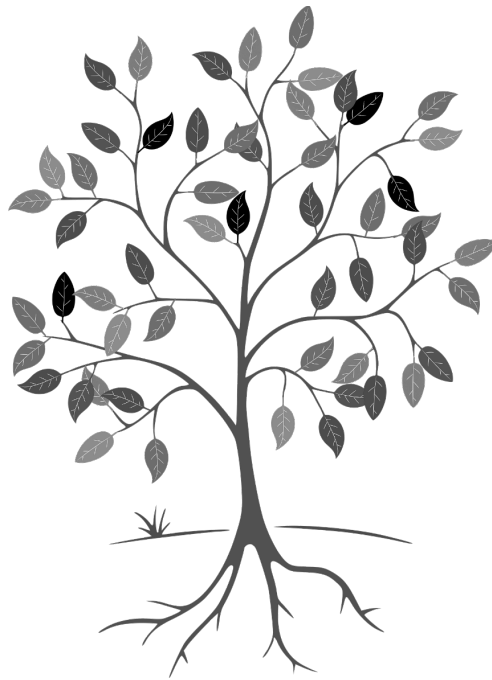


root and branch
volume XII



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April 2019

The name *root and branch* was chosen as a symbol of students' lives at Ivy Tech: they come with solid roots but grow and branch out — intellectually and creatively — through their college experiences.

Special thanks to Dr. Emily Bobo, Annie Gray, the Ivy Tech-Bloomington English Department, and Susie Graham.

Cover Art:

January's Breath - *MacKenzie Melvin*

VOLUME XII CHANGES

In previous years, the Ivy Tech Community College-Bloomington literary magazine has been a required text for some English classes and was sold via our campus bookstore.

While this helped to fund the magazine, it meant students had to spend money to receive a copy. Because our goal has always been to be inclusive of all students on campus, we have decided to make some changes.

This volume of *root and branch* will be free to students: hard copies will be available while supplies last, and everyone will have access to a digital version via our website, rootandbranchmagazine.wordpress.com.

We hope that this will widen our audience of readers and contributors. As always, we thank you for reading.

SUPPORT ROOT AND BRANCH

Please consider supporting our magazine. Your donations fund production costs and scholarships for the editors.

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ADVISOR

Christine Brandel is a writer, photographer, and teacher. Her creative work has appeared in literary magazines around the world, and her first full-length poetry collection, *A Wife Is a Hope Chest*, was published by Brain Mill Press in 2017. She is an Associate Professor of English at Ivy Tech Community College-Bloomington, where she was selected as the 2018 recipient of Ivy Tech's President's Award for Excellence in Instruction. Her writing portfolio is available at clbwrites.com.

EDITORS

Amanda Mabrey is typically studying at home with her cats or can be found looking up at the sky for birds. She is a General Studies student here at Ivy Tech and currently set to transfer to IU in the fall of 2019. She wanted to do one last thing for this campus, so she was thrilled to be chosen as a student editor of this year's *root and branch*. She has enjoyed reading the submissions from her fellow classmates as well as working to put this year's edition together.

Sam Rainey is a 23-year old student from Bedford, Indiana. He is currently seeking a bachelor's degree in writing. In 2017, he was diagnosed with anxiety and depression, and over time, he realized that they were not his enemies. They were a single part of him, needing to be heard, needing a blanket wrapped around their quivering shoulders. Keep climbing.

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Emily Daugherty

The Eye Color Always Changes

From the beginning of my time, it has been a challenge to fit into the body that I was given at birth. Looking at my hands as a child, the idea that they were mine was a foreign sensation. Peering down, I would ripple my fingers back and forth, the connection between my hands and my soul felt severed. These were supposed to be my hands, but the hands I remembered were worn. Old, dirty hands that knew their way around grease-gearred equipment and hardened soil. I expected to see stiff, short fingers and gnarled knuckles; however, when I looked down I saw pale, petal soft, thin-skinned hands. This dichotomy of what I saw and what I expected to see became the groundwork of my self-discovery.

When I looked in the mirror, I would look with anticipation – ready to see a sun-baked, wrinkled forehead and a heavy burdened brow, proudly wearing dirt and wisdom, like a badge of honor that only a true pioneer could possess. This is who I once was, but I know I am not now. I was once the grandfather of my soul, the one with deep set blue eyes, possibly the original. The eyes that I looked through saw a time before lights or running water, living by the rise and set of the sun. Where death was regular and grieving was stifled by keeping food on the table. The hardened strength bestowed inside this old man's soul embodied me with physical strength and a work ethic that can be found only in a field. This is who, at times, I felt I was. A longstanding, worn soul looking out through my eyes at the reflection of a green-eyed girl – freckles, crooked teeth and skin that had not even received its first sunburn.

During other times in this life, solemn, soft brown eyes would be looking out. Images of her time passed by like thick clouds on a sunny day. With the onset of a shadow, I was surrounded in a cast of light and I was looking down admiringly at a newly born child. Pink and sticky. A child not my own, but hers. Sharing her overwhelming pride and love for what she held in our arms. Wrapped in a sheet in a small room, my long dark hair draped around my shoulders like a blanket; I am there, I am her. This recurring memory taught me comfort, intuition, and deep-seated goodness. There was never any confusion about why the reflection was different from her or me; we shared a symbiotic relationship based on pure acceptance of our transitions in our collective lives. This mother of all the mothers interlaced in this soul emanated from those brown eyes. They held the space for growth and making mistakes that I so generously took

advantage of.

Through my youth, I would sit on the bathroom counter, stick my fingers in my mouth and spread out my cheeks wide, exposing as much of the skeletal shape of my teeth as possible. Proving that I was, in fact, real. This confirmed that my thoughts were connected to a tangible body with bones. There is nothing more ungrounding than to wake up every morning only feel connected to a small part of your brain, a pea-sized space between eyes just below where the eyebrows end. For a long time, this was where I felt home. But uncovering the bones inside my mouth offered proof that I was inside, and this is who I should be. This revelation allowed me to explore deeper into the images and feelings of periods of time that I felt connected to. This discovery allowed me to accept the body I now resided in and understood that this was not my first time on the earth. Once I reached this point, I felt mostly whole. I still felt disconnected as any teenager going through these times, but the knowledge behind my eyes supported me and kept me moving forward into adulthood.

In my twenties, the hardened blue eyes changed roles, and the truthful brown eyes became my leading support system. The lady of my soul, my timeless mother who became one with me. Her comforting eyes would show up like a gentle hand on my shoulder at my worst moments – a drunkenly smeared reflection in a puddle of an alley, brown looking through green. Holding my hatred and depression with comfort and a matronly love that only comes unconditionally. This presence gave me strength to make difficult, daring choices that allowed our soul's roots to expand in way they had never done. The depth of her care would guide me but not to make things better. It would let me know that whatever I go through in this life is worth every moment of pain or happiness.

On the bathroom counter, I still sit naked before or after baths. Deeply staring into the eyes of my past selves. Allowing all the tributes of previous lives to arise from their dark corners and remind me that this life is important. But it is bigger than that. Images, feelings, smells, colors, emotions flooding up from the subconscious to connect me to something deeper than what could be accomplished in a day. Some past lives are less prominent, fleeting and unstable. It is hard to grasp the twenty-four-hour lifespan of a mayfly. But other lives are deep and concrete while speaking more intensely to the needs of my body and soul. These lives taught me lessons and passed forth the knowledge that didn't need to be learned again. My worn blue wisdom and honest brown instinct are the foundations of my growth.

The sentiments and disappointments collected though my life

experiences become part of a collective toolbelt. They are to be utilized by inheritors, just like I use the intuition and wisdom to live and better the soul. While I pass through my thirties, my green eyes have become my own but with a little bit of blue and brown. The strangers that once resided in my reflection have transformed with me into the person I see today. The lives that have created this soul stay with me. Grandfather blue's work ethic that gets the work done no matter the circumstances and honest brown's understanding and compassion are not mine. We share them, and I am curious to know what the next soul will take from me, these bright green eyes.

Amy Brier

I Am from What Is Now the Ukraine

I am ninety six percent the pious and devout.
The draft dodgers,
Entrepreneurs,
Needleworkers,
Jewelers.
Maybe my great greats
Put shoes on the Czars.

I am from the broad shouldered,
Curly-haired,
Long-boned and strong,
The victims,
The strangers, the immigrants,
The oppressed.
I am from indoctrination:
I am of those that, I was told,
God loves the best.

I am from the eastern seaboard,
Ocean State to
Miami beaches.
From 47 Slater Av.,
Wheeler School,
Wayland Square,
The Grist Mill pool.

I am from the tight knit,
From Grandma's secret Yiddish,
From heart disease,
Diabetic tendencies,
Cancer, dementia,
Strokes, clogged arteries.
Kosher china, meat and dairy,
The temple,
The Hebrew,
The Talmud.

I am from the wealth of men,
Could they have imagined me?
I am from the American dream,
Birth control, feminism,
Private school, university education.
I am from
The illusion that
I am from
Myself.

Ian McLane Collier

Popcorn

We disagree on the genre,
You yours,
And me mine,
But we'll make the movie fine.

You want popcorn to work through the scenes,
Everyone needs popcorn,
Just wait, you can have mine.
We'll make the movie fine.

You sit so up close,
Your eyes cannot see,
Switching seats can help,
You can have mine,
We'll make the movie fine.

We switch seats once,
And switch seats twice,
The whole time we were switching,
No one could see,

I take my kid self to the movies,
And I sits with me.



Empty in the Dark of Night - *Jeffrey A. Grounds*

The Four-Leaf Clover

The northwestern Indiana spring morning drew her outside. The luminous pastel green of each blade of new grass in the big yard was nourished by a gently warming sun. Sitting cross-legged under the boundless sky, she savored the smell of the black dirt mingled with the pile of freshly torn shreds. The gentle sunlight distinguished each blade of grass and stalk of clover, transforming them into a tiny forest. She was intent on finding a clover with four leaves.

“You’re a foster child,” her brother said. “Or you’re adopted.”

Startled by this off-hand remark about a topic he had never mentioned before, she wondered where this idea of his had come from. Not wanting to give him any credence, she calmly smiled as she pretended to remain focused on her search. “Am *not*. And, don’t you ever sneak up on me like that again.”

“Are, too. Just think about it for a minute. Do either of them ever ask where you’re going? Do they know when you leave? Have they ever even asked where you’ve been?”

She glanced around as the menacing shadow of a dense thunder cloud, warning of torrential rain or maybe even a tornado, fell over the yard, dimming its brilliance with a sky now turned an odd dark gray. Now, she noticed areas of the yard where the grass was crushed from having been trampled upon. Then her eyes were drawn to the edges of the yard that now seemed to her to be much smaller. The yard now felt like a flattened box – a sort of off-color green slab. Her cheeks became heavy and drooped under the weight of her worry.

“Go ahead and admit it to yourself. You’re an orphan.”

“Am *not*.”

Despite her vehement denial, her brother’s comments had reawakened doubt in her that started a full blown internal debate. This very idea had long been niggling at her just below the surface, but until now, she had previously just pushed the thoughts away as quickly as they came. Could her big brother be telling her the truth? Boy, oh, boy, that would, for sure, explain a lot. But, naw, he was just teasing. Or was he? She could ask their mom and dad. But her parents’ quiet laugh would not be an answer. Nope. Their snickers to her questions had always left her forever doubting. She would just have to figure this out on her own.

In her mind, she began to tick off each memory to fact check it.

On weekends, she was the first one up. She ate cold cereal and milk, packed a PB&J into an old paper bag, grabbed a book, and headed for the barn. While Nell chomped her oats, she slipped on the bridle. After tucking the book and her lunch into the bottom of her shirt, feeling light and free as a feather in the breeze, she would hop on Nell's bare back and up the road they would canter.

About three miles up the country road was the beginning of the path that led through thick brush to her place of solace. It was a place where the world was different than at home. In this place, it seemed that everything was harmonious and right with the world. It was an abandoned property edged with forest. When she first discovered this place, she had claimed it as her own. In the center was an open meadow filled with wildflowers and old orchard trees. Here, her spirits were nurtured and renewed by Mother Earth. She would often lie in the meadow, sometimes reading, sometimes letting her mind go free, watching white clouds morph from fluffy balls into big white birds or harmless jellyfish in a big blue sea. She would finish her sandwich while Nell stood nearby, contentedly munching grass. She and Nell, her sensitive and nonjudgmental companion, would share fallen apples. It was only the setting of the sun that would interrupt this serenity. Going back home was not a pleasant thought. Being at home carried the weight of feeling like a nuisance, a burden, an annoyance. No longer wanting to canter and feeling like a sack of potatoes, she would sling herself heavily on Nell's back, and they would plod their way back down the road until home loomed. She would return Nell to her stall and then go through the back door of the house. Knowing that her greeting would go unacknowledged, she would simply slip quietly and unobtrusively into her small, dimly lit room.

Geez, she really wanted to stop thinking about all this, but it seemed that her brother was just not going to let this go. "I just heard 'em talkin'. This year they're gonna send you to Grandma's in Kentucky for all summer. That's about 300 miles from here and she doesn't have a car. And, that old crank-handle phone of hers on the wall only works half the time. You'll be stuck in the backwoods by Wild Cat Holler. There's lots of water moccasins in the creek by her house and rattlesnakes that live under her house. And, for sure, don't go to the outhouse after dark! Hey, I'm just tellin' ya. They're hoping that one of these times, you just won't come back."

"Oh, shush. They do, *too*, want me to come back."

However, she did know that it was true that two years ago when she was in second grade, early on a Sunday morning, she had saddled up her

pony and ridden along the narrow blacktop road to her friend's house, being sure to jump the ditch beside the road to get out of the way as cars approached. She had tied the bridle reins to a fencepost. Once inside, she had drunk in the intimate feeling of a family laughing and cooking a Sunday breakfast together and sharing the best hotcakes ever. But when she had arrived back at the fencepost, there was nothing but a hanging empty bridle swinging in the breeze. Calling Nell's name and whistling the special whistle her pony knew, she had walked up and down the road with wide eyes searching here and there. There was no option to call home for help since it was well understood that in her family that 'it's everyone for themselves and the devil take the hindmost.' On the long walk home, she was thirsty from eating pancakes, but the worry of her lost pony along with the shame that would be heaped upon her kept her steadily trooping down the road, barely aware of the cars whizzing by. As she walked into her yard, relief engulfed her as she saw her pony standing by the closed barn door, mane and tail a tangle of burrs, stirrups flopping away from the upside-down saddle under her belly. Judging how long she had been gone, she used the position of the sun overhead told her that it was well past noon. After pulling out the burrs and letting the pony into the pasture, she went into the house. She wondered whether her parents knew she had run into trouble. As she went through the back door of the house, she saw her mother and father casually sitting at the table drinking coffee. They were looking through the window toward the barn door where she had found her pony. It was then that she realized that they had understood she had needed help, but had not bothered to go looking for her.

On the other hand, what about the family resemblance? After all, everyone said that she had Dad's ears and Mom's nose. Was that evidence? Or was everyone merely commenting on what a remarkable coincidence that was?

Now, the sun peeked out as the thundercloud drifted away and the yard regained its vibrancy. Her attention had come back to the tiny forest of grass and clover where she sat. She noticed her brother sauntering away as her mother and father rigidly walked in her direction.

Her mother's stoic words portended threatening thoughts, "For a while, we've been meaning to talk to you alone, and we decided that now is as good a time as any."

She managed to beam a smile. Then, pluckily, she piped up, "Okay. But, wait! Look! I found a four-leaf clover!"



Ice Storm, November 2018 - *MacKenzie Melvin*



All's Well - *Fitz Simmons*

Holli Burnfield

Cotton High

Cotton high like our feedsack dresses
Washboard cleaning off our messes
Slouchy knit stockings stained mud red
Kids all snoring six to a bed
Running, running to school and home
made us strong to cut broom corn
Daddy's ear to the ground listening for twisters
Praying in the cellar to let it miss us
Splinters and snakes and movies and dates
growing up poor doesn't bother fate
Dog bit Skeez
but he still came back for Netta
Dog bit Don
but he still came back for me
Dog long gone
Now our kids number three
Dog long gone
and Don still loves me

Sam Long

Exodus

I.

Some days my body is a lurching slug. It doubles over in dry heaves trying to dispel the discomfort. My mouth is dry and tastes of dirt

II.

Sometimes being fully clothed makes me feel like skin is a bad magician: watch as I disappear into an oversized sweater

III.

I dream of being a lavish middle-aged stud, splayed in the living room with nothing but a robe covering me and damn – even my reflection gives me a double take and says, “Yes, I see you”

IV.

In the shower I am a wet goddess, all-powerful and dripping. I practice my seduction face without the judgment of a mirror

V.

On days when my heart is cold and unfeeling, my seduction face is a grimace at best

VI.

Some days my body is more apology than proclamation – my spine curls into a wicked question mark

VII.

This poem is littered still with condemnations – my body begs me for mercy, reaches out with desperate hand and asks me when my last judgment will become a redemption song

VIII.

Say for a moment I am an unfinished hymn,
The choirs in my head singing,
my body a sanctuary, my body a memorized melody ringing out in holy echo

IX.

Some days I am all of these moments and more – some days I am all of these moments and less
but

X.

I savor the good days like a prayer, recite them over and over and over, reminding myself that my body is more reclamation than apology – my elastic backbone

resurrected



The Girl Next Door - *Fitz Simmons*

Kelly Sturgeon

New Fruit

The word crush slides delicious on my tongue,
Like biting into the juiciest orange.
“Ripe like fruit,” an Irish lover used to say,
But only now do I understand
As I begin – again – upon this new mystery.
Ever the detective was I, in my youth,
As I panged for something I could not name,
So, I called it “Love,” and I hung the moon and the stars around it.
Around you, as I did around her, as I will this one too.
But who knew that I would develop
A whole new language.

So, let’s call it a crush and delight in the linguistics.
I’m no longer a mystic, per se,
But I will pretend to be one for you,
As I have a lot of practice at it,
And I’m sure the spectacle will amuse you
Long enough
For me to bite the fruit of my true adoration,
And taste the caramel of your skin
That drips into my consciousness
And seeps through my veins like vodka.

Oh, how I love to be drunk on a feeling!
The punch-drunk sensation of chemicals,
Roaring through us like maniacs,
Roaring through us like beasts,
just from proximity alone,
as this crush begins to unite flesh and bone.
But, “Love”?
Oh, no! Speak not to me of love,
Nor of any such relative notion,
For all such mysteries have faded away,
And, now, you are no mystery to me, baby,
But only that new fruit,
Ripe upon the vine,

Waiting to be plucked,
And tasted –
As rightly you should be,
In all your splendor.
But now . . .
Let me be your new enigma.

Here, girl, take my hand,
And let me lead you to Never-Never Land,
Where I have been many times before,
Except – this time – I know the score.
It is Love, zero,
And my newest crush, four.
One kiss more,
And I will count to five.
To get to six,
Let me unzip this from your hip,
And then you'll feel a bite on your lip,
Followed by a resounding "seven,"
As we get closer and closer to Heaven,
Leaving the stench of that loser love behind,
And then we'll dance to eight and nine,
Saving ten for another time,
When I can savor you as if you are all mine,
But set us both free again
In the end,
To find new fruit to delight ourselves in.

You'll Dance When You Hear the Flute

Libby stared at the pot roast. It stared back at her. Ignoring for the moment that it wasn't supposed to have a face, she tried to divide her focus between that small problem and what William was saying.

"... and then the shareholders' meeting was a mess! Don't even get me started about Evans... Are you even listening?"

She blinked. The pot roast did not, thankfully, blink back. "I'm sorry, dear. The shareholders' meeting went badly?"

William resumed his Tale of Woe: late meetings, inept colleagues, missed deadlines. She let it wash over her like a familiar tide – briny but nothing to fuss about. She surreptitiously carved off the part of the roast that seemed to be staring. She had no idea how the meat could have arranged itself like that or when. It had been normal when she put it in the pot; she was sure of it. The potatoes were normal, the corn, and the broccoli – all normal. Normal, normal, normal, normal.

Aware of a sudden lull in the sound of the sea, she made a non-committal sound at William and he resumed his monologue. She was pleased he'd not noticed – when upset, he was difficult to soothe back down to his normal ebb and flow. She distantly felt badly about that, but he worked so hard and did so much – it was better to keep him calm. It was better to listen to the waves than actually swim the ocean. One accumulated much less sand.

She performed Dinner and Interested Wife. She served Dessert and played Lighthouse – a small conversational touch here and there to steer William into familiar currents, predictable lanes, established destinations. His job. Evans. His clients for next week. What he wanted for lunch tomorrow – all the way to light him to bed and sleep and finally peace.

She'd been doing it for years and was by now an accomplished mistress – so easy she sometimes hardly noticed, either that she was doing it or even William himself. She kept him in order, as she did the house, herself, her life. It wasn't a bad life – nice house, nice job, nice car they shared. Nice. Normal. Predictable. Safe. The house wasn't old, the neighborhood ordinary.

It was also quiet and restful and stable. No crying jags, no screaming fights, no bruises. Her childhood had had all of those things – it had been loud, harsh, unstable, and painful. This was so much better. A nice cloud of cotton wool to curl up in – fog to deaden sounds, the sea of

William to lull her to sleep.

After putting William to bed, Libby waited until his breathing had evened out before getting back up and heading to the kitchen. She quietly opened the fridge and took out the leftovers, which were entirely normal again. No face in the grain of the meat. She stared at it a moment and then put it back on the shelf. She must be overtired. As she closed the door, the kitchen light bounced off the frame and flashed across the window, the movement catching her eye. In the back of her mind, a dim concern prodded her, made her look at the window again. Something was there.

She squinted and walked closer to the window. Someone was standing in their yard. She crossed to the back door and made sure the lock was set. Then she reached for the light and shut it off. It took her eyes a minute to adjust further – to her dismay, the figure was not the neighbor boy looking for his dog. The moon was climbing, already risen, and she washed all color to stark contrast – silver and gray, sharp edges and blurred shadows. The man was medium height and seemed to have dark hair. His back was to her, head tilted up to look at the moon. Hands in his pockets, he stood with his weight on one hip – the picture of relaxed ease.

Libby stared. Should she call the police? Wake up William? Just ignore it and go to bed? As her mind dithered, her feet made the choice for her and, before she was quite aware of what she was doing, she was out on the back porch, in her kitty-print pajamas and no shoes.

The man turned toward her when the door opened. His face was in shadow, the moon making a faint edge of light in his hair. He shifted his weight to the other hip, waited.

“Excuse me, sir?” Her voice sounded thin, uncertain even to her. “This is private property. You’ll need to leave, please.”

He stared at her.

“Sir . . .”

“Do you dance?”

The question caught her completely off guard, and unhappily she wondered if he would get violent. Crazy people sometimes did. “Uh . . . Sir. You need to leave.”

He cocked his head like a dog – a slow sideways tilt ending in a bump as his ear seemed to hit his shoulder – and he kept staring at her. She could now make out the line of his long nose in the moonlight, and his eyes glittered. It was a bit unnerving, and she could feel the hairs at the back of her neck prickle.

“Do you *dance*, I said. Everyone should dance. Everyone can dance.”



Serene Slumber - *Salem Naylor*

Libby started to edge back to the door, one hand reaching behind herself to fumble for the knob. He was on her before she could touch it.

She had a heart-freezing moment to think “*I’m dead*,” before he scooped her into a frame: hand on her upper back, holding her other hand, pulled in to about a foot from his body. She froze and stared at him, mouth and eyes wide.

“Dancing is easy. See?” And he pulled her into a moderate two-step, pivoting to steer them around the entire deck, neatly dodging the one corner that had splinters. He smelled of sage. Libby’s brain gibbered at her while she distantly wondered if they’d ever find her body after tonight. On the fourth revolution, the man dropped his hands and stepped away from her.

“There you are! You can do it! I don’t know why you don’t . . . but then, that’s why you always needed us. We showed you what you needed to learn. Such a shame you’ve forgotten us in return . . .” he broke off, sadly shaking his head and looking down.

Libby edged away slowly, freezing again when his head snapped up and his eyes pinned her again.

“Why did you forget?”

Libby’s response was pure instinct, honed from years of putting her feelings on Saturn and dealing with the unpleasant present by managing it – and people. “Sir, I’m sorry; I think you have me mistaken for someone else. I think you are lost. Let me call someone and let’s get you back to where you need to be again.”

He looked at her again and took a step toward her – she fell back a step.

“I know where I am,” he said. “This is my home, this is my place. It’s you who’s forgotten and I don’t know why.”

She was dimly surprised when his voice broke on the last word. He turned slightly from her, and she noticed for the first time that there was something wrong with his shadow. The moon was high enough for her to see it. Unlike hers, which behaved decently and pooled underneath her feet in a lopsided oval, his sprawled out for what seemed like 6 feet. It was humped in the middle – the shape in no way resembling the posture of the man in front of her. It seemed to have a *texture*.

The man was talking again. She couldn’t understand his words. Her mind had gone white as it sometimes did – too much to process or too much to manage – she was never quite certain what the cause was. However it happened, it was a little like her brain would shut down her senses in order to have more processing power of its own. Sound went first, sight

second – she rarely allowed herself to see what was lost third.

She'd seen that shape before. Kokopelli.

Never mind what a Hopi trickster deity was doing in her back garden (besides dancing and scaring the life out of her) – what was she going to do about it? The man paused in his talking, and she made a non-committal noise. He resumed talking. His shadow rippled. He moved closer, and it fell across her toes, startling her with a small sense of weight.

On the small table near the door was a work bag. In the work bag was her latest attempt to learn a skill – a ball of cotton yarn and a crochet hook. One of the big metal ones. She could just make it out in the moonlight. The man was still talking. Moving on an instinct she didn't understand, Libby edged closer to the table. Sound slowly started to come back.

“... it was never all that much – just an offering here or there? A dance? A song? A good story by the fire? Was that so much to ask?”

He moved toward her, and she took the opportunity to compass step, neatly moving in an arc to his left, to the table and to the crochet hook. It fit quite neatly in her hand. He'd not noticed – or if he had, it didn't seem to matter. Much like her husband, he was in full spate and she reduced to The Bent Ear.

So much the better – people always underestimated her when they did that.

She waited until he turned away, extolling the wonderful Days Past and How It Was, and then pounced on his shadow. Grabbing a pinch between thumb and forefinger, she drew it up like taffy – it had the same sort of pull, slightly sticky. He'd not noticed, being distracted by the moon and still assuming she was dutifully listening.

She tied the slip knot quickly and started a simple chain. Working fast, she was able to get at least five stitches in before he turned and cut the soliloquy short.

“What are you . . .”

“Shhh . . . don't pay me any mind now. A bit of time, and we'll have you all sorted out.”

She continued to draw the sticky shadow on to her crochet hook, the taffy texture lending itself to a fairly consistent hand. If she'd had her drop spindle he'd have been sorted in a trice, but they'd just have to make do with what they had. The man fell quiet, and Libby's fingers flew. She'd started double crochet now, turning the chain into a decent sized square. Nothing fancy – she had only learned two stitches so far.

The moon rose higher. Both of them sunk until they were sitting

comfortably on the deck. The square of shadow-fabric grew. Every now and then, Libby looked up from her work to check the man. His face was becoming more and more visible as she worked – almost as if pulling the shadow up was also pulling something from his face. She recognized the nose first – William’s proud beak. His eyes were still clouded.

She didn’t notice what was being pulled from her at the same time, just as she didn’t notice how the shadow-stuff clung to her fingers or how unreeling it from the pool of shadow seemed to call out a darkness of her own to be woven into the fabric.

Through the night she worked, and through the night they sat. It shouldn’t have surprised her, she thought. Hands busy, her mind wandered. They’d fallen into such poor habits lately. She didn’t know why or how he’d become overshadowed, but maybe the Trickster was being kind to them after all. Maybe such a strange night to shake them out of their habits – he, the ocean, or the ship on it, and her the light house to guide and control him – maybe this night and what she did with this shadow could set them free?

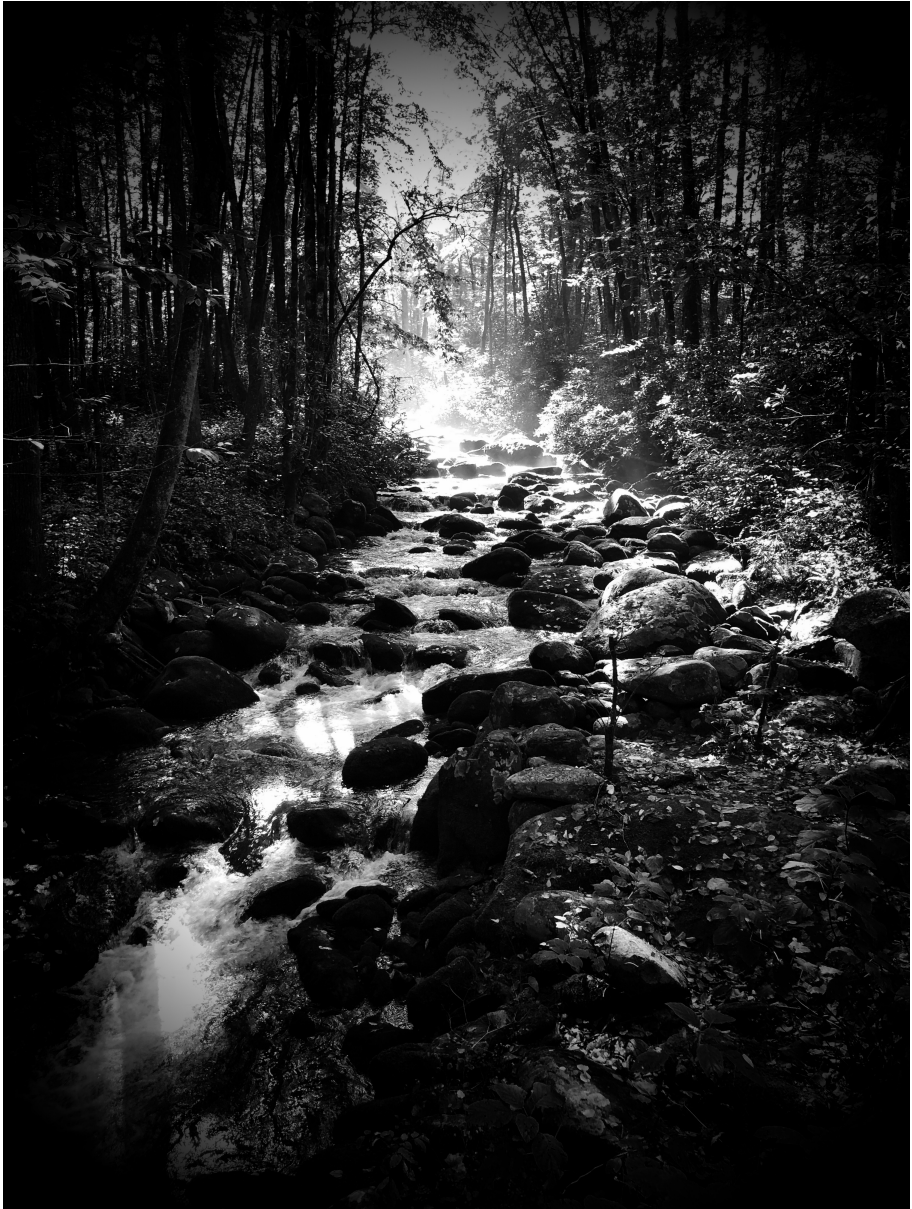
As the sun rose, she bound off the shadow-cloth and, taking out the hook, was startled when William caught her hand.

“Thank you,” he said.

She looked at his eyes – blue as the ocean after a storm – and clearer than she’s seen in longer than she could remember.

“You’re welcome,” she said and touched his face.

Neither of them noticed the shadow cloth fade in the rising light.



The Light in the Midst - *Jeffrey A. Grounds*

Liz Spaulding

Shape Shifter

melancholy juices drip sour on his tongue
black boy joy lives here
shape shifter twists
molds himself into the ground
maybe he can grow into something new here
shift so they don't stare as much
shape shifter dances
he only drinks top shelf liquor
smooth on his hips his tongue spits magic
men drown in his moonlight eyes here
shape shifter drowns
another bill in the mail another shadow across the sky
one of his cousins got shot again
shape shifter dreams
there is no mourning here
there are 42 buff men surrounding him
while he wears a silk black robe with gold trim to be specific
he can finally breathe
shape shifter heals
he washes himself in clay scrubbing until he is himself again
he leaves golden honey tracks so he can find his way back
see he is not a part of this world
shape shifter heals, dreams, drowns
shape shifter dances and twists
shape shifter disappears

Heather Perry

Lazer Eye's Blues Vignette

Lazer Eye knew the place was a dump the minute he smelled it. A mix of mold, stale smoke, fry grease, and that sawdust smell you get in certain midsummer afternoons when the air doesn't move and you figure you just might melt right out of your thrift store suit. Still and all, money was money. And a stage – even if it was the size of a postage stamp – was a stage. It wasn't like he and the boys could really command anything better at the moment, anyway.

He walked through the door and straight to it – a small, raised dais at the south end of the joint. And it was a *Joint* – not a café, not a pub, not a restaurant – a *Joint*. Chipped little wooden tables, bad tile floors, the particular kind of cane-backed chair that seems to breed and inhabit Joints the world over – usually with one short leg, just enough to make you spill your drink if you weren't careful. Alan talked with the owner, he and Bowser started setting up. Drum kit. Stand for the keyboard. Chair. Double bass.

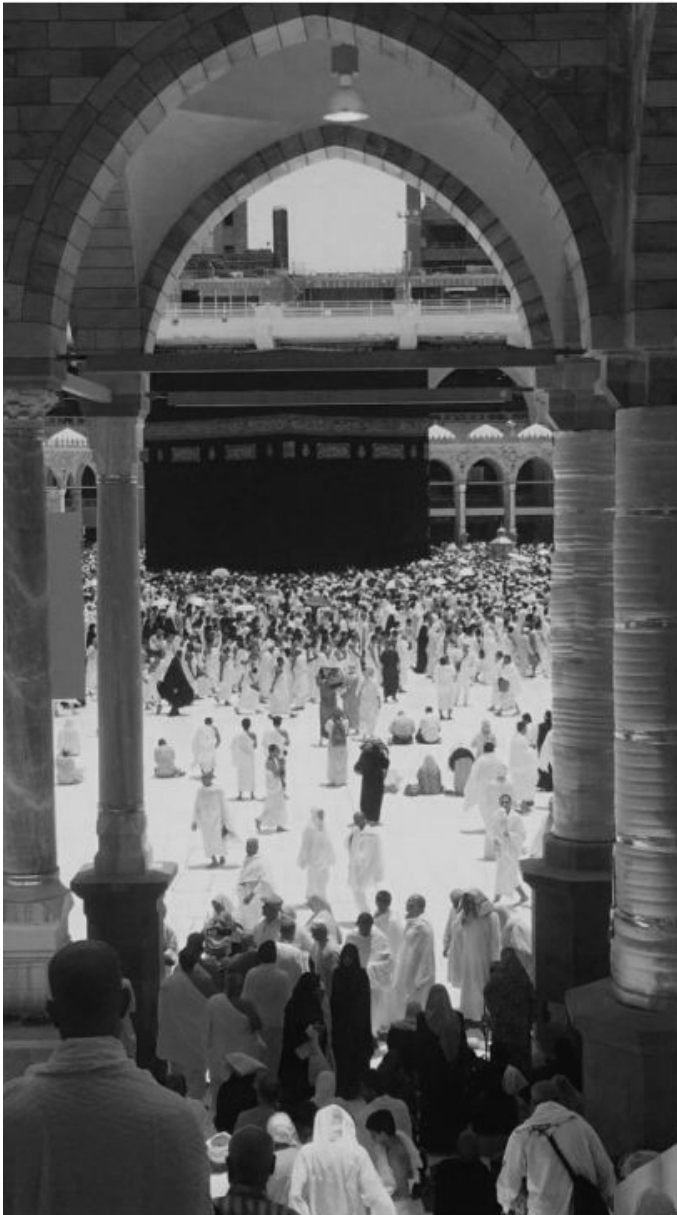
That sorted, he folded himself into one of the chairs, disturbing the herd slightly, jarring a few of the nearest slightly away from the table before they settled back in, nervously. Cane backed chairs: the Thomson's gazelles of the Rundown Joint. Bowser settled in opposite – a long sprawl, punctuated by some lank blond hair. Cracked mirror over the bar, naturally. Cracked walls, par for the course. The sun was falling outside, shadows reaching longer.

Still – there was an echo about the place. Not anything you could hear with your ears – rather something that he could almost catch if he let his gaze go soft in just the right way, unfocused. This had been a hell of a Joint in its day, when the paint was new. But that – hell, that was true of all of them.

While it was still early, they'd get something to eat and a beer. Before the night really got going and they'd be running set after set, lost in music and sometimes losing the crowd with them. Nothing too radical – some Vince Guaraldi quotes, a little Thelonious Monk, some Bill Evans – to get them in the mood, to entice them with something familiar, and then off to Other Ports of Call, when Alan slid into his own little world on the keys and Bowser and Lazer Eye could only follow him in order to see him back safely.

He very much doubted anyone listening knew just how far Alan

would sometimes take them out, but Lazer Eye, he could always tell, could always see it. Eagles had nothing on him, rabbits neither. Sharp and precise on the drums, farsighted and keen in perception. A “Z” for cool style. No getting lost in harmonies or mixed up in irregular time for him, no. Just the clear and steady tic – the rhythm structure that kept them all safe – that built the wall to keep Alan from fading off into where ever the music went when it was done playing them.



Kaaba through Arch - *Nourh Alanazi*

Emily Daugherty

A Good Reminder

Standing lofty; the arrogance is over-whelming

Yes. You are noticeable: see *fantasy of self-importance*

Speaking profoundly; concentration only happens in G minor

Yes. You are refined: see *compulsive liar*

Flaunting your skill; with the grace of a goose waddling through mud

Yes. You feel like a craftsman: see *personally exploitative*

Built up frustrations; the unknown magma locked in the chamber, waiting

Yes. This could have been prevented: see *reacting to contrary viewpoints with rage*

Exploding tantrum; a fierceness only a two-year-old could hold

Yes. You really are seventy: see *highly dominant*

Croaking roars; the fading figure crouched in the corner, blindsided

Yes. This is someone you call a friend: see *poor interpersonal borders and gaslighting*

Strutting like a wrecked cock; charm no longer carries you on

Yes. This is a problem: see *difficulty understanding people's emotions*

Dumbfounded; our agency will not be disregarded

Yes. This is what adults do: see *lack of empathy and self-protecting mechanisms*

Threatening to leave; the baited fable of your dog's death will not be bitten

Yes. Maybe you should: see *perpetuating the role of the victim*

Over-apologizing; only to save face.

Oh! Are we in a honeymoon stage? see *cycles of abuse*

Wily sweet words; met by shame and blame for trusting they are true

Yes. We believe in redemption: see *dealing with a narcissist*

Anxiety Attack: A Reflection in a Milky Pool

The milk pools beside the cup, forming a stark, pale frosting over the surgical steel counters. How many times have I poured this measurement today? How many identical spills? How many times have I just pushed past it, continuing on as drink after drink hits the counter, each methodically crafted as a replica or variation of the last? Yet, as a spring rain gathers outside to form a gray and opaque world beyond the glass of the café, I turn my head to the side, and I stare deep into the flood that forms a white, expanding, and suddenly alien puddle. The purpose of a barista is to craft the drink perfectly, is it not? Here, in full view, is the human error behind the process. I am arrested by it, a spattering of imperfection in a robotic realm, and I cannot look away. The din of the queue fades out, and as if someone has twisted a volume knob on an old radio to an empty channel, static consumes my ears. I feel myself trip, falling forward to sink below the surface of the counter.

The spill and the milkshake it hoped to become vanish, their unsweetened and unformed blemish upon the bar fading into nothingness. The lattes behind me wisp away in the steam along with my coworkers. My apron is replaced with a simple, plaid button-up snatched from a clearance rack four years ago. The sounds of orders and steaming milk are gone completely, and I see the infinitude stretching out. The counter, replicated beyond count, and the knowledge that the line never truly ends as long as I remain in this profession manifest in my mind, but I can barely recall which profession it is. I feel my instincts click on, but there is nothing left to fight. I want to move my feet, to begin running, but I cannot. They are rooted in the grass that has grown around my black, skid-proof leather work shoes. Somewhere far away, I know my hands are shaking, and I feel them, a phantom, grip at the distant counter even as the remaining senses finally give way to the new reality.

I do not need this money, I think.

And then the phantom cool of surgical steel and the vibrant, tangled grasses are replaced by a rocky field. In the distance, my sister is running through it. The thunderous mood of the now distant storm transfers into the attack, and my scalp ripples with its energy. Static sparks skip through the traces of my arm hair and along my back. I know it is coming, and then I see the lightning strike behind her. Despite the danger, I see her smile over her shoulder. Her black, red-streaked hair dazzles in the

dim light with each flash as the sky unleashes a torrent, striking down at her with rapid succession. I can feel her calling, and I can feel her yearning. She is joined by my brothers, both shorter and stouter than she. She stretches her arms out to protect them. Full of longing and anxiety, her smile is replaced by determination, but the boys are just out of reach, and so they all continue to run away from the demons that pursue them, now manifesting within the lightning storm. They continue to reach out, to gather towards one another, but they do not cry out. There are no words but the screaming curses of the storm.

I want to help them flee, escape. I see the doom that they do not: a crevice before them opening and widening into an expanse that is at once a shadow of a ghetto and a chasm of teeth dripping with the poison of destitution and exclusion. The four of us scattered to the four corners to become cardinals of nothing as direction fades and emptiness consumes. I try to shout, to tell them to stop. I cannot. I begin to run after them, but there is pain, as though my legs are intertwined with vines of broken glass and stone, and I cannot speed up enough to catch hold of their fleeing forms. I see lightning striking the pebbled landscape around them, and I see terror lit up on their faces as they grow up before me, each becoming an adult within a few, childlike steps. Each seems identical to myself and yet wholly different, extensions of my mind even as they represent their own individual destinies.

I see my sister stumble. Fear jolts through me, and as I accelerate, I trip, and I am at the counter again. The milk pool has grown larger, and the line has grown longer. I remember where I am and the beverage I am making. My travels finished, I think quietly to myself, *I do need this money*, even as my heart quietly demands that I run, a beating and demanding metronome holding on to my previous reality. I forcibly settle back into the pacing and quicken my step to make up for the lost minute in which six drinks have accumulated. I turn on the blender and wipe away the milk stain on the counter. I attempt to wipe away the memory of their faces with it. I let the buzz of the machine erase my memories of the attack with its static roar, and I stare out the window to see the storm brewing. It is going to be a long, dreadfully beautiful evening storm.

Liz Spaulding

Leviticus 18:22

The church welcomes all
Why did I want to wait outside?

7. I watched how close my teacher's hands were to her breasts.

No one told me being "that way" was wrong out loud, they sure screamed it. Screamed it with their snake eyes open, empty mouths, and tainted red hands.

12. I kissed a boy next to the bathroom, knees shaking, I planned this kiss.

19. My father whispers, "It's just a phase."

The priest says, "Homosexuals are welcome" He doesn't say,
"Heterosexuals are welcome."

Come one

Come all

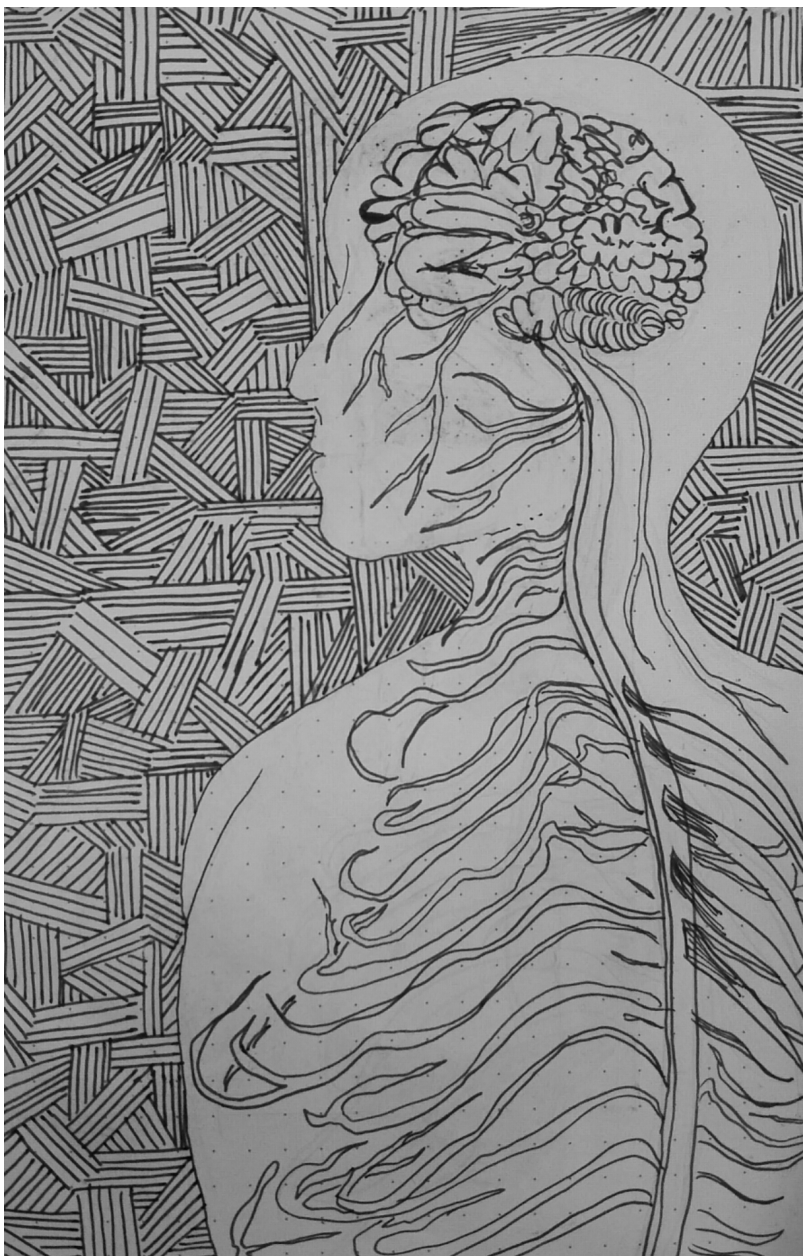
15. I reluctantly let a man feel me.

16. I tasted a woman.

I always wore a dress and gossiped about boys, careful not to let anyone sink their enmity into my throat.

13. My best friend stood naked in front of me, I traced her skin with my eyes, first time I felt safe enough to admire a woman's body.

14. A stranger said he saw god in me, he wondered if I was destined to be beat burned nailed and put on display.



Cruel - *Fitz Simmons*

Margaret Gohn

Lace Reformatted

Ever since I can remember
I have had a small doll
with a
black lace dress
And one leg
(with hand-sewn bloomers and
a hand-painted face)

Also
her tiara is broken (it has always been broken)
I don't remember her
from when
she was not broken
My older sister
has the companion doll
in blue lace
Hers has both of her legs
(and an intact tiara)

When I was old
enough to understand
I realized
that the dolls
were gifts from my grandmother
in San Diego
(who I met once)

the
doll
was
her (to me)

She was broken
(my grandmother)

That's what
They said

She lived in a wheelchair

following a stroke
She was immensely creative.
She tatted a bedspread
for their wedding gift
She knitted the most amazing Christmas stocking
She painted lakes and lichens from his slides
(this is what I held onto)

She died

when I was eight

I keep her
with some other mementos
on a ceramic pond
I made.



Thinking Out-Loud - *Jessica Sturgeon*

Jake Alexander

We All Look Up

Dust floats in the light coming through the open window. Doug has just gone outside with the last load of his meager possessions, and I find myself alone in an empty house. Every piece of furniture has made its way to its new home or waits on the curb, pleading with passersby to be spared from the city dump. The house sighs with emptiness – still familiar to the eye but changed in that subtle way only my subconscious recognizes. As I stand looking at the barren kitchen, I find myself staring at the sun-faded paint around where the table used to be, thinking about endings. This is an ending.

Doug comes wandering back in and my reverie breaks. “Do you remember in Spanish when you would get bored and throw paper balls at my head?” I ask him.

“Yeah, look, I’ve told you I’m sorry. I don’t know why you keep bringing that up,” he curtly replies.

“No, no, I’m just thinking about how we got here,” I reply.

That was back in Knoxville, Tennessee, about a four-hour drive from where we are now. Doug and I had become fast friends in high school. We had a lot of similarities, which likely drew us together: dark hair, a sarcastic sense of humor, an absent dad, a poor mom, drug problems within the family, and almost no supervision. One night, during the summer before high school, I found myself at a friend of a friend’s house, sitting in a rusted-out old car in the yard, watching everyone but myself and this unknown kid getting high. Later that night I slept on a recliner at the end of a sofa that that same unknown kid slept on. He kicked me all through the night.

On my first day of high school I went to my English class, and lo and behold that same kid who had been kicking me all night was there. We sat next to each other, something our English teacher would quickly come to see as a problem. After a couple of years without much guidance, we found ourselves questioning our school careers. We decided that since no one was going to make us go to high school, we would drop out. In the two years between dropping out and finding ourselves here, much had changed.

“I’m going to miss this place,” Doug says, and I notice he seems to have become pensive as well.

We are in our house ‘Black Bear Lair,’ named after a small, chipped up statue of a black bear in the tiny front yard. The house: in a

neighborhood called Butchertown, named so for the old slaughterhouse slumped across a full block's worth of land. The neighborhood: in a city in Kentucky named Louisville, pressed up against the winding Ohio River.

After high school, music became the focal point of our lives. Through unlikely circumstances we had found an interest in punk. The thing about punk is that while it is a style of music, it is also a subculture with a network of people across the world. Once you tap into the network it isn't so hard to create connections in far-away places, especially after the onset of social media. Through this network Doug had met some people in Louisville, specifically he had met a romantic interest. So she started coming down to hang out with him, and I became friends with her as well. Then Doug and I started going to Louisville to hang out with her. In Louisville we found a much larger group of punk kids to hang out with.

"Sometimes it doesn't seem real. How did we even meet these people?" I ask aloud, not expecting an answer. I understood that we had made some friends in Louisville then gradually spent more and more time here until, eventually, we were just living here. But it seems so unlikely for teenagers to make their way through life like that, and so unlikely that we would make connections with people the way we did. As my adolescence peaked, I had begun to feel continuously adrift within the churning sea of the world around me. I felt paralyzed by fear as I slowly became aware of the sheer magnitude of the possibilities presented to a young man in the 21st century. What I grew up around and what was expected from someone with a family like mine, I rejected. Desperate for a feeling of belonging, I unknowingly searched for it in exactly the right place.

"God, I already miss Sam," Doug says.

"Yeah, me too," I reply. Sam: always wearing the same green running shorts and threadbare black t-shirt, the adult in the room when things got out of hand. "What about David? Think we will ever meet someone like David again?" I half-jokingly ask Doug.

"Probably not. A true weirdo," Doug says with the hint of a smile. David: fiery red hair, self-conscious, but somehow managed to draw everyone together. The truth was we were all weird, that's what connected us. One would have to be willing to move outside of the bounds of normalcy to live the way we had been living.

'Black Bear Lair' was an old dingy shotgun house with three big rooms, a bathroom, and a kitchen. We were all musicians, so naturally we reserved one room for band practices. The other two rooms we partitioned up into bedrooms. We had anywhere from four to seven people living in the house at a time, and whenever we needed another room, we would just

partition someone's room into two smaller rooms. There were two closets you could fit a bed into, so we had people live in those too. It was extremely cheap, we were all vegetarians, and we ate rice and food we found in dumpsters for most of our meals. Since we were all newly independent young men, no one was particularly worried about hygiene. Accordingly, it was a smelly place.

"Hanging out in the kitchen is what I'm going to miss the most," I say with a little bit of excitement, as a particularly good memory comes to mind. In this memory, I am laughing, hard. I watch with glee as David lowers himself limbo style onto the dirty, brown floor. He is wearing a stained band t-shirt and cut off jean shorts, and he is holding an imaginary guitar in his hands. Queen's "Don't Stop Me Now" is blasting on the stereo, and right as the guitar solo comes in David slides across the floor with his air guitar. Soon Doug, Sam, and I catch on and start miming other instruments. After we listen to the song a few times, we have choreographed moves for the whole thing.

When Freddie Mercury says he is burning through the sky, we all look up, as though we might see him if we stare hard enough; when Freddie says he is a sex machine, ready to reload, we all exaggeratedly hump the air in front of us; when the drum solo comes in, we all squat down and beat the hell out of a 'drum set'; and the great act comes to a hilarious crescendo with the guitar solo, as we all compete to see who can do the most ridiculously uninhibited rock-star reenactment. This involves a large amount of thrashing around on the ground, facial contortions, abnormal guitar proportions, or any other idea we can think of to create a spectacle. That is, we do those things when we aren't paralyzed with fits of laughter.

As I stand here at this moment of ending, reminiscing about my time with Sam, David, and Doug, a shadow of the listless feeling that once dominated my subconscious comes over me. But I am changed now, and the easy purchase its claws once sunk into is no longer available. Thus, the feeling dissipates without putting up much of a fight at all. In the place this feeling expected to occupy, it found something else. This memory and these people reside there now, and I know as I move on more people will take up residence. For new bonds with new friends have begun to form already. And even though some friendships will fade, an imprint on my being will remain of both those who I have loved and those who have loved me.

In the last moment in our home, on the doorstep of a new beginning and the close of an ending, I am ready for the changes that will come. "I'm not sure I've ever had as much fun as I had goofing around with those guys," I tell Doug as we turn to leave the kitchen for the last time.

Heather Perry

Loudly Your Dreaming Mind Calls

Waking from a nightmare I find you.
You are on your side, curled away from me.
Sound asleep
Safe.

I curl into you – molded to your back,
Arm wound around your chest,
Right hand tangled in your hair,
Nose pressed between shoulder blades.
I breathe you in.
Safe.

My Scheherazade, my heart.
I know that, should you wake
You'll have another tale, another adventure.
You'll spin the world for me.
Impossible, fantastic.
True.

You'll draw me out of my night
And into yours.
Velvet, moon-kissed, star-silvered
Safe.

As it is, pressed to you now –
Breathing when you breathe,
Your heart measuring my life under my hand,
You draw me into your world
Anyway. Lips to skin,
Safe.

I sink into your dream – to starlight and
The wind in the trees.
Safe.

CONTRIBUTORS

Nourh Alanazi graduated from the Arts College in English Literature from King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia. She was working as a teacher in her country before coming to the United States, and she would like to continue after graduation. She loves photography and writing poems and has many poems in her native language. She is the mother of six children, the oldest is 18 and the youngest was born earlier this year. After a semester at Ivy Tech, Nourh is currently a graduate student at the Indiana University Bloomington, School of Education.

Born in Knoxville, TN (1989), **Jake Alexander** made a two-ish year pitstop in Louisville, KY before making his way to Bloomington, IN, where he resides now. Having spent most of his adult life making music with friends and generally having a good time, he has decided to put merriment on the backburner and resume his formal education.

Amy Brier, a native of Providence RI., is a trained stone carver with an MFA in sculpture from IU. She is an Associate Professor of Fine Arts at Ivy Tech Bloomington. Her sculpture is in private and public collections nationally and internationally. www.amybrier.com

Holli R. Burnfield graduated from the massage program at Ivy Tech-Bloomington in 2017 and obtained her associate's of General Studies in 2018. She has published three novels under her name as well as two novels under the pseudonym, Capri S Bard. She is a professional actor/singer – mom of five amazing kids – licensed massage therapist – and an author of novels, short stories, poetry, music, script writing, and creative nonfiction. She enjoys learning Norwegian and Danish and taking screenwriting classes.

Ian McLane Collier is from Northwest Indiana and Northeast Kentucky. He is an English major at Ivy Tech, transferring to Indiana University. He writes a lot of short stories, poems, and scripts. He does some acting as well, but his dream is to write scripts and become a director.

Emily Daugherty is a shy woodland creature who quietly takes the paths less traveled. In this lifetime, that has included a brief stint as a student, an unexpectedly extended stay in Costa Rica, a cross-country life in a van with an irascible dog, and off-grid farming, deep in the woods, while dodging Brown County's infamous poop fascists. She is a cutter of hair, fitter of

wigs, sculptor of clay, weaver of webs, planter of trees, butcher of chickens, and today, author of tales.

Margaret Gohn is a perennial student and an observer of nature – human and otherwise. A painter for most of her life, she has recently taken up limestone sculpture. Genealogy has been a subject of interest for some time, along with feminism, philosophy, sustainability in living and global warming. She has exhibited in various museums, universities and galleries, and published on the internet.

Jeffrey A. Grounds is a Ivy Tech Fine Arts Graduate. He's currently enrolled at IU in Bloomington, studying Fine Arts and Film Production. He is an artist, musician, photographer who enjoys the outdoors, hunting, hiking, mushroom hunting, along with other outdoor activities. He's also a recording artist. He enjoys writing lyrics and music, and has a YouTube channel under 'Jeff Grounds.' He creates videos for his music.

Sam Long (they/them) is a queer poet and songwriter from Nashville, TN. Their writing explores the depth and complexities of relationships, identity, mental illness, and the nonlinear process of recovery. Sam, coming from a family of musicians, is influenced by a myriad of music styles that they try to translate to the page. They are currently based in Bloomington, IN, studying library science at Ivy Tech.

MacKenzie Melvin is an introvert who loves nothing more than a night alone in her room with her books, her many plants, and a big fluffy cat named Saturn. She is interested in capturing life's most precious and fleeting moments in whatever way she can.

Salem Naylor enjoys working with oils and watercolor. At the moment, she would like to focus on studying the human figure.

Raised in the soggy, wintry north of Indiana, **Jeremiah Ochoa** slowly journeyed southward to Bloomington (writing all the way). After Ivy Tech, he will pursue Creative Writing and Linguistics at Indiana University. Whether or not this pays off will be determined given time, but the journey itself was worth the wait and weight of the experience.

Laverne Oller has a favorite quote: "We do not write in order to be

understood; we write to understand,” C. Day Lewis, English poet. Laverne returned to college at Ivy Tech Community College-Bloomington after raising her three children and retiring. While she was attending, a creative writing class rewarded her by facilitating personally liberating insight which continues to fuel her pursuit of more thoughtful connection – writer to reader, reader to writer, reader to reader.

Heather Perry is a work in progress, currently between Swamp Witch and student – the chemistry of her chosen fen is still a little off and the quicksand isn’t effective enough. She resides in Bloomington with three cats and a most excellent husband. She’s only growing stranger, not older.

Fitz Simmons is a creator residing in Bloomington, IN. Their background is in brain science, language, and animal behavior. Their foreground is in writing, drawing, and making puns. Fitz likes comic books, conversations about cosmology, and confabs concerning cats.

Liz Spaulding is a sophomore from the Far East side of Indianapolis pursuing telecommunications. She won best on-air personality in her advanced T.V. class and even had her own podcasts.

Jessica Sturgeon is not just a photographer who is following her dreams; she is so much more. She knows how to think outside of the standard "box" while using her talents to capture the beauty others may not see (like a city hanging lamp). When challenges arise she is up to not only accepting the challenge, but excelling past the challenge.

Kelly Sturgeon, originally from Ellettsville, Indiana, will be graduating from Ivy Tech Community College-Bloomington after the fall semester of 2019. She then plans to transfer to Indiana University in hopes of obtaining a master’s or higher in English. She is 44 years old and has been writing creatively since she was 8. Her primary goal in life is paid publication, but she plans to begin her career teaching English to other college students.

