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High Grade
Stratton Hall 413
Colorado School of Mines
Golden, CO 80401
highgrade@mines.edu

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Dear Reader,

I write this letter under the realization that the ride on this extra supernatural vessel is nearing port. Over the last year I have had the privilege of steering this journal in a new direction with the energy of a wonderful staff, the guidance and friendship of Toni Lefton, and love from Ian Stone. Even though my time here at Mines is nearing an end I will always remember this publication, because of its value in this community.

Our world is art, it is creativity, and it is beautiful and holy. Ginsberg said everything is holy, everything. Remember this. Every work of art is a small revolution illuminating the strings that interconnect this world of ours, so find those strings in this journal made from the work of students, professors, friends, daughters, lovers. This is a work by and for this community. We are all artists even though many of us don't realize it. The engineer is just as creative as the poet, in reality the poet is trying to emulate the ease the engineer has in creating tangible interpretations of thoughts every day.

So remember the power of an idea. Remember the intrinsic value of everything, of everyone. Remember that the differential equation is just as holy as a photograph in a sand storm, that energy is just as holy as the sestina, that the reader is just as holy as the poem. So venture into this journal, the result of countless hours of hard work done by numerous people. Done not for money or recognition, but because they see the strings that binds all the world together. They feel how they vibrate with the lines of every poem, they see the sounds emanating from the colors of every photograph, they taste the ripples of every brush stroke, they smell the cracking in all the plot twists, they hear the grinding of that extra brilliant beautiful illuminating creative binding force.

So remember you are holy, I am holy, the rock is holy, the grass is holy, the world and everything and everyone is holy, so try and capture just a glimpse by making some art.

Calin Meserschmidt, Poet and sometimes Engineer
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I know addition
I know aggregated addition
–multiplication and its
ugly sister division–
I know functions:
lines and polynomials
and exponential decays.
I know calculus,
the development of
systems in time.

I know chemistry
$C_nH_mO_p+O_2 \text{ goes to } CO_2+H_2O$
Naphthenic and palmitic acid
in petroleum come together
in scorchedforests on
scorched faces.
I know how things
and people burn.

I know physics:
General Relativity, and
the “special” child, Special Relativity.
$F \text{ equals } m \ g \text{ changed to } F \text{ equals } m \ a$
under gravity, projectiles fly
with mass, energy
I know bullets
and atom bombs.

If knowledge is power ($dE/dt$)
there is no need for moral temperance.
My dominion is undeniable,
and unruly masses are
subjugated by the change
in energy over time.
In the desert
We saw the death of art
I’m burden with the honor and Dream
of Dr. Einstein
It crazily windy and rainy
Tonight
She adjusts her hat
wearing latex dish gloves
and sporting one brown loafer.

She nearly topples
picking up candy wrappers
and shoving them in her purse.

She kicks up dust
staggering down the dirt road
and talking to the sky.

She pauses
Pulling out a half-empty vodka bottle
and gulping it down.

She continues on
Passing by a yellow brick house
and not recognizing it’s her home.
If there was a graveyard for dead marriages
I’d choose a monument of the hardest and most colorful granite
to signify both the beautiful story of our happiest days
and the cold, hard ending of our marriage hitting the wall—an unexpected sudden death.
I’d stand at the altar of memory
honoring the intent of commitment—
more successful than many but yet failing the test of time…
My heart would ache with regret
as the pages of our story slowly pass before my eyes
revealing new chapters, new dimensions—
but all stories have endings, some happy and others not…
The epitaph might read

*Miraculously found*

*Tragically lost*

I’d carefully place trinkets of remembrance—
greeting cards, photographs, album covers,
ticket stubs, passport stamps, Christmas ornaments
and emotionally acquired art.

Tears spilling from the deepest suffering
watering the tree planted in memory of a marriage dead-ended.
“Can we keep these? Forever?”
Her voice quiet and trembling,
clutching the giant spoon in her little hands.
There are too many to even notice,
clinking against each other in that overflowing drawer.

It has been a sleepy day.
Rain pattering against the window,
the smell of damp wood;
my baby brother’s laughter breaking the silence
of our cozy cabin—
She chooses one with a square handle—

too short to peek into the drawer,
she stands on tip toes,
one hand on the steady wood,
the other plunged into that
drawer of spoons.

She chose the best-feeling one. Since she could not see.
I chose the best-looking one. It was too late to feel.

Sunlight streams in from the kitchen window
and all I can do is hug her:
“Yes, forever and ever.”
I was lucky enough to attend
the 1980 Winter Olympics
with seats in just the right place,
just the right view.

Boy, was I startled to see that America’s starting lineup
contained the man on the dollar bill flashing a set
of beautiful pearly whites and a powdered wig
Sporting the Team USA hockey jersey.

The Founding Father flew across the ice,
dodging Russians and passing to heroes,
when he checked the communists,
I didn’t hear the crunch of Plexiglas
But America the Beautiful
and when he shot the puck
it left a trail of red
white
and blue.

He showed no fear
when he took a puck right to his face.
His teeth flew like doves into the stadium
and the blood flowed like the Trenton River.
As I heard eagles cry he righted himself
His slapshot roared like a musket
and ended the contest crowds cheering.

The paramedics arrived shortly thereafter
and I saw on the news the next day:
Poor old George was getting wooden dentures.
Who writes the teleprompter?
The one that shadows
upon the gullible and impressionable,
wanting a simple weather forecast.

Do you not see the lightning
of complex pressing matters at hand,
while the celebrities catch a cold?

Why must you hear the echoes
of thundering and booming inaccuracy
creating a 95% chance of superstitious truth?

Why is it that you must always concur?
To be in accordance with those around you,
despite the logical anti-popular census to seek refuge.

Your civil inability spills onto me excessively.
I will promise to give you a towel,
as long as you seek it.

I will always have an inviting umbrella,
far away from their desiccated pretentious shelter,
yet close enough to smell the sweet stench
of the falling reign.
SEEKING PEACE

Jesse Glover
I see the Armored Personal Carrier, idling on the road. I run up to the back end, and came to a crouching stop making sure to not kick up dust. After waiting a few seconds to confirm that I am unnoticed I crawl under the APC vehicle and lay beneath the chassis between the middle two sets of tires where the frame has two support bars to attach to. The back of the APC starts to lower to form a ramp on the ground. I undo my straps and wrap one under my upper back and the other under my thigh. Men start running to the back of the APC and up the ramp. I secure the straps around some bars and thread the straps through the winch. The back hydraulics start screeching as the ramp begins to raise and I hear the gears above my head shift as the vehicle slips into drive. I begin to simultaneously crank both winches, raising myself off the ground. The vehicle starts to move forward as I continued to pull myself closer to the frame. As we gain speed, rocks fly from the tires into my armor, a few finding bare skin on my neck and head. I stop winching when my body is a few centimeters from the hot metal, trying to gain as much distance from the blurry ground as I can without being burned by the underside of the truck. I find myself tapping my three fingers to my chest the outside two twice, and then the inside finger twice. I clench my fist to stop the act. The vehicle begins to slow and settles to a stop at the gate. The man at the kiosk and the driver talk about how drunk they got at the New Year’s party a few days ago. They eventually finished their dialogue with laughter. The buzzing gate opens and the APC drive on. I can’t see the gate but I know what it says, “KEEP OUT!! SOLNTSEVSKAYA BRATVA!! KEEP OUT!!” I am now one step closer to my target.

‘Anya, you may only be ten, but you must begin to provide for us now. It is up to you to carry on the family trade as your brother was born … unfit for the job.’ Father looks back at the corner of the room where his son was sitting silent. Silent, like he always is.

‘He is mute Father, not helpless’

‘Wrong Anya, he is useless and does not respond to orders, all he does is break holes in the walls and dissect the wires. He is a nuisance and has no value!’ Father shouted at his unresponsive son. ‘With my sickness coming on, I can no longer work like I used to, I must train you while I am able.’

‘Yes father, I will try my best.’
‘No!’ he grabbed her arm and slapped his daughter across the face. The son flinched at the table, his only movement since the conversation began. ‘You will do your best and you will do it right. Do you understand? … If you fail then we will all starve to death. You will do your best.’ She nodded her head slowly, not caring to wipe the blood dripping from her nostril. ‘Good, now you must eat. Training starts tomorrow.’ He walked towards the pint of soup that was cooking on the burner.

‘Come Dmitri,’ the girl said, extending an open hand to her younger brother by 6 years. ‘It’s time to eat’.

The father quickly pulled her towards him, ‘No Anya he does not eat tonight. Tonight there is just enough for one.’

The knife cuts the air over my head, barely dodging the wild swing. His swinging left arm is intercepted by my right hand keeping the blade away from us. My left arm comes in hard and fast, forearm crashing into his elbow. Tendons crunch and then snap as I fold his left arm 90 degrees against its natural direction. A scream tears through his lips. My hand slides down the broken arm and takes hold of the blade loosely held in his hand. My right arm jerks down and across his throat. The entire movement so fast, he doesn’t get to reach full scream before falling limp. As his body falls I kick out at the knee of the guard to my right, right leg buckling under the snapping tendon on the patellar bone. He begins to fall to the ground. I pull my legs under me and push off with all my force, springing high into the air in a double roll, as I begin twirling, stretching my legs out to steer my body I pull out my silenced 9 mm. The other three guards, standing in a line, start to draw a bead on me as I line the first man up, my right side facing him. I squeeze the trigger twice; bullets tear into his skull as I continued my rotation. I draw my sight on the second man, his rifle is starting to rise as I squeeze the trigger twice again. His left eye explodes quickly followed by a kill shot above the eyebrow. I am three quarters through my roll as I begin to line up the final man. He lets off a wild shot, missing me by meters; his fingers are tight, pressing the metal trigger against the gun’s body. I shoot before his gun gets off another firecracker shout. My aim truer than his, two holes breach his heart. I land in a crouched position. The first man with the slit throat hits the floor with a dull thud. I was careless, and ran straight into that patrol group. It was a rookie mistake that should have gotten me killed. I should have expected more resistance after the APC. I will be better next time. I have to be better. I stand up and walk over to the guard with the blown out knee. He
pleads for his life but I’m not listening. I draw the bead of the gun on his head and fire once. I look to the distant mountains where my target is waiting and run on. Nothing will stop me from reaching this target. Not this one.

She came into the room quickly, military boots dragging under her legs. She found her couch and dropped herself into the seat. From her hip holster she pulled out the silenced 9 mm pistol and set it on the counter. Next was the 15 cm military knife, with red stains still on it from her days work. She fell into the back of the chair with a loud sigh. Dmitri popped his head out from the cabinet fort he had made next to the Chlorine and Raid pesticides under the kitchen sink. She looked at him. He pulled out his flash light, and clicked it on and off in long and short flashes.

‘I can’t play Dmitri. I just got in and I’m tired’ He looked at her and tried again. ‘I know we don’t play anymore, I’m busy training. And father says I can’t-’ Father walked into the room from the back door. Dmitri’s head disappeared into the cabinet.

‘I heard you enter the house Anya. That is sloppy work.’

‘But I am tired and I just got in and-’ A glare from Father stopped the excuses immediately. ‘I am sorry father .. it will not happen again.’ He grabbed a Ceska-CZ 805 assault rifle and a box of ammo.

‘Come Anya, we are going to practice shooting again and afterwards … your stealth.’ He headed for the back door.

‘But father I-I –‘

‘What!’ He stared at the averted eyes of his daughter.

‘I just thought ..’

‘Thought what!’ The awkward pause was excruciating. ‘I just thought … that … since it is my 16th birthday … that … maybe … I-‘

‘You can have a break? Or go hang out with friends? What friends Anya? No! You do not get to rest. Rest causes complacency. Complacency causes death. Today is no different from yesterday, and tomorrow will be no different from today. We train and we work! That is it. Do you understand!’

‘Yes. Father.’ Each syllable was choked out, fighting its way past tears.

‘Good, grab some protein bars and some water. We are going to be out today longer than I had planned.’ He walked out of the house, the only sound, the click of the door after he left.
Pierce

Gwyneth Holston
I kneel down and rub the snow and grass with scent to keep the patrol dogs distracted so that I have an escape route when I come back this way. I use the broken branch to cover my tracks in the new day’s snow, just as father had taught. I jog through the rolling hills below the cliff face, searching for my pre-marked spot. As I approach, I hear a distant noise from somewhere distorted by the rising wind. I run to the source, low and undetected to a rock and squat there in silence. Men are sitting around a fire pit. Some with gloves off, heating their hands from the increasingly colder air. They pass around two separate Vodka bottles talking about some place warmer. One of the guards begins to approach my position. I remain calm, head peering over the snow covered rocks, counting the guards. I duck my head in and mentally recall the placement of each of the nine men. I hear the soft crunch of the boots in the snow as the man approaches my hiding spot. I mentally map out each shot I will take, determined by who is the drunkest and thereby slowest based on the slurred dialogue. Just as Father had taught. The footsteps still approach until they are less than a meter above the nook I hide in. He stops and I hear the zipper of snow pants and jeans being pulled down. I wait silently, three fingers tapping my chest. He begins to pee, the stream of urine being picked up by the wind and some of the spray hitting my face and jacket. Still I wait, three fingers betraying a still body, listening for the right time … There! A sigh, released when looking upward at the sky. I snap into motion, my body blasting out the nook, partly through his stream. My hands lead the way. One around his mouth to block the shout of surprise, and the other around his neck. I pull him down to me, tearing his head left as he falls, snapping his neck before he hits the ground. I pause in silence. No shouts raised, no one noticed. I pull out my pistol and grab the guard’s assault rifle. I pop up from cover, jumping the meter height in a bound and start firing. Bullets cut through snow and air, tearing holes into their targets. In four seconds, all guards are dead. I drop the assault rifle and walk to the base of the cliff face. I look up, and stared for a while. Putting my target in mind, pushing all other thoughts away. My right hand touches the wall and I start to climb …
The rain poured down on the muddy ground. Icy spikes stabbing our skin. Shovel still in hand. We were the only ones at Father's grave. The only ones who will ever be at his grave ‘After all you have done to me and you have a heart attack.’ The words were the only ones spoken in the last 8 hours since we had found our father dead in the kitchen after our return from the market. The shovel hit the ground with a loud slop. Dmitri jumped at the unexpected movement.

‘Come on Dmitri. It’s time to go home. I’ve said my peace.’ She turned from the shallow grave and walked down into the dark, sleeting night. The son looked back to his father’s grave, his face showing the same expression it had all night: Liberation.

Fingers found grips in the stone no wider than 5 centimeters across and 2 centimeters deep. I pull my body up the cliff face. Many times having to dangle my legs into the air as my arms, burning with exhaustion pull their way up the rocky wall. The wind blows cold air into my face, freezing my cheeks and biting my eyes. I blink away the frost and find a foot hold in the stone and push up. The rock immediately buckles under my weight, and my body plummets, pulling my tired, bloody fingers out of their holds. I fall down for what feels like seconds, adrenaline immediately coursing through my veins, heartbeat pounding in my skull. I see the guards far below, oblivious to my peril, following dogs excitedly barking at foreign scents along their routine paths. Two birds dance in the air below me and out into the sky. Their blue body’s gleaming in the sunlight, circling each other in a helix pattern. Below me the stone fast approaches at a 60 degree slope. Two uneven rock planes are pressed together forming a V. I crash into the stone and bounce off, my ribs taking most of the hit, the air blown from my lungs. I roll down the rock, hands slapping at stone, finding any sort of hold but no grip is found. I roll down the cliff face a few meters before managing to slide on my chest, the edge of the cliff fast approaching. My feet and fingers claw at the stone with no success. Then my feet kick air and still I slide. Now my lower torso is in air, and still I slide, fingers raking stone, nails splitting and breaking at my efforts. As my head flies off the cliff my hand makes a last attempt to claw at the stone face. My right hand finds a hold and the weight of my body snaps at my arm. I grimace in pain and hang for a few seconds, contemplating letting go, letting this finally be over. I shake my head. No; death does not come that easy, should not come that easy. I growl, pulling myself back on to the ledge. I will not fail. I must reach my target. I must get this target. I look up at the position I had fallen from, 15 meters away. I move my bleeding right leg in front of me and reached out with my left hand, bloody fingers staining stone and begin to climb again.
‘Do you want another snow cone?’ She asked. Dmitri signed no, deciding that 6 was finally enough. At this point the snow cone was being forced into Dmitri’s mouth. The December air was cold, turning their noses red. The glove holding the snow cone was crackling and the weight of it was shifted in the hand. ‘Are you sure? It is your 16th birthday after all. I want you to get anything you want… like I had wanted at your age.’ The words hung in the air haunting the two siblings. ‘So this is going to be the last time we see each other for a while Dmitiri’ Anya said, turning to see her brother face to face. ‘I can’t take care of you. You have to see your own way now… for a while at least.’ Her face grimaced at her last statement. Dmitri’s head shook furiously. Hands quickly signing statements of refusal, throwing the remnants of the snow cone around them. ‘No we can’t stay together. That last job was too hot. The Solntsevskaya Bratva saw my face. They’re bound to come any day now and I can’t put you in that danger. I wanted to protect you Dmitri. That’s all I’ve ever wanted for you, to keep you from pain.’ Dmitri’s hands and snow cone raised but Anya caught them. ‘No! … I don’t want to hear it. I won’t let you shoot somebody like I have … I can’t let you shoot somebody like I have … anyways, I will come back for you …’ The breath lingered in the frosted air, exposing it for the lie that it was. Dmitri looked up at her, tears flowing down from glassy eyes, water freezing to his face but he remained unblinking. ‘There’s something I’ve got to ask you though?’ She smiled, blonde hair dancing around her angelic face. Dmitri kept his teary eyed stare locked on her hers , his only movement was three fingers tapping his chest. Outside two twice, inside finger twice. ‘Why do you always tap your three fingers against your chest like that?’

The gun clanks against the hard stone on the peak of the cliff face. I look down the sight. The crosshairs dance across the scene, 600 meters away. There are man sized turret mounds placed in front of compounds used as houses. Guards walk down the streets with assault rifles dangling around their waists by straps. At any one time, there must be at least two hundred armed men casually walking down the streets along mundane patrol routes. In what looks to be the center of the plaza, three men guard the target, the young woman, bound in chains wrapped around a tall metal pole. The hands are high above the targets body, wrists rubbed raw, dry and fresh blood smearing the forearms. I examine her torso, the white shirt, torn and tattered is stained with perspiration and blood. The steady snow hits bare skin. The curved chest rises and falls in slow, steady movements. I knew she would still be alive. My crosshairs focus on her head, I zoom in so that her face encompasses the sight. The forehead has a deep gash, showing the smooth plate of skull underneath the ragged flesh staining parts of her blonde hair red. It is obvious that she has been tortured for
weeks. They will try to keep her alive for as long as possible as they continue to cut her body in ways that make her regret ever living.

She looks up. Her single working right eye scans her proximity searching for something. Then she pauses and starts scanning the horizon, the cliffs. I pull my eye away from the scope in disbelief. After a moment’s pause I take off the sun cover to my scope and move the gun haphazardly to catch the sun’s glare. Steadying my breath I look down the sights at her. She is staring straight at my position with an expression I can’t decipher under her broken face. A tear trails from her right eye. I decide to answer the only question she must be asking, moving my gun to make a series of long and short flashes. Then I focus my sight on her. She stares at the ground, digesting the information. After a few moments she just looks up at me. We stare at each other for seconds or hours, I’m not sure which. Finally she just smiles and nods. I close my eyes, forcing back the tears. I notice my left hand hitting the stone, outside two fingers tapping twice, inside finger tapping twice. I stop tapping, open my eyes again and set my crosshairs on her chest. I open the chamber and put in one shell. I have just enough for one. I slide the chamber shut and adjust my scope for the west wind and the distance. Fifteen clicks left, twenty two clicks up. I look at her one last time through my scope; she is still sagging limp against the poll. I match her rhythmic breathing to my own. Letting time pass by until I am sure of my shot. I breathe in slowly, hold my breath, steady the crosshairs … it’s my turn to take care of you now Anya.

I squeeze the trigger.
Don’t You Hate it When the Lift Stops?

Scott Roman
Late Night Excursion

Will Treanor

My eyes open to the sound of silence.
I was exploring the jungles of Colombia
in search of the city of gold.

It must have been the waterfall
I walked by earlier that really set it off.
I'm glad I awoke when I did.

Stumbling out of bed
I step on the clothes I was
too lazy to pick up.
I can only make out the silhouettes
of familiar landmarks
and the creaks of the
wooden floor
lead me through the jungle of darkness.

Making my way to the hallway
I slide my hand along,
every bump is a clue
leading me closer to relief.

After what felt like hours of traveling,
I have reached my destination.

Now for the moment of unknown.

How many times have I been in this spot,
in this same position, doing the same thing?
Still I pray to hit my mark.

Only the sound can confirm my aim.
How glorious it is on a Tuesday at 3 A.M.
Dream Catcher

Ginny Premo
TREE SURVEILLANCE

Kyle Schulz
Vase

Gwyneth Holston
I am the steam
d pipes of this old house
the ones that moan,
and rock, with that roll
of heat. But I am also that wall,
stonewall, brick wall, foolish
retaining wall, foolishly
constructed in summer, when the steamer
rolled through all the walls
of this pine clad house
painted in the faces of all the rolling
raindrops of that riverhead moaning.

But I am also the moan
of the creeping oak foolish
in its growing grandeur, it rolls
along its seams
with every pink wind over this house,
this house with its hollow walls.

Oh baby I am ready to be walled
in, so my rattling purple flower moan
will be the wall-paper of this house.
But I am also the foolish
green chairs we stained,
for the dining room with the rose.

But I am also the rolling
drive way, stone way, you walled
me out baby, now I am the steeple
of the heavy roof that moans
under the white weight of my foolish
red radiating howl
that I have crafted, to paint, this house.
But remember, I am also the roll
the roll of that adjacent full
jealous river that has no walls
in the freedom of this moaning
fall, so ready your stems,
because I am this winter and your stems are
turning a shade to mirror this house
so ready your voice to moan under the weight
of my rolling
yellow love that will wash over the fragile
walls we constructed as fools.
Posed, with the perfect up-dos.
Each in a gown that exposes just enough
to straddle the line between princess and prostitute.

Three of these four ladies
hold cocktail glasses to their party-pink lips;
Diaphragms sucked in,
ready for the shoot.

But Jamie (second from the right)
her shot’s already done.
Captured with her head still tilted back,
revealing the empty glass bottom
which acts as a lens to alter her view of the world.
RADIANCE
Max Goddard
Woman,
I want to eat you alive
A blind taste test
To learn the Braille of your inner thigh
Woman,
I want to drink your scent
To be engulfed without inhibition
And learn how to make you sweat
Woman,
I want to envision the ecstasy
Of your rumbling body
To learn the rocking motion of your wild sea
Woman,
I want to know the music
Of your groans and breaths
To learn everything that makes you tick
Woman,
I want you wrapped around me
The warm water of a crashing wave.
To know I’ve rid of pulsing agony.
Woman
O, Woman.
HOLLOW

Chelsea Panos
A story written by a vain mathematician about a girl, or maybe the idea of a girl, or maybe no
girl at all. You’ll have to read it and find out for yourself or you could watch a movie or play a game
or learn a new skill. The decisions are all yours.

If the world was ending, I’d start my car, close the garage door and watch an Ingmar
Bergman film. Probably Wild Strawberries or maybe Fellini’s Amarcord. I haven’t thought it through
because I don’t expect that to happen. I only bring this up to relate that we never can know what’s
going to happen. I often imagine before I fall asleep at night that perhaps I won’t wake up. You may
think that this would drive me to stay conscious as long as possible, but on the contrary, when that
thought crawls like a spider through my ear and into my brain, I relax my nerves and give myself
over to oblivion. I’m not a fatalist – well, I am, but I’m not a suicidal fatalist – I just have a firm
belief in tearing bandages off in one swift, decisive movement and it is inevitable that all bandages
must be removed at some point, so don’t deceive yourself into thinking that you can leave one there
forever and save yourself the pain.
It may be this sentiment that has kept me so long from any lasting or meaningful happiness.
Embarking on new exciting journeys seems empty when the end is always ahead, whether in sight
or not. I remember when I was seventeen and I was giddily excited by the inexhaustible variety of
life and several years later, here I am, thoroughly underwhelmed by it. At first I simply expected too
much. I saw the green light that Jay Gatsby saw so many years ago and gave chase to it, only to find
that it was not a bright tint of a green forever telling whomever laid their eyes upon it to “Go for it!”,
but rather was the blue-green of the sea which gave me a notion of the long and arduous journey
ahead.

I sat in the Rock Rest Tavern on a thus far indistinguishable Friday night and drank whiskey
sour and Long Island ice tea and belched disgusting flavors back into my mouth while my friends
sauntered about the scene looking for young women just intoxicated enough to drag back to their
lair. My friends are nice in a broad sense, smart enough too. I very much like them, for whatever
reason, but they often complain to me that this crush of theirs is attracted to some jerk and that
crush is attracted to a head case. If women had evolved to be put off by jerks and head cases, our
species may have gone extinct years ago. Any of my old girlfriends may tell you I’m one of those
jerks, but don’t believe them because they’re all bitches.

You may have observed that I related this night as ‘thus far indistinguishable’ and wondered
rightly when it would progress into distinguishability. I suppose I should divulge that information
now because it’s bad writing to keep the audience titillated for too long. Of course, there are rules
for everything which makes me think that either everything is bad writing or all those rules are
misleading us in some way. Self-reference is cliché so I already broke those rules anyway.

What made this night distinguishable was the appearance of a young woman. I sat at the bar,
tiresomely bouncing a quarter into an empty shot glass. Clink. Clank. Then there she was. She met
my eyes for the moment before they sheepishly darted down towards the quarter which had landed successfully in the cup. I had seen her before but I couldn’t immediately remember where. I had recently become enamored with actress Carey Mulligan, so I decided to call this girl Carey. To this day, I still do not know her real name. I don’t know what caused my infatuation with Carey that night. It may have been something she was wearing, or my crippling loneliness, but in all reality it was much more likely that look she gave me from across the bar. As a rule, if any attractive girl shows me even an inkling of attention, I fall madly in love with her.

Carey and her friend – another young woman who I named Keira to keep up the pattern of British actresses – wandered around the bar that night occasionally accepting drinks from guys or buying their own. I watched them all night; they must’ve noticed, I certainly wasn’t subtle. I marveled at Carey’s graceful movements, her hoop skirt fluttering with every change of direction. Returning from the bar that night, I watched 2001: A Space Odyssey and the world seemed available. My friends had counseled me to go and talk to her, but I couldn’t do that. She wasn’t the type of girl who would be picked up at a bar. Now you should be thinking to yourself, You can’t know that. You’ve no idea what type of girl she is. And you’d be quite right. It had been two years or so since my last relationship ended. Her name was Zooey. We had met senior year of high school and dated for three years. She grew bored with me when I grew bored with life and one day she decided it wasn’t worth it. Still now some friends will ask me why I dislike Zooey Deschanel and I’ve never given them an honest answer.

My problem, some would say, is that I romanticize. I see only what I want people to be and refuse to view them as they actually are. I heard a joke which I think defines my relationship with women. If I had a dollar for every time I felt more for a fictional character than any real person, I could pay for the help I clearly need. I have an excellent imagination so that I can turn any woman I meet into a fictional character. Carey is perhaps the best example of this, but she’s far from the first.

Over the next few weeks, I visited the Rock Rest Tavern several times. I saw her occasionally and always imagined our conversations. I imagined that I’d be sitting at the bar as she approached to order a drink.

“I’ll take Jameson, neat,” she’s assertive but not insistent.
“Impressive, you’re not messing around,” I muse.
“We’re grad students. We don’t have time to waste,” her blue eyes meet mine. Those eyes, that half smile, it just about kills me.

That’s where I’ve seen her. She was a grad student too. I was – and perhaps forever will be – working on a Master’s Degree in Mathematics, and the Math department shared a building with the Liberal Arts department, the two smallest factions of a renowned Engineering school.

“What’re you studying?” I ask.
“Right now, on-going themes of idealism in Scott Fitzgerald’s work,” she replies. I love that. I love that she leaves off the ‘F’ as if she’s friends with him.

“Let me try,” I say, “Amory Blaine is young, intelligent, handsome. Anthony Patch is rich, young and has a beautiful wife. Gatsby is rich, handsome and powerful. And I haven’t read
Tender Is the Night, but I think Dick Diver has a Medical degree, so he’s rich and intelligent at least. And then Monroe Stahr is rich and powerful. So you’re studying how awesome all the awesome people are, yes?” At this point my literary knowledge is stretched to the brim, so I pray she doesn’t press any further.

“Very good,” she says, “Most people haven’t read his minor work.”

“Most people haven’t read his major work but we won’t hold that against them. It’s not their fault for being stupid. We’re raised in a stupid society. You know how to tell if there’s a genius among us, right?” There are hundreds of ways she could answer this while still referencing a famous author, but I hope against hope that she chooses the right one.

The bartender pushes a tumbler and her change back towards her. She leaves a dollar. As she walks away, she says with a grin, “...dunces will all be in confederacy against him.” Game, set, match. I’m in love.

I consider Hemingway a genius. And Simon & Garfunkel, and Paul Thomas Anderson, Salvador Dali and Luis Bunuel, and Dostoevsky even though he’s so damn Russian. And I wouldn’t be so haughty as to consider myself in the same category as any of them. I’ve never taken an IQ test for fear that I’ll score 80 and have the overwhelming urge to self-harm. I do think I’m generally intelligent though, in some vague sense. More intelligent, I hope, than any of my high school teachers and less so, I’m sure, than any of my college professors. Hemingway said, Happiness in intelligent people is the rarest thing I know. I’ve always felt that I’m not a genius, I’m just intelligent enough to be unhappy.

I was working on a computer in the lab in our building the next time I saw Carey. My imagination took a narcissistic turn and I got to talk about me.

“I think I’ll take to calling you Scott,” she says, “or maybe just Fitz.”

I swelled with pride at this and did my best not to kiss her on the mouth.

“I wouldn’t resist it.”

“What do you study?” she asks.

“Nothing that would interest you I’m sure.” I self-deprecate sometimes, but I’m really not fishing for anything. I consider myself honest.

“I’ll be the judge,” she meets my stare.

“Alright. Well for parabolic equations of this form...” I scribble an equation for her which looks like:

\[
ut+Au= f(t)
\]

“with an initial condition \( u(0) = u_0 \), a constant, and where ‘f’ is a given function and ‘A’ is a given operator, which can be as simple as a partial derivative or as complicated as anything you want it to be, we can simplify the problem from a numerical standpoint by transforming it into the complex plane using a basic Laplace Transform, which eventually yields this equation,

\[
w(z)=(zI+A)^{-1}(u_0+fL(z))
\]

where ‘F\(L(z)\)’ is the Laplace transform of ‘f’. Then \( w(z), \) a function of imaginary numbers, is the transform of \( u(t). \)” Take a breath, I tell myself. I’m sounding like a textbook.
She pipes in, “Then just take the inverse transform of ‘w’ and you have your solution.”

“Exactly,” I say, “I mean it’s not quite as easy as it sounds, but that’s the idea. You just need to establish an appropriate contour, since inverse transforms are contour integrals which turn the imaginary function w(z) back into a real function u(t). Once you’ve chosen a contour, you can numerically evaluate the transform and get an approximate solution.”

By this time, you’re all sufficiently bored, right? But not Carey, she loves this stuff.

“Is this original work?” she asks.

“No, it was published a few years ago, but I’m using this method in my thesis.”

“It’s really good. Elegant in its simplicity. I love that about Math. It’s all still magic to me.”

“Me too,” I say, “We should go out some time.”

“Alright.”

Now you know that I mean what I said about the fictional characters. I could really use those dollars. I always thought it would be fun to be psychoanalyzed. What would Freud say about me? Well I know what he’d say. He’d just tell me that any stress in my life is a manifestation of sexual frustration. I once had a dream where I was masturbating but then my childhood crush walked in on me. I had another dream that my sister was murdered and I played old fashioned noir detective and tracked down her killer, but then I was terrified because I had to tell my mother that her daughter was dead. What would Freud say about those? I mean, the first one is obvious, I suppose. I’ve changed my mind, I want Carl Jung’s opinion.

I don’t think Freud was completely wrong though. Human sexuality is the most interesting aspect of psychology. Especially directly after puberty. That’s why high school is so fun – for psychologists, not for the high schoolers. My pubescent years must have been different than others. My friends around that time were trying as desperately as they could to obtain Playboy magazines or feel up some innocent young girl’s breasts. I spent that time alone in my room, reading graspable literature – which at that age included Tom Sawyer, The Hobbit and some abridged Sherlock Holmes stories – and watching films. I may be better adjusted now if I had just done the Playboy thing. I watched Boogie Nights, does that count? Perhaps I could engage in meaningful conversation with women if I had a more active sexual curiosity. It’s not that women frighten me, it’s that they bore me. And please don’t assume that I am chauvinistic. I find most men altogether boring too.

On our first date, I would take Carey somewhere extra classy. We’d make small talk like where are you from? and any siblings? and it would be fine. I’d discover that she likes art films and enjoys wearing sweat pants. She doesn’t like sports. That’s a bummer. I guess she can’t be perfect. There is a brilliant physicality to sports though. That’s why I find myself drawn to them. I think of the immense pride and pressure that must come with being the absolute best at something.

The middle is always so inconsequential. I savor the beginning of things and all the poignant feelings arrive at the end. The middle is reserved for apathy and routine. So it’s no surprise that I started to imagine the end. In my mind, Carey and I had been dating quite some time. Maybe we were even living together, I’m not sure. But I remember fighting. I’m very good at being mad which is a very bad thing to be good at.
“You don’t have to be so jealous,” she says, “I was just talking to him.”

“Just talking?” I never raise my voice, but my tone is always hurtful. “I’ve never seen someone flirt so outrageously. I thought you might disrobe right then and there.”

“You’re over-reacting,” when she really wants to emphasize something, she just says it slower, drawing out every syllable. I think that’s adorable.

“I don’t know. It’s just you don’t see me throwing myself at any girl that makes me laugh.”

“I didn’t throw myself at him. We were talking and he made some jokes. You would’ve liked him if you weren’t so blinded by rage at my transgression of talking to another human being. And besides, I don’t see you doing anything! I have to drag you out of the house to even go to a bar and hang out with my friends.”

“Well excuse me if I’m not as taken with that group as you are. I mean good Lord, he spouts off an 8th grade interpretation of Catcher in the Rye and you idolize him as a titan of the literature.”

“Andrew...”

That’s my name, by the way. Andrew comes from the Greek word meaning warrior. I take a second to wonder what the Greek word for coward is.

“Andrew, you’re ridiculous. He’s half-way to a doctorate in American Literature. You tried to read James Joyce and gave up. I think his interpretations may carry a little more weight than yours.”

I know she’s right about this, so what I should say is ‘You’re right.’ But what I do say is, “Well have fun screwing the guy with the better interpretations.”

Our eyes meet, a tear begins to form in hers and my heart just about breaks. She storms out of the apartment.

I sit there by myself and know that she’ll come back. Not because she’s weak, mind you, it’s because she’s a much bigger person than I. She always looks internally. She always asks ‘What could I have done differently?’ I really admire that about her. When I make her angry, she doesn’t vent her anger; she goes on long introspective walks. She’s much too good for me.

I should go outside and run up and down the streets like Woody Allen in Manhattan and then when I find her, fall to my knees and tell her she’s right and I’m sorry and I’ll try to change and I love her. I love her patience, her kindness, her smile, her eyes, her intelligence, her sweat pants, her everything.

But I don’t. I can’t. I imagine myself chasing her down, and in my head it’s so cool and romantic and in reality, she’d probably call the cops and I’d get hit with the Taser right as I caught up to her. There I am writhing on the ground in front of her, electricity coursing through my body, thinking that I totally deserve this. I’m the villain in this story, you see. I can’t even cast myself as the hero in my own damn fantasy. Maybe an anti-hero, Travis Bickle or something. I’d blow my brains out if only I had any bullets left. That’s a metaphor, I’m not – well, you get the point. It’s time for this bandage to come off, no matter how it hurts.

I heard a quote and I can’t remember where. Love never dies a natural death. It dies of blindness, errors and betrayals. That was certainly true of Zooey and I. Zooey, the inverse transform of Carey, she’s the one this story is truly about. She was nice, you know? She was funny, she watched
football from time to time, she agreed with me about Simon & Garfunkel but not Salvador Dali. She really liked the Coen Brothers. I could get behind that. O Brother, Where Art Thou? is a mess, but No Country for Old Men is a revelation; Barton Fink too. I’m an idiot. I should call her. She’d pick up and I’d ask how she was and she’d say she was happy and then ask how are you?

A few days ago, I was sitting on a computer in the same lab where Carey and I had never met, when a voice came from a table behind me.

“Excuse me, how good are you at math?” the voice asked. I swung around to see that is was Keira.

“I’m not entirely clueless,” I smiled. I chuckled at the coincidence.

For the next hour, I helped her through some basic differential equations. At the end, she said to me, “You hang out down at Rock Rest Tavern, don’t you?”

“As often as my friends drag me there,” I replied.

“You sit at the end of the bar all night?”

“I prefer it to the middle of the dance floor.”

“I was there with a friend a few weeks ago and she thought you were cute,” she informed me. I blushed a little. “She has a boyfriend now; otherwise I’d call her and tell her to get over here ‘cause the cute guy at the end of the bar is doing my homework for me.”

“It’s just as well we never met,” I said, thinking about how Bill Buckner must have felt when he booted the ground ball that could have won the World Series for the Red Sox, “It probably wouldn’t have worked out.”

That’s the end. I know it’s terrible. You may have been hoping for some grand conclusion: I swung around to see that it was Carey. I helped her with math and then we rode off into the sunset with a killer last line which truly inspired you for the few hours before you got distracted by more important thoughts. Even if you weren’t hoping for it, I certainly was. When I watch love stories on film I become dangerously romantic. Then I remind myself that stuff like that doesn’t happen in reality. All the right things never just fall into place. But then I think, reality is stranger than fiction, right? Carl Jung wrote about an experience he had where a patient was recounting a dream in which she received a gold scarab as a gift, and just as she was describing this he heard an insect fly into the window. The insect was a bright gold colored scarab-esque beetle. Or once in Bermuda, a man was riding a bike and he was hit and killed by a taxi. A year later, the man’s brother was riding the same bike and was hit and killed by the same taxi which was being driven by the same driver and was carrying the same passenger. That’s a morbid example, but you know what I mean. Frogs could fall from the sky tomorrow. So you can imagine something different happened if you want. Maybe I spent puberty chasing girls. Maybe I was more genuine and less cynical. Maybe Carey and I did meet. Maybe I could even be a hero. I couldn’t let those things happen, but maybe you can.
I’m delicious.
Could have made your life heaven
but you tried me too soon.

Je suis délicieux!
You violated my smooth cheese
and garlic-spiced sauce by shoveling
me into your pig-hole
like I was some leftover casserole.

Ich bin lecker!
You should have admired my perfection,
a work of art by your own hand,

Soy delicioso!
Oven hot noodles infused with cheese,
saturated in red sauce, worthy of devotion
and the finest china.

I’m delicious!
It was your haste that burned your mouth,
what did you think would happen?
Dunce.

Now I’m out side,
you blame me for the blisters.
Now I’m outside,
cooling with falling leaves.

Now I’m inside out,
birds pick at my warm noodley flesh!

Now I’m all gone,
gobbled up,
and some hobo stole my pan.
I once killed a man accidentally by stepping on the head of a coal rake, and my misstep caused the shaft to pop up and hit him in the testicles, whereupon he reflexively curled into a ball, kinda like those little ones you can make with fruit if you have an ice-cream scoop handy. In curling up and with a sound like someone hitting a cantaloupe with a board with a nail in it (kind of a squidge mixed with some pulpy juice), he impaled his head right through the right eye-socket upon the red-hot grappling hook he was making for his brother, who had a crush on a woman that looked like Barbie. Because his brother died the next day trying to rescue the blow-up Barbie doll from the fruit-stand in Caracas, where she was being held captive by a salesman who couldn’t earn enough money from selling produce to afford a real woman, I gave the eulogy for both my best friends a week later. I commented on the fact that I don’t know why they hatched the plan anyway, the blacksmith’s brother’s wife had a couple of cans like watermelons, big and tasty, probably pretty refreshing when it’s warm out. The look of horror on the faces of those mourning kinda looked like rotting fruit to me, all black and twisted and droopy, and that made me think of a new name for testicles – man melons! – and the irony made me chuckle, which caused the fruit to get angry so I sat down. After that, I couldn’t stop laughing during the funeral – man melons! I don’t feel bad about that, we all make mistakes sometimes.
Grow and Harvest

Hayley “Lee” Shanna O’Keefe Olson
Lying down here
with you by my
side, I start
to trace your
spine all the way
down to the small
of your back where
you have two small
simples. They are like
a colon on the sentence
of your body and they
makes take a pause:
And then before I even
realizes my eyes reading
and falling down, down
a long list your legs wrap
mine like anacondas
squeezing out the stiff
pains from tying to
find some sort of cure
in drugs and scripts
outside of
your winding and
intricate curves.
Before I could raise my
defense he came towards me.
His face hard and body

ready to pounce. His lips twitched
as his finger pointed at my heart,
accusing me of

acts I did not commit- “where
were you?” it asked. I wanted to
lie. Tell him Cacun, where

the sun beats down in winter
and the water is always calm. Tell him
New York, that I’ve

given up and joined a major
production like Cats. Maybe the
hospital, I could fake

a major illness right? My
answer, was far more sly, I
smirk and I find my voice

“where I needed to be.”
I stared at my blue sneakers
double-knotted like my dad showed me.
Today, everything
comes untied.

Blood-encrusted lips
A tube stuck down his throat
Barely conscious
The doctor says he’s comfortable as

morphine falls drip drip,
Malcolm in the Middle reruns on the TV,
the Rabbi reads prayers and
stone grinding breaths take over.

Finally it’s all over, but
I can’t look my siblings in the eyes,
arms reach for Mom, tied for eternity
and tears fall until there are no more.

I stared at my blue sneakers
double-knotted like my dad showed me
Today, everything
came untied.
It was hot. It was always hot. But that day seemed particularly bad. I stood in the shade of
the tiny overhang close to the wall of our hut. It was as tiny as an outhouse, but it didn’t have to be
big, we only ever slept there. It looked a little like a tent, except it was drilled far into the ground and
had thick walls, an actual floor, and the door had hinges. But the windows were still made of a thick
plastic material. The huts were made to be able to withstand all the horrible sandstorms of the desert.

We were up at the crack of dawn, as usual, and so it was still cool in the shade. I reached
above me and grabbed onto the edge of the roof to stretch, talking to my bunkmate, Sanderson.

“Why did they send us here?” He asked.

We had just been stationed at this tiny town two weeks ago, “Beats me. They said there was a
threat, but there ain’t nothing here to threaten.”

Sanderson spat on the ground, “Just another shit-hole in the desert.”

I yawned before responding. “We’ll probably pull out soon. They said they would hit a week
ago. Probably just bad intel. It happens sometimes”

“Well they should get us something to do other than just sit on our asses. I’m sick of it here.”

“Hey, maybe we can go into town again. You know; a peace mission sort of thing.”

Sanderson rolled his eyes, “Sure if they would send us a soccer ball or baseball or something.

We don’t even have the candy they said we could give out. Nobody in the whole town speaks a word
of fucking English, how are we supposed ‘build those bridges’” He laughed and spat again.

Sergeant Malloy had been telling us to “build bridges” with the natives. It had quickly
become a joke. Malloy wanted to see our being there as a mission of peace. We all wanted it that
way, but peace is an agreement. And the fucking al-Qaeda didn’t seem to agree.

“They’ll probably send us somewhere else soon,” I said, leaning forward to stretch my arms
more.

“Yea, to another God-forsaken shit-hole.”

“Believe it or not, the desert is strewn with nothing but shit-holes.” I replied. After you got
used to the heat, Iraq was still miserable. It was unbearably dry. I missed Georgia. I thought that
I wanted to get away from my small mountain town, but now I’d give anything to return to the
moist heat, and to swim in the lake where the whole town went to cool off. The water was warm on
top, but when you dove deep it was pleasantly cool. But here we were lucky to have water to shower
in, and it was never cool. And the air was so dry, that it sucked the moisture out of your skin. The
humidity of Georgia only existed in my rare pleasant dreams.
Our job was to investigate and secure the police recruitment stations set up by the U.S. Government to promote a more democratic law enforcement system. If I lived here, I wouldn’t want to be a cop because that would make me a target.

Sanderson sighed loudly, “Part of me wishes the threat was real just so we would have something to do.”

Just then, I felt something on the roof crawl onto my hand, probably just a scorpion. I quickly lifted my hand and flung it onto the ground, but it wasn’t a scorpion, it was a camel spider. I immediately jumped to where I had thrown it. I put my fist in front of it and pushed it back. Luckily it seemed disoriented from being thrown to the ground. Using my other hand I picked it up by one of its legs. Those fuckers are really ugly. There is debate as to whether camel spiders are more closely related to spiders or scorpions, but I think they’re in a class all their own. First off, they’re fucking huge. I’ve seen them as big as my face, but this one was on the small side; a little bigger than my hand. They have a longer abdomen than normal spiders, and it’s sectioned enough to look like a scorpion’s tail. But the tail doesn’t curve up and doesn’t contain their venom. Their fangs are at least four times larger than their heads and right in front of their beady little eyes. In fact, their fangs are about as long as their abdomen. If for some reason they don’t use any venom when they bite you, the wound could require stitches and give you a giant bruise. But if they do use venom, it makes your flesh rot right off you. Depending on how big the spider is, it could rot off a small circle of skin, or an entire arm’s worth of skin and muscle. And what you would really have to worry about is infection. The whole wound turns green and oozes pus. But only if you get bitten.

I held up my camel spider with pride pointing at Sanderson, “Quick, get me a cup!”

He ran into the hut and emerged a few seconds later with two large paper cups and some duct tape. He tossed me the duct tape then held a cup so I could lower the spider in, fangs first. Then when it was in, Sanderson put the other cup on top and I taped the two together. I took a toothpick from one of my many pockets and poked a few air holes in the top.

While in the middle of the desert, there really isn’t much to do. You could watch your shadow shrink and grow, sort the sand by color, or battle camel spiders. It was one of the greatest sports in the middle of nowhere. When two guys caught camel spiders, everyone in the whole camp would gather to watch the carnage. When there was only one spider, we would make it fight a scorpion instead, which was over much quicker. It was still better than counting the hairs on your arm though.

So whenever you caught a camel spider everyone would buy you a drink, usually right before the fight. “Hahahaha! We’re going to have fun tonight!” I laughed.

“McNeil!” I sat the cup down and snapped to attention. Sanderson followed suit. Sergeant Malloy spoke as he approached us. “As you were.” He sighed before talking. “We think we might send your squad with the Cancer Cannon to the recruitment station today. There’s been another
threat and you guys are the only ones that haven’t covered it so far.”

“How many times has this station been threatened?” I asked. It was great to be a little casual around an officer. Malloy and I had been together since first deploying.

“Just the once over a month ago.” He replied.

“And how big is this town?”

“Not even a thousand people. Listen, I know what you’re getting at, but even just a few lives saved is worth the effort.” He tried to assure me.

“It’s not that I don’t think the town is worth protecting, I just don’t understand why it’s even a target. I think we got the wrong information this time.”

“I know what you’re saying, but orders are orders.”

“I know I just hope it isn’t some other town of civilians about to be attacked.”

Malloy looked at the two cups taped together on the ground, “You catch a freak?” He said. Changing the subject was his way of admitting I was right, without saying it out loud.

“Yup, it ain’t huge but it’s feisty.” I replied.

“Found one in my boot this morning. Probably smaller than yours, but its fangs were dripping with venom. Tell ya what, you can leave a little late and get there after the station opens. Then when you’re done I’ll fill out the report to H.Q. and request transfer. Let’s see these fuckers fight.”

“Alright!” I said, “Outside the mess hall in an hour? Gotta tell the guys ya know.”

“Make it 0700, we should both get some breakfast first.”

The Battle Box was outside the mess hall. It was just a cardboard box with sand covering the bottom and a few larger rocks thrown in to make for interesting terrain. We set it on the ground and kneeled around it. A bunch of guys brought crates and a few fold up chairs to sit on behind us, and others stood up behind them. It was quite a crowd.

Malloy had his spider in a shoebox which he placed in the battle box while it was still closed. He tipped the shoebox on its side to open it, and shook the spider onto the ground. The thing was massive. Malloy had to be related to Bigfoot for that thing to fit in his boot. Legs included, it was almost as big as my face. And he was right; its fangs really were dripping venom. That thing made my spider look cute and cuddly. I held onto the two cups containing little Cuddles as Sanderson took off the duct tape. I opened the cups over the arena like cracking open an egg.

Cuddles dropped onto the sand with a soft plop, and then quickly began scrambling to get up the walls of the battle box. But Martinez used a stick to push him back in. He turned around and saw Malloy’s spider on the other side of the arena. He ran towards it preparing to defend himself. Cuddles spread his front legs to either side of Malloy’s spider’s head and began snapping at it’s fangs. Malloy’s spider began doing the same, each one trying to get a lock on the other’s head. Cuddles fangs were smaller though, and it looked as though Malloy would win. Their fangs were interlocked as Malloy’s spider began to push. Little Cuddles wasn’t nearly as strong, and began sliding backwards
making little tracks in the sand.

“Come on Cuddles!” I whispered, not wanting the guys to know I had named my spider. I clenched my fists, watching him get pushed around, until they reached the other side of the box. Cuddles twisted his abdomen to the side and freed his fangs. Then he closed them, pushed himself off of a large rock, and rammed his fangs into Malloy’s spider’s face. He decided that it was his turn to do the pushing. Malloy’s spider walked backwards, it didn’t slide like Cuddles had. It tried to free itself of Cuddles’ fangs, but couldn’t walk fast enough. He was pushed, struggling and meandering to the opposite corner of the box. All the while he was getting weaker as he was pumped full of venom. How could such a little thing be so cruel? It was survival, sure, but soon the thick milky venom began dripping out of Malloy’s spider. How much did it take?

They reached the largest rock in the arena in the corner opposite of where I was. Malloy’s spider stopped struggling and just laid down with its legs twitching. Cuddles pried its fangs free of the other spider’s face, ran to one of the legs, and began devouring his opponent. I knew that they could each other, but it was rare and usually not while one was still alive. Normally they waited a while and made sure their food was dead. Malloy’s spider twitched its leg away from Cuddle’s mouth, but Cuddles just found it again and kept eating. His little head moved back and forth masticating a larger version of himself.

I stood up quickly, “Told ya he was feisty!” I said to Sergeant Malloy. I clenched my shaking hand, and walked over to where he was on the other side of the box. I then reached my foot over the wall of the box and crushed Cuddles.

“Hey, don’t we keep them so they can fight another day?” Malloy said.

“One less camel spider in the world is a good thing.” I replied, dragging my foot on the ground to scrape Cuddles off of my boot.

“God, I thought for sure I would win!”

“Yea, well my little guy wasn’t to be underestimated I guess,” I scratched the back of my neck. “I’ll get the crew together to head on over to the recruitment station.”

“Good idea.” Malloy said, picking up his spider’s carcass to throw it into the dessert.

“Grierson has a Cancer Cannon you can use.”

“Thanks.” I said, relieved that the battle was over.

I began walking over to Grierson’s hut. There were threats on recruitment stations every time one opened. Our job was to scan the crowd with a portable x-ray machine, or as we called it; the Cancer Cannon. It’s just a box with two handles and a few knobs. It wasn’t heavy, but on top of the body armor, guns, and supplies, it was a major pain in the ass to carry. Man, if that was the newest
technology I would hate to have to carry around one of the old machines. The images were in black and green; nice and simple. There were two knobs below the screen, one to adjust for your distance from the target area and another to adjust the brightness of the screen. The outside was grey plastic. It supposedly didn’t heat up like metal does, but in the middle of the desert everything gets hot.

You point it at a crowd, and you can see all their skeletons and if they have phones, keys, rocks, knives, guns, swords, or bombs. We look for the bombs, but one guy actually had a sword once. He expected to dramatically behead the American recruiters. It’s funny, whenever we found someone who was a threat, a few soldiers would walk up on either side of them and escort them away from the crowd like nothing serious was happening. But everyone knew. The people would part, and walk away casually as if they just smelled something bad. The danger was real, but it was rare that an attack was successful. That’s why it always made the news when they were.

I’ll never forget one of the first times I saw a man with a bomb strapped to himself. Normally they lost their nerve and just gave up quietly. But when this motherfucker saw us Americans coming, the first thing he did was reach for the detonator. But per protocol, we had our guns aimed at him from the moment he was identified. So someone shot him in the forehead before he could blow the place up. We use hollow tip bullets so there was no exit wound and the bullet broke up after impact, tearing his brain to shreds and killing him instantly. I had only been in Iraq for a month or so at that point, and watching him die while trying to kill innocent people made me realize how stupid, desperate, cruel, and fucking heartless these people are! We only watched the recruitment stations, but it happened everywhere. We were sent to towns based on how many threats and bombings there were, but being briefed on the situation of a town could never prepare us for what we found. Evil exists. Humans are treated like pawns, like they aren’t real. They think shooting a little girl in the face in front of her mother as ok because people are just objects. They don’t consider their own lives valuable, and they see the people around them as outright disposable.

Grierson was sitting outside his hut cleaning his shoes. “Hey, you got the Cannon?” I asked.

“Yea, it’s inside.” He said looking up at me. He was the smart guy of our platoon. He spoke both Farsi and Arabic so he was almost always the one sent to the recruitment stations. He was quiet though and didn’t like to socialize.

I peeked inside the open door and found the thing leaning against the wall. I grabbed it and set it outside. “So what’s the place like?” I asked.

“Should be bigger.” He said

“What do you mean?”

“Well, there really aren’t any recruitment stations in this area, so people come from all over just to sign up here. There are always hundreds of people there.”
“What?” My heart started pounding.

“Yea, they had to re-build it so they could train everybody. There are a bunch of tiny little towns like this one in the area. They’re all built around natural wells and are close enough together that we let about twenty neighboring towns use this station. They all love us, it’s a great relief from the heavy al-Qaeda areas. You wouldn’t believe it, I heard rumors that people from all over are gathering there today for a pro-America rally sort of thing.”

The blood rushed out of my face and I felt like throwing up. “Did you think to tell any superiors this information?”

“It’s all paperwork with them. I don’t have the evidence they say. Rumors aren’t enough, it has to be official. Fucking government is always getting in the way of the military. I only heard about it a few days ago, may take a few weeks to get orders from H.Q. Prove it they always say.”

“Fuck!” I grabbed the Cancer Cannon and ran to meet up with my squad.

We were all piled into a jeep speeding towards the recruitment station.

“This place could be in serious trouble.” I tried to explain. I flipped the switch to warm up the Cancer Cannon. “It’s been threatened for a legitimate reason this time.”

“We didn’t hear anything about that!” Wilkins exclaimed.

“Yea, well it wasn’t verified information. We need to get in there fast and be on the lookout for suspicious behavior. The machine is warming up now so it should be good to go when we get there. I’ll jump out and get inside first to start using it. Everyone else follow me and we’ll get the place secure. I’ve radioed base and requested extra security. They probably won’t listen to me but hell, maybe they’ll ask for volunteers. That clear?!”

“Yes sir!” Velazquez shouted, saluting with the wrong arm.

“I’m fucking serious guys!”

“Sir yes sir!” everyone shouted at once. Much better. Staff Sergent wasn’t much higher than private, but at least they had to listen to me.

The jeep screeched to a halt in front of the recruitment station, I jumped out before the car could stop. There were people all around. They had small American flags and waved them in the air with extra enthusiasm when we approached. It wasn’t much of a rally by our standards, but any positive display towards America in public was scarce and dangerous. They yelled obscure cheers at me as I ran into the building past another camel spider. I could hear my squad scrambling to get out of the jeep, but didn’t wait for them to catch up. Inside was more crowded than I thought it could ever get. Some men brought their sons with them so they could see their father sign up to help their country. One man had brought his four wives with him to show off his wealth and his generosity at the same time.
I looked at the screen of the Cancer Cannon, it was black and green as it should be. As I looked around the room for suspicious behavior, I began lifting it up to my face. When it was to my chin, I heard a loud pop and a man in the middle of the room suddenly disappeared. I felt the wind knocked out of me and my heart stop for a moment. I couldn’t breathe, and my entire head felt like it had been bashed in from all sides at the same time. My ears especially hurt. It felt like when you swim down too deep in a swimming pool or lake or the ocean. At first the room was silent, but a high pitched ringing slowly filled my head.

I tried to breathe and look around me. The walls had all been painted red. Blood pooled on the floor. I looked down at my feet, and saw a leg without an owner. All around the room there were people missing limbs, and limbs missing people. I looked to my right, and saw an ear stuck to the wall. A hand here, an arm over there, somebody’s intestines over there, even someone’s head had been blown off. Pieces of people. The people closest to the walls were far enough from the blast that they survived and seemed intact, but they weren’t. They sat on the floor shaking, clutching wounds, crying, or staring into space. They were gone too; mere statues of themselves.

Somebody shook my shoulder. I turned around and saw Sanderson yelling something. What was he yelling? It didn't matter. I looked down at the leg by my feet. A camel spider came in through the door, crawled on it, and began devouring the human flesh as it cooked in the dry desert air.
Ostomy, tracheostomy, more
(Boulder, CO. 80304)

Andrew Hyde

From a Craigslist Post

Free medical supplies, mom and dad passed away recently.
Smoking, both of them, but that’s not important.
I’ve got two dozen suction catheter kits,
just in case your life doesn’t suck as bad as mine.
I’ve got one dozen tracheostomy kits,
just in case you need to breathe as much as I do.
I’ve got Hollister ostomy supplies (no, not the styling brand),
bags, clamps, etc, more than two dozen the lot.
And I’ve got feeding nutrition bags, a dozen plus,
eggg base, for you to try to hatch a plan to save your loved ones.
I couldn’t. So feel free to call my cell, (303-555-0935),
or email me. I only check in the morning or evening.

Please let me know how this turns out for you,
I’d like to know if I could help at all.
I gave my Sadness some liquor.
Bought his favorite brand of
spiced rum and cinnamon whiskey.
He took it smiling relieved
with tears in his eyes. He began to sip
to ease his pain, but drink took over
a few hours later, Sickness
cut him off and hid the liquor.
Sadness passed out, but woke
feeling just as he always did.
Sadness, cheer up.
Happiness is on her way
to see you, don’t worry.
You never have tears
when she’s around.
FACE

Fraser Simi Evans
This popcorn plastered
ceiling hides faces
with wretched little hills;

It is the rigid
tract of moon-scape where,
in vain, I search for

a nose, lips, and bits
that aren’t fists thrusting
between jagged plaster-bergs.

Ultimately, I
know it’s a barren
tract of chalky crag,

and yet, I sense that
from the shadows, a
pair of eyes stares back.

They search the room
for a body they
cannot see, between folds

in the blanket, the
grain of the headboard,
the threads of each sheet;

Mistaking each lump
for an arm, any
warmth, a beating heart.

But in the darkness,
a pair of bright eyes
is all that stares back.
Water Lilies

Thomas Rapstine
Electric Epileptic
Supernatural Song
Calin Meserschmidt

Remember you are a pine
tree atop a jagged mountain
green blanketed by this
extra supernatural radiating howl
of white reality
under the weight of electric
high rise thoughts, electrified
by these pine
clad roots of reality
deep in this mountainside
loam. So ready your howl
for a train in the color of this
neck turning an impossible angle reality
is approaching, for that transfiguration of that electric
green aspen tree howl
is roaring through these pine
tree fingers that grip this mountainside.
O brother, remember your reality,
because your lips will turn a real
shade of blue in this
relaxation under the sound of a mountainside
mudslide, and those electric
thoughts of yours will turn these pines
a shade to mirror our mothers paternal howl.

Remember though these golden valleys howl,
the ones that swell in the reality
of morning dew, where those pines
grow wild in this
feel of western electrical
thunderheads over those mountain
sized blues. O Brother, your mountain
is an earth quaking supernatural extra beautiful howl.
So don’t look to that approaching electric
thunder cloud with all its reality,
look to those fingers of aspen trees, and this
image of trees of pine.

O brother, take this memory of pine trees to
the top of your mountain,
and O brother I will remember this, your
supernatural extra illuminating howl,
and brother this is your reality so remember
you are electric.
Volcano

Ryan Mason
I just wanted to create new worlds,
people to fill their spacious
rooms and shape the landscape
to their desires.
To explore the dark forests
and gaze longingly at the stars,
wishing for the chance to travel between them.

I just wanted to make events turn on a spit
roasting over an open fire
turning the tides
and melting the ice caps while
spinning tapestries of espionage,
stories of betrayal, deceit,
love, lust and loneliness,

I just wanted to build a paper mache volcano.
I didn’t know I was making poetry
until I noticed I created a village
at the base and watched
the liquid, red with food coloring,
sweep it off my kitchen table
and smash it on the linoleum floor.
NEST

Fangyu Gao
Cataracts of flowers blooming on the wind
and slowly falling droplets splinter into glass
this moment when the tempest grinned
and petals touched the verdant grass
the gray soaks every pore and stains
the ground with vacant earthen echoes
where pebbles roll on tidal grains
and sand is run across by geckos.
The bumble bees and trampled towns
infest the swamps and meadows left
red rodents peer from bridal gowns
lie trampled like the shroud of death.
Vivacious as the world might seem
the void will chew and swallow dreams.
Hunger

Cody McCullah

The cage so small
engulfed in yellow canary fire
swaying from the storm inside
the beaded heap of relief just beyond reach.
If only,
the feathered victim could
squeeze through,
those cold,
unrelenting,
arms.
BOUNDED ANGEL

Hayley “Lee” Shanna O’Keefe Olson
Amaterasu

Kyle Schulz
The bobcat gnaws the road
It whirls and stomps
Shrieks, dives, shivers
Latches on with claws and teeth and will
Its sidekick the masonry saw screams and bites
A plume of rock dust wrestles with the clouds

The men thrust their pointed shovels
Roughly into the disheveled earth
Throw jagged chunks of cement and asphalt aside
The machine breaks open the road before them, insatiable
The earth peeks out from underneath
Blinks its eyes after its long sleep
Tastes the light and giggles, already drunk
Seeds drift nearby, curious
The startled trees throb, their buds fall, sighing
Even the shop windows jump and dance
Wary birds flee
Their mouths are open but I can’t hear a word
I clasp my hands over my ears

The men leave a line of orange cones
like fantastic horse droppings in a dream
Their clothes are filthy,
Their sunglasses grey with dust
Their hard boots swallow their calves
They swarm over the new earth
Soon they will cover it again
Lay pipes in her body
Cast a blanket of stone over her fragrant skin
But for a moment,

just a moment,

I’ve seen a glimpse of the future.
HART
Nima Sherpa
She loves to dance. When she was younger, her parents let her take any dance class she wanted; ballet, tap, modern, anything their little girl wanted to take. They loved seeing her dance, seeing her joy. They had more children, and she grew up. Money grew tight and she couldn’t dance anymore. Her parents asked her to watch her siblings, asked her to give up her freedoms to become a second mother, asked to give up what she is best at in exchange for less recognition. She began to slip away from them, wishing for a way out of the trap her life has become.

They find her one day, between the drudgery of school and the toil awaiting her at home. They are beautiful. Utterly beautiful. They want her. Want to take her away from her dreary life. They know she hates her life, and they know she won’t be missed. They promise her wonder. They promise her beauty, to make her beautiful like them. They promise her they recognize her skill, they appreciate her. They promise she can dance, dance for them to her heart’s content and beyond. They want her, and she agrees to leave with them, to dance again, to be part of their beauty, their world. She agrees to be theirs.

They take her away. They lead her so far and so long she no longer knows where she is, but she doesn’t care, not any more, she only wants away from her life. She feels brambles pull at her clothes and tear at her hair. The brambles seem impenetrable, and endless in all directions. Fear of being lost and left behind creeps into her heart and she clings to their hands tightly, afraid to be separated from her saviors.

They travel for days through the thicket, never stopping, never resting. When she stumbles they pull her along, back to her feet. When she falls, they drag her along. They are changing the further they travel, still beautiful, but growing more terrible with each passing moment. To look at their impossible features makes her feel as if she is going mad. The thorns cut her skin everywhere, and she feels as though with each cut she is losing something important.

The brambles end and she finds herself in their world, a scream catches in her throat, unable to escape. They promised her wonder, but the wonder is tempered with terror. They take her into their palace. The walls and angles inside are impossible to comprehend, but she follows quietly, too paralyzed with fear to do anything else. They want her to dance. Chimes and bells begin to play. She tries to dance but stumbles, her limbs stiff from their journey. They tell her to dance. She tries again, but can’t. They make her dance. Her body moves on its own, not under her control any longer. They make her dance for hours before growing tired of her. They place her in a small, dark, empty, dusty room and leave her there.
GWAR FAIRY

Jesse Glover
Every now and then they take her out of her room and tell her to dance to the chimes and bells they are so fond of. If she can’t dance, they make her dance. They promised to make her beautiful, but make her beautiful in their terrible image, make her pleasing to their discriminating eyes. She dances until her joints became hinges, and she moves until her muscles and organs became gears and clockwork. She dances until her body lengthens and thins to please her masters. Her skin becomes hard, pale porcelain and her eyes dark and heavy. They make her dance for hours, days, weeks, even sometimes years on end. She doesn’t need sleep anymore. Sometimes they feed her, other times they forget about her for months. She doesn’t need to eat anymore.

She no longer loves to dance. There is no joy any longer, only the compulsion to move her body for her masters when she hears the music start. They promised her appreciation, but only give her the appreciation warranted by a simple trinket or toy used for amusement. She is hollow now, her soul lost long ago in the brambles, when she agreed to be theirs without understanding what that meant. Dancing is now her curse. They stole her away long ago to make her dance without end.

They make her make her dance less frequently now. She sits quietly in her empty room more often than she dances. They put another, strange girl in her room and the girl is frightened of her. She watches the girl cry for days and days, watches her sleep, watches her call out for her family, saying they’ll look for her. She begins to realize why they haven’t made her dance in so long, why this girl is so strange and foreign to her. This girl is not like her, the girl is like how she used to be, this girl is still real. This new girl is her replacement. They are bored of her. She moves to look at the girl, wondering why they chose the girl over her, what this girl has that she doesn’t, but the girl only screams in fear of her, now so deformed, reformed, she is no longer truly human, but a living doll made by her masters. She tells the girl they lied to her, to both of them. They told the truth but lied in all the worst ways. The girl only screams more, pulling away from her, pounding on the door, desperate to leave, frightened by the monstrous living doll. They never wanted her, they only ever wanted her dancing, and now they were replacing her with this girl, who will become her. She tries to cry, but she can’t anymore.
They come for her once more. They lead her away, past the room where she danced, where the replacement dances now, out of their terrible palace of beauty. She follows her mad captors to the brambles, and falls herself stop, now knowing their intentions. They are going to make her go back. They are going to abandon her. She struggles against them, knowing her mind has broken in ways that allowed her to survive in their world, but will make her incapable of living in her own again. She is mad because they made her so, they made her theirs, and now wish to throw her away. They hit her and she falls into darkness.

She wakes in the brambles alone and panics. She runs into the thicket, desperate to find her way back, to find her masters again, knowing they don’t want her, knowing that she needs them to survive. Living without them is living death. They changed her and tortured her and abused her, but she needs them, because without them she is just a discarded toy with no purpose, no reason to be anything any longer. She pushes through the thorns for weeks before seeing a bright light and pushing through to it excitedly.

The sun falls on her face, its rays warming her cold, hard skin. She blinks her eyes with soft clicks and feels her jaw drop into a silent scream as she recognizes this world as her own, original world. She ran the wrong way in the brambles, ran away from what she had wanted to move towards. She wails piteously, clutching her spidery arms to her thin body. She turns to return to the thicket, to return to the terrible beauty of the Faye, but the thicket has disappeared, it is gone, lost to her, and she is stuck here.

She tries to find her family, but they had moved long ago, and she no longer remembers her name, or anything about who they were other than the way her family treated her, all the things she disliked about them. She no longer cares what happened to them. She tries to get used to life in her birth world again, but sometimes finds herself seeing things that aren’t there, and the Faye world haunts her waking dreams and nightmares. Normal humans don’t see her monstrosity here. They only see the beauty enforced on her, not the hinges, or the gears, they don’t seem to hear the clicks and whirs of her body, but they sense something is different about her. She doesn’t dance anymore if she can help it, but the sound of bells and chimes still provokes her body to dance, and she cannot stop until the music does.
A man stops her one day. He has a camera. He asks her to pose for him. She agrees. He dresses her in beautiful clothes, does her hair and make-up, and takes her picture. So many pictures. He calls her his weeping willow, his beautiful, sorrowful Willow. Others ask to take her picture. She agrees. She is only a doll after all, it is easy to pose for them, and they need her, need her beauty, need her to be theirs. The name Willow has stuck, and they all call her that now. They tell her how lucky she is to be so beautiful, to be so tall and thin and elegant. She can only smile bitterly in return. She lives alone, posing for them when they ask, taking the money they give her, slowly learning to get by again in this world.

Another man approaches her while she is doing a photo shoot. Her photographers try to scare him off, but she senses something familiar about him, a certain kinship. She looks at him and she can see his eyes have horizontal pupils, she can see the horns growing out through his hair. She can see the hair on his body becoming thick fur. He seems to transform before her eyes from a man to a man goat and she knows, this man was touched like she was by the Faye. He sees her monstrosity as easily as she sees his. She approaches him and asks softly if they were cruel. He says they are always cruel. She embraces him awkwardly, not having held anyone since she was human, and lets him lead the way to others like them, leaving her photographers behind, aghast their beautiful Willow is leaving them.
Open my pages
and I will tell you the truth.
Yes. I said it. The truth.
About how the world was created.

God.
with His might and glory,
created the world in six days.
Well, more or less, time was a bit different back then (he still had to create that)
First, He created light.
Well that was a doosy deciding on the color,
blue, green, red…. White!
Second, He created oceans and sky
   Originally, ocean and sky were opposite of where they are now.
   God, He got tired of his hair always being wet, so
   He flipped everything opposite to stay dry.
Third, He created land and plants
   At first He only wanted land, but
   without plants, everything was barren.
   Plus, his plans were big,
   He realized the plants had a purpose to serve.
Fourth, He created sun, moon, and stars
   The sun was way too close.
   Plants were dying, water evaporating
   So He pushed the sun further away.
   Stars were too bright, so He couldn’t sleep.
   Those had to be dimmed down.
The moon, that’s one He got just right.
Fifth, He created birds and creatures of the sea
   He put so many creatures in the sea that sea level rose!
   Birds near water drowned, He hadn’t designed them to fly.
   This was fixed quickly, they couldn’t die due to a design flaw,
   He was perfect.
Sixth, He created creatures of the land
   And He created human beings,
   He gave them the Earth to tame and subdue.
   But humans kept eating poisonous plants,
He kept having to save them. They eventually learned.
The seventh, he rested.
    Afterall, it was exhausting creating things.
    If you don’t believe me, you try it.
SAILING IN A LIGHTBULB

Martha Nawacki
A caricature of a woman
enshrouded with blonde hair
in a pink button up blazer pushes
some half-baked product
that will fulfill the needlessly complicated life.

With a flick of my wrist she’s suddenly changed

Into the bulldog face, no nonsense black man
detective to save the city
from an overabundant amount of killers
who all face their own heavy-handed, ironic, gruesome deaths
from the two-dimensional protagonist who lacks any facial expression.

In a blink of my eye the killers vanish and become

Sweaty, over-tanned contestants
competing for their fifteen minutes of fame
by forming new enemies through silver tongues
and well-crafted lies on the now tainted beaches
forever associated with first-worlders bitching about third-world problems.

A final jab at the narcissists destroys their world into an oblivion

And a completely fictitious plane of existence appears
with fluid lines and colors defying the laws of nature
when a young boy rides upon his magic yellow talking dog
to save a post-apocalyptic world from the evil
that would infest and plague the all the happy critters.

Contentedly, in a form of repose I simply think

It’s odd to find a relatable character in cartoons
Rather than the revealing, vapid and vain based on reality.
Why are cartoons filled with things one should aspire to be?
And real drama diseased with everything no one should want?
Communications went down first. The stories start to vary from there, but this one thing we can agree on; communications went down first. Some sort of EMP thing, people said, but what did we know? We’re like cattle; in situations like these we don’t think, just panic. Panic and run. And run people did. The streets were a mess, more so because nobody actually knew where to go. The general consensus seemed to be just this: get out the city. Guess everybody figured we were under attack and being a in a major city was just about the same as waiting to die.

Maybe they knew that, them that started this mess. Maybe that’s why they didn’t start with destroying the big cities. At least, that was the assumption most of us came up with. Either way, the anticipation of it was so much worse than just having been vaporized in the first place. Saw a man just about trample a kid he was in such a hurry to leave the city only to come back a week later, tail tucked between his legs and head full of doubt, to putz around his place unable to decide to stay or leave again. ‘Course that’s kinda where I was right from the start so he walks out, locks his door, thinks a moment, then fumbles with the keys again and I just nod because I know. I know that feeling.

So we wait. And when we can’t decide whether to wait some more we do so anyway because indecision takes time.

The armed forces didn’t show. Some were waiting on that, thinking the military would come swooping in to tell us all what the hell was going on. That’d be their sign, the way to break the indecision. But it didn’t happen.

After a time what did happen was looting, or theft rather, depending on your view, but violence with it. That’s what really broke the stalemate. That and guns. Can you imagine stampeding cattle with guns? It was a bitter something to see. A lot of people died for not a whole lot of reason. Local law enforcement were in a little over their heads what with the general mentality that the world as we knew it was ending. The smell from the neighboring apartment told me my neighbor thought that way, though I dared not open the door to see just what method of going he thought was better.

For chrissakes, all they did was turn the lights off a few weeks and the city just kinda collapsed in on its own doubt. That’s about when I called it. Time to go.

Getting out wasn’t easy. Certainly required being not all that attached, to stuff or people. And I wasn’t. Just loaded up the old piece of crap I called a truck with the bare minimum and my own self. Doors locked, windows up, and a paranoid lead foot that almost had me run over a family of four.

When I saw the mushroom cloud some hundreds of miles later in the rearview I thanked my lucky stars that a) my family were somewhere far ahead of and not behind me and b) that some
the first place. Guess he got his. Still, it was sad to see, confusing and sad, to know home was gone and not even know why.

The gas, originally mine and that siphoned from abandoned cars along the way, got me to a small town a long ways away from anything. Them there were none too pleased to hear about the way the city’d been, not that it much mattered anymore what with it being gone.

I was in the bar of this tiny, middle of nowhere place for the first message. The power flickered, right out of the blue. Guy next to me just about died sucking his drink down his windpipe in surprise, but hardly an elated sound of relief was heard before there it was on the TV. It didn’t make a whole lot of sense, left more questions than answers, but out of the confusion came on key detail: this thing, whatever it was, was global.

For three days we stewed in our own panic (and I say we ‘cause what other place in the world is worth heading for when the whole of it faced the same danger?) but then, again, a message. An ultimatum, really. We were being fought over live livestock or around like noisy scenery, depending on your own personal interpretation, but either way we had some decisions to make.

The sum of it was this: we could all die or we could find some way to decide on a select subset to be saved. They’d send the means to collect as many as possible from each area, but space was limited. They left it to us to choose.

I didn’t know these people around me or anyone else from the five other towns in our designated area so I figured my chances of capturing the popular vote were pretty much nil. I found my niche, the group with the same looks on their faces for their own mishmash of personal reasons drinking in the background. We listened, watched as so many other fought it out in the town’s gathering places.

There was a bit about saving the women and children, Titanic style, and another about saving only whole families. They tried ranking quality of life, ruling out the old and infirm. Someone, a self-righteous surgeon or dentist or some such, suggested considering contribution, saying it should be doctors and the like as opposed to gas station attendants and sales associates. About when she said, “You know, the important people” is when things came apart because, really, how do you decide who should get to live and who should have to die?

What no one really counted on was them that would decide by force. The gunfire and subsequent commotion left more than a few bodies, children included. I’m ashamed to recall that my first thought at the start of all that was focused on someone spilling my drink. (“If I’m going to die I’d like to do so in a warm, fuzzy haze and you damn people are making that damn difficult.”) In the end, it was survival of the fittest though. The thing I can’t get out of my head was that little girl, crying and clinging to the legs of her daddy, the most vocal of the gunmen.
The hostiles gathered up enough of their buddies to fill out the established number, some of which were apparently “good people” just too damn scared of dying to be decent anymore, and the lot of ’em set out. I cowered under a table while people died in front of me, bleeding out from the bullet holes while the majority of the rest cried their souls right out through their eyes. My consolation came from the inner voice that said there was nothing I could have done to save any of them anyway, but somehow the bitterness of cowardice stung through that, too.

The in-between, from there to the end, was short and meaningless. A few hours after the “chosen” group left we received the last message. It wasn’t global. The world ending, yes, but getting a chance to escape? That wasn’t. It was just us, this town and the five others. They just watched us. Picked a small pocket of the remaining world at random to decide the fate of us all. Six towns worth of people’s reactions to decide if a planet’s worth of people was worth trying to save.

We failed.

Our “civilized” society had proved that we were nothing better than animals, that the vast majority would look only to themselves to save. We were deemed unworthy of rescue by those opposing the destructive race that had already wiped out every major city on the face of this earth. Caught in the crossfire of an intergalactic war, we’d shown ourselves to not even be worth the effort to defend.

The already grounded transports were filled with the demonstrated selfless and as many children as possible. Then they left us with the knowledge that that first, very small group to be saved would be the only one. They wouldn’t risk anyone more to try and evacuate a world so full of malice and hate.

I’m going to die soon. Now I’m sitting here for it and I know it’s coming soon. Even some of those few transports didn’t make it; I saw a pair shot down. This is it.

What am I doing with my precious last hours? Drinking, watching the sky, wishing a lot of things and knowing they never did and never will happen. But I’ve got this, as I drink myself into the oblivion I’m about to be sent to, I’ve got this one thing: I end this life a confused, self-admitted coward who watched the world burn and didn’t do a damn thing to help, but I’ve no blood on my hands that I put there myself. That’ll just have to be enough.
She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. Crisp autumn air moves through yellow plains. 
  Nothing’s wrong
She clenches the handle, cold in her hand. Red rust decorates the truck’s door. 
  Nothing’s wrong
She pulls the truck’s door open, complete silence. No one’s around for miles. 
  Nothing’s wrong
She leans over him, he’s not moving. The entire landscape flows in sharp contrast. 
  Nothing’s wrong
She hears the seatbelt click upon release. Wind kicks up plumes of dusts along the road.
  Something’s got to give
She looks him in the face, lips blue, red blood dried. The airbag never deployed. 
  Something’s got to give
She clenches his arm, cold, stiff. The sun slips lower refracting through the fractured glass. 
  Something’s got to give
She pulls as hard as she can, feet sliding on the dirt. The telephone pole casts a looming shadow.
  Something’s got to give
She steps back quickly as his large frame leans toward her. 
  He’d done the same thing earlier.
She watches as he hits the floor.
  He had planted a kiss on her cheek.
She waits for the dust to settle before stepping into the car and leaving. 
  Before he hit the telephone pole.
CHOCOLATE CAKE AND STRAWBERRY ICECREAM

Amy Leigh Morrisse
BALANCE

Jesse Glover
“Step away from the ledge!” the cop’s voice is electronically amplified by the bullhorn in his hand. He looks small, small minded.

“I can’t, sorry, I’ve got to fly.” He spreads his arms out wide and smiles, enjoying the breeze from his perch.

“Sir, stay there, someone’s coming up!” the cop calls up to him again. He just shakes his head in response, disappointed in the cop and all those gathered below, looking up at him in horror. There’s not much time now so he closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. All he has to do is believe.

The door behind him swings open, but the man standing there arrived just in time to see him jump. Gasps and screams rise from below as spectators turn their heads away from the inevitable splat.

It never comes.
The room was silent. A man stood from his stool beside a bed, walked into the next room, and lightly closed the door. His body leaned against the door, head making a slight thud.

After many minutes, he stood, stroking back a lock of greying brown hair. He picked up his overcoat from the chair and walked outside. It was a beautiful day, but no one was outside. No one. The usual dust in the air was missing, no people or horses to kick it up. The man walked down the road. His hands crossed over his midsection and his shoulders were hunched up. He walked with a slight limp, an old injury from his past as a farmer.

A rat ran across the street. His arms unfolded and he took a few steps backwards. The rat, covered in black fur except for its paws and tail, stood up on its back feet, nose twitching as it sniffed the air. Unsatisfied with what it smelled, it lowered back down onto all fours and scampered off down an alleyway. Once the rat was fully out of sight, the man continued on his walk, crossing his arms over his midsection.

After a few minutes, he opened the door to an apothecary. Inside stood a man with a long white bird mask and dark clothes. Through the mask it was hard to see his eyes, but you could imagine a worried look on the doctor’s face.

“Wil,” the doctor said, “your wife has gotten worse?”

All Wil could do was slowly nod. The doctor moved to his shelves filled with bottles and bags and scanned them, letting out a long “Hmm…” as he moved down the line. As he searched, Wil stood, placing his weight on his good leg. He moved to scratch his upper arm but stopped himself, holding his hands in tight fists down by his sides. He scanned the room to distract himself. A musty smell filled the room, probably from the dried carcasses of who-knows-what on the wall. The bottles which lined the packed shelves were filled with various liquids, powders, leaves, and insects. The doctor moved into a back room and Wil caught a glimpse of some dead things floating in jars.

The doctor finally returned with a jar filled with black bugs, and Wil instantly released his fists and tried to appear more relaxed.

“These are leeches. Place a few on her arms. They will come off when they are full on their own.”

Wil nodded, taking out a small metallic coin and placing it in the free hand of the doctor, and grabbing the jar from his other.

“I-thank you,” Wil stuttered.

“Anytime, just let me know if she continues to worsen.”
“I will,” he said and left the store, clutching the jar tightly as his arm began to itch again. He clench his teeth together tightly. Across the street he saw a carriage go by. It was covered in a heavy cloth but Wil saw a limp hand hanging out the back. He hurried home.

Wil closed the door behind him and quickly set the jar down on the table, grabbing hold of the back of a chair. His head felt light and his breathing was heavy. His vision blacked out and when it returned, he was sitting in the chair. The chair creaked as he leaned his head back and rubbed his eyes.

“Feeling tired?”

Wil bolted upright, nearly falling out of the chair. Across from him was a very strange doctor. He dressed in the typical white bird-shaped mask, but with gold embellishments. Instead of the long black cloak, he wore a patchwork black jacket and red vest with a white cravat. He also oddly sported a top hat and cane.

“W-who are you and what are you doing in my house?” Wil yelled.

“Now now my good sir,” the doctor said in a calm tone. “I am here to help you. My name is Mr. Raven.” The doctor tipped his hat slightly.

“I don’t need help—”

“Oh? Then who are the leeches for?”

Wil held his breath as his arm began to itch again. He glared over at Mr. Raven. He couldn’t see Mr. Raven’s face behind the mask, but something told him he was smiling. His black jacket shifted to a greenish-blue color for a second as he leaned forward.

“Come now, Wilfred,” Mr. Raven said with a tilt of his head.

“M-my wife.”

“Tisk tisk, lying again?”

Wil could feel his throat tighten. He couldn’t let others know he had the sickness… they would have confined him. He wouldn’t be able to do anything. He’d have been useless. By saying that his wife, Edith, was still alive, he could help himself without letting others know. He had avoided saying she was dead for the past five days and now that feeling of loss was sweeping over him. He felt sick to his stomach and his body was shaking. He could smell the rot coming from the bedroom. He began to sob.

Mr. Raven placed his white gloved hand on Wil’s shoulder. “Now my dear Wilfred. Don’t fret. I can help you.” Wil’s sobbing slowed.

“Here’s what I can do,” Mr. Raven said. “I can heal you, and you might even be able to see Edith again. Maybe she’d make you that shepherd’s pie you loved so much.”
Wil looked up at Mr. Raven with puffy red eyes and a confused look. “How?”

“Oh don’t worry, it’s easy enough and you don’t need to do a thing. All I need is for you to come with me.”

Wil glanced over at the bedroom door, where his wife was in the long sleep. He looked up at the dark eyes of Mr. Raven’s mask and gave a slow nod. Mr. Raven set his hat down on the table.

“Good man, now follow me.” Mr. Raven helped Wil out of his chair and led him to a wall of the room. There was a door that Wil had never seen before. It was large, reaching all the way to the ceiling, and had carvings of... heaven? The dark wood showed clouds, doves, and a bright sun. It shimmered gold as the light hit it in certain ways. Mr. Raven made a sweeping motion with his hand, loosening a black feather from inside his sleeve, telling Wil to open the door.

The door creaked open as Wil pulled against the heavy door with his weak arms. He looked inside.

Nothing.

All there was was darkness. Wil took a step backwards but then lurched forward with a shove from Mr. Raven. Wil disappeared into the black. Mr. Raven then closed the door, spun around on his heels, and walked back to the table with a slight skip in his step, a few more feathers falling to the ground behind him.

Wil’s lifeless body sat in the chair, limp. Mr. Raven reached into his pocket and pulled out a deep red rose. He set the rose lightly on the table and picked up his hat. The doctor continued his skipping walk and went outside onto the street, but not before tipping his hat towards Wil and his wife.

Mr. Raven looked at his pocket watch, and headed towards the next plague-ridden house to collect another soul or two.
TIME SPENT WISE

Hayley Purdom
TO: Whomever picks this fruit and wants to bite into a juicy mess of words, firm flesh that rots upon a fall into the light of scrutiny. To you who reads this mesh of creepers wound upon the iron gates of times more plentiful than now, when trees were greener, ladders felt the pickers’ weight within the orchard’s depths: I give a breeze, a breath of life, perhaps, a seed or rind for you to grow and shoot up to the sky. To shape strife into happiness, to find your vineyard’s golden cause for which to die.

FROM: A vine who withered long ago to dust. whose tainted grapes ferment as vintner’s must.
My feet lost the path
on these tall hills
but the moon shines bright;

a sharp clear fills my mind
compass-like,
limbs aware and feet light;

stars show me a way
and I feel alive tonight.
But cool, trekking to my fate.

The buzz of insects fall silent
as my feet pass too close,
but then, quiet all together

and solitudes security
disappears.
My ears perk, but only hear

Distant thunder, warning
a storms approach,
preceded by clouds which

cover the moon, and
darkening my
minds clarity, but rains scent

wraps it in a lulling cloak.
Chilled comfort
keeps fear concealed in my toes.

Though, fear, or its animal
embodiment, tracks my tread,
closing silent, swift, but patient.

One rain drop lands solemnly,
like a tear
on my cool, sure face, begins to run

down as fangs pierce my flesh
and drag my
body off, to die in the rain.
Fluid
Everything is leaking, spewing, flooding
And containment is no longer a possibility…
   The next step, moving forward,
   Is not possible, nor going back.
   I am immobile, swimming
   in the fluid aftermath
   Of our design.

Berlin  6-18-12
The laundromat’s machines cycled restlessly like a clock’s second hand, although the first hand is more fitting because my time moved like traffic for an eternity. That’s the problem with keeping your clothes white in a darkening city – you have to be mindful of what’s creeping into your streets. You can force the colors from your wardrobe easy enough, but not black in your heart. And the machines you kept set to delicates and lights tumble away from you, without you, with the rest of the world like permanent press.
My Dog Named Time

Theodore Goodlin

I am always late.

Maybe I’ll buy him a snazzy new bed to calm him.
Every morning he licks my face.
You see, to him
he almost topples over my mother daily.

Always as restless as the second.
like a plane,
Time waits for no man.

hand on a clock.
Whirring around the house
Or whines loudly.
Theodore Goodlin

My FAVORITE SPIRAL

Every day I wake up. It’s not at sunrise. I try to pull me up. I don’t understand. I that Favorite Thing. I find my way. I don’t seem to back asleep. I have slept. Dad gets to do my favorite place. Once I get up. I can’t go outside. My head keeps spinning. After that, you see. It’s just right. It seems like bedroom. Once he gets back in bed. I can’t let them out of the bed. I just don’t want to be rude and start trampling around. My parents’ bed. I paw at them until I get my way. My dad always yells at me to stop. He just has to let me out on my own. Once I get back inside, you see. I get up. I can’t jump up. I just jump. My dad and mom are always sure my bed is just right. It seems like right after that. I just have to get back inside. My bed is spinning. I turn. I get back inside. I can’t go outside. My dad gets to do my favorite place. Once I get up. I can’t go outside. My dad gets to do my favorite place. Once I get up. I have slept. Dad gets to do my favorite place. Once I get up. I can’t go outside. My dad gets to do my favorite place. Once I get up. I have slept. Dad gets to do my favorite place. Once I get up. I can’t go outside. My dad gets to do my favorite place. Once I get up. I have slept.
Midnight Flower

Alyssa Schwarz
ConfeSSion of an Imaginary Chain Smoker

Ian Stone

It so happens that every few nights
I’ll have the dream where I’m smoking,
and not a casual puff or two; like, I’ll blow
through a pack every few minutes.
It’s not a big deal, though I’m at a loss
as to why the dream keeps coming back.

I’ve never smoked before, not even back
when I was a teenager. I spent nights
with my books and refused to see it as a loss
to my social life. After all, booze and smokes
weren’t worth my time when every minute
spent idly was another opportunity blown.

My therapist says it means I should blow
off my responsibilities, that I should “scale-back”
at work because I’m stressed, take a minute
to rest or go to bed an hour earlier each night.
It’s because I’m so “obsessive” that I’m getting smoked
by my workload and will soon start operating at a loss.

My bestie says it’s because I’ve lost
my libido and smoking’s dream-speak for blowing
dudes off and that I should experiment with “smoking”,
though I think she’s full of shit and wants to get back
at me because I actually enjoy working, while every night
she plays jazz-trumpet on the sass-whistle for $5 a minute.

I checked WebMD for “smoke dreams”, and after a minute
of browsing, it diagnosed me with PTSD from the loss
of a childhood friend, chronic depression, “late-night-
snacking” disorder, obesity, sleep apnea, withdrawals from that blow
I did at a party a few years ago, restless leg syndrome, back
pain, malnourishment, anorexia, and an acute allergy to smoke.

But whatever the cause may be, I find that whenever I dream-smoke,
my mind has a way of constructing every minute
detail, like the weight of the fume, the sweetness in the back
of my throat, the tingling in my sinuses as I loose
a thick, curling cloud of opalescent vapor, blowing
into the breeze of a cool, crisp night.

And after I’ve smoked a pack, a sense of loss
consumes me for a minute, like 20 little blows
to the chest, bringing back the weight of night.
Bulldozed under opalescent white my loam is ready for this illuminated brick laying, growing belly pains of red striking hammers on this my sacrificial radiant building, stretch of early morning eggs and bacon revisiting porcelain whites splash, splash the dishes in the sink, wobbling breasts, painful nipples, foundations. Watch me join the heavy beams of the sturdy floors to this Watch me turn the bolts on the risers of the roof to this Watch me weld and cut to length the many walls to this Watch me paint in my blood so it’s skin will grow responsive and smooth, this is the last lock.

Your voice is readied, only a scream will exit these sturdy walls of my contracting bedrock, now turn your movements to earthquakes for you will tunnel to complete this zion, heavy breaths are best within my howling sound, but remember your sound is the nighthawk, now move with me in the heavy flow of the yellow after birth of your construction.

So look at my flowering reconstructed lactating pastoral breasts with envy and look at my construction, envy this night wind that cradles it in flowing complexity.
Kyle Aabak: Sneaking, whispering, crouching, dodging, laying blame, using throwing stars, flamethrower proficiency; these are all things that I have mastered. Chemical engineering, talking to more than one person at a time, not staring at my shoes when I walk, making the perfect pancake; these are things I will master.

Melissa Anderson, from Littleton, Colorado, is a sophomore in mining engineering. Photography is something she enjoy doing with her family, and because they travel a lot she gets the opportunity to take pictures of some beautiful things. Photography for her is a way to be more creative in her life and she likes to be able to share her photos with others.

Lincoln D. 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.

Jesse Earle is a Utah native who recently graduated in Chemical Engineering and enjoys writing poetry as a way of balancing. He was also involved with student government and ∑AE fraternity.

Frazer Evan: Personal foraging at a disturbing proximity to the spirit. An unforeseen metamorphosis of what is left behind. The suspended moment in time between death and relic, when the ceremonial inhabits a man as much as he inhabits it. Mystery does not tend to hold still. We take it in when we hold still.

Jennifer Gale is a Colorado native who enjoys the great weather and its multitude of activities. She likes to hike, bike, and ski as well as curl up by a fire with a great book. She divides her time between raising two great kiddos and showing engineers that in addition to creating gadgets to change the world they can also be incredible writers and communicators.

Jesse Glover, I am honored that a few of my doodles were selected for this year’s High Grade. It’s my dream one day to own an 8 bedroom house with each room dedicated to a different medium of art. I’ve done painting, sketch, charcoal, airbrush, digital, marker, tattoos, writing, sculpture… My life prior to Mines involved working as an art teacher for developmentally disabled children. Before that I was the lead concept artist for a marketing firm and I’ve also done posters/cd covers for some underground bands in Southern California. I am also a veteran of the U.S. Navy.
Max Goddard was born in Aspen, CO and then moved to Pueblo West, CO (aka Little Mexico). He is studying Petroleum Engineering at Mines. Random things to avoid: Mexican food made by white people, really manly women, mad cow disease, taking a Physics test while charged up on caffeine, bipolar cats, and the state of Vermont. Things that are awesome; Golden shitty chinese food, stop light dance parties, Lady Gaga, handing out illegally acquired bagels from a trash bag, midnight Taco Bell runs, and especially Jay, Jenny, Adam, Kyle, Connor, Spencer, Kelly, Elizabeth, Johnny, and all my other awesome friends at Mines.

Garrett Goodlin was born in Tennessee, and moved to Colorado when he was one. He is studying Civil Engineering. He has had many pets and they can be a great inspiration for poetry. It’s fun to try and see the world through their eyes. He likes creating art because it lets you use your creativity in whatever way you’d like. It’s a nice way to get a break from all the number crunching and analysis that’s involved with engineering.

Alex Hardie was born and raised in southern Oregon. He decided to study mechanical engineering because he was inspired by high-tech bicycle products. He graduated from CSM with an M.S. in mechanical engineering in December 2012. He believes that engineers and artists are indistinguishable.

Leah Hill is majoring in Engineering Physics in her Junior year. She is a member of Kappa Kappa Psi and plans on going to grad school.

Gwyneth Holston is a math instructor for the Colorado School of Mines by day and an artist by night. In addition to painting, she enjoys drawing, graphic design, and art history.

Andrew Hyde is a senior(-ish) chemical and biochemical engineering student hailing from Boulder, Colorado. Andrew enjoys working as an EMT, an athletic trainer, and a tour guide at the CSM Geology museum, and these activities provide fodder for the odd poetic line and other artistic endeavors. When not writing poetry, Andrew placates his muse by composing classical music, playing several different styles of guitar, bass, and banjo, and engaging in various lapidary arts. For Andrew, creation of art is a manner by which he is able to process and relate to his surroundings, in addition to being a healthy cathartic manner by which to exorcise the frustrations and stress caused by his day-to-day life.

In between trips to the pool and playing in his Geophysics classes, Colton Kohnke considers sleeping and eating to be his top two favorite activities. Napping is a close third. He hails from the part of Washington where walking on water is a basic survival skill. He left the gloomiest state in the Republic mainly because defying basic physics is hard on the knees, and he wanted to run away from home. In the little free time he has, Colton enjoys snowboarding, hiking, pretending he’s coordinated, space, and fish.
**Charlie Laufert** was born to a pack of wolves in the forests of the Rocky Mountains in northwestern Colorado. After suckling the teat of his wolf mother, he grew to be so strong that he began to down entire trees with his bare hands. One day, Charlie found himself foraging through a hiker’s bag where he found a cell phone. The device intrigued Charlie so much that he began his quest to understand electricity and all its power. Eventually, in his search for the meaning of life Charlie ended up at the Colorado School of Mines…

**Ryan Mason** is from Colorado Springs, Colorado and is planning to major in Chemistry-Biochem specialty. Some of his favorite activities are sports, traveling, hiking, and photography. He loves taking those shots that leave people wanting the experience of seeing the world, hopefully giving them the need to go out and see it for themselves. He wants to thank his family for supporting him in his passion for capturing the beauty of the world. Remember, life is an adventure, so go out and experience it.

**Courtney McGinn** was born in Virginia but calls Minnesota home. She makes art for herself, if other people get to see it and enjoy it, awesome, if not, well it felt great to make. It provides an outlet for her creative side which is usually smothered at Mines. She frequently spends her time cooking, crafting, or outside when she is not studying.

**Calin Meserschmidt** is a poet and the Captain of this vessel!

Born in Dayton, OH, **Amy Morrissey** grew up inspired by notable entrepreneurs and inventors in aviation and aerospace for which her hometown is well-known. Their stories of innovation led Amy to view engineering as a creative field of study. After Amy received her BS from Purdue University, she accepted a full-time engineering position working for an aircraft engine manufacturer before attending Mines. Amy is currently a PhD candidate in Materials Science; she balances her research activities with art, running, and by spending time with her family. All of Amy’s paintings have deep personal meaning and are intended to communicate her history, her reality, and her dreams.

**Aaron Mull** was born in Vancouver, WA, is studying chemistry, and loves Jesus! His favorite art forms are poetry, film, theatre, and ceramics/pottery. If this world becomes magically ideal, his life after school will be in the movie making business. Aaron is a co-owner of Broken Record Films LTD, which is still tiny, but keep an eye out for them (www.facebook.com/brokenrecordfilms)! The poetry he writes is usually based on some kind of revelation which he then heavily dilutes and disguises until it makes a semi-coherent block, and then hammers on until it loosely resembles a poem.
Chelsea Panos is a Colorado native studying Engineering Physics. She has been taking photos since she was four (Barbie camera with 110 film), but she has been relatively good at it since 10th grade (Canon EOS 30D). Chelsea loves conceptual photography and she prefers photographing people rather than objects or landscapes. She is the Photography Director for SWE and she is also a photographer for the Mines Alumni Association, so don’t be shy if you see her shooting photos around campus and at events!

Christian Parkinson is an Applied Mathematics major planning to graduate in May 2013, but then staying around to obtain a Master’s degree. He enjoys film and classic literature. He considers himself a non-descript, ergo there is nothing too interesting to report in a one paragraph bio. If you’d like to get to know him, you can read his piece!

Ginny Premo was born in Lawrence KS, but grew up in Colorado. Her areas of specialty in art are fiction writing, pottery, and metal work. Ginny went to an alternative learning school from pre-school thru high school where she learned to love learning. In middle school she found a passion for pottery; starting with Dover and Porcelain high fire and then finding her true love for Raku. After high school she went to Warren Tech to become an auto technician. After 10 years in the industry she decided to return to school. Originally she started going to RRCC to begin the Mines transfer program to become a mechanical engineer. In the process Ginny found that she really loved geology and chemistry and making things with metal and gems.

I’m Scott Roman, I was born and raised in Cincinnati Ohio, and I am studying physics. I own a small point-n’-shoot camera and I took a 2 hour photography course in the 7th grade, so I consider myself a full-fledged artist. That being said, I am a rather lazy full-fledged artist, and only really take pictures when I have my camera in my pocket and a nice picture presents itself. When I am not making art, I like to backpack, play guitar, snowboard, and physics (verb).

Thomas Rapstine’s hometown is the one and only White Deer, America. Geophysics is what I study here at Mines, and it’s fascinating. I could literally talk about geophysics all day. Some people call me Nighthawk, but not very many. I find art to have value within itself, and enjoy letting loose with some paint.

Nima Sherpa loves art because it is a creative outlet especially from the rigorous academic life at Mines. I am a Bio Chemistry and Economics double major, enjoy traveling, and plan on getting into the medical field.
Hope Sisley was born in Seattle. Her business card says she is a geologist. In her spare time she breeds radioactive giant squid with 50-foot Burmese pythons in an attempt to create an invincible super-race of snakesquids, with which she plans eventually to take over the world. She enjoys classical music, candlelit dinners, and long walks on the beach.

Dani Stegman is a Chemical Engineer. I’ve always had a mind for math and science and the logical nature of the world. However, I also have an artistic side and have always been a book worm. Taught by my father (who was armed with Hooked on Phonics), I could read on my own by five years old and was (am) proud of it. Books have always taken me to far places I haven’t even dreamed of visiting, and once I realized that the craft of writing didn’t always entail book reports and essays, I began to transcribe some of my own worlds to paper. So, welcome to the roads that wind through my mind; just be wary of the wandering octopi (I promise they only want hugs).

Ian Stone takes pictures, writes occasionally.

Cecilia Suderman is a senior in the Computer Science department. She began writing as a hobby when she was 12, after learning how to read when she was 4. She loves strong character development and mostly enjoys writing fantasy and science fiction. She spends her spare time with her husband Andrew and her dog Chase. Other hobbies include watching TV shows like Walking Dead, and training the dog to do cool tricks like fetching beer from the fridge.

Pak Chin Yong is a visual storyteller who tell stories through photos. Pak has been in love with photography since 2008 and is especially good at street and portrait photography. The only way to freeze the time and a precious moment is to press the shutter.