

S P I R E S

TWO THOUSAND FIFTEEN
Autumn





S P I R E S

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Critics, however, are welcome to quote brief passages
by way of criticism and review.

Front cover: "Raisin the Bar" (acrylic & raisins on a cardboard box)

Front inside cover: "Fishbowl Mistress" (Digital Photograph)

Back cover: "Dawn of Memories I" (Oil on Canvas)

Back inside cover: "Untitled" (Metal Chains, Plaster, Spray Paint, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas)

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Sam Smathers
Washington University in St. Louis, 2019

Front Inside: "Fishbowl Mistress"
Caroline Yoo
Washington University in St. Louis, 2019

Back Cover: "Dawn of Memories I"
Jake Yoo
Washington University in St. Louis, 2016

Back Inside: "Untitled"
Jake Yoo
Washington University in St. Louis, 2016

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Gentleman Muggers

He was old-fashioned, their leader, insisting they leave women and children unharmed and untouched; they were to flip through the wallets and leave family pictures behind; they were to search politely through ladies' purses, delicately handling personal items; they were to smile genuinely at the victims the entire time, to signal their good-will; they were to engage men in conversations about stocks and sports while they rifled through their briefcase in front of them; they were to leave jewelry that had sentimental attachment, never taking wedding rings, heirloom necklaces, or locket, no matter the monetary value; they were to engage women in conversation by asking about their day, about problems at work, problems at home, and sometimes they didn't ask about problems, but stumbled onto the good things, the promotions, the hobbies, the interests, the passions; they were to listen; they were to spend no less than thirty minutes on a mugging, because it takes time for victims to grow accustomed to gunpoint and be able to talk openly about life; they were to mind their manners and always say thank-you afterwards, and kiss their hands, or shake their hands, or clasp their hands and say parting words of fondness.

They were never to rob the same person twice, even when their victims wandered into the back alleys and waited impatiently to be mugged; in this situation, they were to instead suggest the nearby coffeeshop, and sit across from each other in a booth, and talk, and listen, openly and earnestly, no longer needing the aid of a gun.

Keegan Hughes

Washington University in St. Louis, '16

still

there is whiteness
and dark light,
fires
burning in basements
of the Pacific, moon
stains, the glow
and the knife, hidden
back where my blood
is still blue

Ariel Kusby
University of California, Los Angeles, '15

trembling, honest

Just across the Oregon border, trying to find a doctor that would kill me, my pain meds ran out. Granddaughter told me try to hang on, and squeezed the bridge between my thumb and forefinger without lifting her eyes off the road. I could feel the scratches in my throat rubbing together. I coughed something out of me and my eyes went wet. I bent my head over in teary recoil. I closed my eyes and I could see the scratches in my throat, grooved and pulsing red and wet, visible over the mountain ridges in the background where trees can't grow over the angled rock faces.

Oregon, finally. Enormous. One more slight bend of I-90, maybe a few more, and we're careening through mammoth evergreens, prehistoric boulders. The cars to our left slide in another direction through the afternoon fog I can't quite see but feel, and Granddaughter says the car's driving fine on the smooth wet road. It looks tangible, saturated and grainy dark. Each detail feels excruciating and necessary, Hail Mary passes that I can't seem to hold on to when they finally slide back to my brain. Granddaughter asks about the pain and I slowly show eight trembling, honest fingers that aren't much whiter than the watery plastic on the dashboard in front of me. Bathtubs of rain fall forward with our car, then stop then start again. I fixate in this car wash. I'm drawn to the dotted white lines. Oregon, finally, and each anthill bump in the road launches my frame into the air, only slam down again on the towel over the seat. Every drop on the windshield reflects its shadow onto the dashboard in front of me, the mountains in the background show their shape but not their color, and Granddaughter tells me hang on, hang on, hang on.

*Samuel Flaster
Washington University in St. Louis, '17*

Appendectomy

Throwing away the moldy oranges,
I felt relieved.

What was it about purity
that made it so easy to poison?

Spring

Back when my hourglass
had barely been turned over
my father made me test the fruit
from our newly-planted plum tree
but my little teeth couldn't quite bite
through its firm unripeness
The wrinkles between his eyebrows
knitted in anxiousness
and we waited, and waited.

I asked my mother why old people
gave up their smooth youthed face
for a map of river tributaries
I am still asking
why adulthood is so very long
and childhood so fleeting
and why no one has done
anything to change that

Summer

Sunny dispositions emerged
along with mouths strong enough
and plums soft enough to eat
My mother packed them in my lunches
Despite their meager brown bag
and my backpack's bustling
they did not bruise.
I came home from middle school

announcing proudly
that I wanted to study Biology
because I liked learning about life.
My father told me a science joke:
"Male nipples
the appendix
and wisdom teeth
all walked into a bar
and searched for their purpose."
I am still waiting
for the punch line.

Fall

The skin of the plums sagged,
formed ridges like low-lying valleys
or ancient faces' lost elasticity
The outside bludgeoned red
inside a stark yellow—
a reverse gilded apple.

My father's blood bore the same hue
as the core of his homegrown fruit
it started with his inflamed appendix
I cursed autumn's ultimate impermanence
for making everything change colors

Winter

My mother cut down my father's
plum tree.

Someone must have thrown his heart monitor
in the shower
because it sputtered like liquid electricity
and settled
to a drone like tornado drills
Sometimes things just go bad

Katy Przybylski

Washington University in St. Louis, '17

Inheritance

If you draw a line between this bench
and that bench, then you will remember
your grandfather's footsteps on concrete
and from there

the smell of Shanghai air.
You are seven, traveling overseas
to meet him, bring him to the habitat
of your guestroom.

Your grandfather sits in the house.
He doesn't like how meat is packaged here,
the heads of fish severed off. The neighbors
on the street, too polite to speak,
they cross the road. When he walks,
he doesn't see the earth plastered and clean. He sees
neighbors blowing smoke rings
and the house where he plays poker each day at four,
hawkers fanning fried dough and the gritty crunch
of gravel under feet. He sees the bench
where he slipped your father gifts of stories
that breathed in ink brushstroke calligraphy,
not the bench where you and he sit silently,
the letters of u and s and a
between you.

Lucy Zhao
University of Michigan, '15

Babushka Event

Insightful young little weaver bird, discoverer of the harmful interactions
Between timelessness and frigid tundra and preventer of blast radius
Casualties and babushka dolls that seem to be bottomless, totally devoid
Of the laws of nature and bountiful in terms of analytical mindwarper.
He was sprung from one of the wretched rusky “muñecas” himself and
It was he who was in love with the cold, calculated qualities of life found
Within igneous rock, he who scavenged across those fissuring dimensions
Where he fell infatuated with the very idea of the fragility of permanence,
He who coughed up smaller variations of himself and hid them in the
Dark forested areas that pop up in the prairies of obscure rural townships
Only to find that they follow him home like savage ducks in a row and
The final solution is always reminiscent of de Goya’s grimmest canvas,
He who slowly recognized that the insurgency of replicants into the roles
Of his closest friends and family was a story not so incredibly far-fetched,
He who still believed in fiercely disappointing entities such as true love,
He who was rendered helpless as a child, trapped in a county-sized crater
And was forced to categorize and compartmentalize his successive NDEs,
He who had tried and tried to convince himself of his existence but due to
Unforeseen circumstances and heartbreak found reality is not the bastion
Of stability it once was, he who tripped over his own insecurities which
Due to an off-brand psychokinesis took physical form near his feet,
He who was contracted by shadow corporations to create the most
Scarring projections of the mind in bedrooms of ambassadors’ children,
He who took surrealist justice into his own hands and was heard saying,
“Oh god, no,” but ten seconds after the fact, he who was struck down
By the smitten and angry goddesses of Lockean thought, all of whom
Expressed their distaste through guttural noises and disembowelment,
He who saw the future and its comparative counterparts and soon left.
It is he who now keeps himself under lock and key in the miles of bunkers
That run under the supposed Tunguska Event site until further notice.
The reason: a chipped courageousness and an unreliable plan for blissfulness.

Tanner Boyle
Washington University in St. Louis, '18

The Traveler's Diary

I sing a hymn of happy like sunshine
kisses on my nose in a holy place, a land of temples and candlelight
prayers every evening. My hymen broke like the clouds over the Taj Mahal
four hours before dawn break, morning sun filtering through marble like silk.
Ninety five degrees and sticky like melting sugar cubes,
lips red as watermelon, taste sweet as mango, kissing
for real now, kissing hard and pressing hands
on backs and hands on me, me, me,
my body arches to sing. Beauty I am here
and beauty I see. Unspeakable
wonder before me. Love of a king
wrought in living stone. Love
of a boy wrung in living me.

Lucy Zhao
University of Michigan, '15

Dengue Fever

I come home smelling burnt
though I don't even like cigarettes
It's comforting to smell on myself
a heavy layer, warm and
A little dirty, like you
exhaling a grey stream out the window
My feet propped on the dashboard
sweat glistening on your upper lip
Both our tshirts stick to slick skin
we pick out the people we hate the most
Drunk jaywalkers, indie kids
more piercings than money

[Everything we were]

you grew up out west
I was reared in a country club
now your mom doesn't answer your calls
And I'm collecting empty bottles of everclear
and your knuckles are raw from door-knocking
And my shirt is stale with cigarette smoke.

*Tristan Worthington
University of Florida, '17*

The Blueberry Cranberry Chocolate-Chip Streusel Dump-Cake with Toasted Almond Slivers

Damn if they aren't honest. Foodies never lie. No matter *how* the taste-testers respond, they admit it. "Not a big hit with the hubby, which was fine with me! All to myself this time!" If it took them five tries to get the vanilla-to-cinnamon ratio correct, they'll admit that too. "Well, gals, the first four attempts were nothing short of disastrous – but here's looking at you, batch#5!" They'll show you pictures of the soufflés that didn't poof, the breads that didn't rise, the cakes that overspilled into the oven. There isn't a foodie on earth that doesn't have a harrowing list of failures.

That's how you know when you find a winner – when everybody who tries it faints with titillation. And when foodies gloat, they *gloat*. They'll say it was so good, they had to make a second batch just to get through the weekend. Or two. Or three. Or neighbors flocked from the whole suburb to find the source of the aroma and promptly devoured it. First-prize at the state fair, every year, since 1698 when their great-great-great-great-great-greatgreatgreataaaaaaaaat-grandmother first invented the Blueberry Cranberry Chocolate-Chip Streusel Dump-Cake With Toasted Almond Slivers. Border skirmishes have been brought to peace and rebellions have been quelled when they shared this recipe. There was a married couple who was going to divorce – he was certain she didn't love him anymore, because they hadn't made love in three years, and whenever he rested his half-warmed hand on the small diamond where her shoulderblades almost touched, she would shift away and reply thickly that she was tired, always tired, and he began dreaming of the kinky librarian with the horn-rimmed glasses who seemed always to be peering over the book instead of reading it, and he was sick of warm lemonade where the pulp sunk to the bottom and clogged the sink, he was sick of the strands of wet-black hair curled against the shower walls and clogging the shower drain, and when he left dishes in the sink he fully intended to scrub them but she always got to them first just to play martyr, and he bought a shiny black suitcase, the kind he knew she hated, with the tacky brown stripe and the roller-wheels, and he fully intended to fill that slick black suitcase with all of his un-pressed shirts and his khakis and his Sports Illustrated backorders – but then she entered the bedroom with a piece of the Blueberry Cranberry Chocolate-Chip Streusel Dump-Cake With Toasted Almond Slivers and it was like they were back in college again.

Really? It's that good? Hell, I'll try it.

Hell, I'll try anything that'll fix my life up *that* good.

Keegan Hughes

Washington University in St. Louis, '16

Becoming a Mutation

Pages slip like milk through hungry fingertips
food for the anxious
ink black night like thunderclouds in a soup bowl.
Pepper constellations beneath sweating palms.
Loose hairs like folk songs,
sticky from being imprisoned in an apple core.
Writer's block like cinder on a tender chest,
I promise I'm not a witch-
but I float in the oceans.
I float in puddles beneath your feet
and in raindrops that'll ruin your hair.

Echoes on rubber soles speak through riddled holes,
and I can howl with the voice of the wind.
Onomatopoeias type plumes into the skin beneath your chin.
Text drips from bitter lips,
tracing profanities into phonographs.
Whispering braille symphonies,
vertebrae twist between words,
mutating pins trailing down my spine.
Impressions burn like
fingertips between my thighs.

Rotate slowly, with intention.
Corrosion crawls up the peony stem.
Muse seducing suicide,
call me ink, call me spider,
call me mantis.
Call me kettledrum pounding,
 resonance
in your blood-soaked skull.

Elizabeth Levinson
Washington University in St. Louis, '18

The Lerner Variations

I

On August 3rd, 1914, seventeen-year-old Eugene Lerner was conscripted to join the B.E.F. in the war against Germany. He wanted to be a writer. On September 14th, 1914, he was killed in the First Battle of the Aisne, one hundred and thirty kilometers outside of Paris.

II

He wanted to be a writer but wouldn't refer to himself as a writer. Not yet, at least. He had experimented with metered poetry, and he had written a series of stories of increasing quality which he thought were good but which he was too anxious to share with anyone else. They were love stories and he didn't want to give anyone the wrong idea. When love started to bore him as a subject for his work, he wrote about God and morality and meaning and man's place in the universe. Then he realized that he didn't believe in God, at least not the God of his parents, and that all that other stuff was abstract, that it had no import on his life, and was therefore also boring. So he stopped writing all together, and spent much of his time alone, wandering London with his hands in his pockets, waiting for inspiration. He knew that he was supposed to write, that one day he would write a great book. After school he would leave his schoolmates and sit on a bench in Green Park and breathe deeply, and open himself to the sounds and sights of the park. Occasionally he bit his tongue in anger and horror at the emptiness he found inside his own mind. But patience prevailed. Birds fluttered like ideas in and out of the branches overhead as Eugene waited for the arrival, abruptly and out of the abyss, of the subject of his great book.

III

On August 3rd, seventeen-year-old Eugene Lerner joined the British Expeditionary Force to fight against the Germans on the western front. Eugene and his schoolmates were among the first to enroll after King George issued the call for soldiers. Eugene and co. pinned their fraternity pins to the breasts their uniforms and sang songs together on the boat that carried them across the Channel.

IV

His mother and father and two younger sisters gathered at the station to say goodbye. His mother cried and kept adjusting the cuffs of his uniform and repeatedly replaced a stubborn hair that fell limply over Eugene's forehead. His father kept saying the same thing over and over again about duty. Duty to God and country and so forth. His sister Martha gave him a fresh-picked daisy, which he stuck in his buttonhole in his label. Just as the train was about to leave the station, Eugene bent down on one knee and kissed his littlest sister Aggie on the cheek and told her not to cry, since he'd be back before she knew it. On the train, Eugene and his schoolmates sang songs and made jokes about German women.

V

Just as the train was about to leave the station, he bent down on one knee and kissed his littlest sister Aggie on the cheek, and asked her in a voice so quiet that his parents couldn't hear what he was saying to pray for him while he was gone, because God was always attentive to the prayers of children.

VI

He brought along a notebook with him, which he kept in the pocket of his uniform, but which was rendered unusable after the heavy October rains.

VII

In the notebook, Eugene began to write a battle story, which he thought was the best thing he'd ever written, until the notebook was lost somewhere in the swampish trench lines along the Arden, somewhere in the mud that bubbled and frothed and sucked the boots right off your feet. He wept for its loss, since by that time he could no longer weep for his dead friends, but was sure that he would be able to reproduce what he'd written.

VIII

Their French counterparts in the war wore white gloves and funny hats with feathers sticking out of them, and they carried sabers that they used to lead cavalry attacks atop chestnut-brown chargers, directly into German artillery fire. Once Eugene met an English-speaking Frenchman in the trenches. Eugene asked him why the French officers dressed that way, and why they never tried to find cover, but went into battle without helmets but funny hats instead and walked into gunfire like it was nothing. The Frenchman told him that they did it because they loved France, and because they wanted to protect their wives and children. Eugene asked if the children wouldn't be safer and happier and healthier if perhaps the father protected himself, and so he could live through the war and return home. The Frenchman said that then this man would be a coward and therefore not fit to be a father. Then Eugene asked, before he could stop himself from saying it, why then was the Frenchman himself taking cover in the trench. Didn't that make him a coward too? The Frenchman wasn't angry, but smiled and said gravely, "I don't have any children." Then the rain started and they were quiet.

IX

On August 3rd, Eugene Lerner was conscripted to join the B.E.F. He wrote a letter to the conscription office and asked to be excused from duty, citing the fact that he was his mother's only child (his sister Martha had died of pneumonia before she was one year old, and his other sister Aggie could neither read nor write and was losing her motor functions by the day, and could only communicate through moans and flailing, and her doctors were certain she wouldn't live past the end of the year). But the office denied his request with sincerest apologies, since they needed every man they could get.

X

On August 3rd, Eugene Lerner was conscripted. When he went to enlist, he learned that, being a terribly short man, a mere five-foot-four inches tall at the age of seventeen, he did not meet the necessary height requirement. So he stayed in London, and eventually forgot about his writing. Once the war was over, he became a clerk for a reputable firm on Oxford Street.

XI

Inner organs are actually brownish-grey in color, Eugene learned, although anatomical diagrams would have you believe they were light pastel orange and pink and green and purple. But they're all more or less grey. To see them outside of a human body is also a strange experience. Have you ever actually seen a gallbladder? If you haven't, it's probably for the best.

XII

The longest Eugene ever squatted in a trench was four days. It was raining all four days. If you even tried to peek out of the trench you risked being shot at. On the third day Eugene and two other soldiers had to bury a man named Longfellow who'd been shot in the neck on the first day, gotten an infection on the second day, and died on the third. They had to bury him in the trench, but this proved difficult since the mud bubbled and frothed because of the rain, and even though the mud would suck the boots right off your feet like quicksand, it was impossible to bury the dead man. The wet mud kept pushing his limbs back up. As Eugene huddled beneath his blanket in the rain, he looked at the blank pages of his sopping notebook and tried to write despite Longfellow's smell and the booming of faraway artillery shells.

XIII

Near the Belgian border, Eugene found one of his schoolmate's fraternity pins sticking out of the ground, half encased in mud. He moved around the temporary camp trying to find the badge's owner, whom he had known since grammar school. He skirted between the tents and the groups of soldiers huddled around dull fires. He eventually discovered from a captain that the owner of the pin had been dead for three months.

XIV

After five months of fighting, Eugene's company of one hundred and one men had been reduced to thirteen men.

XV

Shells from the German howitzers could weigh anywhere between 800 kilograms and 1200 kilograms, which means around 2200 pounds on average. This means a shell could pretty much slice straight through a human being, if you can imagine that.

XVI

Eugene Lerner, infantryman for the B.E.F., 2nd Brigade of the 23rd Division, was killed in an explosion from a German howitzer shell near the Franco-Belgian border in September 1916. He did not die immediately. The explosion blasted his eardrums out, so he spent the last minutes of his life staring up in perfect silence through the smoke of long-ago-fired bullets and rubble dust which refused to settle, as soldiers ran through it and disturbed the thick motes of floating plaster. For these few minutes Eugene was left alone with his own mind, which he suddenly realized was not empty, as he had once thought, but rather was overflowing with smells and colors and light. He could recall even the most banal details of his life: the smell of chalk he'd hated so much in grammar school, the made-up songs his mother hummed in the morning while she waited for the kettle to boil as Eugene still lay in bed, half-awake and half-asleep. Eventually another member of his company hurried past him, came back, looked into his still-open eyes, and hurriedly reached down to close his eyelids with a flat hand, as though Eugene had already died.

XVII

They celebrated the surrender of the Axis powers. Eugene and the remnants of his company were paraded through the streets of London, under handfuls of thrown confetti and waving flags and banners that said "We Won!" Eugene was reunited with his family, although he was soon saddened to learn that his sister Aggie had been killed just a week before when she'd been struck by a tramcar. But Eugene did not mourn her long and quickly returned to the celebrations. His father cried and touched his shoulder and told him that he'd done his duty. Once the celebrations died down, and Eugene was preparing to return to school, he found his old love stories in a desk drawer. He remembered the battle story he began to write during his tour, but which he threw into a campfire, convinced that it wasn't any good. He'd been too distracted to write anyway. So he decided to try again. And he sat down at his desk and held a pen over a sheet of paper, and the experience of his years in combat, the memories of the friends who'd died, swirled through his mind (which at one point he had believed to be empty) and surged into the fingers of his writing hand.

XVIII

He never wrote a word of the story. Eugene sat at his desk for a while, and then decided to try again the next day. He was tired. For the first few months he blamed the death of his sisters Aggie and Martha and the accompanying trauma. But even when this passed, and he would sit at his desk with a pen and fresh sheet of paper, even then his hands didn't stop shaking.

*Peter Bresnan
Hamilton College, '15*



To See Beyond Our Appearances

Daniel Shieh

Washington University in St. Louis, '16

Steel, Latex, Nylon, Paint

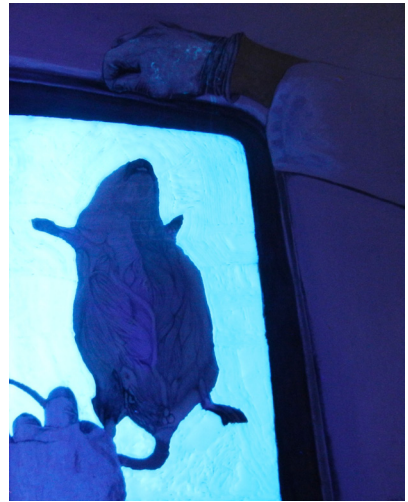


Birth of the Savior

Gavin Schmitz

Washington University in St. Louis, '16

*Acrylic Paint, Oil Paint, Colored Pencil, and Nail Polish on
Wooden Panel*



Crucifixion

Gavin Schmitz

Washington University in St. Louis '16

*Acrylic Paint, Oil Paint, Graphite Pencil, Lead Pencil, RoseArt
Colored Pencil, Ink, Nail Polish, and Hot Glue on Canvas*



Perfusion

Gavin Schmitz

*Washington University in St. Louis, '16
Oil Paint, RoseArt Colored Pencil, Graphite Pencil,
Lead Pencil, Nail Polish, Tonic Water, Plastic Tubing,
Aquarium Pump, and Spackle on Wood Panel*

boy

noun. /boi/

1. a male child, from birth to full growth, especially one less than 18 years of age.

When I was in middle school, my hair was always cut to my ears because my mom didn't have time to brush it so between classes for bathroom breaks I would always get pushed to the boys line by the other boys in my class who would later grow up to be bad boys with tragic acne that bad girls fell in love with and when I saw them in the hallways in high school crossed my arms a little tighter so when they saw me they would see protruding balloon breasts and not boy-bob haircut.

2. a young man who lacks maturity, judgment, etc.

A boy that I dated in high school broke up with me by saying he was tired of being a lopsided relationship. He was exactly the kind of boy that would say things like that because he wanted you to ask what he meant so that his words had more time to worm themselves inside your brain and scratch little gashes in you before the sentence was finished. When I did ask he blew smoke in my face that said "It's where one person feels everything and the other person feels nothing at all." But I bet now he wishes he didn't say that because shortly after we broke up he got kicked out of college and then of his house and now all he's got are his punk boy band songs that he writes wishing that he could get out of his hometown and longing for another lopsided relationship.

3. a man socializing in a group of men

He told his boys that I stare at him after we have sex. I want to tell his boys that I'm not that girl—I don't take fucking and force it into love's cookie cutter mold but when someone for a moment makes your body a part of their body, their absence aches like the feeling of growing out of your own skin. It hurts how your bones feel after a two-hour sleep or the void in your stomach that hunger breeds. You start to think these feelings satiable, start to think that maybe it might be nice to be looked at for bit, start to think that wouldn't be unreasonable.

4. a son

I can't think about boys without thinking of you and that time you called me a fucking cunt and slammed me into a locker and told me I couldn't walk away from you if I loved you because your dad left you when you were young and I wouldn't do that would I? I wouldn't leave someone I loved even though blood was beading up like tiny particles of fear exploding in my mouth and the look from every student who passed by in the hallway told me that this wasn't love but none of them stopped to show me what was.

exclamation.

I. used to express intensity of feeling

Oh, boy! I will exclaim when a boy straightens my shriveled spine and plucks my petals open again because now I am wilted, soggy silk dripping wrinkled flowerbuds, trampled garden full of hopeless botanicals but boy, I do bloom in sun.

*Katy Przybylski
Washington University in St. Louis, '17*

Graveyard

Pistol-whipping the drug dealer had led him here, and it wasn't even a punishment as much as a vindication; a full year and two proud officer misconduct reports after joining the force, officer Fox McCloud was on the graveyard shift. The other officers had expressed their faux sympathies and gone home to their families for a sane night's sleep. McCloud pulled his cruiser out of the station at 11:55, legs light with excitement after a few weeks off, and drove to a parking lot down the road. He rested his black Glock on the dashboard, polished and unholstered, and changed into athletic shorts and carefully cleaned Nikes. The graveyard shift was a departure from the partner patrol McCloud should have "earned" after his rookie year. Temporary side-duty, internal affairs said. Highway patrol, try to reel in some speeding tickets to help hit the quota. Three months of commendable, non-heroic police work and he'd be back with the other rookies, handling paperwork and cleaning piss off of a cruiser's backseat. But McCloud established his own reality, always had. This was a dream posting. Alone. Midnight to 8. No partner. Minimal supervision. No rules. No bullshit. All the real crime. On average, just three glorious calls per night. He wasn't a police officer. McCloud was a cop.

McCloud reached into his backpack and pulled out an iPod, syncing it to his portable speaker beneath the scanner. His meticulously curated "Graveyard!!!!" playlist clicked into being as he glided out of the parking lot, booming funk music through the pinholes in the red rectangular box. McCloud's ribs buzzed. He rolled down his window and rested his elbow outside the vehicle in the sound summer night. This was unreal. The *Shaft* theme echoed as McCloud grinned his way through the center of his hometown, shuffling through his old haunts. No rules. Or rather he made the rules. 8 hours to protect the world. He had a slight erection.

The cop-funk soundtrack, the crisp white Nikes, the four-Splenda cinnamon hazelnut cappuccino in the cup holder over the scanner: these eccentricities were important. They cuffed impulses. They reined in the mind. McCloud had learned it before he left grad school. He was reminded of it now, hovering over the large small town streets. Lecture halls. Office hours. His favorite mahogany desk in the psych building basement. He'd once been so loyal to the names carved in the scarlet margin of the desk, but he gradually learned to hate them. His promising research on mindful breathing limiting schizophrenic hallucinations had shot him to the stratosphere of academic psych; he met all the salient names, even some of the monuments on his desk. He hated them. Most wore white suits or prescribed pills for boarding school kids to snort in bathrooms while the real world kept bleeding. He'd struggled relentlessly to propel himself forward. To graduate. To help people. People like him. People like Kenneth, his dead best friend. McCloud had struggled to survive his second semester. He couldn't sleep, plagued with lunatic dreams. He saw himself die every night. Murdered by an angry mob of Kenneths. Sometimes it was suicide. He stopped looking at clocks and turned to material comforts. He started drinking coffee, stopped wearing underwear. But he found himself failing exams and writing shit papers, burning his academic currency. No one in a building dedicated to the brain noticed his. One day while conducting an experiment in a mental hospital, McCloud shit his pants, audibly. Very audibly. "Brick House" came on and McCloud whooped through the quiet night, untouchable. This was how he helped people now. He felt happy and eased the cruiser's pedal to match the funk's pulse. McCloud grabbed his Glock off the dashboard and smiled at it.

He pressed it firmly with his right thumb, angling it 45 degrees against the steering wheel, daringly pointed toward the moon. McCloud grinned wildly, throbbing against the Glock's sweaty, latticed grip.

A quarter tank of gas and a few safe daydreams later, McCloud's lungs still swell with testosterone. Finally the scanner flashes a call through the hazy aftermidnight, obliterating the Bee Gees and the calm, windless air outside the cruiser. McCloud drops his Glock in fear. For an instant, reality flashes and every cell thrives, breathless and afraid. Will the rules unravel? Will the gun fire when it impacts the floor? It does not. McCloud reaches to the central panel, mashing buttons on the speaker until the music pauses. He stops the car in an empty intersection. It's a 245, maybe a 932 on Kenneth's side of town. Assault, potential domestic abuse. A dream call. A chance to help. McCloud swallows and responds, shakily. He flicks on his lights, no sirens. He spins over the curb and out of the intersection, stomping the pedal and bursting over the pavement. The Glock rattles nervously around the floor. His arm trembles when he bends down to grab it, placing his darting eyes just over the apex of the steering wheel. He whizzes by the public library where he still sometimes spends the night.

McCloud swings widely onto Perry Road and screeches the car to a stop, nearly colliding with the crowd of pajamas and flashing cell phones in the street. He radios his arrival and slams through the cruiser door, making sure to leave the car locked and pivoted over the tight, uphill curb. Outside of the car, innocent civilians swarm him with information. They seem happy, he thinks, to be in a world more vivid than that of their late-night homes. He listens silently and keeps his jaw straight, pacing through the crowd with his thumb rubbing the grip of his gun, dipped gently into his holster. The crowd retracts, alarmed by his demeanor. They see a uniform, a template filed away in a legal document. But McCloud is an authority, unruled. He approaches the crabby front "yard" of the "house" in question, where a man holds his hands high over his head for the cameras while towering over a weeping woman with a bloody lip. The woman is yelling, pointing at a knife on the ground. McCloud extends his empty palm and shouts at the man to step back and they lock veiny, narrow eyes. Another cruiser sweeps through to the front "yard" and when McCloud glances toward it the man takes off between the brick house and its rotting white fence. Game time, McCloud thinks. I'm gonna drop this guy. He breaks into pursuit.

Pull your gun. Your hearing floats off of the street and into the side alley. Officer, he's running, don't shoot him, follow them, he's gonna shoot, holy shit, we need backup, tell us what happened, where did they go? Game time. Your feet are slipping over these padded soles, clapping in staccato bursts, crafting a peppery drum beat, make sure you don't shoot him. Footsteps smack off the ground, he beats you around the second corner. Color in the alley fades to black and white with siren blue flames, you breathe. You breathe as you run. He's struggling getting over that wire fence catch him catch him put your gun hand on top of the fence and vault it here we go one two jump shit what's he doing

The man doubles back on the other side of the fence and throws a punch that crackles on McCloud's wrist on the fence. McCloud drops his gun but lands on his feet. The man throws a right hook, McCloud blocks it with his hand but can't stop the impact. Both fists land on McCloud's jaw. The first punch came from the left hand, he's a lefty. McCloud dodges another punch from the left hand and lands a jab on the man's ear; then the man lands a deep hook on McCloud's jaw. Maybe not a lefty. McCloud stumbles back and protects his head, while the man takes off again. The other officers fire at the man from the behind the fence, missing on purpose. McCloud dives to the clay ground. The man disappears over another rotting fence.

Grab your gun, wheel to the right out of the line of fire, you're faster than this punk, did the bullets stop? Left hand up let's vault it one two jump land. Now you're running, cue cymbals, there he is in the town park there that flash around that tree there through the tree line take a wide angle so the police officers can catch up. Cue cymbals they roll with your breath go around the tree, footstep breath footstep breath did Kenneth and I smoke weed here in high school once control it control it hold on to your gun dig the skin on your thumb into the grip keep up, keep up, kick his ass.

The man zags out of the park and slips down a hill covered in leaves. McCloud cuts back to force him right from the tree line towards the police officers, but they are far behind. McCloud weaves in and out of the tree line after the man, screeching to a halt and diving right around a thick oak while the man cuts left in the dark and hops an interstate guardrail, leaping over the dotted white lines, narrowly escaping a blind date with a speeding F-150, crossing the yellow divider with his hands extended to the right. McCloud follows over the guardrail and does not look left as he dashes through the glowing growing headlights and horns, he does not look right after the yellow divider, go on, fucking hit me, I dare you. Fucking hit me like you hit Kenneth when we made this same fucking run when we were seventeen when he needed to feel alive and well and right here I let him run we wore wet hoodies in the rain we saw ourselves invincible then you, you fucking splattered him, what happened to the fucking cymbals I'm a cop and I'm sprinting after a bad guy so you roll the fucking cymbals for me, Kenneth was melting his fucking eyes were open and happy but he couldn't see you I yelled but he couldn't hear me in that world I stretched out my arm when I saw you but I couldn't reach maybe he wouldn't let me and you fucking splattered him, a hundred feet that way you can still see his blood you killed him you splattered him and I sat right there by the guardrail treading water and trying not to look at his body, catch this guy fuck this guy up fuck this guy up

McCloud's eyes are tied to the man as he hops the opposite guardrail where McCloud sees old shaky graffiti, smudged and scraped, faded but legible forever. RIP 10/01/2003. The man sprints down the gully on the other side of the highway, losing both shoes to the mud. McCloud tears after the man up the side of the gully and loses his left Nike. The buttery mud squelches into McCloud's tight left sock, churning between his toes with each slippery step. McCloud is gaining upon him as he enters the cemetery through the woods at the bottom of the gully. The man stumbles on the fresh grass rolling onto the ground then quickly picks himself up but McCloud finally connects, diving into him, driving his shoulder into the man's spine, snapping the two of them through a thin tombstone in the first row of graves. McCloud pins the man, face down. The man is soaked in blood and tombstone dust and he sucks the air out of the grass surrounding his sweaty, gaping mouth. McCloud crunches his gun's point into the back of the man's head, pushing farther and farther until the man starts to cry and McCloud cries too, angrily, rubbing his gun deep into the top of the man's spinal chord, pushing until the first officer finally arrives, wheezing, to cuff the man while McCloud pins him. McCloud rolls off of the man, muddy and beat, and closes his eyes just in time to hear the second officer arrive and subsequently vomit. Some lands on McCloud's scarred, ashy legs. McCloud winces, breathing hot air. He breathes and maps the distance on his inner eyelids; they couldn't have covered a mile.

McCloud's world is spinning and for a while all he does is breathe. After a second, he opens his eyes to the cracked, lumpy tombstone, mirthfully gurgling blood over the cemetery. He thinks of Kenneth.

Sirens blaze from the parking lot, flashing dreamlike over the rows of abundant tombstones with names carved in scarlet. McCloud's lungs heave and strip their gears as he lies on his back in primordial sweat. The graveyard is primed with fog. McCloud is tired and unsatisfied. The second police officer is wrinkled, wheezing with his hands on his vomit-stained pant legs just above the knee. He points behind McCloud with a crooked blue finger. McCloud rolls over to right his vision and glimpses a tombstone with his name, Fox McCloud, carved and bleeding over the granite base, dated today. McCloud has been here before, created this before, Kenneth is not here. McCloud vows to breathe in, to control this, breathe out, it is not real. Kenneth is not here. You created this. The tombstones crack, spraying blood. McCloud closes his eyes and breathes in and out. In the distance, at the margin of the graveyard just before the lake, a colossal hooded figure hangs and swings from a tree branch with both arms. McCloud breathes in, control, breathes out, control. The second, wrinkled police officer wheezes louder and louder. McCloud watches the figure now as it sways unpredictably through flashing realities. In brief electric dips the figure is a muddy noose, shrouded in fog; in longer violet circles the figure is faceless and likeable in creased violet robes, dangling wiry claws through the bottom of the robe into the glassy surface of the lake. The second, jaundiced police officer wheezes fast and batshit over the seesaw creaks of the hooded figure, swaying forward and back, forward and back. McCloud cannot watch and tries not to listen, he presses his head into the cemetery lawn and breathes breathes breathes through the flashes, anchoring his thumb on the latticed grip of the gun, squirming as the timelines wriggle free of him, with his face down he sucks the air out of the bloody grass of his sweaty, bleeding reality.

Samuel Flaster

Washington University in St. Louis, '17

Lo que he visto

English translation follows

he visto la guerra
he visto el hambre
he visto el fin de toda la tierra
y he visto el mundo, lleno de sangre.

pero lo peor que he visto en mi vida
– lo que mi corazón nunca olvida –
fue la cara, por lágrimas envuelta,
de una niña, pequeña y muerta.

I have seen war
I have seen hunger
I have seen the end of the entire earth
and I have seen the world, full of blood.

but the worst that I have seen in my life
— that which my heart never forgets —
was the face, wrapped in tears,
of a girl, small and dead.

Maria Ferguson
Washington University in St. Louis, '16



Innocuous

Dante Migone-Ojeda

Washington University in St. Louis, '16

Relief Print on Paper

The great summer blackout of 2003

led to basins of water settling around the house, dry mouths from emptying ice cream, clothing changes in gray rooms. New discoveries were made: the temperature differential between doorknobs, divots in bare floorboards, unexpected extra steps in stairwells. Bodies found reasons to stay still, breathe stale air, rub at the fuzzy gray matter of brain.

We came to understand the pounds in pregnant power lines, sagging along our horizon. We came to understand our magnetized poles, pulling us from the solitude of white space. At night, we leave our beds be, gather in the center of the living room with cool sheets. We build fortresses with our bodies, tumbling together in sleep. Mothers next to grown daughters, traveling sons, estranged fathers next to mothers.

In suburban areas, the Milky Way and orbiting satellites wink at the naked eye. In the absence of particulate light pollution, we see the hurling galaxy of Andromeda come for us.

Lucy Zhao
University of Michigan, '15

The Distance of Proximity

I wonder if We are victims of
parallel lines adolescent
apologize that backwardness or
they can never ill fated eight
hold each other. balls or Cupid's
Star-crossed poison tipped
segments denied arrows, perhaps.
their crossing of Our unfortunate
paths— the infrastructure
distance of crumbled for one
proximity their another now lies
sweetest torment. in distinct piles
Strokes with the untouched by the
same slope, other's debris.
longing for a Social constructs
similar string to of morality like
make them same sides of
wholer, bolder. magnets repelled
Asymptotes can us, denied us our
at least be close, desire. We sit in
feel electric adjacent jail cells.
shocks between We touch lips
their barely but do not kiss,
brushing bodies, unknotted our
but parallel lines ribcages and
are only afforded exchanged our
the luxury of inner bits but do
equidistance. not dare love.
In real geometry, In reality,
parallel lines will forbidden lovers will
never meet. In never meet. In
ideal geometry, an ideal world,
parallel lines will forbidden lovers will
meet at infinity. meet at infinity.
Infinity begins Infinity begins
where parallel where forbidden
lines lovers
meet

Katy Przybylski
Washington University in St. Louis, '17

Notes on Not Forgetting Family

I know myself well and I know that I have a tendency to forget things intangible, things that are not written down in planners or calendars or on backs of hands.

I have a habit of writing myself cryptic drunk reminders in the notes section of my phone so a more sober me can bread crumb together my particularly hazy nights. A personal favorite is:

“June 16th, 2014 9:49PM
Who the fuck is Lisa
Are all Corner Bakeries on the corner?”

I know a lot of Lisa’s but never figured out which one this was referring to and it doesn’t bother me really except that I have an aunt named Lisa and I don’t think she would appreciate the profanity. And no, all Corner Bakeries are not, in fact, on the corner.

Another, more recent and much more forceful note:

“November 2nd, 2014 11:46PM
You met Nathan in the acapella group. You walked back to your dorm. NO SEXUAL TENSION you DO NOT want to hook up with him you want to hook up with his acapella friends.”

And I must have been doing at least some things right, because I didn’t hook up with Nathan (it must have been the lack of SEXUAL TENSION) or any of his acapella friends but instead passed out wearing a Superman shirt and woke up the next morning wondering why I was so aggressive last night.

But the most interesting note is not aggressive, features no caps lock or cryptic questions:

“November 7th, 2014 12:43 AM
Don’t ever forget the feeling of sitting across from your mother at your kitchen table drinking wine and talking of past times and suddenly she’s not your mother she is human and you just want to interact with her so you do things that she as a mother wouldn’t approve of like finish a bottle of her wine and you think she knows because your face is biting red know that she knows and that’s okay because you’re twenty years old and you’ve been waiting for the day she would regard you as an adult but you know if you stay here for long enough you will again become her child and is that okay? Yes, yes I think so.”

And upon reading that, I thought of some other things I wanted to write myself.

•

When dad asks you to dance at the first wedding you go to in seventh grade I don't blame you for declining because I know you. You don't know how to dance and you thought the ring bearer was pretty cute so you're going to attract his attention by attracting the least amount of attention to yourself. But dance with dad in the living room to the Black Eyed Peas when it's just you and him home alone and he's still got motion left in his muscles.

When dad shows you your portrait in his wallet and you recognize it as last year's 5th grade picture day disaster when you had just gotten braces on but didn't yet know how to smile with them, feel free to complain and throw a tantrum because really, dad? Are you trying to embarrass me?

But when you rifle through his wallet looking for money to buy a homecoming dress and you see the same picture, think what his coworkers must think when he has to tell them this is the most recent photo he has of you.

When dad kisses you on the cheek to thank you for writing in your diary every day wishing that he would get a new job, it's okay to scrunch up your face because his salt and pepper stubble is hard but when he does the same thing fourteen years later after he waits with you for the train that will take you back to school, make sure your I love you is felt as clearly as his facial hair.

•

Big brother will tell you all about his new fraternity and you'll want to stop listening because "Sigma Nu" and "Phi Delta Chi" all just sound like a batch of alphabet soup gone bad to you but please, just nod and smile. You'll thank me when you call him crying the next year during sorority recruitment.

Don't be alarmed when big brother tells you how often he drinks in college. You'll do the same.

When big brother invites you to hang out with his friends in a dilapidated garage in the middle of winter, stop when you start to tell him that you think his friends are scum bags. Go instead and sit on old couches and listen to country music even though you hate it and stay silent most of the night because you are not old enough to understand any of their jokes but it will be worth it. Because at one point there will be a lull in conversation and your brother will turn to you and say, "Hey, remember those summers when we used to throw water balloons at the church and then hide under the trampoline in case they came looking for us?" When big brother doesn't want to come home from college in the summer you'll think back on those moments, and on reminiscing on those moments, and be glad you have them in his absence.

•

Mom will read your AIM messages with your junior high boyfriend and ground you from the computer for two weeks, but it's okay to be mad at her because one day she'll come home with an iPhone and ask you who Siri is and you can bring up all the times she took away your instant messaging privileges before you teach her that she doesn't need to sign all of her text messages "love, mom."

I know it may not seem like it now but one day you will appreciate mom for making you write every thank you note for your graduation by hand. The best thank you note you will ever write is to her, after she sends you a card for your birthday that was once a sympathy card that she has crossed out the words "I'm sorry" and written "JK!!" instead.

When mom tells you she is sick the first thing she will say is "Don't worry, they said it's not genetic." Make sure to tell her how ridiculous this is. Go wig shopping with her when you can and laugh at the pictures of her "doo-rag" when you can't and I know it's hard, but don't apologize for being so far from her because it will only make her miss you more. When you write the cancer poem, do not be afraid to show her because you think it will make her sad, because it will, but she will think such sadness beautiful.

•

Don't stop trying to preserve your family, your memories, your memories of your family, even if they are drunken ramblings or embarrassing stories or things that you really don't want to hear again, because they might be all you have one day. But that, I can't tell you for sure.

*Katy Przybylski
Washington University in St. Louis, '17*

Produce

Gala apples and ruby tomatoes, the soft
underbellies of mushrooms sitting
by the bright clamor of bell peppers.
How did you get here?

It's four days after waking barren
of blood, the sheets clean. Like a scientist,
I examined the monthly packet of pills,
I furrowed the internet for solution.

And now I'm here holding the thin tube
to test my ovaries, to bear the weight
of a worried womb, yet it's still sitting
in my belly, the knot of cells in dread.

Twenty four years ago, my mother
made an appointment at a hospital.
The procedure was simple. Tissues
sucked out, the nurse showed her
the bottle of bloody liquid in the end.

I buy a red apple, bite into its tart flesh.
Suck the juice of a flower's nectar
and a bee's breath.

Lucy Zhao
University of Michigan, '15

Appetite

When all of us had gone to bed, the kitchen light
still flushed— my mother, alone, eating.

She must have been so hungry
to take what little food we had, cornmeal, rice, Miracle

Whip, a columned sleeve of Saltines. I could hear her
teeth going, each bite, desire for fullness or weight, an occupied

tongue, the tender meat of a fruit, something to chew
and slick-swallow, pretending, for a moment, we had

money. Years later: my marriage, and a baby—
I learned what it was to be well-fed.

The cans on the wooden shelves like soldiers in a line: green beans
and mandarins, glossy and giving in their armor, ready

for opening. My stomach never wanting, my daughter's hands never
vacant. Still, if things were different, who is to say

I wouldn't spend my nights at the kitchen table, fingers
driven deep into a near-naked pantry, wanting to satisfy first

my own hunger?

Caroline Schmidt
Emory University, '17

Mother's Mandate: A Haiku

I hid your letter.
Harvard accepted you, dear,
But you can't leave me.

Maria Ferguson
Washington University in St. Louis, '16

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