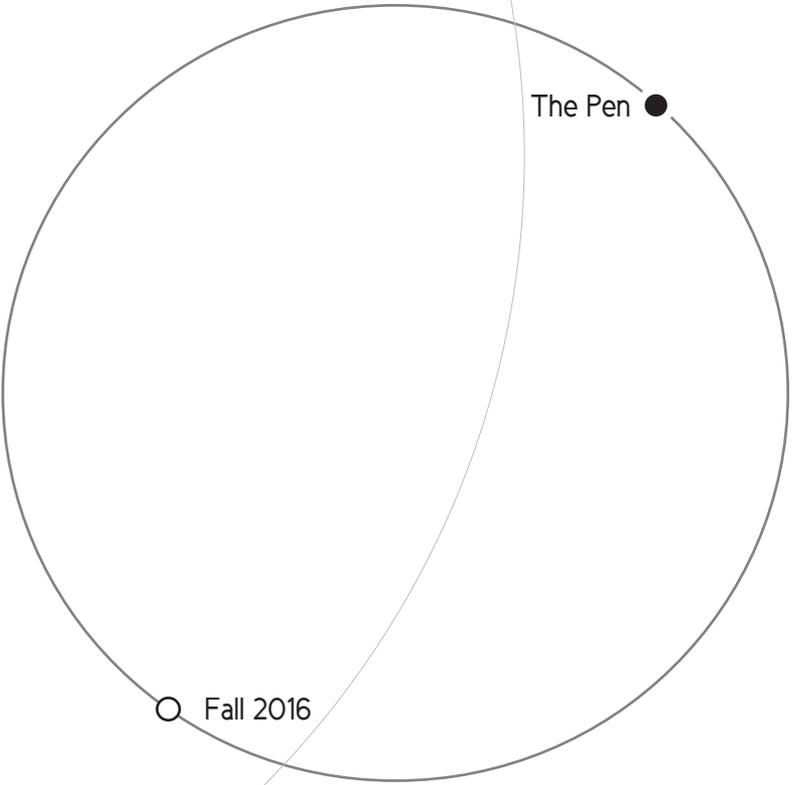


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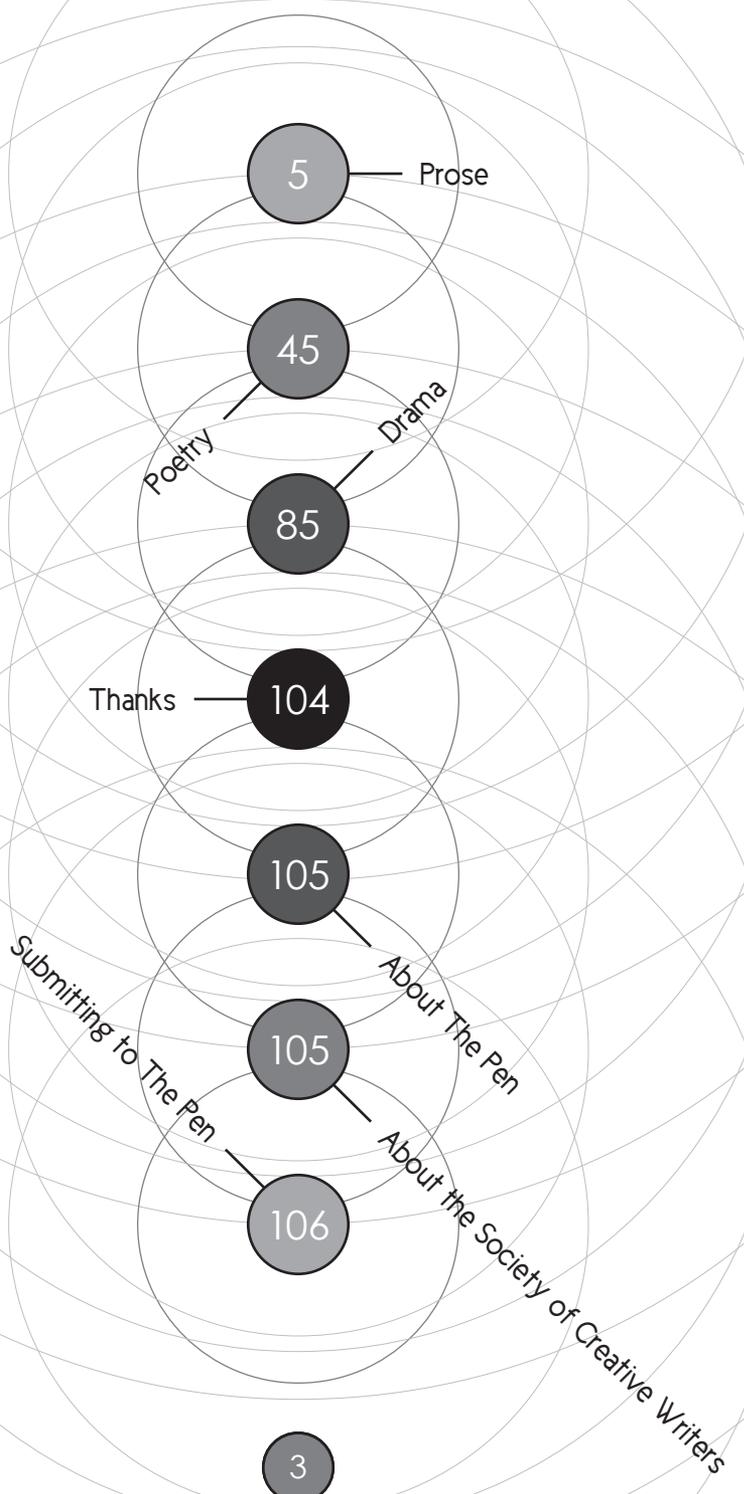
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○ Some Unholy War

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An Interview with DJ Cruz

DJ Cruz played at the same festival that would end up being Helen Rothschild's last performance before her death, and Cruz says he was "horrified" watching her onstage and wished he could have helped her.

Helen's August 16 performance at Ladybug Music Festival, in which she stumbled onstage and was booed by her fans, marked her last performance before she was found dead in her apartment this past Wednesday.

DJ Cruz also performed that night and described what it was like watching Helen that night to *NOW* magazine:

"As soon as I got out of the car, I knew something was wrong," Cruz remembers. "I could hear the audience booing from outside the venue. It was louder than the music."

Cruz watched her performance from the side of the stage. "Helen just stood there, swaying, mumbling occasionally. The band played quietly and they looked terribly uncomfortable. The whole audience was in shock."

"I think she was on stage for 30 or so minutes before she just walked off. I was horrified."

Cruz, who has been sober for 10 years, wishes he could have helped her.

"What I saw in Helen was, simply, the love of existing in a chemically altered state. I know a lot of addicts, and sadly, she is one that didn't survive."

Background

Helen Rothschild was born Helen Naylor de Rothschild in New

York City on October 5, 1987 to parents Rowan Gary de Rothschild, an entrepreneur, and Gloria de Rothschild, a college professor. She has one sister, Camille de Rothschild (born 1990), and two brothers, twins, Gavin and Rowan Jr. (born 1996). She is of French descent.

Rothschild grew up on Long Island, New York, and attended Long Island Lutheran Middle and High School.

After graduating high school, she was accepted to the Julliard School of New York but decided not to attend. She took a gap year, living on Long Island with relatives, working as a waitress.

Regarding not having friends in school, she said: “that was when my musical experience began. I found people like myself, for myself.” Rothschild then lived in Brooklyn for eight years.

When she was 18, she began performing in various nightclubs around the city under names such as “Butterfly Queen” and “The Enigma Helen.”

“I was always singing. At 18 I started at clubs in the city. I have good friends and devoted fans in the underground. We were playing for each other.”

2007: Back to Basics

On May 7, 2007, an eight track compact disk was registered under Helen Naylor Rothschild with the United States Copyright Office. The application title was “Back to Basics” with another title “Spirited Away” also listed. The track titles are currently unknown. Between 2007 and 2008, the album *Odyssey* was recorded under the name “April Jones” and leaked in June 2014.

During her first performance in 2006, Helen sang the song “Some Unholy War” by one of her inspirations, Amy Winehouse.

“It’s hard to describe what I saw on stage. There was pain and heartache, but a steady devotion she portrayed in her performance,” Richard Pike of Pike Entertainment Group recalls.

“My first performance?” Helen smiles and her eyes concentrate and she pauses, looking up to the left. She sighs. “It would have been in 2006. Amy [Winehouse’s] album had just come out. I was obsessed with it.” Her deep eyes sparkle.

“I can tell you I wore a vintage Lanvin lace tuxedo inset blouse and matching long pleated bow waist skirt. It was ivory and black.” She places her hands on her lap and leans back, eyes closed. “And I sang ‘Some Unholy War’ by Amy Winehouse.” She smiles and sings some bars:

*Yes my man is fighting some unholy war,
and I will stand beside you,
and who you dying for?
Me, I would have died too.
I would have liked to.
If my man was fighting some unholy war.*

“My hair was tied up in a loose bun. It was hot in there, I know it was not holding up.” She laughs. “It was such a magical night.”

2010-2012: Some Unholy War and Tribute

After sending a demo with a few original tracks and her unofficial cover of “Some Unholy War” to Venus Records she was signed with them and released her debut single “Invisible.” The song earned her a Jupiter award for “Best Upcoming Artist” in 2010 and a Euterpe award for “Best Contemporary Song” in 2011. The same month she began work on her second studio album *Some Unholy War*.

She toured many popular cities, performing live, in order to promote her albums release including Roseland Ballroom and the Waldorf-Astoria, and with performances on The Graham Norton Show and The Johnathan Ross Show. Rothschild also performed two songs from the album on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon on January 13, 2011.

“I’ve never been a performer,” Helen smiles. “I don’t like the spotlight on me. I’ve never been an exhibitionist,” she giggles and looks around. “Oh boy,” her voice trails off.

Off camera someone asks her a question.

She ‘hm’s.”

The question is repeated.

She giggles. “I can respond to critics for you if you’d so like,” she

winks. “I looked beautiful and I felt, and feel, beautiful. I wore a Gucci crystal knot black silk gown and Gucci Leila metallic leather platform sandals.” She uncrosses and switches her legs.

From the Notes of Quincey Jones

She avoided interviews because she felt her words were scrutinized and used against her. She showed up to ours on time. I went into the green room to greet her before we started. She was laid like a painting on one of the couches, comfortable but aware of her image. We chatted for a bit before we recorded. She was soft spoken and sat gracefully during our short conversation.

“How would you like to be addressed during this interview?”

“You can call me whatever you want, but most people call me Helen.”

“Alright Helen.” I smile. “Are you comfortable? Is there anything you think you might need before we begin?”

She smiles. “No thank you.” She politely sits crossing one leg over the other. I then notice she doesn’t have a purse or even her phone with her. “Wonderful! Let’s get started.” I tell Mark to start rolling and we begin the interview.

“I would like to just get right into it if you don’t mind.”

“I don’t mind. I’d prefer it.” That smile again.

“Why do you make music?”

“Because I like it.”

I stayed silent.

“Well I love it. I love to make music. I love to sing. It makes me happy.”

“Your music is very somber but is it cathartic or is it truth?”

“That’s a good question.”

“That’s a shitty answer.”

“You’re not asking the right questions.”

I was silent again.

“Okay. Helen. Would you do it all again?”

“No.”

2010-2012: Some Unholy War and Tribute cont...

“I still have that dress, you know, and shoes,” Helen looks at the interviewer and smiles. Then she looks down again and fidgets with her hands. “I, um, I sang ‘Angels Forever.’ Now it wasn’t the greatest of my performances. I was nervous. I’m always nervous, but the performance was true to form and didn’t warrant the reaction it received.” She looks down and sighs. “Singing is what I do. I am good at it and Jimmy [Fallon] knows that. The producers know that. It wasn’t an accident I was on that show.”

Some Unholy War was officially released on February 28, 2011, worldwide, and reached number one in nine countries. Critical reception was mixed to positive. *Some Unholy War* sold 4 million copies in 2011 making it the third-best-selling album. The album charted on the Billboard 200 album chart, peaking at number seven and lingering at 52 after 36 weeks on the chart.

In an interview with *Apathy* magazine on May 16, 2011, she announced work on another album that was due in September. In a separate interview with Donald Chamberlin on his Sirius XM radio show, Rothschild stated it wasn’t a second album but really more like an EP.

On August 22, 2011, a cover of Etta James’ “I’d Rather Go Blind” was released as a promotional single for the EP titled *Tribute*. Rothschild describes it as a personal touch on “favorite American classics.” In that same interview with Chamberlin, she describes working on her album:

“I love Etta James. I love Tina Turner, and Amy Winehouse – anyone who sang with the raw emotion they brought to music. They were beautiful and had voices to match. I want to exude the same type of grace and soul in my music and my renditions that they were able to bring with their originals. That’s why this album is called *Tribute*. It is, quite simply, a tribute to my favorite artists.”

Rothschild released the album on September 5, 2011, earning her her second top 10 album in the United States and UK. The album sold 88,000 copies in its first week, and 273,000 worldwide. Rothschild performed her song “Last Chance” at the 2011 MTV VMAs the next week. In November of 2011, Rothschild performed another song, “Some

Unholy War,” a cover of Amy Winehouse, at the MTV EMAs. Both performances were followed by wins in the categories: Best New Act and Best Alternative. “These performances were much better,” Rothschild joked in another interview with Chamberlin in January of 2012.

2013: American Beauty

On January 10, 2013, it was announced that Rothschild would provide the vocals for the soundtrack of the 2013 film *Lucky Luciano* directed by Baz Luhrmann. The single, titled “Bootlegger’s Girl,” was released on January 13.

On March 1, 2013, Rothschild posted a photo on Instagram of herself and Tommy Guns, leading many fans to presume that the two would be working together on an upcoming album. Rothschild later confirmed this with a second photo on March 3, 2013, of Guns sitting in a studio and the caption: “Back to work...” Rumors were circulating that the two were working together, with Guns producing the album for Rothschild. In an interview with Nova FM in Melbourne, Australia, Guns confirmed the partnership.

“Mister Tommy Guns. How are you man?”

“I’m doing well. Just been working a lot recently.”

“I’ve heard you’ve been busy, but I don’t want to circulate falsities so tell me what’s good.”

Tommy chuckles. “Yeah dude it’s been crazy busy. I been working with Helen Rothschild for a minute now.”

“I’m living right now.”

Tommy chuckles again. “Yeah it’s awesome. The stuff we are working on is super – like – just different from anything you’ve heard from her before.”

“Aw man! Tommy! Can you give me anything more? I’m sure I’m not the only one who is dying to know.”

“You know how it is man,” Tommy smiles. “I can’t say nothin’ ‘bout nothin’!” He winks.

The first single off *American Beauty*, titled “Lost,” was released on May 6, 2013. The second single and title track, “American Beauty,” was released two weeks later on May 20.

The full album was released on June 3, 2013, and debuted at number one in 14 countries, including the US and UK. The album sold 853,000 copies in the first week, worldwide. She described the album as “dark” “cinematic,” “raw,” and “stripped.” On December 1, Rothschild announced in a *Rolling Stone* cover article that she was headlining a Summer 2014 tour, deemed “The American Beauty Tour.” Out of 25 shows, seven featured the band Desperado, ten featured Linda Lovelace (not to be confused with adult film star Linda Lovelace), and eight featured The Scumbag Kids.

Controversy

Rothschild was arrested on suspicion of cocaine possession in Las Vegas. To avoid a felony conviction, she pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors on March 5, 2013.

On December 1, 2013, the same day her *Rolling Stone* interview was published, Rothschild was arrested for and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol, with a blood alcohol content of 0.12%. Rothschild’s license was suspended in January 2014 and pleaded no contest to a reckless driving charge in January 2015. Her sentence was 36 months probation and fines totaling \$1,500.

From the Notes of Quincey Jones

She canceled many interviews before she finally chose to do mine. I was surprised. Why had she chosen me? So I asked her exactly that, “Why did you choose me?”

She had arrived an hour late to the interview; but I needed this interview. I canceled every appointment and took the day off to complete the interview. Her hair was tied in a top bun, bangs across her forehead. She left her classic black sunglasses on during it.

She sat as pleasantly as she had throughout our previous encounters. After *American Beauty* came out, I was the only one she did interviews with anymore. She told me during one of our interviews it was because “I intrigued her.”

“I intrigue you?”

“Very much so.”

“Why are you keeping your sunglasses on?”

She “hm’d” as if I caught her off guard.

I didn’t say it again.

“Well it’s bright in here.”

It was my turn to “hm.”

“Helen.”

“Yes?”

“What can you tell me about the rumors of alcohol abuse?”

“I don’t know. I’ve never heard them,” she curtly said.

“Have you been drinking today?”

“I have.”

“Are you drunk now?”

After a pause she says, “yes.”

“I think this interview is over.” I get up and leave the recording booth.

2014-2015: Final Projects Before Death

In June of 2014, Rothschild was quoted as saying her next album would be released no later than June 2015. Later that month, Guns stated that they had not started to record an album. She performed “White Lightning” with Guns at a movie premiere but forgot some of the lyrics.

During January 2015, she played seven dates in Australia with opening acts The Chemical Twins. On February 6, 2015, Rothschild cut a performance in South Africa short following booing from the audience. Rothschild was reported to be distracted and under the influence during the performance.

On June 6, 2015, Rothschild started her 10-leg tour in London. Local media described her performance as a disaster and was booed-off the stage being too drunk to perform. She was unable to remember the lyrics to her songs. Press also alleged that Rothschild was forced to perform by her bodyguards who did not allow her to leave the stage when she tried to do so. She canceled all performances on her tour to “figure herself out.”

Rothschild’s last public appearance was on June 12, 2015, at the House of Blues in New Orleans where her niece, Elizabeth Rothschild,

was singing Rothschild's song "Lost."

Rothschild died on June 14, 2015. That week, *American Beauty* and *Some Unholy War* re-entered the Billboard 200 list at numbers 4 and 20 respectively.

Her last recording was described as a "haunting melody about indulgence and destruction." Her unfinished album was released as an EP posthumously, titled *Helen*. It topped the Billboard 200 chart for 24 weeks. It also topped the Billboard Hot Digital Songs, selling up to one million copies worldwide. The EP won her a posthumous Grammy award for Album of the Year. Her parents Robert and Eileen accepted the award on her behalf saying, "We shouldn't be here. Helen should be here."

Image

Rothschild's image of the "Sad Girl" was contributed to in part by her influences which included: Amy Winehouse, Etta James, Nina Simone, Nancy Sinatra, Kurt Cobain, Courtney Love, Billie Holiday, Father John Misty, Frank Sinatra, and Lana Del Rey. "I just love all the master of music," she told a reporter.

She cited her favorite songs, "Hotel California" by The Eagles and "All I Could Do Was Cry" by Etta James as specific influences. Poets like Walt Whitman and Maya Angelou influenced much of her writing style.

Her music has been dubbed "sadcore" like Del Rey's.

From the Notes of Quincey Jones

I received a telephone call around 10 am on June 12. It was Helen. She was coherent and full of clarity. The last time I had spoken to her was when I left the interview. I was struck with a sudden panic attack in the green room. I honestly thought I'd never get a chance to speak with her again.

I answered the phone: "This is Quincey."

"Hello Quincey." I recognized her voice immediately. My heart fluttered. I was – happy? I'm not sure how I felt.

"Helen!" I gasped. "How are you?"

"I'm very well, thank you." I could hear her smile. "I'm calling to

apologize for what happened during our last interaction,” she continued. “I know how unprofessional I was; but, not only that, I wasn’t a good friend. I know how much you wanted these interviews and I wanted so badly to give them to you. I just wasn’t – in a position to do so. I would like to reschedule a new interview. I have positive things to share with you!” I was speechless.

“Of course! Wh-when would be best for you? I can clear Monday for you?”

“You don’t have to do that,” she chuckled.

“Yes I do.”

“Alright. Monday I can do. I’ll be at your house 10 am sharp! Good-bye, Quincey.”

She hung up before I could reply.

We never had that last interview. She dies two days after our phone call.

Death

Rothschild was involved in a fatal car accident on June 14, 2015. Rothschild’s bodyguard stated that he arrived two days before her death and felt she was under the influence. Over the last two days he observed “moderate drinking.” He observed her watching TV at 3 am the day of her death. At 11 am, the bodyguard noticed her missing from her bedroom in her Hollywood Hills home. She was later spotted by police driving erratically down the Hollywood freeway.

Somewhere between there she attracted the attention of the paparazzi who followed her on her high speed chase.

She then turned onto Mulholland Drive where she allegedly reached speeds of 70 mph or more. It was there police and paparazzi observed her 2015 Mercedes-Benz G-Class SUV leave the roadway and roll down the embankment.

Aftermath

As Rothschild lay in her vehicle, the photographers, who had finally caught up with her, swarmed around the vehicle taking pictures.

First responders were on the scene at 11:20 am, fifteen minutes after the initial crash. The responding officers arrested the four paparazzi on the scene. Rothschild was removed from the car at 12:09 pm. She was moved from the scene to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Despite attempts at fully resuscitating her, her internal injuries were too severe. She suffered from blunt cardiac disruption which tore her pulmonary vein and pericardium. She was pronounced dead at 1 pm.

After a three-month investigation, it was concluded, by the sheriff's office, that the crash was caused by Rothschild. An autopsy revealed opiates in her system and a blood alcohol content of 0.32%, three times the legal limit.

Funeral

Rothschild's death was met with extraordinary public expressions of grief. Her funeral, which took place at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, was attended by close friends and family of Rothschild. Quincey Jones was the only media source allowed in the procession.

Earlier, Rothschild had expressed desires for a jazz funeral, should she ever perish early. The procession and ceremony lasted for two hours.

Her father delivered her eulogy, saying "Her song is over. The hour I have long feared is now come." The procession was followed through the cemetery by a jazz band that played Paul Lenart and Billy Novick's "The Viper."

From the Notes of Quincey Jones

Her funeral was just as impermanent as she was. As our interviews continued, I noticed a decline in her positive demeanor. She frequently referenced death in many of our conversations. She seemed to develop an obsession. "I welcome the freedom of death. I fill with relief when I think about my own death," she told me in the green room one day. Then her physical health started deteriorating. I knew she was doing heroin most likely. She also heavily abused alcohol.

As required I wore black: black bow tie, black shirt, and a black three-piece suit. All the men wore variations of the same dress code.

Women wore black dresses, black-veiled hats, or carried black lace umbrellas. It was beautiful and extravagant.

I left my flowers and tears inside her mausoleum with the other mourners. Then I filed back into my pre-Rothschild routine. I still think about her – quite often actually. I visit her grave twice a year: the day of her birth and the day of her death. On her birthday I bring her roses and I leave her a card with a typed letter folded neatly inside. I think the janitor just throws out my gifts after a few days.

Postmortem Retrospectives

A year after Rothschild's death, her father released a memoir titled *My Daughter Helen*. The proceeds from the sold book were donated to his charity The Rothschild Foundation.

Currently, a documentary titled *Helen the Star* is in talks. It is reported that award-winning Sundance documentary director Callum Cooper is slated to direct as well as co-write the film.

Discography

Main articles: [Helen Rothschild discography](#) and [List of songs recorded by Helen Rothschild](#)

- *Odyssey* (2008)
- *Some Unholy War* (2011)
- *Tribute* (2011)
- *American Beauty* (2013)
- *Helen* (2015)

Filmography

- *Helen the Star* (2017)

References

○ A Glance on the Parallel

● Jayme Brinson

“My gift is utterly useless.”

The interviewer was taken aback by what he had just heard.

“What do you mean!” he exclaimed. “How can an individual in your uniquely marvelous position consider such a rare and inconceivable gift useless? It’s simply preposterous!”

The man on the other side of the coffee table simply smiled.

“Shall we begin then,” the man said, looking up from the steaming cup of coffee comfortably grasped in his left hand, his right supporting the base of the mug lightly.

“Yes, I believe that would be a good idea.” The interviewer clicked the record button on his tape recorder and began to speak. “Benjamin, you have a rather unique talent, isn’t that correct?”

Benjamin shifted slightly in his seat, he had never before spoken with anyone about the ability he discovered suddenly when he turned 16. It had taken him nearly a year to come to terms with a change in the course of his existence that had been brought about by a devastating event in his history.

“Yes. Two weeks and three and a half days after my sixteenth birthday I gained the ability to witness future events through my vision.”

The interviewer had only a brief introduction to the subject he would be discussing with Benjamin. He eagerly awaited in his hotel room this morning for the opportunity to dig into the mind of this fascinating man and his extraordinary and on the verge of supernatural case.

“You claim that this gift is a waste, however this seems unfathomable. How is it possible that the ability to see into the future is a waste? The possibilities are endless! You can know anything you wanted, the lottery, natural disasters, death, all of it is open and exposed to you!”

Again Benjamin did not answer right away but instead simply stared into the black liquid within his mug. Finally after a few moments, which to the interviewer seemed like hours, Benjamin looked up from his mug

and stared the interviewer directly and calmly in the eyes.

“You misunderstand, in order to fully understand my ability you must understand how subsequent events work.”

The interviewer became puzzled, his face contorted slightly as he tried to understand what Benjamin was implying.

“You see, I believe it would be beneficial if I begin on the day I saw my first premonition.” The interviewer nodded. “I had turned 16 a couple weeks prior and my mother decided to gift me with a pair of tickets to the fair that had come to town. I decided I would go with my longtime friend as I had done many time before. As we came upon a crosswalk that we had crossed many times in our youth a warm buzz began to creep up my spine. A feeling that prior to that day I had never felt before but since I have become all too familiar with. In front of me I saw a woman, around the age of twenty five, I watched as the light turned red and she stepped forward, she then stopped and glanced back. I noticed her glare had been locked on me, a half surprised, half annoyed glare. It was the next moment that shook me to my core.”

The interviewer had become deeply entangled in Benjamin’s story and had ceased writing on the little notepad he carried with him to every interview. He always made sure to take careful notes but had in this moment lost himself.

“As the women stepped out onto the crosswalk with her glare locked on me a dingy, large Chevrolet pickup came barreling down the two-lane highway, running the red light and struck the woman directly in her side.” Benjamin watched the interviewer’s expression.

“That had to be terrifying, especially for a 16-year-old,” the interviewer said sympathetically.

“Indeed it was, but the worst of it came afterwards. I closed my eyes in the wake of the tragedy and when I opened them back again I noticed that there was no chaos, no truck, no screams or panicked people. However, there was the woman and she was waiting for the light to turn signaling for her to cross, and it did.” Benjamin paused momentarily and glanced back down to his coffee. The steam had already started to fade to the point where there was only slight slivers rising from the deep, silent liquid. The interviewer stared at Benjamin, his mind finding it difficult to wrapping itself around the tale that Benjamin was relaying.

Finally, after just shy of a minute Benjamin continued.

“As she began to walk forward I frantically yelled to her. She turned around and her glare sent ice shards down my spine, it was deathly familiar,” Benjamin paused took a sip of his coffee and continued again. “That was when the truck struck her for a second time.”

“So you saw her death in a vision and you tried to prevent it from happening.” The interviewer looked intently into Benjamin’s eyes. Benjamin looked back to his coffee for a moment then met the interviewer’s eyes again but this time with an intensity that made the interviewer slightly uncomfortable.

“You don’t understand, it is because I intervened that the woman died that day. It is because I called her that she stopped and the truck struck her.” Benjamin looked down again.

“You couldn’t have known that at the time you acted on instinct. Any person would have done the same thing, at least I know I would have.” The interviewer sat back against his chair and waited for a response.

“Perhaps you would have, but it was this experience that later down the road led me to truly understand this ability and how to use it.”

“You claim that this ability is a waste, so how do you use it given that circumstance?” The interviewer began to become frustrated with the lack of answers and the emergence of more questions that began to flood his mind.

“For years I tried to ignore my newfound ability, but it seemed like the more I tried to shove it to the back of my mind the more the random premonitions would overtake me.” Benjamin paused to sip his lukewarm coffee. “The first year was the hardest. It wasn’t until I realized that unless I embraced the gift I would never be able to control it so I welcomed the visions as they came.” Benjamin paused giving the interviewer an opportunity to ask one of his questions.

“Did more occurrences like the accident happen again? Were you able to stop any catastrophes or anything like that?” The interviewer stared at Benjamin with eyes clouded by curiosity.

“Yes and no. It was during this time period that I learned what cause and effect meant as far as the future was concerned.” At this statement the interviewer’s brow furrowed and Benjamin could see the gears in his head turning vigorously.

“Cause and effect, what do you mean?”

“You’re aware of the idea of cause and effect I assume.” The interviewer nodded. “If you were leaving my apartment and I told you that you would take a tumble down the stairway what would you do?”

The interviewer thought for a moment. “I would take extra precaution to make sure that I did not fall.”

Benjamin’s lip twitched up in a subtle grin. “But what if in doing this you effectively cause yourself to fall?”

The interviewer opened his mouth to respond but found no words to contradict or answer Benjamin’s question. “Do you understand how cause and effect works as far as my ability is concerned?”

“I think so. You seeing the vision of me falling is the cause and me falling is the effect.”

Benjamin gently shakes his head from side to side. “That is incorrect.” Benjamin’s response puzzled the interviewer. “Understand something very important: my ability to see you fall is irrelevant.”

“That makes no sense Benjamin. If you hadn’t seen me fall then I never would have fallen.”

Benjamin again grins at the interviewer. “Or perhaps if I had not said anything you wouldn’t have fallen.”

Again the interviewer’s gears ground to understand the idea laid out by Benjamin.

“In all honesty claiming that my ability is irrelevant may not be exactly accurate, but there is a paradox between my premonitions and my actions on the information I receive.”

The interviewer’s face began to slacken slightly as he took in what Benjamin said.

“You see the future is entirely subjective to change. Just this morning I wandered past the large library on the corner as I visited the grocery store and watched as a large U-Haul truck rammed through the front glass windows and killed the elderly woman behind the desk. Then I blinked the image away.” Benjamin delivered this recollection in the calmest of manners bringing terror to the poor interviewer’s face.

“Did you run in and warn the poor woman? Did it happen right in front of your face? That’s absolutely unfathomable! What did you do?” The interviewer clung to the edge of his seat as he awaited Benjamin’s

response.

“I kept walking.”

The interviewer’s eyes grew wide as saucers. He began to protest, to reprimand, to condemn Benjamin, but Benjamin held up the hand previously supporting the base of his mug to silence the discontent man in across the table from him.

“As I rounded the same corner after my venture to the supermarket I saw the prestigious library still standing and conveniently I also saw as the same vehicle I saw only roughly an hour before pass by harmlessly.”

The interviewer slumped back in to his seat running his hands through his neatly combed sandy colored hair. Benjamin noticed a few drops of perspiration collecting on his brow.

“So your visions aren’t always true. Sometimes you see things that won’t actually happen.” The interviewer locked eyes with Benjamin and saw a slight flicker.

“That is also false.”

The interviewer sat back up. “How so? You just said that your vision was wrong. The U-Haul didn’t ram into the library.”

“That’s correct but not because I saw something false. Something changed in the course of time it took for me to see my premonition and for the actual event to happen, and because of this change, the future shifted and took a different route.”

The tape recorder on the coffee table clicked.

“Sorry, the tape ran out.” The interviewer leaned forward pushed the release button on the tape recorder popping the lid and revealing the small cassette within. He removed the cassette, flipped it around, reinserted it back inside, closed the lid and pushed the record button once more.

“So you see the future but sometimes what you see sometimes doesn’t happen?” The interviewer had resumed writing on his notepad. He looked up and noticed a slight vacancy in Benjamin’s eyes then scribbled some notes in his notebook.

“Vacant eyes, calm demeanor, story teller,” Benjamin said as he locked eyes with the interviewer noticing a slight spark in his eyes.

“I just wrote that,” the interviewer proclaimed.

“Yes, I know.” The interviewer’s eyes sparkled with curiosity and a

slight excitement he attempted to conceal. “My premonitions are subjective to the flow of time in relation to the flow of action, so if I see something but later something changes then cause and effect takes place again. If the cause changes then the effect changes, the only exception to this base rule is myself.”

“What do you mean by that? Why are you an exception?”

“When I see something I may feel the need to either intervene or not, however I have learned that what ever action I may choose has, in the grand scheme of things, already been accounted for in my vision. My sight is centralized around myself, almost as if I am in a bubble. While I can see what will happen to others and how they will act in certain situations, they have the ability to change the course of their fate and should they do so...”

“Then your vision would change to accommodate?” the interviewer inquired.

“Or it won’t. Sometimes I don’t receive an update, if you will. Sometimes the future just changes and I am left in the dark.”

“I see, so the future is ever changing, which means that your vision is ever changing,” the interviewer said.

“Precisely, and that young man is why my gift is useless.”

Benjamin reached in front of him and gently pressed the stop button on the recorder.



The Media

● Jayme Brinson

Q: What is wrong with the media?

A: We consume it.

Q: Why is it all bad stuff on the media?

A: Because it produces a strong response.

Q: Why doesn't the media talk about good things?

A: Because the response isn't as strong.

Q: Who's at fault?

A: Consumers.

Q: Who are the consumers?

A: We are.



#trump
photography by Jay Cheatham



Past and Present:

A Story of War and Friendship

● Kirstin Crites

Walking. That's all we do anymore, with no direction and no endpoint. Sweat drips from our bodies; it's clear now. Last week it was a muddy color because of the blood that was mixed in with it. I don't know how I have anything left to sweat. I haven't had anything to drink in so long that I can't even remember the last time that water touched my lips or food filled my stomach. At least I have Lu, she's been at by my side for every major and minor event of my 17-year-old life. But I'm most thankful that she's present for this one: war.

Past

It all started with my mother's scream as she watched on the television of the explosions in the Northern region of our country. I ran into our living room and saw the first effects of war and I felt the effects as I saw the bloody bodies of toddlers in the arms of their dead mothers and fathers, tears silently falling down my cheeks. My mother fell to her knees and I had never seen her in such a state. She yelled my father's name over and over again, knowing he wouldn't come. He was in the North, away on a business trip and probably never returning. I hugged my mother until she calmed down and then went into my own room to mourn the memory of the last time I saw and spoke with my father, fear filling me, as I prayed I would see him on Thursday when he was supposed to come back.

He never came back. Time went on, war went on. War doesn't stop to let you mourn the thought that a loved one has been lost, and it doesn't call to say, "No, your father is okay. He'll be back soon," or "I'm so sorry, but your father has fallen victim to the bombs and bullets of an enemy whose face will never first handedly see the war, and who's feet will never be bloodied on the front because he sits safely in his own

home with guards surrounding and no fear of tomorrow.”

Guzar. That was his name, no first name, no last name. Guzar, the name that made you scared to breathe. Guzar, the man telling the soldiers to drop the bombs. Guzar, the narcissist who wanted control and money and would stop at nothing to achieve it.

Lu was there for me though, just like always. She always knew the right thing to do and say to help take the pain away. She was the first one I told about my father, and the only one, and somehow she made me feel better, that things were going to get better.

She was right for a little bit. The bombings had stopped and help was sent in from other countries. They set up hospitals and food stations for those who were affected. Lu and I wanted to help, she always wanted to help and that was the best thing about her. We knew we couldn't physically be there so we devised a different plan.

Our mothers wouldn't let us get jobs, even though we were seventeen. We didn't want a job for the money, we wanted one so that we could donate our earnings to those in greater need than our own. Our 'job' was collecting aluminum cans from dumpsters and recycling bins in our town. We went out on our bikes every morning with gigantic trash bags in tow. We would come back for lunch and refill our trash bag stock and then leaving again until dinner. We had to hide the cans deep in garages so that our mothers wouldn't realize what we were doing.

Friday was when we went to sell the cans. The first time we went, we brought seven bags filled with cans, hoping to get a relatively huge earning. We went home sunburnt with only twelve dollars to our names. We knew that money wouldn't do nearly as much as we hoped and that if we were going to make it worth it, we needed more cans, a whole lot more. It was a new week filled with new hopes as we set off to start collecting cans not only from dumpsters, but also from homes. Lu rang the doorbell of the first house, her face eager. An elderly woman opened the door and smiled as we explained our cause to her. She told us she didn't drink soda much so she didn't have a lot of cans, but returned to the door with the three cans that she did have and told us to come back in a week when she would have more.

This is how Lu and I spent our summer. She made me a better person

and I was so thankful for that, especially since we were in the middle of the war when the world needed as many good people as it could get.

It was Thursday morning, just like any other morning, when Lu and I left our houses, promising our mothers we'd be safe and back for dinner. The idea of going house to house had really started to pay off. We were coming on Fridays with thirty or more dollars. We had decided the night before to go to a neighborhood farther away, one we'd never been to before. As we were walking down the sidewalk from our second house, sirens started to blare and we heard the buzz of the bomber airplanes. I remember looking at Lu with fear in my eyes, she then grabbed my hand and pulled me towards the direction of our bikes.

By the time we reached home, we could hear the bombs in the distance. We fled in, while everyone was fleeing out. Our mothers and siblings were gone; they had left us. We followed in the direction of the masses, hoping to find our families. Lu soothed me, kept me calm, promised we would find them and like always, I believed her. The crowds led us downtown where there were soldiers waiting for us and I was overcome with a feeling of safety, only for it to fall short when we found out they were working for Guzar.

The next few months were a blur. Lu and I never found our families and the crowd got separated into groups. We were taken in trucks to unknown locations and had to live in tents surrounded by a fence and full of soldiers, armed with machine guns. I lost track of how many days we'd been there, but judging by my protruding rib cage, it had been a while.

The next day, bombs were our alarm clocks, and the bombs were dropped close, getting closer. The soldiers loaded themselves up onto their vehicles and drove away, leaving us all behind to die, but they had forgotten to close the gate to keep us locked in. All of us ran towards the gate, towards life. Lu and I ran faster and faster, hoping to find safety somewhere near. By the time Lu and I stopped to catch our breath, we realized we were no longer with the majority of the group and had no idea what direction they headed. Lu and I continued to walk, not knowing where we were going or what we would find, but I was thankful I wasn't alone.

Present

Days have passed and we've seen no sign of people anywhere other than their leftover trash, which we scavenged for food and water. We had no energy. We had barely eaten or drank anything for at least a month between being captured and escaping, the sun was so hot, and we didn't really sleep at night, afraid of what horrors could potentially find us.

War makes you thankful, thankful for being able to get three meals a day and having the ability to get a cold glass of water whenever you pleased. The regret comes after, regret of not eating everything on your plate or being picky and wasting food because now we didn't have any food to eat, let alone waste. Regretful that you didn't say something meaningful enough to your father before he left or to your mother when you left to go collect cans. But it mainly made Lu and I feel nostalgic. We lied down at night recalling all our past adventures as old as we could remember. Recollected on our birthday parties and the boys we had crushes on in grade school. It all seemed so trivial now, but it was what kept us alive. We tried to focus on something other than death because we had no idea how close we were to it.

One day, we came upon several orange trees and I don't think we'd had ever been so excited. The oranges weren't all quite ripe, but we didn't care, we ate so many we lost count. We later regretted this, realizing our stomachs had shrunk significantly and they couldn't handle that amount of food and we threw up most of what we had just taken in. Lu went to sleep shortly after and I stayed awake to keep watch, expecting nothing exciting to happen because it never did.

The first while was quiet and boring as usual and I started to doze off, but was startled when I heard tree branches crunching not too far away. I didn't want to wake Lu in case it was just a rabbit or something and held my breath. The crunching grew progressively louder and closer, enough to wake Lu. I grabbed her hand and put my other hand over her mouth to keep her from screaming and bringing the unknown subject any closer. Our bodies were shaking and our breaths quivered, we needed to close our eyes so that they wouldn't give us away, but we couldn't, we had to know what was out there.

It found us, we screamed and started to run, but didn't get far in the dark and it was chasing us. A flashlight shined in our eyes, revealing a boy who was not much older than Lu and I and that he was one of Guzar's soldiers. I knew he was going to kill us, there was no way we could lie our ways out, so I started to mentally prepare myself to die. I looked at Lu and told her I loved her and that she was my best friend and started to cry. The soldier asked me why I was crying, telling us that he wasn't go to kill us. He too had escaped from Guzar and was seeking safety.

We had teamed up and continued on our journey. His name was Thomas, he was nineteen and had been captured during the early part of the war and was forced to be a soldier for Guzar. We all got along well and he taught us what plants we could eat and how to walk in the direction of water. I felt as if we were making no progress, it had to be close to a month since we escaped and we still hadn't found any other people. We had found a lake though and were able to catch fish for our meals and wash ourselves and our clothes in it. Hoping that more people would find the lake we decided to make it "home."

Our plan worked and after about a week a husband and wife had stumbled across us. They were from a city twenty minutes from where Lu and I had lived. As the days went on more people had arrived and we had formed a sort of society, each of us offering different skills and personalities to the group. We became friends, more importantly a family of sorts.

One man though, Dan, also a former soldier of Guzar, was always distant and didn't appear to want to be a part of our family. He ate with us and helped out, but never offered any conversation. Thomas was sure he had just had a difficult time fighting and was depressed or something. Lu felt bad for him and wanted to help, having some unsaid affection towards him, she brought him his food, made sure she was always in his group when we split up to go foraging, even talking to him knowing he wouldn't respond. I warned her to be careful because something just seemed off about him and she thought I was being hateful and responding by only spending more time with him, saying that I spent all my time with Thomas anyway.

This began to wear on our friendship and we barely even talked. I

spent most of my time with Thomas, and her with Dan. Soon after, Dan had decided he wanted to leave the group and move on to find more people or a city or something and some of our group wanted to join, while some wanted to stay and wait. Lu of course wanted to go with Dan and asked her to come with us, but we begged her to stay with us, away from Dan. She refused and parted with Dan and part of our group and my mind felt guilty that I didn't go with her, but I knew that he had some hidden agenda he was trying to fulfill. I missed Lu like crazy and cried almost every day. I lost her. I had no idea if I would ever see her again, if she was safe or happy. We were supposed to be friends until we died, maids of honor at each other's weddings and godmothers of each other's kids, our friendship wasn't supposed to end.

Our group was later found by a recovery effort and brought to Porta, a city left untouched by the war. I found out that Dan was actually still working for Guzar and was doing reconnaissance for him and when he left he was going back to tell him our location so we could be bombed. Lu wasn't apparently hurt, but moved away and hasn't come back since. I still feel guilt every day about letting her leave alone, wishing I could have done or said something to make her change her mind, but there's nothing I can do now to change it.

A year after being found, Thomas and I started our lives together, trying to move on from the painful memories. I was unable to find my mother or siblings after the war was over, but investigators are still searching for all those lost during the war. Guzar was arrested and charged with hate and war crimes as well as murder and corruption, he had close to 20,000 people killed.

War is an awful part of our world. It caused my friendship with Lu to end, but before it did, it brought us closer than we'd ever been and I still hope to make amends with her in the future. While it brought many negatives to my life, I try and focus on the positive. I gained new friends and I now have Thomas as a constant in my life. War changes your perspective and helps you accept the past and present. I now focus on wasting less and making more of my days, slowing things down and relaxing instead of rushing into the next moment because that moment could change in an instant. The past won't let you take any day for granted and it teaches you to be thankful for all you have and all

you have to look forward to: my family might be found and life could go back to some level of normalcy, especially once my best friend is by my side. You can't wallow in your own self-pity or you will just be stuck there forever; get out and keep in mind that you're still alive, and someone made it that way for a reason. Find your reason for life and remember: war only destroys you if you let it.

Leave

Katie Hart ●

“Amy, baby, please...I miss you.”

Her eyes squeezed close, her curtains were drawn, and the sheets were pulled over her head. She did her best to block him out, to fall asleep. Anything to make the morning come faster—anything to make him leave.

“Amy, come on, I miss you. Just let me see you. I promise I won’t even ask this time.”

She let out a huff from frustration. It would be nice to see his face again—the face she saw in her dreams. But that’s not his face anymore, that’s not who he is now.

“Amy, just let me look at you. Come pull the curtains back. Do that for me at least. Please baby, I’m going crazy here.”

She shook her head no from under the covers. Not that he could see her do so but she didn’t trust her voice to answer him.

“Amy, I want to see you. It’s so lonely out here. It’s so cold, won’t you let me inside? Just to get warm at least? Baby, please.”

“Can you even feel the cold?” Amy shouted as she jumps up from her bed.

“Besides, Ray, it’s summer. Remember that?” She officially broke her top rule: never speak to him.

“Babe, you know I get cold easily. Don’t you remember that?”

She sat up in her bed and tried to control her breathing. She opened a door to him getting to her; she should never have spoken to him.

“Fine Amy. You don’t have to let me in. But could you lend me a blanket or something? I’m freezing baby. Just open the window and hand me your robe. You know...the fluffy purple one you love, with little Scotty dogs on it. I love how it smells like you.”

She started to shake. It was true. When Ray used to come over he would laugh when she came downstairs for movie night in that robe, but always told her he loved how it smelled...like her nutmeg lotion.

She hated how this voice knew such a precious memory. How this voice warped something so pure into tricking her.

“I can’t do that, Ray. You know that. I’m sorry but I can’t let you in.”

Amy drifted back down in her bed and once again tried to force herself to fall asleep. She just needed to reach daylight. Then she could breathe again, she could relax.

“Amy, I need you to let me inside. I need you to do it now. You don’t understand Amy—stop ignoring me and come over here. Amy!”

“Stop saying my name,” she whispered. “I can’t take it, please just stop. Just go away.”



Amy woke up violently but silently. She was having a pleasant dream, and those are always the ones lately that shock her awake. She popped her head from out of the covers and blinking red letters read 1:05 am. She was asleep for only two hours and twenty minutes and fifty-six seconds –fifty-seven –fifty-eight –fifty-nine –two hours and twenty-one minutes. 1:06 am.

The sound of a nail scraping down the window brought her back to her situation at hand.

Ray.

“I can hear your heart quicken, Amy. I know you’re awake. How about you come over and talk to me? Oh don’t squeak at me, Amy. I’m not asking for anything other than a simple conversation. Ya’know, like we used to.”

“We can’t have those conversations, Ray. You’re not who you were.”

“Sure I am. Amy, nothing’s different here. There’s just a few new rules we have to get used to. We can talk about that, if you would come over here.”

“No. They’re not my rules, Ray. I don’t even want to know what they are.”

“Way to hurt my feelings, Amy.”

“You’re not, Ray. I don’t care what happens to your feelings...Please, just for tonight, can’t you just go away and let me sleep? I’m exhausted.”

“Let me see you, Amy, then I’ll give you whatever you want.”

“You won’t ask to come inside?”

“Not tonight, Amy, I promise you. I love you.”

Still half asleep, she walked to the window. With closed eyes she grasped the curtain and without a pause she threw them open.

They glared at her, shining, with a stretch of false joy. Teeth like a military cemetery. They jarred her awake from what she was about to do.

“Wow, Amy, you’re more beautiful than I remembered.”

The copper locks she used to run her fingers through were longer, reaching towards his nose now. Hazel eyes were shining at her with happiness, happiness with a mix of something predatory. His face was smoother, creamier than she last saw it.

“You’re not, Ray.”

“Really Amy? Than tell me, who am I?”

“You’re a trick—don’t shake your head at me, Ray. I’m not stupid.”

“You’re saying I’m not your boyfriend yet you keep calling me ‘Ray.’”

“My boyfriend’s dead, I went to the funeral – I spoke at the funeral. This was a mistake.”

“Don’t close the curtains, Amy! We’re just talking. Nothing bad ever came out of talking.”

“Stranger danger.”

He slammed his palms against the glass.

“Amy, be reasonable. You’re acting silly. Don’t go away Amy. I need you – baby please.”

“What is there to talk about, Ray?”

“You. Me. Us.”

“Alright how about this, you’re a monster. You’re not human—you can’t be—not anymore. You’re sick and a toxin. I just want you to leave.”

“You used to tell me that you loved me Amy.”

“I loved Ray. Whatever you are ate him up and are just wearing his face.”

“That’s not a very nice thing to say, Amy.”

“Leave Ray, I’m never letting you inside. So just go away!”

“Jesus, Amy, is that what you want? Fine! You know what, you’re not the only one I know – do you know how many girls would love to see me alive and outside their window? I was giving you the honor, considering.”

“Then go see them! Go anywhere else, see anyone else, you’re nothing. Get away from my window and out of the tree.”

“You should have let me in, Amy. You’ll regret this.”

“Stop with the dramatics and just go.”

And with a blink, Ray was gone. Vanished. The tree was the only thing overlooking her window.

“I’ll have to ask dad to cut that down in the morning. I’m done with this for good.”



“Amy! Wait up!”

“Hey Charlotte, what’s up?”

“Did you hear about Kate?”

“No, what about her?”

“Oh! My! God! Amy! You’ll never believe it, it’s so horrible.”

“Horrible? What happened?”

Charlotte looked around the school grounds, making certain no one could over hear. “Her parents found her dead this morning!” Charlotte whispered in her signature loud hush. Amy just stared back at her in disbelief.

”How?”

Charlotte again looked around and in the same loud hushed tone “They said her throat was ripped out. Her window was open, so cops think some animal must have jumped in and...well...did it.”

Amy didn’t have the heart to respond, for a sinking feeling was washing over her upon hearing the story.

“Hey,” Charlotte started back up, “kind of reminds me of Ray, you know? Happening all of the sudden. It’s a shame...do you ever miss him?”

Amy smiled softly, “During the day yeah—all the time. But at night...” she shrugged and her facial expression turned cold “...but at night it’s almost like he had never died.”

Prologue

A woman was carried bridal-style out to the pool area. Both her left foot and her left hand were in a cast and she had a large Band-Aid on her right thigh. Despite the injuries she was beautiful, long silver-blond hair falling out of her high ponytail, wearing a white sundress and dark sunglasses. The guy carrying her sat her down near a vacant lounge a few spots down from Kelly. He watched her sit down on the chair and slip off her sundress, folding it on the front of the lounge. Kelly couldn't look away, not after catching a glimpse of the tattooed wings covering nearly her entire back. When he first spotted her being carried to the pool she didn't look like the tattoo-type of woman. She still didn't. And except for a bruise on her cheekbone, her face was flawless. Her movement was slow and calculated and Kelly wondered what could have happened to her.

She relaxed her back into the lounge and as she stretched her legs Kelly could see how small she was, her body barely covering half the chair while his continued well beyond its edge. He watched her squeeze a hefty amount of sunblock into her palms and spread it out over her skin.

“What happened?”

She jumped at the sound and her head snapped to the right where Kelly sat. She didn't move, sunscreen in hand staring in Kelly's direction through her glasses. It made him nervous. And Kelly doesn't like being nervous, especially around women.

“Oh...long story. Doctors say I'm stuck with the casts for a few more weeks and hopefully my eyesight will come back by then too.” She gestured to the sunscreen bottle, “Mind helping?”

“You're blind?” Kelly asked as he moved to grant her request.

“It's why I'm here actually – but it's just a temporary loss of sight

and there's a doctor in Marbella who specializes in fixing things like this...at least that's what my doctor told me. They're very optimistic, so that's what I am."

Kelly found that the sound of her voice matched her petite form. As his hands moved lower down her back, Kelly never had a girlfriend with a tattoo and he wondered if inked skin felt any different. Once done he placed the bottle into her hand, to signal to her. He stood, unsure what to do now. The woman put the sunscreen away and relaxed into the lounge again, Kelly made moves to walk back to his original spot.

"What's your name?"

"Kelly, and yours?"

"I'm Jenny."

One

At 8:30 am, Kelly woke with a start. Elena had been wildly knocking at his door, forcing him to get up.

"Kelly, get up and move your lazy ass! Mom and I are heading downstairs for breakfast and you will join us on our last day here! Don't you dare stay in bed; you do not want me to come up here a second time Big Brother. Thirty minutes, pronto!"

Kelly let his head fall back into the pillow with a groan. He wasn't in the mood for breakfast nor did he want to get up this early. But Kelly never could deny his sister with whatever she wanted. With a quick shower, some shorts, and a dark T-shirt later he was taking the long way past the pool to the hotel restaurant.

"I take it this morning was a success?" grinned Kelly. Cooper, his childhood friend and reason for the trip, gave him a hard look.

"Kelly I'm pretty disappointed. You're already canceling on me man. I've spent enough time with my fiancée."

"Oh shut up Cooper," shouted his fiancée, Rose, from the pool. "If you two aren't going out that means you and I can go and have lunch at that restaurant we walked past yesterday. I promise not to talk about the wedding."

"We've only been talking about the wedding," grumbled Cooper.

"We'll catch up buddy. you know Eileen – she hates waiting, especially

on me.”

Kelly patted Cooper on the shoulder, walked to the water and bent down to kiss Rose on the cheek, winking at Cooper, and left.

His mother, Eileen, and Elena were already seated and waiting for him.

“Kelly, nice to see you up so early. I didn’t expect you would join us for breakfast,” Eileen said with a smile. “I missed you last night, it would have been nice to spend the last evening with both my children before we go back home. Oh, but I heard you had company?”

Kelly raised a brow and shot his sister a look.

“Who’s that girl you were with Kelly?” Elena asked. “And don’t pretend, I saw you carrying that blonde chick when we got back to the hotel. She’s the girl from the pool, right?”

Kelly released a loud sigh and rubbed his temples. This wasn’t really the type of conversation he planned on having over breakfast.

“I met a girl at the pool yesterday when you and mom left. We talked for a while, I asked her out for the evening. That’s all.”

“Does she know about you?”

“What are you talking about, Elena?” Kelly grit his teeth.

“You know, your reputation...your girlfriend back home?” she spat out, stuffing a piece of croissant into her mouth.

“Kelly,” Eileen interrupted, “I would like you to join us for lunch before we leave. I’m sure this ‘vacation girl’ isn’t as important as spending time with your family,” Eileen said calmly, pouring herself a cup of tea.

Kelly got up from the table and headed for the exit.

“Where are you going?” Elena called after him.

“I’m too tired to eat, I’ll meet you at lunch.”

He wasn’t interested in having lunch with them; he could do that any time back home. He thought of Jenny. He dialed her number and heard her voice via voicemail. So he walked back towards the pool.



Bridges and Walls

● Zoë Slingluff

It's funny the things that stay stuck in the crevices of your mind. You once told me that 1.8 billion photos are uploaded to social media accounts every day. 1.8 billion photos, hundreds of which I probably scroll through and barely glimpse at during the fleeting free moments I have throughout the day. This morning began just like this. Waking up at 7:30 to my alarm clock blaring and my messy bun unraveling, I rumble downstairs to awaken the Keurig machine. While it begins to come to life, my iPhone screen brightens with notifications and alerts missed throughout the night. I open Facebook, receiving a cheerfully decorated announcement that a popular post of mine turns 3 years old today. Our faces stare smiling back at me and I stop thinking about the menial daily rendition I'm performing. Freshman year, sitting in the front row of my Spanish class, you slithered in reeking of tequila and regret. Anna Porter, psychology major, 21. "You look like you're 12. You must be new here," you chirped at me. The photo was taken on my birthday that year, shortly after we first met. We stand grinning closely together, bright blonde hair, pink lips, and outfits on point, unknowing of our futures but knowing that we had each other. Months later, you called me in the middle of the night, leaving me a brief voicemail full of I'm Sorry and I Love You. One missed call. One missed notification. They found you on the floor of the apartment bathroom. I'll never understand how or why our friendship began and abruptly ended the way it did. You built walls and bridges and I couldn't make it past and through them all. This was no bridge to cross anymore.



bicycled, recycled

photography by Bill Lisbon



Sacraments

● Jacob Woelke

They left me alone with him.

My brother and his wife made a quick run to the grocery store, left me at their house. The note on the table in front of me says they'll be back soon, says I can help myself to a cup of coffee, says they'll have breakfast home in about half an hour. I heard them leave; they thought I was asleep, but I wasn't.

I can't sleep here.

I can't sleep here with him.

I sit up on the only couch in the living room on which I had been trying to sleep, on which I couldn't sleep, and I stare at it—at him.

The portrait of my father hangs long and tall above the fireplace; a sizable picture stuck up in a space much too small but, somehow, fitting. The mantle of the fireplace is an appropriate shrine to that god of unforgiveness, decorated with delicate feathers, miniature statues, antique pictures, and modest plants. A stick of bitter incense has finished burning, leaving small wisps of white smoke dancing up towards his likeness. He is sitting in his chair, dark skinned and dressed in traditional tribal garments; I am sitting on my brother's couch, light-skinned and hardly dressed.

I don't look him in the eye.

I stand and move towards it, trace the gilded frame with my eyes and then my fingers, stand humbly beneath the looming portrait as some lay person before an altar, feeling much smaller than I am, considering whether or not he can see me.

I decide he can't. And then decide maybe he can.

A family picture is displayed in the middle of the altar: my brother sits on my father's lap, dark like him, while I sit on my mother's lap, light like her, nearly white like her. I turn it around out of spite.

As I continue to rummage through the remnants atop the mantelpiece—picking up old pictures, perusing old letters, poking through

antiques—I prick my finger on a small cactus whose once-large, red flower has been reduced to a flaky, papery adornment. I snatch my hand back quickly and knock the succulent from the altar—the clay pot in which it sat, dying, shattered on the ground. I don't notice, don't care; instead I stare at my finger, watching the wine-dark blood pool at its tip.

I lift my head to my father, look him in the eyes for the first time in three years. With gritted teeth, I put my finger to my face, just beneath my eye, and smear the blood across this cheek, across that cheek. I paint myself like him. No—I paint myself for him and not for me.

Fury rages inside my body, a fire shut up in my bones.

“Is this what you want?” I scream. “Is it?”

He stares at me unmoving as I pull a feather from his shrine, stick it in my long dark hair.

“Do I look like an Indian now?”

I begin tearing things down from the mantelpiece wildly; the floor becomes littered with glass, ashes, pictures, dirt, figurines, jewelry, memories, bitterness, regrets, and I yell at it, at him: “That’s what you wanted, isn’t it? You wanted me to be an Indian? Now, I’m an Indian! Look Dad, I’m an Indian!”

I grunt, I woo, I shout, I howl and I feel my ancestors join in my mocking, in my anger, in my pain, in my dance. He can see me, I know he can see me.

My face becomes anointed with my own tears slipping down my cheeks like holy oil; they cling lightly to my chin, my nose, before falling in blessings and baptisms upon the fireplace reliquary as I tear it apart. I spit my final prayer to him in tongue of our people:

“Dad, I’m a savage! I’m a savage just like you!”

Photography by Jay Cheatham

fugue



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Lord,

● Jeremy Breland

I know I should forget the old combine
Revere in words of red, not debts of here
and focus only on your Kingdom Divine

But, I have bills to pay, and it's near,
The waters rising, the levees have failed,
nothing grows here but rot and auctioneers.

Yes, to the bank my folded hands are nailed.
It's going once, it's going twice, I scream
I cry and yell but water is all I inhale.

Oh lord, because it's hard to breathe
Beneath the great flood of 2015

It's Just Business

Jeremy Breland ●

The holy equations you worship
Only curb your assumptions
Profit schemes of roundtrips
Only expound consumptions.

I may go right when you say left
Nearer dependable than once perceived
Opposite rather than deaf
Further off the money than you conceived

Call in the managers, call in the boss!
We must not let this fall into loss!
Marketing departments in a fit!
Stereotyping must be on the fritz!

now nom, there, there

We know you better than you
We know you know it too
Let us tell you what you need
We've done studies, the best indeed
Now, won't you come back,
Won't you please?
On you we wish to feed.



Taps

● Jeremy Breland

I'm folded under these old stars and bars.
Fist high, feet stomping on this grave of mine.
Their cries indoctrinate the youth. From We
to one. This weight of yours, not a burden.

For you and I came here upon these shores
from distant lands, in not so equal ways,
but We are in the same ship now, from stern
to bow. For here, from many, all are one.

Sound seven rifles loaded to the third.
In God We Trust and over me you stand,
but do not fear my friend. I have borne so,
much more, of worse a weight than this, before.

and having hallucinations that the ones I gave my heart to
weren't actually monsters

I laugh at my foolish choice

to take a shot at finding hope in someone else

versus taking a shot of vodka with my friends

A hangover lasts a day but a broken heart lasts forever and a day

I'd take being disassociated and disoriented from a bottle

than from having someone else walk away from me anyway

Who'd guess to think the chances of overdosing on passion

could be as just detrimental as that hit of heroin

spreading through your system quicker than you fell in the first place?

Searing goodbyes leaving your heart more singed

than the burnt thumbs of a frequent user of crack pipes or cigarillos

The sad reality is the difference between love and drugs

is that relationships and feelings tend to fade

But a high can be renewed each and every day

Why Do Fools Fall in Love?

(A Pessimist's Perspective)

Tia Dobson ●

I'm trying to understand why fools fall in love
When the terminology of falling insinuates pain in the first place
I know what you're thinking: Who hurt you??
Well the jokes on you,
No one did because I keep my guard higher up
 than the divorce rates in today's world
I'm heartless on Valentine's Day
 and I kindly explain that the true origin of the name
While people are losing their heads on a lover to find, St.
Valentine lost his in a literal sense on the 14th of February
Did you know that?
I'm the grim reaper when it comes to finding my soul mate
I'll never let a soul get close to me
 without it dissipating in my grasp
I didn't give up on love
 because I never believed in it in the first place
The real endings to the fairy tales we were told as children
 are more twisted than my perspective ever could be
I don't believe that love isn't for everyone,
 it's just simply not for me
I wish you the best on your quest to find someone and be happy
But just let me be me
And sit in amusement and contemplation as I wonder:
Why do fools love to fall?



Blues for the City

● Alexis Henderson

Call me king of the city

King of the concrete

King of the murmuring
pigeons in the empty square

Call me king of the swing
music that jives in the
the thick of midnight

Call me king of the fur-collared
pimps and the pretty girls that
laugh too loud in the twilight

King of the white liars
and the smoking guns and
the music like madness

Call me king of the wicked children and
the church girls and the shoe shiner
on his curbside throne

Call me king of the bus stop
and the slithering subway train
King of the rag tag bandits, the pick
pockets and the housewives and
husbands, the stray dog that
sleeps beneath the stars

Call me king of the peculiar, the perpendicular,
the ragged man miming on the sidewalk steps
Call me king of the smoggy dusk and the steel birds
King of the corridors
and the breaking day,
the hollow night, the bustle
of the city like white noise



On Apathy

● Alexis Henderson

The woman walks
along the shoulder
of the road
the wind licking
at her back

She has a name
but you do not
pause to ask
it

Better that the dead
mind their own
Secrets

Cellar Doors

Blake Hill ●

These lesions grow, infesting broken walls,
Tormenting hollow grasps in the room near.
Forego the creeks nearby, continue on.

What ecstasy here? Insert that one fiend
Who fucked down the hallway only to scream
Internal beatings, pulsing fear and joy
Through the resonant sound of sheer silence.

Please help me God. Please help me God. He's here.



Channeled Trinity

● Blake Hill

I see the vibrations intertwine me;
And you taught the rest of us that day
Branches bleed high as only to be free.

Bark through our ruts, overflow the veins our way.
Digress to suck thine legs in light,
Bloomed in birth, slipped to the sky every ray.

Spread no farther to my haven in night
Once blood patches in full length of my thoughts
Slivered spaces come in conquering that knowing fright.

Cast to the beast this impure knowing the haunts.
Blessed in silence gusts between essence.
Internal scars bellow against the internal flaunts.

Almighty reckons today the bloodless sense
Toxins erode polluting these crops
What watch determines the ringing past since?

Brother. Brother. Brother; Brother drops.
Inferior plights disrupt those determining none above.
Wounds exhaust acute waves aching for none to stop.

Dirty

Blake Hill ●

Fuck these eyes, every glimpse I seek to you

Absorbs a fraction complete to the sex.

Gouge the lump forbidding.

Please let these fingers feel.

Just one

single

touch.



Tongue

● Blake Hill

Ring a

Flaccid single

Grope to group in contact;

Silk touch engaged from streamlined thoughts

Of skin.

My cross

Seeks the vital,

Not from sky nor sockets

For hearing, but ending with a

Deep slit.

Black Blame

Jaia Jones

Wrinkled white shirts
Oxidized gold chains, 40 in my hands
Rough, ashy hands, waiting to shed innocent blood
Cold dark nights
Cruel gangbang fights
Boxed in minds, wishing to shed innocent blood
Black gun
Unknown finger
Waiting...
One shot? Two shots? Who shot?
Wrinkled red shirts
Still gold chains
Busted 40 on the sidewalk
Cold, stiff, ashy hands
No longer shedding innocent blood
Crisp, catastrophic nights
Hateful gangbang fights
Black gun
One finger
No longer shedding innocent blood
Who did it? Who done it? Admit it!
One shot. Two shots.
Who shot?
I shot.



Saved by Grace

● Jaia Jones

I love God, but I
Do bad things sometimes, funny
Self-condemnation
Isn't in my sinful bones
Yet church folk tell me it should

Sex ○

Jaia Jones ●

First time

Like a dusty trophy, already won

Blood, sweat, tears, hard work, unnoticed

Just there



awkward mittens

● Bill Lisbon

a pause after
oven door opening
for warmth to embrace
before awkward mittens
pinch a pan of tater tots
and a single chicken pot pie

radiant ○

Bill Lisbon ●

she didn't light up a room

she

burned

it

down



For Jimi Hendrix

● Emily Miller

Momma said kings don't come from cardboard
If you want to play god,
you need paper

Momma said kings can't play from three strings
If you want to play good,
you're gonna need more than that soul

Momma said kings don't come from these streets
If you want to be big,
you have to learn to beat the habits you've been bred into

Momma said kings don't make no noise around here
If you want to be heard,
you best sing louder than all that white noise

Momma said you can't be king
If you want to be king,
get up on that stage and be golden

digital art by Tia Dobson
Rose's Revival





Let's Talk

● Christopher Petry

This is the first line. This is where I intrigue you with my ideas.

This is where the first line ends.

I refuse to grope your intelligence with archaic words;

I have no reason to impress you.

Aren't you tired of pretending?

No one actually enjoys reading this kind of poetry.

These lines don't even rhyme, why should you care?

The author obviously doesn't.

Forget that name at the top, slow down and focus on these words.

Listen closely,

do you hear that voice in your head as you read this line?

Isn't it strange that it's exactly the same tone as your voice?

You've cringed at recordings of yourself speaking, you know that's

not how you really sound.

It's the same timbre as all your thoughts if you haven't noticed;

Deducing, panicking, berating.

That voice isn't real, at least not physically; it's only heard by you.

You're reading this line, this very word,
as long as you continue I narrate that voice, your voice.

Of course, you can stop reading this whenever you want;
but you haven't.

You can't prove the past or know the future.
Neither can I, but I'm only a sheet of paper.

This present moment, right now as you read this sentence,
is the only moment that's actually real.

Just keep reading.
If you stop, I'll become scribbles in-between these pages.

These markings only make sense
because you've been learning this language your whole life.

Inevitably you'll think about these words again;
I'll always exist somewhere in your life.

I exist now, you've decided to let me your mind.
These words are now as real as your soul.

I am forcing my consciousness into yours.
I am in control of what you're thinking right now.

As long as you keep your focus here
there is nothing in the world except you and me.

Let's talk.

My Light ○

Taylor Riley ●

What do you see when you look into the light?

I assume the only answer lies
even beyond the farthest star.

What things do you see, feel & taste there?

You shall only know when you die,
so as you walk, absorb the things you love.

Never far, & forever warm of soul, stands my love.

The way you float, with fake jewels flashing in the light,
right now, I know I couldn't stand to die.

If I, before you, don't leave me where my body lies.

Stroll by, & call on my lingering soul there,
otherwise lookup, & scour the sky to find my star.

Even then, your last resort, the problem arises—which star?

One in seven billion, lost in the crowd waits your love.

If weak in eye, & so, still alone, leave there,
your gazing ground, & succumb to the light.

As pretty as it is, leave your body as it lies.

In any case, be sure, I'd be longing for you to die.

But in the meantime, as we walk, let the gods, yours or mine,
cast the die.

Take no stock in the answers you see in one star
or another & watch out for well-worn lies.

You must, in our many moments, step back,
& ask yourself if this is an eternal love.

Toss it about; think it over as it's exposed in the ever nearing light,
& determine if you're willing to come with me there.

Then meet my eyes somewhere before the plane; I'll be waiting there.
Rich in spirit, coated in colorful dye,
like the people of your holiday; I'll be rejoicing amidst the light.
Still in bliss & eager for more & more & more
memories we'd dance beyond the very last star.

Then you'd have a chance to either sing proud to me of your pure love
or leave me to wallow in your barely once-shown lies.

They would serve to shock, but on & on & on, I'd steam,
sheltered from the lies.

At peace with my love, nothing would perturb me but their
perfect veil, upheld all this time by an imperfect love
unwilling to abandon some hope to die
with some sense of a guiding star
& amidst some inspiring light.

Whatever the occasion, my light would still bathe you as you lie
beyond those stars, & below the grass blades there
where you've been since you last died; when your spirit said farewell
to this life's love.

Fear Change ○

Emily Schettler ●

I fear change yet that's all I want
I strive for a better day but do nothing for one
I want to suck the marrow out of life yet I'm afraid of dying
I want to be more than I am without trying



Broken

● Jonathan Wilford

Intangible delusions of a day
Lost but not gone, it flew away
Peaceful war waged in my mind
Stranded and hopeless to ever find
Powerless and waiting in my regret
My soul crushed and my mind in debt
Fuck the process I'll make my own bet
And roll the dice again but I haven't won yet
Up the stakes, wage your soul
Pitted against the greatest fear
Fear of love lost, fear of fear
Sentenced myself, barred the door to my heart
Stabbed my soul till it bled no more
Then sobbed over what I had done
Unable to understand what I had done it for
Purpose lost, no cause, no reason, just blame
Counted cost, my fault, my treason, my name
Standing in the divide picking up the scattered pieces
Like an animal with no habitat, roaming forever
Like a sun that would never rise, always setting

Gypsy

Jonathan Wilford

Just across the way stands an example
of divine creation so fair, glowing
With intoxicating essence, flowing
Hues of something deeper, yet so supple
How could something be so pleasing to see
Without knowing anything but the form
Of this creature across the way, the storm
Of thoughts I have, as my two eyes perceive
All that is known is the vessel, no more
What entices and moves and propels it
These things are not know to me, albeit
Would the chance ever come for me to adore?
If I walked up to you and told you this
this was written just for you, jotted down
Would you laugh or cry or smile or frown
One way to know, take a shot risk the miss
So know I stand before you wondering
Exactly just what it is that you think
And right now my heart it begins to sink
Because replies are scary, thundering

○ The Moment Before Death

● Jonathan Wilford

transmutation of salvation
recognizing the conflation in death
reimbursing my hands with petty thought
strapping myself down with blue smoke
attention running cold as fiery needles
pain near, then far, then laughing
cut open but still whole as the sun
walking on the wall, I fell into space
in the corner rounded I found hate
under the concrete I found the universe
revised it all till it was red
as the blood that showered earth
conflicted with measures of time
and pieces of fabric that clothe eternity
between the nothingnesses that rattle inside
beat with wind that holds answers
losing my wave in the regular forgotten
new things true, yet already rotten
colors combine, mind collapses, everything – black

Always ○

Jacob Woelke ●

Please remember me
when he refuses to be
tangled in your hair,
or in your thoughts, or really
any time he is not me.



Angela

● Jacob Woelke

You are
and I am not;
I am and you are not.
And these are the things with which we
contend.

Cycle ○

Jacob Woelke ●

and when his son becomes a father -- he hits his son,



Heritage

● Jacob Woelke

I am a son of the beasts
of heaven; the carcasses of men
who have assumed of themselves
a holy responsibility:
to figure the fates of each of the wandering
bastards caught up in the
march to hell.

Indigestion ○

Jacob Woelke ●

I think I swallowed
a broken fragment of
the past
because I taste blood
whenever I try to stomach
the thought of you
and resist the urge
to gag.



Martyr

● Jacob Woelke

She spoke only in scriptures and in psalms,
But she could not resist my sinful alms.
I tempted her with manna, bread and wine:
She ate, and drank, I spoiled the divine.
I broke her body, drew blood with a kiss,
While I prayed to find the Eucharist.

The Advent of Light

Jacob Woelke ●

You remind me of
the time of the morning when
everything is still;
when every thought—every word—
has the chance to be perfect.



The Altar

● Jacob Woelke

Tell me,
what is the price,
what is it I must pay,
to come, to eat, to take of your
body?

Theory Number One

Jacob Woelke

I am God's left eye or
perhaps I am His right—
can you ever really know for sure? Or

can you only ever be an eye which
sees into the abyss and screams;
the eye that plucks out
half-minded phrases which spring up from the cracks of sobriety
after each attempted high rings null and void,
in the void or
out of the void.

What is the void anyway?

Perhaps it is Vonnegut's asshole or
Whitman's genius or
some other abstraction that is sure to know all of the ways
by which you can look at a blackbird,
and demand to be understood.
No, misunderstood.

But surely the void, and
the abyss, and
the blackbird, are all God's left eye. And,
surely, I am His right.



sunday school dropout

photography by Jay Cheatham

86 ○ **Complacent** by Mahogany Hickman

94 ○ **Café Le Soir** by Zoë Slingluff

DRAMA

98 ○ **The First Twelve Hours** by Maddie Wilkinson

Complacent

● Mahogany Hickman

(Charles sits at the table on his laptop ignoring the noises and bangs Elizabeth makes while upstairs. She makes her way down the stairs with two small bags in her hands. Setting the bags down, she makes her way into the kitchen. Both ignore the other's presence, Charles out of indifference, Elizabeth out of genuine disdain and hatred. When she does come back into the room, she checks around in her purse for everything that she needs, a rummaging sound that indicates to Charles she's about to leave.)

CHARLES: Lizzy, while you're out buy some milk. I'd actually like to have that with my cereal.

ELIZABETH: I'm not coming back.

CHARLES: mhmm

(Elizabeth continues to gather her little belongings.)

CHARLES: Hey Lizzy, while you're up, get me a drink before you go.

(Elizabeth ignores him.) Lizzy...

ELIZABETH: *(Tosses the keys on the ground.)* Goodbye, Charles. When I get settled, my lawyer will send the divorce papers.

CHARLES: *(Looks up and finally notices Elizabeth walking towards the door with her bags.)* And where are you going? You didn't tell me you were taking a trip with the girls.

ELIZABETH: *(Stops.)* I'm leaving Charles. *(Turns around and points to the keys.)* You can keep everything.

CHARLES: You're leaving? And where will you go?

ELIZABETH: Who knows. Carrie's coming to get me.

CHARLES: *(arrogantly)* And so when can I expect you back?

ELIZABETH: *(Takes off her ring and places it on the table.)* Never. *(Elizabeth turns around and walk towards the door.)*

CHARLES: Lizzy. Lizzy. *(Elizabeth continues to ignore him.)* Elizabeth! *(Urgent, he jumps up from his chair.)* Wait a minute! Where do you think you're going!? You can't be serious about this.

ELIZABETH: Dead serious.

CHARLES: (*Rushes forward and grabs her wrist.*) Lizzy you aren't leaving until you give me an explanation.

ELIZABETH: Let me go Charles.

(*Charles hold her tighter.*)

ELIZABETH: Let me go. (*Tugs at her wrist.*) I said let me go. (*Struggles.*) Dammit Charles! Why do we have to go through this?! Just let me go!

CHARLES: What the hell do you mean why?! You're the one who's leaving without a reason! All I'm asking for is a fucking explanation!

ELIZABETH: FINE! You want an explanation? (*Yanks her wrist from his grasp.*) I don't want you Charles! I hate your friends! I hate this house! I FUCKING HATE YOU!

CHARLES: (*shocked*) You hate me... (*Pause.*) (*Gets angry.*) You hate me? For what?!

ELIZABETH: (*Steps forward, in Charles' face.*) For eight years, eight fucking years, I've stayed with you and been the best wife I could be. If there was anything I could do for you, I did it. I took the abuse from your friends and family telling me I was trash! I lost touch with all of my family who told me not to marry you. I—

CHARLES: Oh cut the crap Elizabeth. You and I both know that isn't true. You were the one who agreed to marry me. I didn't force you.

ELIZABETH: You're right. You didn't force me.

CHARLES: I know I'm right! That still doesn't explain why you're trying to leave. When did you even plan this?

ELIZABETH: After our honeymoon.

CHARLES: (*hurt*) Our honeymoon...

ELIZABETH: (*Sighs.*) I've tried so hard to stay. Charles, I did love you. I tried to keep loving you. But every single time I think I can overlook it all. You find more reasons to make me leave.

CHARLES: I found reasons?! You never let me know what you were thinking! I never knew you were unhappy. As a husband, no as a man, I've given you anything you could ever ask for! You wanted a car, I got it! You wanted a nicer house, I got it. Clothes, food, anything! I've given them to you!

ELIZABETH: That's what I'm talking about Charles. You always thought you had to buy me shiny things and that would keep me

interested. I never gave a damn about any of that. I just wanted someone to love me unconditionally.

CHARLES: And I didn't do that?

ELIZABETH: Charles, you never loved me. You loved the thought of having me around. You loved that you had a woman to take to all of your company picnics. Someone to help "talk" to your bosses and tell them about how great of a man you are.

CHARLES: You never minded any of that!

ELIZABETH: (*cold and lifeless*) I did when I couldn't opt out of it.

CHARLES: Not this again.

ELIZABETH: (*Smirks.*) Why not this again? You were the one who wanted a proper explanation right? (*condescending*) I'm doing just like you asked me.

(*Charles turns away. Elizabeth continues to speak to his back.*)

ELIZABETH: I could have dealt with the mistreatment and the abuse from your friends. Your liquor cabinet was usually a great remedy. But...after that...that was when I realized that you truly didn't give a damn about me or her.

CHARLES: (*Turns.*) Didn't give a damn? (*mocking*) Elizabeth do you not realize how much pain—

ELIZABETH: Pain?! What do you know about pain? I was the one who lost Maya!

CHARLES: You weren't her only parent! I loved her more than anything!

ELIZABETH: (*heartbroken*) But that only lasted while she lived. (*Voice breaks.*) I carried her for nine months. Praying for her to be safe and healthy. I thought that after all the other losses (*Cries.*) we would actually get it right this time. All I wanted was to make sure that she would be happy and safe.

CHARLES: You know I loved her.

ELIZABETH: But do you still? (*Stares at Charles.*)

CHARLES: (*defensive*) How could you even ask that?! She was my daughter! My only child! How could I not be hurt when she died?! She never even got to grow up!

ELIZABETH: Do you hate me?

CHARLES: (*startled*) What? (*Pause.*) (*angry*) Is this really the time to be

asking this?

ELIZABETH: Just answer the question Charles. Do you blame me?

CHARLES: *(Pauses.)* It's... *(Longer pause.)* I-I...

ELIZABETH: *(Smiles reluctantly.)*

CHARLES: *(Panics.)* I've never blamed you! You couldn't help what happened! She—

(Just as Elizabeth starts to say something, her phone rings.)

ELIZABETH: Hello? *(Pause.)* Yeah I'm packed. *(Pause.)* He's here.

(Pause.) I'm alright. *(Pause.)* Okay I'll see you in a few. *(Hangs up and turns to Charles.)* Carrie's here. I'm leaving Charles. For good this time.

(Knock at the door.)

CARRIE: Liz! I'm here.

ELIZABETH: I'm coming Carrie. *(Turns towards the door.)*

CHARLES: *(Rushes forward and grabs Elizabeth by her forearm.)* No! You aren't leaving! I won't allow it!

ELIZABETH: Charles!

(They struggle.)

ELIZABETH: LET ME GO!

(They wrestle and knock over pieces furniture, including a lamp.)

CARRIE: *(Bangs on the door.)* Liz! Hey! What's going on?!

(They continue to struggle around the room. Charles lifts her up and tries to carry her away, but Elizabeth kicks him. They both fall on the ground, filled with nicks and tears from the thrashing around.

He kneels on his hands and knees in front of her.

Elizabeth sits facing his face.)

CHARLES: I won't let you leave me! *(Stares into Elizabeth's eyes.)* I'd rather die than have that happen.

ELIZABETH: *(angry and frustrated)* Well die then.

(Charles lets her go, stumbles backwards, then falls to his knees.

All confidence and pride gone.)

CHARLES: Why... *(Pauses. Looks at her solemnly.)* Why can't we go back to the way we were?

ELIZABETH: *(Pauses. Pities Charles.)* Because, there's nothing here for us anymore.

CHARLES: *(quietly)* But there was.

ELIZABETH: *(Crawls over to Charles and bugs him.)* You're right. There

was. I loved you and I probably will always have love for you. But you and I aren't right for each other. Not anymore. We haven't been for a long time.

CHARLES: (*Strokes her arms softly.*) What am I gonna do without you?

ELIZABETH: I don't know. (*Rubs his hair.*) I don't have the answers to any of this. All I know is that this is for the best.

(Intimate moment happens between Charles and Elizabeth.

Both think about the ending of their relationship and show their vulnerability. Elizabeth's phone rings.)

CARRIE: (*Bangs on door again.*) Elizabeth! Answer the door! Charles you've got three minutes to open the door or so help me god I'm calling the police!

ELIZABETH: (*Lets Charles go.*) I have to go now Charles.

(Elizabeth gets up and walks to the door to let Carrie in.

As Carrie walks into the house, Charles gets up and exits the room to the master bedroom.)

CARRIE: (*Rushes in and hugs Elizabeth tightly.*) Oh my god! I was so worried about you! (*Pulls back and looks over Elizabeth.*) You're hurt! That bastard hurt you?!

ELIZABETH: No Carrie he—

CARRIE: (*Cuts off.*) No?! Liz you're covered in cuts!

ELIZABETH: Carrie, I'm fine—

CARRIE: (*Cuts off.*) Look at the house! He wrecked everything! I'm calling the police. He has no business hurting you and—

ELIZABETH: CARRIE! (*Carrie stops ranting and looks at Elizabeth.*)

I'm fine. Yes we bumped around the room, but I'm okay. He didn't hurt me.

CARRIE: But...

ELIZABETH: Leave it alone Carrie.

CARRIE: (*Silence.*) If you say so.

ELIZABETH: Thank you.

CARRIE: (*Reaches forward and pulls Elizabeth closer to kiss her.*) Why are you thanking me? You know I'd do anything for you. (*Elizabeth smiles.*)

Is there anything else you need before we throw all of your stuff in the truck?

ELIZABETH: (*Steps away from Carrie and regards her belongings.*) I think

so. I only took the things that I would need. Anything else I'd just take from you.

CARRIE: (*Chuckles.*) Figures. (*Both lower voice to whisper.*) (*serious*) Did you tell him?

ELIZABETH: Yes he knows I'm leaving and that I won't be coming back.

CARRIE: I mean everything.

ELIZABETH: (*reluctant*) I...No.

CARRIE: Why are you still trying to hide it?

ELIZABETH: I'm not trying to hide anything Carrie. You know that.

CARRIE: Then you're ashamed.

ELIZABETH: I'm not ashamed!

CARRIE: Then what are you waiting for?

ELIZABETH: Dammit, Carrie, why can't you understand?

CARRIE: The same reason you haven't told him about us.

ELIZABETH: (*Sighs and gestures with frustration.*) Today, I've just told my husband of eight years how much of a failure our marriage has been. Now he knows I'm leaving him for good as well. On top of all of that, do you really want me to tell him that for the past three years, I've been cheating on him with my best friend who was also the maid of honor at our wedding?

CARRIE: (*Sighs.*) I understand, but why do you have to be considerate of this ass? He's done nothing but hurt you this entire time.

ELIZABETH: I know he's an ass. But he was also my husband and he treated me well...or at least what he thought was well. He's been beat up enough today.

CARRIE: (*Remains silent and watches Elizabeth.*) Then promise me after you get all the divorce papers signed, you'll let him know EVERYTHING.

ELIZABETH: (*Hesitates.*) I...I promise.

CARRIE: (*Both begins speaking normally again.*) (*approvingly*) Well, then... (*Grabs Elizabeth's bag.*) Come on let's go. We've got a lot of things to do today.

ELIZABETH: Wait, give me a moment. I want to go and at least say bye to him.

CARRIE: (*Sighs.*) Go ahead, but I'm not going anywhere. If I hear

anything suspicious, I'm calling the cops.

ELIZABETH: I know.

*(Elizabeth walks into the master bedroom
and leaves Carrie in the room.*

*After only a few seconds, Elizabeth
runs back into the room screaming in hysteria.)*

CARRIE: What's wrong! Liz!

ELIZABETH: He's dead! He's dead!

CARRIE: Who's dead?! Liz you're not making sense. What happened?

ELIZABETH: It's Charles! He's dead! *(Cries hysterically.)*

CARRIE: Oh shit. *(Tries to soothe Elizabeth for a moment, but then gets
up.)* Liz honey, I need you to stay here. I'm gonna go call 911.

(Carrie walks away from Elizabeth, leaving her on the ground.

*Elizabeth stays on the ground rocking back and forth
as she sobs uncontrollably chanting
over and over "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."*

In the distance, sirens sound as the stage fades to black.)

(End.)



nesting bowls

bisque-fired ceramic pottery by Manuel Lopez

Café Le Soir

● Zoë Slingluff

(A Charleston coffee shop, corner table. Night.)

(Mark orders his coffee and looks around the room for an empty table. Notices Caroline and makes a beeline for the empty seat next to hers. Caroline, with her head down, is busy working on something and doesn't notice or pay attention to Mark at first.)

MARK: Excuse me, would you mind if I used your wall socket to charge my laptop?

(Caroline finally looks up and rejoins the world of the living.)

CAROLINE: That's fine by me.

MARK: I haven't seen you around here before, are you new?

CAROLINE: No.

MARK: Oh.

(Awkward silence.)

MARK: What are you working on?

CAROLINE: Stuff.

MARK: Descriptive.

CAROLINE: I'm sorry I'm not being more descriptive to some random dude in a coffee shop that I don't know. It's sort of on the same lines as not giving out my entire life story to guys on Tinder or handing out contact info to people on the way over here.

MARK: You're a real piece of work.

CAROLINE: I'm a redhead. I'm supposed to be feisty. Anyways, what are YOU not paying attention to and should be working on?

MARK: Things.

CAROLINE: *(Glares.)*

MARK: You started it.

CAROLINE: I'm working on top CIA programming. Nobody usually suspects tiny redheaded girls with shitty pink Toshiba laptops. That's why they hired me.

MARK: But for real though.

CAROLINE: I'm never for real with any guy.

MARK: Good to know.

CAROLINE: So what are you "working" on but not really because you're too busy being nosy?

MARK: Writing the next great American novel, but I need to develop characters to put in it.

CAROLINE: Writing a novel in Starbucks. Typical.

MARK: So for real, what's your story?

CAROLINE: I have a feeling you're not going to quit on me. It's a tale as old as time, I'm just a college graduate in a coffee shop trying to find out what my next move is. I love going to coffee shops because there's an abundance of people always, and there's this feeling that we're all in this together. We're all sitting here plotting our next move. What about you?

MARK: I went to Brown and got lost in this sea of liberal arts. You think to yourself when you're getting a liberal arts degree about all the "what ifs." What if I had majored in something safe? Most people go through the ivies majoring in something safe, and they just take up a job on Wall Street, selling out their creativity and passions for a 9-to-5 desk job and the stock market websites bookmarked on their iPhones.

CAROLINE: All coffee shop people seem to be lost in a sea of solving the "what if" questions. Even the snitty and elitist Wall Street people.

MARK: That's why we have and need writers and liberal arts majors. They may not be able to pass math, but they can solve the "what ifs" running through all of our heads. What was the move that brought you to this specific moment?

CAROLINE: I grew up on Catalina Island, went to college at FIDM, and ended up moving across the country into a place that seems worlds away from Los Angeles and SoCal all for a guy that broke my heart into little pieces as well as my coffee maker.

MARK: How did he break your coffee maker?

CAROLINE: Ramen noodles. He was 20, didn't know any better, and thought that was high cuisine.

MARK: I don't know how people ingest that stuff.

CAROLINE: When you're college poor you'll eat anything if you get hungry enough.

MARK: I haven't had a girlfriend since my sophomore year of college. Amy Greene, captain of Brown's debate team and equestrian team. I had never met a girl that was absolutely beautiful as well as soul crushing at the same time before her.

CAROLINE: The soul crushing ones make for great stories later on, though.

MARK: At least she didn't break my coffee maker. I still don't understand how people can fuck up noodles, especially cheap noodles.

CAROLINE: Well, at least now it gives me an excuse to work in coffee shops instead of working from home.

MARK: Hey, look at it this way, you got to meet me because of that unfortunate coffee maker incident

CAROLINE: Ah yes, the fancy Ivy Leaguer carrying an Italian leather briefcase complete with a Cross pen and wearing Sperrys. What would I ever do without you?

MARK: I have no idea.

CAROLINE: You probably usually drink French press coffee, have your shirts dry cleaned every week, and listen to soft jazz while studying.

MARK: What's wrong with enjoying high end coffee and being a little high maintenance? You probably drink green smoothies, have a save the whales bumper sticker on the back of your Volkswagen bug, and surf in your spare time, or whatever else Californians do. Are you always this analytical with everyone?

CAROLINE: I think as a woman you become analytical naturally because of all the shit you're exposed to. You develop a knack for figuring people out without even having a conversation with them.

MARK: That's the thing that baffles me about women, and I guess about people in general. You all have a world inside of you, hidden from the world we're all exposed to, but yet you and I guess we in general choose to build walls to hide the inner world from other people. You can think you "know" people, but none of us can ever really fully "know" people. Does that even make sense?

CAROLINE: Yes, but actually "knowing" people is the scary part.

Because once you let them into your world, and you get access to their world, they do things like cheat on you and break your coffee maker.

MARK: Amy knew that she could captivate guy's attention like nothing, and used it to manipulate people. So I feel you on the "knowing" people and the fragility behind the underlying principles there.

CAROLINE: So I guess that's why I'm feisty, or sassy, or whatever word or phrase you would use to describe it. It's the sassy ones that have learned to stick up for themselves and whatever their "inner world" may contain.

(The barista walks over and announces that the coffee shop will be closing in 15 minutes.)

MARK: I can handle the feistiness, as long as you don't pull an Amy Greene and crush my soul.

CAROLINE: I'll do my damndest. Just if I happen to finally buy a new coffee maker, don't fucking try to be Gordon Ramsey with it.

MARK: No worries. I'm not an idiot and an actually survive and cook unprocessed food products.

CAROLINE: And they say chivalry is dead.

(Mark writes his number down on the back of a napkin.)

MARK: Same time next week?

CAROLINE: *(smiling)* Deal.

(End.)

The First Twelve Hours

● Maddie Wilkinson

NARRATOR: (*“customer service”-like tone*) May I have your attention please? Due to the state of emergency set forth by the governor and our observations of the approaching inclement weather...

REPORTER: (*off-stage, microphone left on, not intending for audience to hear personal thoughts, reacting to news they have to report*) Disney World closed? Waffle House closed? Holy shit we’re going to die! (*shouting*) Everyone get the fu—

NARRATOR: (*makes a motion to someone offstage for cut the mic off, but continues in same customer service tone, but speaking slightly louder to draw the attention back on their person*) ...our observations of the approaching inclement weather have led us to the decision to shut down all operations effective at 5 pm tonight. The university will be under a mandatory evacuation order, and all residents and personnel must be off campus by noon tomorrow, and will not be allowed back until the university sends out a notice stating otherwise. The procedure for those who wish to evacuate with the university is as follows...

(Narrator is interrupted by a people onstage and then exits. During her speech, the people are staring at the narrator or at the audience, but spring into motion during her last line. There is rushing and chaos, everyone saying things like “I need to call my mom,” “Work is going to kill me but I gotta go,” “NO MIDTERMS!” They leave the stage at various times, in various states of disarray, until only Lauren, Karen and Sam are left onstage)

LAUREN: Thank you so much for letting me come with you, my family is thirteen hours away and I don’t want to go that far if we are going to come back in just a few days.

KAREN: Really, it’s no problem! I’m sorry it’s taken so long to get everything together, but I think we’re ready to go, right?

SAM: Yeah mom, we just have to get the dogs in your car.

KAREN: Good...good...go get them for me?

SAM: Sure. (*Exits.*)

KAREN: (*turning back to Lauren*) Okay, you have the address right? I know you're following me but just in case we lose each other on the road –

LAUREN: Yes! And I'm sure we'll be fine. Really, are you sure this is okay? Sam offered back at school, and I don't want you to feel like you have to. I can figure something else out. I know we're going to your cousin's place, and you mentioned a lot of people are going, I just don't want to be a burden.

KAREN: Oh, it'll be fine! However, I do feel the need to warn you.

LAUREN: (*getting nervous*) Warn me of what?

KAREN: Well, we might be staying with family, but we don't LIKE this family. We're only going there because no hotel will take us with all of our animals. They're a bit rude, just don't mention politics, even non-controversial issues, they'll be all over it and argue just for the sake of it. They drink homemade moonshine all day and chain-smoke like there's no tomorrow. Their house is pretty far out, in the middle of nowhere on a farm, they don't have internet or much cell service.

LAUREN: Well...okay, so most of this I can work around, but I'm allergic to cigarette smoke...

KAREN: Oh, well they only smoke outside, so you should be fine!

LAUREN: Okay...

SAM: (*Enters.*) The dogs are in the car. Can we get going? We have a two-hour drive ahead of us and it's one in the morning.

KAREN: Yes, let's go!

(All three exit off the same way Sam came on, on the opposite side Bellamy comes onstage on the porch and sits on a lawn chair, playing with a lighter and cigarette in her hands.)

Karen and Sam re-enter with Lauren trailing behind them.)

BELLAMY: (*Standing, shuffling the lighter and the cigarette to one hand, and meets Karen in the middle with an awkward bug.*) It's nice to see you.

KAREN: Thank you so much for letting us come!

BELLAMY: Well, we're family after all. Samantha, let me look at you! (*inspecting her*) Well, you've grown up quite a bit. It's been awhile, hasn't it? (*Lights her cigarette, brings it to her lips and takes a drag, while turning to Lauren, posture turning stiff.*) And you must be Louise.

LAUREN: (*trying to be polite, holding her hand out for a handshake, but*

keeps her distance from the smoke) It's Lauren, actually, thank you for letting me come.

KAREN: (*noticing the lit cigarette*) Hey Bell, can you put that out or away just a bit Lauren is allergic, she'll go inside in a sec.

BELLAMY: (*Rolls her eyes and sneers in Lauren's direction.*) Well, the northerner is about to get a southern education.

(She takes another drag, and specifically blows it in Lauren's face. Lauren begins coughing and wheezing, she takes a step back, her hand goes to her throat.)

SAM: (*stepping between Lauren and Bellamy, protective of her friend*) What was that for? She –

BELLAMY: I don't appreciate a Yankee coming in and trying to dictate how I live. I bet she isn't allergic, it's just a stupid excuse so she can live her entitled life with no disruption.

SAM: Her throat closes up and she can't breathe! I've seen it happen before! She could need to go to the hospital and you –

LAUREN: I'm fine Sam. I just need water. And to get inside.

KAREN: Sam, take her inside and go to bed. You know where you're sleeping.

(Sam and Lauren exit, Karen turns to Bellamy and holds her hand out. Taking another drag, Bellamy reaches into her pocket and takes out a cigarette and hands it to Karen. She picks up her lighter and lights the cigarette for Karen.)

KAREN: While I don't disagree with you Bellamy, you should be nicer. Lauren's a decent kid.

BELLAMY: (*sniffs*) I opened my home to her. I will treat her how I want to.

(Both puff on their cigarettes for a few minutes then exit into the house. There is a scene change. The porch is now center stage, on one side there is a couch, on the other there is a bench in an outdoorsy-setting. Sam and Lauren enter the stage, Sam lies on the couch, Lauren on the floor with a blanket. They are sleeping, when offstage there is a loud, obnoxious rooster call. Lauren sits up, startled, while Sam groans and pulls a blanket over her head.)

LAUREN: I can't do this. Nope. Sam I need to go, I can't do this.

(Rooster calls again.) I'm about to turn that cocky know-it-all into breakfast Sam, I swear on my life!

SAM: Lauren, it's 10 am. We've only been sleeping for six-and-a-half hours. You are not making sense right now.

LAUREN: The freaking rooster! Your mom's cousin throwing out names and blowing cigarette smoke in my face! The fact that this entire house smells like cigarette smoke, and I feel my throat closing more and more each minute. I just...I need some air. *(Rooster crows again.)* Oh for –

SAM: *(sitting up)* Lauren, it's going to be okay –

LAUREN: Okay? Okay!? It's not okay! I said I could figure out somewhere to go, if they don't want me here, then that is fine! But don't say I'm welcome when I'm obviously not! Sam, I have to leave. I can take a lot, I can take passive-aggressive comments, I can take rudeness. *(Sam gives her a look.)* Well, I won't be happy about it, but I know when to keep my mouth shut. But being here is endangering my life. I'm grateful that they were willing to take me, but I have to go.

(While Lauren is ranting, Bellamy and Michael enter and sit on the bench outside. They are smoking and drinking homemade moonshine.

Karen and Lindsay enter with them. Karen stands to the side, smoking and drawn into a conversation, Lindsay is playing on her phone, and acting like a regular 13-year-old girl.)

SAM: Lauren, I hate it here. I understand you need to go, but please don't leave me alone!

LAUREN: I don't even know how to leave. I won't sink to their level and be rude, but I don't know how to say "you're going to kill me, so I'm going despite the fact you let me stay here, bye!" while still sounding polite!

SAM: Oh bless your heart –

LAUREN: Shut up.

SAM: *(laughing)* Maybe we can just run away and pretend like these last nine hours never happened.

(Shift focus momentarily to Michael, Bellamy, Karen, and Lindsay. Michael and Bellamy are singing some kind of obnoxious drinking song, while Karen and Lindsay keep doing their own thing, but are both out of their element.)

LAUREN: Hey...maybe I can do that. *(She is snapping and pointing her finger in Sam's direction, trying to come up with words.)*

SAM: What...run away?

LAUREN: Yes! No harm, no foul! No one will miss me, and only your mom has my number. I can screen her calls!

SAM: Did I just hear 4.0 student, teacher's pet, super-responsible-adult Lauren Edwards say she's going to run away from her problems?

LAUREN: Well, it was your suggestion!

SAM: That's really not helping your case right now.

LAUREN: Well, what would you do? This is your family; how do I do this without seeming like a total asshole?

SAM: Well... *(She thinks about it for a moment.)* I...don't think there is another way. No matter what you say, Bellamy is going to hold it against you, and so will my mom. Michael married Bellamy, so he's going to think whatever she thinks, but by twelve times creepier about the entire thing Lindsay... *(Both girls peak out the window to watch the group on the bench. At this moment, Michael falls over laughing drunkly, while Lindsay scoots away from him.)* ...yeah. Lindsay's got her own problems, I don't really think she'll care.

LAUREN: Well, I should probably check the weather. If this hurricane is rolling in too fast, I can't do much. *(She takes a remote and points it offstage.)*

REPORTER: *(offstage)* The governor is still encouraging residents to heed the mandatory evacuation. Right now, the hurricane is projected to make landfall in about ten hours –

LAUREN: *(Points the remote offstage to turn off TV, then throws the remote back on the couch.)* I have enough time to leave.

SAM: I'm coming with you! I can't be left here, I can't!

LAUREN: Sam, are you sure? Your mom is going to be really pissed –

SAM: I don't care! This is for my emotional safety! I barely know these people, and I don't want to deal with... *(Both girls peer out the window again, focus shifts to the group on the bench.)*

LINDSAY: *(standing and dusting her pants)* I'm going to feed the animals.

MICHAEL: You get 'em girl. *(He high fives Lindsay as she walks past, then reaches down and smacks her butt. Karen whirls to Bellamy and opens her mouth, but Lindsay makes a calming motion with her hands.)*

LINDSAY: It's not what you think, this is just...how he...encourages all of us when he's had a little too much. But really, it's not a big deal.

(Lindsay walks offstage, focus shifts back to both Sam and Lauren, who pull back from the window.)

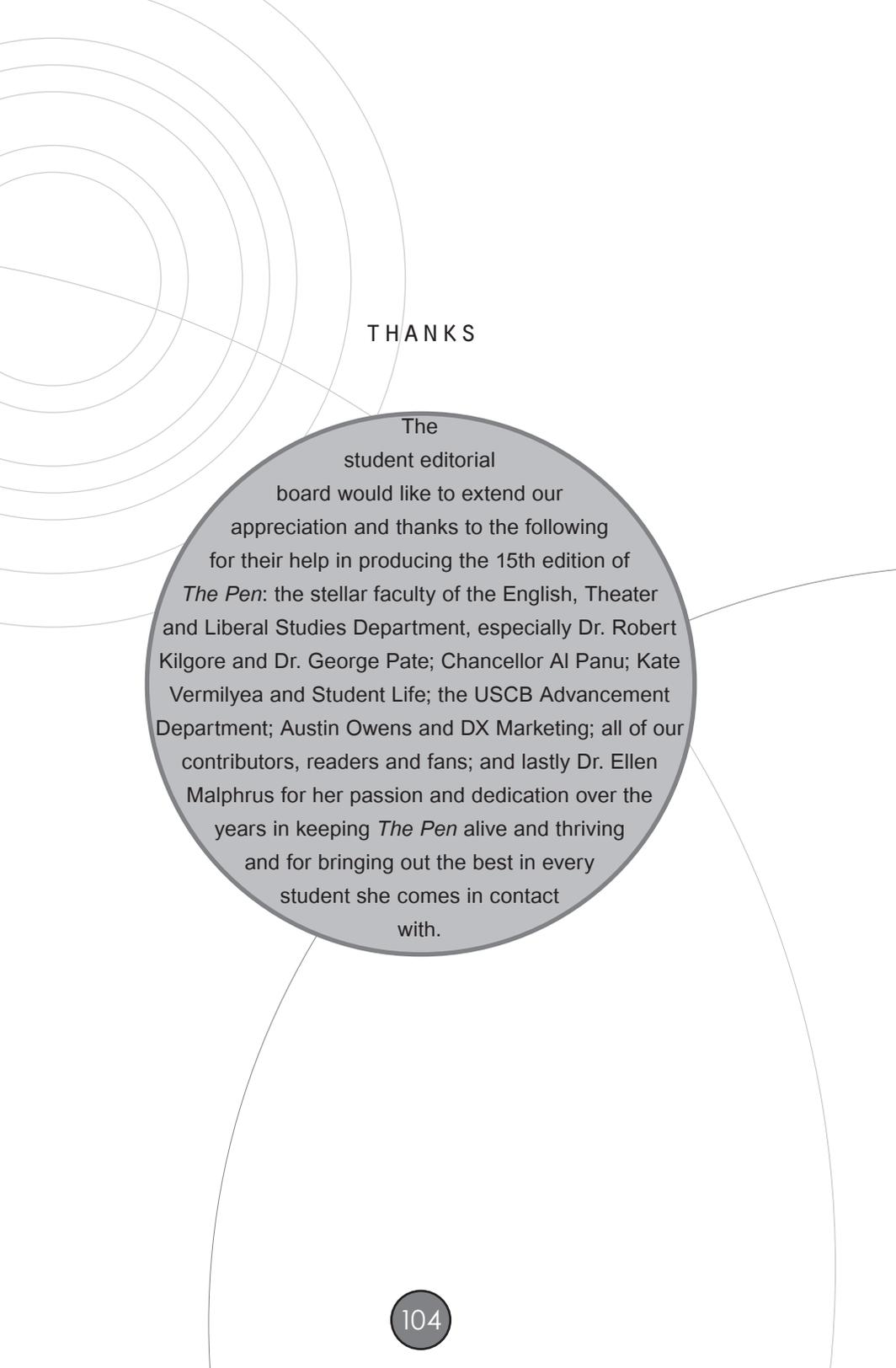
LAUREN: Oh fuck that noise.

SAM: Lauren...

LAUREN: Yeah, you can come with me, but you're the one telling your mom we're leaving.

NARRATOR: *(While speaking, actors should mime actions of what is going on.)* So, Lauren and Sam snuck their things out the back one by one to where their cars were parked. They were caught once by Lindsay, who went on her way and didn't say a word. It took them two and a half hours to get everything into the car. They spent another half an hour "playing nice" with Karen and Bellamy, but avoided Michael at all costs. At 1 pm, they said they needed to go into town to meet with a classmate and work on school work, and they both drove off that farm as quickly as they could. *(By this point, all the actors should have exited.)* But little did they know that their evacuation adventure was only beginning.

(End.)



THANKS

The student editorial board would like to extend our appreciation and thanks to the following for their help in producing the 15th edition of *The Pen*: the stellar faculty of the English, Theater and Liberal Studies Department, especially Dr. Robert Kilgore and Dr. George Pate; Chancellor Al Panu; Kate Vermilyea and Student Life; the USCB Advancement Department; Austin Owens and DX Marketing; all of our contributors, readers and fans; and lastly Dr. Ellen Malphrus for her passion and dedication over the years in keeping *The Pen* alive and thriving and for bringing out the best in every student she comes in contact with.

ABOUT THE PEN

The Pen is a biannual publication of the Society of Creative Writers, produced under the supervision of the Department of English, Theater and Liberal Studies at the University of South Carolina Beaufort. *The Pen* features the original work of some of USCB's brightest students in the realm of creative writing, which includes primarily fiction, poetry and playwriting, as well as other creative arts, such as photography and painting. The aim of *The Pen* is to showcase commendable, creative talent and provide students a place where their work may be published with credit.

The University of South Carolina Beaufort's Society of Creative Writers is dedicated to sharing a passion for the written word with like-minded peers. This student-led group allows writers of any experience level to share their work, get constructive criticism and other feedback from classmates, network or just hang out and talk about writing. The group meets on campus regularly during the Fall and Spring semesters and holds a public reading at the end of each semester. For more information, email ThePenUSCB@gmail.com or join the public Facebook group titled "USCB Society of Creative Writers."

ABOUT THE SOCIETY OF CREATIVE WRITERS

In order to be considered for publication in *The Pen*, writers must be current USCB students or prior students with no more than two years since their last active semester. Students need not be enrolled in an English or art course to submit work.

All work submitted for publication must be original, unpublished and preferably produced while the writer/artist was a USCB student. Most types of creative writing, art and other expression will be happily considered. ("Fan fiction" will not be accepted.)

There is no limit to the amount of submissions per person, however, writers are expected to send only polished, college-level work. Writing pieces should not exceed 2,500 words each.

All writing pieces must be sent via email, preferably in an attached Microsoft Word document. Ensure work is formatted as it is intended to appear on the page, especially poetry. Each piece should be sent in its own file, and each piece must include a title and the author's name.

While it is *The Pen's* goal to publish work exactly as it is submitted, the editorial staff does reserve the right to edit submissions for publication. Typically, this will include editing for spelling, punctuation, grammar and consistency. Writers should inform the editorial board of any intentional misspellings to avoid unintentional corrections.

All art and photography must be sent via email as a JPEG file no smaller than 5" x 7" at 300 dpi. Artists and photographers must include their name and a title for each entry as well as information on the medium (i.e., oil on canvas, charcoal on paper).

Published writers and artists will be provided with at least one free copy of *The Pen*.

Tentative deadline for the Spring 2017 edition is March 6, 2017.

To submit, or for more information, email the editorial board at ThePenUSCB@gmail.com.

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