "Feed my sheep," even if the café owner

Botto both loathed Daniel's presence and looked forward to it every night. He was never so pleased as when business was slow enough that he and Daniel were alone in the place and he had the leisure to stare daggers at the heart of the tired Jew while he ate, Daniel's eyes averted yet restless. If asked why he detested this particular customer so, Botto would have felt hard pressed to find a reasonable answer and, in fact finding none except his own perverseness, would have answered with a sneer, working his fists, "Oh, Buchbinder, the little moth, he's like no one else." His hands would twitch sometimes with relish at the thought of tearing a delicate creature to bits for the sheer pleasure of knowing that the deed afforded him no challenge. He thought to himself, I could tear into Buchbinder as easily as into a package of crackers, and looking at the lean, stooping figure, felt such tenderness in his chest, knowing this was true, that he could have hugged Daniel to him to protect the Jew from his abuse. All these thoughts Botto kept to himself. He has no idea how close he is each and every night to utter decimation, and I spare him magnificently each and every time, only staring, staring.

Botto lumbered to the stove, emitting a disheartened grunt at every step, and stirred something in a pot. Daniel never ate in company and was utterly alone in the world as far as Botto could tell. He often passed Daniel's shop and saw the Jew humped over his work table, sewing the pages of a book together with the thick linen thread, reminding him, for all his fierce concentration, of a tidy spider. Botto was loathe to admit how frequently he went that way for the sole purpose of spying on his secret concern, on his way to intercept his granddaughter after school or early in the morning on his way to buy his vegetables at the farmers' market, a whole side of beef at the stockyards. He met the Jew, if only at a distance, on his way to nearly every place he went and found him to be always alone. Daniel's isolation added further fuel to Botto's hatred of him and made his delight in intimidating him all the more poignant, for he knew the Jew had no one to complain to.

cared so little for the sheep themselves, particularly Daniel, who, being meek as a tear, drove him to distraction.

Illustrations by Harriet "Happy" Burbeck

But now, by indicating that he would await company, Daniel roused him to fury. Botto shook with contempt and a desire for revenge that Daniel could keep his secret from him in his own café, though Botto knew nearly nothing of his personal life as it was. For that matter, everything about the Jew was a secret kept from him. But this was the last straw. He dropped the spoon and, with his mouth stretched unusually taut, rounded the edge of the counter and moved like a seething steam engine toward the table. Meanwhile, Daniel had removed his parka and ear muffs and folded them neatly, almost lovingly, on an adjacent chair. Sensing Botto's approach, he lowered his head over the menu once more, stroking the back of his neck with one hand, following a line of print with the other.

"Oh, Bejesus," Botto said, pulling a chair out and sinking into it with a belch. He stared hard at Daniel, but his adversary would not look up from the menu. "I think most of us are barely getting by," he went on, his voice probing for a nerve. "I think most of us in the business world are. You, for example, sewing words into leather bindings, and for what? Do you think anyone takes down those books once you've sewn them so prettily and looks into them? They're for show. I'd stake my life - not a one of those books you've bound has ever been read. But then, so what? You must bind them and stamp them in gold leaf, tool the curious designs knowing it's your work and not the words you bind that's important. Even then, what does your work receive? A glance? A compliment? And then, the kiss of death: the bookshelf for which it was made, like the cushions are made for the couch. And you, you're like those books you bind, that are crammed into a tight spot on the shelf - just as you are into that cramped workshop of yours - and forgotten, unappreciated. We become like our work."

"If our work is a passion," Daniel ventured. Daring to look up for a moment, he saw that despite the café owner's supposedly sympathetic words, Botto's eyes contained a hatred of him that Daniel struggled to fathom. Botto probably could not love those he must without hating those he needn't hate. Daniel didn't mind. He sensed that, on some level missed entirely because of the shaky footing of their relations, the café owner was a good man. "And then if it is a passion, it doesn't matter where it puts us, in an overstuffed bookshelf or into the fire. We must work, Botto, and live, too, as if every breath were a privilege we haven't the appreciation to grasp." He looked furtively at his watch and then at the black window which rattled from a renewed assault by the wind. The reflection of the room tilted precariously as the plate of glass shook.

Botto jealously kept track of Daniel's gaze. He was amazed at what spite he felt that the lonely Jew might have won a friend and was expecting him momentarily and, furthermore, that Daniel had divulged nothing of this friend's identity. It was more than Botto could endure from one he hated so intimately.

"Yes," Botto continued, "but at least you never had the burden of a family to support." He lowered his dandruffed red eyebrows. "For whatever reasons – ill luck, fear, preference – you never married."

He paused and rotated his chin to give Daniel time to select his reason from the choices offered. Slowly a bulge appeared in Botto's left cheek and continued to grow until he had stretched the skin so far that in another moment his cheek would separate from the jaw bone. He uttered a sharp yowl and put his tongue back where it belonged, slapping the table top with his palm and lurching forward,

his eyes bulging. "I say!"

"Are you all right?" Daniel asked, blinking rapidly, and even fearfully, as if he had just been told he and Botto would be spending all eternity together, tied to opposite ends of a short rope. He pictured Botto biting continually at his own end of the rope and commanding him to do so to his own. How could he patiently endure being told to do what he had known a millennium ago was fruitless? Botto was one of those who believed vividly that he would break his bonds in the next instant, contrary to years of



evidence that the task was insurmountable, success only a dream. As such, Daniel gently considered him a fool. But the irony in that, he saw clearly enough, was that tonight he was acting out Botto's belief, right under the other man's nose. But do you have to ask pardon for scoring on another man's belief, he asked himself, for walking cleanly through a wall the other man butts his head against? Daniel's reluctance to offend compelled him to ask pardon for just about everything he did in the presence of God and Man, and he felt almost as if he owed Botto a tribute for acting in his own interests in the café owner's domain.

The Stockyards Café was Daniel's appointed place of meeting with the woman, Nalia Koberg-Franz, who had answered his ad in the paper. She had described herself as stout. "A stout Gentile. Do you mind?" "The 'stout' or the 'Gentile'?" he had written back. They both made something of a joke of it.

Before coming tonight, Daniel had made two false starts: returning to his rooms first for a shot of the whiskey one of his Christian customers had given him at Christmas, then for a swig of mouthwash (as he had described himself as a non-drinker). In one of her letters, Nalia had expressed pleasure in his abstinence. She said that she suffered from swollen kidneys and for her health's sake could not afford to conviviate with those in whose daily routines liquor formed a part. Her letters were peppered with such overblown phrasings. Daniel took pleasure in repeating them to himself, much as if savoring the memory of a fine meal. Because of these indulgences in language, he pictured Nalia as someone who would fuss over him and make special efforts in cases where someone else would only make do.

For years Daniel had been planning to fall in love but had never quite succeeded. He watched lovers with envy and admired their situations. But for making their situations his own he felt an incapacity and even fear, lest he should prove incompetent, involving himself too far in a compromise from which it would later be difficult to withdraw as needed. Romance had long held a tyrannical attraction for him. It was like the forbidden fruit and might give him knowledge of things better left unknown: his inability to sustain love over a long run or to inspire it.

He felt he had somehow been tricked into placing an ad by that impassioned self that hid in other people's lives. "This is not me," he had said imploringly as he walked to the café tonight. And yet he kept walking. He prodded himself, saying, "You're forty-three, Daniel. Soon you'll be seventy-three. That's thirty years you might be happy. There might be a new life for you, even at forty-three. Furthermore, Nalia Koberg-Franz might not consider you attractive. And unless you find this out, you'll take all on yourself the blame for abandoning the project." He consoled himself, reflecting that the meeting would be worth having if only to find out he did not appeal to her. A stout Gentile might not appeal to him either, although her letters enchanted him with their slightly clumsy footing. Their awkwardness brought to his mind a large woman's walking for the first time on heels too small for her. He was charmed by the image and would not release it. He wouldn't care that she had a figure like a bathtub as long as she had dainty lips and said "as I know of" every once in a while, as she wrote in her letters. The shape of things did not matter to him.

"Tonight," he told himself, "I am going to do something I have put off for a long time. I am going to meet my love face to face, and perhaps this will help me solve the riddle of existence. Why do I bind books no one reads, if Botto is to be believed? Why does he feed us all out of his larder when he hates each and every one of us and to him we are only so many cattle on a long drive to the grave? He is a man soured on life but unable to resist preserving it in others, if for a profit. Why all these contradictions unless it is toward such a privilege as this, to meet the love I thought I'd never have?"

Botto narrowed his eyes suspiciously on him. The detestable Jew was having thoughts he couldn't discern. What misery this was, to be himself, separate from everyone, particularly from those he hated. After all, those he loved would always be there, but the objects of his wrath, weren't they liable to take off at any moment, never to return? The incompleteness of life shook him up. He must be getting old, although at fifty-two he shouldn't be ready for the grave. He ought to have many ideas for living out his existence, although not one occurred to him except that of making the ugly Jew disclose how he had won a friend he had never mentioned.

"I have four sons, and they all stole stereo equipment at one time or another," Botto said, hitting himself tenderly on the forehead with his fist. At that moment he longed to change places with Daniel, to be waiting in someone else's café for a mysterious stranger to appear and listening to another man's lament about his wayward sons. He actually convinced himself, thinking of his own circumstances, that Daniel's life was one of luxury and ease. "It's this neighborhood," Botto said, looking around himself defiantly and flaring his nostrils as if the neighborhood were closing in on him. He turned his head aside and made a spitting sound, painfully aware that while he envied Daniel, Daniel was content within himself and did not envy him his life. He shook his head slowly. "And to have grandchildren who laugh at you behind your back and call you 'Stinker' and 'Fatty' and 'Dishtowel."" He spread his arms. "The whole world began here, for them. This is their origin, their genesis. And they're all too good for it, too good to come in and help. They all want to go to the finest restaurants with the highest prices. They think their butts don't stink anymore, that mine does all the stinking for them. I swear it doesn't."

He longed bitterly, then, for Daniel to confide in him, but all the Jew did was look steadily at him with his gentle dark eyes. The constant wetness of those eyes robbed their owner of every semblance of manliness. Botto imagined that one hard slap on the face would dry them up for good.

"What is the most beautiful line you've ever read?" Botto asked suddenly. "I mean for you to tell me!" he blared, and then his voice lapsed back into the uncustomary gentleness it had assumed before. "You've bound many, many books, and you must have browsed a great number of them, I am sure. Surely a line once leapt out at you and has stayed with you ever since. All those books?" he said, shivering. "I can't imagine it. How horrible. But, tell me."

Botto leaned his hulking torso over the table and folded his hands close to Daniel, who sat with his rib cage pressed against the table's edge. Botto's earnestness touched him. A change had come over the caféowner. Daniel had known him for seven years and had never seen him eager to subject himself to the written word. Yet it seemed he hung on that hope now. Perhaps he was looking for something conciliatory to say to the children who shunned him, or something tender to say to his wife, to make her recall her first feelings for him. Perhaps his perpetual irritability was due to the fact that for years running he had had no faith in the word, written or spoken, and this appeal was a last-ditch effort to work out his salvation. Daniel wished he had never come here tonight, for Botto seemed to read a great deal of significance into his presence, and his attempts to have a normal conversation made the owner look even more crazy than he did when he only muttered to himself and glared and hit his forearm with the dishtowel. One of the horrible things that Daniel had observed about going out into the world was that he never knew whether people were going to appropriate him for good or evil. He felt unprepared to accommodate either force but preferred to work steadily, alone.

"The most beautiful line I can remember?" Daniel said, feeling trapped. For someone who until this moment had treated him with spite, Botto was asking a lot of him. The bookbinder's



attention roamed over the entire room: first to the clock, which showed a quarter after eight – meaning that Nalia was already fifteen minutes late – then to the white stove with the red knobs (on which three rings of fire burned uncovered and the kettle of soup boiled away over the fourth burner), to the brass coffee urn, and on to Botto's waiting boilcovered face, through which shone a light of childish anticipation. It nearly broke Daniel's heart to see that childish gleam pressed through a face so ugly and unaware of its ugliness. How could anyone hate, that was what he wanted to know, when the one who had it in for you could be so unexpectedly child-like? There didn't seem to be a way to harden his thoughts up to a pitch for self-preservation. He was too quick to glimpse some gesture of his would-be enemy's that seemed to harken back to a time before their differences put them at odds. Finally, he laid his gaze against the glass door and each of the shivering windows. "I'm looking so forward to meeting you face to face," Nalia had written, "to see the author of such beautiful sentiments."Words like those were cruel as any taunt if the one writing didn't live up to them.

"You'll laugh," Daniel said, trying hard to forget his own concerns for the time being and to concentrate on Botto, who honestly appeared to be seeking consolation from him. Instead of making him feel important or vengeful, the responsibility depressed Daniel.

"No, I won't!" Botto said.

"But it's a line of poetry."

"Poetry is fine." Botto spread his arms enthusiastically. "I've seen the time I'd pass up eighteen dinners just for one beautiful line of poetry. That's no exaggeration. Eighteen dinners." He held up all ten of his fingers. "I used to try writing poetry, but then the flare went out of me over about twenty years with a lot of misery in them."

Daniel squirmed as if screwing himself into the floor. "But it's not even a beautiful line. It's obscure. I'm not even sure why it touched me so."

"Maybe I'll be able to tell you."

Daniel looked at him in surprise and grew still. For a moment, neither was conscious of anything but the other, and each for himself did not exist. Daniel forgot why he had come here, that he was facing down likely disappointment. Botto forgot that as a good Christian he hated this sniveling Jew and his humility, his loneliness, all those things to which Botto feared he had or to which he would eventually fall prey. He forgot that he despised Daniel almost as much as he did a glance in the mirror – slightly less so, because at least he could openly admit to disliking the Jew.

Daniel blinked and considered Botto's boxer's hand folded before him. The Jew's expression was never faded, Botto noted, but always expressed some keenness of sense and sorrow, as if seeing the potential for misuse in everything. Yet he had barely enough gumption to protest if Botto were to take him by the neck and begin to squeeze the life out of him. He was the kind that would believe it was God's will and lift his eyes to heaven instead of bashing him one in return. There was nothing to do for that kind. They asked for it. Botto was almost moved to say, "Learn to fight, you worthless piece of humanity." He was a welter of emotions. Only the Jew inspired him that way. It occurred to him he should be grateful. He felt increasing disaffection toward those he was duty-bound to love, while toward Daniel, who was nothing to him, he was drawn with undeniable interest, as if because of the opposing desires Daniel inspired in him, to hurt and protect the same individual, he saw himself cast in the roles both of God and the devil and therefore the real type of the great cosmic drama. His other customers he could see taken out and shot in the morning, but Daniel he must have. A discontinuity of emotions was pleasant to him. Perhaps not even three people in a lifetime would spawn such a cursed vortex in his mind. Love was more controversial than hatred, harder to own up to than to hatred. And didn't the two extremes feed off one another? Botto's head was spinning. He felt he was being pushed to some decision. If Daniel's friend didn't show up soon, he might be compelled to thrash the daylights out of his customer. His hands felt too strong, too capable of violence. His own strength was almost too great a temptation to him.

"Okay, then," Daniel said in the nick of time. "The line goes, 'Not even the rain has such small hands." He paused. "That's it. I can't remember who wrote it or what it comes from, nor even when I bound it. I don't know anything about it, not what it means, not why it moves me."

Botto looked at him for a full minute without moving his eyes, and Daniel began picking at a piece of torn plastic covering the menu.

"Not even the rain has such small hands," Botto echoed after a long while. His voice was ghostly and quiet. Slowly he slid his folded hands toward himself and hid them underneath the table. "You're right, it is beautiful, but not meaningless, even if we can't understand it. I think of the rain lightly tapping on the window as ghosts are said to do, or the gentle feel of the mist on the face, so that you could say it caresses you, but more like an angel than a human being."

Daniel shrugged apologetically. "Who knows? But, needless to say, whenever that line comes back to my mind, I feel I've heard again the voice of someone far away. Someone who has seen something, perhaps in a world far different from this one. A world that promises admiration for such a delicate structure as rain-sized hands. They must be very small."

"As you say, who knows? Poets confuse the hell out of me. But once in a while a line, such as this one, will stop me dead in my tracks. I'll have to admit, it's worth the whole lot of them writing night and day for one of them to come up with a line like that. And afterward I'm dissatisfied for a day or so with the rest of the world. But eventually I realize that no matter how beautiful something is, life has to go on and I can't just dwell on beauty. What a fool I'd be if I did. I have to sober up and remember that this is a world in which people destroy each other, too, and not just in any old way, but with imagination. Yes, poetry is good for maybe one day in twenty. That's about all the consolation a man can afford himself. You have to be realistic in life. Otherwise you're asking for it."

Daniel thought to himself, "He is talking an awful streak. Someone must have hurt his feelings tonight. His kind only becomes friendly when they have to take what they usually dish out. Poor cuss, he's not half bad, if only someone would hurt him every day. Then maybe he'd tread more lightly on other people's toes. Tomorrow he'll rebound. Oh, what a bother it is, not being able to get the same things out of people every day."

Outside, across the street, stood Nalia Koberg-Franz. The black shadow of the door stoop under which she huddled concealed her. For ten minutes she had been watching the man she recognized as Daniel Buchbinder and another man have a conversation. In fact, she had been hiding there when Daniel passed by and went into the café. These moments of indecision had turned into a life for her. It seemed she was forever twenty feet away from altering her fate and failing to move onward. There didn't seem to be any overwhelming reason to move out of that doorway and enter the café, except that she had agreed to the date. Why were there no miracles, no voices to say either go or stay? Why was she always on her own, never knowing in any specific instance whether she was her own best friend or worst enemy? At one time she had believed that her life was going to be as well-plotted as a movie, but that illusion was shot and could not be resurrected. There was no one to act for her, and she was too fearful to act on her own.

This Daniel Buchbinder, what was he but some words on paper that had somehow come alive in her mind? It seemed incredible that he was real outside her mind. She was in love, certainly, but that was all under her hat. Her love didn't need this outside reference. What if she had written all those letters herself? Until she had seen the thin-boned, iron-browed little man sitting there as he promised her he would be, she might have gotten by believing she had made him and the letters up, that he did not exist outside her brain. But now it was too late; she had seen him. What a weak specimen. To think, he had lured her here with such beautiful sentiments and was no beauty himself. Hadn't he warned her? And hadn't she written that she wasn't beautiful either? She had convinced herself she had written that to console him, but come to think of it she had told the truth because there was no denying it. *Ah!* How could she enter into the harsh lights of the café and know he was thinking to himself, "It's true! It's true"?

Didn't beauty have a strong home these days? It was always found contained in such weaklings. What was that horrible lump in his neck? It kept moving up and down as he talked.

It was cold, but she steamed under her coat. Her ears ached, though, and felt, when she touched them, like they were turning to cheap plastic. She tried to bend one back and forth, but it wouldn't go. Oh, all this because love was so important! But in another sense she didn't believe it was necessary. She could put it off a while longer if only she weren't sweating so under that damned coat.

She had nothing against Jews. She had heard they were just like other people. However, people thought there was only one kind of heavy person. She felt she was it, though she tried hard not to be. That was the way: always worried that she was doing what could cause someone to look at her and say to himself, "Ah-hah! Just like a fat person." But how could she be true to that self inside her that had nothing to do with size? That self could slip through a keyhole if it wanted. It could be any size, small as a tap on a window someone would look for and not see. Her self was sizeless. She could be words on a page, sentiments expressed. Words, sentiments were sizeless. They could reach into a heart, and no one would know how they got there. They could ache inside a heart, and they were her. She hoped Daniel Buchbinder's heart ached right now. "That's me," she whispered into the cold wind. "That's me that aches in your little heart with you right now. I'm with you. That's the size I am. That's how beautiful I am. Ache! Hurt! Miss me."

Having accepted the fact that for one reason or another he had been stood up, Daniel ordered a bowl of white beans and poured them over crumbled cornbread. On top of this he spread pickle relish and ate, swallowing more than his food sometimes. Nothing went down well when life made no sense. Her most passionate letter had been the most recent one. No doubt she had written her passion out. She had expressed it, and then it didn't exist anymore. After seven weeks of exchanging letters, her interest peaked and simply vanished. Or perhaps she really did have qualms about dating a Jew. People had their unfathomable reasons. Most of them were personal and outrageous.

Botto was secretly gratified that Daniel's friend had not shown up, although that sort of treatment a dog shouldn't have to take. "People, phooey," was all he could think. "Aren't they on a lark, all of them? Why should they care about us?" Upstairs Madeleine was probably combing out her hair and thinking of another man, a much younger one, one who said how much he adored her. Botto didn't blame her for that. Or maybe she was thinking of a much older man, who would soon kick the bucket and leave her fixed to travel. He was certain, anyway, that she wasn't thinking of him. But he was not pointing the finger. He couldn't recall the last time he thought of her with anything but impatience and boredom.

"Daniel, old man," he said from the stove, trying to remember why he had turned on the three extra burners. "So, you thought it best not to wait for your companion."

HTBIS

Daniel, his head hung over his plate, mumbled, "I can't wait forever. A man has to eat to live." He tried to give Botto a look of polite interest.

"Maybe not. Saint Theresa went seven years without food. I don't know how she did it. But Christ said he was the bread of life, and maybe she had enough faith."

"That's a good possibility," Daniel said.

"None of the rest of us can follow the saints' examples in such cases. It would be dangerous: they're an odd lot, exceptions to the rule, every last one of them." Daniel was about to say he had lived on hope at least as long as Saint Theresa lived on Christ, but he realized how untrue and possibly disrespectful that was.

Botto went on, "The saints are inspiring, but a little out of our league. Still, we need them in order to understand how short we fall. They lead you to ask what it means to live in the real world. Did they, or do I?"

"What is the use of having an example you can't follow, just to make you feel bad?" Daniel said, throwing down his fork. "What is the use of having any ideals at all if they are particular and so easily shattered? You can't go against the grain of life, I'm afraid."

Botto tossed chicken necks in a pot of boiling water to make broth for tomorrow's soup and then ladled out the ham hock from the pot of white beans, peeled back a strip of mushy fat, and laid it between two slices of cornbread for a sandwich. He took a bite, and juice spurted out from both corners of his mouth. "After I heard that story," he said, speaking with his mouth full, "I used to imagine I went to Saint Theresa and tempted her to eat. She ran from me, to hug the cross, and I laughed. But I am not as much of a donkey as I used to be. I don't think that way anymore. I really stand up for the church. The saints put me to shame, and I don't laugh at them. I couldn't tell that story if I hadn't changed my ways."

The café door rattled. Daniel turned to see standing on the threshold a woman with glaringly blond hair fixed in sausage curls and, pinned to several of these, a green velvet tam like an inverted bowl, with a battered gray feather standing in it. Bracing her neck was a woolen scarf, which she unwound an incredible number of turns until she had transferred the whole thing to her right forearm and hand like the cast of someone who had been in a terrible accident. Laying her purse down on a bench, she then unbuttoned her coat, but because of the mass around her right arm could only half remove it. She freed her left side, but the coat remained draped over her right shoulder. She picked up her purse and moved toward Daniel, who was frozen to the spot in terror and disbelief.

Judging by her size, this woman had eaten for Saint Theresa those seven years, Botto mused. He paused with his sandwich before his

mouth as if he were going to blow a note through it. And so this was it, Daniel had himself a romance going. Every bit of that blond came out of a bottle, but the Jew was too cockeyed in love to know the difference. Daniel himself had no guile and so could not be expected to know when someone was practicing witchcraft on him. What a bitter thing it was to see other people in love, blast them. Botto excused himself to the restroom but watched through a crack in the door. While he was in there, he prayed to Saint Theresa for intercession for a number of venial sins, but not for spying. He cried in self-pity, that he was hopelessly cast for the rest of his days in the role of observer, while this Daniel, who had done nothing much with his life thus far, had the freedom now to rearrange circumstances as he chose. For seven years, Botto had hated the man and all because of the number of possibilities that his aloneness contained. He envied his aloneness because it was the only place from which a new start could be made. And to think, he was forced now to witness the first fruits of all those years of delay. What thanks would he get for letting the Jew peter out his aloneness here?

Daniel was shaking under the table. This was like a nightmare with a lot of light in it. Her not appearing had thrown him back on himself for strength, and he had found some, but now she would depend on him for strength, too, and he realized in a blinding, muting surge of terror what a weak, ineffectual individual he was. Here was no flatness of paper, no leisure of consideration, no access to erasure. This was not like letterwriting at all. What was she thinking? She moved uncertainly to the table, avoiding his eyes, and sat down opposite him, staring pensively at the table. The words, "Give me back ...." shot through his mind, but he could not finish them. He lifted his toes against his shoes and felt the nails pressing into his flesh.

She was much prettier than he had imagined she would be, but her cheeks sagged and the skin under her eyes had darkened as if she were exhausted after a long trip. Her mouth was small, and the upper lip came to two distinct peaks. It was painted in vividly-red and wet-looking lipstick. As for her shape, she was a plum, a bit hefty, but weren't all ripe things? He couldn't imagine agreeing with her on any score. She was totally the opposite to him, from her sex on down. Perhaps for the first time he understood the old saying, "opposites attract." Finally he worked up the courage to say, "Nalia Koberg-Franz?"

When she first came in, her face was a bright pink from the cold, but by now it had turned stark white.

She nodded but still did not meet his gaze. This was dreadful for both of them. First meetings were barbaric. He wanted to mention how horrible this was for both of them, that nothing on the face of the earth could make it a graceful situation. But after all, hadn't he heard that the way to treat a bruise was to apply pressure to it? And how awful to meet someone who was as lonely as you, lonely to the extent of writing letters to a stranger, but to be unable to mention that because of the taboo. Weren't they both ashamed of the terrible thing that had driven them together? How would they ever be able to face it?

Suddenly she looked him directly in the eye. "Daniel Buchbinder?" "Yes," he answered.

"Good evening." She nodded coldly.

"Good evening."

She lifted her large black purse from the floor and rummaged in it long enough without producing anything that he wondered if she did so merely for comfort. At last she pulled out a letter-size manila envelope that must have been evident all along, but which she greeted with an expression of combined surprise and relief. She held the envelope in both hands and examined his face with curiosity. "Buchbinder," she said. "Deutsch for bookbinder. Coincidence or not you are bookbinder and Buchbinder?"

Daniel tugged at his knees.

She went on. "My name is a place to which I have never been and which cannot describe me concretely. But your name names a profession which does describe you. How is that? Just curiosity. Did you take the name because of the profession, or the profession because of the name?"

Nalia removed her tam, and one of her curls shot out like a spring wound taut and released.

He nodded. "Oh, feel free to wonder. Wonder and ask." He laughed and swaggered his torso in a manner that he feared gave the impression of feeblemindedness. He was so uncomfortable, he was ready to burst into tears when all of a sudden he thought of something intelligent to say: "Yes. If your name were to you as mine is to me, you would be called 'Nalia Schoolteacher."

She cocked her head and flared her nostrils in distaste. "Keep that little bit of information to yourself. I hate my profession and always have. The problem is, I like things to be perfect, and they never are when you're dealing with young American minds. I need a free hand to discipline, but I notice you can't even get that in prison anymore."

"No," he said, "I am the fourth generation in this country. My great grandfather immigrated in 1902 with both the name and the profession. But I imagine the link occurred several generations prior to that. Once artisans took for surnames the names of their trades. But now with people changing jobs every time their backs ache, naturally it's not as much of a practice."

She lowered her head and looked up at him as if shyly seeking faith. "And you do good work?"

"At the risk of tooting my own horn: the best that can be had." He thought of his earlier conversation with Botto, and his spirits drooped. "But it doesn't matter. We all die, and books go unread. People work hard enough without having to sit down and figure out what all those characters mean."

"But it matters to me." She opened the envelope and withdrew a small bunch of papers. "You see, I have something I want bound, a group of letters from a friend, purely of sentimental value, not literary, not monetary."

"My favorite kind of work to be preserved. Has a chance of being looked at again, eh?"

"They were folded," she said, laying the pieces of paper on the table between them and placing her hands on top of them. "I ironed them. To try to flatten them out. I've done very well."

He took the pages from her. "Will be a thin volume, Nalia Koberg-Franz."

"*Macht nichts*, Daniel Buchbinder. Those letters are full of individual lines that would move mountains. Listen!" She touched his hand, and he felt the tiniest involuntary surge of bliss reach his heart. He was sure he had a heart: that fact, which once had been the source of much unhappiness, now seemed to turn its other cheek toward him and reveal a different face entirely. She quoted a line he recognized as one he had slaved about two hours to write and finally stolen from various sources: "In time to come, I will honor you with my entire being, I trust, and this honor will be great enough to form worlds, though body and soul I were no larger than a raindrop."

Daniel slumped down slightly in his chair and hoped Botto could not hear their conversation from the men's. "Such schlock as this," he said, his face turning the color Nalia's had been when she first entered.

"Schlock, maybe," she said, leaning toward him and smiling strangely, a fleck of boldness in her eyes, "but I wouldn't trust anyone but you to bind it."

A woman that size, and away she went without ordering a bite! He saw twenty, twenty-five dollars go out the door. Hadn't she looked starved? Disgruntled, Botto emerged from the bathroom and picked off Daniel's table the money he had left for his meal. Those two had departed quickly. There was some talk of business, but he couldn't hear how it went. And just when he was thinking to himself, "Oh, he's only meeting a potential customer," he saw them link arms as they passed the front window. "Come back to the shop, I'll show you the procedures," he'd heard Daniel, the lady-killer, say to her.

Botto sat down on a revolving stool at the counter and tried to satisfy himself by recalling his first meeting with Madeleine, but at the same time he happened to glance up and meet his reflection coming to him out of the mirror. "You old wreck," he muttered. Why had he been born with one ear half the size of the other, as though that smaller ear were for listening to things from his youth? Well, he was practically deaf in that ear, if anyone cared to know. Look for the memory of a first meeting in that bloated gristly-nosed face? It was like looking for a particular drop of water in a rusty bucket. All the life that had flowed from his love for Madeleine couldn't have happened, for what woman would look twice at that jug? He laid his head in the crook of his arm and wept again, as if Daniel had stolen his romance. "To be assured of nothing in life," he moaned, "and yet to have what seems like everything taken away from you. How terrible!"

#### NATE PRITTS

#### What New Century

Overnight, the dandelions erupt & unfurl. Ditto the neighbor's lawn furniture, so picturesque & so empty, unfolded after the long cold winter like opening a letter from that friend you left behind in North Carolina when everything got tough. But we all fall asleep & wake up in the future. Tomorrow is a place that we mostly can count on to not be destroyed when we get there, where all the bright colors are projected from the darling eyes of robots. Sometimes I'm surprised by what I've forgotten a restaurant, even a whole city. Every last citizen just vanishes & here you can insert your own image of how everything slips through the sieve.

Was it a lake or a river we jumped into together & hopeful? Everything gets shoveled on the pile which is something I occasionally expend energy Visualizing. There's me on top of a big pile of rocks in the blistering medieval sun. My life depends on a whisper between strangers, on catching just a shimmer of what's buried.

#### KATHLEEN HELLEN

#### KATHLEEN HELLEN

#### Orphan

Moving but not, on top of the drifting apart, the shaping of continents, the nation of Cascadia lost in the salt marsh and mud. The orphan traveling 5,000 miles, 300 years to Vancouver. Kobe. Seattle. *Like two cheese graters rubbing*,

the tv geologist says. A gesture. Like this. The wind and water turning. The siren as we crawled under the desks, our backs to the snow in Russia. The Chinese teacher says, *Children*, *put your hands over your heads*.

*Like this*. Remember? Many were killed, many canoes were flung into trees.

#### Simple Rules

Hint of frost The white trees stripped The black-tipped oranged flagging *Stay together* 

the caterpillar says minked The cow bird crow grub-cupped the grackles in their flocking glued cell-tethered *Avoid danger* 

Tell that to the little rags of leaf shifting postures The black sun tasked with cold molasses The carcass of the allosaurus' sticky black exhaustion Tyrant in bitumen fast

Tell that to the birds keeling-curved toward extinction Pit or trap Action or affection notwithstanding

Cold chemistry's the last alert The last hurrah The armored plate lies horned in brute deposits





Menino + Ross Amber Tourlentes

# **AMBER TOURLENTES.** from an interview by JOSHI RADIN.

I was interested in the Boston Pride Parade in a way as a case study, and also as a way to tell a history of being a child of the LGBT movement. I was born in 1970 to a boomer who was a painter and came out when I was one year old, the type of man who moved into cities all across the country postwhite flight to develop an artistic practice and find and create community as an artist and a single gay man.

My father and his partner opened one of the first gay-owned restaurants in the South End on Tremont Street, Café Calypso (1978–1983), and then a health club called Metropolitan, which offered free membership for anyone who was HIV positive or living with AIDS and was one of the early locations for the AIDS Action Committee. When I was not with my mother and stepfather, I spent my young life pre-AIDS going to parades with my father, boyfriends, and his friends.

The parade, thinking back, was about love, friendship, being out and queer, being public, expressing yourself. I remember my father and his friends as beautiful and happy – we would go to parties on friends' roofs after the parade and block parties; I don't remember swag. It was a happy time. There were the gorgeous drag queens and dykes on bikes – all celebrating all. Class and race and gender seemed to be in flux, up for trying on and parading. Perhaps looking back, it was a bit Disney for a ten-yearold who knew these transgressions could never be expressed or shared in the town I was growing up in (outside of Worcester, MA).

I, like many kids of my generation, was in the closet about these weekend and summer events. It was not until college that I told friends about having a gay parent. When the AIDS epidemic hit Boston and my father's community, life changed. I stopped going to Pride in middle school. My father left me out of the memorials and hospital visits. It was soon after that I saw photographs of them marching in Boston, New York, and Washington holding signs about AIDS awareness.

I began going to the parade again when I returned to Boston as an adult in 2000. The parade had begun as a protest, a form of public activism, a symbolic act of finding a community. On my return, the parade still had Ramrod nightclub boys dancing in gold lamé speedos and the AIDS Action Committee, but the swag was new to me.

Now there is swag for banks, IBM, beer companies, hospitals, insurance companies, schools, and churches. The parade that began as a protest was now an annual event, a pilgrimage for someone like me, a daughter of a gay man in his sixties, but also a spectacle.







Orbitz Salvavidas Delta Amber Tourlentes



I collected the swag to have a longer look – gleaning and scanning the swag is what keeps me going to the parade. It has become this case study in my mind. The swag represents a newly visible demographic of couples marrying and raising children. It seemed to represent a subculture so quickly, making it normative and middle class.

The process of scanning the swag, visually flattening out these plastic objects, taking them through Photoshop to look like B&W negatives, taking an almost clinical approach, was a chance for me to give homage to the men who I knew in the South End who worked with my father, babysat and played with me, and those still living with AIDS. They and my father's community were under a microscope in those years. By placing the logos of banks, technology companies, schools, hospitals, nonprofits, and politicians under examination, it is a memorial in flux, much like a parade perhaps. The companies that are LGBT-friendly are placed under the metaphorical microscope to be archived, counted, and re-examined as a photograph, to be collected and revisited.

I spent years in the darkroom as an art student making photograms and giant multiple negative prints, so creating "scanner-grams" was fun. I wanted to borrow from the avant-garde practices of photograms, collage, and agitation posters as seen in the work of Man Ray (rayographs), Hanna Hoch, Max Ernst, and László Moholy-Nagy. I wanted to reference visual history and those artists and critiques of consumer culture and late capitalism. **\***  Bank of America, Made in China Amber Tourlentes





Wainright Amber Tourlentes

(OPPOSITE) Fortune Cookie Home Depot King Peanuts Amber TOURLENTES







Fidelity Amber Tourlentes

(OPPOSITE) Old South Church Marc Jacobs Harvard Vanguard Amber TOURLENTES





## Home Repair

DEVRA'S DOORWAY LOOKED THE SAME as it had before Keira's funeral – shadowy and silent, while a bulb like a floodlight fronted every other house on the block. I almost tripped ascending the porch steps, and I thought perhaps I would fix them for her. It was the most peaceful picture that had entered my head in weeks: sitting outside this house in the afternoon light with a toolbox open on the pebbled path beside me, replacing loose boards and fixing them into place. The trouble with living alone and being handy was that everything in my apartment was working just fine. I felt like it had been months, maybe years, since I had done anything with my hands.

One day when I was thirteen, Martin's bedroom door fell off. After my cousin Claudine had moved with her husband to the naval base in Pensacola, Florida, Manman had decided I was old enough to be responsible for Martin after school by myself. Most of the time I slipped easily back into the role I had played at the age of six – making dinner, setting a rigid homework schedule that I enforced even when Keira or my other friends came over – but from time to time Martin and I would arrive at the apartment in a shared silly mood and spend several hours playing Martin's version of hide-and-go-seek, inventing new rules as we went along. On one such afternoon Martin had hidden himself behind his open bedroom door, and I pulled at the knob forcefully to reach him. Giggling, he yanked it back, and I pulled again, but the tug-of-war proved too much for the worn hinges, and the door fell from our grips, towards Martin. He yelped and ducked out of the way, and it crashed down onto his bed frame, a flare of gray dust flying off the top.

"Are you all right?"

Martin crawled under the door and towards me, his eyes wide. "Yeah," he said, "but Manman's gonna kill us."

"Shut up," I said. "I have to think."

In spite of Manman's usual tightwad ways – we were *not rich*, she reminded me fiercely when I asked for my own phone line, a stereo system like the one in Allison's bedroom, a raise in my allowance – she had recently given in and purchased America Online for our computer at the suggestion of her co-worker. We had one family screen name, MarLovv; Manman also had a private one, Viverlaine, the function of which she refused to discuss with us.

AOL fascinated me: there were message boards for everything. The sex ones didn't interest me much – once, when Manman and Martin weren't home, I'd "had cybersex," but it wasn't really that different from normal IMing – but I loved to read boards about cars even though I had never driven one, about pets even though I didn't have one, about Catholic teenagers even though I wasn't Catholic. There was even a message board for Haitian teenagers, which I liked to read even though I felt too shy to post on it yet. AOL had all the information in the world.

So it was to AOL I went, Martin still whimpering by the fallen door, to find a message board about home repair. It was in the section for grown-ups, not teenagers, and it sounded like most of the people writing were grown-up men. I composed a post, not feeling as shy as I did on the Haitian kids' message board – maybe because it was an emergency.

This piece was adapted from the author's novel-in-progress, Go Home Faster.

#### I broke my bedroom door and don't know how to fix it. Need help? P.S.13/f.

The first two responses were a little bit gross – one said "just leave that door open, baby girl, and I'll come right in." (I thought maybe I shouldn't have said I was thirteen.) But the next few were questions that sounded important. "Did the doorway crack?" "Do you have a drill and a screwdriver?" "Does your father have some wood glue?"

I ran back down the hall to check, then returned to the computer to answer, ignoring the part about my dad. Then somebody named CARPENTER3 sent me an IM. "*I can talk you through it*," he said.

MarLovv: ok thank you

Marlovv: I don't know what stuff I need

CARPENTER3: is there a hardware store near your house? MarLovV: yes

CARPENTER3: we can make a list

Leaving Martin in the house (to his annoyance and against Manman's standing orders), I ran to the hardware store three blocks away. (I had joined the middle school girls' softball team last spring, and I was getting very good at running.) I gathered wood filler, a putty knife, screws that were three-eighths of an inch longer than the old ones, and a piece of sandpaper. Even that was going to cost all the allowance I had saved, and I was relieved that Martin had found a drill and a screwdriver in the bathroom closet.

"Are you gonna build a house?" the store clerk asked, grinning like it was funny.

"No," I said. "Fix a door." I felt weirdly proud of it and hurried home so that Martin and I could follow CARPENTER3's instructions.

Devra opened the door before I even rang the bell and remained silhouetted there for a second, her edges illuminated and the house glaring behind her, before my eyes adjusted. She wasn't wearing any makeup at all this time: her cheeks were washed out and sagging, and little bruised humps of flesh trembled beneath her eyes. She looked like what she was, a woman in her fifties getting lost. Her hair was pulled into a raucous knot at the nape of her neck, strands flying out like an electric field to frame her face, and at least an inch of gray roots gleamed at the top of her head.

She cupped my cheeks with her hands and looked imploringly over my face. I struggled to keep my expression neutral. Then she pushed the door wide open, inviting me inside. I had planned to go up to the room where I'd stayed during the funeral, but she picked up my suitcase before I could and set it just inside the door.

"Did you eat?"

"Yeah. Yes."

"Would you like some tea? Or some wine?"

"Tea sounds great, thank you," I said, even though it was much warmer than it had been even a few weeks ago. Devra filled an electric teakettle at the sink and swung an arm towards the couch.

"Do you remember that?" she asked when I looked down at an open photo album.

I did. In sixth grade, Keira, Allison, Alice, and I had dressed for Halloween as the mascots for different holidays. Allison was Santa Claus, which was ironic, Keira said, because she was Jewish; my leprechaun costume was ironic because - she said, carefully overlooking the racial implications of a Haitian girl representing an Irish mascot – I was so tall. (Keira really did use the word "ironic" with impunity at the age of eleven. Even Martin couldn't really manage that.) Alice was the Easter Bunny (this choice might have been a comment on her overbite, but none of us would admit it), and Keira was Cupid, a bow and a quiver of arrows slung over one bare shoulder, the other sheathed by a toga. Allison had a long fake beard, and we painted Alice's nose black and drew whiskers on her cheeks with Devra's eyeliner pencil. I wore green eye shadow and green lipstick that Keira also smudged on my ears and cheeks; we had even tried to spray a few green streaks into my hair, but they didn't really show up. Old trick-or-treaters, we paraded down Commonwealth Avenue with our arms linked. Keira's father, Frank, followed from a safe distance for a while, then retreated to give us an hour on our own.

I flipped through the album as my tea steeped, acutely aware of Devra's tired, searching eyes on me from the armchair. She settled on the other side of the pile of albums and examined the pictures over my shoulder. Turning a page, I found one of my senior-year portraits set on a page opposite Keira's.

For most of my life, when I have looked at photographs of myself, I have believed with ease that she is still who I am, that anyone looking at my face now would recognize the toddler with donuts of fat on her arms, the gawky, bony adolescent, without the slightest hesitation. Now, suddenly, I saw that I was looking at a picture of a child, and that Keira, too, was terrifyingly young and already more than halfway through her life.

Although I followed Henry's instructions (that was what CARPENTER3 told me to call him about halfway through the conversation) to the letter, using the putty knife to smooth wood filler into the damaged part of the doorframe and measuring carefully to drill new holes for the screws two inches below where they had been, Martin and I were unable to lift the door on our own. I called Tant Yolande's and reached, to my relief, my seventeen-year-old cousin Edner, who had been kicked out of his basketball league for smoking pot and therefore spent many more afternoons at home than he used to. He tried to take over the entire operation when he arrived, but I said in a self-important voice, "All you have to do is hold the door up."

Martin cheered when we could open and shut it smoothly. Edner looked sour – like Tant Yolande, he hated it when Martin and I did anything right. "If you tell your parents or Manman or Granmè about this," I said smoothly, "I will tell them that you smoked pot in the house while you were helping." Martin laughed and Edner stormed out, not saying another word. After opening and closing the bedroom door twice more in satisfaction, I skipped back to the computer, knowing that Manman would find me online, as I often was, when she got home.

Marlovv: it all worked!!

MarLovv: thank you so MUCH

CARPENTER3: you're welcome

MarLovv: that was fun

CARPENTER3: really? you think it's fun?

Henry, who said he lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with his wife Mary Rose and one-year-old son Kenneth, became my home repair instructor. He was forty-two years old, he said, and being a carpenter was actually his job, and he fixed everything around his house himself. Henry taught me how to tighten the washers in the kitchen and bathroom sinks so the faucets stopped dripping, how to put a shelf up in the front hall closet for our hats and gloves, how to fix the garbage disposal when it jammed, how to keep the dryer in the basement from overheating. At first we conducted these exchanges only on IM, and only when I wrote to him first, but Manman let me have my own screen name when I turned fourteen, and after school I often rushed to the computer, eager to describe my latest home repair success to Henry, so I could see his response: "*Smart girl.*"

Because my best friend was Keira Madigan – Keira who had read every book by George Orwell and two by Dostoyevsky, who got straight As even though she never did her geometry homework except during English class – there weren't a lot of people who said that to me.

"What are you doing online?" Manman asked me.

"Just talking to people."

"To people?"

"Like Keira and Allison and Denise and, like, Dan. People."

"Dan is a boy?"

"He *has a girlfriend*." I rolled my eyes. "What are *you* doing online?" She glared at me. "Just talking to people."

Still, Manman was excited about my newfound skills, and soon enough Tant Josie, Tant Yolande and Tonton Marcel, and Granmè were all calling me up to fix things at their houses, too. Tant Josie sometimes said under her breath, "A girl should not do such things," and Edner always glared at me when I came over as if I had taken something from him, but I ignored them and fixed Tant Josie's silverware drawer, the blocked drain in Tant Yolande's kitchen sink, just as they had asked me, remembering the instructions or tips that Henry had sent me in his most recent email. For Christmas, my family members pooled their money to buy me a fully stocked toolbox of my own.

"You shouldn't talk to that man," Martin said. I jumped; I hadn't even noticed him looking over my shoulder at the screen.

"Shut up," I said.

"We're not supposed to talk to people online. Not grown-ups."

I sighed and typed "*brb*" to Henry. (I always had to teach him what things like that meant.)

"Martin, it's okay," I said. It was kind of cute when he was protective, but kind of really annoying. "We just talk about how to fix things. Nothing, like ...it's not a big deal."

Without asking me, Martin grabbed the mouse and scrolled back through the text of my IM. "That's *private*!" I snapped, but Henry and I had, in fact, been discussing how he had recently fixed a wobbly kitchen table, which I was going to do for Margaret the next day. After reading for a minute or two, Martin nodded reluctantly.

"But don't tell Manman," I said.

I was older than the girl in the picture now. I was a woman who could feel the outline of my ribs beneath Devra's hands, feel Devra's lips wet and sloppy against my cheeks and chin. I was a woman who could feel myself tumbling, tumbling as she pressed against me urgently, whose hands and arms now had the confidence to hold Devra myself, to notice and ignore how fragile her body seemed now. (Although really, both of us were shaking a little.) I followed Devra up the stairs once again, my hand rubbing against her hip; once, then twice, she turned around to kiss me. I responded with an assertiveness that felt new, untapped, and its current guided us to the bedroom once more, as if we had never left it.

"Has he ever come on to you?" Keira asked, exhaling a cloud. Devra had gone to the grocery store, and Keira and I were smoking a joint in Keira's bathroom.

"No. Not at all. Not ever." I took a hit, still struggling with the scratchy feeling in my throat. It was only the third time I had ever smoked pot.

"Did you tell him how old you were?"

"Yeah."

"Have you seen a picture of him?" "Yeah. Yes." "His face?" "What do you mean? What else would it be?"

"You know."

"Ew! Keira! Gross!"

"People do that," she said, stubbing out the smoldering roach on the plate of cookies between us.

"Not Henry. I think I'm more like his daughter than anything else." Keira raised her eyebrows suggestively.

"Gross!" I screamed.

I started wondering, though. Whenever I got an email from Henry, I imagined that it would contain a picture of his penis, long and pink and erect and shiny. I thought about him sending me a plane ticket to Tulsa, Oklahoma. I wondered idly if Kenneth and Mary Rose were real people, or if Mary Rose was, in fact, a fifteen-year-old girl who had been trapped for two years in Henry's basement. Maybe that's who Kenneth was, too. People did that.

I tried to plan what I would do. How could I explain to Manman why I needed to go to Tulsa, Oklahoma? Maybe I could say I was going on vacation with Keira's family, some weekend when Keira and Devra and Frank were leaving town. But what if Henry did try to trap me in his basement? Maybe I should start by having cybersex; I thought it might be different if I actually touched myself. But it was hard to imagine even a picture of Henry's penis in much detail (except for Martin's when he was a baby, I had never seen a real penis at all), hard to think of Henry even saying anything unrelated to wood and screws and closet doors and the wheels of a TV stand.

And it never happened. Henry's emails never got suggestive, not even a little bit. When I decided to build Martin a bookcase for his tenth birthday, the summer after I was in eighth grade, Henry sent an email saying he would happily guide me through every step. "*MR and I are taking Kenneth for tests today*," he added. I bought wood with the money that I had saved up from the household repairs that Margaret and Robert, Graham and Carolyn, Devra, and even a couple of my neighbors were now paying me for. (When I pointed out to Manman that she was saving money on handymen and plumbers and should be paying me too, she rolled her eyes. "Bébé, I pay your rent.") I worked on the bookcase in the den at Keira's house, so I could keep it a surprise. Keira's family had not one, but three computers, and one was in the den, so every now and then I could even stop to go online and update Henry on my progress. "*Good girl*," his most recent email had said.

"What are you doing?" Devra asked.

I hadn't heard her come in. Usually Keira sat and talked to me while I worked, or just did her homework, and Devra mostly stayed in her own study and Frank in his. But Keira was at a movie with Katie and Kayla and Danica today – she had said it was okay if I came over anyway – and now Devra stood watching me in the doorway.

"Just checking something online. I'm sorry. Is that okay?" Keira's family had three phone lines, so I thought it probably wasn't a big deal, but it was weird without Keira to explain things for me.

"Yes, of course, honey." Devra hesitated, as if deciding whether to enter the room. She was wearing a red cotton t-shirt with a scoop neck and her black hair was gathered in a messy knot. She looked very young. "Is that where you've been learning to do all this? Online?"

"Yeah."

"Will wonders never cease." She smiled at me, then shifted her gaze to the bookcase itself, which was three-quarters done. "It looks beautiful, sweetheart. Martin's going to be thrilled."

Martin was indeed thrilled when I gave it to him. We carried it into his bedroom and the first book he placed on it was *Ender's Game*, his favorite of the moment. "No one else's sister can do that," he said proudly. Manman rubbed my back, and even Granmè looked pleased and said softly to Manman, "Smart, and good, like Antoine." Antoine was Manman's big brother, who was killed by the Tonton Macoute when Manman was five, before Manman and Granmè left Haiti. Granmè almost never talked about him.

The next week, after I got my film developed, I went back to Keira's house and used Frank's scanner so I could send a picture of the bookcase to Henry. His response came three days later. "*Smart girl, good job. Kenneth's tests are bad news. MR and I have to focus.*" I sent him a few IMS over the next couple of weeks, trying to plan my next ambitious project, but that was the last I ever heard from him. A wounded scream shook me from my sleep. My eyes dashed around the room, hulking shadows of furniture unfamiliar in the darkness. "Devra," I said, rolling over to face her.

Her eyes as they flew open were glassy, reflecting fragments of the porchlight below the bedroom window. "Who?" she said softly.

"It's me," I said. "It's Lauren."

"Lauren ... Lauren," she said, and her voice was no better than her scream. The fingers of her left hand danced over my face as if trying to distinguish the features, and I was glad I couldn't get a clear view of her expression in the dark.

I put my hand on her wrist, feeling the worn skin below her palm. "Lauren." She stared beyond me for a moment and then her muscles slackened and she fell back against the pillow once more. I lay facing her and pulled her hand against my chest.

"Yeah, I'm here," I said.

I heard the throaty choking noises before I could distinguish the tears streaming from her eyes. I hadn't heard her cry like this since the memorial service, and the noise shredded through the darkness like claws. "Lauren," she gasped. "Baby."

I pulled her to me, tucking her head between my chin and my breasts and wrapping my arms around her heaving shoulders, closing my eyes until her shoulders stilled and her breathing evened. The thought that I always tried to banish from my mind flew in again, unbidden: *Keira's mother. She's Keira's mother.* 



The Pacific Series, 2013 Oil on canvas 36 x 48 in. KEITH FRANCIS

# **Keith Francis**

from an interview by JESS BARNETT

The paintings from The Pacific Series are based on my travels to the Point Lobos State Natural Reserve in Carmel, California. Powerful forces of nature, raging sea against rock, beach deposits, landslides, quartz dikes, kelp and vein-filled fissures converge in this magical landscape.

I used a technique of applying a mixture of plaster of paris, gesso, water, and glue binders on a primed canvas. Once applied, I rapidly worked the layer with painter's knives, canvases, and an assortment of brushes, knives, sandpaper, and water. The canvas was allowed to dry for twentyfour hours, then the process began again, with multiple layers being applied until the desired effect was achieved. Upon nearing completion of the canvas, oil paint was applied; once the canvas was dry, a final glaze was applied. A painting takes approximately two to three weeks to complete.

The color palette of the paintings was selected due to its color absorption properties. I wanted to reflect the entire powerful events at Point Lobos, the color spectrums of the nutrient-rich water, giant and bull kelp, sandstone, clay, sand, wildflowers, granite, etc. When the combinations of these separate pigments are mixed together, the result reflects such little light as to be called black.

My influences include Jean-Michel Basquiat and Aldo Tambellini. I saw an exhibition of Basquiat's work at the Gogosian Gallery last year in New York, and I was fascinated with Basquiat's power, fresh approach, and color palette. After viewing the exhibit in early April, I started my steel sculpture series.

Aldo is an artist and a poet, and I formed a friendship with him a couple of years ago when I was installing his show at the Chelsea Art Museum. Aldo's work and our conversations demonstrated to me that working in different artistic media feeds and strengthens the entire vision of an artist's body of work.

I also continue to be inspired by the ocean. I was born near the ocean, but then lived in Arizona, I returned to work in Boston and vowed to never be far from the ocean again.



The Pacific Series, 2013 Oil on canvas 36 × 48 in. KEITH FRANCIS



The Pacific Series, 2013 Oil on canvas 36 × 48 in. Keith Francis



No. 136. 2013 Cold rolled steel 4 × 8 ft. KEITH FRANCIS (FOLLOWING PAGE) No. 68. 2013 No. 65. 2013 No. 53. 2013 No. 65. 2013 Cold rolled steel 38 × 48 in KEITH FRANCIS







The rolled steel works are based on my sketches and observations while traveling in Venice, Italy. The beauty of the city against a backdrop of decay and rebuilding in a never-ending struggle to survive against mother nature and time inspired these pieces.



#### MAGGIE GOLSTON

#### Set Yourself on Fire

Exactly what does it take to have grown from being a camera to being a gun?

Way down below the ocean is where I want to be, in analog with the air's

crack: a chemical burn, tubes of wee explosions. What if little by little

we never meet again? In patterns, linked like birds, parallel or out of sync.

Just hang on. I'm always on my way to you as if the hundredth meeting could undo

this harbor gone rusted with birds left to draw circles of caws into words

you're spitting like teeth not pearls or promises, just something you said.

#### MAGGIE GOLSTON

#### Because the World Is Badly Made

Jimmy has a tumor in his left leg, or he doesn't. I'd suck it out like venom. I am sure to say I'd take a bullet for him, for a girl in Chicago, for the war girl bundled on Italian TV, her crushed eyes. No single life could be more or less valuable. And I play act a Jain with a mask over my lipsticked mouth, though I am sleepwalking my broom through the first of several gin-and-tonics. And there's the rub. I hate the bile at the back of my throat. I hate my way. Because we can't wake up, the slo-mo dream won't stop, the endless rows of grocery items that manifest only themselves. A motherless child, a childless mother, it adds up to commodities and consequences even though we expected magic with ever swinging tetherball at elementary, eventually cars must be lined up for emissions tests, their whines the exhalations of everything good about childhood, what is given, what is given up.

#### MAGGIE GOLSTON

#### DAVID MCALEAVEY

#### Digit

Via letters in wind I time. Ever nasty it arbitrates: the Om, clashing kettledrums. Mornings on the cement bring the finest fever and winter, too, is judge.

Winter far and eventual Father inside, here or dead, all the way inside his profligate slur and gnashing made framed in a Land Rover's driving seat; wind just ordinary damage left in hair to nest in.

For the next grand birth a slag needs and ocean and the small horse then men believe it until the marks of whoredom and the father make an unfortified squat by the market for voracious living. There I make a spread for you.

## Sideshow

after Rimbaud

Very reduced rabbits. They have infiltrated, as in Australia, as in tundra. You get the feeling they know things they shouldn't. It's frightening. The sheet metal of their eyes reflects the world including you, yet you are being processed by them. Then they move on. You are left to imagine your own sense of spectacle, star in your own movie, as if you were Godard, for example. You feel a kind of exile into desire and realize no one will care what you do.

There's a funhouse-mirror aspect to this. Bacteriologists confer. Actually they are sex-life educators, making balloons from condoms, not strange at all. Except they've made spirochetes and viruses, mutant genes, interneuronic scaffolding. One is happier than anyone has ever been, happier than a new mother. The frames advance jerkily for a while. Sunsets over canyons and music from the moon, is what it sounds like. It slides into a deep valley with the feeling of a war whoop.

I continue to tinker until I fall asleep.



# Kissing oscar-wilde

*text by* JADE SYVAN *photos by* CALEB COLE



# All beautiful things belong to the same age."

OSCAR WILDE

SPENT A GOOD PORTION OF MY LATE TEENS and early twenties making pilgrimages to my favorite authors' graves. By the time I officially met Caleb, I had already started to gather an impromptu mental catalogue of the physical tokens of these mass conceptions. In Oxford, Mississippi, admirers leave William Faulkner cigarettes and bourbon. Ralph Waldo Emerson's grave is piled with pinecones. Rainer Maria Rilke is buried in a tiny churchyard at the very top of a tall, goatdotted hill in the Swiss Alps, where panting young poets ascend to leave single, intentional roses. My favorite of all was Oscar Wilde, lying in a relatively serene, tree-lined corner of Paris's labyrinthine celebrity cemetery, Père Lachaise.

In the 1990s, fans started leaving lipstick kisses on the large rectangular stone sculpture that served as his grave marker and headstone. The brighter the color, the better. There were hundreds of them. Hundreds on hundreds. Sometimes when everything was dark and I felt abandoned by everyone and couldn't stop thinking about lonely, diabetic women sitting in front of their televisions feeding on corn syrup and Paxil and nuggets made from mutant, drugged-up chickens who lived their whole lives force-fed in tiny cages, I would shut my eyes and picture those kisses, all red and pink against the grey, and a thumbprint-sized place in my chest would open to a warm, peaceful glow. If that many people could love the idea of this person, who died an outcast, so much that they were independently and collectively moved to kiss the very symbol of death, then maybe there was hope for everyone who had ever been shamed or excluded or ridiculed. Maybe there was even hope for me.

**B** EFORE THE PAN-ROMANTIC EXPLOITS, the buzzing poetry bars, and the foggy draw of Paris, I grew up stagnant and strange in Indianapolis, Indiana. Nothing about me seemed to make sense in or to my surroundings. Kids called me a "freak" at school for reasons I never understood. To my conservative parents, I was confusingly artistic at the best of times and embarrassingly perverse at the worst. I felt placeless, so books became my home and their authors and characters became my closest friends for years until I went to college in Bloomington and found/ed a small group of queer artists, including Caleb.

After I graduated, I knew I had to leave the Midwest. I decided on Boston for three reasons. One, Indiana was no place to be a writer, and Boston's literary scene seemed the closest to the 1920s Parisian Lost Generation or the 1950s San Francisco beat world that I could imagine at the end of 2006. Two, *The Sound and the Fury* was my favorite book at the time, and I thought Quentin's chapter was the most beautiful thing ever written in English, and Quentin was at Harvard when, in twenty-year-old Rimbaud-esque mania, he broke his pocket watch to escape time and walked into the Charles River to drown. Three, Caleb was moving to Boston for photography school.

My last few months in Bloomington, I would walk over to Caleb's house in the cruel heat of southern Indiana's August after teaching poetry to kids. It was the summer after I graduated college and the summer after his mother died. His forearms had two new tattoos in his mother's handwriting that were two of her favorite Latin phrases. One said *memento mori* and the other said *carpe diem*.

We would climb down the rocky bank of the stream by his house to take pictures under the graffitied bridge and talk about love, death, social constructs, and most of all, art. We talked about moving away

This piece was adapted from the author's memoir, *Kissing Oscar Wilde* (Write Bloody Press, 2013).

from the utterly unbearable allpervading flatness of Indiana, its fields of corn and soybeans interrupted by dismal strip malls and monstrous chain restaurants. We talked about going to some city, some *real* city, and becoming a photographer and a writer, respectively, and how one day, when we were old (meaning like forty) and successful and ready to sell out, we would get some grants or whatever and use the money to travel around the world to different famous people's graves, and he would take pictures and I would write some bullshit something for each picture about



what the items people leave there mean about what the person – or the idea of the person – meant to people. Then we would use all the money we were sure to make to never have to work at regular jobs again, maybe buy a warehouse or a farm that came with its own electricity and goats. Then we'd sprawl across hours and days shooting and writing and collaging and creating other brand-new modes of expression that we were sure it would one day be our responsibility to invent, because we knew we couldn't spend half our waking lives at sallow nine-to-fives. We vowed we would never. That would be worse than death.

HE FIRST TIME I SAW CALEB I was dressed as a boy. Caleb was a girl then, and her name was Carrie. I was sixteen so she must have been seventeen. I had a haircut that my mom called "pixie" and my drama club friends called "butch." I was wearing my brother's carpenter jeans and polo shirt and my own Dr. Marten boots. I'd smashed down my C-cup breasts with a sports bra and kept slouching to try to disguise them as pecks. Marissa and I were in the theater department of Indianapolis's Catholic high school, Cathedral, which was not our high school. We were waiting backstage for her friend Mary to finish a tech rehearsal. When she finally came back to meet us, Carrie was with her. Mary was about five-two and athletic-looking, with deep olive skin and *My So-Called Life* bottle-burgundy hair. She wore a black tank top with bright green bra straps showing. She had a real nose ring. Carrie was just as short, with pale skin and white-red hair. She was dressed more like I was, except she wasn't trying to hide her breasts, and they were bigger than mine anyway. I would've called Carrie's haircut "butch" and Mary's haircut "pixie." Mary talked a lot, but Carrie hardly said two words. I've told Caleb about this encounter several times but he doesn't remember it.

The next week at school Marissa told me Mary thought I was cute. She'd asked Marissa to pass along her phone number. I left the torn piece of green-inked paper on my dresser for a month before I finally threw it away. Then I started to wear platform sandals and grow out my hair.

Three years later, during my freshman year in college, I saw Carrie perform at a drag show in the lobby of my dorm. I remembered her pale skin and white-red hair from the Cathedral theater. Carrie's drag name was Caleb King. Later, when Carrie Colvard became Caleb Cole, he changed his drag name to Owen King.

I saw Caleb again at a friend's birthday party late in the summer before I turned twenty-three. I was staying in Bloomington an extra year after I graduated, working at a women's shelter, going to therapy for depression and obsessive compulsive disorder, trying to write a novel, and waiting for my boyfriend Thade to finish his final year of school. He had a fauxhawk and sideburns and was wearing a plain red T-shirt. I was in a slightly hipsterfied stage of femme-ness, with short, dyed-black hair, a black lace tank top, and high heels.

I remembered Caleb from the drag show and from Cathedral. He was sitting across the beige living room of Sarah, a queen bee lesbian theology student cum stripper who called herself the "Main Gay" of Bloomington, at a party consisting of mostly women and trans men, vodka and cranberry juice, a late-night order of cheese bread with garlic butter dipping sauce cooling on the coffee table, and a barely audible episode of *Xena: Warrior Princess* on the television. I can't explain how I knew he was important just sitting there. Most words I use to describe it sound mystical, but it wasn't. There have been a few people in my life I've known were going to be important to me just by looking at them. Caleb was one. That's all.

He made some witty joke, I remember, and I laughed, and at some point we started talking. Caleb was not a photographer then. He hadn't even thought of becoming a photographer. He had dropped out of a master's program in sociology and was working as a writing tutor at 1U while Leyna finished her master's in marketing. When I met him, Caleb called himself a writer. We talked enough to discover that both of us were working on novels. Mine was about vampire lesbian strippers. His was about his mother's death.

I asked him if he'd like to be novel-writing buddies, and he said yes, so we started talking about art. That fall, though, he abandoned his novel and decided to try his hand at visual art instead. He used some of the money his mother had left him to buy some nice camera equipment and began taking pictures of his friends.

Around that winter, we started talking about Art with a big "A." By that spring, Caleb knew he was going to go to photography school in Boston, and Thade knew he didn't want to go to Boston. Caleb's and my friendship immediately intensified, since for all we knew, come September, we'd be hundreds of miles away from one another. I cut my hair into a fauxhawk to look more like him. I started wearing pants with collared shirts and vests partially because I was really into Bob Dylan circa 1966, and partially because Caleb said he liked how I looked in them.

That summer we both quit our jobs so we could spend more time together, making art. We would pass long afternoons in each other's living rooms Mod Podging collages on the carpet. We started using the word "love" about each other. Before September, when he left for Boston with Leyna and I left for Europe with Thade, Caleb and I got married.


OR SIX YEARS, Caleb and I have collaborated on an extended portrait project. It started in Bloomington the summer of 2006, right before he moved to Boston and I went to Europe. Caleb and I spent a lot of time that summer at each other's houses developing high-concept art pieces with varying success rates. One involved handwritten letters by fictional people expressing their loneliness and need for human connection, signed with pleas for any sort of written response. Each envelope contained another envelope stamped and addressed to a PO box we'd rented. We would leave the letters in strategic places, like coffee shops and libraries, and we always disguised our handwriting. We checked the PO box once a week, but no responses ever came.

Other projects were more successful, such as shellacking collages of fashion magazines and pornography. We came up with the mantra, EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE OKAY, and wrote it in sharpie in every bathroom stall in Bloomington. I also came up with the slogan ART SAVES, inspired by the many Christian billboards and bumper stickers in southern Indiana. We had ART SAVES stickers printed up and stuck them everywhere.

We talked a lot about artists we loved, especially Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe. Even more than their work, we loved their story. How Patti Smith moved to New York from New Jersey to become an artist. How their working relationship carried them through a young romance that evolved to a mature romantic friendship. How much they loved each other. How they were so, so queer.

As far as the portraits, we never decided to do it. It just happened and kept happening. Caleb decided he wanted to become a photographer and he started shooting me. He didn't know what he was doing yet. He was learning and I was his test subject.

One of my favorite pictures of me ever is me in Bloomington's old, southern-feeling graveyard. I'm leaning against a headstone that's a large crucifix with an eroding Jesus, looking out past the viewer. I'm twentythree and have short, dyed-black hair. There's a lit cigarette in my mouth, but I didn't smoke.

A portrait is really a picture of the relationship between the artist and the model. That's why the Mapplethorpe photos of Patti Smith are so striking. No one knew her like him and no one knew him like her and the real picture is that knowing.

At the end of the summer, Caleb knew he was moving to Boston and I didn't know for sure what I was going to do, so we had an "Art marriage" ceremony at the anarchist co-op bookstore to profess our profound Art commit-



ment and also our real nonphysical undying love. It was a Friday evening event. We flyered and advertised and invited everyone we knew. About sixty people came to see exhibits of all the work we'd created over the summer, hear me read some poems, and watch us get married. We wrote our own vows and exchanged vials of fake blood. Thade performed the ceremony and Caleb's girlfriend, Leyna, was the vial-bearer.

Caleb and Leyna had been together for three years and Thade and I had been together for four years. Caleb had asked Leyna if it was okay with her that we got Art married because he and Leyna knew they were going to get married for real in the next couple of years. She said it was. I didn't ask Thade if it was okay with him, but I'm almost positive he would have said it was if I had.

Thade and I knew we weren't going to get married for real. Thade wanted to stay in Indiana near his family and live a simple life teaching piano and probably eventually go to grad school. I wanted to go to a real city on a coast and be an artist. Thade said I could be an artist in Bloomington, and I said not the kind of artist I wanted to be.

I passed out on Leyna and Caleb's couch after pints of whiskey and hours of repetitive dialogue about what I should do romance- and moving-wise more than a few nights that summer. In the end I moved to Boston and that was the end of me and Thade.

In Boston, I was Caleb's model through photography school. When I started performing, he took all of my pictures. Over the next five years, the portraits continued, trudging through the snow against an eye-blue sky; under streetlights in knee-high boots, push-up bra, and lip liner; makeup-less in grey polo dress with electroshock hair tangle; giddily nude in hungover, post-sex bedroom languor; autumn afternoon in collared shirt, vest, and cowboy boots; drinking whiskey or eating ice cream sandwiches or doing absent-minded yoga poses in cut-offs in the back yard. We don't talk about why we do the portraits. It's just what we do.

When I post photos we've taken together on Facebook I usually tag Caleb. There are a lot more photos of me than of him on his page. There are a lot more of me than of anyone else.

Caleb uses a lot of our photos in the photography classes he teaches. He said recently he wonders if people wonder who I am. "My students know I'm married," he said. "But then I've got all these pictures of this other woman." I told him it was good for an artist to have intriguing interpersonal relationships.

I worked as an artist's model for years in my mid-twenties when I was broke. I had thousands of photos of me taken by dozens of photographers. Caleb's are the only ones I liked and still like. Caleb's are the only ones I can look at and see someone who looks at all how I think I am.

EAR THE END OF 2006, I'd taken four months to chase history and couch-surf through the old cobblestone continent. I feared the trip might just be a played-out American whitekid postponement of adulthood – a last grasp at adolescence before moving to Boston and scrounging to afford shared housing in the rat-colonized part of town. I figured, though, that Patti Smith had done it when she was young, and if it was good enough for twenty-fouryear-old Patti Smith, it was good enough for twenty-four-year-old Jeni Schaibley. Plus, I wanted to be a poet.

Whatever my motivations, I placed my barely-adult body in lamp-lit Dublin pubs and stained-glass-lit Barcelona cathedrals and tiny candlelit Parisian cafés, where I scrawled free verse rants and iambic villanelles detailing the import of it all in sticker-covered Moleskines and Mead composition notebooks, dragging Thade along with me even though our relationship had already started to fall apart.

When I found I had the opportunity to go back to France on a poetry tour in 2012, I also found that the French government had cleaned all the kisses off of Oscar Wilde's grave and surrounded it with a glass barrier. My stomach hurt the way it hurt when I was nine and found out about global warming and the atomic bomb. I told Caleb about it, and he didn't hesitate. He said he would come with me and we would do something at the grave – a statement, a happening – and he would take pictures.

I've never been to Paris in the summer. I only know it in monochrome – silver buildings, silver river, silver statues, silver sky. No one wears color. It almost looks like a black and white film.

We walked up the winding, hilly streets to the somber stone wall that surrounded Père Lachaise. The place where we were staying was the farthest away from Oscar Wilde, but was the closest to Gertrude Stein, whose grave I'd never seen. When we walked in, a groundskeeper and a guard were talking by some sort of official-looking shed about three meters away from us. The groundskeeper was leaning half of his body on a shovel. One of them said something to us that I didn't understand.

"*Quoi*?" I asked. He repeated it, but I was too flustered by the interruption to separate the words into meaning.

"He said it's closing in less than an hour," Caleb said.

I thanked the groundskeeper and asked him if he knew where Gertrude Stein was. The way he pronounced Gertrude Stein, I wouldn't have understood him unless I already knew what he was saying. He told us the section number and pointed us toward it. The guard also handed us folded tourist's map.

It was farther from the entrance than it looked on the map. We walked past block after block of sectioned-off gravestones and ornate, temple-like monuments. One section was a dedicated Holocaust memorial, its centerpiece an eerie expressionist sculpture – a twisted bronze conflagration of writhing ghosts.

The section the groundskeeper named was a large grey square of land rowed with rather anomalously plain grave markers, all dull grey or glossy black. Gertrude Stein was not indicated on the map, so we had no choice but to walk up and down every row of gravestones and read each of the names.

Row after row, she wasn't there. Sometimes as we made our way down a line I would spy a heavily-decorated grave a few meters away and conjecture that that must be it, but it never was. Some of the graves were so covered in flowers I had to move them to read the names. Most of the adorned names had been dead at least several decades, but I didn't recognize any of them as famous. When I moved the flowers – I felt weird about moving them even just to read the names – I always put them back.

As we started to make it closer to the edge abutting the stone wall of the cemetery, the graves began trading their French for Hebrew and their crosses for stars of David.

As we walked down the last row on the very edge along the pathway, we saw a large stone-framed bed of stones. The stones were sized from grape to golf ball. There were hundreds, maybe thousands, all filling this vast rectangular stone bed. There was nothing remarkable about the stones other than their placement and company. They all were just stones you could find anywhere on the ground on the cemetery. The headstone also was stacked with these stones, as if the stones were water and could flow off the headstone into the stone bed. The stones were all grey as the sky or black as closed eyes. The headstone was wide, clean, and geometric, with only the words GERTRUDE STEIN carved on its front and only the words ALICE B. TOKLAS carved on its back.

I stood looking across the large stone bed at her name. I probably said something in my head to her, whatever she now was. Something very heartfelt, I'm sure, and very unoriginal. From the other side of the headstone, Caleb took a picture of me looking.

I walked around to the back of the headstone alongside Caleb. The letters were sharp and deep and I knelt and touched them.

When I stood up I saw, placed at the very apex of the pile of stones on the headstone, one rock that was not black or grey, but deep burgundy red. It was shaped like a heart.

"I don't know what I should leave," I said.

"Do you want to leave a rock?" said Caleb.

"No, it doesn't feel sincere. It wouldn't mean anything to me."

"Well, what else do you have? Or we could walk around a little bit and find something maybe."

"I kind of want to take a rock."

"Okay."

"Is that terrible? Is that wrong?"

Caleb shrugged. "I don't think anything's wrong if you do it for the right reasons."



"It feels right. I want to take a rock with me. I'll put it on my altar at home."

"Okay. Then take a rock then."

I reached out and lifted the heart-shaped rock reverently off its cradle. If anything ever feels right, it felt right.

"What in God's name do you think you're doing?" said a nasal, Irishaccented voice.

I looked over the headstone to see a slim, frail, white-haired man wearing a sweater vest and a backpack. He was holding his smart phone horizontally aimed at the grave, apparently halted in the process of taking a picture.

I walked around the grave to stand near the man and Caleb followed. I showed the man the rock.

"I was going to take this because I always leave things at graves but here it felt right to take something home. Is that wrong?" The man wouldn't make eye-contact, he just shook.

"How can you even ask that? Is it wrong?"

I evened out my voice. "I'm sorry. I'll put it back. I've never heard anything about taking something from a grave if it's sacred to you." "Go ahead. Play the ugly American." He shook his head making grunting noises of disgust.

"I mean, doesn't the staff clean it all up eventually anyway?" I said. "If people for the past eighty years have been leaving stones here, I'm pretty sure it would be more than overflowing by now if it hadn't been cleared out a few times."

"God!" He made more grunting noises and squinted at me out of the corner of his eye. "Fine, take it," he said. He held up his smart phone and took two more pictures, previewing them both before glancing at me one more time with unmitigated disdain and walking away from us down the path.

I looked at Caleb. He shrugged. I pocketed the rock.

Through the clouds we could see that the sun was low in the sky. Père Lachaise would be closing soon, and Wilde's grave was on the opposite edge. We navigated as quickly as we could, Caleb with his short legs and me with my worsening limp along uphill paths threaded through monuments and mausoleums. The markers grew more rococo nearer to the center, then gradually became more modest as we climbed away from it. We were both out of breath. The sun was setting and the wind was cold.

The grave was immaculate and encased by four unceremonious glass walls. The stone angel swept along its place clean and unperverted. For a moment, panting, we both just stood there. Kisses of desperate saliva and lipstick smeared across the glass like children's car-window mouth-prints. Someone had written, *Oscar, je t'aime*, in red lipstick across the lower left of the barrier's face.

A young blond couple walked up behind us carrying the same map the guard had given me. They spoke to each other in German, looking at the map and pointing at the grave in turn. Then the girl stepped forward and stood smiling in front of the glass while the guy took a smart phone picture. The guy said something in German and the girl said something back and then she turned around and kissed the glass while the guy repositioned himself and took some more pictures. Caleb and I stepped backward a few paces to get out of the shot. The wind stung my face and made my fingers go numb. I wished I'd brought gloves. When the German couple stepped away to huddle together and view the pictures, I looked at Caleb. He'd taken his camera out of its case and stood there with it half-poised.

"I guess I should kiss it," I said.

"Okay."

"Right? I mean, that's the only thing I can really do."

"Sure. It's up to you."

"I took a step forward. Crap. I don't have any lipstick."

I remembered packing and holding lipstick in my hand and choosing not to put it in. I remembered thinking I didn't wear lipstick anymore, that lipstick along with Chanel perfume and skin-tight mini-dresses were things I wore when I was dating Luke. I remembered remembering the Wilde grave-kissing plan and remembered thinking I'd buy lipstick in Paris if I needed it. I hadn't bought any, and here we were. Without lipstick, the kiss would be useless.

Before we could figure out another plan, we heard the anemic honk of a golf cart horn. A guard had pulled up behind us to let us know Père Lachaise was closing. The German tourists linked arms and walked toward the nearest exit. Caleb immediately shoved his camera into its bag.

"We should go," he said.

"Yeah, I know."

"Maybe we can come back another time. We can find some lipstick somewhere."

"Sure. Maybe."

The golf cart honked again. Caleb and I followed after the German couple. I was hobbling. Every other step hurt.

### GILLIAN DEVEREUX

### GILLIAN DEVEREUX

### Hauntings: Apparition II

the siren again, closer	with no		roar and clamor	
dark body curved	against the shac	lows far	.1 •1	
with no sound	<b>.</b>		the rails,	
the bridge	an electric train.		vivid	
blue light incessantly	crackling			
spluttering flame	a corpse, lit		rows of trees	
	the far s	ide of the road	light	
tepid, the	blended suddenly		8	
rush of even sound	elast	•	blind	
thundered onto the brid			the solemn	
thundered onto the brid	50, 1acing			
river	sucking in its	sound		
reverberant echo,	8		down again over	
wet country	and suddenly a		0	
•	he trance	8	the train	
0	descending			
	accentants			
iron stairway	it was son	nething she had a	always wanted	
that she would have		0		
over the riv	er.			
а	t the top now	the lands ab	out her	
open countr	*			
heavy clumps	•		the river	
trailed away behind the light		scattered		
lights	the e	the end of the bridge		
a sullen lanter		lifted now –		
starl		She stretched out her arms		

## Hauntings: Apparition III

I remember the right throbs and the wrong		of flights	a little seesaw	
very bad da				
a mistake.	the lon	ig hours		
carried me to the sto	opping place			
the close of the June afternoon,			waiting for me.	
a lovely day,			summer	
sweetness		m	ounted afresh	
and, as we turned				
proof of		I had expected,	or had dreaded	
-		i nau expecteu,	I remember	
something so melancholy			1 Temeniber	
the	broad, clear front	topen	and fresh	
the pair of maids	broad, cicar from	the lawn	bright	
flowers			0	
llowers	• .1 11	and the cluster	-	
in the golden sky. The scene had a greatness				
different from my	y own	and there imm	nediately appeared	
a narrower notion of	-	that, as I recalled	l it,	
	sug	gested		
something beyond promise.				

she had wanted to stand alone

# Shivaree

THIN AFTERNOON LIGHT FILTERS THROUGH THE FULL LEAVES of the sweet gums that line the edge of the hollow, masking the crisp clouds rolling above. The wedding reception is held in the open air about ten minutes outside of town. People drag their feet through the fresh-cut grass as they leave their cars and pickups. Tables are set in a square around a dance floor of hard-packed clay. Perhaps a hundred people have shown up, but George doesn't know a damned one of them. He greets everyone because he's the groom and it's expected. He's married to a beautiful woman out of similar expectations, even though he feels no love for her. And everyone at the reception seems to know it. Still, he tries to impress each person with a firm handshake. But the people have a puzzled look about their eyes when he squeezes their hands. Bewilderment initially, followed by a few stiff words and an awkward silence.

He stands on the edge of the reception, watching his new wife dance across the clay with one of her cousins. Her name is Jolene, and her hair shines glossy black beneath a crown of crepe myrtle. Her dress is plain and the dust from the clay tints the hem a dull red. He wants to tell her to stop and rest before she ruins her dress in the late June afternoon heat, but she's smiling and this makes him happy.

A familiar hand comes to rest gently across the small of his back. He turns and sees his sister's husband, Luke, with a package tucked under his arm and an open beer in his hand.

"Didn't see you at the wedding."

"You weren't looking." Luke passes the can and George takes a swig before passing it back. No one from his side of family had been at the wedding, except Abe.

"Clean up good in a suit."

"Not really." George's palms run along the front of the suit, selfconsciously smoothing the wrinkles. "It's a rental."

"Course, no sense in paying for something you'll only wear again when they put you in the ground."

The two haven't spoken for almost a year and their last conversation didn't end well. George had told Luke he was engaged. Luke couldn't bear the news.

George scratches his arm where the starched shirt meets his wrist before clearing his throat, searching for something to say. "I sent out invitations."

Luke shifts his weight to the heels of his feet. "Got mine. Can't say if the rest of the family got theirs, but it's likely that they did."

The music fades, and the dance ends. Jo takes a seat. She knows next to nothing about George's family and he doesn't want her to meet Luke.

Luke hands him a gift. "From your pa."

It's a small box wrapped in butcher paper. George can tell that it's a bottle of something from the sloshing liquid. A moment of shock comes over him. His father, the fugitive, still managed to find time to get him a wedding gift.

"Did you have words with him?"

"I did." Luke reaches into his pocket and pulls out a plain envelope. "Told me to give you this."

George takes the envelope and slides the unread letter into his pocket. "How was he?"

"Down on his back. Complained bout his prostate hurting him. You ain't gonna read it?"

"I got an idea what it says."

The band starts playing. Jo takes to the dance floor with another one of her cousins, and George leads Luke through the beaten grass, knowing that Luke tends to drink fast, hoping if he can get him drunk, then he might leave without embarrassment. The air carries the smell of creosote and cooking meat from fire pits set some distance away. Both men sit at an empty table along the edge of the dancing. A few people smile out of politeness when they see George with Luke.

Luke leans forward. "You know all her people?" George shakes his head and passes Luke someone's drink from the table. He takes a sip. "Sure particular about the way they do things." He doesn't drink very fast. It's not like him to take it slow. "Was it a Catholic service?"

"Nondenominational," George says, setting another drink in front of Luke, but he ignores it.

"Nondenominational?" Luke leans back in the metal folding chair. "Sure you ain't Catholic now?"

"I'm sure, Luke. That put your mind at ease?"

Luke says nothing, and his face reveals little. George doesn't understand why he's here. If there is still love between them, neither man shows it.

The dance ends, and he catches Jo's eye. She walks over and sits down on his lap. Her face glistens with sweat, and he can smell the cheap aftershave of the men she's been dancing with. But he isn't jealous. Could she be trying to make him jealous? Should he be jealous – is that what a married man is supposed to feel? She wraps her arm around his neck and laughs, deep and natural, a loving sound that makes George feel guilty that he'll never be able to return it. He reluctantly introduces her to Luke with a few dry words.

Jo shakes his hand. "Oh, I'm so glad to meet another one of George's family."

"Just my brother-in-law."

Luke drains his drink and looks away, ashamed.

Jo knocks her husband's shoulder with her fist. "You never told me you had a sister." She turns to Luke. "Where is she?"

Luke says nothing. Jo turns her eyes to her husband, but he's silent. George should have told Jo about his sister, but he was quiet about his family and ashamed when she went away. His family didn't live in Eminence. They weren't city folk like Jo's people. They lived in hollows all over Shannon County. Most were farmers. Few had graduated high school, and George was like them.

The band begins to play again and a man grabs Jo and leads her off to the dance floor.

"Should keep an eye on your wife. I wouldn't let nobody dance with her."

"You tight yet?" George says.

"I'm on my way there."

Dinner begins with no formal announcement. Women uncover the serving tables, revealing loaves of bread arranged like a pyramid and casseroles in porcelain dishes with twice-baked beans, potatoes, sweet corn, green peas, okra, yams, cranberries, and a tray of meat loaf smeared with ketchup. A woman with a broad chest pours copious amounts of rum-sweetened punch into a metal trash can beside cookie sheets of sliced pork. A severed hog head in the center table presides over the whole event, its eyes bulging from cooked sockets.

The line for dinner forms in no particular order. Jo's father, Ben, sits at the head table and hands everyone a plate after exchanging a brief greeting. Martha, her mother, stands at the end next to the punch and serves drinks. The women set their plates down once they reach her so they can talk, and these conversations end with an embrace.

Luke finds a place in line. George remains seated and watches Jo dance. The music slows some. Even the band takes a break, but not his wife. A man seizes the moment and cuts in on the dance. Jo manages a smile. She leads and he follows, his movements clumsy and slow compared to hers. His hand stretches along the flank of her waist before shifting to the small of her back where he rubs the sheer fabric. George takes note of his face. The man wears a drunken grin and stares out on the crowd with sluggish eyes. A stone-faced woman sits opposite George. Her look can only mean she's the drunken man's wife, and George tries to match it with a look of his own. He's her husband, he tells himself, and it's what he's supposed to do now.

Jo's dress clings to her skin. The outline of her bra and panties holds the attention of the staring men. George gazes at her belly. It hangs out an inch or so more than it should. He only noticed this last week when she stepped out of the shower; and only when she was standing naked beneath the familiar fluorescent bathroom light did he see that the baby had begun to show. They told no one that she was pregnant, and George had no doubt that it wasn't his child. She was happy she had a husband and he was happy to have a wife. George spent most of the time thinking about what would happen if the men in her family ever found out.

The sun falls behind the ridge. Men light paper lanterns set atop poles throughout the reception as tables begin to fill with hungry people carrying platefuls of food. The artificial light spreads shadows across the linen tablecloths and into the empty spaces that stretch all the way to the deepening woods. All but one member of the band leaves to eat. The fiddle player remains, strumming out a slow number that clears the dance floor of everyone except for Jo and the drunk.

And that's when it happens.

Three men walk through the crowd with rifles.

Ira, Jo's brother, is at the front. No one in the crowd pays much attention to the men, except George, who begins to sweat.

Ira stops in front of him. "Noticed you sitting off by yourself."

One of the men sets his rifle on the table. He looks out at Jo. "Think she'll dance with me?"

Ira's other friend pulls out a flask. He takes a snort and passes the flask forward. "The way I hear, she's danced with half the county."

Ira takes the flask. He offers George a drink, but George turns it down. George has heard the stories about Jo with other men, but having her brother taunt him with the rumors is a lot to take. Ira sets the flask on the table, reaches into his pocket, pulls out a box of rifle cartridges that have a pink bow attached, and slides the box across the table. "I'd figure to gift you something."

It's a touching gesture; the only problem is George has only ever spoken to Ira once before. And he wasn't carrying a rifle then. "I got enough bullets."

Ira furrows his brow. "They go to this." He hands George the rifle.

The stock is cheap. The barrel isn't blued. A price tag hangs from the front sight. George pulls back the bolt and sees a round in the chamber. The safety is off.

"Thanks," George says, uncertain, "but I got a rifle." Ira shakes his head. "This here's an automatic." "It's a twenty-two." George says, disapproving such a small weapon. He leans the rifle against the table and tries to relax. If Ira wanted to hurt him, he wouldn't have handed him a loaded gun.

But Ira still looks menacing. "Up for some night shooting?" Ira pauses. "Got a Coleman lantern in my truck."

"That'd scare living hell out of these people."

Ira takes a seat. "There's a dry shut-in on the other side of the ridge. Nobody hear a thing."

The thought of being led out into the woods by his wife's drunken brother to shoot in the night is more frightening than sitting in the crowd next to Luke. "It won't look right, me slipping out like that."

"We'll have you back in no time."

Ira doesn't wait for him to answer. He rises and walks away with his friends following. George wipes his forehead with a napkin. Jo is still with the drunk. She looks like she's holding up a boxer who went one too many rounds. He picks up the box of cartridges and weighs them in his palm; then, he sees Luke near the end of the line. Luke's plate is full, and Martha pours him a drink. Soon he'll return to the table and sit. And talk. Luke turns and gives a quick nod. He'll be at the table in a moment. George feels his fingers wrap around the box. He rises from the table, picks up the rifle, and walks to Ira.

The Coleman casts a halo of harsh light around the men who stand with Ira near his truck. The flask has been replaced by a bottle of country whiskey. Ira has a queer grin on his face. He swings the lantern from his hip like a pendulum in an old grandfather clock. A white-bellied hound lies at his feet. George says nothing to them, walking past the men, toward the woods. They crowd together and follow him through the switch grass grown tall, brown, and still.

Ira catches up with George and wraps his arm around him before handing one of the men the lantern and sending his friends ahead. They pass beyond the edge of the woods. It is fully dark beneath the canopy of green leaves. There's a heavy, musty smell. The hound walks to George's left while Ira stays to his right, and George can't decide if Ira smells worse than the dog. "Awful sorry your family didn't show."

George shrugs off his arm. "Nothing to be sorry about."

The voices of the two men who went ahead become distant, and George can just make out the lantern as they make their way up the hill.

"Your dad must be a busy man," Ira says, poking fun at the fact that George's father has been on the run for almost a year now.

But George refuses to take the bait. "He waits for people to come to him."

Ira shortens his stride. "Old people are like that."

"Not really. It's more or less a personality issue. We're too much alike." Ira stops, letting what George said sink in. "Jo didn't tell me much about you."

George stops nearby and leans against a tree. He can't see the other man's face in the darkness, but he can sense Ira's fear. "Ask any question you like."

"Well," Ira says, letting his thumbs rest on the lip of his jeans, "I know you got some money."

George's eyes begin to adjust in the darkness. "I'm not a criminal like my father."

Ira has a serious look about him. "Something to be said about a man who don't know his limits."

"He was a farmer who got down on his luck, that's all."

"That's a noble profession nowadays."

"Not really."

The hound shuffles into view. The talk stops as the animal regards each of the men. It moves like a much older animal than it looks. The dog sniffs the air and decides to lie down between them.

"That's a fine animal," George says, hoping to turn the conversation. Ira scratches the dog. "Some would say."

"Well, it's what I say."

"People sure are fond of their animals."

They start walking again and George thinks about his father and the time he spent with him along the Missouri River when he was hired to help watch the convicts that the state sent to help build the levees. The land rises as they climb the ridge. George is forced to grab saplings along the path to keep from falling. Ira struggles behind. He stops below the crest of the ridge and waits for Ira to catch up. Trees grow sparsely here. The sound of their breathing echoes off the furrowed bark. The hound struggles up the ridge.

The rifle Ira gifted him is smaller than the one his father taught him to shoot with, and feels alien in his hands. There was an old shed that his father didn't use on the farm and George stood against it while his father traced the outline of his son's body with chalk. George had learned to shoot at a target the same shape and size as his own body; in effect his father taught him how to shoot himself.

Ira crests the ridge above him and descends the other side, moving faster as he travels down the ridge and out of sight.

A gunshot. Ira stops. Another gunshot.

"They're not shooting at us," George says, catching up with him and then walking past.

"How can you tell?"

George stops. "Well, why would they?"

Ira stares at the rifle in George's hands. "They're drunk."

George considers his reaction. "A bullet sounds like a hornet when it passes close to you. That's how you know."

"Like a hornet?"

"Yeah."

The men move down. Sharp rock walls run the length of the dry streambed. Ira's friends stand in the middle of the gully. Busted glass and rusted cans litter the length of the wash. The lantern hangs from a sycamore tree. Beer cans are set along the gnarled branches. One of the men raises his rifle and drops a can from the tree. The report echoes from the rock walls. George climbs into the wash and Ira follows, dragging the hound by the collar. The men greet the two, handing Ira the whiskey. One of the men tries to pass George the bottle.

Ira stops him. "My brother-in-law wants to stay sober so he can get it up tonight."

The men laugh. Ira waits to see George's reaction before he joins them. George takes note of his face, smooth shaven, except for the small patch of hair growing under his bottom lip. The sight of the fuzz can't help but make George grin. It looks like Ira had an unfortunate run in with a moldy peach. Ira smiles once he sees George's grin, thinking that the joke is on him. But George wonders how happy Ira would be if he knew that Jo shaves herself, leaving a small patch of hair just above her sex about the same size as the patch of hair on his chin.

The hound searches for a spot to rest clear of cans and broken glass. The shooting begins. George is the last to go. Ira stays with the bottle of whiskey. The men's aims are true to the liquor in their stomachs and it takes several reports from their rifles until the first can falls. The hound doesn't stir at the sound from the shots. His lidded eyes show him near sleep. He must be deaf.

When George's turn comes, he has to remove the price tag from the front sight to take aim. A gentle squeeze of the trigger sends a round flying. He misses on purpose, not wanting to show off. Be a part of the crowd, he tells himself. Fit in.

"Take another whack at it."

George does. He levels the rifle, holds his breath, and repeats the process with the same result. "Sight's off," George says, wanting to call it a night and go back to the reception.

Ira snorts. "I sighted it myself."

He takes the rifle from George and he fires off a series of shots. The rounds miss their intended target, and George can see that most pull above and to the left of the branch by a few inches. Ira keeps on firing. He nears the end of the magazine when one of the cans falls away. George steps forward and reaches for the rifle but Ira moves it away from his reach. His two friends come closer, and George realizes his mistake. He shouldn't have let Ira take the rifle. The air stills. No more jokes are told. His friends now wear sober expressions.

Ira taps the stock of the gun. "It meant a lot. You coming out with us tonight." He raises his hand. "And this isn't the liquor talking."

"It's getting late," George says, trying to leave.

Ira steps forward and George begins to sweat again. *They know. They must know.* Either Jo told them or they saw Luke at the party or before. *God. And now it comes down to this.* It would be over soon enough. The cruel faces surrounding him let him know that it was rage, rage that would kill him quickly. Let them shoot, he thinks, please let them shoot me and not beat me so bad that it takes me hours to die in this cut. Knowing

that this was the end made the fear go away somehow, to a place deep within him. He only hopes someone from the family finds his body.

Ira kneels down in front of George and runs his hand along the length of the hound resting at the man's feet in slow deliberate strokes. The animal rolls onto its side, tail wagging.

"Look at that," Ira says, nodding towards the dog's genitals. "You ever heard of Neuticles before?"

"What?" George's lungs push the word out.

One of the men kneels beside Ira. "You know, Neuticles, prosthetic testicles for dogs."

George's face feels like a thousand nettles. He doesn't know whether to run or to laugh.

Ira places his hand on the dog's scrotum. "Come on down and give em a feel."

A slight cry comes from some part of George he'd worked so long to hide, and it's followed by another. "I'd rather not."

Ira and the men look concerned. "Oh, old Ned won't mind." The dog beats its tail along the ground as Ira's hand lifts and separates each fake testicle to show just how lifelike they are.

Ira's friend nods at George, his face serious – the face of a businessman wanting a sale. "Give em a feel."

George's throat is dry. He can't manage to hush the sounds from his throat. They don't seem to be joking, and fearing that the three armed men won't take "no" for an answer makes George kneel down. The dog raises its head and watches him. George rubs his hands together, warming them out of common courtesy. Ira takes his hand away, and George coughs, forcing the cries to stop. He tries to match the men's earnest faces as he feels Ned's scrotum. He tries to fit back in, but the quality that let him pass for so long as one of them feels broken beyond repair.

Ira's eyes possess a strange glow. "Notice a difference between the two?"

"They feel pretty real to me." George lets his hand fall away, distant and unfeeling to any contact.

Ira grabs the right testicle. "This one feels different," he says, squeezing it between his thumb and forefinger like a grape. "That's because it's not a Neuticle." Ira smiles. "That's our product." Wiping his hand clean on rented pants, George wonders how this can be reality. "What's it called?"

Ira reaches out his arm and places the same hand on George's shoulder that fondled poor Ned just a moment ago. "That's the beauty of it," he says, pulling George closer. "They don't have a name yet." There are tears in Ira's eyes and his voice cracks. "We want you to name them as our new financial partner." George stands. Ira does the same. "No need to say yes now." Ira goes on, and tells George how his product is salinebased and safer than the silicone Neuticles.

A dog apparently goes through a certain level of trauma when neutered and needs to rebuild his confidence. And indeed, Ned appears to have suffered some long lasting trauma, but George doubts that it's from his castration. George begins to recover and regain confidence in himself. Ira stops talking.

He mistakes George's silence for serious consideration. "I think I'd like to dance with my wife," George says, finally.

The men head back to the reception in silence. Ned trails them at some distance. The lights from the party can be seen as they crest the ridge. It's a safe glow, something familiar and civilized. Ira drinks the last of the whiskey.

"You and I are like a couple of bulls," he says, chucking the bottle into the darkness. "With one difference. A young bull stands on a hill and says, 'Hey, let's me and you run down and get us a heifer.' But an old bull says, 'No son, let's walk down and screw all them heifers.""

A giddy feeling spreads along George's legs. Ira can run or walk into the arms of any women for all he cares. The rifle is given back to George, and Ira hurries on ahead. He's misjudged Ira. The man is just a fool. A failed businessman trying to scam his new brother-in-law. The only thing dangerous about Ira is his mouth.

The gun feels light, and George brings it close to his chest. The night carries an odd chill with it, and he tells himself that it's the walk that makes him begin to sweat again. By the time he's through the woods and walking in the tall grass, he has nearly convinced himself that it's the truth.

Jo scowls at his return. She's finally sitting at a table. Her parents are with her. So is Luke. George's stomach drops, but he still manages the

courage to sit next to them. Jo's hand falls onto his thigh. She leans over his ear. "You missed the bridesmaid speech."

He makes a face, letting her know how sorry he is.

"It's a shame." Martha slaps his other leg. "A damned shame that none of your family showed."

Jo introduces Luke before George can stop her.

"Why doesn't he give a speech?"

All eyes turn to Luke. Both of Jo's parents are upset that he didn't have a best man.

Luke pales at the invitation. He opens his mouth and lets out a sigh, so brief and quiet that only George is aware of it. "All I can say is that George is a hell of guy," Luke says, fumbling over the words.

"Well, stand up and shout it."

"He really can't speak," George says, kicking Luke under the table. "It's his nerves."

Martha gives a warm laugh and takes George's hand and presses it to hers and looks at Luke, who has bent down to rub his leg. "Isn't he just wonderful?"

Luke raises an eyebrow. "Yeah. A real peach."

Martha turns to George. The heat off her breath tells him she's been drinking. "I can't tell you how glad we are that you married Jo."

Ben looks to his wife. "She gave us a lot of sleepless nights." "Oh yes."

Jo looks desperate. "Mother, stop."

"She'd always vamp."

George lets his hand fall away from Martha and excuses himself from the table. Jo moves into his empty seat and whispers to her mother. It's a short conversation. Martha's back grows rigid and she appears sober once again. Jo's eyes are watery, and Martha's comment sends the world spinning. George walks to the serving tables to get some water. Does everyone know how many men she's been with? The band sets up on stage again. Men rise and walk toward Jo. There's damn near a pack of them. George leans against the table. The food is covered, but flies still buzz the air.

Jo takes to the floor with Luke. She must be using him to escape her mother.

The music is a real fast number and Jo swings her hips to the beat while Luke side steps, the only dance move he knows. George had to teach it to him. The men stand along the edge of the dance. Ira is amongst them. His mouth gapes a little, an expression shared by the other men. The music speeds up and Jo places Luke's hands on her hips. The crowd gives a whoop. The men have a look of hunger fueled by whiskey. But Luke has no idea what to think, or how to handle a woman well enough to pass as straight.

Without much thought George's legs carry him through the crowd toward the dancing. He passes by the rifle Ira gave him. Pitiful looking thing. Why had he ever been frightened of it?

He cuts in on the dance, shoving Luke to the side, and Jo makes a big scene, throwing her arms about, acting, trying not to look hurt. But George doesn't care.

Someone lets the band know to play it slow, and so they do. Jo moves close. Everyone's seat is empty. Jo forces a smile and the dance ends with applause.

Jo pinches his arm. "We didn't even cut the cake."

Tradition has it that the last dance of the evening happens when the bride and groom come together. Once it does, the night is at an end. People begin to move about. Some return to their seats and collect their things. Martha tries to cut cake and hand pieces to people as they pass.

Ben cuts through the crowd and stops in front of George. "This weren't cheap."

Jo leaves her husband's side and joins her mother. The last thing anyone wants is a fight.

"I'll pay you back."

Ben throws up his hands in disgust before joining his wife without saying anymore. His insistence on tradition put George off from the moment that Jo made him ask his permission to marry her.

The crowd thins. Engines rev. Headlights click on. People start leaving. Ira pulls his truck up to the reception. His friends help him load the stack of gifts. George moves to join them, but Luke stops him.

"She's pretty, you're wife." Luke folds his arms. "Real pretty." "Please – " "Maybe somehow you'll be happy, together. I guess saying that about a marriage is bad luck, but still, I wish you the best."

"Don't be like that," George says, reaching out for him but stopping once he notices people watching. "Nothing has to change, not between us."

"Really?" Luke's eyes are bloodshot – the blood vessels cobwebbed out hotly in the whites of his eyes like lightening. "If you believe that, then you're more of a fool than I could've imagined."

"We made it work when you got married."

"Work? It was a farce then and it's made even worse now that there's another person in it." Luke leans close to George until their faces nearly touched. "Can you get it up with her?"

"Stop it."

"Or do you have to close your eyes to get hard?"

A quick shove from George and Luke finds himself on the ground. People nearby stop and watch. Luke recovers himself, brushes off his shirt and tries his best to recover. He fits in, at least he does his best anyhow. Just like George. He leaves without saying any more and George helps Ira finish loading the truck. The band keeps playing.

With the truck loaded, George sits at their empty table. The remaining people crowd around Jo and her parents while someone takes down the rest of the serving tables. Soil is kicked over the fire pits and the earth rises, bubbling from the heat. It kind of looks like love, that bubbling mess of dirt, steaming and heaving upward, readying to burst but cooling at the same time.

George doesn't want to think about it, so he grabs Ira's gift and unscrews the tube magazine. The box of bullets Ira gave him has some use, and he uses it to reload the mostly empty rifle. It comes to rest across his lap like a cheap toy. Jo isn't far off. She takes off the myrtle and lets her hair dry in the cooling night air. There's not a more beautiful sight than her hair, especially when it's wet. He wishes he could have hair like hers.

Her parents follow them to their house. Ben stays in the car, but Martha walks to the porch with Jo. George opens the house to find all the gifts neatly piled inside the door. Jo must have given Ira a spare key. He turns to ask her, but stops when he sees Martha speaking to her daughter in a hushed voice. She holds both of Jo's hands and kisses her. The light is on, so he steps inside and waits for her. A car door shuts a moment later and her parents drive away. Jo has tears in her eyes when she enters the house. The rifle is leaned against the wall. She stands in the open door frame, silhouetted against the night.

For a moment George actually thinks she's waiting for him to lift her across the threshold. She walks into the house and he can smell the men she's been dancing with. She wipes the sweat from her forehead and heads to the bathroom.

"I hope your dad wasn't upset."

She leaves the bathroom door open – there aren't to be any secrets now that they're married. "Don't mind him. He's just a nut for tradition."

He turns his attention from his wife to the gifts stacked along the wall. "Have you given anymore thought about Salt Lake?"

His father's package sits off to one side.

Jo steps out into the hall, naked. "Motels are cheap."

They haven't decided on a honeymoon, not yet. He takes the package and thinks about the Great Salt Lake. Jo's shown him brochures, and he's come to understand that it's a large inland sea in the middle of a desert. Nothing sounds more wonderful than that right now.

He opens his father's gift, a small bottle of bourbon without a label, something very old. Jo rubs soap onto her face and smiles at the bottle in his hands. "We'd have to bring along booze."

He sits down at the table. Jo turns to go back into the bathroom, and he can't help but notice her belly from the side. "You didn't happen to tell your family you were pregnant?"

"No." She sticks her head from the door. "Why do you ask?"

He chuckles and shakes his head. "That brother of yours." The faucet squeaks as it turns. "Scared me half to death."

But Jo doesn't hear him above the sound from the shower. He uncorks the bourbon. There's heat coming from the liquid inside. How his father bought it while he was on the run he'll never know. He steps onto the porch and smells the dampness in the air. The sky is overcast, but he can see the faint outline of the moon through the clouds. The fields to the east and west are full of dry corn stalks that farmers have left to die so the soil won't get dusty like it used to when he was young. His father used to bring George along with him when he worked with convicts along the Missouri River. The endless days of building levees clogged the sky with dust from the sandy soil. The convicts wore masks over their mouths as they moved along the rows. Their faces, white and black with mud-caked eyes. Hair in coiled loops of dried sweat and dust. They would chant while they worked. All were chained, sometimes together at the ankle.

George spent his time watering down the convicts. He would go home at night, and his mother would wash him from head to foot. She used to shove a wet washcloth up his nose to get at the sand crusted around his nostrils. The cloud of dust spread with the wind and covered their small farm. Towels and old blankets were shoved under the doors and wedged beneath window frames to keep the dust out. It was too hot to cook inside, so the family ate Spam and canned beets on plates at first. But everything had a thin layer of dust to it, so they ate straight from the cans. They could still taste the grit.

Dusk was always the restful time at work. The heat didn't fade as it should when the sun hangs along the horizon. Convicts would eat their supper, and George would bring them water. Game birds cooled themselves in dust baths throughout the fields behind the levees. Boredom was always an issue for the watchmen. They'd give a few convicts leave to chase down pheasants.

One afternoon, the sharp crack from a rifle echoed in the valley like a rumor of thunder. A convict had chased a bird too far. The watchmen dragged the fallen man – a neat hole the size of a dime in his chest. There was very little blood. It was impossible to see his face in the growing twilight. No one asked who shot him.

George's father walked with him afterward, the rifle slung across his shoulder. He kept plastic over the muzzle to keep dust from fouling the barrel. It had popped sometime during the day so George offered to clean the rifle once they were home. But his father never answered him and didn't speak the rest of the night, not even when mother asked him why he was so quiet at supper.

George leaves the porch and enters the bedroom, feeling a little more tired than he should. Jo is waiting for him. There are two full-sized beds

and she lies in the one nearest the window. No one had asked about why they needed two beds, thank God. Most thought it was out of tradition.

"Why are you crying?" she says.

He brings his hand to his face. He hadn't noticed the tears. "I dunno."

Laying his suit out neatly across the dresser, he wipes his eyes with the hem of his pants before getting into bed. He turns to face Jo. She is awake but silent. They stare at each other.

"Are you happy?" she asks, finally.

"Yeah," he says, trying to smile. "Are you?"

"Yes," she says. But she doesn't return his smile. "Was the man at the wedding -"

"Luke?"

"Yes. Was he the one?"

"Yeah."

Jo raises her knees to her chest until she's resting on her side in the fetal position. "He's handsome. We should have him over for dinner sometime soon."

"I don't think he'll come," George says, his voice cracking. He raises his hand and covers his eyes.

"We have an arrangement," she says, puckering her lips. "He should know."

"He does."

Jo leaves her bed effortlessly and slides next to George, curling her body next to his. "You're a man. You have needs. I know. And I love you. I love you still."

"The baby," George says, letting his hand rest across Jo's belly. "What will we tell it? That it has no father?"

Her chin raises until it presses into the crook of his neck. "You will become the father he needs."

"It's a boy?"

"Yes. I think so. I hope so."

George rolls on his side away from her. "I hope it's a girl. The world has enough boys."

Nothing more is said. Nothing can be said. They fall asleep anxiously. Jo snores almost immediately, but George rests fitfully, tossing and turning until uneasy dreams begin to fill his mind: dreams of being a convict and

being chased in a blinding dust storm, falling into the dust and choking on it, being swallowed by dust and sucked down so far into the buried earth that no worms could find him. Being stuck there for centuries and feeling his body become desiccated and dry until unearthed, his corpse mummified and put on display in some macabre museum.

A rustling outside forces his eyes open, the horrible memory of the dream fresh on his mind. Lights flicker on and off through the window, too harsh and artificial to be lightning. His eyes cannot adjust to the harshness of the light but he can make out a shape in the window frame. A terrible shape, inhuman, with antlers where there should be a head. His heart races. An air horn sounds, splitting the silence. His wife sits up beside him, her hair draped across her breasts. The sound of clanging metal fills the room and the walls begin to shake. The lights begin to flash on and off. Jo begins to beat her hands together, clapping madly. She's smiling and doesn't seem afraid. George gets out of bed. Hide! He must hide. He tries to drag Jo to the basement, but she wraps herself in the bed sheet and falls to the floor laughing. The rattling increases and comes from all sides of the house now. He sees the rifle Ira gave him resting against the wall. He takes it into his arms. It's tiny and synthetic, but it is the only thing he has to protect himself. He takes the rifle and steps outside the front door.

Blinding light greets him on the porch. Strange shapes hoot from the bushes. They look like people, but they're covered in fur. A group of vehicles faces the house, headlights full on. Something darts in front of the porch, banging pots and pans together.

These are people. There's no doubt in his mind, and the thought of it makes him sick. This is a shivaree, another one of Jo's family's traditions. They dress up like animals and bang pots and pans together. It's supposed to be a welcoming, but it feels nothing like one. Nothing her family has done has made him feel welcome.

He steadies the rifle toward one of the trucks, aims down and to the right. He squeezes the trigger, shattering one of the lights and making Jo's family feel just as welcome on his land as they made him feel the whole night. Another report from the rifle causes the windshield to fracture into a thousand cracks. The driver rolls out and runs to the trees. There's screaming now. No more clanking metal. A man rushes George from the bushes, but he's ready for the intruder and catches the side of his mouth with the stock of the rifle. The cheap wood and plastic splinter. The man drops to the porch and lies motionless at his feet.

Jo appears in her bathrobe behind him, trying to pry the rifle away. Voices call out from the night, pleading with George to stop shooting. He lets go of the rifle. Jo kneels next to the fallen man. Ben and Martha appear. They're dressed like sheep, and they step onto the porch.

"What in the hell!" Ben removes a hat with antlers from the local Elks lodge.

Martha has a cooking pot and a frying pan in her hands. "We were just belling."

The man rolls over. It's Ira. He's awake and moaning. Several teeth lie on the porch. Jo begins to scream. Martha sits down to comfort her daughter.

"Sonofabitch," Ben says. "You sonofabitch." He raises his hand to strike.

Martha stops her husband. "He's never heard of a shivaree. Can you imagine how frightened he must of been with Jo and the baby?"

His wife gives George a hurtful look. She's lied to him when she said she didn't tell her family that she was pregnant. George lowers his head and walks back into the living room and sits at the table. It takes some time for things to settle down outside. But when it does Jo enters the house and tells him that no one has been killed. She lays her hand on his shoulder, trying to comfort him, but it feels cold.