



Re:visions

NEW SERIES 8

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This representative collection of writing by Notre Dame students is published through the Creative Writing Program in the Department of English. Each year, a new editorial board consisting of graduate students solicits and selects manuscripts and oversees the production of the journal in order to encourage creativity and recognize student writing of notable quality.

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Re:Visions

A Journal of Creativity



Creative Writing Program
University of Notre Dame

RE:ADINGS & VISUALS

Jackie Burke <i>Glasshouse</i>	11	Joe Miller <i>The Casket</i>	69
Kevin Muratore <i>Knowledge Earned by Wrinkles</i>	19	Katherine Khorey <i>Blood and Stones</i>	73
Annette Esquibel <i>The Honey Pot</i>	21	Anne Boyle <i>Gatsby's Green Light</i>	85
James Martell <i>The Last Story</i>	23	Ryan Lash <i>The Devil's Foot</i>	87
Rgina Gesicki <i>Lips Flash</i>	31	Brittany Burgeson <i>So Effin' Romantic</i>	97
John Dillon <i>Nasturtiums</i>	33		
Theresa Olivier <i>The Gardener</i>	35		
Shelagh O'Brien <i>Birds</i>	45		
Emily Barton <i>Night Terrors</i>	47		
Tim LaBarge <i>Searching for Simon</i>	49		
Emily Forester <i>Father's Attempt at Masculinity</i>	57		
Mikey Moses <i>With the Creepy Crawling Things</i>	59		
Anne Boyle <i>Pause</i>	67		

FOREWORD

Our *Re:Visions* is hemmed and pleated. This is the domesticated *Re:Visions*. Ours is a schoolgirl racked and Re:Racked with guilt. The Re:Volution of *Re:Visions* 2009 has been Re:Scinded. It is the Re:Bushing of *Re:Visions*. *Re:Visions* is Re:Virginized, shoved back in the womb. We have Re:Troactively cancelled all previous *Re:Visions*.

Re:Visions is Re:Surrected. *Re:Visions* is Re:Born. *Re:Visions* is Re:Fracted in the glass house. *Re:Visions* is strung up by the wrists. *Re:Visions* is Re:Animated in the waxwork. *Re:Visions* is Re:Gurgitated. Eat it, baby birds!



The Editors

Glasshouse

JACKIE BURKE

W elcome
To the
Glasshouse
Where all
Is as
It seems
Until
You meet
Children

Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse were made of glass and they lived in a house made of glass. They bore glass children who are no longer glass. They all lived together on top of the world.

When Mr. Glasshouse first saw Mrs. Glasshouse, he knew from her material that she was perfect for him. In glass tradition he knew all glass people should stay together. He fell for her perfect smoothness, her flawless surface. He looked into her but she was made so perfectly that all light went straight through, and he was unable to see her heart. Still, in a manner very unlike Mr. Glasshouse, he reached out into empty space for her slender wrist and slid a silver ring effortlessly onto her finger. He smiled because it was as if that finger had been crafted to hold his ring. Mr. Glasshouse then vowed to always protect Mrs. Glasshouse from what was not glass.

Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse built themselves a home of only windows. They built it up and across and soon it was big and empty and wanting. They took some glass and blew into it and made glass children. For several years they all sat together and looked out of their house.

Until one child became water.

In the
House they
Were made
Of Glass
Two glass
Makers
Breath air
To make
Three hard
Bodies
No glass
Spirit

When Ana was born her glass was thin so her parents filled her cradle with down. They feared she would crack, that a finger or toe would break. But for years Ana remained beautiful and resilient. For years she was glass and glass alone.

Until she began to fill with water.

Thirteen years after she had been filled with air, Ana started waking up with water in her feet. Her parents took her to a glass doctor. The doctor didn't know where the water was coming from, or how to get rid of it without damaging Ana's flawless frame. He asked Ana how the water made her feel. The weight of water made moving harder. She didn't mention that she felt herself growing thin-

ner because she knew it would make her parents sad and scared.

Each day Ana woke up with more and more water in her feet, ankles, shins and knees. Mr. Glasshouse began sleeping in his daughter's room. He felt that he should protect her from what wasn't glass, too, and he had nightmares of Ana drowning in her body in the night.

By the end of her thirteenth year Ana could not get out of bed. The glass doctor told her parents that she would have to be drained or she would die there. They lined her bed with buckets and towels. The doctor brought a needle. Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse held each other closely but delicately as they waited for the doctor to pierce the body of their first glass girl. None of them knew if it would hurt, or if the water trickle or burst. But they needed to get the water out, so the doctor approached her arm and took in air. Then he pierced the girl.

Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse winced. Ana remained still. It had been barely a poke; the girl's glass was so thin that the needle didn't need to go far. No water came out, and the doctor wondered if the hole was too small. But when he reached for her arm again, he felt not glass but water.

Ana's glass had disappeared, and only water remained. She sat up and looked at her parents and the doctor. She felt different than she had ever felt before. She felt strong. She felt light.

Mr. Glasshouse looked at his daughter. She had the same features, the same face, the same body, but she was not glass.

Water began to leak from Mr. Glasshouse.

Makers
Wonder
If glass
Is life
If glass
Is choice
Now they

Preserve

Becca was glass for seventeen years. Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse made sure of it. Becca was taken to countless doctor's appointments, overly routine check-ups, and mental-health evaluations.

Becca's doctors asked about Ana. She thought Ana's water was beautiful. She moved fluidly, gracefully. No one told her that Ana was supposed to always be glass. They asked her about things that were glass and things that were not glass, about how she felt about not-glass, her sister's relationships with non-glass people. Becca asked would she ever get to be water, and everyone frowned. This was the day before Becca became not-glass.

In school Becca dated an older glass boy. Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse were happy that she was making other glass friends and developing good glass relationships. Becca's boyfriend was iridescent, and no one could see into him completely. Becca was fascinated by his colors, as if the thing that made him opaque also made him beautiful. When he held her gently, her glass felt warm, like the fire from the day she was made was still inside her, secretly burning away.

Becca enjoyed visiting her boyfriend's house. It had four solid walls and small windows, and she enjoyed placing her palms firmly against the strong walls. Her boyfriend loved to show off his strong home and his strong arms. During these times, his hands were less than gentle, and Becca was afraid that she would crack—or worse, break. Her parents had told her several times how important her glass was, how she had to keep it in the best of conditions.

One night, Becca's boyfriend was so rough she was sure she would shatter. She woke up the next morning. When she turned to find him, she screamed. Her boyfriend was still beside her, but he was now a boy of granite. He awoke with a start and when he saw her, he also screamed. Her body was less firm than before but still hard. She was pasty and pale.

Becca was now of wax.

From then on Becca stopped feeling warm, and she hated her wax self.

What was the point of wax without fire? She was weak and malleable, unable to control her own form.

Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse could see from their daughter's pale face and limp limbs that she had lost all of her spark since the transformation. They tried to hide their own devastation, but in the house they had built nothing could be hidden, so Becca saw it plainly.

In the
House he
Was born
Again
Blood boiled
Over
New fire
Body

Cale watched his sisters change and his parents mourn as if the girls had died. Unlike his sisters, he had never loved being of glass and didn't understand why his parents found it so important. After all, glass was just breakability.

He admired Becca's ex-boyfriend, who was now of stone. He never said it out loud because he knew the change was connected to his sister now being of wax. Being of wax didn't seem awful to Cale—it was less fragile than glass. But though her matter was thick Becca seemed empty.

In Glasshouse all was seen but nothing heard so Cale never knew how the changes happened. Cale asked Becca's ex-boyfriend about the change, and immediately decided that if that was what it took to become granite, he never wanted to be of stone.

Neither did he want to be of water, like Ana, or of wax, like Becca. Cale didn't

know what he would be, but it seemed that everyone who changed hadn't wanted to, and hadn't really had a choice. One could argue that, when he did change, it had been because he didn't have a choice.

When Cale found out about Becca and her ex-boyfriend, he felt very protective of his sisters. As different as they were, Cale knew he needed to stand up for them. Physically, he was useless. Glass versus stone was not a fight worth starting. But he would make sure that the bastard's life was miserable.

At school, Cale began spreading rumors about the boy of stone that would hit him at his most vulnerable point. They centered around habits and preferences. But a boy of wind heard Cale one day and told the boy of stone. In front of several friends, the boy of stone threatened to shatter Cale. Cale called him names. A granite fist retreated.

The fight was stopped before it began, broken up by the school. But the boy of stone was not done with the Glasshouse family.

Cale walked home from school that afternoon and was passed by a speeding car. He thought nothing of it until he walked up to the top, to Glasshouse. Glasshouse was glowing like a star, a ball of blazing fire. He approached it with awe and terror. His parents and sisters were outside.

Inside, the possessions of the Glasshouse family were aflame, burning brightly through the walls of the house. Cale hurried to see if his family was injured, but they were fine. Ana started toward the house, determined to quench the fire with herself. Cale watched her flying forward, stunned. He had never known his sister to be so brave, so selfless. But this was not her flame to extinguish.

He called her back, and she stopped, her body flowing briefly forward and back like a tide. And then Cale ran into the house.

The air of Glasshouse had been replaced with pure smoke so that each breath was choking. Cale stumbled through his home, hoping to recognize valuables that he could salvage for his family. But with each breath his lungs filled and his eyes teared, and the last thing he saw that night was a glimpse down at his own body, covered in ash and filled completely with smoke.

Three hearts
Tied by
Fractured
Makers
Etched plans
Shattered
Leaving
Unclear
Children

When the firemen came Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse ordered them to leave their hoses behind and find their son. They watched the men scouring through the rising fire.

The men returned from the glass inferno with nothing but a few half-burnt items that meant nothing to the couple. They offered to go in again with hoses, but Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse declined. When the firemen asked why, Mr. Glasshouse said that it was because his son was in there, smoldering away. Ana agreed that water would be murder, but no one would look at her.

Then out came Cale, flames streaming from his limbs. His features were unrecognizable, a boy of fire and nothing else. He was blood red and brilliant looking. He was hotter than glass could have ever stood, ever understood, and it didn't hurt. It was his body.

Cale felt indestructible. He looked at his family. He saw Becca. He realized there were better things to be.

The firemen went into the house and saved what was left inside. So many of the small and beautiful things that the Glasshouse's had loved were gone. Cale felt guilty and dangerous and Becca felt guilty and Ana felt dangerous. Mr. and Mrs. Glasshouse felt cracked all over, and it was far worse than being scorched or drowned or shattered.

In wax
Stomach
New blood
Flowing
Wax child
Born to
Wax heart
Stone world
And
Empty
Home.

Knowledge earned by wrinkles

KEVIN MURATORE

My grandpa has a millennium-old handlebar mustache that gives the appearance of wisdom
He has a bald head which he covers with cowboy hats ordered specially because his head is too strong
He fought in “the war”
He has a big hole in his back that he won’t speak of not even to his wife
He tells racist jokes to black people and they all laugh together
He doesn’t think too much
He moves slowly
He doesn’t seem right when he’s not in his chair
And he tells the best fucking stories
My grandpa hates poetry
He doesn’t read books that aren’t about American history
But my grandpa fucking hates Howard Zinn
He doesn’t know who he is, but he hates him
My grandpa makes shitty conversation an art form
Tells terrible jokes
Forgets my name
My grandpa drinks too much gin
He’s a terrible public speaker and an ignorant drunk
An inappropriate interruption
An Irish traditionalist
A silent hardass who cuts his own son and wife out of his own fucking life
Whose worst fear has been cut into so many tiny pieces

That he might as well not even sit in that wheel chair
But shit, he knows us
Or he wants to know us
And he loves us or he wants to love us
So fuck you and fuck me
For we sit in our boxes ignorant of the knowledge earned by wrinkles
And the currency that is experience
Or should be experience
Because if it was
My grandpa would own your ass
And my grandpa would buy understanding
Mine, yours, theirs
My Grandpa would make this country into a great nation
And then he would take over the rest of the world
With a few handwritten notes and chocolate boxes
But it's not
So he's not
So I'm not
So we cannot
So my grandpa will sit in his chair and forever drink his gin
And one day perhaps my grandpa will ask me who he really is



The Honey Pot

ANNETTE ESQUIBEL

the last story

JAMES MARTELL

On *m'appellera Santiago*. Even though this is not my name. Nor are any of those with which, for some decades, they have been referring to me. One could doubt that I really have a name. But, if such exists, if there is one that is true, it must remain veiled in the midst of all the other papers and documents that have testified to my (first) existence. Piles of records and signatures that wait for the hopeless one, for the one who possesses fewer words than I, for him to exhume and transform them, in two or three movements, into the life of Santiago, *comme on m'appellera dès ce moment*.

Right now I could give him the key. If he comes and shouts at me from downstairs, calling me, I will throw it to him; or I will ask him to come up, I will tell him that, for some time, I have been waiting for him. But this will not happen. Rather I will stay here, watching. Until I cannot watch any longer, *non plus*. When my eyes close to this night that here is just beginning.

I cannot define exactly the time, the amount of hours or days that I have been here since they left me. I remember that the woman, saying goodbye from the threshold, mentioned something about she *hoped* to come back, but she thought in reality that she would not, that it was better for me to forget this possibility. *Maintenant*, I do not know how much I've forgotten. I washed my face some minutes ago, and it was there, over the sink, where I thought again that I would be called *Santiago*, when all of this had finished.

The light of the little street has now started to shine, and I could turn on the television. But the thing projected on the screen would be the same. Since long ago, since the departure of the woman, the television shows only the same movie, a film about a man who cannot forget his dream of the night before. Maybe somebody is trans-

mitting this movie on purpose, *bloody on purpose*, as the other woman used to say. Can I remember the last thing I dreamt? There was a northern woman advancing towards me, in a chamber with a grey-blue carpet. She sat down next to the bed, laid back at the end, and I slid into her, my head resting over her chest. In a moment, she opened her blouse—metallic blue—and directed my face towards her left breast, telling me that everything was going to be fine. *Puis*, time passed; everything blurred, as if both the illumination in the room and the light penetrating the window were fading. Then I think I woke up, and there was no woman, no longer were those long legs wrapped around my body. But my dream is different from the one of the man in the film. In his, there was a clock, and in mine one could not even hear a tick tack, just the rasping breath that came from my chest, trying to fill the room. Now I believe it was this very same room. But I could always be wrong.

I would like to know what time it is, although the contrast of the light over the mountains could give me some intuition. If it is summer, then it must be eight and a half, if autumn, then six and a half. It has been a while since I forgot the exact month. Maybe since I felt I was going to change my name again. Before this, I had been called *Jacques*, when I lived in that francophone city.

I remember that I used to walk at dusk from the hotel to the plaza, where the tourists wandered, taking pictures of *le palace du gouvernement* and *la brasserie* that stood out, perpendicular, from the corner. While I was watching them, I listened to their different languages, smiling ironically when one of them spoke Spanish. Sometimes even the accent was the same I heard in my childhood. But instead of causing me a warm sensation of recognition, this only provoked me to retreat farther away, trying to fake with my body a reason for this sudden disappearance.

In that city too there was a woman. I met her in a small restaurant *du centre-ville*. She served me a dark beer and a baguette, and I asked her also for an ashtray. She smiled at me, and I decided to ask her if she was studying at the university. She answered yes, and I told her that I was giving a course in epistemology that summer. She said she was going to see me. And she did, the next week. She came to some of my classes. And eventually we ended up drinking wine in my apartment. A place a little similar to the one in which I am living now. On the radio was an American tune, *Last dance with Mary Jane*, I think it was. She would have danced a little

during the song, or at least this is the way in which I have chosen to remember her. Her dark hair slipping over the straps of her blouse as I lit another cigarette without ever stopping my contemplation of her. I think I have never watched another woman dancing the same song, or at least not with that rhythm, filtered through the wine and the light that penetrated the oval window. She danced as if she was resting, as if she could enjoy in each movement the same relaxation one has in the morning, stretching. Her eyes were half-closed, but always fixed in something, in some kind of internal fleshy wire that moved her without ever pushing her into any movement that her own inertia—her own abandonment—did not dictate her. More than with orders, she seemed to direct herself by whispers, by a far away humming that came from her own muscles, from the forms that she and the air shared.

At some point she left. I watched her from the angle of the oval, walking through the old and still wet street, while I smoked my last cigarette of the night and finished the wine from her glass, stained with lipstick. It would have been a long night because, if I remember well, I wrote a lot; not only did I finish preparing for the next day's course, I also wrote some letters, some of them for Mexico and some others for Paris. Her name I cannot remember. But I have decided, for easing my depiction of her, to baptize her Melissa with the aid of the memory of the light rain that fell over that night. I would have seen her twice or maybe three times after that evening, although always separated by, in some way, a great length of time. Sometimes I still imagine her dancing that same melody in front of another man, or another woman; but always veiled within herself, within that bizarre movement, uncanny, which inscribed her not only into my narratives, but also my theoretical writings, my last dissertations.

The inscription of a foreboding that will always make me thank her; the pure sensation—almost cutaneous—that, in some way, in the midst of everything, there will always be that space, that renouncing of self without any irresponsibility, with the biggest compromise with what is present, with the body. Something that, even though she wrote it into me, in my own language—she spoke some Spanish—I could never actualize in my own passing.

The last time I saw her, after putting on her black jacket and kissing me on the cheek, she said: Your name is not *Jacques*. As we know, she was right. But I am

glad that she did not ask me the true one. It is possible that in that moment, under the perspective of this disappearance, I would have said it to her, or at least I would have invented one that, without consideration for myself, would have had in its incarnation an unbearable reality, cruelly definitive. Be that as it may, some days after this event I stopped calling myself *Jacques*, and I left that city. I took a night train, waiting to perform some entirely foreseen staging, and arrived in a Spanish port.

If I turn on the television, the whisper starts. It is the plaintive voice of the man trying to forget what his mind and the screen as a medium do not stop rendering to us. It is a whisper that, albeit unintelligible, reminds us more of the first itching words of the infant than of the cries of a man with the age of the present one. The image is always the same. It is he, in a café, next to a window, watching a woman that passes and gets into a car. We cannot know if he knows the woman, or if she is a complete creation of his dream, but the sight and the face of the man present, more than a nostalgia, a too uncanny smile, as of a release and a death at the same time; the smile of a man condemned to death that has awaited too long the confirmation of the moment. After this, the man nods, and the whisper starts again, taking us—just in the way of sound, the image does not change, the man is still watching the woman getting into the car, once and again—to the probable space of his wakefulness. Sometimes I turn on the volume and walk through the rooms, pausing one moment in the bathroom to watch myself. Curiously enough, although formerly I had a profound beard, now, even without shaving, I can hardly distinguish some small, dispersed hairs, scattered as in a recently reaped field. Sometimes it seems to me that I lose the whisper. Focused on my face, or on the pictures on the walls, my ears seem to obey my eyes, and, as with a far away music, the tunes of diverse moments from the images begin to flood my brain: perfect symbiosis of the speeches that flood my head. All of this happens, until one of these discourses, usually that one that produces a slight annoyance in my stomach and lungs, until this one comes to life again, and in its intermittent form, constructing itself like the recent revival of the whisper, sends me again to the room and to the carpet beneath my feet. And so I come to the television and I turn it off, sitting in the soft

couch in front of it. Sometimes I can focus enough to read under the whisper of the film, but only if it is not too loud. *L'autre nuit*, while I was reading the *Tractatus*, a strange amalgam started appearing between the stammering of both phenomena. First: 4.121 “*What* is expressed in language, we cannot express through language”, and then: 4.04 “In the proposition one has to be able to distinguish the exact same things as in the state of things that it represents.” Thus, backwards, in the opposite direction, while I was re-reading, the sense started developing and disappearing through the rhythm of the whisper, like the heartbeat or the blinking of a child that would never be born, though always announcing himself (it could be better to speak of a girl; yes, *c'est toujours meilleur une fille*). The state of things in that moment looked truly different than its representation, at least the representation that I could make of it. I could—*encore je peux*—gather a series of names, take them and transform them into categories according to the traces that developed a certain space; after this, I could transplant them, create movements between these categories until I develop some kind of game, an organic game, fluid game; I could do this while I am still sitting here, still, watching the window that, even in its obscure landscape, stands out from the television. I could do it *from* the whisper, but without any intelligibility, that is to say, without any true access to a sense; just like the desirable wish for a *free* woman behind a glass; the reflection that I have never had the courage to follow, from which I have only let myself be possessed.

If I stand up—when I stand up—and I walk towards the glass, expanding just a little, with my fingers, the small opening of the venetian blinds, I can see again the vigilant street, while I stand waiting for the one who could come and knock at my door, who could come and call me. But this calling is not possible right now. And probably it will not be possible until my name has deformed itself, has been re-appropriated in this final form that not long ago I conceived: *Santiago*. *Santiago* as the name or the zeal that would end my *récit*, my recitation. And so it is, that if I throw the key, or if I let it slowly slip from my hand, I would not know who really is handing the access, the entrance, to whom; the hand that receives or the one that throws. It is the woman who has let me see all this. With her goodbye, veiled or covered beneath the appearance of a see-you-later, an *à bientôt*, she handed me the possibility, an always frightful one, of staying here, writing this, developing my

prologue to what we could call the last story. This is why the necessity of remembrance—from the whispering, from the film—has to reappear each time as the entrance or the passing of this negation. Same movement of the first woman, the last one, and the ones in between, of all these series of sisters, of sibyls, that from their dances, their abandonment, by their bodies and their silence, brought me to this silence. Necessity, *alors*, not only of the name, but of the rendering of the piles and the archives to the one *sans espérance*, to that new shadow that would come to situate himself on top of all of my rests. A man that could listen, from his own memories, his own absence of hope—as I dared to call it some moments ago—that could listen to the whispering of the other man, the one dreaming, the one inside the film. Maybe it was this very same man who started calling me *Santiago*. Maybe from his language, his stammering, the only grain of intelligibility was the name, it was the only meaning that he could give me, in the form of the woman in my own dream, of her prolonged embrace of arms, legs, and breasts. He gave me this name while we were both watching, from the window, the goodbye of the woman; a undelivered farewell, not clearly given, but seen, muttered in the way that her skirt lodged inside the car.

Thus I will be, by him or her, I will be called, invoked; according to this last naming that, in a strange way, does not belong in a transparent manner to the old series of names. To the “punctuality” of *Jacques, Jaime, Jean, John, Yu, Yes, Iago*. But this calling could happen beneath the sky, the terrace, or behind the door; though in its prologue, its annunciation, it comes from the screen and its germinal bubbling. It will happen in an impersonal way, just materialized by the sexual difference, the tonal difference, of who arrives. The woman was in the farewell, but not for this reason would she be absent from the closing, the *closure* that will form my name.

In the meantime I wait, gathering and reading again—in the same act—all the fragments, segments, canvases and photographs that inundate these, my rooms. Melissa is still dancing, just as Bárbara and Patricia, Christine and Marianne, while I observe them, quiet and trying to describe, to extract something from their unconnected dance, their fluid dance. None of the photographs has a trace of them. All draw an always-deserted landscape, where the only intuition or sign of life is the one that holds the camera, the machine.

Now I listen to the whisper, and yet the television is off. I am sure. I will have to stand up, take this notebook and put it back into the bookshelves inside the chamber. Maybe

somebody has entered, and I did not hear, half-asleep as I am with this purring that projects me to an always-different wakefulness, although always in rhythm with that one of the man in the café. But I do not hear steps. *Quoique*, the carpet is too thick.

Lawrence, KS, 2005.



Lips flash (painting)

REGINA GESICKI

nasturtiums
JOHN DILLON

1

A girl stepping over a cattle fence into night -- steel follows
footfall with tare and balsam set like close battalions,
selling words, selling colors through narrow eyes of laughter --

the cradleboard bloodies her back, a season's yield, a slung moon,
and a drowning man's grip at open air.

Adversaria scripta, I know, I've set her face like this,
sent her fishing at a red sun with bottled hands.

2

The nasturtiums are rotting by the window --
a retting down, a numinous dicing cast to a butcher's dog.

The nasturtiums are rotting by the window and I am shaking
a goad at white sand.

3

Do you know his old song?
The man who ferries an empty boat

across an empty river.

Do you know his old song?
worn like a coin for a god or a stone for a bird.

tare - a vine
balsam - sap/odor from trees
cradleboard - board for holding child
Adversaria scripta - written notes
nasturtiums - flowering plant
numinous - spiritual or supernatural
ret - soak with water

the gardener
THERESA OLIVIER

Do you remember that time? The time the wind blew fro and to? The time the hydrangeas grew green and the roses smelled of cologne and the tulips... well, you know. The time Death gave birth? *That* time? Don't you recall?

Well, in that case, a story.

Once, a man married a woman. They were equally young, equally handsome, and loved each other. They lived happily. She had a garden.

Yes, they were very happy. She had a garden, he had a well-paying job. They talked of children. She hoped their children would be healthy, and tall. Tall, like their father. She always thought his height was the most attractive, most noble thing about him. In her eyes, he stood heads above all the other men her long hair and longish eyelashes and longer legs had ever attracted. In her eyes, he was a king.

And he loved that about her most – he loved that when she looked at him her eyes bowed and her lashes curtsyed. He never felt finer than after looking at his reflection in the blue-grey of her irises. He hoped their children would have her eyes, he told her.

“Curtsey,” said her lashes.

“I am happy,” he replied.

“I am happy,” she said.

And so they were, you see. Very happy indeed.

But no one is perfect, not even husbands. Not even husbands who are actually kings. And this one, this young, handsome, tall husband-king, had a rather

unremarkable flaw. Named Mistress. In fact, he had a lot – of mistresses, that is. This was not because he did not love his wife, nor because she did not pay him enough attention, but simply because it was no trouble. And more simply because his mistresses satisfied some lingering longings all the love from his wife could not sate. You see, it was no trouble to stop in to smooch Big-Lips Mistress in the morning on his way to work when his lips left-over tingled from his wife's goodbye kiss. It was no trouble to sneak in a cuddle with Good-Smelling Mistress in the evening on his long way home when the nook between his arm and his chest – hollow for hours – started to burn around the edges. No trouble at all.

And his wife never suspected. Not a bit. So most mornings, many lunch breaks, and multiple evenings, we could have followed his large, tall-man footsteps to the houses or offices or motel rooms of Narrow-Feet Mistress, Silky-Hair Mistress, Twin-Sister Mistresses, Buxom-Bosom Mistress, Very-Fashionable Mistress, Savvy-Businesswoman Mistress... and on and on and on. And the little red light just inside his wife's left temple never even flickered, not even when he came home late. Or when he left bed early. She, obviously, did not know much about the innate imperfection with which everyone, including perfect husband-kings, is endowed.

And so their happy lives continued. She worked in her garden, and he worked at the office. She kissed him goodbye, and Big-Eyes Mistress fondled him hello. She was happy, he was happy, and the mistresses, well, they were happy enough, considering there were so very many of them and only one husband-king. Happy enough, indeed.

But one day, the husband-king's misdirected kisses – French and butterfly, pecking and planted, heated and Eskimo – caught up with him. That day, on his way to work, the West Wind woke late, and in the rush to gather his gusts about him, he collided with the Northern blows which were just on their way out of our happy couple's town. Quite the blustery tangle ensued. West breeze wrapped around Northern puff, Northern draft slipped inside Western waft, and all through the town, the most imprudent gusts went their undirected ways. Men's hats were blown down the street, only to be returned to the head they belonged to moments later by a separate blast of air. Women's skirts were pushed over their heads, not to

be righted, even after the winds had died down. Cars in reverse were pushed back into their garages. Flags were forced to truly fly, and while some navigated the air currents masterfully, others were merely tossed fro and to in the heavens like an uncooked pizza crust.

Meanwhile, the birds tip-toed from wire to wire, careful to keep their wings tucked to their sides.

Perhaps most curious, however, was the gust which found the young husband and wife on their front porch just as he was leaving for work, just as she was leaning to press her perfectly-shaped lips (they were truly perfect – her lip-shape was not her one, endowed flaw) to his. This gust, like most others that day, was a hybrid from both the west and north. It was not a strong, but an aggressive waft, not directed toward but unmistakably bound for the couple. And then – with a WHOOSH the wind interrupted the SMACK of their lips, the imprint of the man’s lips on the air gone with it. Bewildered, the two separated, not quite sure they hadn’t, in fact, kissed. But not quite sure they had, either. Curious. Dazed, the two said goodbye and as the woman walked into the house, the man walked off in the direction of his office.

But oh – I beg your pardon – I was mistaken when I said before the draft was bound for the couple. It was not bound for the husband-and-wife, but actually, only for the husband. It followed him, spinning behind his shoulder blades and somersaulting at his heels. And bouncing among its wisps, was his kiss. The one he had (or hadn’t?) given to his wife before he left. And as the man made his winding way through the town, stopping at Big-Lips Mistress’ townhouse and then at Twin-Sister Mistresses’ shop and later at Savvy Businesswoman’s office building, each kiss he tried to lay on their lips, or necks, or cheeks was swept off by the draft and joined the others in trailing him to his office.

At the last corner he had to turn before reaching his building, a young, unremarkable woman, who had been anxiously awaiting to glimpse the man on his way (and perhaps secure a friendly wave, or an intimate wink), tried desperately to catch his eye. The man did look in her direction. In fact, he looked her exactly in her greenish eyes, though his gaze bore no hint of recognition. This irked the young woman. To say the least. It irked her because she, too, was one of the man’s

mistresses. She was *Less-than-Remarkable Mistress* (notably, the only *Mistress* with a three-word name). And while our husband-king could never quite place her face, he saw it every Thursday on his lunch break. He saw it after the taste of his Thursday sandwich – turkey on rye – which his wife had packed, was gone, eaten, and with it, his wife’s soft, barely-discernable scent. It would be at this point in the Thursday that the man wandered in search of satisfaction of the vague craving her scent had left behind. Before very long, he would happen upon the deli owned by *Less-than-Remarkable Mistress’s* family and order a sandwich – turkey on rye – and, once finished with it, meet the ogling, greenish eyes of *Less-than-Remarkable Mistress*. And then, every Thursday around lunchtime, this unremarkable woman would earn the name *Mistress*. Truthfully, the man more readily recalled the sandwich than the affair, if ever pressed, as it always left him excruciatingly full (having been his second full lunch in less than a half hour).

So, that the man did not recognize *Less-than-Remarkable Mistress* did irk her, and quite considerably, but no more than it did every other morning when he walked past and met her imploring stare (behind which a continually repeating reel of snapshots of the two of them picnicking at the park, or camping by the lake, or adopting a small dog for their two young girls was playing) with his own indifferent glance. However, he did not walk by every other morning trailing evidence that he did not make much time and harbored even less affection for her. He did not parade confirmation that he was not battling the urge to spring himself upon her every minute of the long, long day in front of her every other morning. Every other morning, she could convince herself (though, admittedly, it took a quite insistent argument by her loudest inner voice) that he thought she was remarkable.

Not this morning. With every tossing, tumbling kiss that passed her window as the man walked away, oblivious, the reel in *Less-than-Remarkable Mistress’s* head was jolting, until it stopped altogether. Her lips parted in the grossest way, gnarling her mouth into a growl. Her normally squinted eyes slowly bulged, until her lids could no longer wrap around them, and her greenish irises intensified in hue. With the disappearance of the final, perky, skipping smooch (no doubt stolen from one of the *Twin-Sisters*), her greenish irises had turned dark and bright as the freshly-spring-rained hillsides. Though we would never call their color beau-

tiful. No. Powerful, perhaps. Severe. Even as the man and his affectionate trail found their way into his office building, Less-than-Remarkable Mistress could not unsnarl her mouth nor unswell her eyes. They snarled and swelled the whole day long, waiting for the man to reappear.

That day as the man walked home from work (he made no stops this evening, as he was more than unusually hungry, half his lunch having been blown into the trash by the unruly winds earlier that morning), Less-than-Remarkable Mistress followed him. Stalked him. In the fast-fading light. The entire way, the kisses from that morning – which had since been carried away on some other wild stream of air – danced in her head. Every turn they made turned her stomach. Every step sidestep they took made her heart lurch. Their jumps were her gags, their dips her terrible vertigo. Finally, just yards from the man’s house, she could no longer stand it, and she began to choke on them. After some seconds of gasping, writhing, hacking struggle, she threw them out of her mouth with a “YOU!”

The man turned around, startled.

“Can I help you?” He asked, sincerely concerned.

“YOU!” Again. The call was inhuman. Low, rumbling. It made his ears scratch from the inside.

She unstuck her feet from the pavement and charged at him, never releasing his eyes from her own. Even as her jutted chin threatened to touch his adam’s apple, he did not recognize her. Her breath on his own chin burned. It singed his 5:30 shadow and the smoke wafted into his nostrils, filling them with a vapor that made his eyes water.

Then, she began to speak. She sputtered and spat of Thursdays and sandwiches, picnics and children, wife and mistresses, secrets and vengeance. And as he moved from her smoldering breath, backing toward the shed far to the side of and slightly behind his house, he began, slowly, to recall her face. It took several easing, subtle steps before his memory of her completed. Her eyes complicated the process – they had never been more than greenish before, and now, unable to move his focus from the unsettling, unmistakable green of the eyes before him, he had trouble reconciling his memory with her transformed self. But he managed it.

And in the same instant, he was afraid.

She was talking so loud! So near the house! His wife was expecting him! He could, perhaps, see her in the window of the kitchen, gathering things for dinner – was that not her shape at the corner of his eye? So loud! Surely the entire neighborhood could hear her! The whole town, no doubt! And his wife, his wife!

And next, he noticed he was shrinking under the hammering of Less-than-Remarkable Mistress' words. They fell like bricks on his head, mashing his body in toward its center. With every syllable she barked, he lost inches. After perhaps just one or two minutes, he felt barely half his original height. His fear mixed with mortification as he thought again of his wife – she must never see him so diminished! So small, she could never love him!

And all of a sudden, he had done it. "It" was a smear of flailing arms and gardening tools. And there he stood. Over her bent body. He towered over her bent body. Measuring himself against the height of the shed, he noted with glee that his eyes reached even higher on the wood than before. Even higher! A king.

Almost immediately, Death came for the mistress.

He heard Death before he saw her, clinking and clanking as she did, slithering along with all that grave booty in her belly. Watches, rings, cuff links. Pendants, hair clips, spectacles. They filled the space below her belly button, where her uterus should have been. Weighing her down, forcing her abdomen to the floor. She snaked right up to the body, and slowly... sloooow-ly... She swallowed it up. Left arm and left leg first.

"Where do you want it?" she belched.

The man only stared, mouth agape. He had never seen Death before and was taken aback. To say the least.

"Weeeeeell?" she had not, to the man's displeasure, expelled all the gas from her corpse-meal with the first question.

Pressured for an answer (lest Death grow impatient and decide to ask-belch a third time), the man scanned the area but could find no suitable place. None. There were houses, lawns, gardens, freshly-painted fences. No mounds of dirt. No coffin-shaped holes. No headstones or crypts. Not one. But Death's patience is re-

served for the dying, and before he had had adequate time to think she was again opening her mouth and depressing her tongue to release –

“THE GARDEN!” he burst. “Bury her in the garden. Beneath the hydrangeas. My wife planted them seasons ago, they won’t need much attention.”

Before he had finished, Death slithered off in the direction of the garden. He followed her, walking backward, to make sure no one was watching, straining his ears to detect any sound above or below the clink-clank-clanging of Death’s belly.

Once at the hydrangeas he turned around to face Death. Unwisely, perhaps. For, I will warn you, while Death’s labors may be discreet, they lack a certain... delicacy. The man turned around to see Death, legs split and splatted on the dirt surrounding the plants, fingers staked into the grass, wiry hair thrown across her face and mouth wrenched open in the shape of a soundless scream (a far more upsetting sight than that of a soundful scream). Inside her abdomen, the great bulge of Less-than-Remarkable Mistress thrashed against the rusting metal and cracking glass, clouding jewels and chipping crystal. And then, with one frog-kick of her legs, Death had dug a hole beneath the flowers and birthed the Mistress into it (sans earrings, finger rings, toe ring, and order-taking pen). Then Death rolled onto her stomach with a groan, and disappeared into the pitch.

Nauseous yet satisfied, the man went into his house (realizing almost too late that he now had to duck to avoid hitting his head on the top of the door’s frame), where his wife greeted him with his favorite compliment: “Your highness, you look even taller today than you did yesterday! (Curtsey)” And he believed it, because it was true.

The next day, as the man and his wife sat drinking their coffee and eating their toast by the window overlooking the garden, his wife exclaimed “My hydrangeas! What happened?” The flowers had turned the deepest, brightest, hillside-after-a-spring-rain green. Shaken though he was by her comment, he was still feeling rather tall from the previous day’s action and so replied, calmly, “How strange. Pretty color, though.” And always the optimist, his wife agreed.

After the man kissed his wife goodbye and set off for work (he remembered

with delight to duck on his way out), he noticed the town had noticed the Mistress's disappearance. But of course, no one knew that she was one of his mistresses – unremarkable as she was and so remarkable as all his other mistresses were known to be – and so while he did not feel totally at ease with all the murmurings and whisperings of neighbors and law enforcement, neither did he feel in danger of discovery. In all likelihood, the intrigue of such an unremarkable woman's vanishing would be lost before the day was done. So he continued on to work, stopping to kiss or canoodle as he felt the urge.

Our husband-king might have been right about all this normally, but last night, as he shrunk in the face of Less-than-Remarkable Mistress's berate, New Neighbor, a young man who had lost all sense of everything but his skipping heart the first time he saw the husband-king's wife, was watching. He was watching because looking at the husband-king's wife as she worked about the house, alone and untouched by her husband, let him time and again forget all senses but his heartbeat – a sensation he had always thought once-only and fast-fleeting. But the night before, as New Neighbor sat by his front window staring at his love preparing dinner for her husband, something else caught and kept his glance.

He had seen everything. Everything. And, scared though he was, he could hardly restrain his feet and arms from presenting his mouth to the husband-king's wife to tell her the truth that would dissolve her marriage in his hands, mandating he create it anew. He did not, however, have the chance to do so that morning, as the husband had left for work just a bit late. He would have to wait until the work-day was done.

When the husband-king approached his house that evening, whistling and marveling at the nearness of the tree branches to his head, he was stopped in almost the precise spot he had been stopped the night before. He was halted by the sight of his New Neighbor talking to his wife in their doorway. New Neighbor's arms were desperate, reaching around her, trying to catch her in his shower of words. She did not seem to believe whatever he was saying to her, her head kept shaking and her hands attempted to push his away. But still, she did not seem to

not believe him. She had not backed away from him, she had not closed the door. And then, the husband-king heard exactly what he didn't need to hear. It also happened to be exactly what he did need to hear.

“But he DID it! He KILLED her! I SAW! She's buried in your garden!”

Again, this time in one sudden, downward lunge, the husband-king felt himself nearing the ground. He took several easing, subtle steps into the shadows surrounding his house and waited until he heard the door close. He could not have been there more than a minute before he heard the thud of wood and the click of metal. Then, he saw New Neighbor. Walking slowly, with many sad, long looks backward, toward his house. Before he got very far, the husband-king was upon him. Again, in a smear of movement, it was done.

Again, instantaneously, clink-clank. Clank-clank-clang.

“The roses,” he said. (“They never need much tending,” he thought to himself this time – he had learned explanations were not for Death.)

This time, he did not stay to watch. He did not want to see another awful birth, and, perhaps more than that, he was eager to measure himself against the height of his door. He had to hunch his back this time. He was pleased. His met his wife in the kitchen, and upon seeing him, her eyes widened in surprise. Maybe fear. She told him again, “Your highness, you look even taller today than you did yesterday!” Though this time, her voice was not so much complimentary as careful. It trembled over the words “taller” and “yesterday.” It shook over “highness.” There was no curtsy in her lashes. But her husband did not notice, his ears, closer than ever to the whirring ceiling fan, could not detect those small changes from their new height. His eyes, with their new birds-eye view, could not tell the difference between a curtsy and a blink.

The next day on his way to work, the man noticed with satisfaction that the rumblings about Less-than-Remarkable Mistress had subsided, though his satisfaction was limited by his dissatisfaction upon noticing the amount of talk about New Neighbor's recent, mysterious disappearance. Again, however, he felt confident in his lack of connection to New Neighbor, and proceeded through his day as normally as ever.

When he returned to his house that evening, he walked – hunched – all the way through the first floor before he realized his wife was outside. In the garden. Smelling the roses. He waved to her through the back door window, and she signaled him to come outside. He opened the door.

“Come here and smell these, sweetie.”

“I’ve already smelled them, they smell wonderful. Let’s eat dinner.”

“No, it’s the strangest thing. They smell different. But familiar – I’ve smelled this scent before but I just can’t place it.” There was no tremble in her voice.

He walked down to the garden and sniffed at one of the roses.

“Smells like cologne.”

His wife sniffed again. “You’re right! *That’s* where I’ve smelled it before – the new neighbor...” Her eyes grew wide and wet, her lips opened and closed. Over and over. Only small moan-squeaks escaped. The rest of her was paralyzed. In the middle of the roses.

“Our new neighbor what? What were you going to say?”

She could not form the words. After several seconds of her very strange behavior, the husband-king discerned what she had intended to say. He also discerned what she might say, should she ever regain control of her mouth again. It would not begin, “Your highness.” It would not include the word “taller.” And upon this realization sat an image of a woman changed. She was unfamiliar, an imposter. Sent to corrupt his wife, to convince her he was not a good husband, was less than noble, was no king.

Again, the sensation of shrinking.

Again, the smear.

And, of course, clink-clank. Clank-clank-clang.

“Tulips.”

As he walked through the back door, he had to duck his head, hunch his back, and bend his knees. He walked over to the dining table, and waited, smiling, for his wife to serve him dinner. Smiling.

Outside, the tulip blooms withered and fell.



birds

SHELAGH O'BRIEN

night terrors
EMILY BARTON

I went to bed last night with a headache
sending pulsing waves down my neck
you called me in the middle of the night
in the middle of a dream
to ask how I was doing

but I was busy
counting the pulses as they slipped like
rocks down a gravel slope
finding rest at the bottom
and I didn't reply

when I woke I remembered your call
and the headache had gone away
but a blank beat still thrummed softly
over the new grave in my head
where the rocks had fallen slowly
to cover you up below me

searching for simon

TIM LABARGE

Simon knocked three times on the tan door of 14 Wilshire Drive. When he heard no footsteps he twisted the knob to find it locked. He cracked through the window, reached through with his hand and opened the door from the inside. The cold of the metal in his pocket tickled his thigh. He walked up the stairs and looked in on the rooms.

“Hello?”

He was drawn to a room with a basketball perched on a shelf. He touched it and spun it around slowly. He licked it before leaving quietly. He descended the stairs. A woman stood stirring a broth over the oven. She looked like a rat. The fan was on. She jumped and squeaked when she saw him.

“Who are you?” Her pointy nose sniveled at him.

“My name is Simon.”

“What do you want?” She turned her hunched back to the broth and her rat hand claws tore at the countertop.

“Do you have any oranges? I’d like an orange.”

“We don’t got no oranges here.” Her whiskers twinged back and forth like a ticking clock.

Simon felt a twinge in his leg, cold and sharp.

“I’m thirsty. I love orange juice.”

“I said we don’t got no oranges,” the lady chattered.

Simon shuffled his feet and eyed the refrigerator. “Can I look?”

The woman’s breathing was short and quick, and her heart beat like a rodent’s. He could see it through her greasy hair covered chest. He opened the refrigerator. No oranges. No orange juice.

“We got tangerines,” the lady said through her rat buckteeth. “Here have a tangerine.”

Simon took it, the tickle in his leg subsiding as he bit into it. He peeled the skin and stuck it carefully in to his back pocket, smoothing it out like wrinkled paper beforehand. He sat down at the kitchen table, gorging himself on the tangerine, letting the juices run down his arm like a citrus river. He slurped and swallowed in the same gulp. The rat lady watched him. He stood after his last bite.

“Thank you.”

And he left.

*

Simon was eleven, sleeping on the cot in his sister’s downtown apartment. He listened to the sound of the traffic. He heard crashes and lay in his bed, staring at the ceiling. Angela always came in to make sure he wasn’t scared. He fiddled with metal under his pillow or under the sheets. It was cool on his warm fingers and his hot legs. It soothed him.

“Are you alright, Simon?” Angela asked after a brawl had occurred outside his window.

“Mama was orange. She was hot.”

“Are you scared?” she asked.

“Daddy was orange and hot. Make him cold. Make him blue.”

“Did you hear the fight?” she asked.

“They were orange. It was like the sun.”

“Do you want me to stay in here until you fall asleep?” she asked.

“No.”

Simon never felt like he slept. He would lie down in bed when it got dark, and arise when the sun came up. He laid there and stared, fiddled, listened. All the while he fought the battle with his sheets between heat and protection.

*

Simon knocked three times on the brown door of 14 Manchester Avenue. He heard the rapping of animal footsteps and the thumping of larger ones. He began to fiddle in his pocket. He heard sharp footsteps inside. They got closer, and Simon fiddled faster. His skin was hot.

“Can I help you?” A man that looked like a cat stood in the doorway. His lashes were long. His hair was rough. A cat that looked like a man wound around his legs. It was gray and black, like smoke. Simon watched it closely. A smoky cat, whose fur rose to the ceiling in a dark cloud before getting stuck and billowing around rooms and forming more clouds of suffocating blackness. Simon coughed.

“Are you alright?” the man asked, offering his hand to Simon. Simon moved away and returned his hand to his pocket.

“Do you have any oranges?”

“Oranges?” the man asked, scratching behind his ears.

“I like oranges.”

“I don’t think I have any, I’m sorry. You can try the house next door.” He rubbed up against the door and purred.

Simon’s leg tickled. It was starting to shake.

“Do you have any tangerines?”

“No, I’m afraid not. Like I said, you can check next door.” His whiskers were finely manicured, and he looked down on Simon.

“Can I look?”

“No, I don’t think so. Have a good evening.” The man spun around and bounded back in to his house, shutting the door behind him.

Simon caught the door with the knife from his pocket, and it bounced back open. He took off his jacket and hung it on the doorknob. He was hot, again. He felt as if he were sitting in a furnace. He felt like he was entering the sun. He touched the metal.

The man’s back arched and his hair stood on end as he watched Simon enter his house. He backed into a corner and hissed as Simon approached. He tried to scramble away, quick and agile. Simon caught him. Cold became warm and then hot. Simon recoiled and ran to the sink. He squirted cold water over the metal and stuck his face in the freezer. He saw popsicles and smiled. He grabbed the orange one and returned the knife to his pocket. The tickle in his leg was gone. And he left.

*

Simon was eight. He made sure to be quiet in the kitchen cupboard un-

derneath the sink. Sam would never find him, because he was so much bigger and would never think that someone could fit under the sink. He tried to breathe slowly as he waited for his brother to give up.

It took about three minutes, but Sam threw open the cupboard doors. "Found you," he said. His nose was permanently turned upward like that of a pig, and he snorted when he laughed. Simon knew he rolled in mud, too. He heard him in his room, with the door closed, the sounds of slops and squishes from the mud coming in to the hallway.

"You can't trick me, Simon," he said, turning so Simon could see his curly pink tail coming out through his jeans. "I hid there all the time when I was small."

Simon crawled out from under the sink, wiping the drops off of his shoulder that had leaked from the pipes. They felt dirty and cold. He cringed. He put his hands in front of his eyes and started counting, but Sam stopped him.

"No," he said. "You lost. You have to rake the yard."

Simon protested.

"That was the deal," Sam insisted. "Go."

Simon looked at his brother, and stood in the middle of the kitchen.

"Simon," Sam said. He took a lighter from his pocket. Sam was only twelve, but had long since taken up smoking. He fondled the lighter in his hands, and with a flick created an orange flame. He moved it towards Simon slowly before touching it to the skin of his forearm. Simon yelped, and recoiled from his brother. Sam flicked the lighter again and pressed it on to Simon's arm beside the first spot. Simon started to whimper.

"What's going on?" Father was calling from his bedroom. "Sam, go rake the yard."

"Simon just told me he wanted to do it," Sam yelled back. He looked at Simon, and flicked another flame.

"Go rake the yard, Simon," Mother said.

Simon went and raked the yard with one arm, being careful not to move his other. He shielded his burnt arm from his parents at the dinner table, who thought nothing of his eating with his weak hand. When they all left the kitchen, Simon scurried to the freezer to get an ice cube.

“What are you doing in there?” Mother asked, reentering the kitchen.

“Looking for a popsicle.”

“You can’t have a popsicle, now head on upstairs,” she said.

Simon obeyed. Before leaving the room he grabbed a knife off the counter without Mother noticing. He walked up to his room, at the very peak of the house, and placed it next to the window. Later that night, once the breeze had cooled it, he placed it on his arm to soothe the burns.

He then walked in to his brother’s room, still holding the knife to his burns. Sam was sleeping, snorting with every breath. He always tried to be tough, but still slept with a stuffed rabbit. Simon took the knife from his burns and looked down at his piggy brother. He reached towards him, and grabbed the rabbit from underneath his arm. He cut off its ears. Then he cut off its legs. Then he cut off its head. And he left.

*

Simon knocked three times on the white door of 14 Windsor Court. It clicked open.

“Hello, Simon, I was wondering when you would finally arrive here.”

Simon stayed quiet. The man greeting him was tall, with gray flecks along the borders of his hairline. He invited Simon inside his house. On the table was a bowl of oranges. Sitting at the table was a woman, approaching middle age.

“Hi Simon,” she said. “We were hoping you’d be here soon. We’ve got you some oranges here.” Angela stood up quietly and walked towards Simon. She wrapped her arms around him. Simon stood still, with his hand in his pocket.

“Do you have any oranges?”

“Yes, Simon. I just said, we have them right here.” Angela pointed to the bowl.

Simon eyed his sister and her husband. His name was Tom, and they had been married for eight years. Both of their faces were tired. Simon wondered if they were scared.

“Are you scared?” Angela asked. “You can sit down.”

Simon still kept his hand in his pocket. He started to get hot. His leg fidgeted. He took his jacket off and placed it over the back of a chair.

“I want an orange.” Simon sat down and began peeling an orange. He smoothed out the skin and placed it in to his back pocket. He shoved the slices in to his mouth.

Angela sat down next to him. “How have you been, Simon?” she asked.

Simon didn’t answer.

“What have you been doing?” she asked.

Simon didn’t answer. She looked at Tom. Tom looked scared, like a possum lying beside the road. His mouth hung open.

“Do you still think about Mom and Dad?” she asked.

“No.”

“Do you still think about Sam?” she asked.

“No.”

“Can you sleep at night now?” she asked.

“No.”

“What do you think about in bed these days?” she asked.

“Fire. Oranges. Hot. Cold.”

Angela still sat next to Simon. Tom hung upside down from the ceiling fan, pretending to be dead. Simon finished his orange.

“Thank you.” He stood up to leave.

“Do you want to stay for awhile? We haven’t talked in so long,” Angela said.

“No.”

He grabbed his jacket and started to leave, but stopped.

“Can I take an orange?”

“Sure you can,” Angela said. “And Simon, I hope to see you again soon.”

*

Simon was ten, fast asleep in his bed. The summer sun had just set outside his window. He was awoken by yelling coming from his parents’ bedroom. They had found Sam smoking again.

“You shouldn’t know how to use a lighter,” Father said.

Sam was quiet, but Simon could hear him flicking his lighter through the walls.

“Give me that,” Father said.

Simon buried his head in his pillow, trying to push his body through it into a world that was just as soft and comforting as it was. The next thing Simon heard was the blaring of beeps coming from the ceiling. Smoke pushed its way under the crack in his door and filled his room. Running from his room, he saw smoke pouring out from under the door to his parents’ bedroom. He heard Sam and his parents pounding on the door. It was stuck. He saw the flicker of orange through the cracks. It glowed, as if the sun were just in the next room.

Simon looked around. He kicked the door, and coughed. He rammed it with his shoulder and fell. Returning to his room he grabbed the knife from underneath the book on his windowsill. He cut at the door and picked at the knob. Smoke filled his lungs and he fell again. He slid the knife underneath the door.

He was at Angela’s later that night. Once she went to sleep he snuck in to the kitchen and stole a knife. He put it under his pillow, and lay awake until morning.

*

Simon knocked three times on the white door of 14 Windsor Court. He didn’t know if he was hot or cold. The knife in his pocket both soothed and troubled him. It took a moment, but the door clicked open.

“Hi, Simon,” Angela said. She hugged him. He kept his hand in his pocket.

“Do you have any oranges?”

“Oh, I’m sorry, Simon, we don’t have any today. I haven’t gone to the store yet. Won’t you come in anyway, though?” she said. She reached towards him. He recoiled, fiddling in his pocket. His leg tingled. He was hot.

“It’s alright,” Angela said. “You can come in and visit. Tom won’t be home for a while.” She opened the door further and returned to the kitchen table. Simon hung his jacket on the doorknob.

“Do you have any tangerines?”

“No, I’m afraid we’re out of those, too. So what have you been doing since I saw you last?” she asked.

“Can I look?”

“Simon, don’t be silly. There are no oranges and no tangerines,” she said.

“Now come and sit down here.”

Simon sat, keeping his hand pressed down on the metal in his pocket. He fiddled with it as Angela spoke. She spoke of strange things. Movies, television, sports, food, gardening, music. He listened to her for some time. His hand stayed in his pocket. And then he left.

father's attempt at masculinity
EMILY FORESTER

Father bathes. Sunday after
noon Father bathes in preparation

in the time it takes to wash
away a time of wasted leisure.

*It is up to us united warriors
to be the masters of the house
once again.*

no messages saved on the
machine. no dirty sheets to
catch up on.

no trace of a mess left
by a Child's day.

tie dye t-shirts. Fitted perfectly
in the bottom two drawers
in the master suite.

•

Child roams. Goes wherever
she goes without feeling those
adult feelings of convention.

God's little trick.
God's endearing plan.

walks in on him. in the flesh.
spots him. spots everything.

with the creepy crawling things

MIKEY MOSES

I have a fantastical memory you said a fantastical memory and I looked at you and I said no this is not true you do not you are a goddamn liar. You smiled slantwise with your mouth crooked just so and you reached up and with your hand cupped crescent-like you pushed my hair back from my forehead. Your tone gentle enough to break you said you cannot yet know and stepped away fading into the shadows of the soft glimmered trees like some wraith and then I was all alone in there. The rain misting firm and insistent in the rising wind and my shoulders bent down below my ears as if wrought there beaten out in some forge where the smith forgot or died or said fuck it I am done and moved on to other pursuits before the metal cooled obdurate into a shape that was not had never been intended. How this is. You speak so much but it was only me left amidst the spectrals the sky all opened up and dimmed above with my form burrowed against the shuddering flesh of the trees and the blood trailing down into the loam. I rooted about in search of a purchase to which to affix my weight but none was forthcoming and so I collapsed stiff and immobile. The rotting logs slid soft around. The bestalked trees wild careening aberrant with needles fluttering away to rest green and particulate down with the detritus. With the silted mud sheer. With the bugs and the creeping crawling things. With me.

His father is speaking to him and as he does so he lets fly a gentle stream of saliva that etches its way down his chin shining bright all the while. He looks away searching for a towel or rag or anything that he can press to his face and so staunch the flow but now he says do not look away from me this is too important you listen you listen please so that I can save you. He does not want to look and see the

frothing rivulet issuing forth for it frightens him so he fixes his gaze on the warped and cracking plaster behind but neither is this palatable so he shifts his eyes again now to the solitary and fractured window bedraggled with cobwebs and dust and tries to see beyond though he knows that the angle is wrong he cannot see the ocean from this vantage point and still he tries. And then he steps forward so that it does not matter where he directs his gaze because he is everything regardless. Looming indefatigably. You think you know James he says. You think you know. But I tell you this. I tell you this above all else. Arms stretched out from his body like spindled wings and from them his hands bent up towards the sloped sagging ceiling. Some awkward avian penitent he seems and as he speaks he sprays a fine white vapor. James I tell you that you do not know because you do not and you cannot you are too young you cannot even surmise how it is that this all will be. You cannot begin until you have seen and you cannot see until you open yourself wide all freed up like we emptied the boat where now there is only vacancy and poise. No passengers and no map and not even a captain to guide it not now for I was the captain but I am no longer. He is recoiling now arching his back against the slats of the creaking chair but still his face is wet and still he speaks with his eyes rolling weak a bit like some antediluvian creature rearing up from a time before the light came. His sparse hair standing up as though electric and his bones flutelike and thin within his translucent skin and the wasted muscles corded out antic and strained against a decayed undergirding. You must make yourself ready and strip away all your vanity like we took all the accoutrements from the boat it has not even any paint and then James then he will be with you and then you will be safe. He is standing too close. It is too much. He watches his heart beat out in his chest with the spittle running down and here it is etched in soft relief and here it is gone just a shadowed indentation almost rich in absence but now it is back again for a brief moment instantiated like a shadow in the shape of his skin. They will come back James they always do it is the way of the world carved into the very foundations of all this but it will be you alone and you must be ready do you understand. He moves in those clutching hands and takes his face and pulls it softly upward even as it slides away wet in his grasp. They will come back again James it is only a matter of belief and you must find how to believe do you understand.

Oh do you do you. Now he goes limp in the chair and with his muscles slack and mouth gaped he looks into that ravaged face so ludicrous and he says yes father I understand and good. Good. I must rest. So he staggers back into the corner of the room where the pale light cannot reach and he lays himself down on the pallet in its ragged bedclothes and he coughs. Watching slumping in the chair the sound is such that he fears his chest will split right open and that it will all come to end just now. Not yet father he says. I do not yet believe. Perhaps not. But you will.

There will come a day when I will run through the streets and the light will fall in rich gold beams all about me like a latticework of some divine making ethereal and I will run so fast and so far. I will run and run to that last place at the edge of all the world where I can be alone with the light where there are only golden fields evanescent in their shining right on the cusp of that last and final darkness. It shall be my succor this light. It I will drink of and in it I will bathe and in this way I will be made strong and I will pulse glowing. In this way I will be healed. I will run and I will run and then finally at the end of it all it will be me and it will be the light and then I will be prepared. And he will come and so I will at last be enough.

That son of a bitch he got it entirely wrong. He said we were so similar but he got it so wrong because I am not crazy and I am not a lunatic and I am not so delusional as to cloak myself in fantasy and then call it salvation. He was all of these things but I. I am the opposite. I am rational and I know what is and what is not and you cannot tell me otherwise because I have the faculties to know I have the abilities to know I have the smarts and because of all this like I said I know. You cannot fool me and neither could he. With all his raving. All his bluster. Where did it get him? Where? I'll tell you it got him in a fucking hole where the worms gnaw through his eye sockets and shit on him and make him rot into nothing. He said what he said and he did what he did and now he's not real deep in the ground but he's deep enough and he won't be coming back out not now not ever he is dead but I. I am alive and I will do what he failed to do. I will do what he refused to do. I will take this world in my hand and I will shape it so that none of this will ever happen again. I will make it so that they flood into my nets and when I take them

to market the tourists will wander into my warehouse on the wharf and look at all the bodies all the hundreds of bodies laid out cool smoking on ice in their variety and they will say you sir you are the best you must be look at all this. And I will offer them a good price and in return in appreciation of my honesty and skill they will pay more than that for which I have asked and then I will take the earnings and I will build it all up from the ground out here on the stones until it is so high that you can see it from space. And then I will go back to the wharf in my brand new boat with all its bells and whistles and as I unpack the latest catch from its gleaming hold she will happen upon me and pretend it was an accident but it will be no such accident for she wants me she has always wanted me but the difference is that now she will not be able to hide it any longer no matter what the consequences and right there on the pier with the sea lions barking their song and the sunlight coursing down like the beams of a celestial structure she will come to me and I will lay her down and then I will make her do the selling while I retire to the stones and record my memoirs and when the day is done she will come to me and I will lay her down again. This is how it will be for all time. And I will if she ever asks of him say no. No I was adopted.

You think we are so different from each other but you are wrong. James listen to me. There is only one way for us to be in this world for if we are any way else it will take us and it will swallow us and spit us back out only once we are broken and mashed beyond all hope of salvation. This I swear to you. Time is running short. I know how it has been for you not even knowing her not being all the way out here so far I know how it is but you must understand. This is the only way. He is the way. All else is distraction and this is why I did not mourn her when she died. She was not part of the design and so she was discarded as are all the unbelievers. But you are different we are. And until you understand this you will not be able to orient yourself as is necessary if you are to do what you must. Please. James. Look at me. There's nothing out there why must you always do this my strength it is flagging James. It will all be for naught unless you listen.

He cannot find me here. There are few moments in which I have respite

from his rantings but when I am here I am safe for he has not found me out. Not yet. The trees they look like skeletons all stripped of flesh but I think that maybe skeletons are not quite so terrible as some might think because at the bottom we are all skeletons in one way or another. At one time or another.

He awakes to the smell of bacon on the fire. When he pushes himself up from the hard packed floor upon which he sleeps he sees her before the window which has somehow been cleaned and the sunlight streams in curving gently touching her all of her all at once tangential and then moving off leaving her skin lustrous and lucent in its wake. As he moves she turns and she smiles and she says oh James you're finally up I thought you would sleep away the whole day. And she comes to him and hugs him and says my son. Her scent is fresh and warm and then she takes him by the arm and leads him out to the refurbished stoop and gestures towards the ocean that opens up vast and shimmering beyond the edge of the stone cliffs. Out on the waves he can make out the shape of a gleaming boat as it trawls about. She says this is so beautiful James. This is so beautiful and it is all yours and I love you. Her arm is around his shoulders and he leans into her embrace and feels warm so warm but there is no embrace he is falling and he is on the dirt floor and he is blinking to see a room shrouded in darkness. And he is alone just like always it is him and just him. And he hears his father coughing from the pallet. And he puts his head in his hands there in the murk.

I cannot be bleeding so much. Pulsing out all over seeping down to the floor the sheets will be stained and oh jesus this is don't let this be. Help me please. Get a bandage a doctor one of your goddam nets please anything Hiram do you see all this blood help me. At least let me hold my child. Stop shaking that book at me Hiram stop not now for once not now of all times. I have carried him within for so long now it is my right let me but there is too much blood here is it my blood christ. It is pooling all around me and is it mine. Do something. My right a mother's right is sacred above all else you understand but where are you going with my child. I cannot see the ocean this hurts too much I hurt too much. I need your help. If I could just glimpse it Hiram where is my child where is a doctor. Please. It is sacred

Hiram. I do not. I cannot. Give me my son before it is all too red now.

Stretched out in snarling rows the trees seem to him like strange and gnarled sentries about whom he must lurk. He cannot shake the sensation of being watched when he is among them and for this reason he is resentful. Fuck he says. Fuck all this. He has not ventured outside in weeks and in the soft grasping loam his steps are unsteady. The rain is drifting down all slanted because of the wind and as he moves he looks like nothing so much as a marionette. Jerking this way and that in his meager frame but from where the puppeteer's strings come he could not even begin to speculate. Speculation about such things is in any case foolish. Had his father avoided it a bit more journeys such as this would not have ever had to occur. Had his father engaged in other pursuits he would not be out here fighting through this miasmatic forest on this pathetic spit of land in the midst of this roiling ocean. Had his father been different he would have been different and then it all would not have been how it was. Instead. This. Ineluctable and forsaken in equal measure. He flails at the clutching branches and finds that he scarcely has the strength to do so and yet he soldiers on through maundering even as his clothing tears and even as his skin goes pale in the cold. Even now he persists with the trees stretching above and about him seemingly endless in every direction.

Please I say please do not leave. This cannot be I am not ready just a few more days and then I will be do not please do not abandon me here not right now I cannot do this on my own. I know I have told you what I have told you but please you can't don't take me too seriously I am trying I just don't know how. Even out here things can be too much it is all too much you of all people can understand that there are moments in which the weight is crushing in which you cannot even move because you find that the very sky has become partisan even the trees are conspiring against you or no not this exactly even worse they do not conspire against you they do not even acknowledge you for you are too small too unworthy to be of notice because the whole roaring world could trundle on in its awkward and ill-conceived purpose without even a second glance at you and yet you have to participate for there is no other way it is just that you are stuck within this awful arrogating

mechanism that has no rhyme and less reason at least not any that you can decipher and is not even a mechanism for to be a mechanism is to be directed towards something and this this none of it is as it should and for if it were the past could not get all bound up with the now like it does you see I sometimes it's like I knew her like she held me in her arms even if only for the barest of moments and then there's you with what you say do you see goddammit this is too much don't you dare. Don't you dare. Father. I cannot do this alone. I will not. Please. Father.

I am floating here in the sea of light. I am a buoy and I am signaling to him and finally my god oh I see you coming. I see you coming and I lift my hand in greeting and you are smiling at me as I am borne up towards you in a wash of gold.

There is a small clearing in the heart of the dense copse of trees and within it the wind is howling. It is near dark when he stumbles through the last rank of clutching branches and comes upon the opening. There you are he says. You bastard. There you are. His wrists are gouged and bleeding. Perhaps they were injured as he fought his way through the mist and rain and trees. Perhaps in some other way. His filthy clothing is plastered against his gaunt frame and his hair hangs lank and dripping as the rain slashes downwind into his face. Such a wretched mendicant shambled in the enshadowed greenery where the air swirls vicious. Ha. I've found you again. The screech of the wind makes as if he did not even speak. The light is dim and crepuscular and in it he looks almost insubstantial as though he is not man but instead a shade come to visit the world of the corporeal and see how it is that things are in such a strange place. Hunched over into himself he sways stiff in the coursing air and though the light is failing and the wind roaring he continues to talk. No you did not bring me here it was I who found it for this was my place of refuge. Here you could not prattle on and so I came. The dark is settling down firm and intransigent all about him. Here you could not tell me that it would be alright again he says. Here you could not pretend that there was a time in which it was alright you could not say no James it is just that you do not understand it is just that you do not yet know you could not say one day I will smile

at you beatific with sun shined skin and say to you that it will all be alright if only you can have patience and do as I have instructed you. Here you could not infect me with your damned insensate pining for a world that never was and never could be you could not abrogate the is you could not tell me that salvation was just this close that the fish would come back again that it would all be fine. Here you could not tell me that it was intended and that she did not matter and that he loves us yet. He says no this place is mine it is my place of peace and I found it. No this is not true you are a goddam liar. He is shrieking now. And his entire body is shaking now. And he is collapsing now. And he is convulsing into the mud now. Oh the wind my god it is deafening I cannot I am not and yes yes blood is fissuring out of his wounds now pulsing so metronimical red now and yes the night has enveloped him entire now and yes he has vanished into the inimical darkness now and yes he is yelling now he is shouting he is screaming. You have left me all alone. You have all left me all alone and I do not know what to do.

There will come a time when we understand. When it all becomes clear. And my son until that time comes we must simply believe. To this you must cling as if your life depended on it for James it does your life does depend on it so cling with all your might. We must make our hearts strain till near bursting with love of him. James. Let us hope. And then I swear to you all will be well.



pause

ANNE BOYLE

the casket

JOE MILLER

W *hack-thump-pum Whack-thum-pum Whack-thum-pum*

Crickets whirred along the tree line beside the ocean as the final nail was placed. A thin, egg-headed man wiped his overhanging brow and glanced out over the ocean. *That's where I am gonna be, and I'm gonna love it.* The man's face was dank with sunken ashy eyes. This marked the seventh day he had spent working on this particular boat, his finest. Although boat-making had been his life, he had grown old. His wife was concerned with spending more than he earned. *I can't believe you didn't finish that boat. How are we supposed to keep food on the table?* He ran his calloused hands over the brittle cedar planks, embracing a destination. He set down his hand drill and sander.

Puh-chhhh Puh-chhhh Puh-chhhh

Wiping his brow once more, he walked to the bow of the boat and dragged it towards the writhing, foaming waves. *Now for the final step.* As he stood waist deep in the dark blue, he leaned all his weight against the side of the rowboat, and water crashed into the hollowed middle of the cedar and pine transport like the Styx River. Sinking the rowboat was nothing abnormal; it was just a normal step of making the boat. *Funny. Only the boats that float the best and are the fastest, are the boats that are sunk.* He waded back from the water with a rope that was connected to the boat to ensure that it would not disappear on him. He walked back to the shore, and walked to the remaining skeleton of the tree that was born to float. Time passed, two hours, but to the man, this was his favorite part. He would spend his time enjoying nature and the sound of the waves crashing onto an unforgiving shore. *Ah, Job.*

Never once had the sun set on a day that he did not think of his son Job.

Job was born, and like all children, Job was loved dearly by his parents. Loved until one day, he was found face down, dead, in his crib. Only six months old. The doctors never came up with a cause of death. For the man something else died as well. Both Ann and the man knew that there was no one to blame, but Ann found that her only connecting love to the man died that fateful morning. Screams. Terrible hate rang in the echoes of the memories of his curly haired wife breaking her peaceful, quiet demeanor. He still could not tell if she was always a quiet woman, or if she was holding something back ever since they decided to get married after finding out about becoming impregnated.

Chack-gaw Chack-gaw Chack-gaw

The man's mind wandered back to the chiming gulls. His wife resented his homely existence ever since that day. It was about time. He wandered into the foaming abyss and he heaved, rocked, and pulled the boat onto shore. This task in itself was never an easy one. He'd inch the boat out of the water, empty water out off the burrowed middle, only to be able to pull in up more. This step was repeated until the boat was simply tipped and the water snaked back to its mother, back to where it belonged, back to its home. He left the boat to dry.

Drip Drip Drip

Water always ended up in the same place. It could be turned to rain, snow and sleet. No matter what form it took to play on the earth, it would, inevitably return to its true place. As the man wiped the droplets of sweat that lingered on the back of his neck, the sun began to dip.

Retch Retch Retch

He etched with his carving knife. A boat was never much without a name. He always made a point to give each of his masterpieces a name on the side of the rowing seat. It was his signature, a memory materialized in each work. His only children, his boats, were his life now that there was nothing for him. In a moment of reflection, he remembered his first boat, Jenny. Jenny was crafted, and named for his mother that had passed away while he was in school. He would name the boats, and would often see them in the small town harbor, greet them, check up on their condition, and call out a farewell. He could depend on them. They never sank. He had not outlasted any boat he fashioned.

Whhhipt Whhhipt Whhhipt

He wiped away the shavings. *Perfect.* He slowly dismounted the boat. *Now, for the big moment, let's see if this boy can float.* The sun sank lower, only a small crescent of light was available on the beach. With vigor, he collected his tools, put them all in his toolbox and set them in the rowboat. He pushed the boat out into the water, about knee deep, and he jumped in with a set of oars. He rowed. He rowed until he could row no more. He was back to the ocean, the fine mist gathering on his grizzled mustache. The gulls cried, and the sea wept upon him.

Bang Bang Bang

Blood trickled from the man's bullet-bored chest and over the name inscribed on the boat. The revolver fell from his hand. Gasping suddenly, he rolled his eyes towards the stars, giving his spirit in Ann's embrace.

blood and stones

KATHERINE KHOREY

Dad's service was set for noon: the last visitation session started at ten. This was a Saturday, too, so those two hours at the funeral home were the busiest ones of all. Most people were in suits and stuff, but a lot of them did have chains hanging off their pants and some, including at least one old guy, had their fingernails painted black. It must've been sort of awkward for everyone to mingle, but these were all Dad's people so probably no one was surprised.

For the past three days Mom and I had never really set ourselves up permanently in the viewing room: she always stood by the main front entrance to greet people, and I pretty much lived on the couch on the opposite wall. So I could see who came in, even though I wasn't really watching (I wasn't really *sensing* a lot for that whole month). Both Megan and Sarah came that last time—Megan and her mom were at the service and dinner, too—and they were sitting with me.

At about eleven-thirty, when we'd stopped expecting anyone new to come in, Calvin showed up. Sarah had gone to get drinks, and Megan and I were just sitting there quietly. I'd started to feel a little bit better not to have to keep saying, *thank you, okay, it's good to see you, too, yes, I know, but we knew it might happen sometime, he was ready, I think*, and even though most people who hugged me smelled okay some of my aunts had too much perfume and a couple of Dad's friends weren't wearing deodorant and I'm pretty sure one guy reeked of pot. It was nicer to breathe cleaner air and try not to think about what was going to happen in twenty minutes. I was holding Megan's hand and looking at the pattern on the coffee table in front of us, even though I'd already memorized it. People were murmuring all over the place, and sometimes someone would even laugh, which was okay, and then Mom said, "Oh, my—you've had quite a drive, haven't you?"

I looked up, and there he was. Calvin had gotten his hair cut since the last time we saw him. It looked more brown than blond now, and seemed thicker, even though there was technically less of it. He'd shaved, too, and was wearing black pants and a blue shirt. He said, "Yeah, sorry my mom has to work today, but we thought...", and then I couldn't hear any more. He talked to Mom for a minute, though, and she hugged him. Quickly.

Then Sarah came back and handed me a can of Sprite. She sat down on the other side of me.

"You should probably have a drink of that." Her voice wavered. Sarah was mostly Megan's friend, back then.

"I will." I opened it, and watched Calvin go into the viewing room. I've still *never* seen anyone look so scared as he did then. I imagined him sitting in front of the casket, and it made the tears start building up like they'd done from time to time over the past few days. But they hadn't made it all the way out yet. This time the taste of the Sprite dried them out for a little bit longer.

"Yeah." Megan said. "We're—going to have to get up soon."

"I know." As much as I could want anything I wanted to keep staring at the table forever. The grains of wood and the inlaid brass stuff was so calm, and so solid, and it didn't make any noise, not like the front door, not like Mom saying, "It's good to see you, Father," and Father Nick, "We can start when you're ready, Grace," and the table would be cold, like the Sprite, not warm like Megan's hand, and the table wouldn't—

"Hey, Lilly?"

Even when he's terrified, Calvin's voice is gorgeous. It's just a fact. I looked up again.

"I just wanted to say." He stood next to the table, twisting his hands together. He had a class ring with a red stone. I woke up enough to wonder who paid for that. Actually I never did ask. "I'm sorry. I'm really going to miss him."

He swallowed. I breathed deep, and said, "Me too. Thanks."

"Um." He frowned, and glanced at the table, then finally stepped past Megan. He kind of stumbled and caught himself on the back of the couch. His sleeve brushed my right ear, and I felt the heat of his arm.

He leaned in, and he aimed for my left cheek but hit closer to my ear. His lips were dry, but they burned my skin. I tried to touch the spot he'd kissed but I was so shocked I lost control of my hand and whacked myself in the face instead. He must have pushed himself off the couch so he could stand back up, but I don't remember that part.

I did hear him say, "I'm going to go ahead to the church now. I'll beat the traffic, I mean, wait, no." I think he kicked a table leg. It didn't occur to me then what a horrible thing that was for him to say.

"Thanks again," I said.

All I heard from him was, "Welcome," before he pretty much ran away.

My face was still burning. If the girls had asked me who he was, I'd have said, "I think he gets it. He kissed me and I think he *gets* it." But they didn't. And my cheek was on fire, and it was spreading up to my eyes, and Calvin might sort of know what this was like, and when Mom came over and said, "Lilly, it's time," and reached her arm across my shoulders, I lost it. I guess that was as good a time as any. Two weeks later I turned fourteen.

-

That was the first time Calvin kissed me.

The last time was about three years later, also on the cheek, and in November rather than July. We were out at Bloodstone Manor, where we'd both acted that season, and it was Strike Day. There was no real casket nearby, no actual dead bodies, but funnily enough we *were* right by the little fake graveyard near the customer entrance. One of the fake tombstones is for Dad: *George Khalil, 1965-2002, The Mind Behind the Madness*. Nothing quite so big as Dad dying had happened to me and Calvin in the three years since, but there's still a big difference between thirteen and seventeen (for me) and, I think, seventeen and twenty-one (for him). Then there was that whole part where we'd had sex, but you know, details, right?

We didn't mean to meet up that day. We just both showed up for strike at the same time, and stopped on the footbridge over the creek. The bridge is a good place to talk.

"Did you get my messages?" Calvin asked.

"Yeah," I said. "I'm sorry I haven't called back. I've just needed to think

about stuff.”

“I’ve been thinking too.” He looked over to the graveyard, the little skulls in the grass that look like rocks when you first glance at them, and the ticket booth and the entrance. The door was open, and it still looked dark inside, but we could hear some hammering and the classic rock station. Sometimes, someone would laugh. Farther in, the lights would have to be turned on. “You know, I do kind of love this place, but...”

He paused.

“But it’s just not that big a deal now?” I said.

Calvin kicked a pebble into the water. “My mom told me this wouldn’t be forever.”

-

Dad was diagnosed when I was nine. That year Grandma Jo came to stay with us for longer than she ever had done. He had the big surgery right before Thanksgiving and Grandma Jo went home right before I went back to school in the winter. At the beginning of the summer, Mom and Dad and I were sitting the back yard. We’d grilled steaks that night, and Dad was starting on his second slice of cherry pie. Since that not-so-pretty incident with the pecan pie at Christmas—Mom and Grandma and I only got one slice each, and he ate the whole rest—he’d still been eating whatever he felt like, but he was smarter about not overdoing it. Especially, I think, since he was almost back at his normal weight again.

“So, Lilly,” he said. “How would you feel about taking kind of a longer vacation this year?”

“Where?” I said.

“I don’t know.” He stopped for a second to swallow a giant spoonful of ice cream. It’d been a while since he’d actually *said* it after a meal, but his “it tastes so much better without the pain” smile passed over his lips. With the tumor gone, brain freezes have been nothing to him. Then he said, “We were thinking we’d just hop in the car and go lots of places.”

“How long?”

“Well, that’s the thing.” He set his bowl on the table and wiped his hand across his mouth. “What do you think about missing some school?”

“I guess it’d be kind of cool...”

“Now, you’d still have to do the work with me.” Mom slid her chair forward, closer to mine. “And missing the beginning of middle school might be hard.”

That was true. I might get back and not have friends anymore. Even Megan might forget about me. I didn’t say anything.

“But here’s what I was thinking.” Dad leaned over. Sometimes he’d get this glow in his eyes, and you’d almost expect it to reflect off his glasses. “You know the FrightScares, that Mr. Barrett does?”

“Yeah?” Duh, Dad had taken me there every October for, what, four years? Including that first time, when it was *really* scary for me? And the last time, when he had to stop walking every few feet to close his eyes and rub his forehead? When someone broke character in like every other room to ask if he was okay? In the bedroom scene, a girl with blood all over her face and dress came flying out of the closet and actually froze mid-screch when she saw him standing there holding his head. Dad’s hair was thicker then, and sometimes he’d wrap it through his fingers through the front and just *pull*.

“You want to drive around this fall and hit a bunch of those? We can do all the big ones that we need to see.”

“You and your dad can see them.” Mom stood up to stack our bowls. “I can find other things to do. Except the hayrides. I’ll come on those.”

I still didn’t say anything. Right then, when the sun was out, that sounded pretty neat, but at night I might feel different. Plus I’d been excited for Girls’ Chorus at school. And shouldn’t life be normal again now Dad was supposed to be better?

“Just think about it,” Mom said. “We want you to be part of this decision.”

I nodded while I looked at Dad: he mouthed, “*So much cooler than sixth grade.*” And when Mom went inside, he said, “And we can get lots of ideas from those places.”

“I know,” I said. Dad was still writing a little, but since a few months after the surgery he’d been talking more and more about opening his own haunt. *The back story’s what makes it work, Lilly. We’d be good at that. Remember that’s the part that doesn’t cost anything. Wait, that’s the dish stuff your mom wants us to*

start using, right? Go grab two of those.

“It’d be good,” Dad said. “But Mom’s right. You think about it, and let us know.”

So I thought, and I cried a few times over the next few days. But five weeks later, we started driving. I didn’t go to sixth grade, or seventh.

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Grace is actually Mom’s middle name. Her first name’s Lillian. She’s number three, and I’m number four. They actually called Mom Lilly Grace when she was little, and Grandma was Lilly Jo back in the day. My great-grandma was probably just Lillian. Lilly Mary doesn’t work, and anyway she was the only one back then. I’m the first who gets to always just be Lilly, because you can only really shorten Sophia to Sophie, and Lilly Sophie doesn’t work either.

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“So yeah,” Calvin said, while we were looking over the side of the bridge and watching the water rush under us. The creek was getting shallower. It hadn’t rained much since Halloween. “I don’t know how you feel about this, but I was thinking about heading to Chicago in a few months.”

“I heard,” I said. “You should do that. I just need to stay here, you know?”

“Knowing your mom,” Calvin said, “I don’t think she’d let you not graduate from high school.”

Not like I’d let me not graduate. “Yeah, she wouldn’t be too happy.” If God wants what I want—and God does owe me, big—then in a couple years I’ll be doing Theatre at Northwestern anyway. And going to Northwestern has nothing to do with Calvin. That’s the best part. “And I really wouldn’t be, either.”

“That’s good,” he said. “But you understand that there’s not a whole lot going on here for me?”

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Really, it wasn’t much different from any other vacation, just a lot longer. And Mom had kept her promise, so I had to do math worksheets with her in the hotel rooms. She’d also take me to museums and battlefields while Dad napped in the afternoons, and then I’d have to write essays about them. Depending on where we were, and the time of year, Dad and I would do a haunt in the evening. A couple

of times Mom made me write stories about those, but after Eastern State Penitentiary, when Mom and I toured the prison part in the daytime and Dad and I went to the haunt part at night, I told her she couldn't make me write two things for the same place. So she didn't. And for whatever reason, she stopped even talking to us about any of the haunts after that.

We went home, or to Dad's family down in Ohio, for real holidays, but we never really stayed in one place for all that long. I missed having kids my own age around, but when I told Dad that he said I was better off. I did still write to Megan, though, and eventually I got used to not being in school. You can get used to anything.

The second year, we stayed a little bit closer to home. In the fall, we began to circle around Chicago, and stopped somewhere in Indiana the week before Halloween. One night Dad and I walked through one of those rinky-dink haunts that get put on for charity. Dad used to say that the little local places could be some of the best, because they had to rely on creativity and didn't have big fancy props to fall back on. But seriously, this place was called the Butternut County Annual Spookhouse. And for the first ten minutes, it really was that lame.

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I've never met my grandpa on my mom's side, but supposedly he's still a minister. Grandma Jo divorced him the year Mom started junior high, and in a small town in Tennessee in the seventies that can't have been easy. So no one's ever told me why it was bad enough for Grandma to split with him, but it must've been pretty bad.

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"I'm pretty sure I've always understood that." But when I came in on the first day of rehearsal and actually saw him chilling against a wall in the green room, when he was backstage at Bloodstone Manor, which Mr. Barrett helped build and which was the title on one of Dad's outline notebooks, I hadn't wanted to think about it for real. After daydreaming about Bloodstone and Calvin through Geometry and Algebra and Trig, after imagining at night that I'd go to work at Bloodstone Manor and Calvin would move to town to work here, too—well, how often does stuff you daydream about actually come true? Why ruin it, and think of all the

reasons why it won't actually work? "Calvin?"

He was already looking at me when I looked at him. I thought, *damn, those really are some fine green eyes. And I'm not going to be the one who gets to look at them forever.* And I didn't care as nearly much as I'd sometimes thought I would.

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So Dad and I were walking down this "dark" hallway. And I could see that the black "walls" were really a bunch those wheelie curtain panels like they have at trade shows, and I could practically hear the tiled ceiling yelling, "Look, guys, I'm a community center!"

I was just about holding in the giggles, because even though Dad would stop at a lot of places we walked through to drop acting critiques, he was always telling *me* to be polite, to appreciate people's efforts, and to stay behind the fourth wall. But when yet another figure in a black robe (at least this kid had his hood up) appeared at the end of the hall and started waving his hands around, I burst.

"*Don't laugh!*" he half-sang, and the line itself should've made me laugh even more, but instead I just stopped walking. The way the guy's voice swung up and down more than once over just two syllables, the way it rang out and filled the walls, made my skin cold and my stomach warm.

"Come on, Lilly." Dad tugged my hand. I could hear his eyes glowing in *his* voice.

"Fear me," the kid whispered as we got closer. "Fear me, fear me..."

Mostly, at whichever haunt we went to, when we walked past an actor at close range they'd go for me. Face it, a short blonde girl is usually an easy target, and usually they *could* make me scream, even if I was just appreciating their efforts. But this guy, for whatever reason, maybe he was embarrassed or just didn't feel like bending down, went for Dad.

"Fear me," he said in Dad's face. His r's sent soft lightning up my spine. "Fear me," he growled in Dad's ear, and I wanted him to growl it in mine. "Fear me, fear me, fear me! *Fear—*"

"Son." Dad said, "You can do better than that line, but have you ever done any singing?"

The kid's frown cracked his white face paint, which was smeared in his

sideburns. “Huh?”

-

Mom actually saw a lot of her dad right up through college. She went into nursing partly because he’d pay for it. Then one Friday, her junior year, she went to a screening of a horror movie about giant bunnies (“It had been a *very* long week”), and my dad was shocked that a girl like the strawberry blonde in the lilac sweater had shown up. And the rest, including Mom’s ever speaking to Grandpa again, is literally history.

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“I just got to say, this hasn’t really been easy for me.”

“I’m so sorry.” Calvin bent down to my level. “You sure I didn’t hurt you last week? Because it seemed okay, but I still feel kind of shitty about it”

Me, too. And I’d totally be seizing my next chance to go to church out of town, because there are some confessions Father Nick just doesn’t need to hear. “Yes, I’m fine. Sheesh. No, this isn’t your fault. Anyway, I was *going* to say, I’m actually kind of glad this happened.”

“Yeah.” Calvin leaned his elbows on the railing and stared out at the gray and brown trees. “Yeah, I really am too.”

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The Butternut County Annual Spookhouse remains the one haunt Dad and I didn’t make it all the way through. We stood near the kid with the voice until he went on break, then he showed us the way back to the rec room the cast was using to hang out in. A nice community center lady with curly brown hair and a black Spookhouse t-shirt smiled when she saw us.

“Oh, are these friends of yours, Calvin?”

The kid mumbled something and waved his hand back at Dad and me. The lady told us to help ourselves to doughnuts and cider and pointed to a corner where we could talk. I heard her thanking Dad right as the kid and I headed for the snack table. This was a really small town.

I actually just listened while the guys talked, but it was all interesting enough. When we got back to the Howard Johnson, I ran in the room first and told Mom that we’d met this high schooler named Calvin Baker, and that he didn’t like

going to class and didn't have a dad and kind of wanted to learn guitar. I didn't tell her how red his eyes had been. She was glaring enough at Dad already when he came in from parking the car.

We stayed in Butternut County for a month, and rented an apartment on Main Street. I had to sleep on a nasty fold out couch, and was disappointed that we never got to Chicago.

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While Mom did her last year of nursing school, Dad would drop me off at daycare in the mornings and stay home with me in the afternoons. But for the years I can remember, he'd stayed home all day with me. Then he started getting headaches, and the rest of that's history. Also, my great-grandma Lillian Mary's husband never came back from Germany. That's history, too.

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And that was all Calvin and I really needed to say about that. Because I'm pretty sure the big thing I've always hoped about Calvin is true: that he knows how I feel. (I mean, he has known. And I felt.)

"So," I said. "What are you going to do when you get to Chicago?"

"No idea. Probably the same thing I'm doing now."

"I don't think they have a Wal-Mart."

"True." He smiled. "Seriously, though. I know a couple people over there. So I'll just crash somewhere, get a shit job, and find some open mic nights."

"Yeah, well, I'm sure you'll do great."

"Thanks. So will you."

"Hey, lazy asses!"

We turned to see Alex Hauptman's head peeking around the entrance door. Against the dark his face looked almost like a skull. "Get in here and wrench some nuts!"

-

I've asked Mom how we paid for our vacation, but she said the only money I need to worry about is my college tuition. I guess we had savings, though, and Mom was pulling double shifts at the hospital right before we left and for a long time after we got back. And Dad's books still don't sell too too badly, so they must've paid

for something. You can still get the second one, *The House Next Door to Nowhere*, at Barnes and Noble.

But Mom and Dad weren't actually working in Butternut County. Mom volunteered at the library, and Dad wrote in his Bloodstone Manor notebook or went and hung out at Calvin's house. Dad set him up with voice lessons with some church choir director, and was looking out for good after-school jobs.

One Friday night Dad didn't get back to the apartment until nine o'clock. Mom was washing the lasagna dish and I was reading *Jane Eyre* at the table. He walked into the kitchen grinning. He had to shake his hair out of his eyes.

"I was talking to Calvin's mother." Dad leaned back against the counter. Mom straightened up for a second and looked at him, but when he didn't move she went back to the dishes. "She's so happy someone's taking an interest."

"Good." Mom turned off the sink. "It's nice you're taking an interest in *someone*."

They both looked at me, and I started counting tiles in the floor. That was some ugly orange linoleum.

But long story short: just before we headed down to Ohio for Thanksgiving, Calvin passed two of his three midterms. Dad bought him a used acoustic guitar, and told him he could upgrade once he earned his own money. Mom and I both went with him to bring it to the Bakers' house. Mrs. Baker almost cried. Mom still sends her Christmas cards, but the first year she put the stamp on crooked.

We knocked around for a little while afterward, but in February Dad's headaches started again and we had to go home. The funeral was that summer.

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It's not impossible that Mom will start dating someone seriously soon. She's not forty yet, and her eyeliner always looks better than mine. But unless she does, that'll be three Lillians whose first real guy was the last one. And of course, I'm not married to Calvin, so I'm not sure if he counts, but part of me *is* scared he's the only thing I'll ever have, and now it's over, and not even my mother knows it happened.

After Dad died I did think, for a second, that's it, no little brother, so once I'm married, no more Khalils. Later I remembered that I'm always going to have

the Lillian part, though, so I could be happy just to pass that part on. Now I realize that there's a way I could pass down the Khalil as well, even if it was an accident, and it'd be just *peachy* if it worked out like that.

Calvin used a condom, but I just bought a pregnancy test anyway. I won't open it unless I don't actually get a period this month, so I won't be a total freak-out, but there's always that three percent chance. And seriously, I'm a Lillian. It *would* happen to me.

"Why, yes, Number Five, sweetie, you do have a daddy. But why should you care?"

-

"I guess we'd better go in now," I said.

"I guess so." He frowned. He had some stubble that day, but he probably shaved the next morning. Anyway, it's just light enough that you can't really tell unless you look close. "Lilly, I..."

Don't kiss me, I thought. I don't want to feel this crap anymore.

But he leaned over, didn't put his hands on my face, and kissed my cheek. And I know this is really gross, but it was sort of like letting a load of crap out.

"Thanks," I said.

"No problem. We should go."

We walked toward the entrance, and it only felt a little weird to not be holding his hand. I was looking at the little rock skulls in the grass, and happened to see Dad's tombstone.

Calvin noticed, too. He said, "They might let you take that home."

"Maybe," I said. Who knows, Mom might've actually thought it was cute. "But it kind of lives here."

"I guess," he said.

We stood there for a few seconds, and eventually Calvin brushed my hand and went inside. I stayed out a little longer and read, *George Khalil, The Man Behind the Madness, 2002*, and I thought for a minute, and then for the first time ever I just kind of laughed at it all.



gatsby's green light

ANNE BOYLE

the devil's foot

RYAN LASH

Strange and fortuitous circumstances brought this story to me and from me to you. I had the privilege some summers ago to examine the original notes of Leon Sterndale, a rather obscure amateur ethnographer who conducted study on various island communities in Western Ireland in the late 19th century. Tucked away in his leather-bound notebook were three loose-leaf sheets folded in three. I hadn't the time to decipher his, what seemed to me, rather urgent script, but I photocopied the paper and tucked it away with my other notes where it was soon forgotten. Many months later, consulting these old notes in search of something else entirely, I happened upon the photocopy and, startled by its sudden and unforeseen reappearance, decided Lady Fortune had played a hand. Albeit a bit of charlatan ethnographer (for example, he repeatedly contended that the island people's unusual cranial dimensions and bushy eyebrows belied an inheritable inclination towards violent tempers), it seems Sterndale was a much more accomplished folklorist. The long forgotten document was his attempt at a compilation of an island's legends, semi-historical tales, and oral traditions concerning a peculiar topographic feature. Perhaps the most poignant of these, that of the "Little King of Inishdoyle" is sandwiched between what may seem like laborious historical exposition and digression, but I think the piece is worth reading in full. I've had to amend the text where Sterndale's hand was indecipherable. No title was included, but the one below seemed to me as appropriate as any.

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The Devil's Foot

Here follows the obscure tale of the Little King of Inishdoyle and the complete history of the notorious isthmus of dubious and tragic memory, lain down by Leon Sterndale in the year of our lord eighteen-hundred and sixty-seven.

Of all the manifold craggy outcroppings which constitute the raggedy northern fringe of Inishdoyle, none is more singular in appearance nor more sinister in history than is the Devil's Foot. For all but two hours and twenty one minutes per day, it seems to be no more than a crooked oblong expanse of land whose jagged stone roots even eons of the sea's mighty fury has failed to lay low; an obscured, vile, and petulant little isle bestride its more comely elder sister.

Yet, for two hours and twenty one minutes per day the ocean pulls back and from its dank and bloated underbelly arises a narrow and deceptively serpentine stretch of land extending from Doyle to the Devil's Foot. So rarely does the passageway lay without the water's reach that it remains entangled with the kelp so valuable to the islanders' agricultural endeavors. Muscles and limpets cling to the sea-spattered rocks, safe from all but the most daring (or starving) of hunters. Indeed, the isthmus has seemed a fiendish test, a challenge to the audacity of mankind – go now if you dare, it said, to there where no man dwells. Stand upon the brink of existence. Face oblivion. Step on the devil's toes.

And the audacity of man has responded throughout the ages, and each has left their print upon the Devil's Foot. Tribes of men in a time before Christianity had held the isthmus as a sacred space, and upon it they inscribed their presence with a shrine of stone and timber, no doubt for some cruel and accursed rite now long since forgot. The sole remnants of their sinful triumph – the brash snarl of a few ferocious grey fangs, jutting out from grassy gums – seem scattered willy-nilly to the modern observer, for Christian monks plucked more than a few to build a small clochan, a bee-hive shaped hut, which now, although much dilapidated, remains the only dwelling ever built upon the Foot. In the 7th century, a monastery had been founded on Inishdoyle, which, rather paradoxically, because of its

obscure setting and infamously dangerous coastline, was ideally suited to those monks aping St Anthony, hoping to find God on an island-desert on the edge of the world. For these eremtics, God was only to be found in absolute isolation, only through the denial of all temporal and corporeal temptations: to commune with the divine, with Great Wielder, with sum of existence meant first to bath the consciousness in utter oblivion. Yet, the foundation seemed doomed from its inception. No less than six brothers perished during the initial landing, and the sole extant reclintion of the Life of St Feichen records how demons, the spirits of the island's ancient pagan inhabitants, would awake when the passageway to the Foot was raised, set loose by Satan to terrorize the monks at night, to tempt the holy men to give in to flesh's longings or else descent into a mad frenzy from which it was said only the blessed Eucharist could deliver them.

Feichen of course made the demon's match. He crossed to the Devil's Foot, walking across the water in imitatio christi as the hagiographers would have us believe, and imprisoned the vile spirits, bid them forever inhabit the cold lifeless stones of their shrine, despicable to God. And it was Feichen who ordered the clochan to be built on the Foot, from the very stones now the eternal restless-place of those loathsome spirits, barred from heaven, spared of hell. Feichen, it is said, spent three days and three nights each year within the clochan in pious meditation, and ever after each candidate for abbot, in order to prove his piety, had to endure three days and three nights there, enclosed on all sides by the wretched moans and pangs immeasurable of the rock-fettered souls.

This tradition endured for as long as did the monastery, but even that eventually succumbed to time, the great bane of all mankind's handiworks. Time the notorious, time the unassailable turns men into dust, beats to dirt the works of both angels and demons; kills faith, kills hope, kills memory. All things lay prone under its dominion, and all things are devoured in its wake. Though he work in timber, brick, clay, and stone, man's existence is written on the water, the rapids of a river that rages endlessly over hills, beyond shadow, but always always into oblivion. Yet, for as long he is able, man postpones his fate. His memory is long

indeed and resilient; it endures while it can, though certain of its inevitable doom. The island remembers a story of a boy, brash and audacious, who risked oblivion and fell as we all do.

This boy, the lesser son of Inishdoyle's lowliest fisherman's hovel, would oft steal away to the Devil's Foot when he could. Its loneliness, the very inaccessibility of the place drew him there. Something about the emptiness appealed to him. Somehow he sensed an inherent good in making the journey there, but he knew it to be folly. Was the earth there any different from anywhere else on Doyle, the soil any richer under-foot, the air any sweeter in his lungs? Men throughout time had suffered so much fear and temptation for what was essentially no more than a topographic quark. This was not some adversity gifted to men by God to prove their mettle. Men's minds were the only things that distinguished Doyle from Devil's Foot.

He was lonesome because he was in love (these two things are irrevocably intertwined, not to be undone), but when there on the Foot, cradled inside Feichan's clochan, he was not alone in his solitude. He never felt God's breath on his back as Feichan's monks so hoped to, but in the bitter dankness of crude stone he could feel, he thought, the latent touch of the rock-fettered spirits, their familiar desperation in the grim fastness of the stones all around him, this rubble ever dampened by the blood of sacrifices, ever chilled by the frenzied hands of encaged hell-fiends.

The boy would sit there and think on the one he so longed for, the girl with red hair, white skin, and black eyes, the one promised to another. When she had first turned to him all those years ago and his soul was pierced by those twin black stars in a sky of white all o'er lit by brilliant red flame, it was something altogether novel, yet familiar, a new melody born as old as the hills, a long lost primordial dream forgot and now dreamt anew.

But lately, under her glance, the bitter malady of frustrated deprivation

seemed to him the age-old pestilence roused from long dormancy. He may not have deserved her, but he deserved a chance. If want of fortune barred his way, if fate could not make their meeting, he would make it himself, and so in his agony he contrived a scheme. Each day, he would follow her to the dock where the girl had been sent, pail in hand, to fetch water for boiling. The stairwell cut into the ledge was old and trusty, but fragile. One day before the time she usually arrived, he damaged the final step, battered it loose and ready to fall. Carefully, he crept to a small hollow on the ridge overlooking the dock and waited.

The boy watched her approach from over the hills, innocent and unaware at her errand. As the girl reached over the rocks to fill the pail, the step gave way, the weight of the water overcame her, and she slipped forward. The boy, watching ready from his hiding place, dashed forward to help her. He reached over the rocks and offered his hand; she grasped it and pulled herself up. He had never touched her before, could not expect nor explain what it was that made warm her hands that the icy water could not overcome.

In that night for the first time, the boy ventured to the Devil's Foot not alone. He guided her across, her hand cradled all the while where it seemed to fit so uncannily in his. They sat there in Feichan's clochan and what is there to say (for the process is so inscrutably familiar) other than his heart succumbed. Many a time, especially at night, they would steal in secret to the Devil's Foot, for it had to be secret, she was promised to another, a worthy man from the mainland. There in the dark their souls would commune, seek comfort in the divinity of one another, her white hand, eternally warm, firm in his. He reckoned that if he were to find himself there in the dead of night, roused from slumber, transplanted from one dream to another, and someone was to take his hand, he could be certain – the night as deep as her eyes and as black as it may – whether it was his lady's touch. In the obscurity of a moonless night, she was like a summer-sun in the black.

He knew it was a fey love, that it could not last, that it would certainly pass like, all other things under heaven. The day when she would have to leave was

soon upon them, and he knew they could have but one more night together there in the dark. He envisioned a life without her, and his heart quailed at the thought, the sea-bound plight of so many souls before his. The fishermen, when he masters the sea, only makes himself a slave to what he has mastered. Confronted with a fate unthinkable, the boy resolved to take her away with him. He could not bear a forlorn glance at a disappearing wedding boat to be his last glimpse of her. They would have their final meeting on the Devil's Foot, and from there, where no one could witness it, they would row to the mainland, hide from her family and her fiancé, and remain hidden long enough to disappear from all memory. The boy made his preparations and when that night came, he bid goodnight to his mother for the final time and looked his last upon his father's weathered face. There could be seen the accumulated scars worn on through years of stoic endurance of wind, rain, and sun. The villagers had always told the boy that he favored his mother, and it was only looking on the wrinkles and creases, which wound round like a finger print that he could admit it to himself. When the wide Westernness swallowed the sun, he rowed a boat out to the Foot and attached it there as best he could, and awaited her.

Now whether their tryst was discovered by her father, whether she was waylaid on rout, or decided that she could not betray her family, it is not told, but the girl never appeared at the Devil's Foot that night. But the boy waited nonetheless, beyond that night, even after the row boat was blown loose and floated over the waves into shadow, he held fast. For three days and three nights the boy waited there, over which time, for the only time, it is said, in the entire history of Inishdoyle, the pathway to the Devil's Foot miraculously lie continuously open. He would not budge. He could not budge. He could not betray that sentiment which he felt so deeply to wager all for the impossibility of a final communion before accepting the certainty of desolate life. It was a gambit of piety to the only god he knew.

His parents hunted for him those three days, and when the missing boat was spotted on the horizon by fisherman, they pursued it only to find it empty.

They had no reason to suspect the Devil's Foot, it was far from the village, a lonely place, forbidden, where no one ventured.

Upon the third night, as darkness fell, the boy, his strength slowly fading, held out his hand in the black, reaching a final time for a fellow soul in the oblivion before he gave up his ghost. And there, as the old women of Doyle claim, he still sits in vain, the sad little king of a sad little isle, eternally awaiting the girl with red hair, white skin, and black eyes, desperate to stray once again into that lost dream.

And the grandmothers of Doyle, those hags in their niches by fiery hearths that weave tales for eager children, say further that if one braves his way to the Devil's Foot, and sits there in Feichan's clochan under the wet moon, a cold grasp will take your hand in a desperate clasp, longing beyond hope for love's spark, his lady-love's touch. But when there is none, the wretched little king relinquishes his clasp and resumes his place among the bevy of tortured souls, chained there for all time.

Or so was told to many a child before bed with the promise of a restless night, in which each innocent gust of wind or door's creak became the howl and retch of a heathen spirit, lamenting in agony with their king. They can say little of the girl and her end, whether it was willingly, dutifully, or begrudgingly that she married the man from the mainland. One can never know what she thought, whether her love was the same as his, how she kept him in her heart. Was he a grief to her or a joy to her vanity? A pleasant melody with bitter ending? Or but an ill-struck note, startling in the moment, but easily drown out by life's listless tumult? Did she think of him in her waning years? What thought was fixed in mind when she gave up her ghost? None can tell. All say, "There was never a queen of Inish-doyle." I for one know not whether to cast her as victim or villain. I have myself been to the Devil's Foot and felt the chilly clasp of desperation take hold, the frustrated passion of a naked will frigid in the black. It is certain, no one has returned from that place as whole as they had come. That has ever been the way of things.

Years enumerable have passed under the king's reign, and the Foot itself has remained an open challenge to the people of this island, like a terrible Achilles perpetually waiting outside the gates of Troy for any Hector to meet his summons. There were Trojan princes enough. For school boys most keen for some desperate glory, the Foot provided an opportunity to display their prowess. Competitions were held to see which boy could wander out the farthest or remain there the longest. Devil's Dare they called it. The bravest boys on Doyle were accustomed to keep shells (ostensibly harvested from the forbidden passage) in their pockets and to jingle them as quiet boast of their boldness. Others offered them as tokens of affection to their lady-loves. One Deirdre O'Doherty, once the bonniest thing under a bonnet, but now a toothless, crooked hag with the bushiest eye-brows on Doyle, could produce an entire chest of limpet shells once offered to win her affection, but now no more than the resolute reminders of beauty faded. Alas, the rather dangerous tradition, which had always been spurned by the island's elders, ceased to be the quaint coda to the dramatic history of Doyle when an unfortunate boy, Matthew Brennan, the eldest son of Doyle's most prominent family, went over the ledge in game of Devil's Dare. They never reclaimed his body from the murky depths. Nevertheless, he was given one of the crudely hewn grave stones the islanders are accustomed to make, but curiously it was placed among the ruins of Feichen's church on Doyle, a space usually reserved for un-baptized children. It was perhaps reckoned that given the circumstance and location of his death, the boy required all the help he could get; in any case, close proximity to the blessed saint who had conquered the isthmus's demons certainly could not hurt, and indeed it may have helped, for no story of his ghost is told.

A barricade went up, if a rather whimsical looking one for twenty-one hours and thirty-nine minutes per day. It could present no more than an encumbrance to a truly dedicated adventurer, and although one may be inclined to think that the barricade would have only accentuated the mystique of the place, only augmented the renown to be won by taking the Devil's Dare, the memory of poor Matthew Brennan retained too sorrowful a bite to be a boon to any adventure-seeking. The

boy's death had tainted the islanders' memories with that acrid, metallic after-taste of blood. It was a grievous wound and no one was prepared to pick that scab even as it healed.

And so the island ages as do its people. The young succumb to the allure of modern life on the mainland – carriages, theatres, gas lighting – and abandon Doyle, leave their elders to wither like hoary trees in the winter of their life, and soon forget the stories of their youth. Time passes, and man's memory wanes to nothing as he passes onward, steadily and inexorably into oblivion.

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Inishdoyle was forcibly abandoned by the Irish government in 1957. It remains uninhabited today.

Author's Note:

This bit of fiction was inspired by field work on the island of Inis Airc, co. Galway and represents an attempt to personalize the past through the wholly fabricated myth of the Devil's Foot. I mean no offense to the descendants of those men and women who were forced off the island in 1960, and I hope this is a tribute to, rather than an appropriation of, their past.

so effin' romantic
BRITTANY ANNE BURGESSON

what a holiday
two thousand 10 a 28-day pregnancy
swiss miss cocoa & cheese
phallic arrows & eros' fallacy
doily valentine hearts , two lumps & a V

votive candles & female anatomy
deviant furies , stuffed with fluff
lacy teddies , oily eyes
victoriastuff s real nice
corseted coraline , buttoned tight

south bend aphrodisiac factory
cheap, starch sheets @ motel infinity
your last card , scratched out joker
trumping euchre
jack of spades , upside down V

off-course originality , stuck in peanut butter
burger king wrappers , cold fry grease
arms and legs flail, fatten ; veal strapped in, tender
griswold mini - van booster seat
what a holiday

bios

Emily Barton is a sophomore at the University of Notre Dame majoring in both English and Spanish. She is a native of Phoenix, Arizona.

Anne Boyle is a sophomore from Welsh Family Hall, and she is majoring in PLS and English. Boyle is originally from Chicago.

Brittany Burgeson is missing.

Jackie Burke is a senior English major from Indialantic, Florida. She is currently pursuing a career in book publishing. People often tell Jackie that books are going out of style, but Jackie plans to single-handedly save the publishing industry. Right after she writes the next great American novel.

John Dillon is a graduate of Harvard University (BA) and presently a Notebaert Graduate Presidential Fellow in the English Department at the University of Notre Dame. His primary focus is twentieth-century American and Irish poetry. Currently, he is researching the Irish-language poet, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, and her engagement with the oral tradition.

Annette Esquibel is a Junior Anthro and Environmental Sciences major and has been obsessed with photography since age 11. She is an only child hailing from The Land of Enchantment and would easily drop out of school if she could find something more entertaining to do.

Emily Forester is senior American Studies major from Glenview, Illinois. Her greatest accomplishments in life include learning how to drive a bus and meeting C-3PO from Star Wars. One day, Emily hopes to own her very own vineyard.

Regina Gesicki was going to submit under a pseudonym, but couldn't think of one. This gives you an indication of her creative powers and the consequent quality of her work. She hopes to one day be mistaken for a celebrity.

Katherine Khorey is a senior majoring in English and minoring in Russian, and while her possibilities for next year run from MFA programs to a long stint slinging pizza dough at the local bakery, the future's hazy but

bright at this point. In her spare time she enjoys reading, theatre, baking, and walks with good music.

Tim LaBarge is a senior who is graduating in May with degrees in English and Political Science. He is currently browsing the job market in a number of different areas. Regardless of his profession he plans to continue writing until he runs out of ideas.

Ryan Lash lofgeornost

James Martell studied Philosophy at the Universidad Iberoamericana (Mexico), and wrote his final essay on Derrida's "La différance." He has written articles on Beckett, Derrida, Žižek, Deleuze, Blanchot, and Joyce. His main interests are Deconstruction, Modernism and Psychoanalysis. He is pursuing a PhD in Literature at the University of Notre Dame.

Joseph Miller is a sophomore looking to major in Psychology. He studies in the College of Arts and Letters. Currently, he resides in O'Neill hall on campus. His hometown is Bowling Green, Ohio.

Mikey Moses is a senior majoring in philosophy and political science, and he really enjoys sunsets, long romantic walks on the beach, and candlelit dinners. His lifelong role models and heroes are, in no particular order, Ghostface Killah, Kordell Stewart, and Sylvester Stallone, and he one day hopes to master the art of krumping.

Kevin Muratore is a sophomore at Notre Dame. He hails from New Jersey.

Shelagh O'Brien is a sophomore at Saint Mary's College. She is an Elementary Education Major and Film Studies Minor. Her interest in film and photography has developed over the years. Photography is something that became a hobby of hers in high school and since then, her camera hasn't left her side.

Theresa Olivier is a graduating senior at Notre Dame. She will be receiving degrees in English and Political Science, and this is the first time her creative writing has been published.

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