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COVER DESIGN: CINDERELLA KROH JOSH SEXTON ANDREW SPITTLER

2015

CORNFIELD REVIEW

Volume 32



FREE

THE 2015 ANNUAL

WARNING: This book contains graphic depictions of  
***POETRY ART & PROSE***

# CORNFIELD REVIEW



***HEAVY  
HANGS THE  
HEAD...***

**CORNFIELD  
REVIEW**



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A Literary Publication of The Ohio State University at Marion

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Volume 32 | 2015

# PREFACE

WHEN DECIDING ON A COVER CONCEPT and design motif for this issue, the idea of the comic book genre jumped out at us. After all, the connection between superheroes and their creative alter egos is a fairly prominent one: think of journalist Clark Kent. Or photographer Peter Parker. Or inventor/kinetic sculptor Tony Stark. So given the supernatural feat of the 2014-15 Ohio State Buckeyes (undisputed national champions), we thought it only natural to couple Brutus with our latest collection of creative offerings. And, well, the *Game of Thrones* nod is just because we like the show, so deal with it.

Publications such as ours do not come to fruition without the help of many hands, and so we'd like to thank those hands (as well as the people to which they're attached): the administration of OSU-Marion, led by Dean Greg Rose; our talented and supportive English faculty; Mary Fahy, without whom our photographic offerings would be much more sparse.

The 2015 Editorial Board worked tirelessly, some might say heroically, to bring you this stunning collection of work, and they are proud to share it with you, the readers. This year's board consists of: Bethanie Barker, Cinderella Kroh, Katie Longtine, Joshua Sexton, Shannon Shenefield, Emma Smith, and Travis Wolf.

*Cornfield Review* is published annually. The Editorial Board is interested in quality poetry, prose, artwork, and photography. Submissions are primarily solicited from students at OSU-Marion, Marion Technical College, and Columbus State Community College-Delaware, although we accept submissions from off-campus writers and artists as well. For more information, please email me at [mccorkle.12@osu.edu](mailto:mccorkle.12@osu.edu), or visit us online at <http://cornfieldreview.osu.edu>.

— Ben McCorkle, Faculty Adviser

## The Cornfield Review Mission Statement:

We strive to represent the literary and artistic voice of Central Ohio by giving area college students (as well as others) an opportunity to see their work published in a professional literary journal. Additionally, we are passionate about achieving a cultural impact that goes beyond local campuses and reaches into the greater community.

## POETRY &amp; SHORT FICTION

T.C. Albright, "Award"	6
Michelle Brewer-Bunnell, "The Gambler"	7
Camden Brooks, "Walk Forever Onward"	8
"We'll Always Have Nice"	9
"Cicadas"	11
Hannah Marie Fuller, "Broadway"	12
Tanya Grandillo, "The Old Nun"	13
Ruskana Kabealo, "Ordinary Stories"	17
"Seeds of Doubt"	18
"What Am I to You?"	19
Brittany Larson, "Butterfly"	20
"Poison Love"	21
Brittany Violet Long, "The Color of the Rhino's Tusk"	23
"Remembering Keven"	24
"Denial"	25
"For Brandon"	26
Kathlyn Longtine, "From the Girl Who Fell With Star"	27
Andrew Pinkerton, "Duplicity"	30
Tim West, "To My Recycled Friends"	31
"Philip Levine"	32
The Kapow! Collective, Suite of Nonets	33
Michelle Brewer-Bunnell, "Scared"	36
Johana Langova, "I Know"	44
Brittany Violet Long, "On Quieting My Inner Monologue"	47
Chris Orban, "Wish Upon an Artificial Star?"	48
Mickey Pfarr, "A Visit"	58
K.A. Sodowsky, "Every"	60
Andrew Pinkerton, "Talons"	62
Evan-Thomas Smith, "Borealis"	64

## ARTWORK &amp; PHOTOGRAPHY

## FRONTMATTER & BACKMATTER

Preface	2
Table of Contents	3-4
Contributors' Notes	95
Back Page Notices	96



## Award

*Welcome...welcome...welcome*

Hollow voices escape the smooth,  
echoing mahogany shell,  
dripping down copper stucco lights;  
blinding lies full of dreams.

*Of...of...of*

Cerulean stars shatter, crystals  
raining down slivered sparkles—  
pinpricks bouncing, ripping satin  
as the sky cools its touch.

*Thanks...thanks...thanks*

Stretching golden grins around  
warm velvet vines, cutting off cries  
as foul angels mingle and heaven  
breaks beneath the gate.

—TC Albright

# The Gambler

My eyes are never quite so blue,  
As when my heart is rent in two.  
And were not it for the blackened skies,  
Your sympathies might I recognize.  
One day I opened up that heart  
To see a fragile, hoping start.  
Lock it away, keep it safe  
Sacrifice all, in the name of faith.  
There is nothing further from the truth  
Than holding back what you're afraid to lose.  
So when I chanced it all away  
My heart was caught up in the fray.  
I prayed and pleaded my soul's escape  
When I was taken to the Fates.  
Their one eye stared at me so glum  
And I knew it was a mistake to come.  
In a whirlwind decision, the Fates demand  
Penance for this sleight of hand  
With cacophony ringing in my head,  
I bound up and catch my breath instead.  
Into the deep I journey far  
Where there are no suns or moons or stars.  
My hopes reject me, my fears too  
And all that's left is what I once knew.  
There's nothing left to do but wait,  
And leave it to these sneaky Fates  
But waiting's what got me here at first  
The wait to love before I burst.  
And it is love that broke my heart  
Back when my eyes were cold and dark.  
So watch out, child, whate'er you do  
For the woman in grey, with eyes of blue.

—Michelle Brewer-Bunnell



## Walk Forever Onward

Look into the mirror that casts a bleak reflection,  
Wait for the sun to shine and show a new direction,  
Stuck here all alone in a world of black creation,  
Lost within a darkened void of one's self-destruction.

Pity falls on deafened ears to those who do not listen,  
As blinding light goes unseen to those without a vision,  
A steady hand could make or break one without precision,  
As could any of the consequence of any ill decision.

Like the ember of a burning flame that does not cease to glow,  
Or that single drop of vital rain that causes life to grow,  
The bright warm sunshine on your face when you're feeling low,  
You will always be far more important than you know.

If you can leave it all behind you and put your past to rest,  
You will walk forever onward always at your best.

—Camden Brooks

## We'll Always Have Nice

In Paris we stood atop the world,  
And looked down at the city streets.  
People living day to day,  
Right beneath our very feet.

I did not want to leave your side,  
You were so beautiful up there.  
As you looked down from the tower,  
The wind blowing through your hair.

The next day in Versailles,  
In those cramped and crowded halls.  
You could have passed as royalty,  
As we walked inside those walls.

The Louvre was where we were left alone,  
And we talked more than we should.  
But the way you smiled at me,  
Made me think that things were good.

We went to the French Riviera,  
To Monaco then to Nice.  
We spent the day together,  
Mediterranean washed our feet.

That night we laid together,  
Though that was not our intent.  
External forces blurred our minds,  
But I imagine how it went.

When morning came you left the room,  
Almost without a word.  
From that moment you made me feel,  
Like I was beneath your worth.

After Nice was Pisa,  
When you pushed yourself away.  
You left me all alone to walk,  
While you were gone all day.

Next we went to Florence,

My favorite city in the world.  
There you stayed beside me,  
Which threw me for a whirl.

You kept sending me mixed signals,  
But my heart doesn't read Morse code.  
Or maybe you were as lost as me,  
Two lovelorn losers a la mode.

It was there in Florence I tried,  
To tell you exactly how I feel.  
Describing everything I felt,  
You claimed could not be real.

You told me there was no chance,  
That every word was a lie.  
That every man could only want,  
A way to get inside.

But I could not explain in words,  
The way some often do.  
Instead I drank myself half to death,  
All because of you.

In Assisi you were mad with me,  
Because I got us lost.  
But it got you talking to me once again,  
So I'll accept the cost.

Lastly we ended up in Rome,  
We mostly talked all day.  
You seemed a bit more cheerful,  
Animosity swept away.

That eve we went to the Trevi Fountain,  
To wish for hopes and dreams.  
We closed our eyes and flipped our coins,  
But my wish was not for me.

Though I did not wish for you,  
It was your happiness at least.  
No matter what ill may befall me,  
We will always have Nice.

—Camden Brooks

## Cicadas

The Cicadas cry in somber tune,  
As I lay and think of you.  
Will you return? Where have you gone?  
How long will they cry their song?

A cadence lost in dreary tone,  
I sit here lost and all alone.  
Within a symphony of empathy,  
Natures mourning elegy.

I close my eyes to see your face,  
The leaves rustle, and the sun fades.  
A quick dream back through the years,  
Cicadas' song rings in my ears.

My body left atop the grass,  
I remember when I saw you last.  
A day like this, the solemn song fills the air,  
Cherry blossoms in your hair.

You told me that you loved me,  
As we stood together in the breeze.  
That day came and went far to swift,  
Like the listless song in the wind adrift.

The cycle goes on for them unchanged,  
Without you though I feel estranged.  
In epic chorus, I'll wait in sin,  
Until I can hold you once again.

On your grave, I'll sleep tonight,  
For I cannot bear to be out of sight.  
I'll spend all my time with you,  
As the Cicadas cry their lonesome tune.

—Camden Brooks

# Broadway

Just another puppet on a string  
Pull the threads, watch her sing

Stand her here, place him there,  
Color in their eyes, dye their hair

I'll return each season, each season  
I'll be yours again  
Never mind rhyme or reason

I'll do what you say  
What you say, I'll say  
My hours, my minutes, my moments each day  
Until I forget who's in the mirror, who's begging me to stay

Give me their woes and their troubles, lend me their face  
For 113.20 minutes, my soul I'll happily replace

I'll never tire  
I'll never stop  
Until my name climbs up to the top

My name's now big  
My name's now bright  
But now I forget who I really am  
When I lay down at night

I did it for the money  
I did it for the fame  
Addicted to the people, the applause  
For someone to herald my name

But I'm just another puppet on a string  
Please pull my threads, let me be consumed  
Let me sing

—Hannah Marie Fuller

# A New Canterbury Tale

## "The Old Nun"

(Conversation with Host and Old Nun)

Old woman, you have been silent since the start.  
Do you have no tale you wish to impart?  
Your eyes belie a mind that is keen  
Please tell us some of what you have seen.

Dear host, my tale would not compare  
To the lively tales we've had to bear.  
I would not want to cause the troop to fall  
From the boredom I would surely bring to all.

Old woman, I cannot believe you have no tale to tell  
You have lived so long, though seems not too well.  
You know the bet, you chose to join the ride  
So begin your tale, no more to hide.

(Prologue of the Old Nun)

With robes of rags, she now dresses,  
Gray strings of hair her lowly tresses.  
A face of lines and scars, a mask she must wear  
A curse of repentance she has to bear.

She once was a dame of some renown  
But did not cherish what she had found.  
Lust and greed led her down a path  
Of ruin and loneliness with no way back.

Since she has no choice but to travel on  
She will tell of how her life went wrong.  
Maybe some will learn a lesson  
When hearing of her true confession.

### **The Old Nun's Tale**

I'll begin my tale of what used to be  
And finish with what you all can see.  
A life that was once so grand

To wandering about with this curious band.

Believe this tale, for it is true  
The same could happen to any one of you.  
Trust and cherish what God has given  
Or from his grace you will be driven.

I had a love, a man so kind  
And to my beauty he was so blind.  
I used his trust to make me rich  
He could not see I was a bitch.

He sang me ballads, this sweet music man.  
He charmed the throngs as only angels can.  
But his heart belonged to only me  
And I used this well, as you will see.

We lived in bliss until the day  
His children came with us to stay.  
His love for them was very great  
I knew at once, they had sealed my fate.

I had no wish to be a mother  
Time and tenderness were such a bother.  
I pretended joy at the prospect  
To love, nurture, and protect.

The children, though, could not be fooled  
They knew the truth, no matter how I drooled.  
Their eyes could see right to my soul  
How to control them was my only goal.

If their father ever was to discover  
I really did not want to be their mother  
His love and riches would soon depart  
My hold would be gone from his heart.

I lied and plotted day by day  
To devise a plan to send them away.  
I drove a wedge so deep and wide  
That from my sight they all would hide.

One by one they left the nest.  
I won the game, I did my best.  
He followed me wherever I chose.

His life before me I brought to close.

Once again I led and he followed  
Every lie was so easily swallowed.  
There was no fault he would not forgive  
As long as I chose with him to live.

All was well, or so I thought  
Until with a lover I was caught.  
His pain was more than I could repair  
He no longer listened, no more could care.

From that day on he cursed my being  
His eyes now became all seeing.  
He soon discovered all my plots  
He never forgave, and never forgot.

His mournful song was heard on high  
By the angels who proclaimed I should die.  
But his kind soul would not condemn me  
He just prayed to be rid of me.

The angels granted this, but added more  
Upon my face they scribed these sores.  
My riches all to be forsaken  
And to a life of servitude I was taken.

So now I wander aimlessly  
No love will there ever be for me  
I am forever cursed to loneliness  
My deeds and lies led me to this mess.

I cannot die from my own hand  
I am forced to roam throughout the land.  
I pray for the day someone will kill me  
So I can finally rest completely.

My love has since died and gone to heaven  
Perhaps someday I will be forgiven.  
His hatred could not last through eternity  
But the angels may never set me free.

I have learned, yes I have found  
What goes by comes back around.  
I was so evil and now must pay



So each day I wander and pray and pray.

This is my tale, one true and long  
My life is hell for all my wrong.  
So if you listened and if you heard  
You will pay great heed to all my words.

Live well, love true, and do not deceive  
Or you will have so much to grieve.  
My story is sad but true.  
So now I am done... May God bless you.

—*Tanya Grandillo*

## Ordinary Stories

The sun is a great big incandescent light bulb  
up in the baby blue stucco ceiling we call the sky  
The rain comes from a leaky roof  
And the soil is just a buildup of dust  
I like to believe big things  
Are just little things but bigger  
The night sky is a black cotton handkerchief  
And the stars just tears in the fabric  
Because infinity scares me more than I'd like to admit  
It's easier to think  
That the clouds are stains across a ceiling  
Than thinking that they are billions of water droplets and particles  
Close together  
I can't even count to one billion,  
Let alone two  
Maybe others can grapple with the idea of infinity  
Define it for themselves, reason with it, or just ignore it  
But I can't  
It's too easy to get lost when the universe has no edge  
It's too hard to fathom how I  
And everything I will ever know  
Is microscopic and unimportant compared to a galaxy  
Or a nebulae  
Or even a star  
I explain away the mysteries of my world  
With ordinary stories  
Because I can't handle what else they could be

—*Ruksana Kabealo*

## Seeds of Doubt

The seeds of doubt you sowed in my heart  
Lie still while I lay next to you, awake  
But when you left the room they sprouted and bloomed  
Causing my heart to break  
Their bitter tendrils crawled up through my throat, making it hard to breathe.  
You were my water, my sun, and my shade  
Why did you have to leave?

—*Ruksana Kabealo*

# What Am I To You?

What am I to you?  
Am I a ghost?  
Twin voids where the air from my lungs should be  
The shadow of the girl who could have been  
Is that why you touch me so nervously?  
For fear of the faint  
For fear of what you don't quite understand  
Am I a doll?  
Eyes glassy, unblinking  
Limbs carved from porcelain  
Is that why you touch me so delicately?  
For fear of breaking what broke inside long ago  
For fear of cracking my fragile frame  
Am I a corpse?  
Another mistake to be buried  
A reminder that death is always close behind us  
Is that why you touch me so hesitantly?  
For fear of my skin rotting away at your fingertips  
For fear of contamination  
Or am I human?  
Flesh and blood in your arms  
All life and emotion and biological clockwork  
Is that why you touch me so lovingly?  
To feel my heart beating alongside yours  
As if we were two overflowing bodies in an empty room  
Spilling our hearts into each other  
Is that why you touch me so sweetly?  
To feel that current that constantly surges between us  
Sometimes static electricity, sometimes a lightning bolt  
Apart we may be broken, but together we form a closed circuit  
It's a wonderful comfort, knowing there will always be a pair of open arms to  
come home to  
I will always know what you are to me  
But I may never know what I am to you  
I may never know if the lightness of your touch is because you are repulsed  
Or afraid  
Or because you love me in a complex and beautiful way I will never fully under-  
stand  
So I keep guessing

—*Ruksana Kabealo*

# Butterfly

I want a heart with wings  
like butterflies  
fluttering away into the azure sky  
kissing the clouds  
flitting about carefree.

I want a soul that cries  
like the sky opening up,  
rain falling down in a tidal wave,  
washing up on shore,  
the ocean opening its hungry mouth,  
collecting seashells like I love you's.

I want a body like a tree,  
strong and steady,  
that you can carve your name into  
so it grows with me  
high into the sun.

I want a love like time  
never ending,  
where laughs are the seconds,  
hugs are the minutes,  
and kisses are the hours.

I want a life with you,  
a one where I say I do,  
not just on our wedding day,  
but every day  
when I come home,  
melting into our arms,  
getting lost in each other  
like a butterfly in the sky,  
a storm in the night,  
and a tree in the forest.

—Brittany Larson

## Poison Love

You have serpents in your mouth  
Slithering and hissing  
Your words  
Dripping with venom  
Poison hanging on their tongues  
You're like Satan  
When he appeared to Eve  
Speaking lies so sweet  
Making me believe your temptation  
Convincing me to take that bite  
Taste the forbidden fruit  
A demon masquerading as a saint  
Using your charisma to pull people in  
Smooth as glass eyes  
With an evil glimmer  
So alluring  
Captivating me and everyone around you  
Your sweet nothings graze our ears  
As you slink your way around the truth  
Your lethal deceit  
Squeezing out the life  
Of everything that once was pure  
I didn't want to believe you  
But with words so sweet  
I was caught in your trap  
Falling for your snake like charm  
Something so vile never looked so lovely  
Your sick fabrication of truth  
Stringing me along  
Pulling me in deeper and deeper  
Into a fatal attraction  
That no one else could understand  
Your toxins invading my bloodstream  
Making me hooked  
Craving more  
Wanting that feeling

Not knowing it was a sickness  
A virus disguised as love  
Every time you kissed me  
My life was being drained  
As you contaminated my soul  
Perversion taking its hold  
Slowly killing me  
But I didn't want it to stop  
I didn't want to let go  
Thinking I could change you  
Stop the vicious cycle of sins  
But I was already in too deep  
Already infected by your sting

—*Brittany Larson*

## The Color of the Rhino's Tusk

Sometimes when I paint,  
I let my primal instincts take over.

The way my hands move  
    with a slow prow,  
        like a dark panther  
        meandering in search of prey.

The electric twitching  
    of my fingers over the canvas  
flash like fireflies in the  
        late July sky.

The smudging and nudging  
of paint smeared  
    on the blank canvas  
        ignites a carnal hunger

resonating  
    within my soul.

Burgundy paint s p l a t t e r s  
    on my face like blood  
        while my heart races beneath  
        my skin.

It's not until I'm standing  
    in front of my mother's  
        white, porcelain sink  
watching as the bright corals swirl  
    with the savannah yellows,  
        and the sultry shades of orange,  
mixing into a dark blood red stream,  
    that I realize it was all just a dream.

—Brittany Violet Long



## Remembering Keven

I was sitting half awake in my twentieth century poetry class,  
when I started snooping the World Wide Web,  
searching for your face.

My conscience told me not to;  
but my heart still wanted to know.

Sometimes I sit and wonder if you think about me:  
Do you remember the glassy brightness of my eyes?  
Do you remember the sound of my voice in your ear?  
Do you remember the freckles splattered on my nose?  
Do you remember the way my lips felt against your own?  
Do you remember the weight of my head on your shoulder?

Do you miss me, Keven?  
Or am I just somebody you used to know once, a long, long time ago?

I remember the way you used to twirl  
my hair between your rough fingertips  
late at night while I sat next to you in  
your beige Chevy pick-up truck.

Still your ghost haunts me.  
I see you driving past me in your truck.  
I see you in the grocery store late at night.  
I see you shooting pool at the Kickstand Bar.

But when I search for you,  
you are not there.

It hurts like a rusty dagger probing an infected wound  
knowing that you don't think about me at all.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

## Denial

Because I was in a state of complete denial,  
I didn't notice you removing your hand from the small of my back  
or how the violet moonlight was illuminating your face.  
I wasn't aware that the air seemed thick like tar.  
But I thought I saw a glimmer  
or a brief, slight change playing in your features.  
Your lips were twitching with muted words  
but all I could hear was the screaming silence;  
the bitter sound of disillusionment whispering in my ear.  
I told you that I was in love with you,  
while I was staring at the stars.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

## For Brandon

Your voice still haunts me  
like those white rocking chairs  
on the veranda or the handprints  
on the mirror that just  
wont go away

I still see you  
standing there in the shadows  
back against the garage door  
white smoke cascading from your lips  
like the fog creeping  
across the lawn

Your somber eyes still hold  
that shallow stare, hollow  
like your empty room  
it's a tempting façade  
but an empty tomb

Sometimes you come to me  
in my dreams, while  
everyone else is sleeping

Your sly smile beckons me  
with that sweet come hither

I wander dark hallways  
searching for your face  
but the darkness is consuming  
like a candle snuffed out  
twenty-two years too soon.

Your voice echoes, resonating  
and angelic like a boy  
whose cheeks are pink  
with delight; like a boy  
whose tiny shoulders  
have never felt the weight  
of the world

"Don't cry." You tell me. "I'm right here."  
"It's all gonna be okay."

—*Brittany Violet Long*

## From the Girl who Fell with Star

Make no mistake, sir,  
I'm writing this for you,  
and you know who you are:  
the silver-tongued serpent  
that killed the shooting Star.  
You, Captain; my father  
first mate, sailed this ship  
on the seas of space.  
Star was your Titanic,  
and we wish you knew  
the mechanical dynamics  
of the engines that you flew.

"But sir," my father pleaded,  
    "You'll use more fuel  
    than we replace."  
    You, Captain,  
    Looked him in the eye,  
cruel grin upon your face.  
"My boy, don't tell me what to do.  
Know your place, step back in line,  
and learn how proper racing's done.  
With my flying we'll be fine."  
    You threw back your head  
    and commanded again,  
    "Full speed ahead, boys.  
    I must win!"  
    Full throttle, light speed,  
    engines jumped to work.  
    Pistons rose and fell, driving  
    Star forward until  
    she gave a tired shudder  
    yet trudged on further still.  
    Engines buckled and bent  
    with terrifying crunch.  
    Smoke rose, engineers fled  
    fearing for their lives.  
Out of her bowels Star bled  
chemical fire tainted bloody red.

Down in the hull sang we families  
    you never tried to know.  
Song interrupted by an odd sound  
from the engine room below.  
First a deep rumble, then a jolt,  
chaos, explosions, fire.  
Radiative rage surrounds us,  
now screaming. Crying. Tortured  
cries fall flat in stagnant air.  
Star stops, but the flames  
are insatiable.  
Death is slow  
and agonizing.

"She's dead in the water,  
I'll get a new ship!"  
you called to your dying  
crew. "I promise," you swore,  
"I'll return and rescue you!"  
Alone in your escape pod, how does it feel?  
Does guilt wash over you?  
    Played your political game,  
gambled with our fates  
and lost.  
Guess who is paying?

Oh, and do we feel it.  
Cinders, blazing, sink into our skin.  
Red metal singses our soft soles.  
Gases choke our barely breathing lungs.  
Radiation makes us ill and crippled.  
We pray for relief and safety  
that never comes.

Captain, as my flesh burns  
    from my bones,  
    sinewy skin seared,  
    you plague my mind.  
You were irresponsible, pompous,  
    all talk, Wormtongue.

Respectfully, sir,  
you've screwed with my life,  
and I'd like you to know  
    what you've done.  
My flesh tears away in chunks.

I am burning.  
Still burning.  
Dear *God*,  
    have mercy.

I've heard of your new ship.  
Mythical Moghozi.  
I hate it.  
I know it won't save us.  
We scream, burning in fallout of Star,  
flames licking our once joyful faces.  
Feels like eternity in purgatory.  
And you, Captain.  
Well, aren't you *proud*?  
Sixty some families fall in flames  
and the blame is entirely yours.

Star, her hulking frame  
crashes toward the earth  
like some ghoulish cadaver  
back for vengeance.  
We don't know where she'll land,  
but we know where we'd *like* her to.  
We will land this thing on your head if it kills us.

Captain, dear Captain, remember me  
when you lay sleepless at night,  
thoughts swimming in your mind  
like sharks. Stare, horrified, out your window  
at that green streak of light among the stars,  
and know that you won't easily hide under my radar.  
I am the girl who rides the tail of the falling Star  
that you shot down in clumsy flight  
and now watch from afar.

—Kathlyn Longtime

## Duplicity

A frozen tundra  
Or, a barren wasteland  
A cover I can't see through  
—Can God see through?—  
It covers all and blinds  
My eyes  
Home and earth and sea  
Everything we have come to be  
Is hidden from  
My sight  
Are you redemption or a  
Lie?

—*Andrew Pinkerton*

## To my recycled friends

stuck like green arrows in a gyre,

I know you're tired

of my shit.

But we can compost and come to an agreement.

I'm sure of it.

I'd feel wretched to

never be a building

or former tin or an aluminum

bat

swinging. Homer

said, "We men are wretched things."

No, don't throw me away, again.

I'm left

blue as a city recycling bin.

Just say the word, and

I'll save every fragment.

Hoarding is harder than it seems,

though.

Homer said, "We men are wretched things,"

but I promise something more real.

—*Tim West*



## Philip Levine

On a day cold enough to kill poetry,  
Philip Levine died.  
They feed they lion. They lie so  
he goes unheeded, so  
we have no time for living or Levine  
amid the monotonous clacking and cracks  
or slope of our shoulders to the keyboard.  
We're fat and tired and at our dead-  
line piled in the towering offices at the dead-  
end where the factories once stood.  
I'm a step further from where I was headed.  
Oil drenched through Detroit's work-gloves,  
the windchill aching into the Midwest's  
bones like a shift on the brake line.  
Can you imagine the air filled with smoke?  
On a break, maybe after the lunch bell,  
yes. They feed they lion, Phil.

—Tim West

*This occasional verse refers to Philip Levine, the revered Detroit-area blue-collar poet, who died on February 14 of this year at the age of 87. —Eds.*

# A Suite of Nonets

**Note:** A “nonet” is a poetic form that is inspired by the musical term of the same name, which refers to a composition that requires nine musicians for a performance. In poetry, a nonet is a poem that consists of lines of descending syllable count, starting from nine. That is, the first line of a nonet has nine syllables, the second has eight, the third has seven, etc.

In the last couple of “Kapow!” meetings this spring semester, we’ve written some group nonets, in which one of us would write a line, pass on the poem to the next person in the group, who’d then write the second line of the nonet and then pass the developing poem to the next person in the group, etc. As in any such group endeavor, while there may at times be a lack of consistency from line to line, there is also, we have found, moments of surprise and delight, as well.

—Stuart Lishan (Faculty Advisor, “Kapow!”)

I. I’m on cloud nine with my cool nonet!  
I bet you will want to read this  
as your mind fills with wonders  
like dream salamanders.  
What is your next thought,  
drifting away,  
like today?  
Think on,  
now!

—Brittany Larson, Stuart Lishan, Jawonne Seabon

II. Surely we can run with a cool breeze  
soaking up sunlight’s memory,  
grooving on life’s scenery,  
loving where we are now.

I can feel so much,  
reel in your touch.

Give me peace,  
alone,  
home.

—Brittany Larson, Stuart Lishan, Jawonne Seabon

III. I can find peace where others may not,  
drinking juice on a used car lot,  
staring at my dog's sun spot.

Lazily start to dream,  
like mist in a scream:

I can love these things.  
I can see  
past me,  
there!

—Brittany Larson, Stuart Lishan, Jawonne Seabon

IV. What would you for a Klondike Bar?  
Well, depends on whom I'm asking,  
or where you are, in Ferguson?  
I don't like ice cream, though.  
Heck, that's not my fault.

What DO you want?  
Blond dyke? Bar?

Stop it!  
Please.

—Brittany Larson, Kris Kasotis, Emma Smith, Stuart Lishan

V. Heart, you ain't got no go round no more,  
your beats starting to lose tempo.  
And if they halt, you don't know.

Could be the caffeine... or  
a snowfall of beans  
or hazy dreams,  
love's true things.  
Could be  
bliss.

—Brittany Larson, Kris Kasotis, Emma Smith, Stuart Lishan



# SCARED

*Michelle Brewer-Bunnell*

WERE THERE EVER A MOMENT IN THE HISTORY OF TIME that a woman could surpass her destiny in such a manner that she could take it over and shape it, Anna would have assumed that it would fall to someone brave and flawless. As it were, she was neither of those things and took an almost pride in the fact that she was entirely ordinary. She knew there would be no eternal glory in living her life, nor would there be great eulogies given in her death. These were the gentle understandings that gave her existence meaning as she opened her eyes, waking up for the day.

Anna stretched in her bed, feeling each muscle pull gently as her body remembered how to function. There was a gentle ache in her bones, which she wrote off as a reaction to her late night study habits. Rubbing her eyes, Anna swung her legs onto the floor, letting the chill of the wood seep into the soles of her feet. Her head hurt slightly and it wasn't until she stood up that she remembered exactly why she felt so poorly. She'd just gotten over the flu, and it was rather icy the week before. Anna had managed to keep her footing up until she had gotten into the school. The horde of people who had gone in before her had left a trail of water and ice all the way to her locker. The first step into the school was steady and as she lifted her foot to take another step, she'd felt hot and cold all over. The next thing she knew, Anna was on the floor.

It had taken Anna a few moments to realize where she was and what had happened. Her brain felt sloshy, her heart was racing and people were standing all around her, watching her get up. The principal

came over and asked if she was okay. Anna did the one thing she could compute: Anna lied. She claimed the floor was just slippery (which, in fact, it was) and that her foot had slipped on the water and that she was alright. After giving her a quick look over, the principal offered her his hand and she shook her head, pushed off from the floor and went to class. Anna tried to replay the situation over in her mind, but kept coming back to the same conclusion: she had not slipped. Anna had passed out.

The rest of the day went smoothly and Anna gradually overcame the queasy feeling in her stomach. She nibbled at lunch and dinner, telling her mother the same story she had told the principal when Anna told her about falling in the walkway of the school. Anna had done a little homework and gone to bed. The next morning when she woke up, Anna was sore and bruised all over.

The bruises were deep purple, like squashed plums with little blue borders. If they didn't hurt so badly, Anna would have kept poking them, to watch the colors change from the pressure. Anna had worn long sleeve shirts every day for a week to hide them and was rather curious to see at the end of that week that none of the bruises were showing any signs of yellowing. In fact, the more Anna examined her legs and arms in the mirror, they looked as if they got a little more purple every day. She didn't mind so much, but the middle of her back, where she assumed that she had landed was a deep wine colored mark. It was this bruise in particular that caused her so much trouble while attempting to sleep that she had been sleeping on her stomach,

which translated into not much sleep at all.

"Mom," Anna asked over her cup of coffee, "how long are bruises supposed to last? It's like a week, right?" She tried as hard as she could to keep a level voice, fighting the grumpiness that she knew resulted from her lack of sleep.

"That sounds about right, why? Are you okay?" Her mother did not look at her while she was cutting up tomatoes for that night's supper. Even so, her voice was a little shaky with concern. Anna knew that she would have to do some playing down of her own concern, just to make sure that her mother didn't go into a panic.

"Oh I'm fine. It's just the bruise on my back is still sore and I just want to sleep like a normal person again. I get so grumpy when I don't sleep well. No worries. I'm probably just impatient." Anna, convinced she had done a decent job glossing over the situation, took a big sip of coffee and began to pack up her school supplies. Even though she had her own concerns, she couldn't let her mother see how worried she actually was.

"Well. Let me see and I'll let you know how many more days I think you'll have to stomach it." Her mother winked her direction, alluding to the fact that she knew how Anna had been sleeping. Anna, catching the joke, snorted a laugh and pulled up her shirt to just under her bra band. Her mother, still with the knife in hand, turned around to look at Anna's back and gasped. Anna heard the knife hit the counter and shimmied her shirt back down so that she could face her mother.

"So I take it I have a couple

more days?" Anna tried to laugh off the shocked expression on her mother's face. "Or do I have like a big zit on my back? Or what?" Anna's voice trailed off as she noted that her mother's expression didn't lighten up.

"Mom. What's wrong?"

"How long ago did you get that bruise?" her mother stepped closer, as if she was afraid her daughter might collapse or run away. "Did you hurt yourself again?" Anna tried to piece together her mother's sentences, to formulate an idea of her own. All she could deduce was that her back looked pretty bad.

"I told you. Remember how I fell at school last week? I'm pretty sure my back got the worst of it, which is why it probably looks bad. But the ones on my arms and legs are way smaller. Honest. I feel fine. It was just a curiosity question anyway."

"Anna, why don't you go sit in the living room while I make an appointment with Doctor Mills." Her mother had already pulled the phone out of her pocket and was starting to scroll through her contacts. Anna could see her mother's hands trembling. "Mom, no really. I have school and I'm fine. Seriously. I have to go." Anna tried to argue with her mother, the grumpiness starting to show in her voice.

"Anna, you will sit on that couch, do you hear me? You will not be going back to school until you have the go-ahead from Doctor Mills. End of discussion. So sit down." Her mother's voice approached a bark by the time she ordered Anna to sit. She had the phone up to her ear, listening to the dial tone as she watched her daughter put her school supplies on the seat

beside her. Anna had not fought back, seeing the concern in her mother's eyes that so acutely mirrored her own, and knowing how out of character this was.

The drive to the doctor's office was a long one, but only from the sheer power of the awkward silence that passed undisturbed between Anna and her mother. When they finally pulled into the parking lot, Anna breathed a sigh of relief. Soon enough, she would be free to go back to school and her mother would no longer have to worry. Anna hated seeing her mother worry, but since her mother had filed for the divorce, that was all she really ever saw.

"I'm going to order some tests, just to rule out the nasty stuff and go from there. If you can, I'd like for you to get the lab work done today, and then the receptionist will set up an appointment for us to go over the results, say next week? I'll have them rush your results over to me and that way we can get you back to feeling better in no time, how's that?" Doctor Mills was a plump old man, but extremely good at his job. He listened to his patients and looked more like Santa Claus than a doctor. "And if you don't mind, Persephone, I'd like to talk to you while your daughter's getting the bloodwork done."

Anna marveled at the list of tests he wanted, not really knowing what it was exactly that he was looking for. She nodded, glad that her mother had taken over the conversation so that she didn't have to appear ignorant. However, her brain was able to piece together the fact that her mother's voice seemed distant on the walk to the lab on the next floor up. Through

her exhaustion, it became apparent that the doctor had appeared much more pleasant than he had been truthful. Her mother informed her that she would be out of school until after the results came in and they had gone over them. Anna just nodded and yawned.

The lab technician who was taking care of Anna was nice enough, but Anna still couldn't help but feel that this woman was secretly a vampire and using the whole phlebotomy job as a ruse for her real operations. Her scrubs were teal with aqua and white hearts, which accented her bright blue eyes and coppery brown hair. The woman smiled and introduced herself as Renee, but Anna was too busy mentally preparing for the pain that would be inflicted. Renee was an expert with cold hands and coached Anna through her procedure. Anna watched the blood seep from her arm into the vacuumed tube and before she realized it, she was done. Renee told her to put pressure on the wound and then turned away for a moment.

When Renee turned back around, Anna laughed. Renee had pulled out every roll of the ropey surgical tape that she had access to and wore them like rings. "Here's the deal. We can either go with an incredibly boring Band-Aid, a monster truck Band-Aid, or there's option three."

"What's option three?" Anna asked, smiling widely. Already, she had forgotten the pain of the needle that had been in her arm only seconds before.

"I like to think of option three as surgically inspired abstract art." Renee brandished her rolls of tape, wiggling her fingers back and forth. Anna noticed that Renee hadn't actu-

ally pulled out either of the other two options and nodded giddily when Renee added, "You pick out the colors; I will be the master artiste!" Anna of course, picked out the turquoise, black and neon pink rolls and true to her word Renee began to immediately and expertly tape up Anna's arm. Although Renee did not use as much of the tape as Anna might have, there was something crafty and elegant about the way the crook of Anna's arm turned out. It was like a little turtle shell of camouflage and Anna thanked her sincerely.

"Do you think we could stop anywhere to get something to eat? Or do we have enough money in the jar?" Anna asked as she reunited with her mother. Seeing Anna take an interest in food, her mother brightened up. Regardless of how much was in the jar, Anna's mother turned in to the closest restaurant and let Anna order everything she wanted. Anna had the feeling that the doctor had told her mother something while she had been in the lab with Renee. But what could he have possibly told her that would make her okay with spending money so frivolously?

Waiting at home for the labs to come in was one of the most agonizingly boring things Anna had ever done. Her mother had to work every day except the weekend and that meant four days of being by herself. After immediately balking at the idea, Anna soon found herself far too tired to mind. By the time the weekend came, she was sleeping more than she was awake. Her mother noticed, but said nothing, causing Anna to once again wonder what it was that she wasn't being told.

Monday morning was a driz-





remarked:

"Look, doc, it's not like I have cancer. How bad can the news be?" Anna's mother guffawed as though in pain and Anna understood. So she did have cancer. That's what all this was about. She was maybe even dying. Her mind no longer stopped her from going down the deep and twisted paths of her conscious and fear crept into her very soul. The more she comprehended, the more serious her face became. Anna had never known fear like this.

"Anna, I know this news is hard. But as I have told your mother, cancer is no longer the fearful disease it used to be. It's no longer a death sentence. And your specific kind of cancer is a perfect example of this. In fact, there's a new treatment out, and it looks like you might be an ideal candidate, having been so early in detection. Do you want to go into the specifics, or shall I give you some reading material first?"

Anna looked down at her list of suggested books, crossing off the very last one. That conversation seemed like years ago, when in fact it had been only a couple weeks. The treatment that the doctor had suggested had been a new form of chemo; it was like a concentration of little cancer killers seeping into her body, waiting to take out the enemy. But what Anna hadn't known was that the medicine would also think her own body was the enemy. She grew worse and worse, barely being able to keep liquids down, let alone food. Her body wasted away while her face grew more and more bloated. The nurses all said this was normal, but she no longer felt normal. She felt like death.

Anna laid on the hospital

bed, waiting for the doctor to come and clear her for discharge, when she began to cough. It was a raspy kind of crackling cough that more often than not turned into bronchitis or something equally as dastardly. Anna's mother grew nervous, offering her a glass of water, watching as her daughter choked on air. It was the panicked look in Anna's eyes that sent her mother for the nurses. It was the panic in her mother's eyes that made Anna close her own.

As she closed her eyes, she dreamed she was flying, up in the clouds. The air was pure up there, the clouds tasting just like snowflakes. But the view was to die for. Anna assumed that this is what she would do if she died right then; she would float among the clouds, basking in the sunlight and dancing until she was absorbed into the scenery. It would be a perfect existence.

Persephone watched as her daughter was put on a respirator and returned to a more acceptable shade of humanistic peach. Although her daughter never let on, she knew that chemo had to be so terrible to endure. The reading list that the doctor had given her did not mention all of the side effects, but it made it quite clear that Anna was going to pass through hell just to get her chance to live. And Anna didn't look like she was doing so well. Anna appeared peaceful, just sleeping there on the hospital bed. But the medical team told her that it didn't look like Anna was strong enough to breathe on her own yet. Anna's mother took that yet to mean at all and so the doctors and nurses put her into sedation.

On the third day of her uncon-

sciousness, Anna started having heart troubles. Her heart seemed to pump at odd intervals and without much order. It was that night, after all the other visitors had gone away, that Anna's mother pulled the curtain around her daughter and began to pray.

"Mother Goddess, it's me again. I know I haven't done this in a while, but I don't know what else to do. It's my daughter, Anna. I can't..." She struggled to keep the tears from her eyes, her voice shaking. "She's all I have and she's so brave. But my little warrior princess can only fight so hard and she's barely hanging on. I don't even know that you're listening, but I'll do anything for my baby girl. I know I'm nothing special, but I will take her place if that's what you ask of me. Please keep her safe and hold her hand, as she crosses through the Summerland." Anna's mother could no longer control her weeping and she was thankful Anna was in a medicated slumber. "Give blessed life to Anna's body, by Danu's love, so mote it be."

Anna was able to come out of the induced coma the very next day. Her lungs had been fighting for their own right to breathe and Anna coughed up the tube just a little while after that. Within a week, she was allowed to go back home. Her mother watched over her every night, sleeping in the same room, in the rocking chair from Anna's childhood. Usually she woke up before Anna did, and there were no hiccups or surprises in that schedule. Which is why the Sunday before she had to return to work, her heart dropped as Anna screamed out.

Anna was standing there, a frail ghost of the girl she once had been, looking at her pillow. Thinking

it was a spider or something equally as troubling, her mother grabbed a book with which to squash it. But it wasn't a pest that caused Anna such terror, it was something far more personal. On her pillow, the cruelest of all fates, was her hair. Anna, in the midst of her whimpers and gasping sobs, turned toward her mother and crumpled to the ground.

"I'm going to die." She whispered, dropping her head. "I'm ugly and fat and now my hair is falling out and I'm going to die! This has all been for nothing!" Hysteria washed over Anna as her mother held her close.

"You're not going to die until you're an old woman, with thick braids and a husband and a hundred grandchildren. I promise, sweetheart." Her mother was careful to keep her voice calm and collected, the exact opposite of how she felt.

"Liar." Anna shrugged away from her mother's embrace. "I'm going to die and I'm going to die alone. There is no justice or hope left for me. Not anymore. I'm so scared, Mom. I never wanted this. Any of this. I didn't even have a choice." And as her voice grew more and more quiet, Anna's resolve grew stronger. She dropped the hair she had been holding back onto her pillow and looked her mother in the eyes. "If this is how my destiny looks, I think it's time I laugh in its face."

Anna took a chunk of hair in her hands and began to pull with all her might, watching handful after handful fall from her head. Her mother just sat there, waiting for her daughter to realize what she was doing. As Anna approached the end of her hair, her mother stood up and smiled at her.

"My beautiful daughter, let me

help you." Her mother hugged her and then backed away slowly. "I may not be able to make your hair grow back or cure your cancer, but you will never be alone." Anna watched as her mother went into the bathroom and picked up the electric razor. "Will you help me with the back parts, darling?" Anna began to object, but her mother had already started to cut away her hair. As they worked together, tears and hair began to fall in unison, until they both stood there perfectly bald. Persephone kissed Anna's head and together they walked out to the kitchen.

"It's entirely bizarre how much we take for granted something like hair. We just expect it to always be there, like the ones we love." Anna's mother wiped away the latest tear from her eyes. "Life may never be fair or just or give us everything we want. But no matter where life takes you, so long as you have love and faith, you'll have all you really need. So, I stand here today, not as a beautiful student, like my precious daughter was, but as a reminder that you can never take your lives or anything in them, for granted. Use your education, make mistakes, and change your mind. But in the end, love fiercely, love openly and you'll never be alone. Thank you, class of 2011, for accepting my daughter as one of your own and in Anna's own words: 'hell yea, we made it!'" Persephone watched as three hundred of her daughter's friends flipped their caps into the sky, presenting their bald heads for the world to see. Her vision clouded at the show of loyalty. They had all shaved their heads for Anna and she knew that her daughter was looking down, smiling. Because in this moment, she was no longer scared, she was loved.

# I KNOW

*Johana Langova*

"Do you see that?"

"See what?"

"Over there, on the branch, the bird. Do you see it?"

"It's adorable!" I cry out as she takes my hand and we try to sneak off towards the bird who is hopping around on the branch. As we get a couple meters closer to it, it notices us and flies off.

"Drats," she sighs, her little six year old voice filled with regret as she lets go of my hand.

I laugh at her and shake my head, "Come on, let's go pick raspberries!" I take her hand again and drag her off through the little meadow and back into the trees to the raspberry bushes. The long grass, enveloped in morning dew, soaks our legs and the icy morning chill bites and growls at our goosebumps. Our matching shirts—the same ones that our parents wore when they were younger—are slightly damp against our skin.

I jump into the bushes, ignoring the thorns digging into my skin. I pretend they're the fairies, trying to keep us humans away from their precious treasures.

"You're too obsessed!" her childish laugh dancing through the air as I feverishly attack the raspberry bushes.

"Oh, we should save some for the others! I could make pancakes and berry sauce!" I smile at her and throw a raspberry at her. She shakes her head and I take off my hat, made of straw and falling apart, and start putting raspberries in it.

She sighs, but starts picking raspberries with me, because secretly she wants pancakes and berry sauce too. I look at her, trying to keep my eyes from watering and she looks at me at the moment, noticing my expression, "I know," she says and hugs me.

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"Look at this!"

"Jezisi marja, what is it again?"

"Look! A meadow! Of blueberries!" I pull at her hand in the direction of the meadow, acting like a toddler instead of the twelve year old I am.

"It's beautiful," she says after a while, throw-

ing her cigarette butt on the ground.

The pine forest gives way to a meadow full of knee high blueberry shrubs, with moss and grass mingling amongst them. The sun is shining bright, making everything a perfect temperature for lounging. On the other side of the meadow, there's a slope where you can see the rest of the mountains, green and lush and lower than the one we are on. The slope is white, almost blinding with how it contrasts with the greens and blues of the world around us. We plop down, and start eating the blueberries. After a while I take out a handkerchief and, making a bowl out of it, start collecting berries. I start singing traditional Moravian songs as she starts to hum to them. Soon, she falls asleep beside me and I lay down next to her, staring at the sky framed with pine trees and blueberry bushes, and I desperately wish that I won't have to leave again. Leave this paradise.

Then I notice her eyes on me and she smiles sadly at me, understanding, "I know," is all she says as she puts my head on her lap.

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"Is this one edible?" I ask her as I set my half filled basket on the ground.

Her face is older now, more serious, her voice rough from years of smoking and it makes me think of the harsh past five years she's had to endure. She sighs, "I think so...though it is a bit green, isn't it? Let's leave it be."

"Alright," I say and get up from the pine needle and moss ground. I pick off a few needles from my dress

and grab my basket. She's standing on the slope, overlooking the dark mountain in front of us.

"I miss Dad," she whispers, the shadows from my old straw hat making her face look foreign. I take her hand and squeeze it, "I know," is all I say and she trembles, looking at me with a sad smile, before looking far away again.

"It's just...why?"

"No one can answer that," I tell her and she slides down onto the ground, basket full of mushrooms forgotten. I slide down next to her and embrace her. She just stares off into the dark pines and dark storming skies. I start plaiting her hair, still amazed that she has it. When we were younger, it all fell out. Little pieces of hair on the couch, the bed...all of it falling off in the bathtub. The doctors said it was an immune disorder, switched on by stress. The stress of her father becoming ill all of a sudden. It's a wonder that she has hair now, especially after all that's happened.

And I start to think of my uncle, who for three years laid in the hospital with lock-in-syndrome and ignore the tears that want out- it's too late for tears. I'm too used to their threats. I've seen pictures of him, looking exactly like the picture of my great-grandfather when he was rescued from Mauthausen. A skeleton curling in on itself, with wide open, never blinking eyes. The feeling of horror as you stare at the living corpse and realize that just a few months ago you had been laughing with it, without a care in the world. And now it's not him, it's an it and it can hear your sobs but can't comfort you, because it's paralyzed human flesh. I stare up at the dark clouds for a

minute and sigh.

"I wish I could have seen him before he died," I say as I tie off her hair.

The sky starts to cry-slowly. It's tremors of pain resonating in rumbles and lightning.

"No you don't," then she stops, "I know you wanted to, but it was for the best. If you had collapsed due to the stress of seeing him, it would just add on to everyone's stress. But at least you'll remember him like the way he was."

I snort and help her up, "Shh...I know. I know." I grab our baskets, "It'll start pouring soon, let's get inside."

"Why can't we dance in it like we used to?" she asks, her voice losing its roughness, sounding too much like when we were little. For a minute nostalgia overwhelms me and I want to cry. But I don't, I never do.

"We can," I tell her, "Let's just go put these inside and get the radio, okay?" I had been the one to teach her to dance in the rain. I still remember all the times we'd come back into our grandparents house, mud on our bare feet and wet like cats.

We start the trek back home, the sound of the rain hitting the trees accompanying us. After a kilometer or so of beautiful quiet, we reach the white washed cabin where my mother is sitting with one of our other uncles.

"Oh goodness! You're soaked! Go take a hot bath!" my Mom starts fretting over us as Jiri, our uncle, takes the mushrooms, smiling.

"Jana, let them be. Hmm... there's some yellow mushrooms here..."

My mom looks at him and

glares at being reminded of almost poisoning the entire family.

"We'll be upstairs!" I shout, grabbing my cousin's hand and pulling her inside. We take off our shoes and run through the living room, ignoring the urn as we make our way up the winding wooden staircase and into our attic room. I grab the small portable radio as Eva opens the window and we climb out onto the roof. I close the window and Eva gracefully climbs down to the ground using only the gutter. Once she's on the ground, she helps me down. And not for the first time, I wish I was taller than her. I smile at her and taking each other's hands we run off, in search of a good place to dance.



**ON QUIET-  
ING MY INNER  
MONOLOGUE**

*Brittany Violet Long*

SOMETIMES, I TRAVEL UPON THE WATERS TO ESCAPE my mundane life. The wind tousles my hair and fills my nostrils with its briny scents. Adventure awaits me. An aura of transcendence captures my being when my feet pass from the rickety, wooden dock to my home upon the water; where serenity floats like the clouds in the open sky; where the slumbering sun sets against rays of raspberry sorbet. Can you feel the movement of the breeze? Let it move you like swift, fleeting emotions dancing on the wind. Silence your inner monologue and listen to the whispering howl of the undulating waves that crash against the old boat, cradling it in its foamy fingertips.



**WISH UPON AN  
ARTIFICIAL STAR?**

*Chris Orban*

BY THE NUMBERS, 1.6 MEGAJOULES OF LASER LIGHT IS equivalent to the kinetic energy of an SUV barrel- ing down the highway. The energy is, of course, in photons instead of metal and speed, but you get the idea. The plan is to focus this light on a pellet not much larger than a grain of sand, crushing it to densities and temperatures compa- rable to the interior of the sun and praying that the energy of ten to a thousand SUVs—or say, a couple of high-speed subway cars—comes out in the form of heat and neutrons. Do this hundreds of times a day, somehow, presumably with help from some kind a robotic assembly line, and the age of uranium and plutonium-based nuclear reactors—that is the age of Fukushima’s and Chernobyl’s and nuclear waste with million-year half-lives—will at least begin to end.

When I told my high school biology teacher last year that I’d finished grad school and taken a research job in fusion, she wasn’t thrilled. A somewhat awkward discussion followed. Although I never actually took her environmen- tal science course, I knew simplicity was a core principle of her life and that she was the only teacher at my central Florida high school who rode a bike for most of the year. Despite the heat that day her house was un-airconditioned but relatively cool. I noticed Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* on her lamp stand and asked her about it. Required reading for one of her classes. I’d been meaning to read my own copy of the book sitting at home, but I’d been too busy finishing up my astrophysics Ph.D. to do it. I told her that com- pared to a career in astronomy I was glad to take up a job doing research that might actually help someone. It’s harder to argue with that one.

She was right to be skeptical. Most environmentally-minded people have heard of fusion and are aware that it is an old idea with a still-distant payoff, if it even works at all. In 1950 the father of the Soviet H-bomb turned human- rights champion, Andrei Sakharov, along with Russian physicist, Igor Tamm, proposed con- fining a super-hot plasma with magnetic fields to achieve fusion as a source of civilian power.

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**The quest for fu-  
sion and the story  
of a young scien-  
tist trying to make  
sense of it all**

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Sakharov would later become one of very few scientists who have ever won the Nobel peace prize for the way he used his scientific freedom and prestige to speak out against the human disregard of the Soviet regime. Unfortunately, hot plasmas turned out to be much more difficult to confine than initially believed. Any lack of uniformity in the magnetic field gives the plasma an opportunity to slip away, and the interaction between the fields generated by the plasma itself and the confining magnetic field is difficult to predict and control. Such issues still frustrate efforts to achieve magnetically-confined fusion.

These complications were appreciated by 1961 when, within a year of the discovery of the laser, Sakharov proposed using the technology to spark fusion reactions. His designs were significantly improved upon in 1964 by the German-American theoretical physicist, Freidwardt Winterberg, and around the same time Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, located east of San Francisco Bay in California and just west of the mountains, carried out some of the first attempts at achieving laser-fusion in the lab and has been improving on those efforts ever since. The interest isn't entirely altruistic. The lab was created in the cold-war climate of 1952 to spur American efforts to develop the Hydro-

gen bomb. In a quintessentially American solution to the problem of keeping up with the Russians, it was decided to build another weapons laboratory to internally compete with Los Alamos National Lab in New Mexico, where much of the atom bomb development had occurred during World War II. A kind of locker-room camaraderie between the two labs has been in place ever since, but in the opinion of many, Livermore—for many years directed by Edward Teller, one of the real-life inspirations for *Dr. Strangelove*—is regarded as the better lab. Achieving significant laser-driven fusion in their latest experiment, the so-called National Ignition Facility (NIF) would be the ultimate triumph. The free trip to Stockholm would be another added perk, but it would also be a watershed moment for the nuclear weapons program. Since the Reagan administration, the United States has pledged to uphold the UN's Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which disallows and kind of full-scale nuclear weapons tests. To be able to experiment with thermonuclear explosions on this much smaller scale would be very informative for designing and maintaining the nuclear stockpile.<sup>1</sup> That's why the NIF is funded by nuclear weapons money, even though the NIF website is all about telling

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1. Although, for obvious reasons, it's hard to know exactly what the weapons program is doing with NIF, it's likely that one of the uses is in experimentally calibrating how many years a warhead can sit dormant and still successfully detonate. By far the most efficient fusion mixture (for any fusion experiment) involves two isotopes of Hydrogen called Deuterium and Tritium, which happens to ignite at the lowest temperature of any elemental combination. However, Tritium only has a half-life of fourteen years, meaning that warheads may potentially be much less explosive or even defective within a few years of construction. Without experimental tests, it's hard to confirm exactly how rapidly a given warhead will lose its peak explosive power.

schoolchildren about fusion and how they're bringing the energy of the stars to earth.

My research group orbits around Livermore. Of the twenty or so of us, at any given time it seems like at least two of us are at the lab. We have bi-weekly teleconferences, frequent e-mail correspondence, occasional visits. When they speak—drawing upon sixty years of collective and inherited wisdom in plasma and nuclear physics—we hang upon every word. There are people in our group that used to be over there. Former students from our group have gotten staff positions. Other students wish they'll have staff positions when they graduate. We talk about Livermore like it's the promised land. As if the only real consolation to a frenetic life of pushing forward research projects, to the neglect of all else, is the enjoyment of a mild climate year-round, close proximity to California wine country and a scenic, yet traffic-laden drive to and from home.

I've never quite bought into the hype, although I can plainly see the brilliance of the scientists who work there. Having spent a summer studying astrophysics at Los Alamos as an undergrad, which is also surrounded by mountains and considered by many to be a beautiful setting, my mind's eye had a pretty good feeling of what the place might be like. While at Los

Alamos I gained a respect for the value of the unclassified work being done in Department of Energy Labs, I went home that summer concluding that a staff position at one of them wasn't for me. I never got used to going to the cafeteria and wondering if weapons engineers were sitting at an adjacent table. I never got desensitized to the van rides I took to the Plutonium division, which is surrounded by barbed wire and other security measures, where I would meet the two office ladies who carpooled me back to Santa Fe. The scarcity of undergrads was also troubling. There's a certain vitality in being surrounded by students—a constant reminder that we are all learners. And, geographically, I began to doubt that a billion-dollar research lab (or, more generally, technocratic westerners) really belonged in the desert at all. Some years later my astrophysics contacts at the Lab, who work solely on unclassified research, actually left and moved to Argonne National Lab near Chicago. Their decision was at least in part from pent-up frustration about Lab culture, which tends to undervalue research that doesn't directly or indirectly serve the Lab's mission.

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In month two of my new job I got a chance to visit the promised land. Before launching into that account, let me explain that my

purpose in telling this story is that I think Livermore is the most vivid illustration of two interconnected ideas that have become integral to my sanity as a young scientist. The first is that salvation will not come by technology alone. Stated enthusiastically enough this statement is impossible to disagree with, like a shibboleth at a presidential debate. However, consider how laughable it would be to announce to your local city council, naming some environmental concern, that we should all give up on assuming that technology or the market will slowly but surely bring about a green revolution and take matters into our own hands. Scientists and engineers coming up with new green ways of meeting our needs will be a backup plan. Think of the number of magazines on the newsstand—even environmentally-themed ones—that take up the opposite premise, taking a seat on the grandstand and admiring the ingenuity of those who push forward the state-of-the-art.

For me, this is the first commandment. The second is like unto it: *The legitimacy of the quest for new technology depends upon the diligence and sincerity we apply to making use of already existing technology.* I think about this every time I see people in the physics building putting Aluminum cans in the trash bin (Aluminum being the most easily and efficiently recyclable material of what can be recycled these days

and the inhabitants of the physics building having pledged their lives to discovering things that could, eventually, inspire new technologies). On a more serious level than aluminum cans, anyone who has witnessed an F-16 fly overhead or a shuttle launch or any number of the technical feats that our civilization has achieved, instinctively knows that our current capabilities to make and design, apart from any new breakthrough, are spectacularly grand. We've simply chosen to channel those energies towards certain things and not others.

Of course, this falsely defines technology as anything that has ever graced the pages of Wired magazine. I'm reminded of the quote by Lewis Mumford: "Restore human legs as a means of travel. Pedestrians rely on food for fuel and require no special parking facilities." Technology is everywhere. It's forks and spoons, pavement, traffic signals and road paint.

Livermore is a parable to both of these commandments, first in the ironic sense that achieving laboratory fusion is simultaneously a breakthrough for the weapons program as much as it is a triumph on the road to generating power. Second, isn't it a little odd that we're so eager to tap the energy from an artificial star when, despite huge advances in solar technology, it still seems like little is being done to tap the energy of the star we already have?

Things came together for me to make a few day-visit to Livermore in the middle of February last year. A bunch of guys from our group had already been there for two weeks running a laser experiment (in a different building than NIF) and I was coming along with a professor who was checking-in on them. Taking an early-morning flight, we flew into San Francisco and drove east across the Bay, having gained time by traveling west. My last visit to the Bay area had been in kindergarten with my family – it had been a while. As I got off the plane I was greeted with a warning that “This area contains chemicals known to the State of California to cause cancer.” It was somehow reassuring to know that the State of California had the good sense to tell you like it is, even as I was walking through the carcinogenic haze.

The late-morning traffic was bad but it was a nice tour to go over the Bay and drive a little into the mountains. Upon arrival, my first interaction with the lab was the badge office, where my picture ID was made, which was given to me attached to a small radiation detector. It was designed to silently keep tally of my total radiation dose. As a theorist, there was no reasonable worry that I would really need it, but there it was. With badge in hand, we quickly drove to meet up with the guys running the experi-

ment. On the way I was surprised to notice that none of the buildings had any writings on them except a number for identification. There was little else to distinguish many of the buildings on site. When we arrived at the laser experiment, I was shocked to discover that one of the most advanced lasers in the world was housed in one of the most unremarkable buildings I have ever seen. Someone told me later that the minimalist aesthetic was designed to make the Lab difficult to bomb with any kind of precision.

Things were not going very well at the experiment. Though it was hard for me to follow the discussion, I gathered that they were struggling with getting the laser properly focused and aligned on the hair’s width center of the target they were aiming at, and set up had taken considerably longer than originally planned. This conversation was conveyed like auto mechanics reporting back to their floor boss. It was the most masculine conversation between men wearing what were, essentially, shower caps on their shoes that I have ever witnessed.

We returned to the control room and talked more shop, while other members of the team made sure everything was in place for the second and final laser shot that day. The control room itself was likewise unremarkable, with whiteboards, two flat-screen TVs on the walls showing a scant amount

of uninformative text about the state of the laser, and no windows into the experiment—a deliberate choice to prevent any possibility of laser light reaching us through it. There were no consoles or other equipment in the room either. What they could adjust remotely they did from their laptops and a band of ethernet cables which came in through the ceiling to a table in the middle of the room. The only interesting feature of the space was the door into the experiment where people would go in or come out and give a status update on the alignment or some other concern. Outside of the door was a collection of what looked like large, granny-style safety glasses, tinted with various colors to exclude certain wavelengths of laser light. Curious as I was, I almost didn't want to go through the door and get the nickel and dime tour of the experiment. It was a compelling enough story as it was. I was content with being guest-access-only forbidden from seeing it.

As things moved closer to taking the final shot of the day, since there is always some uncertainty in the experiment, for kicks they went around and took friendly bets on the exact pulse energy that would be delivered to the target. I thought this was pretty hilarious. I played it safe and picked a number near the middle. Later, they started the ten-minute countdown and a voice that sounded like Stephen Hawking came on the

overhead speakers and periodically announced that a shot was about to be fired. I began to wonder what it would actually sound like when the pulse they had spent half the day preparing for would be launched. Some kind of sparking noise? Would the discharge of the capacitor bank make a sound? The pulse hitting the target? 5... 4... 3... 2... 1...

Silence.

"Nothing?! Seriously?" I exclaimed with a boyish grin. Turns out, at least in vacuum, the sound of one of the most intense beams of light mankind has ever made hitting a target and generating a million-degree plasma is also the sound of one hand clapping. If this information ever gets out to elementary school science students, the future of laser physics could be ruined.

"Good shot!" "Nice."

The data streams in from the instruments. The shot looks good—certain to make it into the publication of their results. Things are starting to look up after earlier delays and some of the guys debate pushing back their flights home to take more data. Shutdown is relatively brief and we leave base and head for some food before returning to the "Extended Stay" hotel. This is another unremarkable building, which the guys in the group, in good spirits from a



productive day, insult with sarcastic fondness, complaining about the snoring they'll be forced to endure from the others. From my own room I call my wife and collapse into bed, having caught the 6am flight out of Ohio. It had been a big day and more than a little surreal. I've spent most of my waking moments since then running computer simulations and trying to interpret trends in the data from experiments like this that might inform some future upgrade to NIF or the construction of an even larger facility.

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We woke early to head back to the lab and make the most of the remaining time we had on the laser. Too tired to hold a conversation, we listened to heavy metal in the car through long lines of traffic which seemed to be the only kind of music anyone had on their iPhones. It was a less exciting day for me and I spent most of it hanging out in a large administrative building, chatting with other theorists and smirking at the "Unclassified Discussions Only" signs which looked like they'd been there since the Cold War.

The people I met seemed fairly relaxed and I didn't expect to see a volleyball court situated a quarter-mile away from the NIF facility. I was told one of the hot-shot theorists—who surprised me by having a tan—was a very skilled

player. Despite being a kind of military complex, it was still California.

I also met a number of European scientists who were working on NIF or, like me, were exploring the next steps for laser fusion, assuming NIF works as originally hoped. This was reassuring somehow and I was reminded that foreign scientists played an important role in the Manhattan Project in World War II. Near the center, Hans Bethe (a German) and Enrico Fermi (an Italian) made significant contributions and, famously, the project was birthed by a letter from Albert Einstein (a German émigré to Princeton) to President Roosevelt. Things haven't changed much in this sense and fusion has been an international effort through much of its history.

On our way to the cafeteria for lunch, which was as close to NIF as I've ever been, the professor I was with flagged down one of the NIF scientists he knew as they walked past. We asked him how the experiment was going. He looked a little stressed and reported that the fusion yields were lower than expected, and, frustratingly, the block of time scheduled for fusion experiments had recently run out and the weapons program would be running the NIF for a while. This also meant there would be no chance for me to get a tour of the multi-billion dollar complex. I spent another day at the lab and headed home as planned.

In the next block of time for fusion tests, the NIF team—some of them working strenuously into the night—was able, over a couple months, to optimize the implosion by adjusting the timing of the lasers and subtly changing the chemical mixture of the shell of the fusion pellet. Now, a record-smashing one-tenth of the energy that goes in through laser light gets created in fusion reactions at peak compression, a state that lasts for only a few nanoseconds. Still a long way from powering your toaster, but in the sixty-plus years since fusion was proposed no one has ever gotten this close. It'll be front-page news if they get much closer.

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Whenever I'm torn over the seeming fact that the long history of fusion research is evidence that nature doesn't really want us to bring the energy of the stars down to earth, I remember that so much of our current economy is easily classified as unnatural and that progress is often something that seems like two steps forward and one step back. Fluorescent lights, for example, work by a low-density mercury plasma that would be banished from the public sphere as a potential toxicity hazard were it not one of the most efficient ways of illuminating buildings. Automobiles (which now sometimes seem like a plague) were once a godsend to city streets which, in earlier times,

were covered in horse manure. Even the world's most efficient solar cells depend on the coincidence that two heavy metals—one being hazardous if ingested, the other can pretty much only be found and imported from a handful of mines in China—happen to be perfectly sensitive to the wavelengths of sunlight. Our relationship with technology is ongoing, never-ending. The dilemma is always to what extent we allow it to dictate our lives and to what extent we creatively use it and change it to be tools for some human-defined purpose.

The NIF, in my opinion, can not be said to uniformly fall into one or the other side of this dilemma. If it works I will raise my glass with the rest of my research group and drink the champagne that my supervising professors are likely to purchase in celebration. If it doesn't I am liable to join the voices that agree that it was never, in itself, going to rescue our power-hungry world from its own implosion. Whatever the outcome, the story of NIF—the experiment that got closer to realizing fusion energy than any that came before it—will carry the bittersweet theme that it never would have been built or survived its multi-billion dollar delays without the full pork of the US nuclear weapons program behind it. It was realized this way instead of being a victory for a trans-nationally-funded collaboration of scientists working towards an altruistic goal—the kind of inter-



nationalism Einstein and Sakharov often spoke of as integral to the character of science. During their careers – in a much less- globalized world with plenty of conflict – science was often a common ground which, somewhat like the Olympics, offered a positive venue for crossing national divides.

The world's other great fusion experiment—the ITER project—which aims to achieve fusion with something akin to Sakharov & Tamm's original proposal of magnetic plasma confinement at least, on paper, follows this internationalist model. However in practice the collaboration has been rife with nationalist infighting (e.g. which country will the multi-billion dollar experiment be built?). The US withdrew its funding this year in protest and despite planning for as long as I've been studying physics it is only now that the first bricks are being laid. From this perspective NIF is a Pyrrhic victory and ITER is a sign of the times.

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In truth, though, the international character of science is doing quite well. I'm reminded of this as a visiting professor from China moves into the vacant seat in my office. There are dozens of examples of healthy international collaborations (though mostly with far less world-changing ramifications than fusion) that are feathers in the cap of the nations involved

and evidence that we really can get along, so long as the goals are limited to things like seeking obscure particles, mapping the sky, or watching the polar ice caps melt. I'm obviously a bit of a pessimist in my view on this class of high-flying projects, but it's gotten to the point where, in a given year, it's unlikely that two professors in the same field and living in adjacent cities will interact with each other except at national or international conferences. Perhaps as fuel costs rise and budgets tighten in the coming years this may change.

In any case, the overwhelming success of science has become the hubris that fuels the collective wisdom that technology really will solve society's woes. It's a tradition that traces its roots to Kepler & Newton's heroic re-centering of the universe and Darwin's stunning rewrite of the story of how we came to be. The overconfidence generated by these achievements hovers like a ghost over the university, whispering in our ears, and the message somehow gets wrapped up in a manifesto of economic progress that even the philosophy department is supposed to be able to contribute to. The NIF (or at least the NIF website) is just another part of this appeal. As a scientist—and incidentally with an academic mentor-lineage that can be traced back to Newton himself—it's painful to watch it all. It's even more painful to speculate how much your funding comes from some high-level,

childlike faith in technology-driven progress. I mean are we really trying to bring about an age of reason by founding hundreds of science and technology magnet schools when thousands of household chemicals have never been subject to basic toxicity tests, or is it just another attempt to spur the economy without addressing any of the fundamental problems that have led us to this point? And in Ohio it's been shocking to see how little science-based hesitation there has been to move forward with natural gas fracking and oil drilling in our state parks. Meanwhile, despite the ingenious re-birth of Northwest Ohio's glass industry as one of the most productive solar cell manufacturing centers in the world, nearly all the solar cells get shipped to Germany where subsidies have made it worthwhile to go solar. It makes me want to occupy the state science fair. Maybe I will.

When I see the wind-power generators on the hills behind the NIF spin around happily in the California breeze I'm reminded there is another way. I wish it was more than a metaphor. I wish the current push towards alternative energy had begun twenty years ago. If only it were enough. If only we could learn to live within its supply. Or maybe the billions flowing into the experiment in the foreground are worth the expense—the culmination of a sixty-year-old hail Mary to save the environment that just might work. Time will tell.

# A VISIT

*Mickey Pfarr*

A CHILLED BREEZE SWEEPED OVER THE LAND, shaking the leaves that clung to their branches; the tall, brown grasses shivered with delight as the wind carried the promise of rain. I hadn't been here in years, but it still looked the same as it did when I was but a girl. The crickets were loud—so loud, I couldn't hear my own thoughts without their song influencing my stream of consciousness. I wrapped my arms around myself as the wind slammed into me, blowing my skirts around my ankles, forming to my legs and freezing my bones. The never-ending sea of grass and brush lay just ahead, beckoning to me with bony hands and claws. An old, weather-worn, wooden birdhouse guarded the entrance. It was vacant of any family of birds—had been since my last visit. The dark hole that served as a door for the animals was covered in a thick, white spider's web. I slipped out of my shoes, letting the cold seep into my bare skin. The grass was rough—I could feel it slicing up the soles of my feet. The air was thick with the smell of far-off rain. That kind of power, the natural kind that the earth and sky give off, is overwhelming. It tickled my nose in such a way that I had to rake my sleeve underneath my nostrils to be rid of it. I took a breath through my mouth, preparing myself. Okay. My feet slid forward, and carried me into the forgotten world.

The grass here was taller than me, and it blocked out whatever sunlight could escape the clouds. The walls of prairie grass closed in around me like soldiers, brushing their thorny branches and rough leaves along my skin, leaving a vivid trail of crimson in their wake. My blood fell to the grass, disappearing and soaking into the soil. The earth drank it up graciously, and begged for another taste. I forced my feet to keep going. Don't stop, I told them. Don't stop.

I moved slowly through the maze of endless brown grass and thorns until I saw a black shadow looming in the sky. The tower had long since been destroyed; the only remains of its stone and wooden structure was charred and black, leaving the ground covered in white ash. If the wind picked up enough, the ash would blow and fall, like unholy snow. I never knew what the forgotten tower had originally been— a storage house, maybe, or part of a castle—but I knew of the stories; people from all over this part of the country told them over and over again like parrots. “It’s the gateway to hell,” they say. “Lost souls gather around those ruins and prey on lost souls; looking for lives to replace the ones they lost.” This place, this forgotten, decayed carcass of a building, was where the wailing of the dead could be heard in melancholy choruses, and their wispy white shapes can be seen wandering hopelessly.

The land here was dead, that much was certain. The grasses were black shadows of rotten stalk against the grey sky, and a single ash tree stood by the charred remains, suffocated by the rotten plants around it. A single patch of bright red berries stared at me from its dead prison in the brush. I knew they were poisonous; only deadly things could survive in a place like this. A pretty little trap for anyone

stupid enough to come this far.

The world became eerily quiet as the sky turned to an ominous grey, casting everything into a blue shadow. I lifted my face, and I shivered as the first raindrop touched my skin. I gasped as the cold pierced through me. My body was alive, I could feel the blood pumping, awakened by the mystery and the cold. I stood still as the rain fell steadily down, soaking through my clothes. I could hear it pitter-pattering against the small pond—too shallow to even really be considered a pond, but too big to be a puddle. I followed the sound onto a mossy wooden bridge. This seemed to be untouched by the death around it, and was sturdy despite the deep green growing on the foundation and railing. The bridge didn’t reach the other side of the pond, but rather jutted out over it; the water was darker than night, with murky moss coating the surface and edges like dried blood on a bandage. This was the spot. This was where I almost drowned as a child. I took a deep breath—it smelled like mold and decay.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw something white step towards me.

# EVERY

KA Sodowsky

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*Based on the popular song "Concrete Angel" performed by Martina McBride*

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IT'S A DARK NIGHT ON ROSE CORNER. Lights, one by one, are being put out by the neighborhood's dwellers. There is a quiet breeze whistling through the golden trees; a beautiful fall night in the cool British air. By 9:00 pm on this London square, all the lights have been put out. All that remains is one lonely flickering lamp post overhead the seemingly empty shack on the corner of Holloway and Richardson. It's a full moon night, calm and still. Silent, just like every night.

The silence breaks by 9:15. Scream, tears, and whips can be heard coming from that shack on the corner. Lights being to flash on, one by one, down the block. "Not again!" "Just go back to bed." "It's just that child and her mum again... none of our concern!" Murmurs fade as swiftly as they entered as the Rose Corner residents head back to their peaceful dreams, uncaring of the monstrosity occurring in their own neighborhood. Everyone knows but nobody cares.

That morning, a small girl, no older than five years of age, heads off to school ambling away from that very corner of Holloway and Richardson. Wearing her light pink lace dress and a smile, she goes into class with her head held high. No one notices her hurt inside.

It's normal, she tells herself. It must be normal for every mummy to be scary, right? Sitting quietly, doing her coloring pages, she pushes away these thoughts of her mum. She wears her smile like a mask—every day the same front, hiding the same fear.

As the school day progresses, a substitute teacher lets her thoughts run wild about his unique little girl. Do I ask? Surely those bruises are from recess... Sadly, like all who ponder, she falls for the facade that this unob-

trusive little girl so bravely wears every day.

The school day comes to a close. A little girl, no older than five years of age, heads home to the corner of Holloway and Richardson. *Will Mummy hurt me again tonight? Please, God, make me safe.*

It's a dark night on Rose Corner. Lights, one by one, are being put out by the neighborhood's dwellers. Not even the lonely flickering lamp post burns this silent night; calm and still, just like every night.

By 9:15, the silence is broken. However, this time by the crack of two loud gunshots that echo throughout the dry, fall air. Sirens wail and neighbors scream. By 9:30, it is past too late. A small London girl dies by the hands of her own mum. The neighbors watch, in horror, as her body and her mum's are pulled away both declared dead at the scene: homicide followed by suicide. A small angel flies, unbeknownst to the crowd, up to her Father. God answered the prayer of one small child that night, and made her safe in His arms. Now every night, she is happy at last, no longer in fear of that dreaded corner of Holloway and Richardson.

## **TALONS**

*Andrew Pinkerton*

"GOOD MORNING! ☺ HOW R U?"

Another wake-up text. Every day for the past two weeks. Crap. How on earth do I keep getting myself in these situations?

I sent a quick response. I've learned from prior experience that if I don't, I'll have ten more waiting for me by the time my first class ends.

I have come to admit I have a problem: I'm too nice. I'm utterly unable to tell an obsessed girl that I'd rather undergo months of Chinese water torture than date her. Not all girls. Just the ones that, of course, I seem to attract. You know, the crazy type who imagine guys have nothing better to do than send silly, emoticon-laden texts all the live-long-day. And then talk on the phone for two (or more) grueling hours every night. And then, if that wasn't bad enough, every waking moment you're not communicating via mobile devices you need to be hanging out, which usually consists of you listening, hoping, at best, to get three or four complete sentences in, while she goes on and on about her oh-so-selfish roommate who, oddly enough, doesn't subscribe to the belief that she should bequeath all the power outlets to the crazy. It's either that or her plans for our new future together. And all this for a girl I don't even like. For a girl I'm too nice (or too wimpy) to just break it off.

But I'm not sure how much longer the niceness is going to plague me. The clinginess, as well as the ensuing suffocation, has brought on an insufferable gloominess. The kind of gloominess in which I painfully see my life coming to an inglorious end (figuratively speaking, of course).

I get to the student lounge to do some reading before class and, like clockwork, in less than five minutes, she's zeroed in on her prey like a hawk and plops herself down onto the seat next to me and then scoots it closer. Too close.

"So, I was thinking," Kayla says, holding

out the syllables of all her words and twirling her hair in her fingers. I guess she thought that was cute. "We should definitely hang out tonight after you get off work. It seems like it's been forever since I've seen you."

Forever? Twelve hours.

Oh, yes, an eternity.

"Oh, well..." Crap. The last two post-work date proposals I was able to finagle my way out of. But those were both made over text messages, allowing me the time to formulate an excuse. The fine art of evasion is much more difficult to carry out in person.

Apparently my pause was too much of a tip-off. "You don't want to, do you?" Her voice grew to a pitch I'm certain any self-respecting 80s metal band would've envied, and she extricated her fingers from her now-tangled hair. "I was talking about you with mom last night, ya know. And about how weird you've been lately and all. And she told me if you really cared about me like you should you'd wanna spend every precious moment with me, instead of making up these lame excuses. So tell me how you really feel."

My heart stopped pumping for a brief moment, I believe. Here was my chance, my opportunity to once and for all end it and to once again be a free bird.

"Kayla, I think maybe—" and then I saw the sadness in her face and the tears beginning to freely flow. "Maybe I'll be free

tonight," I muttered. All prior pretenses of hope were decisively crushed. The glee began to return to her face as anguish and suffocation once again enveloped me. As she shifted the conversation back towards her trademark banalities and our future together, which sounded more *Friday the Thirteenth* than *The Notebook* to me, I saw a text from a friend. A friend with whom I was supposed to hang out tonight. I interrupted. "Now that I recall, Ben and I had planned to hang out tonight. And beyond that, I'm not convinced this is gonna work out I'm just a freshman and I'm not really looking for a girlfriend at the moment." I said it all as if it were one long polysyllabic word, taking no breaths in between. I'd done it. I could finally breathe again.



IT BEGAN IN A DREAM.

## **BOREALIS**

Evan-Thomas Smith

*A disturbance on the eardrum. An audible, howling nothingness; North, West, South, and East; a ring of rumbling menace. Snakes in the Above: green, blue, and purple; small ribbons of crimson intersperse the luminescent undulations of celestial silk. The Boy is aware now, staring at the sky he feels the sight and hears the storm distant, surrounding. The frosty air sinks deep into flesh, the night is crystalline bite. Great wisps of ice blow on the far edge of the ring.*

*Within the ring, as if nothing yet feels the wall he sees, the fjord-hold remains. All seems well, no single hut is out of place. The scents hang in the air, the cloying wetness of peat, earthy hum of the livestock's dung, even the desirable pierce of smoke with a taste of grease from that night's meal. But the familiar is no comfort: he watches in dismay the ring-storm circling closer, twisting upon his own epicenter, constricting until the outlying barn is within its reach. The Lights descend gracefully, playing their way through the air and mixing dance with the glare of lightning and whirl of ice in the encroaching Dark. Over the rumble of the tempest he hears the haunting lyrics of the Wolves, singing as if in joy of the fearable nature of the night.*

*As he stands in confusion, the World constricts. The storm howls closer, the glowing Sky-Snakes descend to his level. One by one, for every meter the storm circles closer, the familiar buildings disappear. Not covered or concealed, but vanishing, as all that is not sky or storm or rock is cleared, removed from knowledge. The Wolf-Song grows higher; more rock-dogs join in the worship of the swirling menace encroaching on the Boy's world. The ice slices deeper until his very bones are as knife-steel. The Storm embraces him, the Lights lapping at his face. The Boy is the only one the storm knows.*

**ART & PHOTOGRAPHY**



—Zoe Bright, “Nature’s Mirror”



—James Fairchild, “Best Buds”



—James Fairchild, "Dinner is Waiting"



—James Fairchild, “Looking Forward”



—Cinderella Kroh, “Winter In the Woods”



—Brittany Violet Long, “Alum Creek”





—Brittany Violet Long, “Another Bend in the Road”





—Brittany Violet Long, “Retro Cars”



—Brittany Violet Long, “The Beach”



—Brittany Violet Long, “Three Cats in a Row”



—Shannon Maynard, “Allis Chalmers”





—Shannon Maynard, “Forgotten Church”



—Shannon Maynard, “Marion Marauders Derby”





—Shannon Maynard, “Rogue Fog”



—Shannon Maynard, “Sentinel Light”



—Shannon Maynard, “Skidmore”





—Shannon Maynard, “Stormy School”



—Shannon Maynard, “Wrinkly Dream Days”



—Shannon Maynard, “Yaquina at Dusk”







—McKinley Roll, "Acropolis"



—McKinley Roll, "Blue Jay"



—Jasmine Ann Wright, “Baby”



—Jasmine Ann Wright, “Glasses”







—Jasmine Ann Wright, “Shoes”

# CONTRIBUTORS

After conquering OSUM and her own ego, **TC Albright** set out to forge a sustainable writing career —and she succeeded.

**Zoe Bright:** I am always looking beyond conforming to the normal, moving from concept to reality. Trained in human anatomy and physiology, but intrigued by the environment which encompasses us all. Efforts to capture a glimpse and bring meaning cause us to pause and, for that moment, enjoy.

**Michelle Brewer-Bunnell,** when she is not discovering the magic in the mundane, spends her time crafting it in the written word form. She is currently working on her second novel, with her brilliant husband as her most devoted beta-reader. When she is not writing, Michelle devotes massive amounts of time to her existence as a music connoisseur and has a knack for interpretive storytelling (mostly because she never learned how to speak without her hands flailing about). Michelle will be graduating from The Ohio State University with a degree in Anthropology, hoping to walk with her husband as he graduates with a degree in Biology. She is most humbly thankful to the divine powers for the gifts they have bestowed upon her.

**Camden Brooks** is a student at OSUM.

**James P. Fairchild:** Junior majoring in AgCommunication with minor in AgBusiness in the College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences.

**Hannah Fuller** is a student at OSUM.

**Tanya Grandillo** writes, "I am a nursing professor for Marion Technical College. I love being a teacher and a nurse. I always feel I have the best of both worlds. Thank you for enjoying my work."

**Ruksana Kabealo** is a maniac with a dream.

**Cinderella Kroh:** I am a native of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Married 22 years and a mother of two boys. When the boys started college, in the fall, I returned to school as well, so my hubby is putting all three of us through college. I attend Ohio State University, Marion Campus and am majoring in Social Work with a minor in Biological Behaviors of the Mind. I am actually a closet artist. Drawing, Sewing, Quilting, and paper crafts have been a love of mine since I was young.

**Johana Langova** is majoring in Linguistics with a minor in Intelligence and Security. In her spare time she enjoys hunting for Blibbering Humdingers, searching for Narnia and smiling at strangers.

Hi there. My name is **Brittany Larson** and I am a student at MITC. I am a diehard Doctor Who fan and the fall is my favorite time of year. My favorite poet is Andrea Gibson. Well that's a little about me, hope you enjoy all the wonderful stories, poems, and art in the Cornfield Review!

**Brittany Violet Long:** What inspires me? That's the question I'm always trying to answer. Sometimes it's quiet musings carried on the wind. Sometimes it's the voice of reason nagging at my gut. Sometimes it's my nightmares choking me awake. Sometimes it's the heartache that leaves me in agony. Sometimes it's his warm breath on my bare neck. Sometimes it's the overwhelming joy I feel in my soul. Sometimes it's the raw emotion that thrives on love. Sometimes it's a nostalgic song on the radio. Sometimes it's the way the sun gleams through trees. Sometimes it's the tiny miracles you notice on a whim. Sometimes it's an idea you never want to lose. And sometimes, it's the lack of inspiration that inspires. Now, tell me, what inspires you?

**Kathlyn Longtime:** I'm a writer and English major with a passion for language and literary art. Working on the Cornfield Review has been a lot of fun for me, and I hope you also enjoyed reading it!

**Shannon Maynard:** Ohio State University Student. Social work major.

**Kevin Nguyen** is a student at OSUM.

**Chris Orban** is an Ohio-based researcher and lecturer in physics.

**Mickey Pfarr:** "I'm an English major at OSUM from the middle-of-nowhere between Marysville and Richwood, about 40-some minutes away. I first started writing when I was about 13, but didn't take it seriously until my freshman year in high school, and with the help of my English teacher, I started writing my first novel. I hope to go back to the school I graduated from and teach Creative Writing once I've gotten my degree, and write many more novels on the side. I just want to be able to inspire people with my works the way other authors have inspired me with theirs."

**Andrew Pinkerton:** I'm a recent graduate of the Ohio State University, where I majored in English (See, there's hope for you too!) Take time to enjoy the stories and poems in this publication, as there are many talented writers represented. My hope is that these writings will inspire you to create and submit your own work in the future. So, in the words of one campus legend, "break a line!"

**McKinley Roll** is a student at OSUM.

**Evan-Thomas Smith** is a student at OSUM.

**KA Sodowsky** is a student at OSUM.

**Tim West's** poetry has appeared in *Out of the Blue*, *Red River Review*, *The Blue Collar Review*, and *Pif Magazine*. As a student at Ohio State-Marion, Tim's work appeared in volumes 21 and 22 of *The Cornfield Review*.

**Jasmine Wright** is a student at OSUM.

## COLOPHON

This issue of the Cornfield Review is printed using **Palatino Linotype**, **MASKED MARVEL**, **Onomotabom**, and **Talk** fonts. The layout was handled in Adobe InDesign. The interior artwork and photographs, as well as the cover design, were all edited using a combination of Adobe Photoshop and GIMP. The cover concept was designed by Joshua Sexton, with illustration work by Andrew Spittler and Cinderella Kroh..



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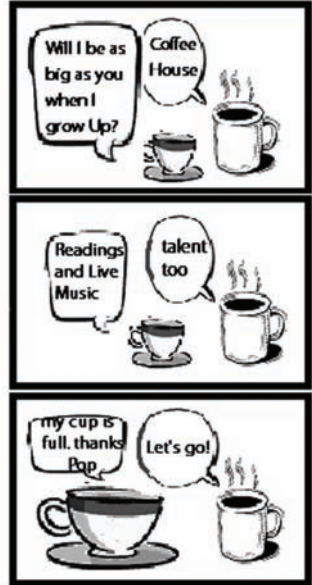


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# KAPW!

## OSU Marion's Premiere Creative Writing Club.

Every fall and spring semesters, students of OSU-Marion's writing club come together every two weeks in the library, room 105K, to listen and share their writing. We encourage all writers to come out!

If you have any questions, contact Stuart Lishan, ([lishan.1@ous.edu](mailto:lishan.1@ous.edu)).