

COLLAGE  
A JOURNAL  
OF  
CREATIVE EXPRESSION

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— Issue 15 • Spring 2012 —

**COLLAGE** A JOURNAL  
..... OF .....  
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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and enthusiasm for *Collage*. Throughout my involvement with this journal, I have had the opportunity to view details of our world, both mundane and extraordinary, from the perspectives of writers and artists.

I believe that sharing our perceptions encourages empathy among very different people. This empathy is one of my most valued lessons that I will be taking with me after my time with *Collage*. I hope that everyone enjoying this magazine gleans the same kind of insight and appreciation that I have, not just for art, but for people, as well.

Jennifer Johnson  
Editor in Chief



## ART

- 4 **TRANSCENDENCE** Trinh Nguyen
- 5 **A BAD CASE OF THE D.I.D.** Alison Ford
- 9 **ROCK HUDSON, ACTOR, 59 YEARS OLD** Thomas Green
- 10 **HARDWARE ALPHABET** Jefferson Rodriguez
- 12 **PROGRAM** Cullen McMackins
- 12 **OUTLOOK CAVE** Wyatt Lampley
- 13 **REFLECTING MAGGIE** Jenny Schut
- 17 **INDOOR** Lawrence Lunsford
- 19 **THE CRADLE WILL FALL** Beth Yentsch
- 22 **THE BEGINNING OF THE END** Alison Ford
- 24 **PERFECT SPACE** Della Wheeler
- 25 **BONNIE BAILEY** Joshua Petty
- 26 **ALEX FINDS THE DRAGON** Joshua Petty
- 27 **NESTING** Whitney Proper
- 28 **ROGUE** Jacquelyn Swanson
- 28 **GROWN 2** Tara Ross

## PROSE

- 7 **THE GODFATHER** Krista Duggin
- 14 **PASSING THROUGH, AN ODE TO MURFREESBORO** Laura Frizzell
- 16 **CONTROL** Amy Shaw
- 22 **GHOSTLY ROAD** Casey Gaddis
- 24 **CRIMSON** Christopher Butner
- 29 **COWS** Ashley Blankenship
- 32 **GRAMMA IS A WITCH** Jessica Paulsen

## PHOTOGRAPHY

- 5 **UNTITLED** Jay Bailey
- 6 **BERTO** Chris Donahue
- 7 **FORGOTTEN. FOR NOW.** Amiee Stubbs
- 8 **IN LIGHT OF SOUND** Kimi Conro
- 9 **PARANOIA** Evie Choate
- 11 **I'LL ALWAYS BE BY YOUR SIDE** Kaitlin Jones
- 14 **UNTITLED** Jay Bailey
- 15 **SCREMR** Tanner Mashburn
- 18 **LA FONTAINE** Kelsey Wells
- 18 **THE WRESTLERS** Dylan Leitnaker
- 20 **CHAPLIN'S ASSISTANT** Davion Baxter
- 21 **WITCHY PERSONALITIES** Davion Baxter
- 24 **BY THE TEETH** Malina Chavez
- 29 **COMPLECTUS** Amiee Stubbs
- 31 **HAPPY THOUGHTS** Cameron Brewer
- 32 **UNTITLED** Patrick Casey

## SONG LYRICS

- 11 **RIDE THE TRACKS** Anonymous

## POETRY

- 4 **YOU, KNIGHTED, WITH LOVE** Charles Spencer
- 5 **DRAGONFLY WITHHOLDING** Ray Dunn
- 6 **FAVORING MY MOTHER** Rory Miller
- 9 **REDITUS** Brianna Weldon
- 12 **THE CRASH OF NEO-EDEN** Jared Burton
- 13 **THE LANGUAGE OF MY FACE** Andrea Green
- 15 **CAPTURED** John Burton
- 19 **YELLOW CAKE** Amanda Gambill
- 20 **THEY MAKE MEN CRAVE** Rory Miller
- 25 **MY PORCELAIN DOLL** Kaitlyn Hawkins
- 25 **MAKE ME SIMPLE** Amanda Gambill
- 26 **A POEM FOR LOST DAUGHTERS** Jared Burton
- 27 **SHOELACES** Ari Constantine
- 28 **DEN•DRO•CHRO•NOL•O•GY (N.)** Ashton Holley
- 31 **SIMPLE, HUNTED, STARVING LIONS** Rachel Nutt



# TABLE OF CONTENTS





UNTITLED  
photography  
JAY BAILEY



## A BAD CASE OF THE D.I.D.

screen printing, 7 runs

ALISON FORD



## DRAGONFLY WITHHOLDING

poetry

RAY DUNN

As surely as the prompt wings beat  
on the feeble summer breeze,  
I rest ashore sanity  
and watch the colliding whimsy waves.

As surely as the eyes reflect  
in hues of green and blue,  
my mind colors the bravo  
and polishes my lightly-touched muse.

As surely as the gravity  
that holds my fluttering thought,  
words travel to the ground  
as the passing leaves in autumn's rot.

As surely as the one I know,  
a dragonfly withholding,  
I care 'bout the world not  
but the audacity of knowing.



## FAVORING MY MOTHER

*poetry*

RORY MILLER

"Favoring my mother."

These words are always said  
About my red complexion  
and the hairs upon my head.

Rarely affixed to the Other  
at least on looks alone,  
Until my slant expression  
reveals my mind's true tone

While the nose and cheeks and brow  
are all of maternal line  
My stern and stubborn nature  
are no doubt from his vine

When people ask me, "How  
does your father favor you?"  
I change my stance and stature,  
as if I have no clue

But when I shuffle and sigh,  
it becomes all too clear  
Much to observers' beguile  
Whose line I do adhere:

I don't even try,  
but much to my impress,  
I share his laugh and smile,  
His failure, his success.

It's only at my worst  
or at my best, it seems,  
when I begin to see in me  
His staunch and stoic themes

Not simply just the first,  
but, as planned, the only One.  
Destined to hold the legacy—  
Like Father, like Son.



BERTO

*photography*

CHRIS DONAHUE



# THE GODFATHER

prose

KRISTA DUGGIN

While thunder shook the earth, lightening lit the sky, and rain beat down upon the thatch roof houses of Hoovesville as a shrill scream bit the air. Inside a too small of house for too many people, a dozen little ears were pressed against their parents' bedroom door.

“Ah!” the mother screamed again.

“Honey!” shouted the father. “He’s almost here! Come on! You’re so close!”

But she couldn’t hear him as she screamed once more. And as the children outside of the room waited, they heard another voice accompany their parents. It was a high-pitched cry, already louder than anything else they had yet to hear in their young lives, and they knew their father was bundling up their new sibling.

As they waited to greet their brother, one of the children looked outside of the house’s sole window into the storm. Despite the thunder, lightning, and rain, the dark clouds had rolled back just enough

to show a blood-red moon hanging overhead. The children didn’t share with their parents what they saw, but they kept the full red moon’s promise in mind as the years passed, for Hoovesville was known for the bulls once worshiped there as gods. These creatures—with their long horns, thick brown fur, and, of course, hooves used for stomping—were terribly frightening. It was said those who enter the world on the night that the sky marks as theirs will not be raised by man, but instead by the beast. The children didn’t tell their parents they saw the full, red moon because the bull gods hadn’t been worshiped in Hoovesville for many, many years.

“Why worry them?” they thought.

The morning after the last of their line was born, the father was concerning himself with more recent village traditions. It was customary in Hoovesville when a child was born for him to receive a godfather, someone to look after him and ensure he grew up well. Having already made more kids than any other and the village collectively going hungry most nights, the father didn’t know who he could appoint to be the godfather of his newest son. All of the other villagers already had both offspring and godchildren to look after and couldn’t afford any more.

So, frustrated with the choice he had to make, the father took the bundled child in his arms, huffed toward the front door, and said, “The next man I see will be my son’s godfather!” He threw back the door, took one step, and saw a figure there across the road. A lingering cloud cover from the previous night’s storm kept the man in shadows, but still the father approached. “You there!” he said. “Will you watch over my son? Guard him as if he were your own?”

Several breaths passed, and the father discerned a slight nod from the shadows. He felt the figure’s



FORGOTTEN. FOR NOW.

photography

AMIEE STUBBS



eyes upon the child in his arms, assessing what he had accepted. At long last, a bottle rolled across the ground from the figure to the father's feet.

"Your family is large, but your funds are small," came a voice, barely human. "Nurse those who are ill with this. In exchange for your son, all of your troubles will be solved."

Well, taking the figure as an answer to his prayers, the father agreed. He passed his child into the stranger's hands and replaced his burden with the bottle. As time passed, the figure would visit his charge every night. He spoke the same promise, just as he had the first time he held the child. "You will grow to be strong. You will grow to be as strong and noble as a bull." Whenever the father heard this, he thought the godfather was simply admiring his son.

How good it was to see that he cared!

While the child spent his time with the godfather, the father did as the figure had told. He took the bottle and went to the homes of those who were sick. The butcher's wife had suffered a terrible head cold

for many months, but with one drop of the potion the stranger had given, she was cured! The town tailor had developed arthritis in her hands, putting her out of work. Two drops later and she had sewn a wide quilt for the father in appreciation for healing her.

Finally, late one night as the father was tucking his son into bed, his son shared what he and the godfather did when they were alone in the forest outside of Hoovesville. He told tales of how they would run for miles, act as animals, and catch game. The father laughed at his son's story, kissed him goodnight, and joined his wife in bed.

The next day, the father was called to the King's court. The King's son had been badly wounded while out in the forest hunting. He had been attacked by a large bull and a small boy. Why the boy was with such a beast, the Prince had no idea. The Prince had barely escaped from the pair alive. To repair the damage done, the Prince required all but the final drop of potion. Once the King's kin was restored to good health, the King granted the father more wealth than he had hoped to see in his lifetime.

But, as the father walked back home through the town streets, his heart lay still in his chest. Something hadn't sounded right about the Prince's story. It sounded like something he had already heard but from a different perspective. Blood coursed through his veins, he ran through the streets now, past the baker's, around the bookkeeper's! He didn't stop until he reached his home and learned his son was with the godfather again. They had taken to the forest, as usual.

*But why would my husband be so worried?* the wife thought as he sprinted into the night once more.

He didn't stop until he was miles away from Hoovesville, in the center of the forest, the tall trees outlined by the light of a full, blood-red moon. *Where is my son?* he wondered, panting. And then, just as he was about to collapse from both concern and exhaustion, he heard the sound.

*Stomp, stomp, stomp.*

He knew what it was. But he didn't want to see.

*Stomp, stomp, stomp.*

Slowly, he turned around, and there in the clearing he saw what he had allowed to happen. A pair of long horns came from a man's head. He was covered in thick, brown fur. Instead of feet, hooves beat the ground as he tilted his face up toward the moon's full, blood-red light. Beside the godfather was his son on all fours, copying his movements.

Taking the bottle from his pocket, he first looked at the last drop and then the pair before him. He tipped the drop onto his tongue and hoped it would be enough to restore his sanity. 🌀



## IN LIGHT OF SOUND

photography

KIMI CONRO



**PARANOIA**  
*photography*

EVIE CHOATE

**REDITUS**  
*poetry*

BRIANNA WELDON

Though the sea may swell and the wind may blow,  
Though masses of grey blot out the moon, the sun, the stars to wish upon,  
Though white-hot fire may steal the sky and air around,  
Though sails may shred and water be below,



**ROCK HUDSON, ACTOR, 59 YEARS OLD**  
*oil, shellac, and polymer resin on panel*

THOMAS GREEN

There are butterflies gliding on a gentle breeze,  
Cool and calm waters still bubble over small rocks,  
Moon and sun lay soft, peaceful lights within the lands,  
And the fireflies continue blinking for you.





# HARDWARE ALPHABET

*graphic design*

JEFFERSON RODRIGUEZ

## RIDE THE TRACKS

*song lyrics*

ANONYMOUS

I had chains around my neck,  
They were getting tight  
I packed up a couple of things,  
And left them in the night  
I put a note on the dresser top,  
Said that I would be all right

Now I just ride the tracks  
I just ride the tracks  
And I'm not going back, no no

I ended up in New Orleans,  
Staying outside of town  
I went looking for a little work,  
To help me get around  
I took a job and got on my feet,  
But that just got me down

Now I just ride the tracks  
I just ride the tracks  
And I'm not going back, no no



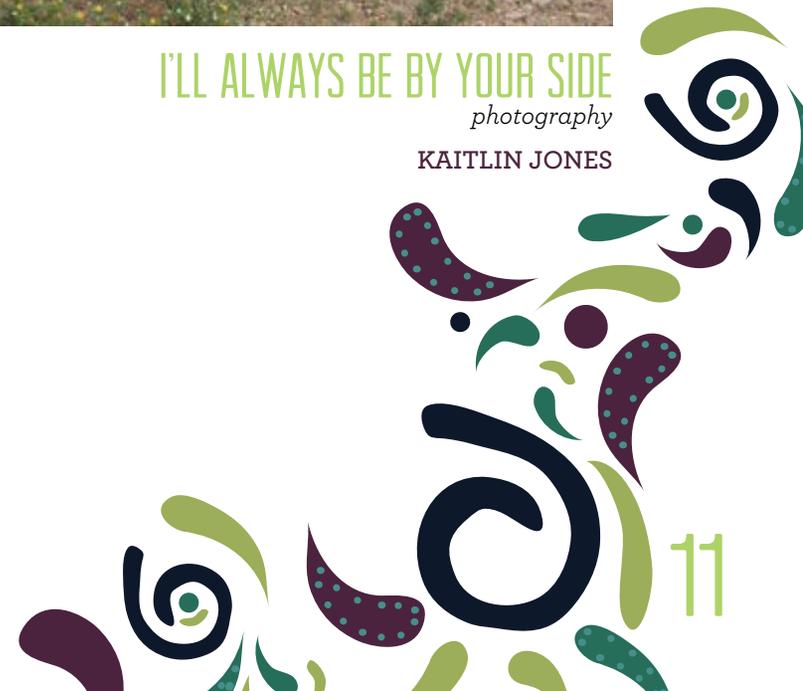
I headed out toward the north,  
Tried to ease my mind  
We got stopped by a bandit bunch,  
There to rob that railroad blind  
I got out and lost the fight,  
Then they left me there to die

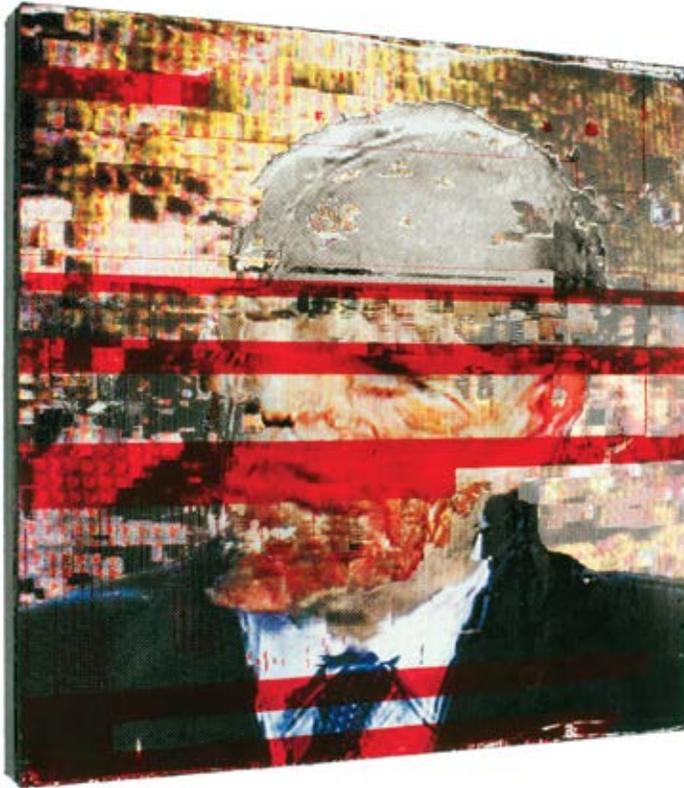
Now I just ride the tracks  
I just ride the tracks  
And I'm not going back, no no

I'LL ALWAYS BE BY YOUR SIDE

*photography*

KAITLIN JONES





**PROGRAM**  
*silkscreen on panel*  
CULLEN MCMACKINS

## THE CRASH OF NEO-EDEN

*poetry*

JARED BURTON

The tree of knowledge is wireless now  
And its fruit is rendered ripe  
While digital snakes patrol our souls  
We speak in tongues of type

For Eden, online, is anonymous now  
And you need not clothe your skin  
As Adam did with trembling shame  
For we are modern men

And once we built our tower to God  
We found his pixels dull  
So, we raised these calves of code  
In beautiful stagnant lull

So, when one day the rains descend  
To clean our screens of blood  
With all our altars swept away  
We'll drown in righteous flood



**OUTLOOK CAVE**  
*spray paint on poster board*  
WYATT LAMPLEY



# THE LANGUAGE OF MY FACE

poetry

ANDREA GREEN

She has come to mend God's quilt.

Surveying the colorless patches,

she lands upon

the language of my face.

*Twin!*

She threads her needle with Hope. Optimism.

She looks upon me with fervor.

Brown eyes.

Black hair.

Full features.

Mine, Ours, *Mi Gente!*

She stares at a patch in God's quilt.

Her eyes survey my face.

She smiles.

*Twin!*

"¿Hablas español?"

I hasten to translate, but too late.

Hope and Optimism begin to fade.

But her needle, it remains. She repeats:

"¿Tu hablas español, hija?"

The colorless faces of my Other sisters and brothers  
examine the colorful patch.

I watch them.

Blue eyes.

Blonde hair.

Slim features.

Mine, Theirs, *My People!*

She stares at a patch in God's quilt.

Her eyes burn with shame. She glowers.

*Twin?*

"Du ju spek Spah-neeche?"

More pieces of the Others, colorless and bright,  
sear holes into a patch in God's quilt.

Green eyes.

Red hair.

Same features.

Mine, Theirs, Ours, Mi Gente, My People!

"No."

She stares at a patch in God's quilt.

"¿Por qué, mi hija?"

She turns and faces the Others.

"Niña mexicana cree que ella es blanco nieve."

The Others tear from me.

Yet, they wonder.

Blue eyes.

Green eyes.

Blonde hair.

Red hair.

Different features.

Realization and smirks.

Not Mine, Not Theirs, Not Ours, No Mi Gente, Not My People!

The little half-breed is a farce.

She designates me to the backing of God's quilt.

She works to mend the Others.

She threads them against me.

I am not them.

I am not her.

I have been torn away by the language of my face.



REFLECTING MAGGIE

oil on wood

JENNY SCHUT



## PASSING THROUGH, AN ODE TO MURFREESBORO

prose

LAURA FRIZZELL

Walking away, I keep my eyes on my shoes and my pockets full of memories like loose change. Every sidewalk is familiar; every restaurant booth held together with tape has been a confessional. This place has become as much a haven as my childhood home, and just as I once crawled my way here, I find myself slip-sliding right back out again. This will be how I say goodbye, tucked away on a hidden page with all the hopefulness and vulnerability of a prayer forever floating upward.

Under a midnight sky, I have swung on a child's swing hung from the sturdy branch of an ageless tree and laughed wildly as my feet brushed the leaves. I have learned that age does not always determine what's fun. It doesn't determine maturity either.

I have driven down nighttime roads with no direction. At times, I have hummed absentmindedly to radio hits from yesteryear. At other times, I have clutched the wheel with white knuckles, blinded by tears for no reason and yet every reason imaginable.

I have purged my secrets to those who cared. I have confessed with giggling embarrassment and with my face in my hands.

I have waited nervously behind felt curtains, my heart racing like the wildest animal in my chest, listening for my cue. I have cringed as the wrong words tumbled out of my mouth on stage. I have tried my best.

I have sat in an innumerable number of classrooms in pursuit of a degree that has, at times, felt mythical at best. I have succeeded and floundered spectacularly in my quest for professorial approval, but I have managed to learn regardless. I have recognized the brilliance of others who have—out of passion—written with intelligence and finesse. I have wanted to be worthy of the title “Man Thinking.” I, too, “should have been a pair of ragged claws scuttling across the floors of silent seas.”

I have sat on the edge of a waterfall, stared into the bottomless depths of a crystal-clear pool, been made to feel small in the shadow of towering mountains, and felt the cool, unassuming texture of unfathomably ancient limestone beneath the palm of my hand. I have been awed by my everyday geography that can all at once feel magnificently exotic.

I have hunted for ghosts in all-too-silent cemeteries and dilapidated houses. I have crept cautiously through weeds and over creaking floorboards, anxiously hoping for something, *anything* to shake me down from my comfortable pedestal. I have screamed at the top of my lungs.



UNTITLED

photography

JAY BAILEY





I have engaged in many late-night conversations with the ones I adore most. I have sat in bars and cars, on riverbanks and vacated bleachers, trying to talk myself into an understanding of who I am and where I belong. The unveiling of these answers is still, and will always be, in progress.

I have loved, lost, and reevaluated many times what it means to feel affection. I have known handsome boys. I have apologized for the excess of cat antiques in my bedroom. I have unintentionally hurt people who had golden intentions. I have decided that, above all, I believe in biology.

Standing under the unforgiving rays of a flawless June sky, holding hands with strangers in smoky bars dark with peculiar mystery, peering over rows of bouncing heads in unfamiliar houses, I have listened to musicians of all kinds play with ferocity and beauty alike. With flushed cheeks, pounding eardrums, and my good blouse splattered with a stranger's beer, I have thought to myself more than a few times, *Oh, God, just don't let it stop.*

And now, despite all that I have known here, I have to move a little further down some as of now unknown highway. There seems to be so much left to say, but I have neither the time nor eloquence for all that. Just know that I meant everything. If I laughed with you, cried with you, kissed you, or fought you, I meant it. If I sat in your classroom and wrote bad essays, good essays, or mediocre essays, I meant it. If I waited tables with you, I meant it. If I never spoke a word to you, it isn't because I didn't want to, and I mean that, too. I have meant, and still mean, every bit of it. 🌀



## CAPTURED

poetry

JOHN BURTON

Lying in bed one eye open.

The circus awaits.

Evolution has failed.

Millions of years of programming inside of my brain

Just to take out the trash.

Repair a Barbie doll.

Handle disputes with positive dialogue.

Get yelled at for not remembering her birthday  
our anniversary.

her name.

She talks about Dr. Phil as if I care,

She talks as if I care.

I used to collect whores, guns, cars, and scars.

SCREMR

photography

TANNER MASHBURN

Now I have matching dishes and a 401k.

We used to hunt tigers.

Now we hunt for a set of sheets on sale.

I wear the ring on my finger as proof of my domestication.

Destined to drown in a lake of mediocrity.

## CONTROL

prose

AMY SHAW

I braced myself in the doorframe of the claustrophobic hospital bathroom. Mom was perched on the closed toilet lid, razor in hand, and my little sister Ellen sat on the edge of the bathtub. Ellen had just started chemotherapy about a week ago, and Mom decided it would be best to just shave Ellen's hair before she had to watch it fall out.

Though Ellen was ten years younger than me at seven years old, I had envied her hair for years. My eyes filled with tears as I watched Mom gently shave off pieces of Ellen's beautiful strawberry blonde hair, and Ellen tried to hold back tears as her crown of beauty was taken away. Watching the scene made me wonder if I should shave all of my hair instead of growing it out to donate just a ponytail's worth for a wig. Of course, I would never be able to go through with it, and Mom would kill me if I did. I fingered at my long, straight brown hair. *I would do it if it made hers grow again*, I thought, as I looked away, Ellen's hair continuing to collect on the floor.

I had just arrived in Houston for the first time that morning and had yet to see the apartment we were renting there. But Mom said she was going to stay in the hospital with Ellen that night, which left me and my Tom Tom GPS to find it on our own. When I arrived at the apartment, I immediately began to unpack my bag and get things organized in my bedroom, which reminded me of the numerous other times I had done so. After six moves in my lifetime—thanks to my dad's career with the army—my family finally settled in Killeen, Texas, when my dad was stationed at Fort Hood four years earlier. I had been excited because I was actually going to graduate from Ellison, the same high school where I started out as a freshman. I had plans to then move on to the University of Texas with a lot of my other friends. It seemed as if I finally knew the plan for my life, or at least the near future of it. But as my junior

year ended, everything started to feel far less certain once Ellen was diagnosed.

The next several weeks were like a roller coaster ride with good days and bad days with Ellen in and out of the hospital. One afternoon, I stayed with Ellen at the hospital while Mom ran an errand, and we watched cartoons until she fell asleep. As I sat and watched Ellen breathing in her sleep, I found myself breathing in rhythm with her, as if this would help her keep going. *In . . . then out. In . . . then out. Breathe in deeply, breathe out slowly.* I became so relaxed that I nearly nodded off myself, still breathing in rhythm. Then suddenly, Ellen broke her cycle of breathing. The interruption jolted me back to full consciousness, and I gasped for air as if we had suddenly run out of it. When I realized I was fine and was about to check on Ellen, she began to cough. She stopped after a moment and within minutes drifted back to sleep, breathing in and out again.

When I left her room for the night, I took a good look at the hallway walls in the cancer wing for the first time. They were lined with rows of bright, colorful finger paintings done by the children in the hospital, and I wondered how I had missed them before. One of a bright, smiling sun particularly caught my attention, and my eyes began to water as I saw the inscription on the bottom-right corner: Ellen, age 7.

A few days later, I worked as a volunteer to help paint a new wing that had recently been added to Texas Children's Hospital. While painting I had the chance to talk to Chloe, one of the nurse externs that worked in the cancer wing. After making small talk about the hospital, Chloe stated, "Yeah, being able to work with the kids here means so much to me since my brother died of leukemia."

"Oh, I—I'm so sorry," I stammered.

"It's definitely hard to lose your brother, but you know, I really feel like going through this experience was important for me. Because of it, I decided to

pursue nursing, and now I'm thinking about going to med school. I've always been interested in science, but I didn't really know what to do with it until I found out Denver was sick."

"Well, as much as I would love to be the one to find the cure for leukemia, I don't think med school is for me," I said as I tried to concentrate on the wide line of blue my paint roller was creating.

"You don't have to be a doctor just because your sister is going through this, but find out what you can do for her and let that drive you." Chloe then nodded towards my handiwork on the wall, "You know, you're pretty good with the paint."

"Oh, well thanks. I'm actually interested in interior design and painting."

"Well then, I think you're off to a great start," she smiled before dipping her paint roller into some more paint.

“ I THOUGHT ABOUT APOLOGIZING,  
BUT FOR SOME REASON, IT  
DIDN'T COME OUT. ”

That night I lay in bed replaying the conversation with Chloe in my head. Ellen was going to be coming home soon and staying there more often, and I hated that her room at the apartment was more sterile than the hospital. I decided the next morning that I would ask the apartment complex for permission to paint Ellen's room, and then I would sketch out a design for a room with a happier feel. The next day I set my plan into motion, and with approval to paint, I eagerly called a couple of my friends from Killeen, Beth and Leslie, and asked if they wanted to come and help. They were enthusiastic about the idea as they loved Ellen, and a few days later when they arrived, they had also commandeered the help of our friends Scott and Tyler.

I assigned each friend a wall to start painting with a pale yellow, while I worked on painting the top and bottom edges all around the room. After the walls dried, I painted a large, orange sun with a smiley face, reminiscent of Ellen's painting in the hospital. While painting the sun, I gave Beth and Leslie the task of framing pictures, Scott of shelving books, and Tyler of painting Ellen's bedside table. After I finished most of my sun, I checked on Tyler's progress with the table.

"Tyler, do you see those drip marks on the front?" I pointed out to him. "You have to be careful of the drip marks."

"I'm sorry, Carissa, this table is just a little harder to paint than the wall—"

"Just be careful," I snapped back, but immediately felt awful for doing so. I thought about apologizing, but for some reason it didn't come out. I looked over to where Scott was shelving the books. "Scott, make sure the series books are in the right order."

Scott looked at the books. "Oh yeah, I didn't even think of that," he replied as he began to rearrange his work.

I slightly groaned as I returned to the smiling sun on the wall.

"You know, someone doesn't seem very happy," Tyler snuck up behind me, causing me to paint a crooked line.

"Look what you made me do!" I turned and looked back at Tyler.

"I'm sorry, Carissa," he laughed. "But it's just paint. You can—"

"Paint over orange with yellow? Yeah, that'll work really well." I rolled my eyes.

"I'm sorry, I'm just trying to be helpful," Tyler softly said as he went back to the table.



**INDOOR**  
digital art

**LAWRENCE LUNSFORD**

When it was all completed, I scanned our handiwork. It wasn't perfect like I had hoped, but Beth and Leslie gushed that Ellen was going to love it. The walls were bright, the sun was happy. Hints of orange throughout with a director's style chair, the bedside table and throw pillows helped pull everything together. "Thanks so much, guys," I said as I hugged Beth and Leslie individually. I then looked over to Scott and Tyler. "Sorry that I blew up at y'all," I apologized. Scott hugged me and assured me it was fine as he followed Beth and Leslie out of the room.

Tyler stayed behind for a moment and looked at me. "You know, Carissa, no matter what happens, at the end of the day all you can do is play with the cards you've been dealt," he stated before leaving.

Not even thirty minutes after everyone left, Mom got a call from the hospital. I was still admiring my work in Ellen's Sunshine Room when Mom came in, her face pale and her mouth curved in a worried position. "What's wrong?" I asked.

“Well, Dr. Browning insisted everything’s going to be OK, but—”

“But what?” I asked after my mom paused.

“Ellen had a seizure,” she finally told me as tears began to stream down her face.

“Oh no, no,” I started to tear up as well. *Stay strong for Mom*, I scolded myself, but I wasn’t sure if I could.

“Apparently, it’s a possible side effect of the intrathecal treatment. They’re giving her something to help out with it, but I want to go over there and check on her.” As I nodded, Mom continued, “But we shouldn’t worry. Dr. Browning insisted that everything was under control.”

I suddenly remembered breathing with Ellen, and the moment that she coughed and disrupted the peaceful pattern we had been engaging in together,

and I decided I wasn’t really sure if I could believe Dr. Browning.

A couple of days later, Ellen suffered from another seizure, but later in the week Dr. Browning said the seizures should not return. After a long week in the hospital, we finally got to bring Ellen back to the apartment. When we arrived, I told Ellen, “I really wanted to do something to make your room here feel happier. A few of my friends helped me out with it. You want to check it out?”

“Yeah!” she exclaimed as I took her hand and led her to her room. She barely stepped inside before she stopped and gaped in awe. “This is so cool!” I smiled as I watched her wander around and check out her new things, and then as she looked at the sun on her wall. “It’s like the one I painted!”

“It is. Your painting inspired me.”

“I love it! Thank you, Carissa,” she hugged me, and I started to cry. Even if this was the only time Ellen

got to see it, I determined, it still would have been worth it.

The next weekend, I made the decision to go back to Killeen to talk to my counselor at Ellison about a new interior design class that Beth had told me about, as well as the rest of my schedule for my senior year. I planned to go straight back to Houston that night, but when I left the school I noticed I missed a call from Tyler. When I called him back he asked, “You want to do something tonight? Maybe go out to eat? I heard you were in town.”

I felt a knot in my stomach. I had treated him so poorly the last time we spoke; I was surprised. But we did have a long history of friendship, and I had secretly been hoping for this for a while. “Uh, well I was going to . . .” I started, but my voice trailed off. *I could wait until tomorrow morning to go back.*

“Sure,” I said. “I’d like that.” ☺



LA FONTAINE  
photography  
KELSEY WELLS



THE WRESTLERS  
photography  
DYLAN LEITNAKER

**YELLOW CAKE**  
*poetry*

**AMANDA GAMBILL**

The yellow cake is dainty,  
Like weathered hands softened by time,  
Like her eyelids closed for the last time.  
The cake is thick in my throat, half-chewed.  
Breathing, it seems, is an option now:  
The cake had chosen for me,  
while she'd never had the choice.  
She didn't get to say she wanted to live,  
Only that she wanted to leave.

The crumbs in my lap,  
As the life crumbles.

She's dead.

I don't remember—  
Her fancy dress bought for the occasion,  
ill-fitting and strange.  
When every other day she wore fabric and an apron,  
tied delicately around her thin waist.  
The casket, lined in pink,  
to remind us she was a woman,  
Not just a slave to her husband and children.  
The sadness, that overcame my father,  
My family.

I'll forget—  
The tears that swept through, knocking down my family in their wake,  
Leaving them to grasp for footing and gasp for air.  
The darkness, lit up only by beeping machines  
and the ironic, hopeful sunrise.  
The waiting: counting seconds to hours to days  
To weeks. Sitting in that same hard chair,  
Through these hard times,  
That no one, no matter what, can ever fully understand.

The thick grease chokes me so the sadness wouldn't.  
Couldn't.  
The yellow cake, so sunshiny and bright,  
So fake, and false.  
That Crisco filling, gleaming white like the floors we all stared at as we waited.  
In a vile, sick way—the way it coated my mouth:  
My throat,  
My tongue.  
My heart.  
I'll always know.

*This poem was inspired by the moment  
I found out my grandmother died.  
Unfortunately, I was eating a Twinkie  
at the time.*

**THE CRADLE WILL FALL**  
*oil on canvas*

**BETH YENTSCH**



## CHAPLIN'S ASSISTANT

photography

DAVION BAXTER



## THEY MAKE MEN CRAVE

poetry

RORY MILLER

Not you, but your friends.

Not you—but derivatives

of you.

Paler skin and shriller voice.

Misguidance instead of Mystique.

Mixed drinks, margaritas.

Moors of teeth that grind through mounds of mirth—

Shrieking with laughter.

I can't take it.

But they are your friends.

But they are not you.

Shirts of pastel portraits

swivel in the dance halls

of apartment corridors,

marred by mistakes

that their wearers are all too oblivious to.

Yet they know—

They can feel it in their shoulders as they twist and twirl:

the loveless trysts of high school bathrooms;

the weepy nights under soiled sheets;

the garden party showcases for the upper establishment;

These moments slink up the spine

of each of your twisting friends—

A patient serpent.

Jealous and vengeful.

Like his wistful victims—

Their pasts all too similar,

Speaking only to the hum and drum of the stereo beats,  
they make men crave.

But,

I see through their gilded locks,

their glittery sweat,

their glistening pores, all packed with tricks.

Misdirection is their salvation—

from an evil too familiar

for them to leave.

They beg for inhibition,

though they have it all along.

They want to believe that nicks are okay,

that cricks are cool.

Still they strive for polished pores,

mirroring the magazines.

No one has the nerve to say the truth—

Because

they are not you,

but they are your friends.





WITCHY PERSONALITIES

*photography*

DAVION BAXTER



## GHOSTLY ROAD

A retelling of “Abandoned Farmhouse”  
by Ted Kooser

CASEY GADDIS

According to the doctors, I have to write as many things down before I forget. Or was it so that I won't forget? Jenny, my youngest, gave me this journal so that I can write down whatever I feel like writing. She says I should write down things I have never told them—they being my children—and as morbid as it is, I think she may be right. Lord, I'll try my best. Jenny does love my stories, and I want to tell this one right.

In the summer of '58, I found something that changed how I felt about life. Until then, everything was normal, the way it had been since I moved to the small town in the Appalachians. I took a hike, one of many that summer, and even the birds sang the correct tune. Normally, I ventured out into the woods to think and enjoy the serenity of it, and this time was no different. I carried a leather pack with a book to read during my picnic lunch and rocks I'd collected along the way. It was growing heavy on my shoulders when I found the eerie gravel road.

I had never seen that road though I had been through there countless times before. At first, I thought I was imagining things, but as I came closer, I wondered that it might be a driveway. I walked along it for an hour, thinking I was lost and wondering what lay at the end.

Soon, I saw a shack-like farmhouse in the distance with a small barn nestled behind. Both buildings were built with planks of wood, much like most of the houses in that area. As I came closer, I noticed that tall weeds choked the yard where the grass struggled to grow. Children's toys, long forgotten and strewn about, were hardly visible through that jungle of a yard. The house's windows were coated with a sufficient layer of dust, and a rusted, broken chain lay under a tree attached to an old tractor tire,

remnants of what used to be an old tire swing. There was another tire filled with weedy sand. I guessed it had been a sand box belonging to the same child who once owned the rusted, chipped toys.

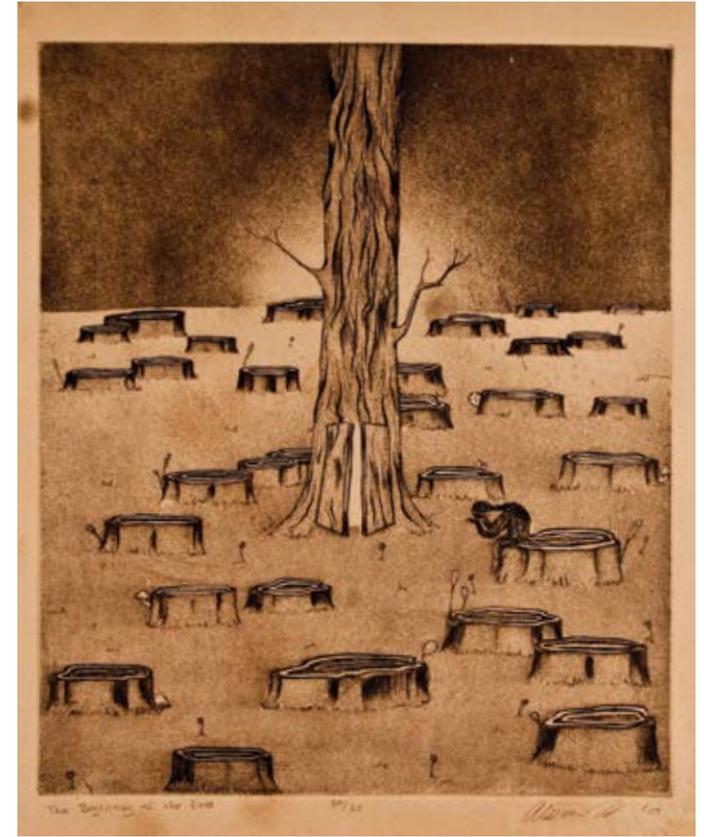
I set my pack down against the tree near the tire swing and knelt down to examine the rusted chain. The broken link in it had been rusted through over time, not broken by some outside force. No one had lived there for a very long time.

The hairs on the back of my neck stood up as I spotted movement to my left, but it was only leaves stirring in an oncoming wind. Something gray in the tree line caught my eye, and upon reaching it, I saw two other gray splotches in the leaves. I uncovered them and found that they were three small stones sitting upright in the ground. Dread filled me as I saw the initials carved on the stones that were, undoubtedly, headstones.

This intrigued me, and though I had no previous intention of staying or entering the house, my curiosity took over. Leaving my pack where it lay, I went around the house and looked out over the small field behind. The rocky dirt had let little grow in the time the field was unused, and I understood that this tiny farm could never have been prosperous. What happened to the people who lived here?

I again turned to face the decrepit house, but my eyes fixed on the gently flapping door of the barn. Inside, rusted tools were visible. A large gust of wind smacked the door against the side of the barn, and the old building creaked and popped as if it were going to fall apart at any moment.

The sky was becoming cloudy, and it would surely storm soon. I was so engrossed in the house, field and barn that I hadn't realized the sun was no longer



## THE BEGINNING OF THE END

etching/intaglio

ALISON FORD

shining. I retrieved my pack and gathered some wildflowers to place on the graves before entering the house. As I climbed the front steps, the wooden slats creaked and moaned under my weight. The top step gave way under me, and I fell hard and stopped myself with my hands, one of them nearly pierced through with a rusty nail. My heart beat an awful thud, and I laughed out loud at my fortune: the nail poked up between my fingers. I pulled myself up quickly, suddenly aware and concerned that snakes might be hidden beneath the steps, and took a few deep breaths to get over the adrenaline rush.

I stood and pushed open the already ajar door, then began coughing in the sudden rush of stale air. Wind whipped through the doorway quickly like a demon looking for prey, pushing me inside and slamming the door behind me. I stared at the door for a moment, wondering if it would be like a scary movie in which the door slams and won't open. I didn't try opening it, reminding myself that I wasn't in a movie, and the situation was actually real.

For about five minutes, I walked through the halls of the small farmhouse, looking at the old, faded photographs and paintings on the walls. Everything was covered with dust, and my footsteps were easily muffled. Most of what few photographs were there consisted of slightly blurred pictures of a sandy-haired little boy as he ran and played, clearly loved by his mother.

I came to the dining room table, placed adjacently to the kitchen at the back of the house, and dropped my pack on top of a pile of yellowed newspapers. From the looks of the coming storm outside, I would be spending some time in the rickety old house. After inspecting the rags around the window frames to make sure they would block out wind and rain, I went to look for matches, starting in the cellar.

Unlike other houses in that area, the cellar stairs were inside, near the pantry in the kitchen. Pulling up the small trap door and peering down, I saw the darkness would be a problem. I quickly got a small flashlight from my pack and descended the stairs, but the matches were easy to find, stashed in a small box on top of a shelf that fell to the floor as soon as I touched it. I noted absentmindedly that there were jars of old preserves on other shelves, which told me whoever left did it swiftly and didn't return. I retreated up the stairs and started a fire in the kitchen stove, seeking warmth after the cool cellar and against the stormy weather rolling in.

A glance out the dusty kitchen window told me I would definitely be staying for a while. While

the stove heated the house, I went to the dining table and sat in one of the chairs, groaning with the awareness that my backside would surely be covered with dust.

I moved some of the newspapers from under my pack and glanced over the headlines. One caught my attention, a newspaper nearly fifteen years old with a headline about a woman and her two-year-old son dying in a car crash. A later newspaper, dated barely a month afterward, told the story of the husband and father who, stricken with grief, shot himself in the head.

The article told me all I needed to know about the family who lived in that house. It told me how she'd left in a hurry with her son because her husband had had too much to drink. He told reporters she had intended to stay at her sister's house for the night and come back because he did not drink often. Of course he didn't, I thought at the time. She never made it to her sister's house.

She swerved to miss a car that, coincidentally, was driven by a drunk driver. She and the boy went off a small cliff, killing them both quickly. Before the investigation was ever finished, the woman's husband was found in his own car, hole in his head, gun in his hand.

The chief of police at the time admitted he would have killed himself too if that had happened to him, but luckily his wife and son were home safe. He also stated to the town that drunk driving was against the law, so they'd better think twice about drinking in the first place. They wouldn't want another "Frank Lendon" happening. Society, again, had made a label out of a dead man's name. It made me heart sick, and it made me miss my mother, father and brother in New York, and I felt thankful that they were alive and well.

While reading the various articles in the old newspapers, the house had warmed up plenty, and the storm was nearly over. Hours later the sun came out, and I extinguished the fire in the stove. I strapped my pack about me once more and put away my flashlight. I set about to make sure everything was as I had left it, save for the burnt tinder and broken shelf in the cellar because I hadn't the tools with me to fix it.

I opened the door, breathed in the fresh air, and turned around to gaze into the hollow home. A Bible, spine wrinkled with overuse, lay under a chair near the front window. I picked it up and let it drop lightly onto the seat of the chair, causing a cloud of dust to stir in the air. I turned and walked out of the house, for the first time noticing the ivy that sprung up around the entire thing, creating something like a safe little nest. Home sounded wonderful just then—not the home I had made in the Appalachians but the home I had left in New York.

“DREAD FILLED ME AS I SAW THE INITIALS CARVED ON THE STONES THAT WERE, UNDOUBTEDLY, HEADSTONES.”

I didn't look back. When I got home, I called my family and told them I loved them, and then moved back to New York State not long after. I still visit to look for that ghostly road, have even taken my children on that hike, though they thought we were looking for bugs and squirrels and birds. I have never told anyone about it, believing somehow that the abandoned farmhouse wanted just one person to remember it and count himself lucky: lucky for being alive and lucky for having those I love and who love me too. Now, it will be a burden for others, but I hope they find the same thankfulness and happiness in life that I have.

*Albert Henson, May 3, 2011* 



PERFECT SPACE

digital art

DELLA WHEELER



## BY THE TEETH

photography

MALINA CHAVEZ



## CRIMSON

prose

CHRISTOPHER BUTNER

The air smelled like rain. The old oak stood before me. Strong. Aged. Water pooled at its base. Formed a wetland. The rain poured. Each drop an explosion. Mud flew in the air.

Red swirled in the water. Crimson. It flowed like a ribbon up the tree. Wolf. Large. Feral. Wounded. Blood seeped from its shoulder.

It slipped. Fell. Crashed to the ground.

Against my will, I stepped forward.

The thing growled. Deep. Throaty. Laced with mucus. Drops of blood spurted from its nose.

Then, it happened.

The beast lunged. I couldn't move. Couldn't blink.

Jaws clamped.

Pain spread.

The beast died. His eyes became human. Mine grew wild.

The creature perished.

The curse lives.



## MY PORCELAIN DOLL

*poetry*

**KAITLYN HAWKINS**

Black velvet hair,  
 Alabaster white skin—  
 Beauty outside.  
 Nothing within.  
 Thick fan-like lashes,  
 Shining bright eyes—  
 Try to convey the  
 Emotion you hide.  
 Painted pink cheeks,  
 Supple red lips—  
 Nearly glued together  
 So that nothing slips.  
 Small hands, feet,  
 Thin girlish frame.  
 No flaws are found,  
 Nothing to defame.

No life to the eyes,  
 No love in the smile.  
 Though she is beautiful  
 Signs of torture are  
 Etched upon her face.  
 Sadly, not misplaced.  
 Hatred becomes her,  
 That she drove herself  
 To this.  
 Hated herself this much,  
 To go and dismiss  
 Everything that made her  
 Who she was.  
 She did—  
 She does—  
 Know what life held.  
 But she couldn't show it,  
 Show what she felt,  
 So she turned—me, I—  
 Turned, into  
 My Porcelain Doll.

## BONNIE BAILEY

*oil on canvas*

**JOSHUA PETTY**



## MAKE ME SIMPLE

*poetry*

**AMANDA GAMBILL**

If I wake up and all my teeth fall out,  
 I'll collect them as pearls,  
 And tell the world I'm beautiful.

My hair may fall out into strands,  
 But I'll string together a coat,  
 And wear it everywhere for the world to see.

And when my skin starts to peel,  
 I'll keep the slips to make a blanket,  
 To stay warm and cozy for the world to use.

I hope the world is happy to use every inch of me.  
 I'd give them it all.  
 Unwrap this precious gift,  
 Make me a simple thing.



## A POEM FOR LOST DAUGHTERS

*poetry*

**JARED BURTON**

In this, your darkest hour, my child  
Comes hatred and sorrow and pain  
You'll feel as you're dying that you've never known hope  
But hope roars at the sound of my name

With the heart of a lion, my love shall descend  
To clasp you in the fiercest embrace  
To withdraw you, my child, from the flails of the grave  
To dry all those tears from your face

Then tenderly, child, I'll seat you by me  
To rest in the shade of my grace  
For the kingdom of death has no influence here  
Only love reigns supreme in this place

So be still, my sweetest, dear daughter of mine  
You know now you're never alone  
Take comfort, my dearest, it won't be much longer  
You're never too far from your home



## ALEX FINDS THE DRAGON

*ink and watercolor*

**JOSHUA PETTY**



## SHOELACES

*A reimagining of  
"Kaddish"*  
by Allen Ginsberg

ARI CONSTANTINE

Over and over—refrain—of the frustration—still haven't gotten this right—can't get this down—just too difficult

to get this damn bunny—around the tree and into his little bunny hole—like parents are supposed to teach.

Spending long nights awake in bed, wondering how rabbits are reminiscent of shoelaces—it makes no sense—none whatsoever—

They all make fun of me, because I can't tie them on my own—because you never taught me—I don't know who else to blame, but you never taught me and now the kids at school, they laugh—

By my simple stupidity—tripping over laces untied—this is called taking one for the team—(unlike you)—(an unfortunate aversion to normalcy)—

But you still bought me tennis shoes on my birthday, and I still never knew how to tie them like the other boys did at school,

so tucked them into my shoes—"idiot, that's not the same"—so I took the laces out altogether—my feet kept slipping out of the heels, girls always laughing irreverently at the sight of me—"why you even wearin' shoes, you gnome?"—I cried—

and you shopped from outside of windows, always looking for better things and better sneakers to buy, but never thought twice to teach me how to tie—

And was papa never there to wear sneakers or teach his son how the rabbit goes in his hole? You smiled at my face, so frustrated and in tears—you must have thought I looked silly, maybe cute, so upset over nothing—

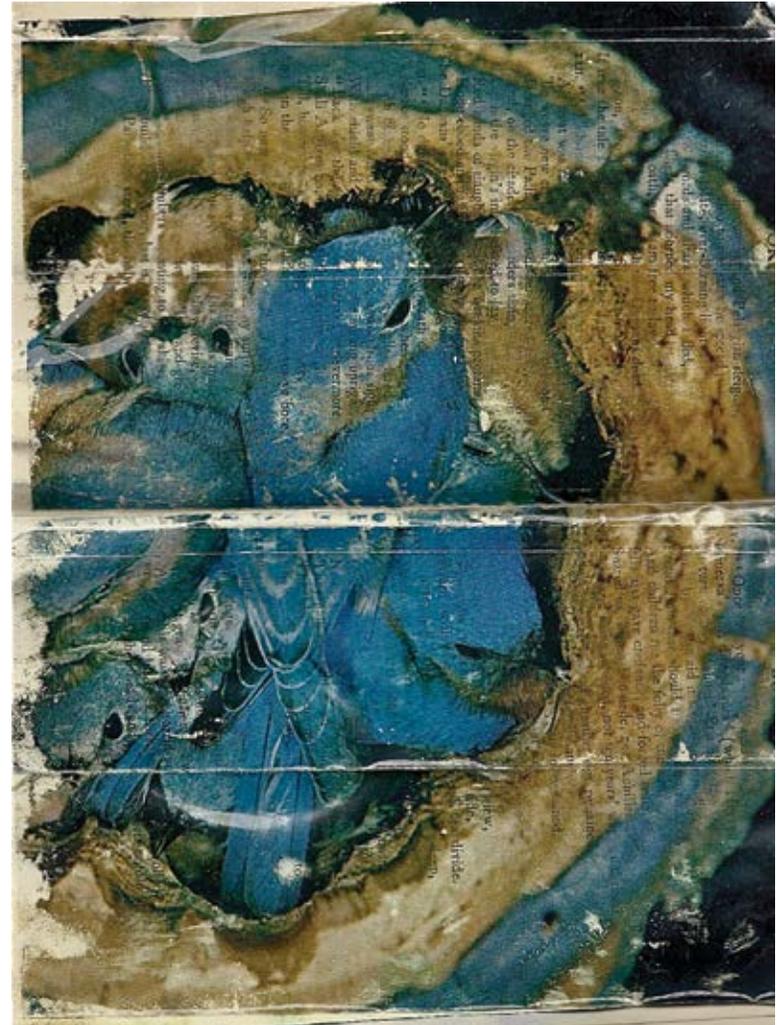
But mama, the truth is it wasn't nothing the other children noticed and decided to make fun—my feet are bunnies with no hole for home.



## NESTING

*tape transfer on book page*

WHITNEY PROPER



DEN-DRO-CHRO-NOL-O-GY (N)  
poetry

ASHTON HOLLEY

*scars on my heart  
like a tree that grows  
forming intricate designs  
through a barbed wire fence  
places where goodbyes  
they become intertwined*

*leave g a p i n g holes*

*missing became a part of me,  
i do not know  
of us.  
this heart of mine  
it is not me  
marred by the passage of time  
but it is a part of me none-the-less  
still Love resides there  
enveloped in folds  
deep beneath the surface  
rings of growth  
beyond the anticipation  
rings of engagement  
someday*

*someday*

*someday*

*yes,  
someday.*

*ido.*

*theewed.*

*someday.*



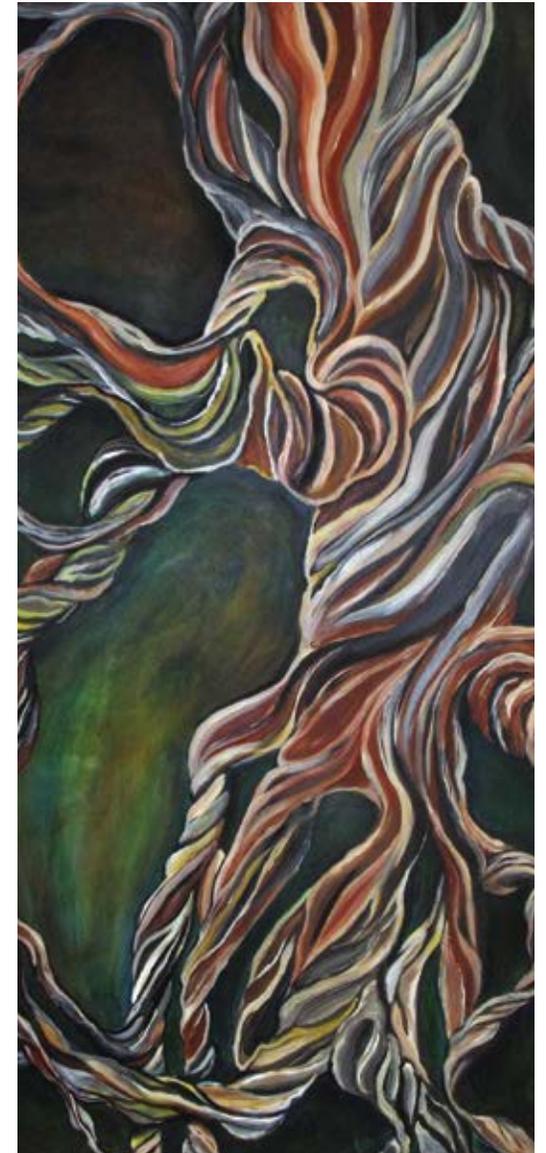
ROGUE  
encaustic

JACQUELYN SWANSON



GROWN 2  
acrylic on wood

TARA ROSS



**ASHLEY BLANKENSHIP**

It was the computer screen blinking. It was the coffee cooling. It was the shock in the air. It was a betrayal matched by a betrayal. He did not finish his coffee before work. It was all he thought about in his office. He wrote the details on Post-it notes, and they hung onto his computer monitor like sores.

John went home unproductive and sour.

“I just grabbed Chinese,” Laura called out to him from the kitchen.

He didn’t say anything. He sulked and slunk to the table.

“What went wrong with work today, huh?” She raised her brows.

He seethed in his hypocrisy. He clenched his jaw and said, “Nothing, long day.”

She nodded, and they ate in silence with forks.

She wanted to watch a movie. He said his head hurt and went to bed. She did sense something was different but could not put her finger on it. He’d been fooling around on her for a long time, and she knew it. She’d been fooling around on him for a little while. She didn’t much care for him after all the years. When you drag out deception for so long love becomes disinterest.

She knew he had an uninteresting job. It had bored him for a long time. She didn’t care about what kept his interest. He had dreamt of going back to his middle school students, social studies class. She said no.

He could not decide whether to confront her. Years of emptiness left him drained and bland. She kept on like a hummingbird, chirping about the kitchen, a realm he’d left to her over the years.

Cows. She filled her kitchen with heifers. They stared at him as he ate his cereal. They stared at him while he ate peanut butter and apples. They stared at him, black, brainless eyes, and he despised them all. The strip of wallpaper, the cookie jar, the clock, the coffee mugs . . .

“Have you considered redecorating, dear?”

“Huh?”

“Never mind.” He shrugged inconsequently.

He stumbled, carafe tilting. Coffee burnt her arm.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” She was acid accidentally. “Forget it.” Quipped apology.

He accepted the jab in calm. He let her malicious words linger in the air long enough to make it awkward.

She made amends. “Really, I didn’t mean it.” She felt a kilogram of doubt—not quite enough to dull the sharp edge in her tone. Twenty years tended to attach you to someone. Made it difficult to drown the sentimentality though she persevered.

He left the house quietly. Ten minutes later, she left, too.

A few hours later, she lay in her lover’s bed in his boxers, smiling at him. He was asleep. She kissed his cheeks and got up to get dressed. His name was Henry. They’d met one evening when

she was out with her oldest friend, Veronica, at an Italian bistro. He was sitting at another table with his friend Scott, with whom Veronica was involved. While things didn’t work out between Veronica and Scott, a romance between Henry and herself blossomed. The bold numerals of the clock on his



nightstand disturbed her reverie—it was time for her to get home. She'd already lingered too long here. On Wednesday nights, she always picked up Mexican.

He hated Mexican. He knew she knew spicy foods gave him indigestion. He could tell that she was different today, but he couldn't put his finger on it. The smell of her was different. Everything was becoming more and more different when all he wanted was for things to be the same again. He couldn't help but reminisce. He needed desperately to talk to Veronica. He didn't want to end things, but he didn't want to continue them either.

“ THE COOKIE JAR COW WAS GIVING HIM THE STINK EYE; HE JUST WANTED TO GET OUT OF THE KITCHEN. ”

He thought of good times with Laura. It was hard not to, walking down the hallway full of color photographs in dark frames arranged like bouquets, leaning out in invitation. Some were from when they were very young, early twenties. They'd been married seven months. It was late June, a very hot summer. They were visiting Mexico when it had still been safe to travel there, staying in a hotel in Monterey where John's uncle often traveled as a pilot for FedEx. There was a picture on the wall that his uncle had taken of them. They were, John thought, completely absorbed by each other. So different than now. You can't get back that kind of thing, he told himself. Once it's gone, it doesn't come back.

She smiled at him sweetly as he emerged from the dim hall, and he grew suspicious.

“Headache, again?”

He shook his head. The cookie jar cow was giving him the stink eye; he just wanted to get out of the

kitchen. An animal too stupid to seek shelter from a storm intimidated him in his own home.

“Oh, good,” she grinned, “let's watch a movie.”

“What movie?”

“Let's watch *Airplane*.”

He tolerated her. He laughed at jokes he'd heard before.

Their life was falling apart. He felt guilty for hating her. He wanted to ask her why they never had any kids together. He wanted to ask her why they'd wasted their life with work and quarrel. He wanted to rewind and renew.

“Do you care?”

“Not particularly. Do you?”

He didn't have the heart to answer. He brushed his teeth and feigned deafness.

Finally she broke the silence, “My dad always said, nothing lasts forever—don't hold out for love.” She resigned herself to a life of lack.

She feared she was becoming her father. If things were better, she would tell John. If she were braver, things would be better. She thought of her father: the cynic born into life too late, wept for a woman he didn't want, and why? For what? To bring her back? To count his heart in? Her father's humanity occurred to him hopeful and insolent.

She realized her mistake—should've listened because what was she doing now? She blamed and blasphemed and belittled but did nothing to improve her situation. If John were gone, would she weep, too? Though now she didn't care, didn't want him, didn't count her heart in? Did she want to live out the rest of her life like her dad, embittered and forlorn to companionship?

They went to bed together, impersonally. They said I love you and did not kiss. She clicked off her lamp, and then he. The room was dark, and they slept through their emptiness without waking.

John dreamt deeply. He had escaped the catacombs of cubicles. He finally took that trip he'd been longing for to South America, and then while picking just-right bananas with a native, a huge poisonous spider descended to kill them both. He and the native had fallen in love two days prior. As they lay down to die, he saw Laura's face. His wife and long companion had been his exotic new lover. She turned her head towards him and began to speak:

“Has this all been for nothing? A waste? A ruin? A loveless life?” She asked him.

“I don't think so. We had as good a run as any.”

“So does this mean it's over?”

“I don't see why so.” He sighed. Why did everything have to be in such decisive, definite terms?

“We're not happy.”

“We're not sad.”

“That's not enough.”

“What is enough?”

He didn't want to talk anymore.

That morning he gave his two weeks. He'd already secured a job at the school he'd worked at before. They were pleased to have him back. Back to teaching culture, history. Back to showing kids a world he'd never seen. He cut ties with Veronica. He gave his best regards to Laura.

“What about our life together?” She beseeched him, starting to panic.

“What life? We're not living.”

His plans to South America were underway. He welcomed her to come.

“Why South America?”

“Does it matter why? It’s not here. It’s some other place we’ve never been.”

She reminded herself of a time, late one night, when she nearly picked up the phone to report a strange woman lurking around their house until she realized

that it was merely her reflection—completely unrecognizable to her. She’d been a stranger to her own life—aloof and cold.

Laura rose to the kitchen. Her fingernails found a vulnerable edge in the mooring strip of wallpaper. She tore a chunk off in a jagged strip. She slid the big-headed salt and pepper shakers off the stove, and they clattered to the floor without breaking, plastic. She opened a cabinet, grabbed three cow head mugs, and threw them into the sink forcefully.

She did not flinch at the crash of porcelain. She leaned over the kitchen sink, unlatched the window, and opened it up, letting in a cool breath of night. She pulled the cookie jar from its place in the corner and threw it out the window. She was ready to redecorate.

He stood in the archway between the kitchen and living room, watching her. She nodded, an uncertain acquiescence, determining it was never too late in life to be born. 



## HAPPY THOUGHTS

*photography*

CAMERON BREWER

## SIMPLE, HUNTED, STARVING LIONS

*poetry*

RACHEL NUTT

Simple, hunted, starving lions  
Are standing in the food stamp lines.  
Silver, shining, ice-cold scissors  
Cut their manes like evil wizards.  
The kings are then hosed down with water,  
Each cat becoming his own martyr.  
The ladybugs and beetles laugh  
As does the worm and the giraffe.  
And when the rain begins to fall  
The lions smirk upon them all,  
Open their doors and enter in  
To their dens of work, of play, of sin.

Simple, hunted, starving lions  
Rest secure in their domestic mines  
Waiting to remember why  
They were created  
And why they’re dry  
When every other creature snickers  
At the way they now are donning knickers.  
The royalty, the overfed  
Do not see where they’ve been led.  
And so they just rest their heads  
Upon their tired, cozy beds,  
Eat their processed meals alone,  
And let their instinct turn to stone.





## UNTITLED

photography

PATRICK CASEY

poke out of her sunken face as she stares at me. “If you don’t grow up soon, you’ll end up in hell with Satan.”

“Mama says Satan isn’t real,” I say.

“Don’t you say that!” she swats her hand through the air. “I saw him take your papa away. Looked just like the president himself.” She pauses. “If you don’t watch it, you’ll end up in hell with the president.”

I slide toward the edge of the bed, but Gramma stops me and squeezes her cold hand around my shoulder.

“Hand me a tissue. You children are freezing up my room,” she shouts. I hand her the box, and she blows her nose like an elephant and crams the tissue into my hand.

I move toward the floor fast and start playing cars with Alex. Gramma yells at the news and finally falls asleep. Me and Alex leave her alone with her TV and sneak out to get some food.

“I think Gramma’s a witch,” Alex says. “I heard about a witch in school, and she is just like Gramma.”

“Witches are green and have dark hair. Gramma’s hair is red,” I tell him as I search through the cabinets for some peanut butter.

“She hides it. Just like Halloween, ‘cept we dress up like witches, and she dresses up like a gramma.”

“I don’t believe you,” I say. I grab a jar of honey and search for a spoon. Alex stomps across the room making cackling noises like a witch and starts playing near the stove.

“Look!” he yells.

I turn around, and Alex lifts a lid off of a pot. The smell of onions and garlic powder burn my nose, and I back away. “I’m not looking in that!”

“But it’s bubbling and green just like witch food,” he yells.

I plug my nose and stare into the mixture of green and brown goop. It snaps, crackles, and pops me in the face. I fall back onto Alex, and he laughs.

“You children better not be playing with my breakfast brew!” Gramma yells. Her voice echoes across the hall.

Alex smiles. “That must be what she eats to keep us from seeing she’s a witch.”

I pull up my sleeve and place a finger in the stew. It tastes gross like cabbage, and I instantly know that no sane human likes cabbage.

“We should pour it down the drain,” I say. “In the morning, if she hasn’t eaten the stew, we’ll know that she’s a witch because she’ll be green and witchy.”

“Let’s do it,” Alex says, smiling. He helps me pour the broth into the sink, and we try to jam the chunks down the drain with a spoon. We walk back to Gramma’s room and set our bedrolls on the floor. We can’t stop laughing, and we worry that Gramma might wake, but she doesn’t, and we fall asleep.

In the morning, I wake up and enter the kitchen. Gramma is older and meaner than ever. Her hair is grayer than red, and her arms are covered in green goop. I know right away that Alex is right. Gramma must be a witch. 🌀

## GRAMMA IS A WITCH

prose

JESSICA PAULSEN

I always knew Gramma was strange, but boy, is she even more strange now.

Mama is busy going to school, so me and my brother, Alex, are watching Gramma tonight.

Gramma sits in bed and eyeballs the news station. Momma doesn’t let us watch the news at home, so I make Alex play with some cars, and me and Gramma watch the news together.

“This world is going to hell,” Gramma spits at the screen.

“What’s hell like?” I ask, sitting on a pile of comforters.

“It’s filled with lots of rotten children.” Her eyeballs

# COLLAGE

Middle Tennessee State University  
MTSU Box 267  
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

## ABOUT COLLAGE

*Collage* is a biannual production of the Middle Tennessee State University Honors College. All submissions are reviewed anonymously and selected by a student editorial staff. The materials published by *Collage* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *Collage* staff, Honors College, MTSU student body, staff, or administrators. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form without written permission from either the editor or adviser of *Collage*. Inquiries should be addressed to *Collage*, Middle Tennessee State University, 1301 East Main St., Box 267, Murfreesboro, TN 37132.

## SUBMIT TO COLLAGE

*Collage* accepts submissions year-round. Submission forms and guidelines are available at [www.mtsu.edu/~collage](http://www.mtsu.edu/~collage). Creative work such as art, photography, prose, and poetry may be submitted digitally from the website or may be turned in at the *Collage* office, Honors 224, along with a completed hard copy of the form, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Creative works are accepted from MTSU students and alumni.

## POLICY STATEMENT

*Collage: A Journal of Creative Expression* is an arts and literature magazine featuring top-scoring submitted work chosen by a volunteer staff in a blind grading process. The staff attempts to choose the best work without regard for theme or authorship.

Although *Collage* is a publication of the University Honors College, staff members and submitters are not required to be Honors students. Staff members are selected each semester from a pool of applicants and must have at least a 3.0 GPA and two letters of recommendation.



## CREATIVE EXPRESSION AWARDS

Each semester the *Collage* Faculty Advisory Board selects submissions to receive Creative Expression Awards, one from each major category: art, photography, poetry, and prose. Literature winners receive the Martha Hixon Creative Expression Award, and visual winners receive the Lon Nuell Creative Expression Award. Winners receive \$50 awards.

### ART

*PERFECT SPACE* Della Wheeler

### PHOTOGRAPHY

*WITCHY PERSONALITIES* Davion Baxter

### POETRY

*MY PORCELAIN DOLL* Kaitlyn Hawkins

### PROSE

*GHOSTLY ROAD* Casey Gaddis

## COLUMBIA SCHOLASTIC PRESS ASSOCIATION AWARDS

Gold Medalist Certificate—2006, 2007, 2008,  
2009, 2010, 2011

Silver Crown Award—2007, 2008, 2011

Gold Crown Award—2012

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

### TECHNOLOGY

Adobe InDesign CS5.5  
Adobe Illustrator CS5.1  
Adobe Photoshop CS5.1  
Apple Macintosh Platform

### TYPOGRAPHY

Archer, various weights  
Arvil

### PAPER

100 lb. HannoArt Silk Cover  
80 lb. HannoArt Silk Text

### BINDING

Saddle Stitch

### PRINTING

Franklin Graphics of Nashville, Tennessee  
printed approximately 3,000 copies of *Collage*.



**MIDDLE  
TENNESSEE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

The logo for Middle Tennessee State University is centered on the left side of the image. It features the university's name in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The words "MIDDLE" and "TENNESSEE" are stacked vertically, with a thin horizontal line separating them. Below this, the words "STATE UNIVERSITY" are written in a smaller, all-caps font. The text is surrounded by a cluster of stylized, colorful floral and leaf-like shapes in shades of purple, teal, and yellow-green, which extend towards the right side of the image.