

Stratus: Journal of Arts and Writing

University of Washington
Continuum College

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Edited and with an Introduction by Roxanne Ray

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Introduction

Welcome to the sixth edition of *Stratus: Journal of Arts and Writing*!

The former University of Washington division of Educational Outreach has now transformed into its most current incarnation as University of Washington Continuum College, and with this transition, we continue to celebrate the art and writing of our students. *Stratus: Journal of Arts and Writing* promotes the visibility of the talent and efforts of our students, instructors, advisory board members, and staff.

At UW Continuum College, we offer a wide range of courses and programs in the visual, performing, media, and literary arts, and we add new creative programs every year for learners of all ages. New programs are developed in collaboration with our campus partners and advisory board members, and often arise from suggestions from our students or from the general public. We are always interested in new ways to serve artists and to spur the creativity that is vital to success in today's technology-driven world. We invite your ideas for the future.

As part of our focus on the future, a key element of the Certificate Programs in Arts and Writing at UWEO and PCE is an emphasis on the student's success *after* the completion of our program. We strive to develop self-sufficient artists who can create and market artistic work for years and decades following graduation.

As in the first five volumes of *Stratus*, top graduates from a range of our programs are represented here in word and image. In this sixth edition, these visual and written works are connected by three interlocking themes: journeys, cultural barriers, and danger and survival. How do we face the challenges of creating connections, surmounting misconceptions, and creating a safe world for all?

We publish *Stratus: Journal of Arts and Writing* on an annual basis, and would very much like to hear your thoughts.

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*Journeys, Cultural Barriers,
and Danger & Survival*

Into the Den

Ari Rosenschein

Certificate in Nonfiction, 2016

On this typical, tranquil suburban Bay Area street, where residents grow the perennial California poppy year round, I am about to enter the ranks of the Cub Scouts. My mother is shuttling me to my first-ever Scout meeting in our tan Volvo. It is supposed to be a fun activity.

I wriggle in the Volvo's front seat, miserable in my starched blue and gold.

Once we park in front of the den leader's home, I can't get the seatbelt off fast enough. The vinyl strap has been cinching my belly for the entire car ride, leaving deep indentations in my soft middle. The stiff, unforgiving shirt material heightens my dread.

"I don't want to go anymore. I'm not going to know anyone," I whine.

"But you're always so good at making friends." It's not what I want to hear, but the certitude in her voice is reassuring.

A budding creative, I don't jive with sports, organized or otherwise. Reading Hardy Boys books is as close to physical exertion as I get. Typically, I melt away from the athletic action and wander, lost in daydreams. In these fantasies I might envision myself as a superhero, maybe a stage actor, nothing too strenuous. Yet, here I am, at den's door, giving outdoorsy Cub Scouting a try.

Let's review the facts. I am:

- I. A 4th-grade student at Hebrew Day School
- II. A JCC summer camp attendee
- III. The owner of a triple-barreled-biblical-blasters of a name

With all this evidence, can Cub Scouts, with its earthy pragmatism and strict ethical code, help me bond with boys beyond school and shul? I hold hope close.

The '60s rambler where they hold the den meeting reminds me of *Eight is Enough*. Gentile houses are like the worn issues of *Highlights* and *Boy's Life* I thumb through while waiting at the doctor's office, simultaneously cozy and foreign. I assume this home contains the sweet, smoky aroma of ham and a brood as effortlessly normal as I am not.

Upon entering, I instinctively note the lack of Judaica items.

No mezuzah or menorah, certainly no schmaltz for cooking. So this is how they live.

The scouts are already busy with a project when I get to the living room. Even in uniforms designed to homogenize and democratize the wearers, I feel like an outsider. At school I can hardly keep my yarmulke on -in fact, the rabbis frequently reprimand me for this transgression. The skullcap leaves a psychological imprint which I fear the secular world can detect. What if these all-American boys discover I'm an imposter?

The Cubmaster asks everyone to settle down. A few Cubs give their den leader a two finger salute I recognize from movies. He introduces me and pronounces my name wrong, as Air-ee. It sounds un-American in his voice. I murmur a halfhearted correction into my neckerchief.

"So, Ari," the Cubmaster says, screwing up my name again. "Today is our first meeting, and we're just getting to know each other, so we're starting out with a little arts and crafts time."

He is lying. I know it. These kids look like they've been breaking bread together since kindergarten. I bet their families all live on this block and give each other Christmas gifts.

"Everyone is making a pirate hat out of newspaper. You can decorate yours however you want." That's good. I won't have to talk to anyone, and I like drawing. Some kids mumble hello before they resume horsing around with ink-stained hands.

"Show me how to do that."

"Just go like this."

At first, I can't make out exactly what's going on. Then I see it. In bold black pen. One scout has drawn a swastika on the sides of his paper hat. Another kid applies his own.

I recognize it from the Holocaust footage they show us at school on Yom Ha'Shoah. And *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, of course.

I've seen it carved into bathroom stalls and spraypainted crudely on walls.

Occasionally, I dare myself to trace one invisibly on my desk and feel guilty, like a bad Jew.

I am shocked by what I see, but try to play it cool. Tears well up as I realize I am not safe here. The meeting soon degenerates into a pirate fighting free-for-all with minimal adult supervision. Then it's over. No one gets a merit badge. Mom picks me up, and I make it home to safety.

During a recent telephone call, I asked her about that first scouting experience.

My Mom couldn't figure out why I didn't want to go back to the group. She said I kept the junior Nazi incident a secret for weeks. (Apparently, I wasn't a snitch.) Then Mom floored me over the phone with an important detail I had somehow forgotten. "Was that when the kid leaned over and told you that 'Hitler should have finished the job?'"

Initially, I was incredulous. "Did someone really say that? I must have blocked it out." After a moment or two, the details started to flood back. She was right. A grade schooler had uttered those unutterable words. My hazy all-American nightmare was even worse than how I remembered it. A resilient little guy, I had buried that afternoon deep in my psyche for future excavation.

It would feel righteous to say I never again set foot inside a scout meeting. Truthfully, I held onto the troop halfheartedly, mostly for our annual Pinewood Derby. My entry's stiff wheels quit spinning far short of the finish line. That modest event was as good as scouting ever got for me.

By the end of my brief career, I was less frightened than bored by scouting's brand of lockstep Americana. The blue and gold shirt remained short on patches, and I retired the garment to my closet along with other pieces of clothing outgrown.

It would be many years before I learned the swastika's complicated cultural history, but at that first meeting I was certain of a few facts: Saba and Savta were Holocaust survivors, I was Jewish, and those cubs meant me harm.

The swastika's unexpected appearance in the living room that day complicated my understanding of right and wrong. Somehow I recognized that I had trusted too freely in people's goodness. The implied wholesomeness of scouting made the moral betrayal hurt more. My experience didn't cause me to anticipate anti-Semitism everywhere I went, but I never again ruled out the possibility of an ambush.

Maybe the Scout Motto said it best: *Be Prepared.*





Daniya

Austin Ella Shipman

Certificate in Photography, 2016

Stay With Me

Irina Masinovsky

Certificate in Screenwriting, 2016

MONTAGE - EXT - SEATTLE - MORNING

Aerial views of Seattle zoom by - the Space Needle, Puget Sound, West Seattle's red bridge cranes, downtown. Random seagulls navigate through a maze of tall buildings.

View of a tree-covered street, all green and in bloom.

A big wooden gate with an arch above, the SIGN on the arch in big letters says "CHABAD HOUSE."

A crowd of Chassidic Jews - men and women in traditional garb, followed by caravans of children, stream towards the gate.

— JAMES (42), a scientist who has recently returned to Orthodox faith, tall, thin, and scholarly-looking, also in a Chassidic garb, runs after the crowd. He is out of breath.

— LENA (39), James' wife, a graduate student who is a Russian Jewish woman, with long hair and a carefree gait, walks at some distance behind James. She wears a short skirt, and a white summer blouse with deep décolleté. She slowly enters the gate, behind everyone else. The gate closes with a SCREECH.

INT. CHABAD HOUSE - DAY

WORSHIP HALL

A big worship hall is divided into two sections, one filled with men and the other - with women. The RABBI leads the service from the pulpit. Several men, James among them, stand in front of the pulpit facing the Rabbi, praying and swaying back and forth vigorously. The rest of the worshippers sit praying, a few men nod off, their prayer books on their knees.

In women's section, most women read prayers while some attend to their young children seated beside them. Several talk with one another, ignoring the service.

Lena sits in the front row, her skirt is very short, and a lot of leg shows about the knees. She opens her prayer book, leafs through absentmindedly. The Rabbi glances at Lena and stops reciting. He leans over to James and whispers in his ear. James gets up, heads over to Lena, and whispers something to her.

Lena gets up and heads toward the exit door. James follows her. Several women follow her with their eyes.

LOBBY

JAMES

I told you to dress modestly for the service. You embarrass me.

LENA

I'll dress the way I want to. Did Rabbi tell you to admonish me?

JAMES

Not to admonish. He asked me to talk to you.

LENA

Doesn't matter. I don't belong here anyway.

JAMES

Belong, shmelong. Always something. Why make everything complicated?

LENA

It's simple. This whole mishigas may be for you, but not for me.

JAMES

Shhh. ... people can hear you. It would have been best if you didn't come here at all.

LENA

Yes, it would have. No worries, I won't any more.

She turns around swiftly and leaves.

WORSHIP HALL

James goes back to the hall. The RABBI stops reading and glares at him, then turns to the audience.

RABBI

All rise.

Everyone rises. Some pray silently, many whisper the prayer while rocking back and forth.

EXT. Street - Day

One of the streets in the University district. Japanese cherries bloom, and sidewalks are covered with petals, too. Beauty abounds. Lena walks sprightly.

She arrives at their house. It's a rambler with a two-car carport and a big lawn with tall grass and dandelions. Lena turns the key, opens the door, and a golden-haired cocker spaniel runs out. He jumps on her and makes a beeline to the neighbor's lawn across the street.

Lena runs after him, but he relieves himself on the lawn before she is able to pick him up. He runs back to the house. She grabs a baggie from the recycling bin by the door, and heads to the neighbor's lawn, but it's too late.

— NEIGHBOR (55), a corpulent, shortish bald man, enraged, red in the face, suddenly appears next to Lena.

NEIGHBOR

Next time that dog poops on our lawn, he is history.

LENA

Don't yell at me. It's the first time he did it. I was about to pick it all up.

NEIGHBOR

Right, you were *about* to pick it up. Just like you were *about* to mow your lawn.

By the way, what does your husband do all day? Get him to mow it, it's an eyesore.

LENA

Would *you* like to mow it instead, since you are the one most bothered by it?

Neighbor glares at Lena and walks away.

INT. - LENA'S AND JAMES' KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Lena is in the kitchen. She sees James walk in from her kitchen window.

LENA

James, I want to talk to you.

James doesn't enter the kitchen.

JAMES (tossing the words over his shoulder)

Not on Shabbat.

He runs to the basement. We see him reading the Torah in his basement study, with his hands on his head, covering his ears. He rocks from side to side and from back to front on his chair, and loudly mumbles to himself.

Lena runs down to the basement, stops by the study door.

LENA

Don't stonewall me!

James gets up and slams the study door in Lena's face. The phone rings somewhere. Lena runs upstairs. It's on the landing. She picks it up.

LENA

No, he can't come to the phone. It's Shabbat. Who's that? Oh, hi, Steve. You didn't know? Yes, he observes everything. Talk to him, not me. Bye.

KITCHEN

Lena is in the kitchen. Doorbell rings. She opens, and the mailman hands her a large envelope. She nods gratefully, walks back to the kitchen while opening the envelope. We see a Letter of Acceptance from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in her hand.

INT. LENA AND JAMES' KITCHEN – SUNDAY MORNING

James and Lena sit at the table having breakfast. James reads a newspaper. Lena drinks coffee. She turns to James, he lifts his eyes from the paper reluctantly, and she announces:

LENA

I want a divorce.

James looks at Lena, nonplussed.

JAMES

Why?

LENA

Can't bear your Orthodoxy and obsession with rituals. Can't imagine you liking the way things are between us now.

JAMES

I am OK with it.

LENA

Both of us are unhappy.

JAMES

I choose this unhappiness over a new kind.

LENA

I am leaving anyway. Going to study in Israel.

Lena leaves the table and walks toward the entry, about to leave.

JAMES

Good luck with that — And let it be our trial separation.

LENA, walking out

It will be a divorce.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

A red Toyota Corolla parks in the UW parking lot. Lena steps out, walks towards an old-style architecture building. It's still spring, there are flowers everywhere. She watches two squirrels

frolicking and chasing each other. She enters the building with the plaque "INTERNATIONAL STUDIES" on it.

INT. DEPARTMENT OFFICE/PROFESSOR'S OFFICE - DAY

DEPARTMENT'S MAIN OFFICE

Lena stops at the door with the sign "MIDDLE-EASTERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE." She lingers a moment, then walks in and proceeds to the next door with the plaque "WALLACE GORDON" on it.

PROFESSOR'S OFFICE

— *PROFESSOR WALLACE GORDON, (60), longish silver hair, glasses - sits at the desk covered with books and papers. There are numerous portraits on the walls - Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Nabokov, Solzhenitsyn, Shakespeare, John Updike.*

The wall behind his chair is a large bookcase with mostly books, except for one shelf with a coffee mug, a pipe, a small modern metal sculpture of the bearded Jew in a broad-brimmed hat playing the violin, and a photograph of Amos Oz.

PROFESSOR GORDON

Greetings, Lena. What brings you here?

LENA

Hello, professor Gordon. I have good news.

Lena pulls out the envelope with the acceptance letter from her portfolio and hands it to Prof. Gordon. He reads it.

PROF. GORDON

Congratulations! I take it you have already decided on the topic of your dissertation - otherwise you wouldn't have applied for the Jerusalem program?

LENA

I did! I want to write about Viktor Lasky's forgotten novels.

Prof. Gordon motions for Lena to sit down. She does. He looks at her inquisitively.

PROF. GORDON

And how are you going to do that? What does Jerusalem have to do with Viktor Lasky?

LENA, ENTHUSIASTICALLY

Lasky wrote three novels that were never published. He gave the manuscripts to his lover, Natalie.

He later disappeared in the GULAG. But Natalie was able to cross the border illegally and ended up in France.

PROF. GORDON, IMPATIENTLY

Yes. And?

LENA

When I was doing my research on Lasky, I stumbled upon Natalie's story. Turns out she had a daughter by Lasky.—

— Her name is MARGO, and she lives in Jerusalem.

Prof. Gordon leans back in his chair and reaches for the pipe on the shelf. Lena fixes her gaze on the portrait of Amos Oz that is next to the pipe. Prof. notices that and looks askance.

PROFESSOR GORDON

You know that writer?

LENA

Yes. He is the greatest.

PROFESSOR GORDON

I am glad you like him. He is the focus of my current study. Not Lasky.

Professor lights his pipe and smiles. Lena looks at him in dismay.

LENA

What are you trying to say? You won't support my research on Lasky?

PROFESSOR GORDON

Frankly, I'd rather you do some work on Amos Oz.

Not sure about Lasky, though. No one at this university has ever heard of him.

Prof. Gordon takes another drag on his pipe. Lena gets up to leave.

LENA

All right. I will look for support elsewhere. Or go there without a scholarship.

PROF. GORDON

Wait. I know someone who can help. Only you'd have to travel there first. No guarantees. But the Universe supports passion.

Lena nods.

LENA

Thank you, Prof. Gordon. I am counting on the Universe.

She leaves the office.





Ardea herodias

Jess Landers

Certificate in Natural Science Illustration, 2016

An Evening in Roma

Trish McRae

Certificate in Nonfiction, 2016

Rome was our last stop and seventh city in our two-week Italy trip. It was my first real vacation. I was accompanied by my childhood best friend, Charity. We were exhausted from two weeks of daily sightseeing, standing in long lines, and endless walking. I lost all feeling in one of my pinky toes, which was apparently getting smooshed in my walking shoes. It wasn't until a couple of weeks after I got home that the feeling returned.

On the last evening of the trip we found ourselves in Piazza Navona in Rome. This has to be one of the most touristy places in Rome, but for good reason: fountains with centuries-old Bernini statues, street musicians, a glut of restaurants (with ambitious hosts trying to persuade us to eat at their restaurant), cobblestone streets sans cars, ancient buildings—all very Italian things that are as unlike a typical American city as I could imagine. Charity and I sat on a bench listening to musicians and watching the other tourists for an unnaturally long time.

As the sun was setting she said, "It's dinner time. Let's go eat at one of these restaurants."

A few minutes later, after I worked up the energy to speak, I replied, "I can't move. Do you think they'll bring the food to us here?"

She said, "I know. My feet are killing me."

We sat some more.

A few minutes later, she got up and dragged me up as I said, "Seriously, pick the closest one."



My family never took vacations. We lived on an island in Florida so going to the beach was nothing special. We took trips to visit family in Georgia and Alabama, but these were not vacations in the traditional sense. Vacation to me meant hotels, sightseeing, activities. Not sitting around “visiting,” where a special day meant a trip to a water park I’d been to countless times.

When I was 18, I traveled with a group of friends to Columbia, South America. This too was not a vacation. The group went with a family who had spent many years there long ago and wanted to visit old friends and show their children where they used to live. They allowed us to tag along, but we didn’t get to see much of the country or do many touristy things. Most of the time, we hung out with the people that the family knew. For safety reasons, we weren’t allowed to leave except as a chaperoned group.

The year after this, at graduation time, everyone I knew was getting a free trip somewhere to celebrate, it seemed. High school and college grads alike were like *The Price is Right* winners with their free luxury trips. It was my college graduation and I was hoping I, too, would be called to “come on down.” My good friend’s family was taking her to Savannah for her trip and told me I could come along if I paid my own way. Which I did. A trip’s a trip. This reached my definition of a getaway, but not a vacation.

Many years later, when I was in the workforce, I went on four work trips where I attended a convention in another city. I felt very grown up riding in a black Town Car and telling the driver I was in town “on business.” On two of the trips I stayed over an extra day, on my own dime, to be a tourist. Still not exactly a vacation (too short), but I was getting closer.

In 2005, on one of these convention trips, I was awarded “Employee of the Year” out of the blue. It was the first year the award was given and the generous CEO had not had the prize approved by HR. He told me I could go anywhere I wanted to, with a companion, all expenses paid. (After my trip, HR put an expense cap on this award.) My friend and I ended up paying for some of the expenses but not many. At last, my first real vacation.

Deciding where to go was fun but overwhelming, since I didn’t know much about vacationing. I had flown across the US countless times visiting family, so I knew about packing, airports, and that sort of thing, but nothing about hotels, sightseeing, meal expenses, and so on. I also didn’t realize that there were two types of vacations: one where you relax and unwind and one where you take in as much as you can, while

you can. I wonder now if there's a middle ground. Over the next few months, I read numerous travel books and finally decided on Italy.

In late April of 2006, Charity and I set out for 14 days in Italy. We would end up visiting seven cities. (We'd only planned for six, but Pisa was on our way to Florence, so we hopped off the train and squeezed it into an afternoon.) Upon arrival in our first city, Venice, we went full bore into the philosophy of seeing and doing everything that we could. One of our first ventures was a boat ride. As our driver escorted us around the islands and we saw the Venetian images of the houses rising from the water, the gondoliers, and charming pedestrian bridges, I couldn't believe that I was there seeing them. I felt like these things had existed only in movies or books until I was able to witness them. They came alive just for me. This other world was existing this whole time without my being aware of it or it being aware of me.

For the first time, I appreciated how big the world is and how travel can broaden your awareness and perspective. I thought travel was about seeing places, hence the packed schedule. In Venice, I saw it and checked it off my travel to-do list, but I also realized there was an emotional component to seeing other cultures and different ways of life. I felt small, but not insignificant. There and throughout the trip, when walking through the various Italian towns, I was amazed at the ancientness of the structures. Seemingly everything there is older than my whole country. It was unfathomable and humbling.

Florence was one of our bigger stops and our trip's halfway point. The city has the Uffizi Gallery (one of the most famous museums in the world), Michelangelo's *David*, an outdoor mercato. My friend and I bought leather jackets, as American tourists do. I also bought leather sandals that are the envy of all women who see them. I still wear them ten years later, even though they've reached the end of their useful life. We witnessed a lovely, sublime outdoor concert of young classical musicians, who played the *Pink Panther* theme. I ate irreproachable gnocchi, the best I had ever or will ever eat. And yet, I did not like Florence and would not be sad if I never go back. The city was cold, unwelcoming, and harsh. What people love about the Italians—their welcoming arms and boisterous voices—was not on display here for me. Maybe it was there behind the ancient walls, but I felt welcomed only by the people who wanted me to buy their goods. How could a city so perfect on paper, be unlikeable?

After Florence, we stayed a few days in rural Tuscany, seeing and getting lost in the "hill towns." We had been in big cities up to this point, except for the Cinque Terre, but travel guru Rick Steves has so popularized those five towns that the locals are as used to tourists as the big cities are. That was not my experience in the hill

towns. We were eating in Montalcino and our waiter was exasperated at our lack of proficiency with his language. He took our order with a great show of irritation. No one before had minded our English, but our existence seemed to offend him. I was rather shocked by his rudeness, but having worked in a retail setting where I routinely met non-English speakers, I understood how frustrating it is when people expect you to understand their language.

Although I should not let this one unpleasant encounter color my whole feeling of rural Tuscany, I do. Nevertheless, I would like to return there one day to redeem my opinion of this area. I now speak a fair amount of Italian and would like to also redeem myself. Did he think we were “ugly Americans”? And *so what* if he did (but were we)?

We said *arrivederci* to Tuscany and traveled on to Rome, which was absurdly crowded, had a traffic system that can only be called dangerous, severe pollution that caused my nose to run and my throat to hurt every moment I was outside, and was full of other annoying tourists, but by far my favorite city. The emotional warmth I was missing in Florence was rampant here. The polar opposite of the Montalcino waiter was here begging us to let him practice his English on us. “Ciao, belle!”

As an American who knew nothing of Italy except what I saw in movies, Rome felt like the most quintessential Italian city. The wonders to see in Rome are too many to squeeze into a couple of days: The Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps, Vatican, Sistine Chapel, Roman Forum, Colosseum, Borghese Gallery, Pantheon, Piazza Navona, Victor Emmanuel II Monument – the list goes on and on. We did our best to see everything we could and even survived a death-defying taxi ride. Saving the best stop of the vacation for last was a fortuitous, albeit random, decision. Here I learned that the feel of the place matters more than the sights. We took a double-decker bus ride around the city and actually got so bored, we bailed. By this point in our journey, seeing was taking a back seat to just being.

• • •

The day I got home, I was picking up my cat from my friend’s house. We had the typical “how was the trip?” conversation, but as I was leaving, I had my hand on the door knob, cat carrier slung over my shoulder, and I paused.

“You know what?”

“Huh?”

“Yesterday, I was in the Sistine Chapel.”

I wasn’t bragging. I nearly had tears in my eyes at the marvel of getting to go so far away from my ordinary, mundane existence and experience not just a single work of

art but an entire building over 500 years old filled with acclaimed, world-renowned art. Me, the girl who had to pay her own way to Savannah and never expected to get to go anywhere special.



That last night at the Piazza Navona restaurant we dined al fresco, and for the umpteenth time, I wondered why this isn't more common in America. By now, we had learned to navigate the Italian menus, how the meat is separate from the pasta and everything has to be ordered individually. We split a bottle of wine. "When in Rome..." after all. We ate in a comfortable silence, having long ago caught up on each other's lives and reminisced enough.

Across the piazza from us was a restaurant named "Dolce Vita," perhaps named after the movie or Italian phrase *la dolce vita* meaning "the sweet life." This phrase inspires one to enjoy life and even indulge in it before it's gone. Italian workers with their four weeks of vacation a year (plus holidays) serve as a reminder to us hard-working Americans to slow down and make time for the important things in life, which may not be things at all.

As the sun faded and darkness crept in, a light early summer breeze blew through. It cooled my face, which was warm from the wine. Most of the street musicians had left, but one lone guitarist sat and played right in front of us. Unlike many of the street musicians we'd heard, he was masterful. He closed his eyes as he got lost in his own music. The peaceful, beautiful sounds enveloped us.

That evening our life concerns, bills, to-do lists, chores, and the other aspects of our daily lives back home were gone, and we were free to enjoy delectable food, wine, music, and nature simultaneously. I carry the memories of that special evening with me to this day and preserve it as what vacation means to me.





Sandhill Crane

Amanda Jorgenson

Certificate in Natural Science Illustration, 2016

Shakespeare and the Ambiguous Cookie

Jill Walters

Certificate in Writing for Children, 2016

Certificate in Editing, 2012

What be but this ungodly urge to eat
a bite of tasteful good that's baked and round?
My tummy it doth growl and grumble so
with noise of twenty-thousand banshee yowls.
Elixir fresh from bovine teat doth grace
yon cup, awaiteth dunking with thy crumb.
Forsooth! Doth cookie hence deceive mine eyes
and be but not thou in true biscuit form?
Thy gluten nature free from flours wheat—
confection, why doth hide thy vegan soul?
Perhaps thou art but common baked dessert—
doth these suspicious musings be but naught?
Oh why must be my quest for simple treat
be marked by thine unclear intentions, sweet?
Shall presence of what vexing cookie all
but ruin this temptation in my mind?
No. Nay! The cookie shall be mine consumed!





Bent Tree

Lee Huntley

Certificate in Photography, 2016

The Consumption

Kyle Getz

Certificate in Screenwriting, 2016

FADE IN:

EXT. Front yard - DAY

A beautiful summer day in an upscale suburban neighborhood with identical, two-story brick houses and green, manicured lawns. Everything is perfect. Well, except for the giant spaceship hovering overhead. It HUMS and casts a shadow over the Earth.

TIM (32), nonchalant, stands in his driveway, staring up at the spaceship. He holds two gardening gloves in his hand.

ELAIN (22), confident and composed, jogs down the sidewalk with leash in hand, her enthusiastic black lab in the lead. The leash escapes Elain's grasp, and the dog barrels towards Tim. Elain chases after.

ELAIN

Hey! No! Heel! Elbow! Knees! Toes! Stop!

Tim jumps when he spots the incoming threat. He clumsily chucks one of the gloves at the dog, who swallows it whole without slowing.

Elain catches up and grabs the dog just before he reaches Tim.

Tim relaxes.

TIM

Cute dog you've got there.

ELAIN

Sorry, he hasn't had his breakfast yet, so he's a little antsy.

TIM

We all are, ever since...

Tim glances up at the spaceship.

TIM (cont'd)

At least it's nice to have some shade during the summer.

ELAIN

But it makes it harder to get a tan.

TIM

Guess so.

A fish with four rodent legs scurries past them. They look down at it, then back up at each other casually.

TIM (cont'd)

You from around here?

ELAIN

I'm new to the area. My dad wanted me to get a new worldview, whatever that means.

The dog pants, drool flowing from his mouth. Tim winces, grossed out.

ELAIN (cont'd)

You know, I haven't seen you out before. Are you a...?

TIM

Oh, no. I'm not... I'm just a regular...

Tim nods towards the house behind him.

TIM (cont'd)

I'm just visiting my parents. I'm from North Dakota.

ELAIN

North?

TIM

I mean, Dakota. I guess I haven't gotten used to the fact that we only have one Dakota left.

ELAIN

That's a long drive.

TIM

I flew.

Elain stares, confused.

TIM (cont'd)

By plane.

ELAIN

You've seen the news stories about-

TIM

Planes randomly falling from the sky, resulting in the sudden, unexpected deaths of every passenger on board?

ELAIN

I was going to say the increased airport security.

(Beat.)

ELAIN (cont'd)

But, yeah, your thing too.

TIM

You risk your life just walking out of your house these days.

ELAIN

I guess you do. But you made it here alive.

TIM

True. Though I'm not sure which is worse, the new TSA anal probe or spending time with my parents.

Growing restless, the dog tries to wriggle out of Elain's grasp. Tim raises his other glove, ready to defend himself.

Elain holds the dog firmly in place. Both the dog and Tim settle down.

ELAIN

I haven't seen your parents leave their house since I've lived here. Did they get deformed?

TIM

Nah, just hermits. Metaphorically. No one turned them into hermits.

ELAIN

They sound nice.

TIM

We're actually in the middle of a big fight.

ELAIN

Is that why you're out after curfew?

TIM

Yeah. They've been bugging me about moving in next door.

ELAIN

Bugging?

TIM

Oh, no, they're not bugs either. I just meant that they won't stop asking about it.

ELAIN

I understand. My dad is always hovering. It's so annoying.

TIM

Exactly. I try to tell them, I have my son and most of my wife back at home.

ELAIN

They sound as invasive and destructive as my parents.

TIM

Not to mention that there's no houses for sale here. Where would I even live?

The spaceship blasts the house next door to Tim's parents.' Tim and Elain calmly look over at the smoldering pile of rubbish. They look back at each other.

ELAIN

Looks like a spot's opened up.

TIM (cont'd)

Yeah, that's not going to help.

The dog BARKS and wags his tail.

TIM (cont'd)

What's his name, anyway?

ELAIN

Xigon32.

TIM

Oh. Oh! So he's a...

Elain shrugs. Tim laughs nervously.

TIM (cont'd)

He seems like a merciful, forgiving dog.

*Xigon32 struggles. Elaine holds on tighter. He finally breaks free of her grasp.
He runs to Tim. Tim braces himself, ready for impact. Xigon32 humps Tim's leg.*

TIM (cont'd)

Wow, he's a friendly guy.

Tim tries to shake the dog off of his leg, but Xigon32 has too tight a grip.

ELAIN

Just let him do what he needs to do. He doesn't like to be interrupted.

TIM

Hey, get off me. Ouch! This is starting to hurt.

Tim pushes and shoves the dog, but he won't budge. Tim hits the dog frantically with his glove.

ELAIN

Just let him have your leg. You only need one anyway.

*Tim finally rips the dog off of his leg. Xigon32 falls onto his side. The dog leaps to his feet and looks back at Elaine. Elaine nods her head.
Xigon32 jumps at Tim and devours him with a few easy bites. He trots happily back to Elaine. Elaine bends down and pets him, returning his joy.*

ELAIN (cont'd)

You were just a little hungry, that's all.

Xigon32 wags his tail.

VOICE FROM SPACESHIP

Elain.

Elain rolls her eyes.

ELAIN

Yes?

VOICE FROM SPACESHIP

What did we tell you?

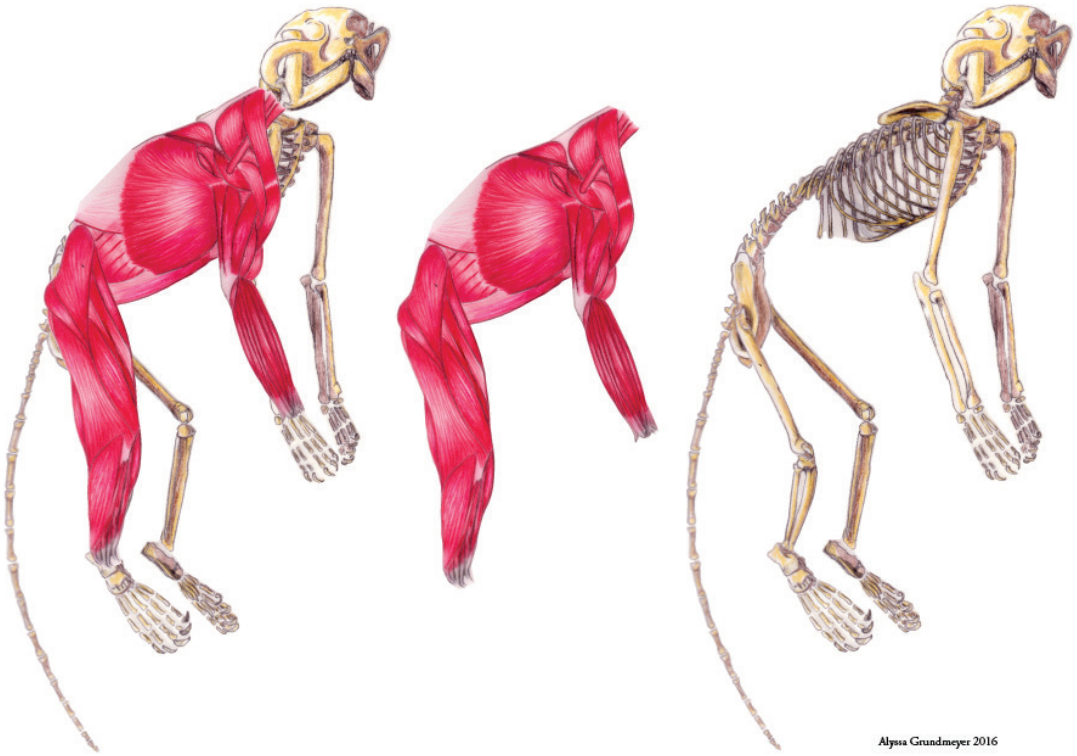
ELAIN

What? At least *he* doesn't have to deal with his parents anymore.

Elain's eyes shine yellow. She grabs Xigon32's leash, and the two continue jogging down the sidewalk.

FADE OUT.





Alyssa Grundmeyer 2016

Red Panda

Alyssa Grundmeyer

Certificate in Natural Science Illustration, 2016

If I Only Had a Tail

Richard Snyder

Certificate in Nonfiction, 2016

When my sister Laura learned that her son had problems getting along with his kindergarten classmates, she said to me, “I know where it comes from. It comes from you and Dad.”

I thought back to a classic “Dad Moment” when he responded to my mother screaming at him for erratic driving by saying, “Barbara. Relax. I had calculated the deceleration coefficient to enough precision that I knew I would come to a stop just before the bumper of that Chevy.”

He didn’t understand my mother’s anger in the car. I wasn’t understanding my sister’s anger when she told me I was autistic.

Whatever difficulties my father and I may have had for reading people, we had none in reading my dog, Astro. She had a tail. She could wag it slow or fast, hold it up stiff and still, forcefully press it down. She was so clear.

Somewhere along the evolutionary journey we *Homo sapiens* lost our tails. We didn’t need them for balance or swatting away flies. We are left with a vestigial tail, aka the coccyx, a series of four to five tiny bones at the end of spine, which as a result of being housed entirely inside our bodies, cannot signal anything.

We have to communicate emotions by tone of voice, eye contact, and body posture. After the age of forty, I learned some of these skills from professionals. I took up acting. I became fanatical. I became a teacher. I taught seminars such as “Building Rapport with Difficult People,” “Status: The Final Frontier,” and a crowd

favorite, “Flirtation 201: How to Become a Real Party Animal.” I thought I was building a second career as a teacher of communication skills. Turns out, I was building a virtual tail.

My sister never took any of my courses. She’s a natural communicator, albeit a dangerous one. Her virtual tail is awe-inspiring, like that of a Stegosaurus—large, full of sharp blades and hard to avoid. She is famed for her glares, snorts of disgust and eye rolls. At our last Thanksgiving dinner, we were playing a story-telling game in which each person at the table told an embarrassing car story. My son talked about his speeding ticket, which prompted a glare from Auntie Laura that could have reheated the Thanksgiving stuffing.

If you think that a tail like that would cause people to avoid her, you would be underestimating the intoxicating attractiveness of a Stegosaurus tail. I have seen children push other kids and adults aside to get a view of the life sized Stegosaurus at the New York Museum of Natural History. When I was a kid, my favorite view-master slide was the scene where the Stegosaurus used his tail to swat the hapless Triceratops. As an adult, I felt the same thrill when Laura swatted my hapless son for his careless driving.

People have always been more interested in Laura than in any other Snyder. In high school, she went to so many parties that my parents gave up staying awake to wait for her to get home. In college, she had so many loyal friends that they declared her president of their made up fraternity “Hafta Tappa Kegga.” They made her a T-Shirt that said President on it. As an adult, she owned an independent bookstore, had a radio show, and was elected to her town’s school board.

In her fifties the equivalent of a dinosaur-extinguishing meteor, metastatic breast cancer, exploded onto her life. That famous tail turned towards healthcare providers—cursing the bad ones and blessing the good ones. As the only doctor in the family, I got to hear all about it. While I was getting her glares of contempt for representing the healthcare sector with all of our poor service, I kept my tail hidden. I put on my professional face: neutral, warm but not passionate, doing the nods of “I hear you.”

In the meantime, my sister fired healthcare providers she didn’t like. She started a yoga group for cancer patients and became active in the political movement to raise awareness of metastatic cancer. My life was less challenging. Sometimes, I had to stay late at the hospital for emergency cases. Sometimes, my favorite bakery was closed when I got there. I really missed the heated toilet seat in my old house. Over several years, my sister’s cancer came and went and came again. But, at her last appointment

she had no evidence of disease. Despite myself, my tail stood up and wagged. I felt as good as I imagine my dog Astro felt wagging her tail.

I understood the imperative of nonverbal communication.

For species with virtual tails, it is better to have a spiky tail than no tail at all.





Pinecone

Owen Curtsinger

Certificate in Natural Science Illustration, 2016

Farewell Starman

Steve Giliberto

Certificate in Nonfiction, 2016

Farewell, Starman.

I remember when the needle first dropped onto the soundtrack record of my life. The specific day was a typical Saturday morning late in my adolescence. The place was my childhood home in Boston, MA. While mowing down bowls of Alpha-Bits breakfast cereal, I spun around the box and noticed one of the many attention getters cereal makers used to entice young pancreases. It was a blue plastic 45RPM single from the Jackson 5. As the sugary pebbles began to wind me up, I became psyched to cut the single out of the box and get jamming.

My older brother walked into the kitchen. As he did I blurted out, “Hey, I have a new Jackson 5 45! Can I play it on your record-player??” With a glare dually formed by what I’m sure was a successful evening of brain cell killing and the early morning blathering of his younger brother, he responded with a gruff and emphatic, “Hell no. You’re not listening to that shit on my stereo. You need to listen to some real music.”

With that, he snatched the little blue ring and, under the false pretense of testing the quality of its tensile strength, snapped it in half. Damn, I thought to myself. Thanks a lot for destroying my record collection before it even began! After stuffing a handful of Alpha-bits in his mouth and swigging a gulp from the milk carton big brother motioned me to follow him up to his room.

My eyes widened and my jaw dropped. Is he talking to me, I wondered? Invitations

to big brother's lair were few and far between. It was The Temple of the First Born. The mysteries behind the often closed door to that portal were seldom revealed. When I ever got the chance to enter this domain, it was like receiving an offer to time travel. Count me in.

I bumped up the stairs behind him like a slightly glazed over pre-teen monk heading towards the revelation of a great truth from a master. When that portal door creaked open it usually was for the bestowal upon me of bits of elder brother wisdom. Things such as learning how to punch more effectively with a roll of quarters in your fist and the healthful and protective benefits of swinging nunchakus. He was on the verge of exiting his teen years. I was on the precipice of entering mine. But with each fraternal lesson he shared in that black light poster adorned room, we became closer as brothers and contemporaries. It was there two of the most important of his revelations were imparted to me: rock and roll music and David Bowie.

We piled into the room single file. I flopped onto the bed. My brother started handing albums to me like a dealer tossing cards to a gambler. I held them with reverence as if I were holding valuable talismans. My hands shuffled through albums by The Rolling Stones, The Who, Led Zeppelin, Marc Bolen and T-Rex, Black Sabbath and The J. Geils Band. "This is what you need to be listening to," my brother said. "This is rock and roll."

As he said that, I stared down at an album cover upon which was the face of a person I couldn't quite tell was a man or a woman. The figure's eyes were closed as if engaged in some sort of extra-terrestrial meditation. The most striking feature was a large, red and blue stripe lightning bolt that reached from forehead to chin. The face belonged to David Bowie. The record was Aladdin Sane. "Can I check this one out?" I asked.

My brother took the album from my hand and slipped the disc from its cover. He handed the cover back to me and turned to drop the vinyl on the turntable. I continued to stare at the face of this almost alien looking being. Then, as the old Emerson amplifier blasted out the first chords of the song, 'Watch That Man', I felt like I'd rediscovered my ears. I had certainly heard music before but this was the first time that I ever really felt it. Each song that I listened to drew me further in until by the time 'Panic In Detroit' came on I could sit no further. I was on my feet, bobbing my head, guided by some unseen force I'd never experienced before. Instinctively, even before the song finished I knew I wanted to hear more, feel more. Much more. Music had begun to seed itself into my soul.

Thus fate dictated that some of the very first tracks of rock and roll music I ever

listened to were those of David Bowie. In that moment, a bond was formed between me, an art form and an artist. Music, particularly Bowie's unique and inspiring brand of it, went on to indelibly shape and sustain my perspective on life and self exploration at that turning point and many others to follow.

Bowie's music opened up to me the whole wild, intense world of rock and roll. And, his world and his art were another galaxy unto itself. From Ziggy Stardust to the Thin White Duke to Aladdin Sane and beyond, I followed Bowie's travels through his changes. His music was a constant as I grew up, headed out and turned to "...face the strange" as he once sang in a song about - changes. The boldness of the steps he took on his journey was a source I drew from to propel me through mine. From adolescence, to adulthood and even now through middle age, his art has been omnipresent in my life.

When I first arrived in Seattle fresh from the East Coast, he brought my best friend and me together. We were two transplants – he from Michigan and I from Massachusetts. When fate crossed our paths, closely shared musical tastes cultivated the bonds of our friendship. And, Bowie fed it energy. We spent many of the first hours of a multi-decade long brotherhood listening to some of our favorite Bowie albums. We were young Americans listening to his 'Young Americans'. Now, despite being older Americans, we still do.

Bowie and his music was there again for me many years later, with a healing, musical hand. It was during the period of the first emotionally debilitating weeks following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. I'd reached a point of saturation. I turned off the TV, stopped looking at newspapers and logged off the Internet. It wasn't until the broadcast of The Concert for New York that was held in honor of the victims that I had regained the will to tune in again. The first performance was by Mr. Bowie. At this point in his life, by his own account, he'd lived in New York City longer than anywhere else. He was a New Yorker. He opened by thanking his local New York firehouse and humbly expressing his gratitude for being able to perform. Then, he launched into a rendition of Simon and Garfunkel's, 'America', followed by his own song, 'Heroes'. Once again, Bowie's music stirred feelings deep within me. This time they were feelings of hope for humanity.

Then came the day when Bowie went from The Man Who Fell to Earth to one who soared away from it. The day he died. Thanks to the ostensible benefits of the modern world, the news of his death came to me via text message: "OMG...oh no... David Bowie died today." As my eyes took in the words and my brain struggled to process them, my shoulders slumped and my chin dropped to my chest. I felt the years vacuumed away from me.

This wasn't the first time I felt deeply the loss of a musical icon from my youth and life. I felt it many years ago as I watched my older brother write the word 'Late' before Jimi Hendrix's name on the 'Are You Experienced' album cover. I felt it upon hearing the news of Bob Marley's death. I felt it as I held my head in my hands when learning that Joe Strummer took his final bow. And, I will always remember being dumbstruck when hearing about John Lennon's murder from none other than Howard Cosell during a Monday Night Football game.

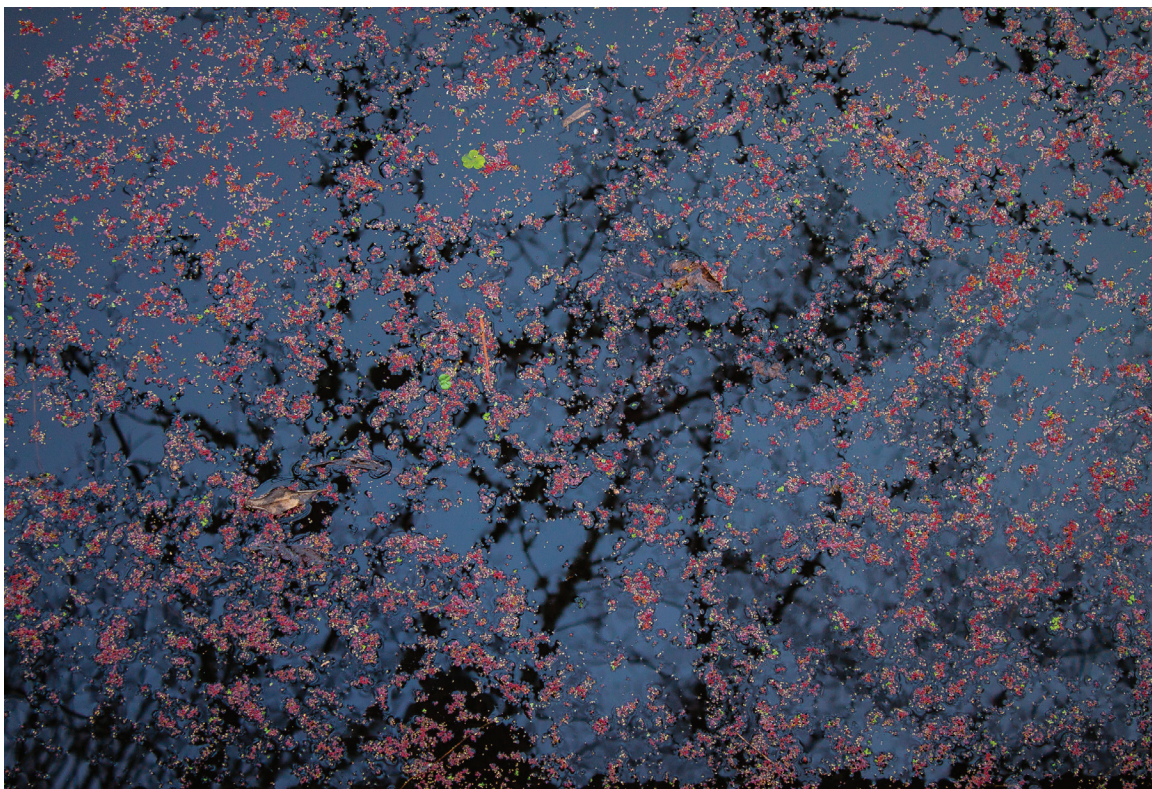
Bowie's death was different, though. Upon hearing the news, I was compelled to look into the tunnel of time and realize how far along I've travelled through it since that vinyl epiphany in my brother's room. The world of music has definitely changed. I have definitely changed. It's been a long time since I last felt the same intensity, the same newness, the same challenges from the world of music as I did when rock and roll first seeped into my consciousness almost 40 years ago.

A feeling of melancholy rose in me as much due to the fading of a time and place in my life as it was to the loss of his voice and his art. I was forced to accept the reality that sooner or later we find ourselves on the opposite side of the generational divide: more reminiscent about the past instead of propelled towards the future. As I read the message on my phone announcing his death I was booted from one side to the other. The record of my life had been flipped to the B side.

A number of weeks after Bowie's death, I once again found myself in a room with my older brother, listening to the latest vinyl recording from Mr. Bowie. The room this time was the living room in my home in Seattle. The album was Bowie's latest and last, 'Blackstar', which was released on his 69th birthday, just days before his death. Even his finale was grandly unique. An extraordinary self-requiem. Its songs contain veiled references to his imminent demise. In the song 'Lazarus' he sings, "Look up here, I'm in heaven/I've got scars that can't be seen/I've got drama, can't be stolen/Everybody knows me now." It is the crafty farewell message of a master musical poet. One more time, I felt his music. I remain inspired by him.

As my brother and I listened to Bowie's music, we still rocked. Not as wildly, just steady. While we did, hanging on a wall nearby was a framed picture. It has hung there for a long time. I see it every day. The frame displays the art of an album cover. The album is Aladdin Sane.





Nisqually Refuge

Judith Leckrone Lee

The Creativity of Photography and Digital Imaging, 2015
Photographic Exhibition and Professional Practice of Photography, 2016

A Covert Plan

Sarah Harris

Certificate in Memoir Writing, 2016

What if God came to you and said, *I can promise you enlightenment*? You would jump for joy, right? What if God was sneaky and didn't tell you that in order to become your best self, you not only would have to suffer but you would have to do it in front of your friends and family – those who love you most – and do it in a way that robs you of your dignity and causes those same people who love you to judge you, talk shit about you and for some to even walk away because they can't handle the hot mess that you'll become? What if that was part of a greater plan? Would you sign up for it if you knew it would be so devastating and hurtful?

When I was pulled out of my rut by being given a horrible illness which I didn't appreciate at the time, which ironically I do now, I was kicked to the curb *real hard* and left there to die. What the fuck??? How could I go through something so horrifying and ugly? I'm a good person. I pay my taxes. I volunteer.

My illness emerged when I was thirty-four, going on thirty-five and seemingly came out of nowhere. Even my family doctor was surprised when I told her the diagnosis: bipolar disorder. She had known me for fifteen years and didn't think I was crazy. She practically fell off her stool in the examining room. She looked at me and winked and said, "We know which side of the family this came from." She meant my Dad, who was also her patient.

When Greg and I met in 2000, neither of us knew we would both become bipolar's bitch. We were waiting tables at Chez Nous, a French restaurant in Toluca

Lake, California. Greg was sweet and handsome, but I didn't notice at first because I had a boyfriend who I thought was the one. We couldn't move forward while I was dating Chris, so Greg and I got to know each other slowly. When I found myself single a few months later, Greg asked me out for a beer and the timing was right. If Greg and I had announced our relationship status on Facebook, which didn't exist at the time, it would state: *it's complicated*.

Our first date was an evening with Ram Dass, a spiritual seeker and self-proclaimed guru. It was quite the scene. In the mid-Wilshire district of LA and there was a line of the wannabe spiritual hipsters dressed in velvet ready to hear Ram Dass chant. We looked at them and then at each other and laughed. We thought they looked pretty ridiculous. Greg had such an easygoing way about him and loved to laugh. He also liked to crack jokes that reflected a slightly off-kilter sense of humor.

Greg moved to Oregon. I didn't know then he was bipolar. We stayed in touch and I'd hear from him periodically. One day he called with some upsetting news. He had been thrown in jail after trespassing on someone's property. He had entered some guy's home, opened his fridge, popped open a beer and sat down on his couch with his feet up, as if he was at home. When the guy came home, he was not pleased to see Greg sitting on his couch. When Greg re-told the story, he thought it was hilarious. Greg didn't know his neurons were misfiring. He had been staying with his Aunt and Uncle. Greg's mother, an alcoholic, was too bogged down with her own problems to help her son. I'm extremely grateful that when my time came that my family was there for me 100%.

I don't know if he was on medication at that time or if he was even under medical care. Eventually he got stable and was ready to woo me full force. He was living in Sacramento and invited me to come up to Northern California for Valentine's weekend. A year had passed since we'd last seen each other. We spent the weekend at his Mom's cabin in Lake Tahoe. We communicated over email before the big weekend and I asked it if it was to be a date. I was nervous and unsure and joked that I wanted to know "so that I'd know what to wear, should I bring a dress or a potato sack?" He confirmed it was a date and I was excited. I bought a new red suitcase as well as a red satin nightie. Even though Greg and I had dated briefly before he left for Oregon, we hadn't even kissed yet.

While the weekend was almost perfect and as romantic as all get-out, it wasn't without its hiccups. Greg picked me up from the airport holding a bouquet of flowers, charming me from the start. Our first night, he took me to Caesar's Palace to see the comedian Dana Carvey. In the car on the way to the casino, Greg admits he'd been

procuring prostitutes, something I *so* didn't need to know. This unwelcome news was like a knife slicing through our blissful haze and I was so angry I couldn't see straight. I didn't know at the time that Greg's promiscuity could be related to his illness. It wouldn't have mattered. It took everything I had to not want to clock him over the head. For the rest of the drive I had to try and get to a place where I could enjoy the rest of the evening. It wasn't easy. While Greg was a perfect gentleman the rest of the night, there was no romance that night.

Tahoe was so beautiful and Greg's Mom's cabin couldn't have been a more idyllic setting. I had calmed down by the next day and eventually let my suitor seduce me. We were supposed to go skiing on Sunday, but we never left the bed. At the end of the weekend, he dumped the mother lode on me: "I can't commit to a relationship," he admitted after our past couple of days of lust. "I'm in Sacramento and you're in LA. We're geographically undesirable." I was devastated. Who wanted to hear that after the weekend we'd just had? My return trip to LA included a lot less gusto as I was feeling deflated.

Over the next few years, Greg's romantic attempts and gestures were as bipolar as he was. One minute we'd be dating, the next we weren't. When I wanted more of a commitment he complained I wasn't letting him be the man and pursue me. Frankly, I was fed up and decided to take the bull by the horns. What I found the most annoying was when he would periodically say he felt like we married. I wanted to strangle him when he said that. How was I supposed to respond? I'm here to tell you we weren't in any way, shape, or form, *married*. He couldn't even commit to being my boyfriend and I wasn't interested in being in a phantom relationship and I couldn't hide my annoyance. After a couple of years of this nonsense, I decided we were done. From then on, we would be friends and only friends. It would turn out; he would wind up needing me more as a friend. In less than a year, this horrible disease would grab me by the horns as well.

We'd known each other for about six years when Greg's illness really reared its ugly head and needed his full attention. He called me frantic after being out the night before. "I can't believe what I've done," he told me. "I was out last night with some friends. We were at a bar till closing. Then, I ran home naked." I could feel his shame. He was in Sacramento and I was in LA, so we spoke on the phone a lot. I didn't know what was wrong with him at this point and found his odd behavior troubling. "Greg rand down the streets of Sacramento buck naked," I told my manager at work, Carole, who also knew Greg. I was ashamed the moment the words left my mouth, but I couldn't help myself. Others would talk smack about me when I was in the midst of

my illness a few years later, and there was the time I gallivanted around naked as well.

I had my own dance with the devil. After being med-compliant for the two and a half years following my diagnosis in 2003, I decided to go off to see if I really needed to be on the meds in the first place, not an uncommon thing for a person with a mental health diagnosis to do. When I went off my meds I was living in a nice apartment and had friends. Shoot, I was pursuing an acting career, just like everyone else in Los Angeles. I thought I was happy, but really I wasn't. The malaise had sucked the life out of me and I barely left the house. Sure, I went to work every day and socialized with friends on occasion, but I didn't love my life and had no idea I was merely tolerating it.

There was no way I could know what I was in for. I hadn't gone off my meds before or had no way of knowing I would become psychotic and have to be hospitalized. When I got out of the hospital in May of 2006, I had to move in with parents in their retirement community in Las Vegas which was *so* not on my top-10 list of things to do. It turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me as my Dad and I were able to heal our difficult relationship. As our family doctor predicted, I wouldn't be surprised if he suffers from an undiagnosed mental illness as well.

In August of 2006, after only being out of the hospital for a couple of months, I started hearing from Greg again. His calls were frequent. "Hey, honey!" he would chirp when he called. He wouldn't take his meds and was riding a bipolar roller coaster and was unfortunately enjoying the ride even though he was up one minute and down the next. Even though I was at the beginning stages of my own recovery, I spoke to him daily, begging him to get help. He was all over the place and didn't think he had a problem. It wasn't until he got on medication that he could admit that it helped and could to live a semblance of a normal life. I asked him to see a psychiatrist and get on medication and hounded him until he finally made an appointment. He was still rather shaky when he came to visit me several months later in November. He came for a week over Thanksgiving. By this time my Dad was acting like a human being and we were getting along fine, great even. He offered to pay for me and Greg and my best friend Kathy to have our Thanksgiving meal out at a nice restaurant on the strip.

When I picked Greg up from the airport we headed straight for the Las Vegas suburbs to the Cheesecake Factory for dinner. Over dinner Greg blurted out, "Sarah, I need to say this. My biggest regret has been never committing to you." I didn't want to hear it. "You blew it" was all I had to say. Even though I was upset, he spent the next five days trying to make it up to me. Every night he said we were going on a date. I wasn't in the mood.

We were waiting for Penn and Teller to come onstage and Greg is slugging down the fruity cocktails. “Greg, are you sure you should be drinking so much?” I whisper: “you are on psychotropic meds. I don’t think it’s a good idea.” He takes another sip and counters, “I’m on vacation. I’m having a good time. Leave me alone.” As someone with the same diagnosis, I’m careful about my alcohol intake and keep it to a minimum. By the third day of his visit, he was driving me nuts; acting way too lovey-dovey. I had no choice but to bring Kathy in for back-up. She was the official third wheel and didn’t mind. The three of us managed to enjoy a lovely Thanksgiving dinner at an Indian restaurant.

As I was heading towards the home stretch of my mental health recovery in 2009, I decided to see a therapist again to deal with the shame resulting from my horrifying behavior when I had been at my worst and most manic, when I was so out of my control. While I wished I could erase my past, I could not so here I was in the waiting room of a therapist who happened to be Buddhist. I had found him online and thought I’d give him a try. It would turn out that I would only see him for a few months and he would then declare me healthy and no longer in need of his services.

On my first visit I hadn’t yet come to terms with the idea that the cops had shown up at my door after being called by a neighbor because yours truly had been streaking through the common area outside my apartment building completely commando. I also deeply regretted the horrific email I had sent to my co-workers about my boss, Ms. Fogel, the morning I was headed into work to quit because I could no longer hold down a job and was too sick. I was completely off my nut and felt terrible about how I had hurt this poor woman who had done nothing wrong. She just happened to stand in my path of destruction. I needed to see this therapist to deal with the havoc I’d wreaked and the lives I’d affected. I was so ashamed of my behavior.

Not being a Buddhist myself, I was surprised when my new therapist called me a *Bodhisattva*. He explained that it meant someone who has become enlightened by gaining compassion. Well, I don’t know much about enlightenment, I do know that not only am I a better person for journeying through hell and back, but I’m much more understanding now of anyone who has problems, no matter what they are. Before my diagnosis I thought that people who took antidepressants were weak. I can’t imagine what I would have thought about those like myself who have to take an atypical anti-psychotic to avoid being batshit crazy. If I had known that anti-psychotics existed and that people have to take them or they’ll be raving mad, I’m pretty sure I would have judged those people, not knowing I too was one, the harshest.

When I was in my twenties, before my illness took hold, I was at the beach with

my friend Susan. It was a hot summer day and we took a stop from rollerblading on the bike path from Marina Del Rey to Pacific Palisades. After downing a slice of pizza, I was reapplying sunscreen and heard a voice say, "May I have some?" I turned and saw a homeless man caked in dirt reaching his hand towards me. "Hell no!" I said as I laughed cruelly. "Fucking bitch," he said and he was right. It would take years for me to regret my decision that day. How could I be so cruel and treat another human being like an animal? After some years, I felt terrible about the whole thing and wished I could go back in time and say, "Of course you can have some sunscreen. Here."

It took years until I could make it right with the homeless man. You see, I had to get a clue first and realize what I had done. When I met Walter, I was ready to make it right. Walter is a regular in my Seattle neighborhood and can be found standing outside of Trader Joe's most days selling the *Real Change* newspaper. I always stop and say hi. While he doesn't know my name, he always smiles when he sees me and greets me with a warm and friendly "Hey you" like we're old friends. Somehow he remembers the mundane details of my life and is always up for a chat. I buy the paper from him when I can and he gets to keep part of the proceeds. Walter is homeless and I suspect, mentally ill. I can relate to Walter more than most people could ever guess. The reason I can relate so well is because I am also mentally ill and have been at a dangerous precipice myself and could have easily wound up homeless, had it not been for the kindness of friends and family who saved my ass.

It has been ten years since I last saw Greg. Lately I've been worried about him. The last time we spoke, two or three years ago, my friend had gone off his meds, been fired from his job and crashed his car into a wall. He was a wreck. A *healthy* version of Greg hadn't been present for several years. When he first called he had a cell phone. Then then he got rid of the phone and gave me the number at his Aunt and Uncle's house, the same Aunt and Uncle he stayed with years before when he'd been in jail. He then went completely radio silent and I had no way of reaching him and didn't know what to do other than worry. Denial is a large part of the deal. We think we're better than we really are and pretend we don't really need our meds, when they are in fact the only thing saving us from hell. If not for the meds, this potentially deadly disease can grab us and thrash us and drag us down a repulsive rabbit hole where lose all sense of self and dignity as well.

For the past few months, I'd been really worried. So much so that I reached out to a complete stranger on Facebook hoping it was a relative. Luckily, it turned out to be Greg's half-brother, Pete. At first Pete was hesitant to fill me in on Greg's whereabouts. Once he gained my trust, by me telling him that I was an old friend of Greg's and

knew all about his illness, he told me the truth: that Greg was homeless and in very dire straits. Pete didn't know what to do or if he'd see Greg again. I told him if for some reason he did show up, to throw him in the car and drive him straight to the Psych ward.

Can it be? *Greg is dead?* I'm on Facebook and friends are posting on his wall. Unfortunately, it doesn't come as a shock or a surprise. It's been a month since Pete and I last corresponded. Pete was so worried. Greg had been in and out of homeless shelters and while some kind folks were trying to help him, he wouldn't accept their help. It breaks my heart to think he allowed his fucked-up brain chemistry to color his decisions. Why couldn't this beautiful man be med compliant? He could have had a better life if he just taken the drugs. Sadly, Greg chose to end his life at forty-four. I'm certain he wasn't in a lucid state when he made the stupid decision to jump.

The only reason I'm alive is because I take my meds and trust me, I didn't always want to. Going off of them cold turkey in March of 2006 was the worst thing I've ever done. I'll never go through what I went through again. It has taken me five years to accept that I need these pills to stay alive. Only very recently have I realized that without them, I would be psychotic which is a scary and unsavory fact that I've finally accepted.

I feel I accepted a mission unwillingly, as horrible as it was, on some level to meet my shadow self and get to know myself and become a better person as a result of all of my humiliation and suffering, something that wasn't lost on my European friends who predicted it would happen when I told them about my tragedy. Unlike my American friends, they saw something beautiful coming out of it, like the lotus petal emerging from the mud. Who knew being taken down a few pegs and forced to face my hubris would be a gift? While I wasn't a full-blown asshole before my illness, I didn't understand people who had problems. I hadn't yet found compassion.

The day I found out Greg died I managed to get to an appointment despite the fact that I was hurting. While in the waiting area, my eyes were drawn towards a greeting card that read: *We Are Better Together*. It startled me. I thought to myself, "Really?? Are we?" and cried softly as not to draw attention to myself. I took time to grieve for Greg. I spent the weekend at home praying for his soul and lighting candles. The vigil continued for several nights. Then I spoke to Greg. I whispered: *Greg, if you're out there somewhere, come to me*. A couple of hours later, the doorbell rang. I ran downstairs and no one was there. A few minutes later, it rang again. When I realized no one was there a second time, I laughed. I got it. *Thanks, Greg*, I said as I shook my head. *Thanks for listening and coming to visit*.

I can't help wondering if I could have been a better friend, if I could have done more? Did I make a mistake by saying no when he wanted to get back together? I was deep in my own recovery process and could only honor my own angry feelings at that time. Seeing that greeting card haunted me. Was he telling me that we were better together and I coldly threw it all away, never giving him a second chance?

More than anything, I wish Greg knew how loved he was. His friends' myriad Facebook posts show a popular kid who was adored by so many. Looking at the photos of Greg as Homecoming King at seventeen, you would never know he would wind up homeless and dead at forty-four. Greg was a good soul who had a tough time navigating through this thing called life. I wish he could have found his way. I still can't believe Greg is dead.

While I've been through hell and back, I can't help but laugh at the fact that I'm a much better person now because of this dreadful disease. I admit I was a judgmental jerk before I went mad and then hospitalized. Having to live under my parents' roof while in recovery was humbling and turned out to be a time of immense healing, both for me and my Dad. I'm grateful that we had the time together as my parents are getting older and creeping into what could be their last years. I am my father's daughter. I'd go through it all again in a heartbeat. No questions asked.





Transcendence

Kimberly Melton

Certificate in Photography, 2016

Sex, Death, and Line Dancing

Betsy Bell

Certificate in Literary Fiction, 2016

I've been thinking about Phillip. He is fifty-two. He has two teenaged kids. He and Martha (his wife) moved to Lopez one and a half years before she died of cancer. It was a long-held dream to live in the islands. Ancient apple orchard, view of the ferries as they came in, deer, rabbits—all the country life-giving things not available in Seattle. Martha was happy there. Her cancer had come back after an off-and-on battle of fifteen years.

Phillip designs and fashions brass and steel fittings for high-end sailing vessels, the ones which race the Pacific. He does this in his shed, hand tooling, an ancient craft made modern by technology but still solitary, hands-on work. His hands are still busy, but he has lost the woman he loved, cared for, washed during chemotherapy, and massaged by candlelight when the pain became intense. He needs skin.

I know this. I have nursed two lovers—husbands—to the grave, dead from long drawn out cancer. It was three years with Don. He soldiered on any day he felt strong enough to rise from his bed and get to campus to teach. There was nothing left over for me. I massaged, caressed and got satisfaction from tender giving. The same was true as Chuck lay dying.

You are left with no touch. A desperate need for skin. With both those men, sex was a beautiful thing. Fifty-five is too young to be left. Seventy, not so hard.

I remember engaging a cranial-sacral therapist soon after we buried Don. I walked into his office and shook his hand. Heat rose from my core. I blurted out, "I am

looking for a lover. Are you the one?”

Gesturing to the table, he said, “I don’t think so. I am happily married to my wife of twenty years.”

I want to write Phillip and give him advice on how to find some skin.

• • •

First husband

After Don died, I went to the Mountaineers every Friday. I paid the \$10 and lined up for instructions, women on the inside, men on the outside. The room was full of testosterone. They stood there, tall, in loose jeans, work shirts and bristly chins. They, one after the other, put their arms around me as we followed the instructions. I breathed their musky scent. I felt their muscled backs. I melted into their arms and spun away, fingers tight, then loose in the goodbye-it’s-over caress. On to the next man. Every five minutes for an hour. I had more skin next to mine. Then the lights went down and couples paired off for the reels and polkas. Sometimes I had a partner but not too often. Sometimes I got up the courage to ask a guy to the dance floor.

The Riverside on Thursdays was even better. I had a friend who went with me, making it easier to leave the house, get in the car and drive to a venue when I did not know if it would work out—that feeling of terror, anticipation, excitement, longing. The Riverside was a country-western dance venue where live orchestras played Thursday, Friday and Saturday. If you got there at six, a couple taught the moves to the Texas two-step, the Cowboy waltz. I studied every move. The gray hairs were there, men who worked the line at Boeing or the cargo planes. They went home for a quick shower in their solitary houses in SeaTac or Tukwila. They came back to dance, no intention of making a hit, taking some dame home with them. Or maybe I sent the message; I am here for skin, safe dancing skin and nothing more.

I loved that instructional hour before the lights went down: the band warming up, adjusting their sound while the instructors used their voices, handclapping and a tape player to teach the steps. Women on the outside, men on the inside moving counterclockwise. The sashay around the circle, his arm full of purpose around my waist, our free hands clasped, guidance, touch, panting exertion. Everything I wanted. For line dancing you don’t need a partner, just a keen mind and memory for the routine.

I didn’t dance that much in the couples dancing. The gentleman asked, “Do you know the Texas two-step?” It’s not something you can fake. You know it or you don’t.

He wasn't interested in teaching me or helping pick up the pieces if I lost my place. Some guys are okay with a novice.

Phil, there is a Grange on Lopez. Go. Go. Go. Learn to dance. Get some skin.

Phillip has been texting Rachel, best friend of Martha. She was there at the death. They've known each other since the kids were born.

"Would you like to live on Lopez? Would you come to see me?"

At first, Rachel was happy to get his texts. He was reaching out, coming out of his hole. Whoops. He crossed the line. She is uncomfortable. I was already thinking about writing to him, a grandmotherly kind of message. "Been there. Done that. I know how it feels."

• • •

Dating

A friend suggested I try dating. "Meet Arthur. He's just out of a relationship." Art was a political activist. I met him at a Democratic meeting. Campaign managers and workers for King County executive, governor, city Council people, the kind of crowd where I felt comfortable.

He wanted to Dutch date for everything, even a cup of coffee. It rubbed me the wrong way. There is nothing romantic in quibbling over how much the chicken dinner is or the movie, especially since I didn't qualify for senior discounts yet. He tried to get me to lie about my age. Cheapskate. I invited him for dinner at my house so the question of how much it costs wouldn't come up. He wanted to go to bed after we ate. That would be the very bed where Don and I made mad passionate love for thirty-two years. Don died after our thirty-fifth wedding anniversary. Okay, I thought. I am not attracted to this guy so much as the idea of having sex.

We were into it. Ghosts hung in the room. Images of the "New Ways to Have Sex" manual I found in Don's bedside table after he died were flashing through my mind. And then there is that awkwardness of being a one-boob woman due to a mastectomy at age 34. We got past all this, but not Art's preference for a blow job. He did not make the cut. Some skin isn't worth the trouble.

• • •

Second husband

I had known Chuck for eighteen years. His wife was a close friend. She died of cancer the same time Don died. I went to see her in the hospital before she passed, and

noticed Chuck lying on the daybed. I called him a month after she died.

“You might not be ready for a party, but I go to this dinner dance with my business associates and wondered if you would go with me? We wouldn’t have to be festive. We could just sit and talk about what it was like to take care of our dying spouses.”

He picked me up, opened the car door and helped me in. He met a room full of strangers. Chuck was in sales all his life. He knew how to work a crowd. I didn’t have to take care of him. He could take care of me. And he did. When we danced, he swept me off my feet.

Four years later, I sold the big house where Don and I and our daughters had made a life together. I settled in to a Tudor brick in the Mapleleaf neighborhood. Chuck’s and my relationship made a dramatic change. We had gone to the opera a few times. I wasn’t attracted to him and hesitated when he reached for my hand during the romantic arias. I was angry with all men. Anger makes it easier to do without skin. But that night after a provocative modern dance recital, when he took me home to my new house, I invited him in. We sat on my couch. He put his arm around me, pulled my chin to his face and planted a lovely kiss on my lips. I reached down to put my arm around his waist and discovered an enormous hard on.

“What shall we do about this?” I asked.

“What would you like to do about this?”

I led him upstairs.

“What about AIDS? I haven’t been tested?” he asked.

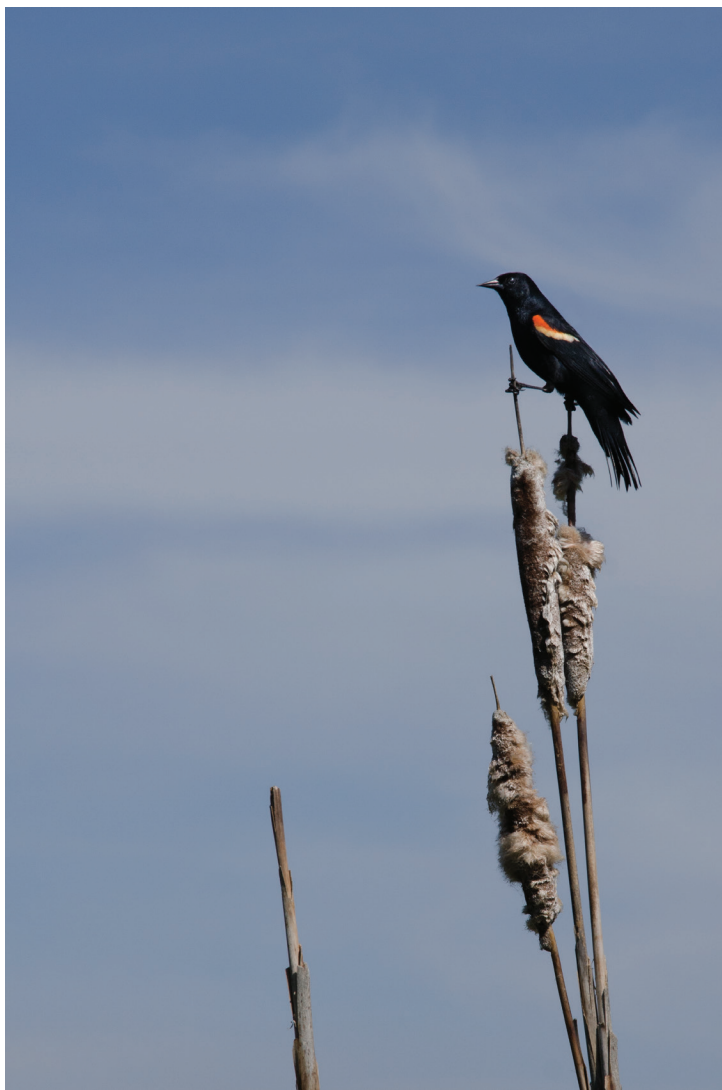
“When was the last time you had sex?”

“I don’t remember. It’s been so long.”

We fell into bed, ravenous, starved, pulsing, vigorous, luscious. Over and over, giggling that two people resigned to a solitary life could actually make love, and not just once. I was sixty. Chuck was seventy-two. The next morning he drove home to his condo whistling all the way.

Phillip, find a widow, a divorcee. Get some skin.





Redwinged Blackbird

Joyce Swanson

Certificate in Photography, 2016

Rescue Dogs

(an excerpt from *Fight Like a Lady*)

Kari Neumeyer

Certificate in Young Adult Fiction Writing, 2016

The fights are held on a Friday night out in the county, in as remote a spot as Mark's house, on wooded acreage amid dairy farms and berry growers. A crowd mills around outside an old barn, painted black. Mark meets me and Eddy by the entrance and assures the bouncer, a burly guy in a Metallica T-shirt, that we're "cool." We hand over a hundred bucks and squeeze our way down a bench a third of the way back. The seats closer up are full, and that's fine with me. I don't want a better vantage point of the pit, a square carpeted area in the center of the barn, surrounded by a low particle-board barrier. Dark stains spatter both the walls and the carpet. I can practically smell the blood. Rows of low metal benches make a square around the pit. They're scarred and look like they've been scavenged from some decrepit school gymnasium. I trace the metal grooves in the bench with my fingernail and glance around the room. Crude light fixtures dangle from the high barn ceiling, casting harsh shadows over the faces of the hundred or so people crowded onto the benches.

Who are these people? Do they have day jobs, or do they support themselves entirely on their winnings from betting on dog fights? I search for another female face, certain that no woman would come to this kind of thing unless she were trying to impress a guy. Surprisingly, I overhear a pair of women discussing dollar amounts, odds, and stats.

A thin guy with patchy facial hair sits next to me. "You hear anything about any of

these matches?" I look at him, startled that he's talking to me. He's missing two of his front teeth.

"No, nothing," I stammer. "This is my first time."

"You gotta kind of ask around, otherwise these names won't mean nothing to you," Patchy says, showing us the program, a half sheet of paper listing eight pairs of dogs. "Normally, 'f yer gonna put money on a fight, you'd wanna pick the fighter with the best record, right? Here's the thing, though, nobody 'round here ever fights a dog a second time if they lose." Flapping the piece of paper at me, he snickers. "All these dogs are undefeated! Know what I mean?"

The less socially awkward side of me knows I should smile and nod, but my lips are so tightly pinched together I can't force a grin out of them. What I would give to pull this guy outside and beat the shit out of him. Eddy saves me, leaning across me to ask, "So, uh, do you have money on any dogs?"

Patchy nods, but narrows his eyes like he's not sure he wants to give away his secrets. "She-Ra in the first fight is my buddy's bitch. She's a grand champion." He points to a little symbol next to her name. I remember that Mark told us a grand champion had won five fights in a row. Obviously the designation is a way to let gamblers decide which dog to back. Everywhere I look, wads of cash are changing hands. This dog fighting is big business.

A shaved head guy, with tattoos snaking from his neck all the way to his face, stands in the center of the pit and welcomes us. Making a slow circle so he can face the people on all sides, he reminds us that taking photos and videos is strictly forbidden. He introduces the first match. She-Ra versus Thunderbird. The trainers enter one at a time, each with an arm slung under the front legs of a dog. The dogs' hind legs dangle like children swinging in a too-tall chair. She-Ra is blonde-colored and Thunderbird is gray brindle. Neither looks vicious as they wait, suspended, cradled by their trainers, nor do they seem troubled by the crowd or the noise. The snarls start the second their paws hit the carpet. The dogs race toward the center of the pit in a blur, their front legs off the ground as they pummel each other.

For a moment, they fight like Thai boxers trying to get into the clinch, until they start vying for position with their jaws. The blonde dog grabs onto the other's neck and doesn't let go, shaking her head back and forth like she's got a tug toy. The squeal is unbearable. The room spins. I want to cry out for someone to help her, but even if I did, I wouldn't be heard over the crowd.

Then, someone's separated the two dogs. Patchy cheers loudly before leaning over to say, "That bitch that looked away, now she has to prove she's still game by going

after the other dog. Or else she loses. S'called 'making scratch.' ”

The brindle dog, Thunderbird, is bleeding from puncture wounds on her neck, but she does return to the fight, three out of four times. Each time, She-Ra latches on to a new spot and Thunderbird makes that devastating wail, tearing at my heart. It is the worst sound I have ever heard.

The fight is called for She-Ra, who is covered in Thunderbird's blood.

“Yesss!” Patchy pumps his fist in the air and waves to his buddy in the pit. I can't tell whether She-Ra herself is proud or not. Refs in dog fights don't raise up the winner's paw.

I have to get out of here. I touch Eddy on the shoulder to let him know, but he doesn't look at me. His face is stone, but I know his lack of expression doesn't betray a lack of feeling. He has to be using every last bit of self-control to sit there and watch. I don't have that much self-control. I stagger into the brisk night, gulping breaths of fresh air until I can see straight again.

Mark's talking to Metallica T-shirt and some other guys by the open hood of a truck with jumper cables spilling out. Feeling like the victim of a plane crash, I latch onto the familiarity of Mark's face, forgetting for a second just how much I hate him. I wander over and force something conversational to come out of my mouth. “Someone has car trouble?”

Metallica T-shirt stubs out a cigarette with his boot and chuckles. “Not exactly.”

As I get closer, I see a porcelain claw-footed bathtub sitting incongruously on the ground on the other side of the truck, filled to the brim with water. In the shadow cast by the truck's headlights, I can see the bathwater is dark with islands of foam and clumps of fur floating around a gray brindled shape. Bile rises in my throat.

Thunderbird.

I want to scoop her out of the tub and apologize for the life these assholes subjected her to. Tears are building up behind my eyes and I swear to god, I think I could kill whoever did this to her.

“You son of a bitch. You weren't kidding.” I look Mark right in his soulless black eyes. “You just dispose of the loser immediately after the fight.”

Metallica T-shirt is still laughing. Some dude strides over carrying another sixty-pound bundle of bleeding pit bull. Unlike Mark's dogs, its ears aren't clipped short enough, which gave his opponent something to hold onto. One of his ears has a ragged tear a couple of inches long.

Metallica T-shirt heaves Thunderbird out of the tub and into the back of the pickup. His buddy nonchalantly attaches one of the jumper cables to the dog's good

ear. "Wait! Please," I gasp. "Please don't."

Metallica says, "Who the fuck are you? Mark, I thought you said she was cool."

"Get out of here, Vicky." Mark waves his hand dismissively. "No one has time for your bleeding heart."

I step forward, ready to force him to make time for my bleeding heart, but there's so many of them and they're going ahead with the execution and I can't watch. I spin around, fighting the urge to run back to the truck and cry. The last thing I want to do is go back in the barn, but I have to tell Eddy what's happening. Inside, I'm greeted by a blast of moist air, as if a hundred testosterone-charged men have just exhaled their hot, stale breath in my face. The cheering has grown raucous and the smell more fetid. Cringing, I squeeze down our bench to where Eddy sits with his elbows on his knees, chin in his hand. Almost everyone else around him is standing, leaning forward to get a closer look at the carnage they paid good money for.

"Eddy, they're killing them right here!" I shout in his ear. "Thunderbird's dead already and they're electrocuting another."

Eddy grabs my hand and pushes past the people in our row. "Where are they?" he asks when we get outside.

"Wait. I think I blew our cover. God, we were so stupid to think they'd just give us the dogs. But Mark said they weren't worth anything! Please, let's call the cops."

Eddy repeats, "Where are they?"

I point to the bathtub.

"Meet me at the truck." Eddy strides over to the executioners with confidence. I watch him lean casually on the side of the pickup truck, before I bolt toward the parking lot.

Several minutes later, Eddy walks toward me carrying a light brown dog.

"This is Xena." Eddy sets her gently on the truck bed before heading back toward the bathtub. I reach for one of the towels we brought. Xena cowers with her head down. She has a bloody wound on her chest. I look at the makeshift dog first-aid kit Eddy threw together and feel completely ill-equipped.

"Hi, Xena, will you let me help you?" I show her the towel, and when she doesn't back away, I gently press it against her chest. She whimpers, but then relaxes against my hand. I scoop her into my arms and place her and the towel inside one of the beige plastic crates. "That's a girl."

Eddy is back with a dog named Machine, who is compact and white and doesn't have any visible wounds. The dog is wary of me and gives a low growl when I reach for him. "Use a towel," Eddy advises. The towel acts as a kind of barrier and I approach

Machine from the side, getting hold of his midsection without giving him a chance to bite me. I don't think he would have anyway. The grumble is a warning, which continues until I close the crate door on him, but he doesn't snarl or lash out at me. Tonight I saw the worst of what a pit bull can do, and still I'm not scared of Machine. He's obviously more afraid of me than I am of him. I can tell he's not a vicious dog; people did this to him.

One by one, Eddy brings over two more dogs. Axel is mostly black with a white patch on his belly. He allows me to dab hydrogen peroxide and first-aid ointment on some puncture wounds on his legs and haunches. His injuries don't seem as serious as Xena's and his demeanor is perfectly mellow. What kind of monster would kill this dog because he lost a fight?

Elvira is a reddish blond dog who licks my hands as I inspect her wounds and apply ointment. She sniffs the splashes of blood Xena left on my clothes. When I reach for her back paw, she catches the side of my face with a sloppy kiss. "Aw, Elvira, you might just be my favorite." I nuzzle against her, lingering in the tender moment.

"I guess that's all we can do. Four dogs." Eddy walks around to the back of the pickup, startling me.

"But we have two more crates."

"I know, but I'm out of money." Eddy lifts Elvira into her crate and we head home. On the dark roads, I keep looking out the back window at the dog crates to make sure nothing happens to them, and that no one is following us. I ask Eddy how he got the guys to give him their dogs. Had it been as easy as offering cash for a dog they were going to kill anyway?

"I couldn't believe the words that were coming out of my mouth." As he tells me what happened, his knuckles turn white where he grips the steering wheel. He'd pretended to be a prospective dog fighter. Mark told Metallica shirt and the other guys about Eddy, an MMA trainer who owned a pit bull. They just assumed he wanted to get involved in fighting dogs. Obviously. Why else would he come? "I had to stand there and talk about doing that to Apollo, like I was talking about signing a kid up for a T-ball league. Bad enough to watch it happen to dogs I don't know, but to be talking specifics with Apollo in mind. . . I had trouble keeping the act up."

Eddy asked the men for advice. How does one get started in dog fighting? What's the first step? "They brought over Xena, and god, I hated myself for saying these words. I asked if losing dogs could be useful in training Apollo. Like, could I set him up with Xena and see if he'd fight."

Eddy wipes the back of his hand across his cheek. His voice is steady, but even in

the dark, I can see tears running down the side of his face. “There’s a word for that, they told me. Bait dog. They told me they’d sell me Xena as a bait dog. I offered two hundred dollars and let them see the wad of cash I pulled out of my pocket. They knew I had more. After I got back from bringing Xena to you, the next guy was there with his losing dog. He said probably I’d want to test Apollo with a couple of different dogs. His dog was in better shape than Xena.” The owners of the other two dogs considered two hundred dollars to be a swell deal too.

Arriving at his house, Eddy backs the truck up to a side gate. We lift the crates out and carry them into the yard with the dogs still inside, howling. We place the crates in the four corners of the yard, arranged so the dogs won’t be able to see each other. Our assumption, until they prove us wrong, is that they’re all aggressive to other dogs.

Eddy opens the wire door to Machine’s crate, just a crack at first, in case he bolts. Machine cowers in back, so Eddy opens the door the rest of the way, and holds out his hand, palm down, for Machine to sniff. The dog steps out gingerly, tail tucked and head jutted forward, as if prepared to duck from a blow. “Come here, Mr. Machine.” Eddy crouches down and lets Machine approach him slowly. He strokes the dog’s back and fastens a leash to his wide collar, leading him around the yard. Machine relieves himself on one of Apollo’s favorite rhododendrons before we put him back in the crate and walk Axel and Elvira separately.

Xena doesn’t want to come out. I sit down on the grass beside her crate while Eddy goes inside the house to check on his own dog. All four dogs quiet their barking. I can hear Axel licking his wounds and Elvira’s nails clicking on the plastic floor as she turns around to find a comfortable position. Xena is splayed in the center of the crate. Her coat is a beautiful reddish brown, but the white towel beneath her is soaked through with blood.

I don’t know what to do. My chest constricts like I’m about to have a panic attack. No, I can’t. If my anxiety takes over, the dogs will pay the price. Before I hyperventilate, I close my eyes and concentrate on taking deep breaths.

Eddy comes back outside. I blurt, “Xena looks bad.”

He sits down beside me and peers in the crate. Xena whimpers very softly.

“We’ll have to take her to the after-hours emergency vet.” He doesn’t get up right away, though, and his shoulders rise and fall with a deep sigh. “I thought getting the dogs was going to be the hard part.”

Eddy doesn’t know what to do either. What have we gotten into?

I force my spiraling thoughts into order. “Step one: Get the dogs. Accomplished. Step two: Get help for Xena.” I reach into the crate and gather her along with the

towel into my arms. The other dogs start to howl again. I carry her to the truck and settle into the passenger seat with Xena's whimpering, limp body in my lap.

The people at the emergency vet give us strange looks when we tell them we "found" this bleeding dog, and they take us back into an exam room. The puncture wound in the chest is bad, Dr. Kilpatrick tells us, but not beyond repair. However, Xena appears to be suffering from a number of internal injuries. X-rays are needed to determine how bad. Do we want to do that? Eddy nods.

We sit in the waiting room while Xena is X-rayed, and I'm able to breathe again without having to force myself. It's not up to me anymore. She's in good hands.

I ask, "Are X-rays pretty expensive?"

Eddy looks at me like my heart is made of ice, like how can I ask that at a time like this? But since he's financing the whole rescue operation, I think it's a valid question. He just spent two hundred dollars to buy this dog. How much more will this night cost?

Dr. Kilpatrick, a man with a salt-and-pepper beard and a kind face, joins us and says that the damage is extensive. Both from injuries she received tonight, as well as past occasions. She needs surgery, likely to cost thousands of dollars.

"I would understand, if this were your dog, that you would do whatever it takes to save her life, no matter the cost," he says. "But this dog already has suffered a great deal. You've helped her enormously by bringing her in. Even if we operate tonight, there's no guarantee. Probably the best thing for her would be to euthanize her."

Eddy nods again, his mouth turning down deeply. I know it's the right thing to do. A familiar ache echoes in the place where my heart broke when I watched my mom die. I put my hand on Eddy's arm. "That makes sense, right? We should let her go."

"Okay," he says quietly, his voice cracking like he might cry.

Dr. Kilpatrick touches Eddy lightly on the shoulder. "Do you want to be in the room with her?"

Eddy looks at me, wide-eyed. "I don't think I could. Is that awful?"

"No, no." I squeeze his arm. "Maybe I should go, though, okay?"

I follow the doctor to the room where Xena lies on a metal table. I pet her head and she closes her eyes while Dr. Kilpatrick administers the lethal dose. I start to cry and remind myself, *She would have died anyway. This way, at least she has someone to hold her lovingly when it happens. She didn't die like Thunderbird.*

Her chest stops expanding with breath. "Is she gone?"

Dr. Kilpatrick nods, then clears his throat. "Where did you say you found her? Out in the county?"

“I don’t think I said.” My voice hardens. He’s trying to trick me into telling him something. Am I going to get busted now for fighting dogs?

“Look, I can tell that you care about this animal, which is why I’m asking. She’s obviously been used in dog fights for a long time. I would think that you’d want to help.”

“How can I help? She’s already dead.”

“You can help the other dogs by telling me where the dog fights were.”





Liz

Josh Samson

Certificate in Photography, 2016

Lucky

Mary Edwards

Certificate in Memoir Writing, 2016

*The world is so much larger than I thought. I thought we went along paths
—but it seems there are no paths. The going itself is the path.*

— C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra*

This is generally a busy intersection, but today the road looks clear. As I pull out of this cramped gas station the gas station, I look left and see the lights change from amber to red. Cars slow to a stop. I look right and am surprised that no cars are racing around the bend like they usually are. It's usually almost impossible to get out of here alive, but today looks different.

"This must be wrong," I think to myself. I look again: left, then right, then left again, just like that film in third grade taught me to do when crossing the street. All's clear. What luck. I ease my little Honda Civic hybrid onto Martin Luther King, Jr., Way, just a few blocks from my home in Seattle's Central District.

Then, it appears—a rusting white Chevy Blazer racing at me. I cannot see the driver sitting high above me. I brake, but the Chevy roars towards me. This driver's not looking, I think. I can tell because he's not reacting. Maybe if I speed up I can get past him. I press the gas.

Then I hear the crash. I do not feel it. I hear the cymbal of breaking glass, the crunch of metal on metal. And then: nothing. Silence. Not a sound. A long blank.

I was there, and now I'm here. Glass shards across my lap tell me that something has changed. I need to get out of the car, so I reach for the door handle, but it's not there anymore. I think I'll roll down my window and open the car door from the outside, but there is no longer a window, and the door is pushing in on me, trapping me.

A man at the bus stop points to his phone. He's calling 9-1-1. A guy in his early 30's walks up to my car and asks, "Are you okay?" He's panicking: he runs his hand through his blond hair, and his voice cracks. It occurs to me later that this was the guy who drove the monster Chevy without looking. ("Look, Ma, no eyes!")

I am calm. My life does not flash before my eyes. My heart is not racing. My body is not shaking. I say, "I think I'm fine, but I can't get out of the car." He nods, puts his hands in his pockets, and saunters towards the sidewalk.

An African-American woman, maybe fifty years old, wearing a pink plastic raincoat with a large flower design, walks up to my car window—or what used to be my window. She says that she will stand with me while I wait for help. I wonder where her car is, but maybe she doesn't have a car. Maybe, she is an angel.

I hear a siren, and she tells me that the siren is for me. Then there are flashing lights and firemen and EMTs, and I don't see my angel again. I think maybe she flew away, but probably she drove.

I am dazed. I feel distant from it all. I feel no pain, and all the hurry around me seems unworldly. I concentrate on how I will get out of the car, and I wonder where my glasses might be. They must have flown from my head. My cane must still be in the back. I'll ask my rescuers to retrieve it. I'll need it later.

Firemen ask if I am all right. "Yes, I'm fine, but I can't get out of the car." One fireman kneels next to what used to be my window, and we look eye to eye. He introduces himself as Mitchell, and I wonder if Mitchell is his first name or his last. He has brown hair and brown eyes that strike me as particularly round. Maybe he's in his early 40s, like I was when doctors diagnosed my first brain tumor. He says that they will get me out, but that they will have to use a saw to cut off the top of the car. I must look like I'm about to argue (I am) because he explains, "It's totaled anyway." I am surprised, and I look around. The windshield has collapsed into thousands of tiny beads, as has the driver's side window. The driver's door crushes in on me. Yep. Totaled. I nod. I am in slow motion.

Fireman Mitchell starts to move to his next task, but he jerks to a stop in a controlled panic. He stares hard at my half-paralyzed face and tries to form words, but

only a few consonants eek out. His mouth makes guppy motions.

He is rescuing me, and I rescue him from his fear: “Oh,” I say. “Don’t worry. My eyes and my face were already like this. I had brain tumors a few years back. I really think I’m fine.”

He regains his composure, nods once emphatically, and moves on to command the removal of my little car’s roof. One fireman puts a collar around my neck as a precaution. Another puts a yellow, wool blanket over my head to protect me from falling glass, and I listen to the whir of a steel saw and the crunch of metal moving as the firemen cut and remove the car’s roof. I see yellow light through the blanket and feel little pieces of glass and metal fall on me, gently, like rain.

From the back seat, one fireman breaks my seat and pulls it back until I am lying down. He lifts the blanket from my face and cuts off my seatbelt and my (new!) rain jacket. He slides a board under my back (another precaution), and he and Fireman Mitchell lift me from the car and into an ambulance. I remain calm.

I have never been in an ambulance before, and I notice how smooth the ride is, even over Seattle’s potholes. Since I am in the neck brace, I cannot turn my head. Though I feel and hear two men trying to get blood out of my arms, I cannot see their faces. This bothers me. On a seven-minute ride to the hospital, these two men work unsuccessfully to get blood from my dainty veins as I watch their gloved hands.

I have had more experience having blood drawn than most people, and I know my veins are exceptionally small and averse to punctures. I tell emergency men that they need heat to get any blood out of me, but they ignore me. They just keep jabbing my arms and saying over me to one another: “Nothing.” I know the ride to the hospital will be short, so I decide to endure the needle pricks and the fact that they will not listen to me. They are concerned about my life, so I don’t lecture them about treating me like a person. The bruises from their repeated efforts will be some of the darkest bruises from the accident.

Once at the hospital, the ambulance stops and medics fling open the doors. I feel June’s damp breeze. A bustle of men rush to move my backboard to a stretcher, and, still tethered to my backboard and collared by my neck brace, my line of vision moves from the ambulance roof to the entrance of the emergency room ceiling. People are shouting commands, and I bounce down as I’m pulled onto a gurney. I’m whisked into the emergency room where a flurry of medical doctors and nurses surrounds me. They slice my corduroys and my (new favorite!) sweater and put them to the side. One especially kind nurse says, “I know these are expensive” and works to remove my bra without cutting it off. I see ten pairs of hands moving over me, but again I don’t see

anyone's face. I wonder if angels have hands, and I think they do, but they have faces, too. I'm sure of it. No one speaks to me as they talk over me: "Blood pressure? ... Good ... Legs ... No breaks ... Feet ... Good ... Pulse ... Good ..."

A doctor shows me her face and asks, "How are you?" She is an angel, and I am relieved to have finally been spoken to. Southern polite as always, I say, "I'm fine. How are you?" She laughs and says that I'm her favorite patient today. I love being the favorite.

Within minutes, this flock of doctors and nurses decides I am okay and flies on to the next patient.

Still in my neck brace and tied to the backboard, I cannot turn or lift my head, so after all of the hands leave, all that I see is the white tiled ceiling and a gadget with a bright light. I hear one person beside me. The woman introduces herself and says that she is a social worker.

She asks me if she can do anything. "Could you call my partner Ann and please tell her I'm okay?" She does. I hear her say, "Hello. I am a social worker at the Harborview Trauma Center Emergency room. Mary asked me to call. She's been in an accident, but she wants me to tell you she thinks she's okay."

When Ann arrives, I hear someone who sounds like she's in charge say, "She seems okay, but she used one of her nine lives today." Ann points out that I have already lost a couple. I know she is thinking about my brain tumors.

I think about cats and their nine lives. Before my tumors, I thought that the cats returned to their previous lives after each death, but I am learning that with each death, even when life goes on, loss resides in me, and my life changes. I have been trying to re-enter my life before brain tumors, but I am beginning to learn that, though my life goes on, it is now a different life. I see only a glimmer of what this means.

Though my life has changed since my brain tumors, my perspective on living has not essentially changed. Though my plans have changed, I am still a planner, and I am still attached to making plans and achieving my goals. I will need to do more than take a new route at my life's detours. It's time to conceptualize life's journey differently, to see myself, my life and my world differently. It's time for me, and not just my circumstances, to change.

I am x-rayed and scanned. When the technician slides me out of the CAT scan machine, he says, "There are no broken bones, but you must really have to go to the bathroom." I do really have to go, but I am not allowed to sit up until all of the tests are done, and my mother potty-trained me too thoroughly for me to pee in a bedpan.

Though a curtain separates me from tonight's other trauma survivors, I overhear

their stories: one motorcyclist was in a one-vehicle accident, one bicyclist was “T-boned” by a car, one helmetless bicyclist—still high on drugs—hit a curb, one softball player shattered her ankle, one burn victim was doused by boiling kettle corn then bonked on his head with the kettle, and one man—whose EMT comments on his especially skinny legs—had a stroke. Lots of lives have changed tonight. This must happen every night. This is my night.

EMTs ask each trauma patient, “What’s your name? What year is it? Who’s the president of the United States? Who’s the president of Libya?” Libya has been in the news lately, but I pause on that last one.

This accident is not part of my life’s plan. As a freckle-faced, auburn-haired tomboy growing up on a suburban cul-de-sac in North Carolina, my parents and I had an unspoken plan: I would be a good student and a decent athlete; for college, I would go to my father’s *alma mater*; I would become a doctor or a lawyer; and I would marry a well-pedigreed doctor or lawyer.

My husband and I would raise our 2.5 children on a suburban cul-de-sac, and these children would be honorable Southern Baptists, like their parents their grandparents, and their great-grandparents. The children would love our golden retriever. They would be good students and decent athletes. They would attend colleges of their choice. They would be doctors and lawyers and would marry doctors and lawyers. Like Shakespeare’s MacBeth, my husband and I would look into a mirror and see the future: for MacBeth, Banquo’s descendants; for us, an infinite line of Southern Baptist doctors and lawyers, children and golden retrievers.

My life’s journey and this day’s journey, however, will not go as planned. I thought I had learned this with my brain tumors, but like Annie Dillard in *An American Childhood*, I suspect that rather than learning new lessons, I have been learning the same lesson over and over. Which is another way of saying that I haven’t yet learned this lesson that my life will not go as I plan.

My life won’t even follow my back-up plan, formed after my brain tumors. As a planner, I struggle with this lesson, and though I sense a new truth, I see it only through a glass darkly. I will need more instruction in order to change not just my life, but my self.

Hours later, the trauma doctors tell me I can go home and the finally release me from my collar and my backboard. It’s 11 pm, so I know it will be dark, cold, and rainy outside. I am wearing my only clothes that have survived: my bra and underwear.

When the social worker tells me I can go home, I ask her for some clothes. This is the region’s trauma center, so I think surely they have clothes here, but the social

worker says, “Hmmm. I’ll see what I can find.” After 30 minutes, she returns with socks, a black polyester sweater in my size, women’s large, and men’s extra large scrubs. She says apologetically, “This was all I could find.”

Ann calls a taxi, and we go into the rainy night.

In my mind, I catalogue the things I lost in the accident: my car, my brown corduroy pants, my dark green turtleneck, my new sweater, the earrings from Palm Springs, my glasses (where did they go? They flew from my head.), my new green Gortex raincoat, a pair of Smartwool (they’re the best) socks, keys to the schools where I work, my prism sunglasses, my Adele and Bruce Cockburn CDs, my Uggs, the Storm season ticket-holder license plate holder, and the garage door opener.

Then I catalogue what I have saved: my underwear and bra, my watch, my cane, and my life.

I feel lucky.





Borago officinalis

Janis Howes

Certificate in Natural Science Illustration, 2016

