



Spire Light

A Journal of Creative Expression

Andrew College
2018

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First Printing: 2018

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Cover Art: "Rustic Rooftop," Gretchen Gales

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

As an editor, there is nothing more electrifying than bringing together emerging and established writers under a common theme. I find that restriction can often bring about the most creative work as too much freedom can actually equal confinement. Thus, the theme of “place” frames each work you see in this 2018 issue of *Spire Light: A Journal of Creative Expression*.

“Place” can be defined as a geographical location or a sense of existence within an emotional realm. Many pieces in this issue speak to a sense of belonging as much as a need to escape a state or place that suffocates. Art can lead us to explore a place we never knew existed, but always wanted to visit.

I hope that you enjoy this issue and the work contained within. As an editorial staff, we’re proud of the wide variety of submissions we received from all over the world, including our very own Andrew College students and faculty.

Penny Dearmin, *Editor*

History

In roughly 1983, Andrew faculty member Herbert Shippey started *Tiger Tales*, which soon became *The Menagerie* under the direction of Professor Lela Phillips, a printed art and literary journal featuring the work of the Andrew College community. It ran for 21 years, its last issue being printed in 2004.

Then, in 2011, *The Menagerie* was re-envisioned by Professor Amanda Knight as an online literary magazine called *The Welkin Ring*, borrowing a phrase from our Alma Mater, which showcased work of Andrew students, faculty, and staff.

In the 2016-2017 academic year, new faculty advisors and a new group of student editors relaunched the printed form, while maintaining an online presence as well, under yet a new name: *Spire Light: A Journal of Creative Expression*, and that is continued now in this edition.

We value the visions of Lela Phillips and Amanda Knight to print both a traditional hard copy as well as an online collection that can be more widely shared, so we are producing both, and are now including open submissions so that each issue reflects not only what we create but what we enjoy reading as well.

"Spires" also draws from the Alma Mater, in a line that reads, "The spires of Old Cuthbert," referring to the unique architecture of Old Main. The spires stand tall over Cuthbert as some of the first and most recognizable features of our college and town, just as we intend for our journal to represent, to a variety of audiences, the artistic talents as well as values of our historic institution. Moreover, our spires have recently been illuminated with exterior lights, and "Spire Light" acknowledges our interest in illuminating others with art, from however small a corner of the world.

Ampersand

Can you really descend low
and listen to the earth,
moon yourself away
in the half-light,
and half-soot?
long tailed mist strips
pallor off its white
to press
on your body—
and this is how the night
forms itself:
with the bloomed daffodil
lays spoiled in sweetness,
and porous bones pound fist
beneath the flesh's velvet coat,
you can't help to feel
the blood darting over then round
your shavings of petals pale
when the ampersand splays open between
what happens out in the universe
and the inversion of yourself within—
so you must ask the dew who's
resting on the rib cage of the leaves
a question:
where is the kind ampersand
when the callous fingers of morning
pull your head up
and the snarl of night
bundles you too tight
in its eiderdown?

Sometime in August

Three years late and
now an email from the baby sister I
have never met. This last reminder of the
man that was my father.

A world away from gravel roads, catfish creeks and
scattered minor league memories, I make my life in a dream
he likely never thought I'd have. Here, I am haunted more by the
fingerprints of grace on my soul and the blessed gifts of time
than by loss or potential unfulfilled.

Organsong—
her words I read and lifelong
rage begins to ebb as she talks of how a father
loved the son he never knew.

I lie, as I have lied
to myself over so many years about how little I remember of him.
She doesn't need to hear about kidnappings. Or know about
hiding out in cheap motels and other people's homes in those
nights there following the
eruption of our father's marriage to my mother. Broken
collarbones
and the choices they elicit aren't important anymore.

She needs to remember the father
she knew. The one I
should have known. 30 years of looking over
my shoulder on every crowded
street I've walked don't matter. Her email lets me know that
I was always safe. The man he was then,
not as important as the man he was the day he died—more
important for
us both. He had two little girls who adored their Dad. Is there really
more to say about the monster that he wasn't?

My parents had a violent night in a decade of
violent years. Who were we in the 70s?

Sometime in August I'll think of the old man, and remember
baseball games beneath the lights. I'll play some Haggard on the
radio in my truck, and crack a can of Pabst. And thanks to a
high school girl in the West Virginia mountains, I'll finally be able to
think about my future. Instead of the past I never had.

Waterbury: A Real Community

Waterbury, a rural community known as the “Crossroads of Vermont,” is the township where two state roads converge with Interstate 89. While its claim to fame is as the “birthplace” of Ben and Jerry’s, the town itself remains relatively unknown. And happy to be so.

The area acts as a middle ground between the highway system and such attractions as Camel’s Hump Mountain and the Mount Snow ski resorts. Other than those concrete and steel arteries relaying vacationers and tourists between the general area and other points, Waterbury does not seem too much different than it might have been 35 or even 75 years ago.

Coming off State Route 100 puts one at the north end of Main Street, primarily a residential section. This vicinity consists of two- and three-story houses on relatively small plots of land hugging the Green Mountains. Although some of these homes are surrounded by waist-high picket fencing, most tend to roll from one piece of property to the next. The only buildings at this point that aren’t dwellings are the Post Office building to the right side of the exit ramp and a couple of general stores offering provisions, liquor, and, according to signs posted, “genuine maple products.”

One needs to travel south for about a mile, passing under a train trestle, to reach the actual center of town. This is marked by a white-painted wood church that is bordered by the town’s recreational facility, a picnic area, and a baseball field that sits between Main Street and the Winooski River. From here starts Waterbury’s business district, perhaps a half-mile of shops and services that ends with the building housing the Waterbury Fire Department and the Community Service Center.

The hub of the town is a stop light that is generally ignored since one of the local police officers is usually directing any traffic present. As this is a "T" intersection, there are three primary places of business: a Rexall pharmacy, a gas station, and the solitary grocery store. From this foundation come some stores selling books, sporting goods, clothing, and hardware; two bars, a rock club for the young and an Irish pub for anyone else; and two restaurants that offer substantial menus.

If you want to watch a movie, you'll have to travel two towns over.

Much like the houses, the stores and shops of Waterbury roughly resemble each other. Since the town sits halfway up the mountain, there are usually three to seven steps to mount when entering just about any building. Light comes in through high and narrow sash windows, and most have hardwood floors. Heat is generally provided by steam radiators supplied by a basement furnace although one of the town's restaurants still uses the large fireplaces built into each section of the structure. The majority of these buildings have been in place for generations, giving the town an organic look that fits into its Green Mountain setting.

Even the residents here are usually fourth generation or beyond, giving Waterbury a "personal" stability that blends nicely with its traditional New England architecture. This is a community where people know one another, doors are left unlocked, and "no trespassing" signs are rarely posted or ever needed. The people here, much like the town itself, reflect a charm and character that is open and genuinely friendly.

This is a Main Street that is, indeed, a "main street" for the area and its people. It is a Main Street of church meetings, Strawberry Festivals, and town meetings.



Linbrook Heritage Estate Murals

One Woman at Sea Level

She loved Friday nights in the perigee moon. No tide
pulled with such certainty. Even
the slow fish seam with abandon, pulled

the sand bottom, coins of shell reconfigured
the drop-off. There the toddlers' feet slipped – more
than ever vigilance took aim. All

water life rang foreign. Salt
or sweet the liquidity never ceased seeming
imaginary. The sea of sand and

the virtual tide pool that sirens sang
calling these startled sailors home.
What ropes to pull? The bottom shifts

only when the drifts
grow
bored.

Zen in the Subtropics

It

seemed never to end, never
to move. Mary Orsini checked the clock, the tidefalls,
checked the heat signatures on sidewalks, the almanacs.

But

the solstice endgames seemed
stuck north, trapped
in a tourniquet of sun spikes and bee sting. Petrified.

Frozen

in the bleak heat. All nuance gone – all shade all
light. The only oversight a single square like a cool
lemon lozenge
on her tongue, oscillating, oscillating on the screen next
door, a

door's door

now opening. The beans and the berries. Of course
she wouldn't stay to watch the limp pane dull pale, or
hear the click and prance of a dog's day, the late day's

play,

all young muscles oblivious, weightless, dividing the air
chest-first. Or
to hear the screen's hasp catch a second later. A held
breath. It all seemed
enough for now. At least one dumb coin in

her beggar's bowl.

Just one slice of yellow wall or roofline, or a sliver of
knotted screening, She
would just
make do.

How odd

that half-light's half-life could tame the sun full-bore, or
uncertain yellow outscore excoriating burns. Or
four legs auburn and airborne overtaking her own two,
stuck stretched and
sun ground. It could be

enough. She could make the day
make do. Sufficient this throwaway coin.
The tip jar's seed a sudden fortune. Bonanza

in her beggar's bowl.

Delhi 2004

I still remember those days
When I used to chase butterflies
While my mother used to
Boil my favourite sweet potatoes
Those days when
We used to enjoy selling
Piles of old newspapers
And all the empty wine bottles
To the scrap dealer
Whom we used to call a 'kabadiwala'
For money and sometimes for
Masala papads and potato chips.
I miss the days
When we used to
Secretly enter Uncle Paul's garden
Start plucking flowers and
Those sour tangerines.
Sometimes I really feel awkward
When I remember how I used to
Steal pencils and sharpeners.
I miss so many things
Those chilly winter mornings
The chirping of petite tree sparrows
The smell of happy childhood
The air of freedom.

Dear Mount Royal, Dear You

Find my love at the tip of your trails,
on the rocks of your peaks, carried in the hands of
raccoons travelling through fallen leaves

and hiding their tails from curious
little girls. Find my love in a
lost bus ticket, a miracle that fell from a pocket

trying to protect a size four ring—
held for months in lock boxes and
empty drawers. Find my love

drowned in covers, in a stuffed bear hidden
among clothes, buried in sheets that
yearn to be wrapped around our
souls as we reach for each other. But

I find our love in crepes and flannel shirts,

meat-packed freezers and pantsless nights—
I hold our love in my journals, between
stanzas and lines of antelopes and
soft kisses. It nestles itself in

yesterday's showers, on the ledge
overlooking a Canadian city where the concrete fell
under your knee.

in the backwoods of new york

on summer days i remember why i ran,
never looking back to the wood paneled home,

back to the waterfalls and blue skies and
enveloping smells of fried dough and manure
in the fields. i fled on my feet,
never letting my mind remember the beats of the
gorge or the breaths of the lake. i wonder

about ice cream stands and empty fairgrounds,

sunkissed woods and local liquor stores—but i can't
undo the flesh-stained memories, the
reluctant turn of a car key and the slow steps on a
vacant field. he stood and waited, hovering
in the garage of a two-story house,
void of heartbeats except our own as i crept
onto stairs that didn't creak,
recoiled into moments i didn't know i'd lose.



Randolph Ramblings

The Debtor

Beneath the balm of August's sleep,
he digs and digs
to the cadence of katydids
and peppered owls.
Into the bowels of the earth

he digs – raping the weeds, the grass, the soil,
the clay – with sodden, trembling hands.
Time thrusts drops of sweat upon his neck,
his cheeks, and brow –
glistening and burning;
they cannot be cooled by the breath
of whistling trees
that sweep their shadows in a drowsy sway.
A crisp moon – pallored; speckled
by smoke –
reads to him from a slab of etched cement
of ages and adages
the name –
the name that writhes his eyes,
makes him spit, curse,
and pray.
He digs and scratches faster,
furious,
at the itch that perpetuates a pool,
swallowing him
deeper in darkness.
Until, at last, his fingers, like frayed roots,
slap the splinters of that
hollow, wooden room;
that earthen tomb of polished pine,

wherein lies the fortune sought.
The shadows reach,
the owls and katydids watch . . .

Weighted by a rusted nail
at every edge,

to taunt his toil,
the lid remains – inches thick from his gain.
But the winds,
a tempestuous symphony above,
feed the fury of his blood, and
his hands become
like stones upon chains
as they plummet through the case,
sending slivers of wood
and dirt and stone in the air,
on his face.

Those numb, grimy fingers, caked in clay,
come alive to the touch
from the lifelessness within
that broken box.

A stench – an invisible plume
of rotted flesh
and mildewed threads –
chokes him, like an ancient curse
cast upon the trespasser of the dead . . .

He can, and must,
feel his way along the peels
of skin that sag
from the bones – so brittle they must be,
that he could grind them

to dust
in his fists.
He must feel his way through
the feasting flock of blind,
white worms that work unhindered by

his hands.

His hands! Oh, in the throes of his desire
to collect,
had he only thought to cover his hands!

The collar, the tie, the lapel . . .
and there,
underneath the nylon fray:
a pocket –
poorly stitched, but hemmed enough to hold
the worn, faded, folded
twenty dollar bill.
“Death cannot cancel your debt, dear friend!”
he laughs –
a laugh that is lost
on the wind, through the trees,
in his mind



She woke up among the rocks

Dawn

Paper Daughters

I'm thankful for the rain. The gray sky wears washed-out clouds that allow me to yank the shade's chain just a crack. The April sun is unbearably bright in Colorado, even without snow. My daughter Abby and I have been in the dark hospital room for four days now. We play Hangman, Battleship, Mancala, and Skip-Bo. We make lists of what we would do with a million dollars—she'd hire the actors from her favorite canceled TV show and film episodes until the money runs out; I'd fly on a private jet to Greece and sleep in a white stone mansion above turquoise seas while a chef feeds me feta-encrusted fish.

The rain bounces off the steel window ledge with a dull ricochet. Forty-seven other kids surround us on the South Ward of The Children's Hospital. I secure Abby's long hair to the base of her neck while she throws up over and over from the pain. She wipes her mouth as I cloak her head in a wet washcloth. Once her neck is wrapped with an ice-pack scarf, I tuck her under the coarse hospital sheet. Each night, I braid Abby's hair to keep it from falling in the toilet; I can't pounce quickly enough from the couch in time to save it. As she hangs her head over the toilet bowl for the fourteenth time that night, her coffee brown braid strikes the middle of her back. I add a tally mark to the whiteboard and push the button for the nurse.

*

Abby started having migraines a year prior to this hospitalization when she was only eleven-years-old. She woke up six months after her father and I separated with a searing pain that disconnected her from the world. According to Doctor's orders, I hydrated Abby with Powerade, medicated her with ibuprofen, and caffeinated her with her first Cherry Coke. Yet, she

remained unable to go to school and sulked in the inky house with the silk curtains drawn. The thinnest ray of light and slightest whisper hammered the left side of her head. Her younger brother and twin sister tiptoed around the house. We banished the dog to the backyard to protect Abby from the clack of his claws on the hardwood floors. Her white-framed sunglasses sprawled across her pale face as she lay on the living room couch.

*

I turn right and pass Abby's neighbor on Eight South. For the first two days, I don't see one visitor come into that hospital room. An ageless child sprawls across the bed without the rails up. Her limbs are brown and plump, yet frenetic. She appears to have at least the use of her arms as she is given a magazine that she swings, crumples, and mangles. Each time I walk by, the movie *Frozen* plays on a loop as the girl flings the magazine wildly. Her joy is evident, like a baby who discovers her fingers can fit in her mouth for the first time. The nurses float in and out of her room and ask her answerless questions in a sing-song voice.

I pass the girl's room each time I go for coffee in the kitchenette, or down the hall to make a phone call. The girl's fascination with paper intrigues me. I think of the chain of paper dolls I made as a child and how much I enjoyed folding and cutting nicks and gouges into white sheets of paper with nubby kid scissors. The symmetry appealed to me; each doll was the same until decorated individually.

On the third day, I spot a woman wearing camel slacks, a silk dress shirt, and a navy headscarf. I overhear a conversation that this girl's mother has family coming into town and she will once again be leaving her daughter alone. Were this mother and I the same? Were our paths linked even as our daughters were handed different fates? Would I appear to abandon my child to

the care of nurses and a paper magazine if our roles were reversed? My questions were as answerless as the nurses.

*

Abby's pediatrician thinks the tremors in her hands are a physical manifestation of psychological suffering from the drawn-out divorce. He introduces us to the pain scale and Abby always hovers at an eight out of ten. He refers Abby to the headache clinic at Children's Hospital. For two weeks, she stays home from school in anticipation of her appointment. Her teacher can't bear to watch her hands dance uncontrollably or see her whimper in pain.

I worry when Abby goes to her father's apartment for her every-other-weekend visit. I receive a call in the middle of the night from her father and I can hear Abby wailing and screaming, "MOM!" in the background.

I plead with her father, "Can I talk to her?"

He hands her the phone.

"Abby, I need you to calm down. I'm going to have you count backward from ten, pausing to take a breath in between each number. Ten, *breathe*. Nine, *breathe*." I breathe with her between each number until we reach one.

She continues to sob.

I ask her, "Can you please put your dad back on the phone?"

I say to him, "I can't get her to stop crying and calm her down over the phone. I think I should come pick her up." I try to sound firm so that he has no choice but to say yes.

"Alright," her father finally relents and allows me to come get her. I race over to his second-floor apartment and carry her clammy, small-for-her-age body from the base of the stairs to my car. Her father sends an email the next day to tell me that the children would always come to his house whether they were sick or not. I have no choice but to acquiesce to his demands.

*

The pain is always there, lurking and oppressive until it lashes out and overwhelms her. Abby is interrogated about the pain: "What's your pain at on a scale of one to ten? Can you describe the pain? Any luck on finding something to stop your headache?"

I know how this line of questioning feels. At the grocery store, or school pick-up, I find myself in a constant condescending conversation with other housewives about my divorce. They want to know, above all else, "Were there any warning signs that he was going to leave me?" I'm not ready to think about anything I can't change. I decide to take action.

The legal ramifications of divorce mean that Abby's father and I share decision-making rights for the children's medical care. He stands in the way of Abby receiving medical treatment. Even though he claims psychological care will be her saving grace, he denies a referral for this care until it is court ordered. The same communication struggles we had in our marriage continue—only now I can't care for our children without his permission. He refuses to respond and changes his objections frequently. He doesn't make his motivations clear to me, but I know Abby feels unsupported by her father. She says he doesn't give her ibuprofen and ignores her calls for help in the middle of the night at his house. He tells her to ignore it and it will go away.

Abby's father comes to visit her at the Children's Hospital and asks me, "Can I speak with Abby alone?"

I say, "You should probably ask her."

"Why?" he sputters, "Is there a reason that she wouldn't want to talk to me alone?"

"I have no idea," I retort, the most amount of words we have spoken to each other in a year, "But she is old enough that you need to start considering her wishes and not just yours." I think about his requirements for Abby to always go to his house whether she wants to or not.

I cross the hall to the small room where families meet with teams of doctors and social workers. Behind the door, I imagine ragged parents who receive devastating news from which they never recover. I hear the movie *Frozen* ending in the neighbor girl's room and shut the door behind me. Her mother still has not visited today and I wonder if she was ever in this room to hear about her own daughter's condition. I want to make the girl a paper doll chain—one to hang above her head like a mobile for an infant's crib. The trick with paper doll chains is to make the hands slender enough that they look realistic, but not so narrow as to cut the link between each doll. Paper doll chains exemplify the ancient Japanese art of folding and cutting paper called Kirigami. I first made snowflakes in kindergarten using scissors to cut (Kiri) paper (gami) into lacy circles of white snow. I hope the girl's mother knows about Kirigami, but I know her daughter is unlikely to learn to cut her own paper. I sit in this room heavy with catastrophic history and give thanks for the opportunities I've had both as a child and for time with my own child.

I don't know that before Abby's father walks out of her room, he will make her cry and feel guilty about how much he will miss her if she moves to Georgia with me. I watch him walk down the hall with a smirk, and when I discover her tear-stained face hiding behind the bathroom door, I resist the urge to follow him outside to the dimly lit parking lot.

I hug Abby in her new, pink Children's Hospital t-shirt and wonder if I ever truly knew her father. During his visit with Abby, he projected his pain about the potential move onto her hope for a fresh start and made her cry. He denied any comfort she might find in my care. As Abby holds back tears, I receive more confirmation that moving to attend graduate school is my only hope for an even-keeled life. All of the children suffer from the every-other-week transitions and extreme changes in their family life, including a father who has been increasingly absent

for several years. He is suddenly everywhere, unannounced. The only way for a predictable schedule of parenting time with highly conflictual parents is for us to live across the country from one another. I wipe Abby's tears with a tissue and think about how lucky we both are that I can be with her in this hospital room.

Abby's pediatrician uncovers enough characteristics about her headache to classify it as a migraine. The headache is localized to the left side, where pain emanates from the back of her head. Light intensifies the throbbing and sound pierces the occipital lobe and segments of the cerebellum. Abby has to choose between words to describe her pain: throbbing, aching, piercing, shooting, pounding, stabbing, tingling, squeezing, sharp, diffuse, or disperse. Words fail to capture her experience.

The doctors make rounds each morning at the hospital. The lead doctor expresses, through his bushy eyebrows and molded black hair, his consistent view that there is a psychological component to Abby's headaches, but also a true physical cause at hand they can't pin down. I close the door to Abby's room and step out into a swarm of seven physicians. A rolling cart holds a computer to my right and the female resident with square black glasses perches behind it. She reviews the case with the circle of doctors that surround me. By the fourth day, I grow weary of the same doctors and the same speech.

Abby is a twelve-year-old girl, admitted four days ago with treatment-resistant, refractory chronic headache. She has an existing diagnosis of chronic migraine headaches, which is being treated with Neurontin 200mg and complementary and alternative medicine supplements: magnesium, riboflavin, CoQ10, zinc, vitamin D, and calcium, as well as over-the-counter medications ibuprofen and Benadryl. Her previous medication trials include nine different medications:

Depakote, Compazine, Imitrex, Diazepam, Zofran, Amitriptyline, Singulair, Propranolol, Periacetin.

*

On the day I went to pick up the round, blue antidepressant, the pharmacist was summoned to the counter.

She asked me, "Is this for you?"

I told her, "No. It's for my daughter." I wasn't sure why she asked.

"How old is she?" the pharmacist probed.

"Twelve, she just turned twelve a week and a half ago." I started to get nervous.

She handed me the medication guide and warned, "There is a potential risk of suicide in adolescents with this category of medication."

I nodded as if I could ever weigh the risk of death against the daily pain my daughter endured.

Once Abby turned twelve, she became old enough for the abortive medications designed to be taken at the onset of a severe migraine attack. Yet, nothing brought relief, and all had side effects such as nausea and debilitating sleepiness. More medications were prescribed to counter these side effects until Abby was taking several prescriptions, many supplements, and still experiencing daily pain. She stopped telling me about her pain during daylight hours. In the middle of the night, I heard Abby as she moaned and hid tears in her pillow. I raced to her with a taste of bile and tears of my own. I woke in the middle of the night and listened for her cries even when she slept at her father's house.

*

The resident reports,

Abby was administered the migraine cocktail in the ER after vomiting blood following an urgent care visit. She was then admitted for administration of DHE after a negative pregnancy test. Her vitals remain stable, yet the medication was unsuccessful and her pain and vomiting continue. An IV of Solumedrol had no effect on pain.

Father of child reports a psychological component to child's pain. He reports she wore an ankle brace for attention and had a panic attack that resulted in an ER visit.

I protest, "Abby came home from her father's house with a swollen, black-and-blue ankle and her ankle was then wrapped. She didn't have a panic attack. She was treated for asthma with a nebulizer treatment in the ER and then needed a second nebulizer treatment and steroids the next day at her pediatrician's office." Her father's misrepresentation of the facts could lead to a lack of appropriate medical treatment. I feel the doctors judge my capacity as a mother. I'm sure Abby has lost faith that either of us will ever care for her again. First, her father took her to the emergency room for her inability to breathe due to asthma, and now he claims that it was a panic attack. All of Abby's symptoms have a psychological etiology in his eyes, which he believes excuses him from taking any action.

I continue in a huff, "I don't want to drag everyone into the drama of our family situation. However, the facts need to be known so Abby can receive the appropriate care. I'm not saying there isn't a psychological component. But, there are physical symptoms that can't be ignored." The resident is silent as the halls echo with the exhausted desperation of my fight for Abby's care. Abby's father would have left her in her hospital room to go to work, as if she were Abby's hospital neighbor, and not given her a second thought. I know this because that's how treats all of us.

The physicians discuss whether to try steroids again, but decide against it given that there was no relief with significant side effects. The eye exam they order doesn't reveal increased cranial pressure as the cause of Abby's headaches. They continue to leave open the option of a

lumbar puncture to further investigate intracranial pressure.

The doctors are biding their time until tomorrow, the fifth day, when Abby's neurologist will be on rounds and can hopefully shed light on the complicated situation. I take comfort that her MRI from a year ago revealed a normal brainstem, basal ganglia, and cerebellum. Her craniocervical junction was in its normal position, and the brain parenchyma showed normal signal intensity throughout. The white matter structures were also normal.

We're running out of options. Abby has none of the typical triggers for migraine headaches such as alcohol, chocolate, cheese, or monosodium glutamate (MSG). She has been on a dairy, gluten, and soy-free diet for years. She doesn't eat processed food and we practice yoga as a family to support her alternative treatments. I even bought her a biofeedback program for her computer. The only thing I can't change is the stress of not being with her every day. She has seen the integrated headache clinic, integrated pain clinic, and has her own counselor who combines talk therapy with yoga to support her.

A psychologist who specializes in chronic pain comes to Abby's hospital room. The whiteboard on her wall lists all of her providers and there is nowhere to write "Dr. Alex." He explains a few theories about pain, including the gate control theory. This theory posits that the brain receives messages about pain through a gate in the spinal cord that can open with negative thoughts, and close with positive ones. Her brain registers pain intensely when no simulation is received, such as when inactive or bored, rather than when the brain registers less intense pain when it is receiving competing information from positive activities. This explanation depersonalizes the process for Abby. The gate control theory gives her tools to take control of her pain, rather than accept blame for causing it or even being told her pain isn't real. Dr. Alex

and Abby practice diaphragmatic breathing, expanding her stomach with air between each count.

I am thankful for the past few days Abby and I had to be together—one of the rare one-on-one moments with my child. I feel sad for Abby's little neighbor girl without any visitors and I hope the neighbor who loves paper

receives letters from her mother when she can't visit. I want her mother to send her paper dolls with hands linked together and adorned with gold leaf and rhinestone tiaras. If "Air is the worst enemy that paper dolls have,"¹ who are the enemies of these sick children on the eighth floor of the Children's Hospital? For my daughter, it seems that stress caused by court papers that keep her from me is an enemy to her health and an ally to her migraines. However, for the neighbor girl, paper brings her closer to happiness than anything I've ever seen. An enemy to one child may be a savior to another.

*

The on-call neurologist stops by on the fourth night for a pep talk. He tells Abby about a young boy admitted just a week before who experienced a lot of the same symptoms and treatments. However, this boy decided not to stay and see the neurologist. He went home.

I tell Abby, "We aren't quitters and will try everything we can to relieve your pain." I want her to know that I believe her pain is real and so do the doctors. The neurologist and I convince Abby to stay.

On the fifth day, Dr. K comes into the room with her resident and begins setting up for the procedure.

She tells us, "I met with the Doctors." As she takes a seat in the pink and blue vinyl rocking chair with outlines

¹ See "The Early History and Charm of Paper Dolls" at <http://collectdolls.about.com/library/ucpaperdolls.htm>

of white horses, she asks, "Did Abby's headache start all of a sudden one day?"

I reply excitedly, "Yes, it did," hoping she has a theory and a new treatment to offer.

She tells Abby and me, "I'm sorry we haven't talked about this yet, but I believe Abby has a type of headache called New Daily Persistent Headache. The defining characteristic is its sudden onset, followed by chronic pain that is resistant to nearly all treatments. We're going to try a nerve block on Abby. This treatment is very effective for this type of headache. I'm confident it's going to help her."

Dr. K spreads out her kit with several needles she will inject across the base of Abby's skull and into her forehead and eyebrows. Abby is steadfast. As each needle pricks, she does not wince, even when the needle draws blood. Spots above her eyebrow fill with the numbing fluid and she puffs up like Frankenstein. The color begins to return to Abby's face and she seems calmer. Ten minutes after the treatment, Abby reports a relief from her pain for the first time in a year. We go home on the afternoon of that fifth day.

*

In Georgia, almost six months later, Abby hasn't complained of one headache. Her feet sashay and pirouette down the grocery store aisle, as her fingers once danced across the field of her piano. Now that we live in another state, away from questioning eyes, I can ponder what happened to the man I married, and why Abby's headaches are better. The people from our old neighborhood, and our children, probably all believe that the stress of raising children caused our break up. We stick to the storyline that is the easiest to believe because it lets us all feel there was nothing we could do to stop it. The papers served to me at my front door in front of our son might have initialized our divorce, but the tragedy of our marriage began before I even recognized it. The man that I married, the one that was so forgiving of my faults

and claimed to want all the same things, didn't. The mother who didn't visit her daughter, simply could not. The simplest explanation is often the best, but rarely tells the whole story.

I know Abby's headaches had a physical cause, but stress made the pain worse. If I didn't believe in her, and her pain, then she wouldn't be pain-free today. I will never know for sure if Abby's headaches were made worse by the pressure of the divorce alone. I only know that they are better and that is all that matters. I think of the little girl next to Abby's hospital room, the one who found joy in crinkling paper, and pray she is cooing, happy, and loved.

I do not know the girl's story or the care she receives aside from the nurses who played her movie and gave her magazines. I have to find my own joy with paper, cradling a new set of dishes, and wrapping a pair of my daughter's new dance shoes. Two years after moving to Georgia, Abby still has no headaches. The court papers continue to force her to spend time with her father against her wishes. At fifteen, she signs up to volunteer at the Children's Hospital. I suggest she teach the patients to make paper doll chains with linked hands and lives, and outfit each one in unique attire and adornments.

We're all like pieces of flat paper that life folded and husbands or fathers cut. We may never be the same; yet, between who we were and who we became, there is a symmetry: an equal cut on both sides of the paper. What husbands or fathers don't know is that when the air blew us far away, all the way to Georgia, we unfolded. Our paper hands remain connected: mothers and our paper daughters.

Aunty Fritz's Apartment

You walk down the sidewalk with your mother
along the ivy-covered brick, push open
the heavy wooden door and run
through the darkened hallway that smells
of lilacs, old roses and dust
to the accordion gate, its brass criss-crosses
that squeeze together as you pull the handle across.

Step into the old elevator, push the button
that lifts you with a lurch, ascending
to your old great-auntie's home. Not a real
relative at all, not linked by blood but
by history, your mother's extra mother,
she is mythical and real at the same time.
It stops on the second floor. You slide the gate open

with a creak. The worn wool pattern of the carpet
leads you to her door. Your mother rings the bell,
but you know she will be expecting you,
sitting regal as a queen, curls of white hair
perfectly arranged, heavy jeweled earrings
weighing down her fleshy earlobes,
the faint scent in the air of Chanel No. 5,

settled in her ruby velvet chair as if
she has been there all day, just waiting
for you to arrive. Here is the china lamp
painted with flowers, the low cherry wood table,
its carved trim, the fringe along the bottom of the chair.
Things here are always in their places
on shelves, on the antique tiered table,

sparkle of detail on the decanter,
her single glass for brandy at bedtime.
You eye the cut-glass dish of butterscotch candies
wrapped in golden cellophane. You wait
until she says *Help yourself, my dear*,
and you take care to lift the glass lid
silently, with your utmost attention.

Everything here is old, and beautiful,
glinting in the polished afternoon sun,
like her. She has lived more years than anyone
you know, through untold loves and losses,
and beams the light of benevolence
beyond any circumstance, a gentle sweep
over the plush room, the smile of her

old blue eyes made larger through her thick lenses.
She laughs then, generous and genuine, amused
by your shyness. She calls you to her side.
You rise and tiptoe over, shift the glass cane
that hangs from the arm of her chair.
Her warm hands on your face like a blessing,
her touch reminds you how good you are.

Saturday Canoe Trip

It's all we can do now,
in the face of such noisy headlines,
to set the red canoe in the river
and, like the sleek muskrat,

muscle and glide with the current.
October sun rests low on top
of burnt boughs, rusty leaves
buoyed with the breeze.

There is a turtle
balanced on a log inches above
the water, sleeping in the sun as if
she's been there her whole life.

I don't know any answers,
and I've found that as my body
creaks and groans with the years,
not much new is revealed.

I just grow more patient.
The sky's blue gets deeper, the sun
more fiery, leaves let go
and fall down faster.

I step off the shore in my boots
into the cold push of water,
glad for the solidness under my feet
as well as the quick flow.

We've packed our tent,
some nuts and dried fruit,
a box of macaroni and cheese
and, of course, some marshmallows.

I know there will be dead
wood for tonight's fire
and my beloved will be warm
next to me in our sleeping bag.

It's no answer
but it's a reason to continue
to breathe deeply and enter
this cold river, no need to go anywhere.



The Way the Wind Blows

Snow

Snow this year has been faithful,
flakes appearing from a whitened sky
just when the ground has begun to show
underneath last week's soft flannel.
This snow's a gentle sifting,
not like rain that pelts.
It doesn't soak your hair, your clothes,
but clings, one flake at a time,
powdering you with a touch so soft
you barely feel its wetness
until later, when the flakes lose their lace,
transform back into simple drops of water.
Snowflakes hold, for a time, infinite variety
of designs, as if a lace curtain crocheted
by the most patient grandmother
was at last dissolving to tiny bits.

You carry its scent of fresh cold
into the house on you
so that your husband says
You smell like outdoors, and sniffs your hair,
trying to imbibe that subtle white fragrance.
Snow is like the beginning,
the place we all came from.
Snow evokes childhood, a place
too far over the rolling hills to see clearly.
It carries a torn piece of that fuzzy blanket
that used to be comfort,
the surprise of time-travel,
back into the pure uncomplicated joy
that used to live in our bodies

as we flew down steep hills.
The opposite of sledding is duty.
The opposite of snow angels is worry.
The opposite of snowflakes is dull aches,
all that we stand under and passively collect
like so much weight, whether we see it or not.

I take snow as evidence of what once was,
here, unseen, and now is gone: these tracks
of rabbit and smaller ones of squirrel paws,
how they circled around, joined others,
seem to have had a party under the lilac bush
and then vanished. Snow remembers
their undeniable stories
in a language we can only guess at.
No translation possible, but the patterns
are a quiet melody we recognize
from somewhere we once were, a place
we stood and listened, not so long ago.



Cedars and Streams

Ar-Raqqa

The fighting is heavy, intense, chaotic,
territory at times swapped like liras; yelling for Allah,
die-hard holdouts holed up in hideouts
delay the inevitable with suicide bombers
advancing on coalition soldiers as mujahideen
retreat into hidden tunnel networks
or disguise themselves as noncombatants
to catch kafirs off guard.

Exurbs, suburbs, districts, and neighborhoods
fall after overnight airstrikes and fierce clashes
by day, desperate fanatics offering stiff resistance
to Syrian Kurds, Arab militiamen, and US special forces
who manage to cut off all escape routes
from the occasionally caliphal capital.

But now the four-year caliphate is being rolled back,
rolled up, a tattered prayer mat.

In this final phase of pangs and throes
the order of the day is surrender or die;
only the deluded or dehydrated
fail to recognize this fateful hour
as the last stand of the damned.

Half the Abbasid city is rubble, its streets strewn
with civilian cadavers, madness' mute witnesses.

Among those internally displaced, intrinsically
traumatized,
tentative selves emerge, emancipated
from oppression and burqas
involuntarily donned and rapidly doffed,
imprisonment's humid metonym.

Black flags topple from minarets,
though tomorrow remains uncertain,
victory's eve uncannily mundane: as ever,
night clothes the heavens with darkness...
...and the Euphrates caches her secrets.

Beach

My mind is an ocean
where swimmers, surfers,
sun worshippers cavort.

Long salty hair
held between
their teeth.
Flourishing
wild flowered gowns
 ...streams of silk
 waves of taffeta
 splashy lace.

They sail through
my watery face
combing my eyes
whispering in my ears.

Alone, under a pointillist sky.
Gulls flying around me.
Black waters touched by
moon of vague prophecy.



Sunshine

9 Ways of Viewing the Brooklyn Bridge

- 1 from far away as if
 a child drew 2 bright
 triangles in the sky
- 2 empty newspaper truck
 rattling over violet bridge
- 3 rain sweeps through giant
 silver spider web
- 4 obscured by N train
 its metal doors reflect freight
 boats and painted containers
- 5 tipping from side to side
 listening to loose tracks
- 6 passengers huddled in tight circles
 woolen gloves around steel pole
- 7 1 square of sunset
 in the sticky window
- 8 orange ball bounces beside
 bridge...slides into blue water
 white waves
- 9 black sky black sea
 yellow moon climbs
 over buildings
 3 foghorns

Wildflower Picnic

It is a warm and sunny day with the breeze blowing ever so softly against the trees. There is a field of wild flowers that grows right above the ankles and tickles her legs as she strides through them. It is a perfect day for a picnic and there is a large willow tree to sit under. He is sitting there, staring at her with his bright blue eyes, with a blanket and basket waiting for her. He is a tall, handsome young man with shaggy brown hair and a smile that could light up a room. He is wearing a collared shirt with jeans and nice loafers, almost as if he was wearing his Sunday best. His name is Augustin and he's been waiting for her for a long time. She is a tall girl with awkward proportions and her hair never grew past her shoulders. She is blonde and skinny and laughs at things that aren't quite funny. Her name is Wren and she approaches Augustin with a smile.

"You're late." He says with a grin.

"Aren't I always? She retorted.

"I've been waiting for you for ages. Where have you been? I was starting to get worried." He was frowning now with a concerned look in his eyes.

"I... really don't know. I was taking a walk and now I'm here with you. It feels strange." She sits next to him and starts unpacking the basket of food.

"It's been a while since I've seen you. I really missed you. Those talks on the phone just aren't enough sometimes." Wren started unwrapping the sandwiches and laid one in front of Augustin.

"I've missed you too. I've come here to see you every day to be honest. I even bring you these flowers." He gestures to the wildflowers swaying all around them.

"How long have you been coming here to wait for me? Doesn't that ever get tiresome?" She lays back against the tree and rests her head on the trunk.

"It's been a whole year today since I've been coming here. Always waiting, always bringing flowers and food for a picnic. I know it's your favorite thing to do." Augustin closes his eyes and sighs. He looks sad and tired now.

"Why don't you call? I would've come sooner if you called." She scooches even closer to Augustin.

"I can't call you from where you're at. It's too far away." He looks at her and she notices that he's been crying.

"Don't cry, baby. Come here, let me hold you." She reaches her arms around him and tries to pull him close, but something doesn't feel right. She can't feel the warmth of his skin or feel the breath from his mouth. She pulls away and he's sobbing now. She looks around her and the flowers have gone dull and the sun has gone away. She stands up and she knows that something isn't right. The willow disappears, but Augustin still remains. What lies behind him is a tomb stone that reads, "Wren Wilson: May her soul rest in peace." She watches as he sits there and weeps for her. She cries out to him and shouts, "I'm here! I'm here!" But he cannot hear her. She falls to her knees and weeps until she feels a hand on her shoulder. A voice calls to her and says, "It's time to go now." He had made a garden around her grave and brought her a picnic every day. So, he packs up his picnic, waters the flowers, and kisses her tomb stone. He says farewell one last time and she watches as he walks off into the distance.



Shellman, 1883

Ochuse, USA

Bienvenidome, Ochuse*
Abrazame in tu calor forestal.

Brick-bottom city
with cobblestone bones,
rumble rock imprecision clatter,
bare your soul beneath pavement and progress.

Restful city,
pine needle pathways, jungle gyms, and gazebos,
Spanish settlements, Civil War gods and a civil rights King
inspire reverence and reverie.

Train track city,
workday wakened downtown freight whistle,
east to west, Gasparilla's Bay to Galveston
circle the city in smoke rings and sound.

Shade city,
cooled live oak canopy earth-gripping roots,
sheen leafy magnolia, springtime whiteburst,
your Spanish Mosses hang through time like afternoon
catnaps.

Lazy lilt city,
bayfront rolling waves paddle ashore,
seabird rest, rocks and reeds,
seaside lights reflect and shimmer.

Banner city,
five times flagged,
unfurl, flutter fair weather welcome,
your standards ripple with the respect of nations.

Fortress city foothold,
bricks and mortar,
scrub and sand,
shelter and safeguard by sea, by land, by air.

Seaside cemetery city,
your vacant lots, solitary plots
look up and cry to the open sky for fulfillment,
grieve for those who fought the final foe.

White sand city,
heartbeat Pensacola,
Mother Earth's breast, soft and warm,
cradles collective daydreams.

Recuerdame, Pensacola**
Puede que te vayas, pero volveré siempre.

Translations

* Welcome me, Ochuse.
Embrace me in your forested warmth.

** Remember me, Pensacola.
I may leave you, but I will always return.

Chez N'Diaye: Fatou

The knife is supposed to be used to cut bread, spread butter/cheese/chocolate on slices consumed by my little host brother Ibrahima on his way to school. I watch the maid saw through the baguettes morning after morning, wrapping individual pieces in newspaper and placing one in my hand, jam on this side, cheese on the other. In her slowest Wolof so I will understand, she says she's twenty years old, comes from a village called Toubacouda in the center of Senegal, and arrived in Dakar when she was twelve. Called Fatou, one of seven children, she has been the maid here since before Ibrahima was born. The knife in her hand makes me nervous, her slicing onions for the yassa sauce we eat for lunch over French fries, bread, and eggs sunny-side up.

When I ask if she gets to see her family, she snorts—only once since she left. Her brother visited during Tabaski years ago, holding a monstrous knife to open the throat of a goat. He had asked for money then disappeared like usual. *Sunugaal la*, Fatou shakes her head, creating smaller slits in the onion in her hand. She stops suddenly, staring at the knife—blue handle, three-inch blade, slightly dull.

Turning to me, she holds it, balanced in the palm of her dark hand.

She was nine
when her mother last held one
like this, carried it under her dress
as she led her daughter to the well.
Screams in the sunset's fading light,
aware that the knife wasn't sharp enough.

Fatou looks at me squarely, asks—
Duma jigéen léegi?: Am I not a woman now?

The Apranti

He's a former *talibé*, a student of the Qu'ran used and abused by a 70-year-old Marabout since the age of five. Now he's nineteen, angry, impulsive, sexually denied.

He clings to the back of the *car rapide*, balancing in jelly sandals against metal rods. Even while we fly forward at the *sofër's* abrupt stops, he stays still. I'm the last one to get off tonight. He has fought with a man three times his age over a 50-franc pass. The side of the open door tore his green t-shirt. His fingers are worn from counting coins and folding bills all day.

With eyes that make it known I'm his next target, he calls out to passerby that we're headed to Ouakam, my neighborhood, one of Dakar's suburbs.

His voice bellows, stained and gravely from inhalation of exhaust, dust, and mosquitoes.

When I stand to get off, he presses his hand against my breast and squeezes. Living in Dakar, I've lost my fear of death, starvation, the dark, men.

The smile that stretches across his lips mimics that of a thief, a murderer taking pleasure in the end. It hasn't rained

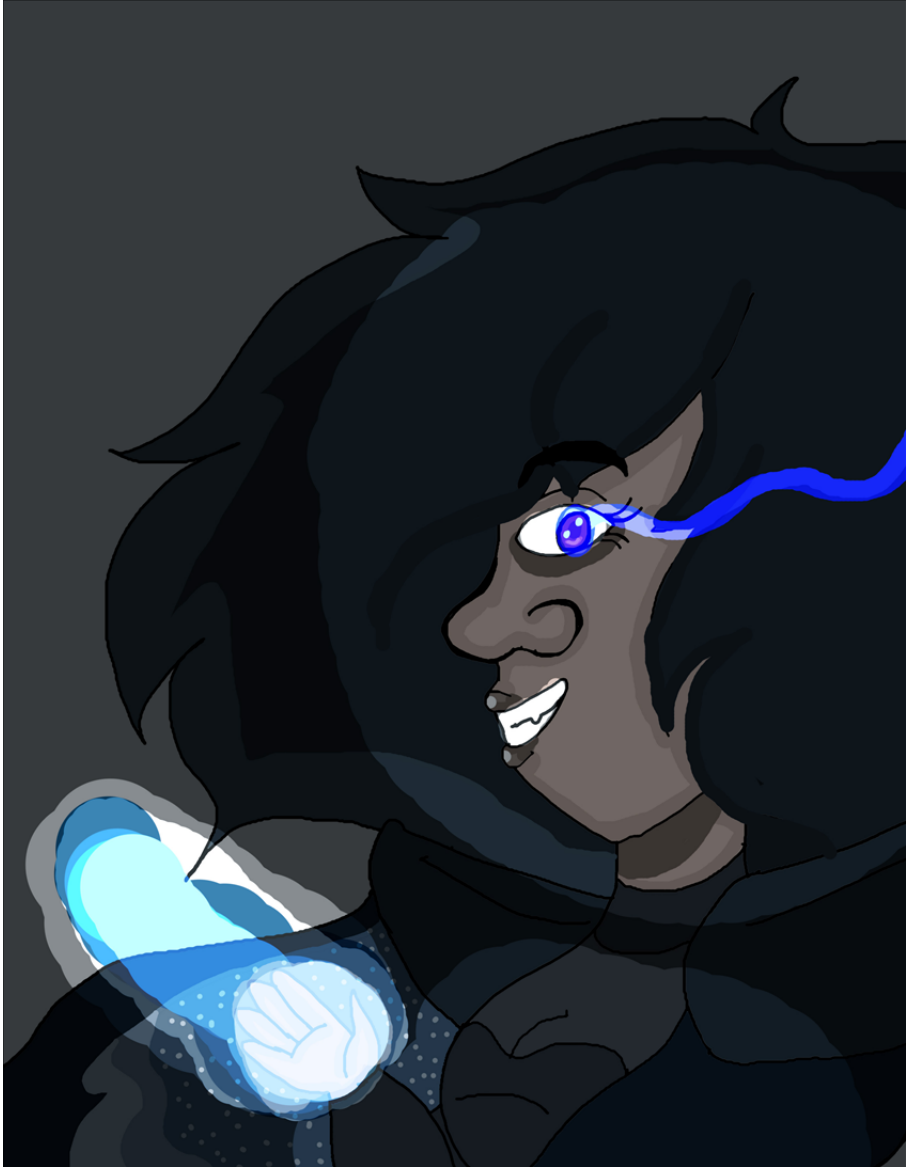
in five weeks. When I don't react,
he gets nervous, thrusts his hand hard between
my legs wrapped in blue denim.

Where was the struggle, the cry for help,
the terror? A minute goes by. Nothing.

Our eyes stay locked. I'm bored.

No longer Abdul or Babacar, his identity
has switched from someone's baby
to a *talibé* to an *apranti*.
He isn't blamed, only pitied.
When he moves and tells me to descend,
the words come out muffled, ashamed.

Magic



Letter to the Mother of a Suicidal Teenager

I won't pretend to enjoy your company.
You're not much for witty banter, what with

the time and all. But no one really talks
to me anyway. They ignore me—bicker

instead: funeral arrangements, insurance
deductibles, lawsuits, wills and last wishes.

Once, a military sergeant punched me so hard
my plaster broke, dry wall and insulation

blooming around his broken fist. He refused
the nurse, simply asked they save his husband.

I wanted to ask what it felt like to risk your life
halfway across the world just to carry

your beloved inside me to suffer from something
you cannot punch. But I just flickered

fluorescence instead, let the weight shift beneath me.
Usually I'm not so talkative. I am not

a place for small talk or lively conversation.
If I could, I'd let you light a cigarette, cover

you in fleece, send you out of me and back
to bed. I am not a safe space. But those scrubbed people

through my double doors—they are safe. They want
to cure your daughter. They want her to dance

into your arms. I know the glue on her neck
will give you nightmares. I know

that your son won't erase the scene
of her open throat and that bloody knife

limp in her fingers. I know you're scared
this will not be the last time.

But I am no fortune teller, so I can't tell you
she won't collapse into my linoleum again

in three months, or a year. I overhear statistics
but those cannot account for adolescent resilience,

locked kitchen cabinets, antidepressant regimens.
I won't lie to you. No one has ever shown me how.

When you take her home tonight,
I never want to see you again.

Chaos

to most: a normal Saturday morning
I awaken to hear screams outside my window.
I fly out of my bed like a soaring eagle.
Police scatter the streets like roaming cows,
ramming into salon doors like angry bulls
and to my surprise yanking out
men dressed in brightly colored dresses,
long hair, and painted nails.
they desperately fight back but are overpowered.
the streets become more crowded.
I begin to hear chanting, signs now running
past my window left and right.
I can hardly keep up
faces as red as tomatoes
voices grow louder, deeper, and more viscous!
mad men marching!

Something Blue

I cannot remember life without my sister. I have a photographic memory which is both a blessing, in business, and a curse, in my personal life. My only sibling, Cindy, and I were born only fourteen months apart—not true ‘Irish twins’, but close enough. She was a ‘surprise’. Actually, we both were as by the time we were conceived, my father was already cheating on my mother with Rosie the Burger King waitress which meant that they had virtually no sex. Cindy and I were sun-shining West Palm Beach Florida born toe-head miracles. My mom has often told me the story of being at the doctor holding a 5-month-old crying me in the summer of 1976.

“NOW, we’ll need to make a follow-up prenatal appointment Mrs. Timmons” Dr. Doohm said in a very matter of fact way—as if he needed to emphasize that he life was NOW about to become all the more overwhelming.

“I thought you said ‘no’ as in the test was negative” her voice quivered.

At 29, she had already lived a lot of life having nearly died of a bleeding ulcer at 23 years old when her first husband-- the love of her life--died of a brain tumor and then marrying a charming young handsome, devout Christian, co-worker from the First National Bank of Detroit who began cheating on her within a year of their being married. My mom was a single mother long before the divorce ultimately came 5 years and a handful of more affairs later.

My sister was born with the exact same sea glass green eyes as mine and thick black hair that quickly fell away and turned into blonde. My father was disappointed she wasn’t a boy, but she was the best

baby doll I could have ever asked for. Cindy refused to let anyone but my mom hold her for the first year of her life, and

would scream bloody murder anytime we would go to the doctor. I assumed my role as the caregiver and the protector very early on. "It's okay Chindy" my toddler self would say since I could not pronounce her name. Since we were so close in age, we were dressed identically most of the time. Every year we would have to sit back to back to open our Christmas presents as relatives would send us each the same thing. On some rare occasions, we received different colors of the same outfit, toy, or new Christmas pajamas. We grew up in the 1980's—the heyday of the Barbie era. The highlights of many of our Christmases once we had moved from Florida to snowy Michigan would be tearing off the wrapping paper on the package to see that GORGEOUS pink box underneath containing Barbie and the Rockers Barbie, Hawaiian Skipper, Tropical Miko, or Dream Glow Ken.

My sister and I would play Barbies for hours on end during the long Michigan winters and frequent snow days off from school. The plastic pink and perfect-to-us-at-the-time dream house, caravan, and corvette world allowed us to escape to a world that was more pleasant than the visits from the social workers or trips to the Friend of the Court when Dad didn't pay child support. Although Cindy was submissive in many ways and embraced my role as her big sister and protector, she was very bossy when it came to playing Barbies. I loved to play with my Barbies up in the air, to see them coming to life literally in front of my face. Cindy, less of a dreamer from day one, insisted that I have their feet glued to the ground when we played. She also was very particular about what my Barbies could wear when we would start our play for the day by lining them and their outfits up to pick out their outfits and accessories.

“Choose something blue!” She demanded.

“But I want Miko to wear the pink prom dress today!!!”
I whined.

“You know the rules: my Barbies wear pink and red and your Barbies wear green and blue, and no ‘Air Barbie’ today. I will not play with you if you hold them up in the air, and I will tell Mom that you stole my Barbie and the Rocker Barbie,” She bullied me.

“Ok” I sighed and chose something blue time and time again. It was a small price to pay to keep my best friend in the whole world happy.

On December 23rd, 2013, we pulled into Manhattan Beach just in time to see the sunset over the ocean blocks away from the beach house where my sister and her boyfriend Daniel lived—having just moved into together a few months prior. Three days earlier, I had kissed my sleeping girlfriend on the forehead at 3am, headed out to JFK, and boarded a flight from my beloved New York City to Phoenix to meet my mom and Stepfather Bob. Less than 24 hours later, I was singing along to Christmas carols as I drove my Mom, Bob, their two Yorkie Poos, Tully and Rocco, 7 hours to Manhattan Beach to celebrate Christmas with my sister Cynthia, her boyfriend Daniel, and his family. Having spent the last Christmas with the explosive poo flu and watching the Yule Log on TV alone since my girlfriend had went to her family’s home for the holidays, and I was too sick to go and not 100% invited, I was determined to not be alone again on Christmas—even if it meant spending it in the land of wreath-adorned Cadillacs this time. I welcomed the 7-hour drive as it was much more serene than my NYC life even with mom talking non-stop virtually the whole way.

“Hi Chubs!” my sister greeted me as we tried to find feeling in our legs after so many hours of sitting.

I hated that nickname “Whatever...so, when do I get to meet Mr. Wonderful?”

“Soon. He is picking his family up from the airport. How do you like my new car?” pointing to her new Black Yukon.

“It’s lovely” I lied—not understanding why someone who lived on a teaching salary with a 4-mile non-highway commute felt a gas-guzzling, environment polluting SUV that took \$75 a tank for a fill-up was a wise choice. Hers had at least escaped the wreath adornment this year.

Cynthia refused to answer to “Cindy” since she graduated from college and moved to LA. She was tan year round and had taken to calling our Mom “Mother” despite our Mom despising it. LA had morphed my sister into one of the plastic Barbies we cherished so dearly growing up. My ‘little’ sister had ended up eclipsing me by close to 5 inches in height. At 6’3 and 150lbs wet, she fed off the attention she received because of the combination of her height and lithe beauty. It broke my heart that she and the ‘South Bay’ circles in which she ran socially cared much less about the fact that she was an incredibly gifted special education teacher. She related beautifully to special needs children because she had grown up her with virtually everyone she met since age 10 saying “I know everyone asks you this, but how tall ARE you?” Perhaps the pain of all those years knowing what it was like to be different had led to her now so wanting to bleach blonde blend in now.

As a child who got B’s versus her big sister’s straight A’s, our Mom had encouraged Cynthia to be realistic when thinking about her career choice.

“I want to be a marine biologist,” she piped after an 8th grade field trip to the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. “I love Dolphins!”

“Cindy, you’re not good enough at science to do that. You should become a teacher. You’re so gifted with young children,” Mom firmly said, and so it was. Cynthia’s dream was quipped that easily.

As passionate as I was about my entrepreneurial pursuits and my mission to change the world, Cynthia was equally passionate--about finding a husband. It had been her priority for a long time. So much so, that her endless pursuit was one of the reasons that she and I had grown apart in our twenties, and we were in our mid-thirties now. I had often needed a spreadsheet to keep track of the 'possibilities' in that regard in her life. Her idea of a good read was *In Touch Magazine* where mine was *Half the Sky*. My sister aspired to become a trophy wife who might consider going back to work once her kids went to school where I wasn't interested in a partner that didn't fully support my passion for my work. Cynthia believed that the only place to meet a man was at a bar, and he had to be at least 6 feet tall--no exceptions.

Her latest Ken doll of slightly over a year, Daniel, was a 5-foot six-inch anesthesiologist with a chiseled athletic build that made him look like he belonged more on a Hawaiian Island than in an operating room--his dark skin a result of his half Japanese heritage combined with his love of paddle boarding. His pint size stature was easily made up for by his charming and outgoing personality. In the first few months of their courtship, Daniel had wowed my sister with 'Pretty Woman'-esque weekend getaways to San Francisco and Las Vegas, new designer dresses, and several pairs of Christian Louboutins. As a teacher, she would have been better off selling them on Ebay to pay her rent. Who needs 4 inch heels when you are 6'3" to start?

After the honeymoon phase of their dating, Cynthia learned that Daniel came with a significant amount of baggage. Yes, it was Louis Vuitton baggage, but it was heavy real life baggage: a messy half a million-dollar divorce, ex-wife drama that required an attorney's intervention on a regular basis, his mother, Yako, who came to visit twice a year and stayed six weeks at a time, and two adorable children ages 5 and 6 who lived in Chicago. Daniel was an incredible father--so devoted

that he flew to Chicago once per month and also flew the kids and his ex-wife, since the kids were too young to fly by themselves, to LA one weekend per month as well. It was clear that Daniel loved my sister as much as his limited bandwidth allowed for and that he planned to make

my Mom, Bob, and I part of their family during this Christmas visit.

"We're having family pictures on the 26th!" he announced as the 9 of us enjoyed our wood-fired pizza at a newly opened beachside bistro that evening.

"Chubs, did you bring the green sweater I told you to bring?" Cynthia asked, after a few bites of salad, as I enjoyed my second slice of pizza.

"I bought a red one," I smiled. Damn this, was excellent pepperoni pizza—spicy with plenty of artisanal cheese and real tomato sauce.

She glared "I told you, you were supposed to bring green. I am wearing red. You know the rules. Now, we'll have to find time to run to the mall and buy you a green one tomorrow and deal with the last minute shopping chaos."

"Or, I could just wear blue," I smiled again, becoming more rebellious after my second glass of wine. "I brought several blue tops. I know how you love me in blue."

Later that evening, and several glasses into his bottle of Scotch, Daniel giddily pulled my mom and I aside and whispered to us "I'm going to propose on Christmas. My mom is coming with me to buy the ring tomorrow!" He wasn't asking us for permission, he was telling us. That made me sad as after all that my mom had done to raise us, the least he could do was ask my mom for my sister's hand in marriage, as both her and my ex-fiancés had. He didn't, and ended up drunk dialing my father in Florida later that eve and asking him instead. My mom was devastated when she learned that news, and I was

furious. Instead of going to church the next night—my mother's only wish that day-- on Christmas Eve, we all took a walk on the Manhattan Pier and Daniel knelt down on one knee and proposed with his two children at his side—offering my sister the two plus carat ring of her dreams.

Nearly six months later, on the Summer Solstice-- the longest clear blue June day of the year, I sat watching the sunset sipping a glass of Prosecco trying to calm myself. I loved that the solstice was known to be a time of intensity and renewal, but the intensity that had come earlier that day was not welcome, and I was struggling to see where the renewal would come from in all of this. After weeks of 'text tag' and excuses of how busy we each were with our respective lives, Cynthia and I spoke. I had let her know that was not something I was willing to simply text about any longer. My nerve endings felt like they had just endured an earthquake. My heart was broken, and my arms had bruises from my gripping them so hard during throughout the day. I was all around blue. It had been one of the most painful telephone conversations of my life.

Until 3 weeks prior, I had been safe from having to even consider making the most difficult life choice I had been asked to make. I had been saved by the very Louis Vuitton divorce-drama baggage that worried me when I thought of my sister's future with Daniel. They had planned to have a small, immediate family only wedding in the backyard of his sister's San Diego home on July 12th. I had already bought my plane ticket. It was immediate family only—my Aunt, Uncle, and cousins were not even invited. If Daniel's ex-wife knew that a wedding was to take place, she would have made sure that the kids were not available to visit Daniel at that time. As awful as that was, her contempt for the pending nuptials saved me as it was easy to explain to my girlfriend why she couldn't come if my Aunts, Uncles, and cousins couldn't come.

That safety vanished the day when my mom called me while my girlfriend and I were in a taxi having just had a great meeting with our general managers of our Broadway bound show. We had just hugged and high-fived when the phone rang. I knew my sister was visiting my Mom that week.

"Hi Mom! We just had a huge meeting with our GM's! What's up? Did you and Cindy go see a movie today?" I asked rolling down the window to get some fresh air. Cab rides always make me nauseous.

"No, we've been busy with wedding planning all day" she whispered. I could hear my sister talking on her phone in the background.

"Wedding planning for a backyard wedding?" The air in the cab felt even more suffocating and it was only early June. My girlfriend stopped whatever she was doing on her smartphone and was now paying attention to the conversation.

"Cindy and Daniel have decided to have the wedding at the Marriott in San Diego, and there will be 50 people there," she paused. "Daniel wants to be able to invite all of his medical school friends."

"And their girlfriends?" I accused. My girlfriend was completely paying attention now. I hated having this conversation with my Mom in her presence.

"Most of them have wives Wendy" she pleaded. "At least your Aunt Karen, Uncle John, and cousins can come now."

"Tell Cindy to call me" I said knowing where this was going, and I was going to be damned if I allowed my sister to force my mom to tell me what she was dancing around saying.

"Cindy has to hop in the shower and head to the airport. She says she'll text you in a bit."

"This is not a conversation I'm going to have via text message" were my last words prior to hanging up.

I stormed out of the cab not giving my girlfriend a chance to offer an opinion. I simply couldn't receive it at that moment. My world was crumbling down rapidly. Granted, my sister and I had become very different people and hadn't been close in years, we had been best friends for the first 20 years of our lives. It has always been

she, my mom, as the Three Musketeers often alone in the world but always having each other. I quickly changed clothes and grabbed my dog Tess's leash and headed out the door to Central Park.

"What about the follow-up from the meeting?" My girlfriend nagged.

"It isn't urgent. I promise I'll do it when I get back" I barked having developed a bit of a chip on my shoulder with respect to our differing work styles. Hers was a world where she measured success with instep-replies and long hours where mine was a style where efficiency and results mattered the most and I strived to integrate elements of 'play' into every day.

Over 90 minutes later in the park I received a text from Cindy.

"About to board my plane. No time to talk this eve as I have to pack Daniel's suitcase before we head to Chicago to see the kids in the morning..."

I was livid. How could she not find time to talk on the phone about this? Also, why the hell was SHE packing a 39-year-old man's suitcase?

"I'm not going to have this conversation via text. We need to TALK. When can you talk talk? This is URGENT," I couldn't go home to my girlfriend without knowing for sure what my sister was thinking.

"Am I allowed to bring a date to the wedding—can my girlfriend of two years come?" I just had to know—texting or not.

"I don't feel comfortable with her being there. I'm sorry if that means you can't come."

"We need to TALK about this."

No Response. Shocked at how simply she said it, I went numb and walked back to the apartment.

After the shock wore off, I convinced myself, with the help of others and even my girlfriend who half-heartedly supported the idea of my 'doing the right thing', 'being the bigger person', and going to the wedding without her. Yet, down deep, I knew I wasn't sold on the idea. I was being bullied by being forced to smile and make nice and go to the wedding without my left arm and a key part of my soul. My relationships had many ups and downs, and I wasn't sure that my girlfriend and I would end up together, but I knew that we were soul mates in many ways and would never be anything less than great friends over time even if we decided to call the relationship quits. We were too connected and had survived many of the things that most people get divorced over: her mom had cancer, I had 3 friends die unexpectedly, and the work we were doing to change the world we both deeply believed in.

Cynthia had never really acknowledged my relationship with my girlfriend and seemed to hope it was just an experimental phase that would pass. She had only met my girlfriend twice in group settings. Both Daniel's friends and hers were allowed to bring whomever they chose as a date, and my girlfriend of two years and partner in changing the world was not invited? Hell, I should be able to bring the barista from Starbucks if I chose to. It was beyond not fair. I was her only sister and only sibling. We had very little family that was still alive. God had barely been invited to the wedding as they were to be married by Daniel's brother in law who would obtain his officiant certificate online a few days before the wedding. I so desperately wanted to talk with Cindy via phone, but our mutual attempts to connect failed, and we fell back into texting:

"For the wedding, you'll need to buy a black dress" Cynthia instructed via text. *"The night before you, Mom, and I will have a slumber party and get mani-pedis and watch movies."*

WTF? It was one thing for me to show up and fake-smile at both the wedding and the brunch the day afterwards, but it was another to expect me to participate in a 'Father of the Bride'-esque bonding session the night before. I couldn't take it anymore. I had tried to be the better person until I was blue in the face. I texted Cindy and demanded a phone call.

The morning of the Summer Solstice, I had done 7am yoga in Times Square with several hundred other yogis. The perspective that I got while looking up at the sky in between the tall Midtown buildings during Savasana was amazing. The sky was such a crystal clear BLUE without a cloud in the sky. The beautiful blue sky whispered to me exactly what I needed to do.

"Hi. I'm so glad I finally caught you"

"Well, I only have a few minutes while Daniel and the kids are at the beach. Are you coming or aren't you?"

"You know I already bought my ticket, right?"

"Yes."

"I need to hear from you exactly why she can't come since you barely know her and we've been together for two years. What are your concerns?"

"I'm afraid that one of you two will drink too much, and you'll have a fight"

"Ok, that's easy to fix. I promise to not drink as it's easy for me to have fun without drinking since I started being more intentional about healthy living. I do it all the time these days. What is your next concern?" I felt a glimmer of hope as I checked the first concern on her list off so easily.

"I don't want the two of you to talk about the show. It's MY day, and the show will take away from me."

"You got it. We're both committed to not talking about the show that day. Final concern? You said there were three..." I was hopeful.

"From what I see of her on Facebook, she is an attention whore and will take too much attention away from me."

I almost laughed out loud. This was the BIG reason of objection: how my girlfriend who had thousands of fans acted on Facebook? "Cindy, she has fans. She uses Facebook to keep in touch with them and keep people up to speed on the show. She actually is extremely introverted and would be all about you on your special day. I promise."

After a long pregnant pause, "I can't take that chance. I have waited 37 years for this day, and I don't want her there."

My face was hot. The tears rolled down my cheeks. "So, what I heard you say is that despite my being able to speak to all of your concerns and provide solutions to them, it is more important to have her not attend than to have me there"

Silence. Then, "Yes."



Fireside Inn

Gathering Rocks on the Bank

**of the Gallatin River Having Hooked Three Rainbows but Lost Two
Spinners and Snapped the Tip Off an Ultralight That Didn't Belong to
Me in the Shadow of Big Sky Mountain, Dusk**

Dragonflies mate for life,
but unlike us, they live briefly
so moments keep precious.
Our problem, Leona said,
We live too damned long
to keep useful. The morphine
ticked into her veins, and her skin
coated her bones like primer.
The phone rang at five,
hibiscus sun just rising over Ponce,
and we knew without answering.
Dragonflies mate mid-flight, the male
often biting the female's wings
so she can't escape, or drowning her
in a shallow pool, but we don't
look so closely. We see tails
bound in the shape of a heart,
see the romantic purpose we long for
in our own lives. That's all
most of us want, somebody
to stand close enough
to shed a little warmth, maybe
take our hands, trace the scars
along our wrists, and say these,
these are your hands. One is the lock
that hides you away. One is the key.
These are your lips, and they're full
of the poems you haven't spoken.
These are your eyes,
and they are little handfuls of tomorrow.
These are your dreams,
and I dream them too.

Gym

Fast, pumping techno music blasts out
To the rhythms of pounding feet and clanking metal
Rowing machines that blow and whirl
A sea of Day-glo, wobbling lycra
Is reflected in the mirrored walls and ceiling
Stale sweat and warm rubber stench hangs in the air
Soon there comes much red-faced puffing,
Slamming of heavy weights, moaning and grunting
Limbs straining to their limit
People lost in expensive headphones
Whilst a toned, young man stands alone
Looking in the mirrored wall
Just a moment too long.



Comforts of Home

Why was the International Humanitarian Law Not Applied in Rwanda During the 1994 Genocide Against Tutsis?

Growing up in Rwanda, I learned a lot about the genocide except there was just one thing that did not really make sense. It's as if the past generation, in fear, is shaking us, desperately trying to awaken us; but, you know the loveliness anyone beyond kindergarten gets from escaping the reality to sleep? Deep in it, we ask "why?" Why was Rwanda still a part of the United Nations, and even on the security council, after being wildly and insensitively left to face its horrors? Why did the international community whose responsibility is to protect innocent civilians and stop the killings turn away? Why is that countries like Syria, Sudan, Iraq, and others that are currently under genocide watch may be helped, even as Rwanda was abandoned? Many questions remained unanswered after the repercussions of the Genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda.

The International Humanitarian Law is a set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not, or are no longer, participating in the hostilities and it also restricts the means and methods of warfare. The International Humanitarian Law is also known as the law of war or the law of armed conflict. Unlike the Middle East, or any other naturally wealthy countries in Africa, Rwanda was of no interest to the western world. It had no gold, oil, or any other financial incentives that could have made a difference for western countries to find interest in sending their troops to Rwanda. In the documentary, "Ghost of Rwanda," the representative of Nigeria in the UN Security Council argued that "the Security Council has a

responsibility of the maintenance of international peace and security everywhere in the world including Africa." However, one man's opinion or say was unfortunately not enough to save Rwanda from its nightmare.

Some of the main causes of the genocide included the resentment between the Hutu and the Tutsi. This had always been the strategic colonial ideology to "divide and conquer" by the Germans and Belgians in East Africa. Before colonization, there were no ethnic groups in Rwanda; the so-called ethnic groups were based on the social and economic status of the people. For me personally, the genocide isn't only about what caused it, but also what it stole. The injustices illustrating the inadequacies of humanity, those 100 days, robbed me of a culture and a family. Between the world of then and now, between the tradition polished with rusting culture, I look through grey lenses, and all I see was what used to be. What my mother called a reality, I listen to like a fairytale: the mocking songs of the machetes, the tongues painted with revenge, the rivers flowing with our ancestor's blood, the tears that filled their eyes, the hearts that ached from hopelessness. The souls that stained with pain, the roads covered with filthy gold, the last screams of the two-year-old baby, and the cry of the women being raped continuously. Watching their home crash to pieces smaller than grain, husbands killing wives, wives killing children, children killing each other—all for something no one could change.

During those first few days in April, special correspondents were much more likely to use words like 'chaos,' 'anarchy,' and 'furor.' They were reporting on a resumption of the civil war.

In the field, it was easy to be confused and view the massacres as a 'side effect' of the fighting. Then, on 12 April, the main story became the evacuation of foreigners

and the closing of embassies. A special correspondent for the French public TV channel recalls that he had very strict orders: cover the evacuation of the French people, then get out. Most of the TV teams came and left with the military planes. We all know now why the international community was so reluctant to qualify the situation so strongly. The use of the word genocide would have necessitated action under the genocide convention (UN 1951). For weeks, Agence France- Presse (AFP) and other media used the word "Genocide" only if it was able to quote a source using that term. Thanks to Human Rights Watch, Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières and others, the reality of the genocide finally made its way into the media as journalists probably avoided many errors because of these nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The world had enough information to know that there was a Genocide taking place in Rwanda, but the world also did not care whether millions of people died. Resolved, the world voluntarily avoided the Responsibility to protect (R2P), which is an internationally agreed-upon doctrine to protect populations from atrocities. In addition, the media must share the blame for not immediately recognizing the extent of the carnage and mobilizing the world's attention to it. In a 1996 study, Garth Myers and colleagues compared news coverage of Rwanda and Bosnia in six major American newspapers: The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor and Boston Globe. In April 1994, there were twice as many articles about the conflict in Bosnia as Rwanda. In all of 1994, the French daily Le Monde published 1,665 articles on Bosnia and only 576 on Rwanda. And the Rwanda tally includes coverage of the evacuation of foreigners and the outbreak in June and July of cholera in the Zaire refugee camps (Rabechault). Among the articles in Le Monde, more than 60 percent were short pieces, mainly news

agency dispatches. In other words, some 220 articles on Rwanda that appeared in *Le Monde* that year were not bylined pieces by the newspaper's own journalists, nor their own analysis or commentary.

Another factor that contributed to the disregard for the Genocide was the international situation at the time, the global context. In Bosnia, Gorazde was under siege and was bombed for weeks. South Africa was holding its first multiracial elections, celebrating the end of apartheid. In the United States, people were more interested in O.J. Simpson than Rwanda. The French were concerned by the death of Ayrton Senna, the Brazilian formula 1 Driver.

In Rwanda, I grew up in a family of nine children and two parents; I grew up not knowing who my grandparents were and I always felt like the big elephant in the room. One day coming from school I asked my mother: "Mom, why is it that I've never seen our grandparents around? Where do they live? Can I go visit them?" She did not answer and changed the topic very quickly. I was only five-years-old when, in April, the house seemed to be a lot quieter. All of a sudden, my parents were very strict about us watching television and what time we would have to go to bed. To me, this was not the only confusing aspect of it at all. I had known my father was the last born in a family of 8, but I had only seen 6 of them around. I used to think maybe they moved to America and that, in a funny way, gave me a sense of pride that I had family members in the United States; so, I told this to all my friends at school in a way to brag to them.

As I grew up, my parents decided to drop hints slowly. I remember one day as we shared dinner, my dad mentioned that some of his siblings were murdered during the Genocide. The next morning, I asked him where his parents were; he told me that his mother was killed when

he was only one month old and his father was murdered later, in the 1960's. He was then taken in by his older sister and her husband who raised him. I had learned from school about the Genocide, but I guess I was a lot more curious mainly because they were finally opening up and that was the most vulnerable I had seen my dad. My father was always very strong; he appeared to be very untroubled and unbothered.

As time went on, I also learned that most of my mother's family members were killed during the Genocide or slightly before that. However, for one of her siblings, they are still not aware if she survived and found refuge, or if she was killed but her body was never found. There is one thing I always wondered: I wondered if my parents gave birth to a lot of us so that none of us would be lonely if the others were killed. I wondered if it gave them some kind of security to know that none of us would have to go through hell and back alone, or at least they hoped.

The time I truly see in color, it is dark April again. It is time to make peace with the shadows of what seems like yesterday. I now understand that the past is not meant to be a home; it's only a memorial site. The past is not supposed to hold us back, but motivate us instead. Our past is not supposed to hold us down. It's supposed to lift our ability. The past gives us the chance to transform and renew ourselves. From aching to forgiveness, from hopelessness to courage, from weakness to strength, from hatred to selflessness, from alienation to adoption, from 3 tribes to 1 nationality, from division to unity. Together, we are a model of hope to all post-war countries and third world countries: that no matter how badly you have fallen there is room to get back up. Remember the lives of our loved ones; unite to heal our wounds and renew the community that our ancestors fought for.

The International Humanitarian Law applies only to armed conflict and does not cover internal tensions or disturbances described as isolated acts of violence. When nations send their military forces into other nations'

territory, it is rarely (if ever) for humanitarian purposes. They are typically pursuing their narrow national interest by grabbing territory, gaining a geo-strategic advantage, or seizing control of precious natural resources. Leaders hope to win public support by describing such actions in terms of high moral purposes to bring peace, justice, democracy, and civilization to the affected area. In the era of colonialism, European governments all cynically insisted that they acted to promote such higher commitments. The appeal to higher moral purposes continues to infect the political discourse of the great powers.

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Stations of the Cross: Charlottesville IV

It's Just Business

who are you to hinder our incomes, our profits, our future.
you shall be beaten multiple times for your insolence,
and your action
to prevent what is ours by right. Not even the summer rain
can stop our efforts in vain.

It will not be easy living for you once we catch you,
not only will you be imprisoned, but the torment will
persevere until there is nothing left in the fragile skeleton
you call body. You will utter
profound noises, plead for mercy. scream things such as
shit, and noooo.

The beautiful trauma that you will suffer will
let you learn who decides matter here-like a lion in
the savanna preaching as his position as the alpha male.
So you care about leaves and insects?

Ny tombony voalohany, ny olona faharoa

Ex Libris

The dog reads snow, looking for
clues about yesterday,
messages about tomorrow.
Ice on the alley's rock candy left behind
by schoolchildren during story time
and ground into the asphalt carpet,
and the Lincoln street sign's tilting,
pointing toward the history section.
Maples line distant shelves,
waiting to be studied for what they
have to say about sugar and houses,
and starlings murmur amongst
themselves, librarians trying to
keep order, knowing they cannot.

Contributors

Andrew College Students:

Ta'kesia Parker, Art

Juanita Holmes, Poetry

Jacob Brantefelt, Poetry

Victoria Weaver, Fiction

Amanda Ngarambe, Nonfiction

A four-time Pushcart Prize, five-time Best of the Net, & Bettering American Poetry nominee, **Lana Bella** is an author of three chapbooks, *Under My Dark* (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2016), *Adagio* (Finishing Line Press, 2016), and *Dear Suki: Letters* (Platypus 2412 Mini Chapbook Series, 2016), has had poetry and fiction featured with over 450 journals, *Acentos Review*, *Comstock Review*, *EVENT*, *Ilanot Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Rock & Sling*, *The Stillwater Review*, *Sundress Publications*, & *Whiskey Island*, among others, and *Aeolian Harp Anthology*, Volume 3. Lana resides in the US and the coastal town of Nha Trang, Vietnam, where she is a mom of two far-too-clever-frolicsome imps.

C.M. Clark's poetry has appeared nationally in a variety of publications, including *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Metonym Literary Journal*, *The Lindenwood Review*, *Dogwood: A Journal of Poetry & Prose*, the *South Florida Poetry Journal*, and *Gulf Stream* magazine. A chapbook of recent work – *The Five Snouts*—has just been published by Finishing Line Press. New work also will soon be appearing in the upcoming Demeter Press anthology *Travellin' Mama*. Clark was runner-up for the Slate Roof Press 2016 Chapbook Contest and Elyse Wolf Prize and she was a finalist for the 2017 Rane Arroyo Chapbook Competition. Her most recent collection, *Dragonfly*, was released by Solution Hole Press in late 2016. Previously, Clark participated in programs featuring contemporary

American poets at the Miami Book Fair. She also served as inaugural Poet-in-Residence at the Deering Estate's Artists Village in Miami, resulting in the collection, *Charles Deering Forecasts the Weather & Other Poems* (Solution Hole Press, 2012). Clark currently lives and works in South Florida.

Bill Cushing lived in numerous states along with the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico before moving to Glendale, California over 20 years ago. As a University of Central Florida undergrad, he was called the "blue collar" writer because of his years working as an electrician on oil tankers, naval vessels, and fishing boats. Earning an MFA in writing from Goddard College in Vermont, he teaches at East Los Angeles and Mt. San Antonio colleges. His fiction has appeared in *Borfski Press* (inaugural issue), *Newtown Literary Journal*, and *Sediment*. Besides teaching and writing, Bill facilitates a 9 Bridges writing group. His non-fiction and poetry appears regularly in print and online. A recent project is a collaboration with a local musician the two have named "Notes and Letters," and the two invite people to visit their youtube and Facebook pages.

Penny Dearmin is both an Assistant Professor of English and Writing Center Director. Her work can be found in *Madcap Review*, *Vine Leaves Literary Journal*, *Mom Egg Review*, and *JuxtaProse*. Penny holds an MFA from Georgia College as the recipient of the Flannery O'Connor Scholarship. She's currently working on her memoir, *Little Deaths*.

Joanne Esser writes poetry and nonfiction in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She has also been a teacher of young children for over thirty years. She earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Hamline University and published a chapbook of poems, "I Have Always Wanted Lightning," with Finishing Line Press in 2012. Her work appears in The Sow's Ear Poetry Review, Welter, Into the Void, Temenos, Common Ground Review and Water~Stone Review, among other literary magazines.

Becky Fawcett is a neurodiverse poet who veers well away from human emotions and subjective matters. Her work is highly visual and concrete. She began writing poetry as part of her stroke rehabilitation and continues to write a new poem each day. Becky has worked as both a teacher and illustrator and could never deal with the abstract then either—objectivity was key in both roles.

Gretchen Gales is a writer, visual artist, and the managing editor of Quail Bell Magazine. Her art has or will appear in cream city review, Memoryhouse, Moonchild, Bad Pony, and more. See more of Gretchen's work at writinggales.wordpress.com.

Ryan Havely earned his B.A. in English from Ohio University and his M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Minnesota State University. He worked as a college professor for roughly a decade before moving into the world of marketing. His work can be found in such magazines as Pebble Lake Review, Ampersand, Midwestern Gothic, and Main Street Rag.

Jason Huddleston is a Professor of English who enjoys writing poems and stories that explore some of the darker, cobwebbed corners of our world. When he is not teaching or writing about literature, he enjoys composing, performing, and singing his music.

K.S. Hufford is a freelance writer/editor from the Finger Lakes Region of Upstate NY. She has a strong love for cats, books, and the copious amounts of unused journals sitting on her desk.

Chris Johnson is Assistant Professor of Visual Art and Director of the Visual Art Program. Prof. Johnson, a resident of South Georgia for most of his life, is a visual artist that typically works in the mediums of woodcarving, printmaking, painting, drawing, and sculpture. In 2008, Prof. Johnson received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Studio Art from Clemson University in Clemson, SC with a focus in printmaking and a minor in ceramics. He later received his Masters of Fine Arts degree in Studio Art from the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC in 2011 with a focus in printmaking and a minor in drawing. Prof. Johnson developed a love for teaching artistic process and technique during his time as a graduate teaching assistant and continued to teach as an adjunct after graduating. In 2013, Prof. Johnson became an Assistant Professor of Visual Art and Director of the Visual Art Program at Andrew College where he has begun to grow the visual art department into a regionally-significant program.

Rachael Kenworthy is a professor of Biology at Andrew College. Dr. Rachael Kenworthy fell in love with pottery though her high school art classes. She earned a PhD in Cellular and Molecular Biology but never lost her love for pottery. After many years without access to a kiln, she has rekindled her passion thanks to the new ceramic class at Andrew College.

Professor of English **Amanda Knight** has taught at Andrew College since 1999 after having thirteen years of experience teaching at the high school level, and she currently serves as the Humanities Department Division Coordinator and Faculty Chair. This featured work, called *Sunshine*, is a study of the human form, people enjoying the feel of the sun on their skin. These figures are all painted with the same color glaze but have darker and lighter hues depending on the length of time they baked in the kiln.

Joshua Legg is a performer, choreographer, theatre director, writer, and head of Wilson College's MFA in choreography, creative writing, and visual arts.

Brandon Marlon is a writer from Ottawa, Canada. He received his B.A. in Drama & English from the University of Toronto and his M.A. in English from the University of Victoria. His poetry was awarded the Harry Hoyt Lacey Prize in Poetry (Fall 2015), and his writing has been published in 225+ publications in 28 countries. Additional author information can be found at: www.brandonmarlon.com.

Sheri Michaels is a photographer, graphic designer, and artist. She was involved in the art community in Iowa for over 25 years. Since moving to Cuthbert, Georgia in 2016, her body of work has continued to grow and evolve. Her photography and artwork has won local, regional and national awards and has been on exhibition as far away as Japan. Sheri Michaels is a graduate of Iowa State University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

Joan McNerney's poetry has been included in numerous literary zines such as Moonlight Dreamers of Yellow Haze, Seven Circle Press, Dinner with the Muse, Blueline, Halcyon Days and included in Bright Hills Press, Kind of A Hurricane

Press and Poppy Road Review anthologies. She has been nominated four times for Best of the Net.

Monica Prince is the 2017-2018 Creative Writing Fellow in Poetry at Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania. She received her MFA in poetry at Georgia College & State University, and her BA in English Creative Writing at Knox College. She is the current managing editor for the Santa Fe Writers Project. Her work can be found in *MadCap Review*, *Fourth & Sycamore*, *The Shade Journal*, *Texas's Best Emerging Poets*, *TRACK//FOUR*, and others. Her latest chapbook *LETTERS FROM THE OTHER WOMAN* was recently published by Grey Book Press. Her choreopoem, *How to Exterminate the Black Woman*, received a staged reading as part of the Women's Voices International Theatre Festival in January 2018, and will premiere as a full-length show in April 2018 in Selinsgrove, PA, where she teaches, writes, and performs.

Jeff Santosuosso is a business consultant and poet living in Pensacola, FL. He is Editor-in-Chief of panoplyzine.com, an online journal of poetry and short prose. His chapbook, "Body of Water," is forthcoming from *Clare's Songbirds Press*. Jeff's work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and has appeared in *San Pedro River Review*, *The Lake (UK)*, *Red Fez*, *Illya's Honey*, *Red River Review*, *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Avocet*, and elsewhere.

Farrah Senn is a professor of English, Education, and Humanities at Andrew College. She holds an MA in English, a MPA with a concentration in Political Science, and a Ed.D. in Higher Education. She is Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of the Georgia Philological Association*.

Sravani Singampalli is a published writer and poet from India. Her works have appeared and are forthcoming in Scarlet Leaf Review, Leaves of Ink, Formercactus, Tuck Magazine, Halcyon days, Gone Lawn journal, Vox Poetica, The Blue Nib and many others. She is the winner of the Fiesta International Love poetry competition 2018. She is presently pursuing a doctoral degree in pharmacy at JNTU KAKINADA University in Andhra Pradesh, India.

Wendy Timmons's mission is to empower 24 Million women to co-create their SUPER Ever After—versus the happily ever after society sells. To serve her mission she has a handful of businesses and creative endeavors that fall under her passion umbrella. They include her annual Globe Circle Mastermind (Think Eat, Pray, Love meets TED), strategically advising/coaching social impactful businesses, producing Broadway (and soon TV and film), and finishing her memoir *Super Ever After*.

Vivian Wagner lives in New Concord, Ohio, where she teaches English at Muskingum University. She's the author of *Fiddle: One Woman, Four Strings, and 8,000 Miles of Music* (Citadel-Kensington), *The Village* (Kelsay Books), and *Making* (Origami Poems Project).

