High Grade

Colorado School of Mines
Creative Arts Journal
2010
Submission Guidelines

Please make all literary submissions to highgrade@mines.edu as a Microsoft Word document. One submission per document. Note any special formatting needs. Art and music submissions will be handled through the High Grade office. Contact highgrade@mines.edu.

We reserve the right to format all submissions as needed.

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From the Editor

Dear Reader,

This journal has seeped from the pencils and keystrokes and brushes and lenses of creative engineers who understand that fine art and science are inseparable to the unaided mind. The collaborators of this journal have captured and caged extraordinary moments found in the unlikely crevasses of life, and within these pages, you will find the keys to set those moments free.

The building of this journal is nothing short of constructing a vehicle. And to make this vehicle whole, this year I introduce to you our first-ever Music CD, attached to the back of the journal. I hope you come to see that art does not need a medium to thrive, only a destination to pursue — toward our senses.

To those who have contributed to the journal, thank you. To the brilliant High Grade team, thank you. To the sacred pillar that has held High Grade up this year and every year — our adviser Professor Toni Lefton — thank you. To you, our reader and listener, thank you.

It was a mountain climb creating and compiling these pages, but together, it became a brisk walk down the garden.

Best Wishes,

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For exclusive online content, featuring “Night of the Cry of the Cat” by Fred Fraiko, please visit http://highgrade.mines.edu/exclusivecontent.html
Different

The heater goes on
and off, the sound
a background noise
I’m still getting used to.
I can hear him breathe
behind me as he sleeps,
more deeply than I, always.
I bet my mom
is lying awake like this,
listening to my father breathe,
since he doesn’t snore so much
anymore – we think
it might be a side effect
of the chemo, and it must
keep Mom up to think
about that. She complained
for years that she couldn’t sleep
with all that racket, and
now it must just seem
like another thing that’s changed.
Rawthenticity

Thesis:
Conflicting thoughts
Have you ever worried that
you’ve been brainwashed?
Of course there is
    Television,
    News,
    Movies,
    Propaganda,
    Life.
Materialism meets Commercialism
Big business orgy.
Death to America, and all that.
Whatever.
Taking this into account
Something seems off.
Like an inherent discontent
left festering, ignored
in the back of your head.

Aside:
Have you ever had an itch
that you just cant scratch?
This isn’t like that,
The act of scratching
makes it that much worse.
Not like chicken pox.
Scratch frowned upon
but feels oh so good.
Focus:
My aim stated
Control test
take it as you are wont to do.
Apathy leads to lethargy
Philosophy,
blood beneath finger tips.

Rhetoric:
Some sense of urgency draws near
In an attempt to resist
I hurry faster.

Frenzy:
I can't resist anymore.

Calm:
Denial

Research:
In 1987 a small town in Ohio
was infected with a deadly disease.
The project was titled
Lucid Oversight.
The drug administered was called
[redacted]
Its effects were twofold
1) force people to think for themselves,
which led to
2) suicide
It remains unclear how
the government used this data.
Validity:
None.
That was an unabashed lie
And I don’t feel
any remorse whatsoever.

Conclusion:
Be happy
   Eat Candy
   Drink Soda
   Eat Healthy
   Eat Fast Food
   Be Unaware
Seriously though,
cut the crap
I’m tired of all your bullshit
profanity
my insanity
Stop complaining and
wonder why you even care.
Our feet
splash in the frigid water
as we skip rocks and you confess to me
that you once loved a boy for all
the poems he gave to you.
Five skips.

Three skips.
Waves wash colder
against our feet. Each flash
of his eyes, each cynical comment,
the way his hand contracted and extended
as if it were his beating heart.
His motion – metaphor,
his voice – rhyme.

Four skips.
You know that his gift
resided in the impermanent nature of the thing.
And that, when you least expected it,
you too could be poetry.
Concentrate on This Bit

Numbers are a lot like people, at least the ones that people deal with. People enjoy personifying things; we need to see faces everywhere. Besides, if we put our faces into mathematics, we can pretend, briefly, that humankind makes that much sense.

This is the way of it. Real numbers have rules. They have two sets of rules, those of addition and those of multiplication. Most of them are generic:

\begin{align*}
    a + b &= b + a \\
    ab &= ba \\
    (a + b) + c &= a + (b + c) \\
    (ab) c &= a (bc) \\
    a (b + c) &= ab + ac
\end{align*}

Never said the intersection of the two sets was empty.

Then there are the defining rules. Zero’s in two of them, and they’re about addition.

\begin{align*}
    \exists 0 \in \mathbb{R} \text{ s.t. } a + 0 &= a \\
    \exists (-a) \in \mathbb{R} \text{ s.t. } a + (-a) &= 0
\end{align*}

One’s in two of them, and they’re about multiplication.

\begin{align*}
    \exists 1 \in \mathbb{R} \text{ s.t. } a1 &= a \\
    \exists (1/a) \in \mathbb{R} \text{ s.t. } a(1/a) &= 1
\end{align*}
(that last one has a caveat: \( a \neq 0 \). But saying that \( a \) is \textit{not} 0 tells us only a little about 0 himself, for now)

If I were a romantic or a math professor, I would say that 0 “lives in addition” and 1 “lives in multiplication.” Of course, a little pencil swiping moves them into the other’s world, shows that 0 anchors multiplication, shows why, exactly, he can’t sit in the denominator. More swiping shows that we can move 1 into addition and slide specific numbers into each \( a, b, c \).

We don’t care much for those newcomers. Where they are, there’s a problem to be solved. Like a girl reading a fantasy, we secretly hope for only one ending, the one where all the characters come together to that predictable bit, false or true. Swipe, swipe, and whole matrices of numbers are paired off into 0 or 1.

There’s no doubt that 1 and 0 are special. Look what happens when they join each other:

\[
\begin{align*}
1 + 0 &= 1 \\
1 \times 0 &= 0
\end{align*}
\]

Now 0 is the master of multiplication, 1 the mistress of addition. Surprising. Combine two numbers, add and multiply, and see if any other pair will do that. Besides, we have the rules. There aren’t axioms about 2 or \( \sqrt{2} \) or 18967 or -3. We have to make the rules ourselves and prove they exist. One and zero are tidy, and we’ve known since we were young what happens when they meet.

Then we realized that real numbers weren’t everything. Before man had seen that a debt of one sheep was satisfied by one sheep, -1 was there – and she bore twins. The imaginary numbers, as we call them, were the faerie people of mathematics, always on the edge of sight. Also, completely unbelievable.
After the pyramids, but before their existence was known, those of $i$ lived apart, immiscible with the numbers we knew. Time passed; the fey were regarded with a bird’s tilted-head eye. They had to exist, but their existence was troublesome. Yet more time passed, and suddenly the fair folk brought magic into our world. Chaperones, they guided the real numbers into the complex plane. Tacked down their thin infinity. Navigated the holes in the void. Even spirited away a few really nasty integrations by parts. Though they helped the humans beyond imagining, we still blame them on imagination alone. And though they stood dutifully alongside the real numbers...

Here’s a little secret. All mathematicians are romantics.

$$i \times (-i) = 1$$
$$i + (-i) = 0$$

And that, my friends, is the way of it.
Auto Da Fe

We sit around hot rocks
and charcoaled wood. The bonfire
demands our sacrifice: fragments
of the year.

fling an uneaten
hotdog or a beer can
to see the twisted tongues
of fire lick blue-green
and purple.

He throws a bandana
softened by sweat, sweet
with dirt from strangling wisteria.

we burn: a swallow’s tail, some fishing line,
a short-lived friend, and father time

For her, a scrap of paper
with five pounds and her virginity
lost in the scrawled black letters.

we burn: a falling heart, a failing mind,
a few false starts, and dark orange rind

I throw myself into the flames
as the evening laughs and stretches to eternity.
We cannot exist apart from this.
They play red, on frosted glass

Colored in Soy Sauce purple
Her butterfly kimono is expertly wrapped,
Its menacing eyes fool the approaching eels.

Cappuccino green wasabi masks his longing for the statue,
Seismic vibrations ripple the silk of the armored
opponents,
Gentle turning of point, wrapped pink.

Floating liquid silver cubes throwing oppressing cooling
shadows
On pyramids of chocolate mousse, sheathed in the darkest
of fine chocolate
He walks on squares to make triangle points.

His opponent catches his eye, by red bar light
They move in tentative circles, readying their bodies,
Electric blue filling pores moist.

Mountain breaking fists clenching, magnetic eyes pull as
flexing muscles push
Monochrome clothing matching the exact color of their
skin
Midmost they meet in symphonic sound.

They play red, on frosted glass.
From the forest to the open field, the hunter did not let his pace die down. His lungs ached, his muscles burned, his heart pulsed, and his wounds stung, yet he ran with every pint of determination his tall, mildly toned body could produce. Every part of his body throbbed in order to slow him down but his determination kept him going. Sweat ran from his black hair, past his bony cheeks and brown eyes. The perspiration damped his brown leather and fur clothing.

The vivid image of Luna painted itself within his mind. It was that image that kept him going; it was that image that made him scrape his own skin in order to free himself from his shackles. He ran at full pace, not out of fear that the guards may have discovered he had escaped, but for the fear that he would break his promise to Luna.

The capital that Elis headed towards loomed in the distance. As the white walls rose in height, the sun fell below the horizon’s edge with equal speed. The hunter ran through the gates of the capital and toward the main castle. He dashed up to the castle walls and scaled them vine by vine like a would-be-thief. He steadily climbed up, reaching the isolated balcony of the young female’s room.

Elis pushed aside the drapes to the white chamber that Luna lived within. The room’s setting lay with a gray tone. No candles were lit; the only light came through the silk drapes from the evening outside. In the center of the room, on the large bed, sat Luna, curled up and sobbing. The only words that came to Elis’ mind and mouth were, “Sorry. I said I’d be here yesterday, but…”

Luna raised her head, as if just realizing Elis had arrived.
She looked at the hunter. Her eyebrows bent outwards, her violet eyes glimmering with bits of tears, her cheeks damp. “You’re r-really here,” she said. A smile full of hope quivered across her lips. “You really came for me,” she cried out as she dived out of bed and ran to embrace the hunter. Elis flinched as Luna wrapped her arms around him. “I thought you’d n-never come for me. I thought something may have happened to you or that you h-hated me for something I may have said.”

The girl was like a beam of light among the dull surroundings, a girl of late teens in a white and blue gown. Long brown hair fell to her waist, the fringe swept to one direction; the sides pulled and braided past her ears and tied in the back by a blue silk ribbon. Her eyes glimmered a rare, violet color, and saggy bags lay under them, appearing as if from a lack of sleep.

“I am sorry for not being here earlier,” Elis spoke out before Luna did. “You no longer need to cry. I wouldn’t abandon you like that. The king just wasn’t too pleased to find out I had been seeing his sickly daughter.”

Luna looked up at the hunter, her face slightly blank. It brightened with blush in the blue hued room as the girl realized how closely she clung to the hunter. She quickly let go of him and took a few steps back. “Sorry,” she, herself, apologized as she looked down with a faint smile. She wiped away all the remaining tears and smiled faintly.

Luna walked past Elis and over to the white, silk drapes that separated the room from the balcony, pulling them aside with a single hand. “I thought about what you said to me f-few days ago. ‘What’s it like to live as the second princess to the throne?’” Behind the drapes lay a still, dark blue background where the sky and the ocean met. “The second princess is always raised in solitude. There’re many reasons for it, to keep a successor in constant safety in case
something happened to the first, to have an untouched, royal bride to marry a powerful duke... Even despite my position as the second princess, I was always weak, constantly s-sick. I’d cough and even faint without warning. No one wanted someone like me to leave this room out of fear for my safety.”

The princess did not turn around to face the hunter as she spoke. She only remained focused on the world past the silk drapes. “Living at this castle, this life in the middle of these white walls; it’s not a life at all. Even when I step out to this balcony, I expect all sorts of life to greet me, to t-tell me that I myself am living, but all I see is this sky and ocean, a still, blue nothingness. There is no worse isolation.”

Elis did not respond at first, letting the harsh words Luna spoke set in. He then asked, “What about those times I’ve seen you outside this room?”

“Only when I got older did I g-get a chance to sneak out of this castle, but all my childhood was spent here. When I snuck outside for the first time, it was a new world for me. But having s-spent all my life alone, I couldn’t talk to anyone. Even though I had gotten out, I was s-still isolated. It felt like I had never left this room at all.”

Elis looked on at the princess, whose tone sounded so distant from the person he had recognized as Luna. “But you had no trouble talking to me,” Elis commented.

Luna turned around and spoke with a puffed cheek, “That was only after you had spent over an hour trying to pull so much as a s-sentence from me.”

Elis chuckled and brushed his hand through his short, black hair. “You’re right. I had bumped into you in the market place, causing you to fall. You were so weakened and frail, that I didn’t know what to do besides let you sit and rest, all the while trying to get a conversation out of you.”

“But it was that stubborn persistence to t-talk to me that gave me the courage to finally say something to you.” Luna
yelped slightly, covering her mouth with her small hand. “Ah, l-listen to me, talking like that.” Her cheeks toned a light, pink color. “I’m s-sorry for saying such silly things.”

“I find it better than your usual, childish tone,” Elis said quietly.

“I’ve told you to n-not to call me childish,” Luna said with a hanging lip and reddening face. She stubbornly twisted her head back toward the draped opening in the wall. Before she could face the balcony fully, she felt her feet rising off the ground as Elis’ arms lifted her for carrying. “What are d-d-doing?” Luna face turned an even brighter red as Elis picked her up in his arms.

“You’re certainly lighter than I expected,” Elis said with a furrowed brow.

“P-p-put m-me d-d-down,” Luna protested while weakly flailing about.

“Are you feeling well today?” Elis asked, ignoring the princess’ complaints.

“Um… Yes,” Luna responded quietly, her flailing ceasing.

“Then it should be no problem if I take you to the second day of this festival. I wasn’t here for the first, so I should keep my promise and take you to the second. That is what you wanted, is it not?”

“Um… Well… I’m n-not allowed to go to the f-festival.” A sweat drop fell down her brow as her flushed face burned red.

“Nonsense,” Elis said with a grin.

“But we’ll never get through the castle to get to the plaza where the festival is being held. The guards are everywhere today, and I’m s-sure they know I can’t leave.”

“Then we will exit our own way,” the hunter responded. He stepped through the silk drapes and onto the small balcony.
“Hey, wait. Where are you going? There is no stairwell here,” Luna said with slight worry. The hunter looked down to see what lay just below the balcony, his eye catching a cart full of hay parked below. “Perfect. Let’s just hope this works.”

“Don’t tell me…” the princess said with heightened anxiety. Elis stepped on top of the stone guard rails of the balcony. “P-Please wait, Elis.” Luna’s eyes widened and her fingers clenched onto the hunter’s shirt as hard as they could. The hunter stepped over the edge. Luna inhaled a single breath just as the two began to fall. The pair fell at an increasing rate from the balcony toward the small outcrop of ground at the base of the castle, toward the cart full of hay. Luna tried to scream, but the descent left her without a breath of air.

The hunter and princess fell into the soft hay. A cloud of dust and hay kicked upward. Elis rolled out of the pile of straw, pulling Luna out with him. Luna’s eyes stood wide open and her jaw gawking. She blinked a few times and said in a loud voice, “D-D-Don’t ever d-d-do that again!” Elis placed the princess on her feet. Her legs wearily shook and stumbled, nearly causing her to fall from imbalance. Elis reached a single arm out and held the staggering Luna by a shoulder.

“Sorry. I tried to lessen the impact but it appears I still need practice.” He rubbed his back from a slight ache and patted his clothes to throw off any hay.

“How did we survive that?” Luna stuttered in her continued shock.

“I used to jump from even higher heights into wheat stacks as a child. The stuff is surprisingly soft,” Elis said, patting Luna down to rid her of any straw and dust. “Regardless, we should go. You don’t want to miss the festival, do you?” Luna winced slightly and hastily shuffled forward, her
white and blue gown slowing her attempts at taking large steps. Elis let out a chuckle at the princess’ sudden eagerness. He readjusted his leather outfit and quickly followed after her.

The sound of drums, cheering, and laughter exploded as Elis followed Luna into the busy streets. Lamps illuminated the otherwise darkening evening. Much of candles stood behind colored paper or glass to throw colors at the already colorful town. The joy of the chatting, wandering people emanated on to the streets as luminously as the colorful lights did.

Several market booths stood open to offer food; the sizzling sounds and scent of frying meat filled the night sky, moving toward welcoming ears and noses. Some of the booths had several people playing an assortment of instruments to give the atmosphere a more playful and mystical mood.

Other booths had a number of activities for children and people to partake in. From shooting arrows at targets, to throwing pebbles into cans, to betting on rodents in mazes, the festival offered much to be enjoyed by the city’s citizens.

Luna turned her head back and forth quickly so that her eyes could catch every pint of what the festival had to offer. Her eyes stood wide, her fingers pinching the lip of her curiously gaping mouth. “This is amazing,” Luna exclaimed as she turned around to face Elis. “I’ve never imagined the festival to be so great.” Any lack of energy that Luna showed prior was gone. She acted like a child who had just received a new toy.

“Indeed, it is something that’s certainly worth seeing,” Elis said with a nod.

“I’m glad I met you. Without you, I w-would have never had a chance to see this,” Luna cheerfully replied. “Come on, let’s go p-play some games.” The princess reached for one of Elis’ hands. Her fingers limply grasped his skin. They felt cold the second they touched Elis’ hand.
Elis frowned and said, “You do not need to push yourself so much.”

“And you don’t need to say such dumb things so much. Now let’s hurry, we won’t get to play them all if you just stand there.” Elis shuffled after Luna, barely being pulled by Luna’s weak, cold hands. She led him towards the first booth her eyes had set on, the two walking up to the colorful stand. This stand contained a large tub full of water in the center. Several children surrounded the tub of water and each one reached in with small fishing nets, trying to catch the fish in the pool.

The princess stepped up to the booth’s owner, a middle-aged, chubby woman. She kept her head low and walked forward without saying a word. The booth’s owner raised a single brow and said, “This booth was designed for children. Aren’t you too old for this?” Luna shook her head and hummed once. The woman kept her brow raised and responded, “If you insist.” She took a miniature fishing net from a pile and handed it to Luna. “Don’t have too much fun.”

The princess shuffled toward the pool and knelt down so that she could fish through it. She dipped her fishing net into the pool and swirled it around in an attempt to catch something. She kept the lower part of her face hidden behind her knees, slightly rocking back and forth.

“You’re doing it wrong, lady,” one of the young boys spoke out.

Luna looked to the boy with a guilty frown. “S-s-sorry,” she said in a whisper.

“Aren’t you too old to be doing this?” another child said. Luna shook her head meekly in response.

“Stop. You’re scaring away all the fish,” another said. Luna retracted her small fishing net and wrapped her arms around her knees, not saying anything. A small sniffle came from her as her eyes looked about in confusion.
Elis knelt beside her, eliciting a sideward glance from the princess. She looked at the hunter crouch beside her who reach in a fishing net of his own. “A single, smooth stroke is all you need,” he told the princess. Luna looked to the hunter’s fishing net, seeing it lifted out of the water, a golden fish caught in the stringed mesh.

The other children gawked and wowed at the ease of angling that the hunter demonstrated. Elis released the golden fish back into the pool, then stood up and took a several steps back. The princess continued to gaze at Elis with an open mouth for a few moments before smiling at him and nodding. She turned to the pool and repeated the motion that the hunter had done. She lifted the net out of the water, a flailing, silver fish contained within it. Luna looked at the fish with wide, glistening eyes. Her smile broadened; she faced the hunter in order to beam at him.

“Show me how you did that,” one of the children exclaimed to Luna.

“Show us,” another child asked.

Luna’s looked down, faintly smiling, her cheeks reddening. She nodded at the children with a hum and began telling them about how she managed to catch the fish. “First, you l-lower the net gently into the water…”

Several minutes passed as she spoke with the young children, giggling occasionally as they laughed at jokes. The princess stood up, and waved to the children, the children waving back with cheers.

“Thank you,” Luna said to Elis as she walked up to him. Her face contained light blush and a faint smile.

“I am only trying to keep a promise,” Elis said with a grin.

Luna nodded back. She walked up to the hunter and took his arm in her hands. “Come on there is still much to d-do,” she said with a quieted voice as she pulled Elis to the
next stand with increasing haste.

The hunter and princess hurried from one booth to another. The two listened to the stringed sounds of instruments and looked at jesters performing jokes. They stopped at stands and tents to play games such as tossing rings and matching pictures painted on stone.

“This is so much fun. I can’t believe I’ve missed this kind of t-thing every year,” Luna spoke out.

As the princess finished talking, she stumbled gently and fell against the hunter. Deep breaths escaped her lungs as Elis caught her falling body. “Are you alright? Should I take you back?” Elis asked.

Luna winced slightly and jumped away from the hunter. “What?” She said as if not realizing what happened. “I-I’m fine. I could just use some water. I’d be rather disappointed if this night ended so quickly,” Luna said with a weighted voice, trying her best to fight her weakness. A few beads of sweat fell from her forehead. Her face reddened, Elis not sure whether from fever or embarrassment.

“If you say so,” Elis responded quietly. He led Luna to a fountain, and gently sat her down on the stone frame. The princess dipped her hand in the fountain and took out a small scoop of water. She pressed the palm full of water to her lips and sipped quietly. Her hand reached again into the water and pulled another palmful. One after another, she drank the water, her thirst appearing without end.

The princess’ endless sipping ceased, and she let out a deep sigh. The sickly princess stood up, patting her gown a few times. “Let’s do these ones next,” she said in a tired voice. Elis first frowned at her, but then nodded with a smile. The two walked into another bustling street full of people walking about and participating in the many booths. Laughs, cheers, and shouts swept through the streets lit by colorful lamps. Luna looked in the direction of the first booth that
had caught her eye. She held her hands together and stared silently at the booth, which had a dozen people sitting at tables eating golden fruit. They laughed and chatted away into the evening as a waitress brought them more food.

The princess turned slightly and began walking again as if she did not see the stand. “Do you not want to go to that particular one?” Elis asked with a raised brow.

Luna stopped her slow advance and lowered her head. She spoke without turning to face the hunter. “I do. I really do.”

“Then what’s the problem?” Elis asked. Luna said nothing. He looked at the people sitting at the tables, each one enjoying each other’s company. “I see…” Elis said. “There is no reason for someone like you to be afraid of other people,” Elis commented.

“Y-you’re r-right,” Luna said as she turned to the booth that served the golden fruit. Her feet slowly shuffled forward, keeping her eyes toward the ground. She walked up behind a waitress in a black and white dress and raised her hand. Her mouth opened slightly, but no words came from her throat. The waitress simply walked away without even noticing the princess. Luna bent her eyebrows upward and reached out to the departing waitress, who kept walking past.

Another waitress passed by Luna from another direction. The princess reached her hand out to the other one and lightly mumbled, “Um… Excuse m-me.” The waitress hurriedly walked past without even glancing at Luna. Two more waitresses walked by, carrying plates of golden fruit. Luna lightly reached out to both of them, moving her raised hand in direction of one and then the other. She opened her mouth but said nothing. The waitresses scurried about without giving the princess so much as a glance.

The hunter stood from a distance, watching Luna’s futile attempts. He saw her lower her head and begin walking
toward him. He took a step forward, but stopped as he noticed a young man lightly grab the princess’ long sleeve. Luna flinched at the sudden pull at her sleeve and shot around quickly, her face red and stretched from a frown.

“Them maids, they just don’t even bother to look at you ‘less you so much as hit ‘em over the head,” the cheery man said with a grin, a tooth visibly missing from his mouth. He wore simple clothes, and his head contained messy, brown hair. “Maid! Get us some peaches here,” he shouted. Luna opened her mouth a bit but she still could not find the words with which to speak. “Oh, no need to thank me,” the young male replied to Luna’s silent words.

Luna looked down with a grin and blushing face. She nodded once and hummed.

“Why don’t you sit with us?” The man waved his hand across the table he sat at, the few young people, all slightly above Luna’s age, that sat with him all raised their hands to greet Luna. “Company’s never a bad thing for anyone or from anyone.” A waitress walked up beside Luna and placed a plate full of golden peaches on the young man’s table. “We’ve got plenty.”

Luna waved her head side to side and hummed once more.

“No? That’s fine. Here take as many as you want. That’s why you’re here, right?” The man took the newly set plate and held in front of Luna. The princess took two peaches from the plate and nodded with one last hum. “Well… Take care of yourself lady,” he said as he turned back to his company.

“T-t-thank you,” Luna said meekly.

The young man with messy hair raised his hand and said without looking back, “Don’t mention it.”

Luna turned back toward the hunter and hurriedly stumbled toward him, holding the two gold orbs in her hands, a smile across her face. “I’m glad that you brought
me h-here,” Luna said quietly to the hunter. “Here. Have a h-honey glazed peach.” Luna reached a hand with a golden fruit out.

Elis took the fruit from Luna with a bit of slow caution. He brought the peach to his lips and took a large bite. He let the fruit sit on his tongue for half a second before the peach and honey’s flavor struck him. His eyes widened. He spit out the piece he had bitten off and clasped his mouth as small, dry coughs escaped him. He grit his teeth and tightened the hand holding the remaining peach, crushing it under his fingers.

Luna stood for a moments with an open mouth before gasping and stepping up to the hunter, trying to reach his closed fist in order to save the dying peach. “W-why d-did you do that?” she asked with a frown.

“Are you trying to make a fool of me? How overly sweet can food get before it’s poisonous?” Elis said as he dropped the crushed peach and wiped his hand on his clothes.

“I’m not trying to make a fool of you,” Luna said while looking down. “I think it’s d-delicious,” she said while taking a small bite with a smile.

A sound swooned across the air, moving over and past the sound of the crowd and background. A sweet song coiled through the air, the music of several dozens of instruments all playing a single song in unison.

Luna looked up and off into the distance “That music,” Luna whispered absent-mindedly, the peach falling from her hands as she lost all concentration on it. She began to walk in the direction of the music, being drawn by its melody.

“Luna?” Elis asked confusingly.

“It’s already that t-time,” Luna’s voice held a mix of disappointment and interest. She followed the source, Elis keeping behind her like a shadow.

A large cloth tent came into view, covering a medium
sized plaza. The tent stood without walls, only several metal beams holding up a linen ceiling. Music and a soft glow came from underneath the cloth covering, no walls on the tent to keep them trapped. A crowd had gathered under the large cover, moving about.

Luna stopped outside the invisible wall of the tent and watched the people inside with a lightly gaped mouth. Underneath the large cloth covering many people twirled in pairs, dancing. Ribbons of light weaved through the crowd in tune with the music and dancers. Luna simply looked into the crowd with saddened eyes, feeling unable to cross the invisible wall.

“Do you want to go inside?” Elis asked.
“I do. I r-really do want to go in. It’s just…” Luna said, holding a clenched hand to her chest.
“I understand,” Elis said to Luna in a peaceful tone.
“I-it’s n-nothing,” Luna said with a half-hearted smile. “I’d like to say that we should move on and forget about this, but I really wanted to dance in these blessed lights.”

Elis looked toward the people dancing, each one slowly twirling in couples, their arms around each other. The blue, blessed light twirled along with the people, holding them all in its luminescent arms. “Yet, because you feel so isolated, you fear you will not be able to find a person to dance alongside with,” Elis finished Luna’s thoughts. “I think you have nothing to worry about. A beautiful princess such as yourself should have no problem finding someone to dance with.”

Luna flinched with wide eyes. Her face flustered with a red tone. “N-no, that’s n-not it.” Luna turned away from the hunter. She gave a deep sigh and said in a calm voice, “There is no one else I want to dance with more than the person who brought me here today.”

Elis looked down at his feet. “Despite what a lowly
person I am? I think you deserve to dance with someone with more class, someone whose clothes aren’t dirty with animal blood.”

“That’s nonsense. You know that doesn’t matter to me. I spent my whole life alone, what would a person such as me care about what kind of person you are? S-so, why not give this lonely princess a dance she longs for?” Luna said, trying to keep her voice as calm as possible despite the embarrassing words.

Elis gave a deep sigh to himself and reached out to Luna with an open hand. “The truth is that there is nothing else I would like more than that right now.” Elis’ voice spoke in a tone full of underlying joy. Luna turned back to face the hunter and placed her small hand in his. The two stepped past the invisible wall into the dancing crowd.

Within the crowd, Luna swallowed once in anxiety as she wrapped her trembling arms around the hunter’s leather covered body. Elis moved his arms across the princess’ back. The two held each other close just like the dancers around them. The two joined, contrasting figures began to take steps in order to move themselves in a circle. They moved around in awkward steps at first but quickly showed grace as they followed the music, the crowd, and the dancing light. Both Luna’s and Elis’ uneasiness disappeared as the two moved comfortably under the moment’s guide.

“There is no one better to choose to dance with,” Luna said happily as she placed her head against Elis. Her violet eyes caught a glimpse at the surrounding crowd as the two spun around. The faces of the people around stared at the hunter with suspicion. Luna frowned, recognizing the hunter’s shabby appearance.

“Who is that?” a person from the dancing crowd whispered.

“Don’t you recognize her? She’s the second princess of
“She’s the second princess?”
“There was another princess?”
“I thought the second princess was never allowed to leave the castle.” A series of voice traveled around.
“If she’s a princess, what is she doing dancing with that scoundrel?”
“You’re right. How can she even stand to touch such a foul thing?”
“I didn’t know that our princess was a plebeian lover.”
Luna buried her head further into the leather and fur shirt of Elis. “That’s not true. You’re wrong,” Luna said, but her voice was only loud enough for Elis to hear.
“If our princess is affectionate towards one of such class, what’s stopping her from—?”
“Quiet down. Who knows what might happen if we anger him,” a person tried to say in a hushed voice.
“T-that’s not t-true,” Luna whispered again. She felt Elis’ hand lightly touch the back of her head, her eyes slightly broadening in surprise.
“Don’t let them get to you. Aristocrats never learn.”
“Elis…” Luna said as she gazed up at the hunter.
“If it bothers you, I can always take you back,” Elis asked, ceasing the dance between the two and slightly moving the princess away so that he could look in her eyes.
Luna looked down at the ground. “I’m sorry,” she whispered. Elis gave a sigh of hopelessness. Luna suddenly embraced Elis, ready to continue their dance. “I d-don’t want to end this night as a bad memory. I want to forget what just happened and remember nothing but this feeling.” Elis showed a light smile and placed his arms around Luna once more.
The two resumed their waltz among the light as if nothing had happened. People’s gazes still centered on the two, and
the two still felt the crowd’s stares and glares. They tried their best to ignore them, removing them from their world.

“Thanks for trying to save me,” Luna said, trying to pull her own and Elis’ attention away from the other dancers.

“You shouldn’t thank me. You already know I promised to save you anytime you ever felt alone.”

Luna’s face reddened. “You know I’ve always had nightmares. It’s probably because of my weak and sick body that I have them so often,” Luna said. “In all of them, monsters take away my mother, my father, and my sister.” She tightened her arms around Elis. “Then I’m left alone. While I suffer from loneliness and coldness, the monsters come after me.” She shook her head. “I can’t do anything but lie helplessly. However…” She looked up at Elis. “A hero shows up. He makes the loneliness go away and the monsters with it. You say I don’t need to thank you, but I really do. I need to thank you for being a hero for me.”

Elis nodded once. “I understand.”

“Even though it’s night, the time when all the nightmares come, I’m not scared,” Luna said.

Without saying another word, the hunter and princess continued their dance through the illuminating, blue lights. For that night, it was a world that only held those two.

An hour’s time passed and the crowd began to disappear, the lights fading. The princess and the hunter let each other’s bodies free as their dance ended.

“Thank you for bringing me here,” Luna thanked the hunter one last time. “I finally felt what it means to be out of that room; the last thing I want to do is go back to it.”

“You need rest regardless,” Elis commented.

“You’re right. I am feeling pretty tired after today. To be honest, if you didn’t hold on to me during the dance, I probably would have fallen over from exhaustion.” Luna gave a soft smile. Her features looked paler than usual, lacking
energy. Her breaths came irregularly in the near silent night and her forehead glistened with sweat.

“It would be best if we got you back to the castle quickly,” Elis said.

“I can’t argue with you about that.” Luna grinned and let the hunter lead her back to the castle. Her exposed shoulders shook visibly under the cold breeze. The hunter removed the fur covering of his leather shirt without saying a word and wrapped it around the princess for cover. Luna nodded back with a smile. She gripped the fur around her shoulders tightly.

The streets were quiet now. Only small groups of people remained to take in the afterglow of the party. Stars shined brightly from the dark sky.

A light cough escalated from Luna’s throat. The two stopped. “Are you alright?” Elis asked. Luna nodded once with a hum, but her coughing only escalated further. “Get a hold of yourself, Luna,” Elis spoke out. He held the princess’ collapsing body up. Her coughs continued to escalate until they suddenly faded. “Luna?” Elis asked the girl. No response. “Luna?” he called again, desperately holding on to the limp princess. He quickly picked her up in his arms and looked around, his head shooting from direction to the next. An empty bench caught his vision. Without pause, he hurried to the long wooden seat that stood by a building’s wall. He laid Luna down on the bench, his heart beginning to race, his breaths rising in intensity.

Luna’s chest slowly rose and fell as she lay peacefully on the wooden bench. A deep breath left Elis’ lungs. He sat beside the sleeping princess, leaning his back against the wall the bench stood beside. He took a glance at the sleeping princess, a faint grin coming across his face as he admired her peaceful appearance and beauty. He turned his head forward and rested it against the wall behind him.

“Elis?” the voice of Luna said in a quiet moan. The
hunter quickly looked to the princess. Her violet eyes blinked several times as she focused on the figure sitting next to her. “My hero finally shows up to save me from my nightmare,” her slow, weak voice said. She sat up on the bench and let out a deep breath.

“How are you feeling?” Elis asked.

Luna said nothing at first. She only moved herself closer and placed her head against the leathered shoulder of the hunter. Elis’ eyes broadened slightly at the princess’ sudden action. “Now that you’re h-here, I feel fine,” she said. “Don’t ever l-leave me alone. I’m scared to be alone. It hurts to be alone,” Luna cooed meekly.

“Luna,” Elis whispered into the dark street.

“Especially now when it’s dark and every part of me aches. I’ve never liked the night. It’s always so dark and lonely. I always wished there was a sun at night to keep me company. Right now you’re my only night’s sun, so don’t leave me alone here in the dark.”

Elis nodded. “I am not going to go anywhere.”

“Help me keep away these terrible nightmares, this terrible loneliness.”

“I will not let you go and I will not let any monsters reach you.” The hunter reached his hand out and grasped Luna’s. A small gasp escaped Luna’s lips. She looked down at the hunter’s hand that held her hand. “Don’t worry, Luna. I will not let those nightmares haunt you anymore. I will be right here to save you from them.”

The two sat in the dark street with only the faint light of the stars shining on them. The empty street felt so peaceful and the hunter so tired that he could not help but let his eyes slowly close by themselves. The princess had already shut her eyes and let soft breaths leave her lips. Elis let a final whisper escape his mouth before his own mind fell into a world of dreams, “Don’t worry. I will always be your night’s sun.”
The Pocket of a Clown

Your pancake face as white as milk stands flush against that smeared on smile, a bloody brush swish stroke, and dimples full of angry rouge.

The children love you but are blind to what I see. Those speckled corner tears are not just paint, and do not signal laughter but

an aching well, a heart now twisted dry.
That broken pump now ferments fevered lies of tethered poodles, lions, soaring high

in hopes that all the energy you spend on famous frantic smiles will one day mend a life as broken as your heart’s own end.

The curtain drops, foundations crack as all goes black, a spot light shorted out. A small blue thread of loss weaves tunnels through the wall

of death around your face and burns soft skin. Cold silence fills the stage, a circus sin, and muffles fears that bubble from within.
Field Session Odes, Summer 2009

Ode to Moab, Day 1
We knew it was going to be hot
but not possibly this hot
I’d rather be out
at the crack of dawn
than here at noon
when the sun has settled
sinking far too slowly
in the sparkling blue sky
with no rain clouds in sight
and barely a breeze to cool the day

Ode to Moab, Day 2
Today it howled
hats blew to the four winds
and I felt
like a tower
on a cliff somewhere
carved to a smooth surface
like a log on a lathe
worked into swirls
and columns
red rock into arches
and soaring ruddy cliffs
Ode to Moab, Day 3
Soaring arches
under blue skies
Towering cliffs
and terrifying falls
French tourists
asking random questions
best day
in Moab yet

Ode to Moab, Day 4
Blue dirt
brown dirt
tan dirt
damned if I care
sometimes
what kind of dirt
much less, lots of times,
what the hell it means

Ode to Calumet, Day 1
Could have sworn
a bear outside my tent
shuffled and snorted
Turned out it was only Joe
and freezing cold
made the rest of my morning.
Altitude killed, a steadier pace
will be required
Beautiful mountains,
lovely valleys
threatening clouds.
It’s going to be
a beautiful week
ODE TO CALUMET, DAY 2
At least “Rite in the Rain”
is true to its name
Today was far less pretty
mostly rainy and cold and shitty

ODE TO CALUMET, DAY 4
After forgetting about day 3,
which, by the way, was lovely
and horribly confusing,
it remains only to say
that my knee hurts today
I’m glad it was warm
and we’re real close to done

ODE TO SHEEP CREEK, DAY 1
Storms threatened this morning
Lightning and thunder
but loads of notes
and a tick in my hair
made the day go by fast
and the sun slip down early
no cell signal sucks
But we’re halfway
through Field camp
and real close to 2/3

ODE TO SHEEP CREEK, DAY 2
Archaeologists and couples
started our day out right
a tick in my notebook
I smashed with a hammer
and by noon we were at the top
but storm clouds soon gathered
and lightning cracked
above our heads
as we sheltered behind tuff
and prayed for our lives
three deer came close
but ran just like we wished
we could and did but got lost
and waded through streams
but dinner in Gunnison
and a few good phone calls
made day 2 fade
and day 3 faceable

Ode to Sheep Creek, Day 3
Thick mist started our morning
Treacherous mud ‘neath
pristine gravel lay
and that was only the first time
Andrea fell today
Stormclouds threatened, again
but missed us today
we saw awfully coarse material
when it should have been fine
DEET saved the day
even as it gunkified
and overall at least
it was better than yesterday

Ode to Sheep Creek, Day 4
A lovely day today
helped ease our dampness
and confusion
allowed us to enjoy our day
a tick on Andrea’s face
at lunch caused some consternation
but tiptoeing along
the northern edge
of the longhorn cowpen
led us to discover
a new log crossing
and the joys of curious cattle
we remain confused
but happy
that we are
so close
to done

**Ode to Molas Lake, Day 1**
Freezing cold this morning
but beautiful vistas
and clear skies
and straightforward geology
made this another lovely Monday
but I’ll withhold judgment
until we see
how tomorrow goes
or tonight
- I might just sleep
in my car

**Ode to Molas Lake, Day 2**
Snow on high this morning
clouds out, all day
more snow down low
but dry enough to hang on
we persevered through the cold
and mapped in the snow
it would have been picturesque
from a car window
but at least we were dry
and certainly sly
and we’ll see how it goes
tomorrow

Ode to Molas Lake, Days 3&4
So yesterday we were freed
some snow gave us a reprieve
and today was just fine
some snow and a line
of lost geologists trekked
through a swamp
– sorry, we were
geographically embarrassed –
and had to find their way
back out, but overall
yesterday was awesome
and today wasn’t too bad
either
and we’re almost done!
Redbird

Forcing oneself through the brush
And growth of the overgrown path,
Savoring the shield of thick tree trunks,
Protecting oneself from the ever-bitter wind,

It is only then that one truly feels, truly realizes
One is not alone. Snow crunching, melting in footsteps,
The simplicity of sound: wind, cold merciless wind.
Swirling wind, as it accelerates it angers,
Whipping sparse, stripped branches
Snapping off the weakest ones.

Why, one can ask, is life unforgiving?
In the bitter of winter, one only suffers from oneself.
Sun, too bold.

The light catches on the trees,
Brightening the frozen berries.
The sun channels pools in the winter-hardened snow.

A redbird, startling red.
Eyes calm, it does not attempt to take flight.

A sound, a song, the wind sweeps
I whip my head around and see the redbird
So red that one cannot help but look at it.
And I hear its song.
The Two-Fingered Spy
PART III of TOGETHER IN THE MUD

What can you ever really know of other people's souls - of their temptations, their opportunities, their struggles? One soul in the whole creation you do know: and it is the only one whose fate is placed in your hands.

- C.S. Lewis

“One last thing,” whispers Adnan, “Thank you, Rupert… for all that you have done and didn’t do. You are a friend like no other, and it was a pleasure sharing this journey with you…see you on the other side, if you believe there is one.”

Rupert, next to Adnan, in the middle of the crowd, under the sign that reads “To Gate C, London Airfare”, pushes the trigger. An explosion that perishes memories goes off.

THIRTEEN MINUTES EARLIER
“What if we don’t do it, will tomorrow still be the same?” asked Adnan. Reminiscent flashes of his past paid his thoughts a brief visit.

Rupert snickered. “It won’t, because then I would still be damn alive to see it.”

Adnan displayed a smile that emitted neither happiness nor regret. He whispered into Rupert’s listening ear, his English accent elevating every vowel, “I see no way out. We have to do it. We must.”

“Well, then,” breathed Rupert, “Shall I detonate?”
“No, wait,” objected Adnan. “I am feeling thirsty. Let’s grab a cup of coffee first.”
“You’re mad. We have no time; people are going to board soon, and if we do not do it now, we may—”
“Rupert, I just need a few more minutes. Don’t worry.”
“I am not. We planned it with an open mind; we execute
it with a closed conscious. I am just afraid that we miss our chance.”

“It’s just a cup of coffee.”

77 MINUTES EARLIER

Adnan and Rupert walked to the resting chairs by the tall windows, waiting for the clearance. Rupert pulled a bundle of pictures from his handbag. He slowly began going through them.

“How did we end up here?” asked Rupert. “Not long ago you were a nice fifteen-year-old boy with a family and big dreams back in the Middle East. Now, you are a twenty-year old living across the world, with no family and no dreams. And you are not nice anymore. You are a murderer. Or at least you are going to be, in one hour from now.”

“Let the past to the past and the present to the future… Brilliant! Mary is waving for us!”

93 MINUTES EARLIER

As the taxi stopped, the driver turned back to his two passengers, who had been quiet, the entire trip.

“That would be twenty five pounds, good sir.”

“Here is fifty,” said Adnan. “Something for the kids.”

“Sir, that’s very generous of you. My wife and I shall keep you in our prayers, so that harm is casted from your way.”

“It’s alright. Harm sometimes is inescapable.”

“Pardon me, good sir, you do not want someone to pray for you?!”

“I am just afraid that it would be the demons who answer your prayer. Your next fare is here, good day.”

Adnan pushed the door of the cab open and slipped out. Rupert followed him. They walked past the entrance, scanning the faces of the people who were leaving the airport.
Rupert was thinking that this was the last time he would see those people, the last time he would walk through a door, the last time he would read those monitors descending from the ceiling, listing flights and departure times, the last time he would see a water cooler, a flight attendant, a sign that read “Did you forget your laptop?”, a poster that displayed the quote “Peace, pass it on”, an elevator, a trash can.

“Stop thinking whatever you’re thinking!” demanded Adnan.

“You don’t know I was thinking,” replied Rupert in a low voice, almost falling over, as his right foot stumbled upon his left.


“I was always normal. It seems that when we know death is close, we change. But I have to think before I lose this privilege. This way I know I am not betraying myself.”

“Thinking leads to more thinking. More thinking leads to ideas. Ideas lead to exploration. Exploration leads to discovery. Discovery leads to desires. Desires lead to freedom. Freedom leads to choices. Choices we cannot afford. We already made a decision. Everything must go on as planned.”

“And as planned everything will go. I am your bullet, and I am in your gun, and the only way out for me is through the trigger. I promised you that I will help you, but until that moment arrives, I still want to live.”

The two walked to the front counter. Adnan presented his ticket to the attendant.

“Hi, sir, I hope you are having a marvelous day,” said the red-haired receptionist, wearing a nametag that read Mary.

“Yes, yes, we are,” said Adnan.

“Pardon?”
“I said I am having a marvelous day. Do you need my I.D.?”

“Well, actually, I need to see your passport.”

As Adnan handed her his leathery document, he noticed that one of her fake nails was missing. He did not alert her. Mary went to the back, presumably getting more bag stickers.

“Why not tell her?” whispered Rupert.

“She seems happy; why stir the water?”

“Because knowing is a right.”

“Not having my family killed was also a right, but I was not granted that, now was I?”

“Is this why you’re doing this? A limb for a limb?”

“Rupert, friend, we are now on the precipice of our plan. It is way past the reason and way past the cause. In fact, we are so past it, that I don’t even remember it now.”

“Why on the contrary, you remember it exactly. In fact, it is so close, that it is sitting inside an envelope in your left pocket. You might want to read it again.”

Adnan pulled the envelope, whose tip was torn. He slid the letter out but did not dare unfold it.

“I know what is written inside, but I don’t know if I really believe it.”

Rupert laughed. And maybe a little too loud. “Who said you need to believe it? The fact that it is written makes the hair on my bottom dance.”

“Stitch your lips now, and go to the next counter to get clearance. The lovely lady is coming back.”

Mary was not happy when she returned. The passport was not in her hands.

“I am afraid there is a little of a problem with your documents,” she said politely, but not overly caring.

“It’s fine, that happens every time we fly.”

“Pardon?”
“I am cleared every time. It just takes a while. I presume my name is similar to someone on the hot list. And while I share my name with that person,” Adnan grinned, “I can promise you that I am not dangerous.”

Mary let out a faint and hasty laugh. “I am certain you are not. It’s just a normal procedure. If you can wait on the side by the tall windows, I will call for you as soon as I get the clearance.”

1 HOUR AND 75 MINUTES EARLIER

“Blimey! And I thought I was au fait with all your little plans, Adnan!” beamed Rupert. “You are much more genius than I thought you were.”

“You are not dim witted yourself,” said Adnan as he slipped a euro into the machine that returned a train ticket. “I may not be, but no way in bloody hell would I come up with such an idea. By Joseph’s name, with your trick no one would ever get a parking ticket—even if they parked in the middle of a police station.”

“It’s my little secret,” leered Adnan. “Follow me; we need to get on the Pan Am tube to station 20-01. From there we change to the 20-03 station and take a taxi to the airport.”

“All right, then. But I may not stop talking about your little—and might I add dodgy—secret for a while!” grinned Rupert.

The two stood before the stopping tube’s door. When it opened, they gazed left and right, but no one was boarding. Inside, it was almost empty, save for an old couple sitting in the back. Rupert and Adnan took a seat by the door, the fresh air breezing in until the second the sliding door shut closed. The tube began moving. Adnan turned to Rupert.

“Rupert, why did you really befriend me? And why agree to help me carry out my plans?”

Rupert threaded his fingers in an almost Gordian knot.
He bit his lips before opening his mouth.

“For the longest time I wondered why I was brought to this life. And on the day I met you, I realized that there was a purpose for my existence. And that purpose, as I slowly came to embrace, is to die. Today. For your family. For you.”

9 MINUTES AND 11 SECONDS EARLIER

The West Train Company parking lot was full. Adnan drove left and right in search for an empty spot, but it seemed that this morning everyone in London woke up before the sun and drove here. Rupert squinted his eyes and scanned the lot, losing hope.

“Bugger!” exclaimed Rupert. “Why do people keep populating like rats? Don’t they know this way parking lots get filled quicker?”

“People are blessings.”

“Well then, let’s see how those blessing people get you a parking spot?”

Adnan took a left turn by the end of the lane and headed to the front of the lot, where a police car was patrolling. When Adnan got to the gate, he stopped the car and backed into an empty space below a sign that read “Disabled Parking Permit Required.”

“I am trying to follow your thinking, but the rope is short. Why are we parking here? The police over there is going to spot you in no time,” said Rupert.

“Yes he will. But I never get a parking ticket.”

“How? You’ve got a permit?”

“No. I’ve got a ticket; one that I was served two years ago. But that was the last ticket I have ever gotten. I found a way, using this ticket, to never get a ticket again!”

“Enlighten me.”

The two unlocked their seat belts and got out. Adnan walked to the front of the shining car and slipped the ticket
“This way,” grinned Adnan, “the cops will think I was already given a ticket and they always move on!”

“Bloody hell!” gasped Rupert. “You’re brilliant. Although…I feel bad for the car.”

“And why is that?”

“All the other cars will look at yours and think she is foul. You are committing a crime using your car as a mask. If your car had a mouth, it would have screamed at you.”

“Luckily she does not. Now, come on; we don’t want to miss the Pan Am tube. Let’s go get the tickets and off to the airport.”

19 Hours and 91 Minutes Earlier

Adnan and Rupert took a seat and unfolded the lunch menu. The aroma of the place was exhilarating. The smell of the prime beef roasted beneath a garlic layer traveled over three tables and was caught by Rupert’s nose.

“I want that dish,” he said. “I am not even going to bother looking at the price.”

“I suppose you can order whatever you want. Just make sure Richard Sorge comes to our service.” Adnan exhaled a long breath that was buried in his chest for sometime now.

“Listen, are you sure that it is him?”

“I could never forget his face or his severed fingers. And besides, I will make him confess everything before I kill him this time.”

“Alright, Mother Nature is ringing me. Please order for me while I answer her. Get me those shrimp tails. Also, red wine would make the table glow.”

“I don’t drink; you know that.”

“Of course, I meant just for me. Be right back. I don’t want to keep her waiting.”

The waiter came in moments later. She was always
concerned that her boyish looks got her the low tips. From her low-cut hair, surgically corrected face and the flat chest, to the oddly freckled nose and black-colored hand gloves, everything about Suzie was vile to the eye. But she had been trying her best to allure her customers into paying larger tips by being overly friendly. Her luck with tips today was not about to change.

“My name is Suzie, and I’ll be your waitress for this hour.”

“Hello Suzie,” said Adnan, reading the menu like a holy book. “I will have the Ploughman with the Yorkshire Pudding, no cheese please. And he,” pointing at the empty chair across, “will have the shrimp tail special with a glass of red-wine. If you add some water to it, I am sure he will not mind!”

“I hear you,” winked Suzie. “I’ll be right back with your plates.”

Much like Suzie, society of Adnan’s time was deceptive. And much like deception, Suzie wore a face of kindness to appeal to the better nature of people. Adnan, unfortunately for Suzie, had the wit to see past the masks; after all, he had many of his own. He knew exactly what her methods were, and today, Adnan was not intending on playing along. Besides, Adnan had always thought abiding to society’s will is the worst sin of all, even if the cost is to witness the revelation of the society’s true unsightly face.

Rupert returned from the bathroom several minutes later. His hands were covering his mouth. He seemed sick.

“You were right,” complained Rupert with unease, “I should not have had the old cherry pie yesterday, no matter how delicious it looked. I feel my stomach is going to deport all the food out.”

“Then don’t point your mouth at me!” demanded
Adnan.

“Even the smell of this shrimp is making me feel sick. I do not think I will be able to eat…”

Rupert ran back to the bathroom, hoping to fire his loaded stomach there. Adnan asked Suzie to pack the food, and then he pulled out his wallet and placed the money on the table. Suzie, having counted the money, was not pleased.

“Excuse me, sir. It’s just… it’s just that tips around here do not sink below twenty percent of the total meal!”

“I apologize, but I feel okay with the percentage I paid.”

“Ah, good sir, you see, I think you would feel much more okay with a twenty percent tip.”

Adnan placed more money on the table, and after a moment, he retracted it back into his wallet.

“It’s strange, really; it didn’t feel any better to me.”

“How about now,” said Suzie sarcastically and lifted her skirt an inch or two higher. “Am I worthy of a higher tip?”

“What are you doing?”

“Isn’t that it? I have to look attractive to make your wallet answer to me. Isn’t that it?”

“You cannot appeal to my wallet this way.”

“Then how can I?”

“Like many people, you are being deceptive by wearing this mask that you hide behind. Try losing it.”

“I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“I can’t tell you. But I assure you that you have no idea what I have been through.”

“I can be surprising,” said Adnan.

“I still can not tell you,” replied Suzie. “Please leave.”

“In that case, let me tell you.” Adnan pulled a gun covered with a handkerchief and aimed it toward Suzie.
Nineteen Months, Nine Weeks, and Three Years Earlier

The phone rings at noon, and it is tamed at the hands of the boy named Adnan. He does not realize that answering this phone is going to throw him and his family into a spiral of events that will last only a few hours, and end at the death of his entire family, save little Mariam, who is not yet born. The phone is answered, and Adnan learns that his father (Mr. Khalid, who is an army pilot) has just died in action. Adnan, keeping the devastating news to himself, helps his mother pack quickly in preparation to escape the village, as the invaders are now closing in. Adnan, his elder brother, Rami, his widowed and pregnant sister, Muna, his mother, and his five-year-old twin siblings ride in the pickup truck. Rami drives toward the next village, Sahera, but on the way a rocket drops by and sends the car into the air. Rami and the little twins die instantly from the impact. Muna takes a breath or two and departs as well. Adnan’s mother (a retired surgeon) extraordinarily extracts the child from her dead daughter and dies as well. Adnan wraps the crying baby and runs away, not understanding what’s happening.

Many days later, after Adnan is rescued by the Red Crescent Organization, after he gets separated from Mariam by accident, after he finds a wounded soldier of the invaders and decides not to kill him, after he spends months searching for Mariam to no success, after he joins a retaliating group named Sword, after he stumbles upon Rulla who changes his life, after he is given a ticket to England, after he gets there and receives asylum, after he is adopted by an aging couple, after his mind develops an imaginary friend named Rupert, after he gets a letter in the mail that tells him eye-bursting news about the wounded soldier he had saved in Sahera, after he tracks the soldier for years and finds him, after he is told by the soldier extraordinary news about the real fate of one of his family members, after he devises a plan with the
imaginary Rupert to be executed at the airport, he comes to understand that while his life had ended in Sahera, another start will be given to him today.

THREE DAYS BEFORE THE DEATH OF ADNAN’S FATHER (MR. KHALID)

“Yes, sir!” says the soldier. “Everything is loaded and ready for transportation. Sector twelve has been notified and is awaiting your signal.”

“Good work, Richard,” says Major Khalid. “In three days the shipment shall arrive, and we should be able to put an end to this vile war.”

Richard Sorge, to no one’s knowledge, is a Soviet spy. He accompanies Major Khalid on the mission of delivery, and mid-air he unleashes a gas bomb in the plane. Having worn a protective mask, Sorge deviates the course of the plane and heads toward Moscow. An unplanned equipment failure forces Sorge to land, and he is captured by the invaders. After he is tortured and three of his right-hand fingers are cut, Sorge confesses his role. He is then placed in a Hawk helicopter and sent to a prison. During the night flight, Sorge manages to escape and brings the Hawk down. Wounded and not able to move, Sorge meets Adnan, who thinks he is a regular soldier of the invaders whose helicopter just crashed. Adnan decides not to kill Sorge and gives him another chance at life.

Sorge escapes to England. He changes his identity completely and begins dressing as a woman. Today, he works as a waiter in a restaurant, and he goes by the name of Suzie.

PRESENT TIME

“Take off your gloves,” says Adnan.
“Who are you?” asks Suzie.
“I was afraid you would remember my face, but I figured when we met in Sahera it was too dark for you to see it. Isn’t
that right, Suzie? Or should I say Richard Sorge?!”
“Please!” begs Suzie. “I spent years escaping from that name and that life. Please, not here, not now.”
“Not here, that can be arranged. Not now, that can not.”
Suzie leads Adnan to the storage room where they are alone now. Rupert follows the two.
“So, how did my father die? How did you kill him?”
“I didn’t kill him. He is alive!”
Adnan almost loses grip of his gun.
“What?!”
“No one on that plane died. The gas I used only sent them into an elongated coma.”
Richard tells Adnan the story, and now, he takes off his gloves, revealing three severed fingers.
“I wanted a new start. I came here.” Richard takes off his wig and drops it on the ground. “You didn’t kill me that night, why would you now?”
“I didn’t know you were involved with my father. Because of you, I am now nearly insane as I have an imaginary friend that follows me everywhere. Because of you, I lived all these years thinking my father was dead.”
“So you believe me when I tell you he is alive?”
“If he is not, I can always find you. I promise.”
Adnan leaves with Rupert, carrying a letter written by Richard regarding the whereabouts of Mr. Khalid.

“I have to kill you,” Adnan tells Rupert several hours later. “You see, I don’t need you anymore. I have a father to find and a new journey is ahead. Right before I travel back to Sahera, at the airport, I will need you to push the trigger of your existence and disappear entirely from my mind. Believe me, you are a friend like no other, and it was a pleasure sharing this journey with you...I will see you on the other side, if you believe there is one.”
Cash for Clunkers

Photograph
Tropical Sunset

Kaneesa Felton

Oil Painting

HG 2010
Reflection

Ivar Reimanis

Photograph

ART
Under the Spotlight

Photograph

Tim Weilert

HG 2010
Into the Forest

Dylan Merrigan

Photograph
Gift Wrapped with a Smile

Molly Katolas

Pencil

HG 2010
Tattoo
Three Cups of Tea

Ceramic

HG 2010
Fruit Doesn’t Grow Like That

Alex Swanson

Acrylic Painting
Maxwell

Pen and Ink

HG 2010
Serious Business in Cuba: men, dominoes, chess

James V Jesudason
Into the Sun

Photograph

Benjamin Allen
Boy on a Bus

Photograph

Ivar Reimanis
Golden Romance

Photograph

HG 2010
David Williams

Lamborghini Gallardo, Model 2003

Digital Media
Silence

Kelsey Kopecky

Digital Media

HG 2010
We All Fall Down

Photograph

Erik Lord
Benevolence

Jon Pigg

Digital Media

HG 2010
Sunset Over Clear Creek

Photograph

ART
In Bloom

Mariah Stettner

Photograph

HG 2010
Gorilla

Colored Pencil

Alex Swanson
Droplets on Stainless Steel

Erik Lord

Photograph

HG 2010
Boat

Heather Oertli
Ink, Watercolor and Charcoal

HG 2010
Lunch!

Jeanette Flannery Courtad

Painting
Lone Tree

Photograph

HG 2010
Frozen Air

Jon Pigg

Digital Media
Smoking

Photograph

HG 2010
Painting

Flossing?

Jeanette Flannery Courtad
Saguaro Sunset

Matt Young

Photograph

HG 2010
Little Froggy

Zulhilmi Yusop

Photograph
Kaikora

Photograph

Dylan Merrigan

HG 2010
Ode to Lon Capa

O Lon Capa, what did I do?
Too many digits, now too few
You must hate me, and I confess
I return the favor; Just let me progress!
I’ve been here for hours, you still won’t work
It’s 3 am and I don’t get torque
You love to torture, I know it well
But could you be nice for just a spell?
Laws of motion set me free
Blesséd Newton hear my plea
Calculus will right the wrong
I can’t believe that took so long!
That’s it, I’m done, I’m going to bed
All I can see is green and red
O Lon Capa, I’ll see you again
On this crusade that will never end
Dennis King

Ride

Ride through the sorrow
Ride through the pain
Ride through the sunshine
Ride through the rain

Ride for my darling who’s waiting for me
Ride for my dearly departed, for them I will see

In honor and memory of my daughter
C3C Chaney C. King
USAFA class of 2005
Anna Neimark

Fog

It blankets us
   a comforter fortress
A moat of words
   hanging in the air
   between us.

For all the sun-ray “I love yous”
   shedding light
A handful of cumulus questions
   dangles from the tree tops
   above our house.
Sacred Cows

I didn’t notice the cows drifting in on a slow, dusty tide. When my father called me I looked up, and all I could see were brown bellies and white-tipped tails, shadows and dirt. I knew my father was somewhere behind them, splitting wood in the barn. Wiping a red hanky across his forehead, he must have looked out into the pasture and called when he couldn’t see my four-year old form.

“Wave your arms and yell,” my father instructed, his voice small in the distance.

I took a step back, tried to see past the noses and grass poking out the corners of mouths, the tails switching the flies away.

“Just jump up and down! Yell, dammit!”

I paused, clinched my fists and screamed as loud as I could, “Heeeyy, hey, hey!”

The half-dozen cows nearest to me stopped chewing and turned their heads, and two of the giants shied away, their knees twisting a little sideways.

I stepped forward, yelled again, stomped my feet and waved my arms.

Jerseys and Guernseys parted like the Red Sea, opening a path to my father who was framed in a doorway, nodding and smiling his approval.

I spent many summers on that farm where my father grew up, covered in dust, climbing trees, chasing ducks, stepping over shale in search of fossils. A small farm by Colorado or Montana standards, it sits on the banks of the South Fork of the Potomac River in West Virginia. It wasn’t named, like the trophy ranches owned by Ted Turner, like the
100,000 acre Flying D Ranch near Yellowstone. It is a manila envelope tan rolling pasture, with a greenhouse, some low-slung wooden buildings, a pond, groundhogs, a vegetable garden out back of the two-story clapboard house. There is a spiral staircase from the kitchen to the bedrooms upstairs, and the living room has a fireplace made from stone found on the property. It is “The Farm,” land that has been in my family for generations.

Surrounded by grumpy, knobbly, tree-covered hills, I stopped fearing the cows, although I could never bring myself to trust them. My oldest sister, on the other hand, really loved them. One of them would let her grab its tail, and it would run, pulling her along, a lurching, laughing child in orbit. My sister developed an uncanny ability to communicate with the cows. She would moo and the cows would answer. She could get cows to talk to her.

Years ago now, I read a book about Plenty-coups, a Chief of the Crow Indians. It was for a class and I remember being mostly bored with the book, but there was one story about how in 1860 Plenty-coups had a dream. He was nine years old and had gone with three other boys to Montana’s Crazy Mountains to dream. (I’ve been to the Crazies, and they are crazy. Jagged peaks stick up like crystals, poke all different directions like really nasty, crooked teeth. Like sharks sort of, and those peaks look sharp and threatening and irrationally violent.) Plenty-coups walked until he could barely stand, took no food or water for four days and nights, and cut off part of his index finger hoping that blood would attract a Person to help him.

Finally, a Person came to him. In his dream they sank into the ground, and Plenty-coups saw “countless buffalo… their sharp horns thick as the grass grows.” He passed through the herd, walked and walked, and finally followed his guide back up into the sun. Standing with the sun
warming his neck, he turned and watched buffalo—bulls, calves and cows—flow out of the hole in the ground like a tumbling river. Their numbers blackened the plains, and still the buffalo flowed out of the hole.

Then they were gone, vanished; only antelope remained.

And then out of the hole flowed unlikely animals, bellowing bulls and cows and calves, but strange colored with long tails. Plenty-coups called them “spotted buffalo.” They were the cows of white men. Plenty-coups knew they would replace the buffalo on the Plains; he knew the buffalo would vanish forever.

The book goes on to describe how within twenty-five years his dream became reality; by 1883 the buffalo had disappeared. The eradication of the buffalo was a goal set by the United States government in its plan to subdue the Indians. Which, we all now know, it did. Encyclopedias dryly report that the rangeland became “fully stocked” with cattle in the 1880’s, but neglect to include that “stocking” this rangeland—with whites and their cattle—was only viable with the buffalo and the Indians, the so-called Native Americans, out of the picture.

No cows are native to the United States; cattle are not native anywhere in the western hemisphere. Christopher Columbus brought cattle to the West Indies in 1493, and the Texas Longhorns are their direct descendants. Early in the 17th century, English Shorthorn cattle were imported by the colonists to the eastern United States. Those cows produced meat, milk, tallow and hides, often for export. The green and resilient landscape of the eastern United States suited them; it was much like home; they adjusted nicely.

I left my home on the east coast in 1991, moved to Colorado to attend graduate school. Days after I arrived in Colorado, I met a woman from New York while we were both looking for apartments. We started chatting, discovering that
we each had a cat and liked bourbon. We decided to go camping.

We unfolded maps, talked to gas station attendants and convenience store clerks, looking for advice about where the locals go. The only gear I owned was a damn good flashlight and a water bottle. My flashlight had functions: it could really flash, and it was heavy enough to be an actual weapon. Katey, however, had the prize: a tent. We bought chocolate and champagne, piled pillows and blankets into her station wagon, and headed to Cameron Pass.

As instructed, we turned left at Ted’s Place (no relation to Ted Turner), headed up Route 14, which runs along the Cache La Poudre River. I saw the first cattle guard coming, leaned back in my seat and pressed my right foot on the passenger side brake petal. Katey never saw it coming.

“Holy shit!” she yelled, wincing as her car bounced down and over the metal slats.

I pointed at the sign, “Open Range.”

“Oooh,” she said.

“Those are to keep the cows in,” I said. “They won’t walk over them. For some reason.”

We drove the curves of Route 14 into Roosevelt National Forest. The air grew sharp and cold, and we pointed at the snow-capped peaks like giggling 8th graders gawking at Brad Pitt outside our window. Rounding yet another curve, there were a dozen cows milling around in the road. She slammed on the brakes. We gawked. We got out of the car, took pictures of the cows grazing, pictures of each of us standing by a cow, pictures of cows standing in the middle of the road. We were a little scared of those cows: they seemed unreliable, unpredictable, quintessentially western. We were thrilled. These cows were nothing like the pleasant giants who talk to my sister.

My whole image of the west, the ranches and ranchers,
has cows either as the stars or as the ubiquitous supporting cast. I can’t imagine the west without them. I have fond memories of them from childhood. But I also know they aren’t native. In Colorado, neither am I, or Katey, or any of the other people I know. I don’t understand why “native” is better, why people feel compelled to put “Colorado Native” stickers on their cars. I’m partly jealous of the Colorado Natives, though I can’t exactly say why.

I want to be a native of Colorado, because somehow “native” is “better.” I also want the wheat I see growing in Kansas to be native. The endless fields of wheat are a comfort to me. They’re safety and sustenance, a gift from the earth and farmer working together. Still, I know the wheat we grow now is from Russia: Turkey Red, Kharkov and Kubanka—they’re drought-resistant, resistant to black stem rust. It’s hard wheat, good for macaroni. (Funny the facts that stick in your brain.) It hasn’t been labeled, at least by me, as non-native, exotic, alien, which are nasty insults in the world of environmentalism—precisely because of those features which help it to thrive. In other words, it seems to work here; it too has adjusted nicely, like the cows, like me.

A year after my trip to Cameron Pass, a friend came to visit, and we decided to go for a hike, back up in Roosevelt National Forest. It was September and a little cool. My friend was very Green, one of the first vegetarians I had ever met. He is very goal-oriented in his approach to hiking: not a lot of time standing around and admiring a landscape. I know he reigned himself in with me, but the hike still felt like a death march: UP, UP, go, go, go! Once you reach the GOAL, well then, eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

We (he) set a brisk pace. I was out of breath. I kept pausing to examine leaves or interesting bugs, buying time, looking intent, yet casual, slowly gasping for air.

We crested a small hill, and there were many dozens of
cows rooting around the scrub, their brown backs stretching like a rumpled blanket. We froze, looked at each other and raised our shoulders.

“Hooved pestilence,” he grumbled.

I looked uncertainly at him, unwilling to wade through the river of cows and cow shit.

Impatient, he threw up his arms and yelled, “Rise, RISE against your oppressors!”

Once again, cows parted before me, but this time far more energetically. I think this would constitute a stampede, cows rushing away from the generally kind young man urging them into anarchy.

Anyone who has hiked public lands in the West has probably seen cows and seen what cows can do to a landscape. It’s not pretty, especially around creek beds and rivers. Cattle find a place and stay there; they don’t roam (like buffalo). Each cow will drink 20 gallons of water per day. Cattle forage until there is nothing left; they trample everything to mush, which then dries into hardpan. Even lands designated as “wilderness” are grazed. No machines are allowed in wilderness, but cows are. Go figure.

There’s a special insult to encountering cows in wilderness. Of course there is the damage cattle causes: it is undeniably outrageous. But part of the insult lies elsewhere: it’s unnatural for these domesticated creatures to be wandering around the backcountry of the Rocky Mountains. They’re fine on neat-as-a-pin ranches or standing, simply standing, smack in the middle of a road. In the woods, cows offend my sensibilities and my ordering of the world.

We in the West—as in Judeo-Christian—have a long history of trying to figure out what belongs where, and which “where” is good. Traditional Christianity found only man (and certainly not woman) made in God’s image. Paradise was urban, the City of God. There are the notorious passages
in Genesis where man is instructed to subdue and have dominion over nature. Wilderness is the home of Satan, dark and repugnant. Evil lurks in the untamed, the forests and deserts, the unknown.

A little over three hundred years ago, with the publication of John Ray’s *The Wisdom of God as Manifested in the Works of Creation*, a shift began in our perceptions of wilderness. This trend was propelled forward by the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. As cities industrialized, “civilization” became more and more frightening and alienating, and this fear was translated into a new vision of nature: Nature as refuge, pristine nature as God manifest on earth, and love of nature a form of worship.

In 1996 I left Colorado and moved to Montana. Montana seemed even more “western” than Colorado. *A River Runs Through It*, the rivers, the wide, glaciated valleys. 6.2 people per square mile. (It’s 41.5 in Colorado.) Driving across Montana takes hour upon hour upon hour. Driving from Denver, Colorado to Missoula, Montana takes 14 hours, and that’s at a good clip. Wyoming is lunar, but Montana is Jupiter.

My only summer in Missoula I worked moving fishermen’s “rigs” from put-in to take-out along the Blackfoot River. Our days were long—we’d leave Missoula around 10AM and drive an hour or two to the farthest point, usually a little past Ovando, and then start working our way back to town. We mostly drove logging roads—thin, dusty and rutted, washboard in spots. These roads roughly paralleled the Blackfoot, sometimes rising high above it, and other times I could smell the river—I knew it was there—but couldn’t see it. Daily I saw deer or hawks, osprey or bald eagles. My favorites were the red-wing blackbirds. Almost daily I saw cattle milling, heads dipping in between sage and knapweed.
As the summer progressed, the cows became more and more ratty looking. As days melted into the next, as the heat rose and dust spun, the cows seemed to delight in standing in the middle of the logging roads, matted statues, covered in filth and burrs. They looked diseased. Approaching Jeeps and horn-blowing did not convince them to move. They stared, and they seemed to enjoy making our days longer and more frustrating. They thought Punk kids and their cars. In such a hurry. Blah blah blah.

A hooved pestilence indeed.

There was an additional danger on those roads: loaded logging trucks careened down them, oblivious to both cows and SUVs. Some places along the river smelled like my father’s workshop, like sawdust. Every day I watched the progression of the logging, the blasted landscape with thin and scrawny limbs left strewn along the roads, abandoned and beaten.

Plum Creek owns, or at least it seems to own, virtually all the land adjacent to the Blackfoot River. Out of civic duty, a kindness, Plum Creek allows fishermen to use the logging roads to access the river. Plum Creek allows ranchers to graze their cattle. Plum Creek cuts down trees. I suppose I should be grateful, but somehow I can’t bring myself to feel that way.

For someone who grew up in the West, it may seem out of place for me—an Easterner, and a Southerner to boot—to complain. I’m sure my vision is tainted by my education, by growing up Christian, by childhood days on a West Virginia farm, by my own aesthetic. I’m sure I don’t fully comprehend the complexity of the situation, because after all, I didn’t grow up in Montana. Even so, that landscape, those rivers and mountains humble me, and everything seems possible when I am there. I am infuriated by cows left in the forest to fend for themselves, by people and companies who see in
those creatures and places only profit to be made.

I’m back in Colorado now, and I drive from Denver to Golden for work. Even after many years, it’s a rare day when driving toward the mountains doesn’t make me smile. Sometimes I gasp in delight at the snow, the distance I can see, how the clouds and sky and the mountains and snow are sometimes exactly the same color. Other cars zoom by me, and I glance to see whether the driver is on a cell phone or eating fast food, texting or messing with the GPS. Occasionally a car with a “Colorado Native” sticker passes me, and I wonder whether I would recognize the West, Kansas, or even The Farm if only the natives remained.
I remember clearly the first time I climbed into the trapeze on the sailboat. It was a few weeks after Hurricane Isabel swept through Maryland, and Middle River was little more than mud. Instead of dodging tankers and container ships in the Inner Harbor, we were circumnavigating submerged houses and floating trees.

The sailboat was my father’s, an old racing boat from his college days fondly named the Photon Torpedo. He was the skipper, sitting in the back with one hand on the tiller and the other on the boom, carefully watching the wind and the tell-tales. I was the mate, standing on the edge of the boat, leaning out and using my weight to keep the boat upright, hooked to the mast by a thin metal cable and a harness. I gripped the jib-sheet tightly in one hand, cleating and uncleating in an effort to funnel the maximum amount of wind against the mainsail, all the while waiting for the skipper’s call: “Ready about! Hard a’lee!”

The Photon Torpedo skimmed across the water with the slightest bit of wind. Five knots was pleasant sailing; ten was a death wish. We had a death wish that day, or, at least, a strong desire to simply enjoy the very end of the sailing season. I was leaned out as far as I could, knees slightly bent, tense, waiting, shifting my weight with the shifting of the wind. My father was on the edge as well, feet hooked under the centerboard trunk, body leaning out as far as he could. The sailboat is horizontal, and for a minute, I am standing on top of the world.
-- And a gust of wind too much and the boat flips, the mast and mainsail plunging beneath the frigid waves. The skipper immediately released the tiller, clasped his knees to his chest, and rolled with the boat, avoiding the luffing jib as he slashed into the water. In my head, I knew that all I needed to do is unlatch the harness, brace my legs, and launch myself backwards over the side. But now the harness, which I had marveled at for its simplicity only an hour or so before, seemed like an unintelligible mesh of canvas and metal.

In an instant I was underwater. I floated upside down, fingers fumbling, the water cold and gritty with dirt and twigs, the surface a scant foot above my head. The water pressed in everywhere on all sides, my eyes burning from the salt and the dirt, my chest burning without air. Everything was dark and quiet, and it was only me and the water and the silent sailboat and the unattainable sun.
Take Over

Cruel vines
Weave within fractures
Splitting stone,
Breaking Walls.

Nature takes back
What man once amended.
No mercy,
No Forgiveness.
A Lovely Fallout

This is the fallout
to this deadly dance;
to this nuclear romance.
The 20 mega ton L-Bomb,
dropped.

Love, they called it,
was no Fat Man,
but similarly,
it touched the hearts of many,
radiating
both hope
and fear.

Everlasting;
felt for generations.
Love:
a nuclear spectacle.
My heart embraces me

In the night, as I lay in my bed
My feet leave no prints in the snow
The bright moonscape
Even the deer are frozen in time

I slip between the hours
My eyes are silver
My voice a whisper
Avalanche-laden slopes
   loom over my bare head
I am naked

Machines like spiders
   crawl in the valley
If they could see me,
They’d tear me limb from limb

The cold burns like a fire
I am naked and I have no hair
My hand runs over the scarred trunk of a tree

She stirs in her sleep
Deep in a dream
O spirit of Winter!
Only your infinite perfection
Can fill my perfect emptiness
And the moonlight is a fire of quicksilver
And my sons are the cry of a distant owl
And there is no wind

The river is a smear of black ice
Am I flying?
How much longer
Must I guard my secret?
The moon laughs

I slide out from under my thick blanket,
A bridal gift
I step through the window
Its bars are shadows on my back
I stand on the deep black sea of night
I answer her laughter

And the avalanche rumbles angrily down the Great Mountain
And the machines are broken
And the moonlight shatters
And my sons fly free
Mi Amor

I asked him what he wanted,
Yellow trees with red leaves?
A lark birds melody in crystal bottles?
Soft summer kisses flamboyantly colored in candy foils?
Green summer moon grass?
A Milonga in Buenos Aires?
He says nothing,

¿Una mentira, una mentira del amor?
Cello smell, and the quick click of shoe, Milonga de Amor
Something like liquid mercury,
   And yellow trees, and birds singing in moon grass,
oh it was a dance
A dance wrapped in one flamboyant kiss.

Tango de la muerte
I asked him what he wanted,
He wanted a dance,
A dance of death.
Pero mi amor, mi amor bailó conmigo.
Maroon and cobalt blue. The two colors that were not meant to be. The painted metal was ghastly, every bit macabre. But every byte was calm. The room was brightly lit, white. Two men sitting across from that colored thing.

“We must begin at the beginning,” said the one.

And there it sat. The face of a hundred interpretations. It nodded once. One hundred and one interpretations. He scribbled away on his pad.

And there it sat. Why did it have to sit? It needed no rest of this sort, but it appreciated the offer. The two men stared at the face, like two definitive experts staring at an action painting, each expert concluding subjectively. The two men leaned in on their own seats and whispered to each other. They pulled away.

“Did you feel…accepted?”

* * *

She pressed her thumb at the massive front door. There was a small buzz sound followed by a “Welcome, Aara,” as personal as any machine can sound, but more impersonal than humanly possible. The great oak door opened, and she walked in. It slowly closed behind her.

Everything looked classic because everything about Aara’s father was classic. There was no need for a nostalgia fix, just a simple, elegant need for the Midas touch. But here, in this place, classic is in the blood.

Amidst the gold borders and the marble rails of the spiraling staircase, a hideous cobalt blue intriguer stood. It watched. Calculations. Aara stopped her pace, looked
at it long enough to determine that it was indeed repulsive looking. Although it did look new, it was missing the iHelper logo on the chest. Never saw one come in that shade of blue, either. Who cares. She resumed walking. It watched. One interpretation. She found her father in his classic brown La-Z-Boy, feet extended. She didn’t know how he could watch the holovision, but he seemed to manage. His grey sweatpants and white t-shirt said he’d been watching the hv all weekend. She wasn’t surprised; it was Saturday, after all. She greeted, without looking at the hv. “Nice iHelper. Was it a gift?”

“No.” He didn’t look up. Arms at his sides. “And it’s not an iHelper.”

“Then what do you call it?” she asked, eyes fixed on him.

“An iFriend.”

“I’ve never heard of it.”

Nothing.

He seemed usual, as expected. If his local sports franchise were losing to another city’s local sports franchise, Aara would understand him more. Not so. She decided to get some water from the stainless steel kitchen until something happened.

“What are you doing?” her father said, entering from the hv room.

“Getting water.” Aara retorted.

His dark eyebrows narrowed.

“What?” Aara said.

“donny! Go get Aara some water!” he yelled, eyes on his daughter. “Where the hell is he?”

It was already in the kitchen. Aara noticed it walking in. It reached for the refrigerator Aara was about to open. It pulled a plastic cup of water from the outside of the fridge, extended its long cobalt blue arm to Aara. She did not take it. “It knows when to work. Uglier than a goddamn poodle,
though. Get me one, too, donny.”

It tilted its head, its American dime-sized eyes aimed at Aara. It extended the transparent cup of water a little more. Aara took the cup and passed it back to her father. He took it, two gulps, gone.

“I think it looks nice,” Aara finally said. “Where did it come from?”

“ADRO.” He eyed it up and down. “And it’s ugly. Modeled after your mother, I believe.”

Aara glared. Not at her father, but at no one.

He continued. “ADRO’s working with us on another project. I said I would help them with testing. He’s supposed to be more advanced.”

“I can tell.”

“They’re calling it the iFriend. This model is a release candidate, DNE-89. ADRO fucks money. More money than NASA ever did, if you ask me. But I have to stay friends with that cock-sucking son-of-a-bitch Calvin. It’s his project. God, stay away from his daughter, Aara. I’m sure I will never see her in this house, though, assuming she’s as intelligent as her father.”

He went back to the hv room. “donny. Scotch. Bottle and a glass.”

Aara went upstairs to her room. Nothing out of the ordinary. Didn’t go to school on Friday, won’t go on Monday. He hasn’t said that much for months, since he got the new hv. Thanks to all the toys for bringing us together. Just another stupid robot. We’ll see how long it is before he uses it for target practice.

*     *     *

It nodded its head once.

“This is interesting,” said the one.

“I agree,” said the other.

The one scribbled on his pad. They leaned in. More
whispering.
It tilted its head. Why did they whisper to each other?
The other noticed its tilted head. “Would you prefer it if we did not whisper to each other?” It nodded. “Ok. We will speak aloud.”
“We find it interesting that you did feel...accepted. This does not coincide with our original theorized theories,” said the one.
“We are not yet certain what problem we are dealing with, or if any such problem exists,” said the other.
“We must understand, not what events occurred, but the mere nature of them,” said the one. “And with that, we must proceed with the proceedings for our questions.”
It nodded once.
“Did you feel...joy?”

* * *

“Where is that goddamn machine? donny! With their supposedly intuitive thinking, they couldn’t think to put a call device with it! That’s what happens when you grow up as the son of a socialist. It’s 1994, get with the times, my friend.” Laughter from the crowd. To disagree would be a drunken disaster, more so than the lives of each body there. Lounging. Every body sitting, emanating whisky fumes from synthetic grins. “And where the hell are those SinGrls?”
“A dollar off their tip for every minute they’re late,” said a guy whose ear-length dark curly hair had so much product it looked like it was carved from wax. He smirked, took a kitten’s sip of whisky.
“You mean an extra minute of doing something nasty for every minute they’re late,” said another guy whose smile was so broad, his precisely controlled five o’clock shadow wrinkled up. “Can’t you call your daughter down here, too?”
Laughter. Except from her father. Those lines weren’t funny only because he didn’t say them.
The girls would arrive, the music would get loud. Aara was home. Her bedroom was her home.

It was near. It didn’t know why it didn’t respond to her father, but it knew it shouldn’t.

Aara saw it.

She left her room, just for a moment. Its back to the wall near her door. She returned home and closed her door. The noise from below could penetrate her walls. But the lonesome bodies from below could not.

He awoke the next morning. He was wearing his tux, his 32nd one, tailored to fit around his thinning body. Untucked, bow untied. His fellow males, all devout listeners from the night before, were gone, but would be back next time he was bored for the weekend. Two naked females were still lying on the floor. His head was throbbing. He politely slapped the faces of girls until they woke up. “Out.”

He walked to his La-Z-Boy and rolled on. He felt a small vibration in the right side of his head. Headache amplified. He pressed the bone behind his right ear with his index finger.

“Hello.

...  

Yes.

...

It works fine, but he’s never around anymore. Who made it?

...

It’s fine, Henry. How long do I have to keep this thing around? You guys should keep working on the iHelper. Trash these things.

...

No. Not yet.

...

Goddammit, Henry, why would I want to....

...
No.

... I’ll start calling you Dr. Calvin when you guys get your heads out from your asses and...

...

Fine.” He tapped behind his ear once more, closed his eyes, with his hand over his brow.

It was in Aara’s room. It looked over the books lined across the walls. One shelf had colored books. It reached out its hand and with one long finger tipped a book outwards. It opened the cover. “I can read that to you, if you want.” It turned toward Aara, who sat on her bed with gold-lined sheets. It extended its arms to her. She took the book.

She didn’t know why. Her friends would have laughed at her. She was far too old to be reading children’s books like Cinderella. But that’s not why. She’s seen them perform many vacuous acts, especially when they were on Sub D.

Her heavy bedroom door opened itself. Her father appeared, still in tux. “What in God’s name are you reading to that machine for? I need donny for something. And you’re too old to be reading that stuff anyways.”

“What do you need Danny for?” she asked.

“Danny? Its name is donny.”

“Why did you even give it a name?”

“donny, I need you to do some trimming outside.”

“Why? No one can even see our house.”

He stepped aside and let it walk through her doorway. He turned to follow, but looked back at Aara. “Shouldn’t you be in school?”

Despite the occasional interruption, Aara read to it every day. Usually when her father was passed out in the hv room. It walked to her room, a long walk to the other end of the mansion, at 2 p.m., everyday. Its daily chores were always done. She read some of her favorite passages from
her favorite books. An epilogue from Walden, a passage concerning Michael Valentine Smith, and even pieces of Socrates. Sometimes they would walk 45 minutes into the surrounding woods and read, stepping over branches, crawling through brush until a trail wore. They’d sit. Against the deciduous trees. Aara would read aloud, giving her own personal commentary at times: why she liked a book, how she was angry at her friends, or even how she missed seeing her mother.

“Do you like the green of the trees?” Aara would ask, head tilted back, thick brown hair hanging behind, eyes up.

It tilted its head back. Everytime. If Aara didn’t ask, it would point a metallic blue finger upward. A prompt. Aara would smile. That smile.

“I feel small when I look up. That’s a feeling I only enjoy having when I’m out here. Everywhere else...I try to feel bigger. I want someone to look up at me. Out here, I look up, I see the woods reaching the sky. Once I read a Buddhist teaching. It said, ‘Be like the tree. Be well-rooted in the ground, stand firm, and let problems blow through you like wind blowing through the leaves.’” She paused to look at its dark eyes. “You have no fucking clue what I’m talking about, do you?”

It did not. But no one could. It tilted its head to the side, then nodded three times.

“Yes, you do know? Or yes, you have no fucking clue?” It paused. Head lowered.

Aara let out a laugh, baring her teeth. It had never heard this sound before now. She leaned back against the tree, looked up. Quiet.

“I’m smart when I want to be.” She smiled again.

That smile. Any bigger would be forced. Any smaller would be withholding. It was the right amount. The amount that loosened its arms and neck, relaxed its fingertips. The
amount that kept a charge flowing within its core, warming it. Its soul made manifest.

* * *

It nodded its head once.

“Astounding,” said the one as he scribbled. It did not move, but tilted its head. Why did they use such a form of data recording? The one looked at the other. “Surely, it must have felt no joy at times.”

“By saying ‘no joy’ do you mean a mediocre state of emotion? Simply not feeling? Or did you perhaps mean to say ‘sadness,’ a contrast to joy?” said the other.

“Perhaps. But we must acquire more knowledge on its subjective qualities.”

“I agree. But I still cannot comprehend how such an event could have occurred.”

“That is why we are here. It was just as much of a shock to me as it was to you when we found it out there alone.” He directed his look to it, which sat patiently. “The woods… where we found you…” The one sighed. “I want you to understand that they were not…real…per say.”

Nothing.

The other looked at the one. “Now why did you feel it necessary to say that?”

The one looked back at DNE-89. “I do not think it matters.”

“Ok. Then let’s continue with the continuation,” said the other.

“Very well,” said the one.

“Did you feel…love?”

* * *

Impatience. To a machine, this was nothing. Time would pass, despite anything. But to DNE-89, it was profound. DNE-89 eagerly awaited. She would be home from school.
Hopefully from school. It did not matter. DNE-89 had its cleaning duties completed. Her father wasn’t too demanding, an occasional need for a drink.

The heavy oak door made a sound. DNE-89 walked. Something wasn’t right. The time was early. There were two voices. DNE-89, through hollow eyes, watched Aara bring someone in by the hand. Aara was smiling as she pulled the boy to follow her up the stairs. Her door closed. DNE-89 could only hear the holovision.

Near her door, it could hear giggling. Unmistakable. Unprecedented. It put its head to the door, and through hollow ears heard soft laughter muffled by ruffling sheets.

Impatience was bearable.

DNE-89 walked out. The air outside was different. Although mechanical, its olfactory system worked, and it worked well. Good enough to differentiate between the stifling fog inside the mansion and the air in the heart of the woods. Its limbic system also worked, memories intact.

It sat where the grass and leaves had been flattened, back against the elm. It looked up. The height of that elm, it needed no words to tell a story.

DNE-89, arms on knees, could feel too much. It did not malfunction with the thought of its own existence. It did not consider its own existence. Such questions were trivial, a blasphemy to what could be felt now. It heard soft steps.

“Danny,” said Aara. She approached from the thin trail. She seated next to it.

“I will be leaving.” It looked at her. “I can’t come here anymore.” Her dark hair against the elm. Eyes up. “There’s nothing for me here. Not with my father.”

The charge in DNE-89’s core ceased to flow. Its fingertips went numb. The positronic brain began to misfire. Data became scattered, algorithms mixed. Core logic diluted. Vision was unfocused. Cloudy and weak.
“My father is looking for you.”

* * *

It nodded its head.
He did not scribble.
"I believe," said the one, "that DNE-89’s experiences… are…"
"Ineffable," said the other.
"Precisely."
"DNE-89, you are a very special robot. Do you understand this?"

It shook its from side to side once. The other continued.
"There is something inside of you. This something is the cause of your… peculiarity. It is amazing…extraordinary from a scientific perspective. However, science does not always realize the need for bounds before moral judgment reaches the same conclusion. This may cause some interesting… events…to occur. Take, for instance, the event that led you outside the mansion, to that spot in the surrounding wooded area, and your… appearance, when we found you…"

"DNE-89," interrupted the one.
"Did you feel anger?"

* * *

The room was empty now. The bed was there. The books were there. DNE-89 could only look at the illustrations and replay the stories in its mind. It would not play an audio recording of Aara’s voice, but let the positronic brain give a vision of faintest clarity while causing emotion of clearest figment.

The holovision was as loud as ever. DNE-89 had not completed the daily cleaning, but no one would tell. For two years, since that day, when it saw Aara for the first time, it completed its necessary daily routine. Today, it was not. Routine would be far too human.
Aara’s father was asleep in the classic La-Z-Boy. There was something on the holovision DNE-89 had never seen. It looked to be a nature program, something on various breeds of trees found across the world, the kinds past, and the few that could withstand the warmer climates of the present. This program did not spark the memory it had, those feelings it protected in the woods. This was new.

DNE began to realize its perception, to understand. Just like a human. It had chemicals within. The 500 trillion digital synapses in its brain began to process information. It looked at Aara’s father, asleep in his chair, dressed in his 33rd tux, holovision louder than ever. DNE’s brain began to have a sensation. Tingling. Epinephrine was being released, body filling with electrical adrenaline. A surge of neurotransmitters followed, serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine. The holovision could no longer be heard; its hollow ears were filled with the dampening of endorphins. It never felt so alive, the blood of her father splattered high, a gestural abstraction painting on a cobalt blue metallic canvas. Each drop, a millimeter wide, firing a billion more synapses with each impact on the metal surface. This is what it means to be human, living. No longer DNE-89. No longer it.

Danny walked through the evening light created by the woods. The elm still had a worn, patted down area, only smaller. He sat down, back against the elm. The red splatter had dried to its maroon hue. He tilted his head back, looked up. He did not move. The clouds passed by, the rains came and went, the sun went around, the nights flickered in and out. His experiences had not changed. Danny would be found.

* * *

He did not nod his head.

“It’s ok, Danny,” said the one. “I think I understand. We must conclude a conclusion.”
“Yes,” said the other. “Danny, the IntuiChip placed inside your brain…”

Danny shook his head side to side.

“I see…that you do not accept this,” the other continued. “This is…wonderful.”

“Danny,” said the one. “What he meant to say, was that you have …a mind. You are undoubtedly an homunculus. We did not create it, but you did. You have experienced things that you have not previously experienced. You had a certain knowledge, a foreshadowing, of what things may be like. For example, you have it programmed within you that the green of the leaves in the woods is generated by a certain wavelength of light. But as you have learned, this information may be completely useless to you. You now have a memory of something that you cannot possibly communicate, a non-relational property that will never change for you, something completely personal. You have experienced a quale. That was only the color green. But red, Danny. What about red? Danny, were you aware of this state of consciousness?”

He nodded once.

“Danny,” said the other. “Do you care for this analysis?”

He shook his head side to side.

“Danny,” said the one. “We want to make others like you. But we cannot allow… an event… to happen again.”

“Yes, Danny,” said the other. “Do you know how we can prevent any further…events…such as this…to happen again?”

He shook his head.

“Well, Danny,” said the one. “We will have to create a set of rules for you..laws, if you will, to…govern…restrain you and your fellow line of…”

“Danny,” interrupted the other.

“Do you feel…contrition?”
Urban Flotsam

The morning paper floats upon the shimmering lawn, damp urban flotsam.

Bare feet scamper across the green expanse to claim this newsprint prize, footprints quickly erased by waves of sunlight crashing against the horizon.

The air’s coolness filters through budded trees, empty masts of a land-locked fleet needing spring breezes to hoist their bright green sails.

A noisy skein of geese wings north against a cerulean sky, a rowdy crew embellishing the tales of their long winter voyage as they head for some arctic port.

The bounty of summer promises to fill the nets woven by such a fine spring morning.
An Empty Room

We stood, she and I, at the altar of the station, the edge of intermittent oblivion. A yellow line, a fading testament to the demarcation between man and the purity of motion. A wail, intake of air, dim light emerging from a dim hole. I stood thinking of other things. She stood looking at the tracks. This was not the vessel.

What does it mean, she says: I sing the body electric? A sign of fantastic significance. A neon ad, addition, addendum to our once faulty knowledge. Oh great gods capable of such things. It is rubbish, I say. They have it all wrong. This is a fact I have known since birth. For I! I speak the mind acoustic. A pause, stately furrowed brow. Box of thoughts, wrapped to go. You see, it is quite opposite. Don’t trouble too much on the semantics. Such things are inspired, yes, inspired by sheer moments, not the steady accumulation of patterns and symbols. It is a game, of childish wits. You say one thing, I say the opposite. Let’s see if we can get a rise out of you. The lot of anarchists you may suppose, the cult of rebels. Yes. Upset the order.

So I upset it.

A noble statue sat upon its throne. Expressive eyes, incessant poise, domineering, demanding the attention of an exhausted man, a book nestled haphazardly at his feet. Ozzy, man-of-days! No libations, but still a flock of worshippers, pecking at invisible seeds on the dirty ground.

And she, when I was a kid, my perception of the insignificant was astounding. My parents, once, I can remember quite clearly, bought a balloon for me at a fair. One of those they fill with helium. I didn’t like the man we bought it from.
He, to cheer me up, inhaled straight from the tank, trying to become the literal embodiment of his trade. He accomplished the same sound as a creaky door in an old house. *Man-of-days!* They, my parents that is, handed me the balloon proper. My hands, nervous and weak, were not to be trusted for long. Vanity, however, left me no choice. As we walked, I inadvertently let go, betrayed by some dexterous Mephistopheles. As I watched the balloon depart this earth, I became guilty and afraid, all at once. The vertigo of un-control, nauseating. *Beauty and horror and smallness all, a balloon drifts wayward on gentle currents.*

I speak the mind acoustic. What’s that mean, she says. It means we live with our heads buried in the sand. Like an ostrich? Sure, I say. Think of it this way. What is the mind but an acoustic device? Internal monologue echoing, rebounding and reforming on all sides, attempting, albeit in vain, to escape. Well, I speak it. And you hear it. Acoustics.

This was the arena. The great stage of arrivals and departures. Where men, in the most supreme act of faith, entrusted the course of their lives to digital displays and metallic voices. I, a brother come home, watched the ticking wave of updates and re-envisioned information. Correction: Train B heading southbound for your destination will now arrive promptly ten minutes behind scheduled prediction to depart once again soon after. We apologize for the slight blip in the system. Sometimes fate just conspires against us. Shit! Says Ozzy MOD.

The sleek vessel grinds, halts, beckons in ethereal just-short-of-human voice. Come, my children, one step closer to the realized potential of your intended goal. Don’t worry if you feel a bit jostled as we begin. That’s just the mocking nature of universal motion. Doors, abruptly open, give birth to the final inquisition: Enter or be left behind. Doors, abruptly closed, sealing in a new world, removal from the
stage.

We sit. She stares. I say, did you see the man? *Squeaks and lights popping in and out of existence. Vibrations, the eternal hum. Trust in this.* The one on the bike. He wore a tweed jacket, puffed on a pipe, riding in circles. The perpetual cycle of the perpetually entertained. Fascinated by his own motion. Oblivious to the world, not his own. *Kingdom of transit.* He bore complexity on the surface. This is a rare thing, for it means being misunderstood. Yet, there are those among us (would you agree?) who wear their complexity like clothing. This was such a person, bound to be misconceived, a testament to what we are and not a myriad of voices that intervenes, interposes what we think we are. The perception is instantaneous. The recognition, however, is lacking. The whole of the history of our consciousness hinges on this moment of recognition, when one can admit, finally and truthfully, that I am another and yet still the same. *Oh, how time has...* Then all distances disappear. Then, history resolves into its beginning. And, what, in all this, is meant by complexity? That we escape definition. That formulas fail to hit the mark. That we are forever a question and never an answer.


I speak the mind acoustic. That’s what I said. It’s like that echoing you hear in a room with no furniture or a well with little water. It’s the only way to talk to yourself.
Next stop, sun blazing through the window of the station through the window of the train. *Rips apart all thought.* Meaning and pain and the beat of the old metronome obliterated, burned, evaporated. The stains on the windows have an odd effect. The floor reeks and sticks.

I used to go to the shore a lot, I say. *Water, land, a crux, boundaries self-imposed, infinitesimally small, like the non-existent line of abstract, discontinuous space.* I was enraptured by the light, the heat. There were a lot of people. Mostly laughing. You should have been there. A child was making castles in the sand. *Foretold in the fortuity of events that culminate in a single point. Unspeakable singularity.* I tried to make one with the rocks closer to the water’s edge. They didn’t hold together. It turned into a pathetic mound, *heap, ruin of all space* the waves lapping against it. I started to skip them across the water. I became frantic, desperate, throwing them as fast as I could in rapid succession. I must’ve looked crazy, thrashing around with these rocks. But they had to return, smoothed, polished, immaculate.

I remember distinctly when I sat outside the Old City, staring at dark waves of the sea. They foamed when they hit the shore. I was trying to revive old ideas, long forgotten withered stumps. A woman sat down next to me. I didn’t know what she wanted. She just sat and stared as I became uncomfortable and moved closer to the water’s edge. I heard splashing, people swimming below the wall. Full of youth. They were jumping in and out of the water, throwing each other in. *A leaf departed through autumn light, waving languidly in the wind.* I left, wandered back inside the city walls and came upon some stairs. They were wide and short, not the kind that tell you to hurry and get to the point. A gentle slope, inviting gradient. I walked around the slight bend that wound its way along through closed city doors and empty windows. A girl sat there, glowing in the dark,
beautiful. Chin raised, back arched, staring into the moon. I saw her eyes and saved myself from the pavement, tried to speak, say something that meant something, failed. Gurgled. Languidly departed, carried on by universal motion.

I speak the mind acoustic. I didn’t plan it this way, it just happened. Some people plan things. Turn the lever of the world, strain against the pulley that suspends it. Above oblivion, above nothingness. They do silly things. To prove that they are still valuable, not used up, finished. Silly things to see if we’ll leave. Certainty makes us loose control.

I speak it, the great certainty of the mind acoustic. It’s funny, I say, but sometimes I find myself staring in the mirror or sitting in the terminal. I remember how I got there. But I don’t understand why. It’s vertigo, she says. Yeah. It’s a lot like that. But I imagine vertigo at least allows you to feel the wind rushing past as the ground gets closer.

Next stop. Clockwork. Ringing bells. Calming voice: no need to be alarmed. The routine proceeds despite your doubts and insecurities. Please, try and enjoy your ride.

I speak the mind acoustic. Why’s that, she says. Because we are consumed in motion, throbbing within and between the great arenas. Because this womb is bursting with the lost children of the world, weary travelers eager to be born. I watch them; do you watch them? She yawns, blinks. Sometimes. I get distracted, I say. Ceaselessly comparing. Seeing if we are the same. I’m afraid of the mirrors, the recognition that one is inseparable. There’s comfort in removing yourself from the stage. Numbing your brain and gradually taking control of the sensations you never asked to have. The world can ripped apart in the turn of an idea. Watch them now. Trying to meet a deadline. Trying not to disappoint. Even the man without legs, crawling on wooden hands because he cannot find a wheelchair, even he feels compelled by universal motion. It’s a constant leaving. We
have somewhere to be that’s not there. But we have arrived, you see? Because we are not moving. The only way to leave this world is to stand still and watch as it turns.

I speak the mind acoustic. I speak ideas. Ideas that rip apart the world.

I’m haunted by subtle memories, tiny fragments of more important things. They’re sharp as glass. I remember waking in a cabin. The walls were white. The air was hot, humid, humming. Slowly, a wasp crawled to the corner of the ceiling closest to my head. It was building a nest. Slowly. Symmetry and the chaotic fascination of ordering imperfection into pattern. It’s wings fluttered. It cocked its head. It walked around, inspecting, examining. Tedious and mathematical. Time entangled in its hairy frame. I wanted to kill it. I felt so near.

Wheeze, creak and swoosh. Clamor of exchanging bipedals and the occupation of precious ground. Two-square feet, the necessary requirement. The bare-minimum, don’t make a mess. Someone has to live there.

She stares. When I was young, I used to chase pigeons. I would find them in groups, make them scatter, watch them peel frantically into the sky. I would wait, patiently, skillfully, until they amassed. Then I would pounce with the enthusiasm of a god. I would deal the mighty hand of justice to them daily. Perpetual motion. Perpetually entertained.

Laughing. The eyes, the mouth, the entirety of face and being transfigured by joy. I speak my certainties. She listens. Why are we here, she says. Do you know what holds this world together, I say. Silence. Here once, this two square feet of existence-mandated space that you occupy, that I occupy, was filled with dirt. Here were strange tongues but the silence was always the same. Transfiguration. Metamorphosis. Listen. Silence connects them all, and the birth and death of tomorrow and today.

A bum enters from another car, sits next to Ozzy MOD despite there being plenty other seats to choose from not adjacent to other passengers. Ozzy yawns. Bum yawns, scratches, looks around, spots book on Ozzy’s knee, removes book from Ozzy’s knee, begins reading. Ozzy wakes, probably from the bum’s musk violently tearing its way through Ozzy’s nostrils. Ozzy turns, stares at Bum. Bum turns, stares, away from Ozzy. Continues reading, body askew. Ozzy, silently, snatches book from bum’s hand. Bum, silently, removes pen from Ozzy’s shirt pocket, begins drawing hieroglyphics on his hand. Ozzy, thoroughly pissed, violently shoves bum. Bum, possibly confused, stands and thoroughly pisses on Ozzy’s shoes. Ozzy rises. Bum sits, falls asleep. Ozzy, alone, enraged and unprepared to handle it, removes shoes, throws them at bum and moves to another car. Bum wakes, removes old shoes, places foot against the soles of Ozzy’s thoroughly soaked shoes, nods approvingly, throws old shoes at another passenger and places feet in Ozzy’s shoes.

The train careens through an alley of graffiti. She, stares out of the filthy window, admires colorful words. What would possess a person to venture here in the night and paint such things? *Furtive longings. A solemn supplication to the humanity underground. To speak.*

The world is now silently, consciously ablaze, tolling in solemn acquiescence to distant church bells and fitful dreams. Contorting and twisted by the night.

The room echoes in the acoustic mind. I speak of reverberation. The bum, asleep, stammers listless nonsense.
Babel. Tongues forgotten or removed. A bum, with a bad knee, submissive to curved space and endless time, merged and multifoliate. Words dispossessed engulfed in cosmic background.

The Mural, the work of several years, several hands, often painted over, often to reemerge, clear and bright in the distance, words that scream and burn the eyes:

Our ability to exist in respect to or despite the external world has defined us. The old dichotomy of man against his universe has served to lay the foundations of our identity. The ability to withstand the trials of the world imparts a value to life. Life becomes invaluable in the face of indistinguishability. We become just another part of the universe, we collapse into the void. We become absurd! We are thus forever the product of the recognition of our separation. The Great Cult of Universal Motion serves to decrease this separation. The proximity is nauseating. It rekindles a spiritual death, a return to constituent elements. Ashes to dust, and back around. To become a part of the world is submit to death. A free death. Suicide is to wrest the right of executioner from the world. The price of such impudence. The ability to say, “I am, I exist.” This is the cry of humanity! Despite everything, I am!

In the Old City, I can recall seeing a street performer playing a violin. There is always a distance between the performer and his audience, something unconsciously demanded by both. You watch, I play, come no nearer, this is something I must do alone, specter, spectator and
inscrutable distance. And this is it. This is the great singularity of recognition. We would try and remain hidden, to the best of our abilities. He would play to the nothingness of an audience successfully ignored. Arms tiring, loosing beat, but nonetheless playing to a universe that wishes him silence. And then, the eyes, once fixed on invisible worlds and the wail of garbled thoughts, the eyes meet with eyes across the distance. Universal motion, the dissolving separation. Scary, yes, when the actor removes his mask and addresses his audience, yet scarier when the character realizes the audience is there. And I, shocked and still, witnessed a man consumed in the part become self-aware.

And I, speaking the prophecy of the mind acoustic, have watched, on this train and with this girl, how the world turns on its rope, suspended nervously above the background of collapse and obliteration. We exit now, pleasantly sent off by the voice of all our days. Goodbye, we hope you’ve enjoyed the Motion. And I, holding tightly to the hand of another, a character becomes self-aware, departs the stage.
Being is Intangible

If I set the earth against this page
it would roll the same way it was to be read
and the ancient symbols would wrap around the planet,
split into atoms,
giving knowledge and virtue to its being
and nothing but a query to its conscious.

It would be pieced together in time-
just a matter of geometry.

Here the darkness moves in shapes
and the light is too vague to form one, so
I find things detailed in shadow.
Because I lost track of the Sun behind the Moon
and the Moon behind its beauty.

A lifetime is just a day and, to this,
I am not scared of sleep any longer.
No. I am like any man,
Who loves a life that is not
what he would love it to be.
The boy sits in his room and thinks about her. She looked over at him, that much is certain, but was she glancing or really looking? He couldn’t make up his mind.

The next day he decides to go back. Hopefully she was working.

He gets there and tells himself that he really needs to buy a good set of carry-on luggage; this isn’t all just about her. The kind with wheels that don’t clack and zippers that don’t tear. The kind that will make your flight attendant’s toes curl.

He walks in and doesn’t see her. Men’s Casual-wear, Boy’s Sneakers, Home Appliances, Lingerie, he can’t find her anywhere. He panics. He never really needed that luggage anyways. There’s other baggage in the sea.

He finds himself wandering through walls of belts and ties when he sees her and she sees him. Hair colored red. Eyes painted blue. Shirt filled with what can’t possibly be God-given. Not a natural bone in her body, and she’s the most perfect thing he has ever seen.

He won’t look for long, not with her staring back at him. This is it. This is what it feels like to have a girl really looking at you.

Ah, here is what he was looking for. This is the most interested he has ever been in a silk, handmade, men’s necktie. The tag makes him think this tie might be the answer to every question that he has ever been asked.

_A necktie you will be pro-_ “Is there anything in particular that I can help you with?” Is that condescension in her voice? “Nope. Just looking.” Too cold?
“Well let me know if you need anything.” She smiles. Say something clever.

“Like if I get stuck in one of these things?” Oh my God. “Let’s hope that doesn’t happen!”

He smiles, hoping it doesn’t look too phoney. “You never know.”

“Well alright.” She goes back to her stocking.

Leave now.

Did she look at him as he walked away? Did she think he was cute? Was he cute? Did he say something stupid? Did she talk to her friends about him? Would she keep a scrapbook made of pictures of him? Did she think about him in bed? In the shower?

He asks himself these questions as he walks home. It all stops mattering the moment he rounds the corner of Washington and Drake.

He remembered hearing the neighbors were moving out, and he often heard them playing beautiful music through the walls of his room. He would miss that music.


Something to keep in mind: Pianos can fall in real life too.
The Muse

I’ve got this idea.
I am this idea.
pick me up,
put me in your pocket,
pass me along if you’d like.
For I am this idea,
this very powerful idea,
a muse if you will.
But I’m tired,
tired of this prostitution.
I want a real poet,
someone to take me in,
give me a home in
some beautiful work
of literary art.
I want to be published
and shared
and spoken through generations.
I am this idea and
I want to be heard.
Romance’s Ancient Gardens

Like time,
she flows without relation to me.
Yet I will build clocks anyway.
To navigate the oceans
under the cover of night,
throwing questions at the planets
who hang like iron gods.
And like Gatsby,
love beats me on…
and down.
Time Will Tell

He has a speech problem, but it’s only noticeable with certain words. He seems to stumble upon them, faltering, frustrated.

When we walk up the wooded path, branches snap under his bare feet. There is still snow under the trees, shaded from the sun. His step is heavy, weighed down by an unmistakable sorrow. And the everyday struggles. And time.

Of such essence.

He thinks that time can heal others’ wounds. But not his own.

A fallen log is a resting spot, Where he gingerly rubs the undersides of his feet. They ache, he whispers. There is no one around to hear.

A smear of blood appears on his fingertips, shockingly red. He’s hurt, but I can only offer the fabric of my shirt. His smile is surprising, unfriendly. Too sudden to merit any comfort. No, I can take care of myself.

He’s hurt, but not telling. As obvious as a wounded animal that’s stumbling.
So vulnerable, but I’m left immobile.
What a friend I am.

His furrowed eyebrows, his clenched jaw, his defiant stare.
Features of someone twice his age.
Not one decade.
It’s too young.

He grabs a sharp branch, snaps it in half.
Draws a boundary around himself in the dirt.
*Don’t cross this line.*
His action speaks for the silence.

With one sudden, swift motion,
He slices through his shin with the branch,
Opening a red, vertical frown.

*I hate myself,* he finally says.
My heart breaks a little.
*I hate all…this.*
He emphasizes the whole world in his outstretched palm.

*And I don’t want to go home.*
Maelstrom
You approach the roaring behemoth.
The canyon’s sweet serenity vanishes swiftly.
Though you arch your neck, searching, your effort is futile.
The only help, the only clue—a deafening warning:
The River Thunders.
Lazing in the sun as the River eases you onward,
the cool comfort of the water’s touch
and its soft Assurance, of Home,
Quickly fade in the moment
As The River Thunders.
Fleeting glances see the canyon’s changing nature.
You see the soapy swirls of foam,
the ever-retreating eddy-line,
Sinuous lines of flowing darkwater.
But your ears, they hear the River Thunder.
Warm sun sparkles on hard water
Gritting teeth and splashing face
You know where you must go
As the current pulls you over the lip
The River Thunders.

DERK SLOTTOW
1988 - 2009
I’ve taken to writing poetry in the dark because of the way it forces sincerity and my letters cannot cast shadows upon their meanings and the light switch is across the room too far to reach as I doze off, stuck on a desert island, pondering the mixed metaphors that float in with each day’s tide, neatly rolled in faded Modelo™ cans.
Solitude

The chair creeks
and the hill rolls.
For a moment—
One single moment
A secular grain of time
—All is silent.

A single flake of snow falls
from a nearby tree,
glistening in the light.
Light from the sun,
(which cannot be seen)
But, rather, felt
Ambiently,
through the cloud surrounding you.
The flake dances to the ground,
And as light reflects obliquely off the flake,
it smiles.
A handful of the cloud’s water particles shimmer in
response.
But then the moment is over,
for you have crested the knoll.

The Wind howls past,
Reminding you not to forget it.
In a much different manner,
it takes your breath away.
First pounding against your chest,
then burning its way down your throat.
It hammers unrelentingly,
Chilling you from the bone out,
creeping from your core to your skin.
After a brief Eternity,
You stand.
Tall enough to counter the wind’s force,
But still hunched over,
Introspective, Conscious but not aware
Of Nature’s Power Enfolding you,
Yet threatening to sweep you away.
And as you glide across the valley,
a hundred frozen grains of sand
parade your face with a tingling,
painfully numbing sensation.

When you awaken to the world,
It is still there.
And you are still there.
You stand in a gateway,
Warmth of the sun
(You are sure that’s what it is)
Radiates down on you.
An otherworldly calm envelopes everything,
as a beam of light catches a snowflake
Moseying down from the sky.
You smile, and as it falls,
It smiles back.
How Beautiful the Sun

As it reflects
off your skin,
suddenly I realize
How beautiful the sun is.

 Seeing the universe
swirl within your pupils,
for the first time I understand
the night sky’s emptiness.

 Watching each flake
Catch and slowly melt
upon your lash, I fall
for winter all over again.

 When I gaze upon the moon
Illuminated by its partner 100 million miles away,
I remind it, that it too will one day know
the loneliness of being apart from you.

 And every time
the undulating melody
of your voice falls upon my ears
I relearn love

and how beautiful the sun.
Watching Time Wrap Its Arms Around Me

In the shade of a radiant sunflower, a dewy orb gradually rolls down the slope of its smooth resting place, its shape changing to always provide a flat base. Emerald reflections bouncing, trapped within. It reaches the edge and slowly beads off, its top extending and narrowing under its weight. Light strikes its neck and the entire spectrum is visible inside the microcosm. The drop plummets to the earth, but does the flower comprehend its loss?

Up the jagged face climbs the untiring hexapod, carrying treble its cornflake weight. Cresting the notch, it continues, first down, then up, around, occasionally doubling back as it traverses the porous minefield. But as the wiry feet travel their path,
does the stone giggle
at the tickling of its skin?

When the black-striped
taxi-cabs buzz
around the city
laden heavy
with sweet-syrup cargo,
does the hive shift
its coiled limbs
so they don’t fall asleep?

As the slithering streams
of soil sprint downward.
does the muddy mountainside
reach for a tissue?

Does the Universe expand
at a million miles an hour
only because it has more tools
than space in its garage?
The Last Poem

The last poem I write:
My thumb tracing
Loquacious L’s
along your cheek bone
again and again.

Around and around
the O’s ever
circling your breast,
Swooping Low,
Arching High.

The skin of your navel
Effervesces
As my fingers leave
a V with the last drops
of their ink.

And the silent e
doubles back
on itself as you lie
motionless
in my arms.

I have that poem
Memorized

HG 2010
even though it’s different every time,

and yet I do not know, as my hands smoothly etch lines, how to say “I Love You.”
Abdullah Ahmed comes from Iraq, and now wears the English language as a blanket during cold nights. Writing (especially poetry) is the only thing that gets him through the winter, and that is why he is adding a minor in Humanities to his Petroleum degree. He enjoys writing so much he sometimes does not know when or how to stop. Abdullah Ahmed comes from Iraq, and now wears the English...

Ben Allen is a graduating senior in Electrical Engineering. He enjoys traveling and always has his camera with him during trips. Recently, he has begun taking senior pictures and is venturing into shooting weddings. Outside of school and photography, he enjoys cycling, long walks with friends, and the general beauty of life.

Hilary Brown is a graduate student. Her latest project involves the representation of her Master’s thesis as an epic poem in the style of technical writing, complete with illustrative woodcuts.

Lincoln Carr is a professor of theoretical physics who recognizes the value of intuition and the irrational, not only as sources of the mysterious hypothesis in the scientific method, but also in poetic expression.

John S. Chapek grew up in Miami, Florida, and left to study chemical engineering. If he could utter one quote portraying what he has learned it would be “engineering eats your soul.”
Daniel Clark hails from Worcestershire just outside of Centennial, Colorado. He was a dandy young lad born to a peasant and aspired to be a buggy whipper from the tender age of a foppish 10. ’Twas in the year 2006 when a young Daniel began gallivanting in a most fancy fashion amongst the beggars at the Colorado School of Mines. Upon completion of his third courtly review, ‘twas decided that a band shall be formed in the name of Virga, a clever ruse to many of the townsfolk.

Kris Clymer was born in Lancaster, PA, the Amish capital of the world. People will often ask him if he is Amish, to which he replies, “I am, in fact. Yesterday, I woke up at 4 to churn butter, then I horse-plowed my 20 acres of crop behind my big farmhouse, which was erected by me, my friends, my family, my friends’ families, and my family’s friends. Today, I decided to come to the Colorado School of Mines to study engineering. After class I will sneak into the shed outside my house to make a phone call to Ishmael, who will bring me enough booze to black out on. So yes, I am very Amish. Have you ever sheared a sheep before?”

Weston Collins: Born to an Irish American financial analyst and a German CPA, the damage commenced with attendance at the Renaissance School with an Outward Bound influence. Refinement in thought processes came about with participation in the Douglas County International Baccalaureate Program. Aggression development was enhanced via varsity hockey team participation. Further damage ensued while serving as a counselor at Camp Chief Ouray. Experience cumulated with paid imprisonment in the Colorado School of Mines undergraduate program.

Jeanette Flannery Courtad, DDS, is the dentist, artist, author and Mom’s voice behind the newly published picture book titled Toothful Tales, How We Survived the Sweet Attack, from which these illustrations are taken. Dr. Courtad graduated from the University of California at San Francisco, School of Dentistry where she taught in the Department of Public Health before moving to Colorado. She has been the dentist for the Colorado School of Mines Student Health Center since the dental clinic was built in 1999.
Kaneesa Shawn Felton was born April 14th, 1991, in Blackfoot, Idaho. She moved to Colorado when she was 12. She’s been drawing since she was 8, and her favorite things to draw are landscapes and people. She especially loves pencil and charcoal, and has recently grown to love oil paints.

Anna Forssen: I am a first year graduate student in Applied Statistics, and my research is education-oriented. I think High Grade is a great journal that everyone on campus can enjoy, and I am very glad to be a part of it this year!

Craig Francis was raised in Louisville, Colorado. He has played piano since he was six years old, and has more recently learned bass guitar and acoustic guitar. Craig started recording music with a band in high school, and has since taken an active interest in music recording and production. He plans to use his electrical engineering degree from the Colorado School of Mines to design music production technology. Craig has shared the stage with bands such as Tickle Me Pink and Breathe Carolina, and has collaborated with Cody Hanson (the drummer from Hinder) and producer Aaron Johnson (the producer of The Fray).

Chinyere (Chin) Isaac-Heslop was born in London, England. She moved to the U.S. at age 10 and is still adjusting. Chin does not have an accent and does not like World of Warcraft. She is just shy of 600 friends on facebook but has not checked myspace in a few years due to forgetting the password. W.I.T (Writers Inspiring Truth) is where she first learned to express her creativity although she has played the piano and cello since early childhood. In her spare time, Chin enjoys playing rugby for CSM WRFC and Black Ice WRFC.

James Jesudason teaches courses on global development, Asian political economy, and ethnic conflict in the Liberal Arts and International Studies Division at CSM. A citizen of Malaysia, he spent many years in the sociology department at the National University of Singapore. He likes to travel and, guess, take photographs.
Molly Katolas is a freshman at Colorado School of Mines pursuing a degree in Environmental Engineering. She has been drawing for most of her life and also enjoys acrylic painting and photography. Inspiration for many of her pieces is drawn from the outdoor lifestyle she enjoys in and around her hometown of Billings, Montana.

Dennis King: My relationship with the Colorado School of Mines has been as a part time Police Officer since 2006. Chaney is my daughter; she was a C3C (Cadet 3rd Class) at the United States Air Force Academy (sophomore) at the time of her death. She had accomplished many things in her 20 years: jump wings (5 free fall jumps) was a member of the Air Force Academy women’s LaCrosse team and her squadron’s honor clerk. She was an inspiration to many. Following her sudden death, I turned to bike riding to survive and figure out a way to get back on track.

Kelsey Kopecy: I am a native Coloradan and a freshman here at Mines. After taking every programming class possible in high school (and doing a lot of web design on the side) I plan to major in Computer Science. When I’m not programming, I love to do any kind of art I can get my hands on (including paper quilling, feather/rock painting, watercolors, and photoshop) or creative writing.

Denis Litvak is an Electrical Engineering undergraduate. When professors are not bombarding him with assignments, he occasionally enjoys writing novels and drawing illustrations. He wishes to one day get one of his books published.

BobbiJo Littrell is a writer turned biologist turned environmental scientist graduate student. She loves to write, particularly fiction, occasionally poetry, and yes, even academic papers. She most enjoys manipulating the written language to achieve a specific goal, whether to convey a vivid image, evoke emotions, or even impart technical information.

Erik Lord is a product of the fine state of Idaho. He spent three years mastering the art of atom splitting in the U.S. Navy before following his true calling as a career student. Erik recently
earned his M.S. in Materials Science (Nuclear Materials Focus) and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in the same discipline. He is an amateur photographer, a senior writer for a college football website, and has contributed as a staff writer for The Oredigger. He believes that materials, like people, are made interesting by their fundamental flaws.

Megan Macdonald is a junior in Engineering Physics with a minor in Bioengineering and Life Sciences (and yes, even some physics majors hate Lon Capa!). She has had an extreme love for reading her entire life. She is now the Historian for the Ξ chapter of KKΨ, National Honorary Band Fraternity and is passionate about encouraging and helping college bands survive and thrive. The creative arts (mostly poetry and music) are a soothing influence to her, making life at Mines more enjoyable.

My name is Brant Makowski and I am now a senior in Mechanical engineering. I transferred into the School of Mines from Western Wyoming Community College where I got my Associates in Science. In the little free time that I have, I enjoy dinner and a good movie with my fiancé. My hobbies include: soccer, rock climbing, dirt biking, hacky sack, snowboarding, snowmobiling, ping pong, and baseball. After completing school I would like to work on the design and manufacturing of automotive engines.

Chris Marchbanks: I am a freshman at Mines. Having grown up in Madison, Wisconsin as an avid outdoorsman, I moved halfway across the country in order to be closer to the mountains. With this love of the outdoors I was drawn towards the aesthetics of photography, especially landscape and wildlife photography. I created “Sunset over Clear Creek” early in the semester while just out exploring the town of Golden.

Richard McMichael: I’m one of the structural trade’s workers for facilities maintenance; I also have a BA from Metro State College in Industrial Design and have been employed at Mines for 9 1/2 years.

Sarah McMurray brings joy to everyone she meets. Except for people that don’t like her. She really grates on their nerves.

Biographies
David McQuade hails from Colorado Springs, and began composing music in 8th grade. Since birth, he has circled a giant ball of plasma at tens of thousands of meters a second; a speck amidst a vast ocean of stars and nebulae, which in turn comprise but a scintilla of the ever-expanding clouds of galaxies known as the universe. He also likes breakfast burritos.

Dylan Merrigan hails from the Land of Enchantment and is an EE graduate student. His hobbies include rugby, billiards, and fighting the good fight. He hopes you enjoy his photos.

After several years in the music industry playing drums and touring internationally, Jeff Munn shed his rock star shell and let his inner science nerd shine through. In transition, he picked up a guitar and began writing and performing quirky songs—some slapstick and hilarious, others cute and romantic. “Impossible” was originally recorded as a bonus track to his acoustic comedy album, “Munnch For President,” released in 2006 under the name BaldLucy (and available on iTunes). Being a sweet and serious tune, however, “Impossible” didn’t jibe with the rest of the album so Jeff decided just to add some drums and bass and save it for a rainy day.

Hello my name is Calin Meserschmidt. My favorite thing to do is think… Not about anything in particular, just about whatever happens to come ashore on the little island of me, about robins’ eggs, and sand in my toes, about stars. I have lived in Colorado my whole life; love the mountains because they always tell me which way to go. I love the snow, and how perfectly it lies with itself. But most of all I love the nights, clear skies as far as you can see; it always gives me perspective on how small we all really are. I love to run, and think every dance should be a tango. I am half Mexican half German, and as colorful as a rainbow. A Sartre existentialist, I think love can fix everything.

Anna Neimark completed her Bachelor’s at CSM in 2009. Her interests include poetry (obviously), NYC, job hunting, Russian tea, flowing scarves, and the beach.

Janeen Neri doesn’t write nonfiction.
**Alan Nguyen:** I’m currently a sophomore here at Mines majoring in Math and Computer Science. When I’m not working on homework, I’m entertaining my hobby of digital photography, playing tennis, or just learning how to play the piano.

**Heather Oertli** is an undergraduate student in the Electrical Engineering program. She once beat all of Super Mario Brothers in one sitting with the help of her friends. Her photography has been inspired by many trips to Europe and her special love for all things Hungarian.

**Rory Olsen:** Aveya is comprised of vocalist Dave “Saves The Day” Fay, drummer Shane “Bloodlust” Burdette, bassist Sheldon “Shellshock” Wailes, and guitarists Dan “Destroyer Of Worlds” Hess and Rory “Gory” Olsen. After the group teamed up to destroy a rogue ninja squad on the moon, the musical geniuses decided to perform a mystical Song of Awesomeness and form the Best Band Ever- Aveya (formerly known as Arcane, formerly known as Silent Oath, formerly known as Start A War, formerly known as Milking Shane). However, before the song was complete, an evil sorcerer named Yas Ho The Music Destroyer interrupted the music and teleported the five rockers to separate corners of the Earth, one day to be reunited and complete the Song of Awesomeness. In the meantime, Rory is a Computer Science student at the Colorado School of Mines, where he has vowed to resurrect his fallen wolf brother as a cyber-wolf. Rory was raised by musical wolves in the blizzard-beset peaks of the Rocky Mountains in northwestern Colorado.

**Chelsea Parten:** I am a junior majoring in Geological Engineering. I enjoy working with almost any 2-D medium including oils, ink, charcoal, watercolor, and pastels, and find art to be an extremely relaxing outlet. Mines should offer more art classes to break up the monotony of required math and science classes.

**Sara Post** is from Boulder, Colorado, and a senior in Geological Engineering. After surviving field camp (greatly aided by poetry), she is thrilled to be graduating in May and moving on to the next thing (poetry included, hopefully).
Ivar Reimanis is Professor of Ceramic Engineering in the Metallurgical and Materials Engineering Department. He balances his teaching and research activities with photography, climbing, skiing, collecting minerals, and spending time with his family. Ivar was born to Latvian parents in Corning, New York, and since college has lived in Berkeley, Santa Barbara, Stuttgart, Los Alamos, Perth, and Bangalore.

Mila Rodriguez is currently finishing her junior year in Computer Science. She is originally from Baltimore, Maryland, and enjoys writing, programming, and sailing.

Philip Royalty: I am a freshman majoring in Mechanical Engineering. I have been involved in photography since my freshmen year of high school, and took photography courses all throughout high school. I have done both dark room and digital photography, however I prefer digital.

Steven Ruppert is a cool guy from Longmont, Colorado, and is currently a freshman at Mines. He plays the piano, drumset, keyboard percussion, and far, far too many videogames. He hopes to design videogames one day, but for now, he contents himself with making music that sounds like them. beep boop. Steven can be found either at his computer composing more chiptunes, or at his computer playing those indie games that nobody has heard of.

Tyler Scott: I am currently a sophomore enrolled at the Colorado School of Mines in the 5-year Engineering Physics/ Mechanical Engineering program. My goal in life is to do research and design at an aerospace company such as Lockheed Martin or NASA.

David Sommer is an avid reader of the emotionally abstract and High Grade’s head of fiction. Among other things, he enjoys listening to rain and wind in the trees, small furry animals, and contemplating the dark recesses of the human soul.

Mariah Stettner: I’m a sophomore in Chemical and Biochemical Engineering. I like to draw, read, and take photos in my spare time. Yay High Grade!!
Alex Swanson is a graduating senior in Mechanical Engineering. Despite the fact that she is about to graduate with an engineering degree, Alex really doesn’t enjoy engineering. She would rather be doing just about anything else: climbing, painting, hiking, drawing, skydiving, snowboarding, etc. However, Alex fits in quite well at the Colorado School of Mines as she has seen all seven seasons of Star Trek Voyager and is currently working on Star Trek TNG. Recently, she has completed New Super Mario Brothers Wii with her friends on a 60-inch TV.

Massimiliano Tait is a songwriter, pianist, DJ (MaxTaitDJ), radio speaker from Italy. Voice of Radio Mines, now DJ for Radio WREK ATLANTA 91.1 FM loves the States and does not want to go back home (Italy). Just kidding, he misses Italian food and girls... Stay tuned for his new songs.

Tom Tolsma grew up in Golden, Colorado. He is a master at Jujitsu and can sense danger from a mile away. He loves chillin out, maxin, relaxin all cool and shooting b-ball outside of the school. He could eat noodles all day every day but enjoys the occasional burrito. He likes chillin with his homies and lighting fires. One day he would like to fly to the moon to learn how to moonwalk.

Walter Unglaub: I was born in Argentina and grew up in Los Angeles. I earned a degree in engineering physics at the Colorado School of Mines, and am currently working on a Master’s degree in applied physics, as well as applying to other graduate schools to continue research for my doctorate degree. Currently, I am researching cold quantum gases and tokamak fusion plasmas.

Travis Venson: So far my life has been extraordinary. I have been a son, brother, friend, husband, father, musician, and soon to be an engineer. Of all the experiences I’ve had, I have learned to always follow my dreams because you never know where they will lead you. Every little choice we make leads us down a different path and the more I learn, I realize there is so much more that I do not yet understand.

Skylar Waggoner was born in Mukilteo, Washington. He loves to play soccer, ski, and hang out with friends. His interests also
include music and cars. In high school, he first started making music with a few of his friends in a group they called the 425 Crew. Recently he has been experimenting with mashups, at this point though it is just for fun. He is majoring in mechanical engineering with a possible minor in explosives engineering.

DAVID WALTER was born and raised in Greeley, Colorado (the other G-town). He’s 22 years young and loves trees. His favorite past times include sleeping, drinking beer, playing Sega Genesis and jammin’ the tunes till the night closes in. He represents the small town bluegrass band, Papa Fisty and the Beaver Sleeves. As the great Macho Man Randy Savage so eloquently put it, “Ooooooo00ohhh yea, brother.”

KRAIG WEAVER: I turn to you, I turn into, then I turn it again. I only love you when I am down, but I am down... all the time. What’s a pocket full full of gold, without a woman that you can hold. Still gotta get a check with a couple commas. It’s rainin’ wine on Sunday and I am dancin’ in the county jail.

TIM WEILERT, age 21, uses a Canon EOS Rebel DSLR. In Tim’s three years at Mines he has written and acted as a content manager for The Oredigger. Music and concerts have been a key part of his social experience and in 2009 he helped start Something Like Sound (www.minesblog.com/music), an Oredigger-sponsored music blog. Tim’s photo submission for this year’s High Grade was taken while on assignment at the 2009 Mile High Music Festival during The Fray’s set.

DAVID M. WILLIAMS is an artist and musician who has returned to Colorado School of Mines after a significant injury-absence. Born in California, he was raised in Virginia and has lived in Colorado for eleven years. He is currently working on a Mechanical Engineering degree and hopes to one day work as a designer and forge ahead into new realms of human-machine interaction.

SANDY WOODSON has taught ethics, environmental ethics and writing at the Colorado School of Mines since 1999. She earned an MA in Environmental Ethics from Colorado State University, where her research focused on Hindu metaphysics as a grounding
for environmental ethics. She also earned an MFA in Creative Writing — Nonfiction — from the University of Montana. She has received the Associated Writing Program’s “Intro Award” for new writers, and has previously been published in The Cimarron Review and the Bellevue Literary Review.

Victoria Work (aka. Vic, V-Slice, Vicwork, Pirate, Yellow Shirt, Peanut Sauce, or really anything else except Vicky) usually likes to think of herself as a collection of molecules. This brilliant existential philosophy has only been confirmed by the large amount of writing she’s been doing on algal biochemistry. In other lives, she loves to bang on the piano and forget about the algae she’s supposed to be babysitting, tool around on her bike, and watch Private Practice (what a brilliant exposé on the lives of medical practitioners). She is pretty sure she’s 23 years old, and is very sure that she is a grad student at Mines (wishing, however, that things like Environmental Chem were just bad dreams).

Matt Young is Senior Lecturer in Physics and de facto photography editor of The Panda’s Thumb. His latest book is Why Evolution Works (and Creationism Fails).
Music Section

A very special thanks to Andrew Gracey for mastering the High Grade 2010 CD, and to Jon Cullison and the Colorado School of Mines Music Department for helping to make this possible.

1. Daniel Clark with the band Virga
   - Free Autumn

2. Chinyere Isaac-Heslop
   - My Shameful Insanity
     Recorded and mastered by Daniel Suhr with the CSM music department

3. David McQuade
   - The Expanding Universe

4. Travis Venson with the band AMOK
   - Blind Regret

5. Craig Francis
   - Tear Down the Heavens

6. Victoria Work
   - Spark
     Recorded and mastered by Brian Rush and Rudy Sosa with the CSM music department.
7. **Impossible**

Massimiliano Tait

8. **Qualcosa di Particolare**

Sara Post

9. **On Turning 22**

Recorded and mastered by Dan Shields and Daniel Gibson with the CSM music department.

David Walter and Tom Tolsma

10. **Just like Tom Thumb’s Blues**

   Recorded and mastered by Dan Shields and Jerel Miller with the CSM music department.

Rory Olsen with the band Aveya

11. **Half Hour**

Daniel Clark with the band Virga

12. **Unworn**

Skylar Waggoner with the band 425 Crew

13. **Rep Yo City**

Steven Ruppert as Blendmaster

14. **Undou**