



THE RUBICON

Troy University
Department of English
Student Literary Journal
ISSUE 9 | FALL 2013

THE RUBICON

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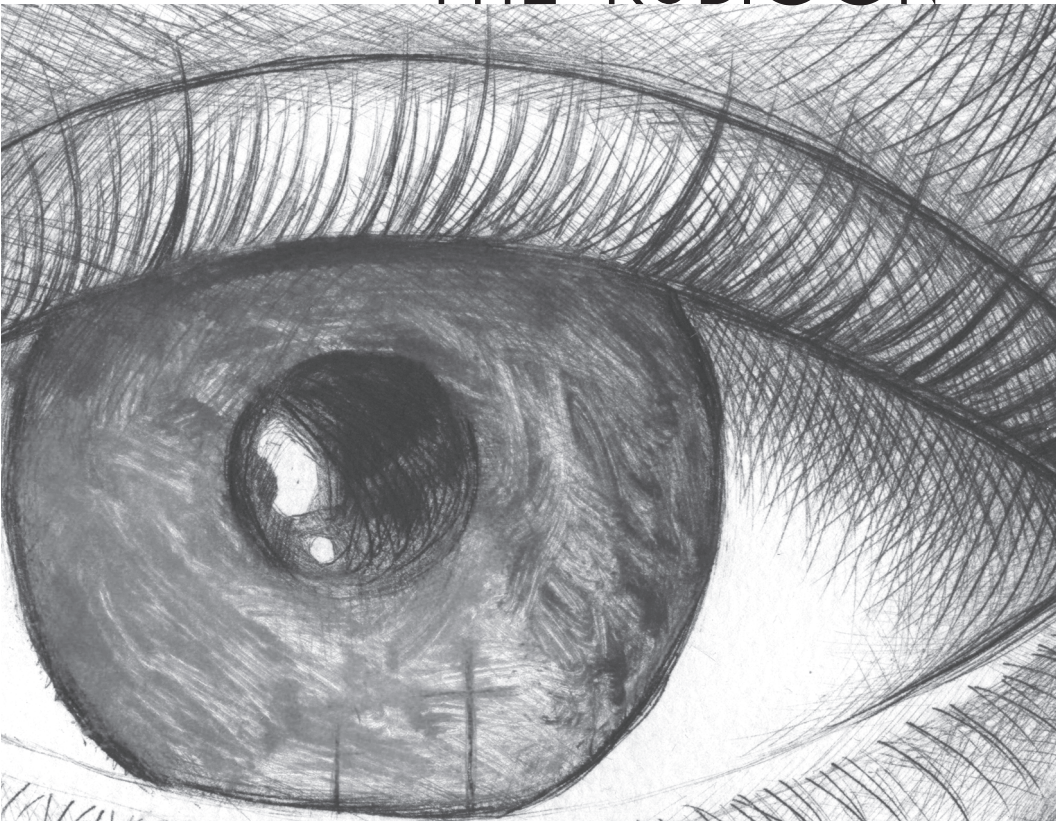
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

Domestic War	Allison Miller	1
Ovillejo	Samantha Loff	2
A Mug of Tea	Matthew Firpo	2
Hundreds of Years	Allison Miller	3
Redemption	Jamie Leverette	3
Wishing You Well	Buchanan Watson	4
Joy of Recycling	Melissa Morris	6
Wanting	Hannah Dobbs	6
Rubaiyat: Mound	Samantha Loff	7
Set Me Free	Jamie Holmes	8

PROSE

Dying Cycle	Josh Richards	8
Liquid Lightning	Josh Williams	11
What is a Nightmare	Ryan Taylor	14
Magic Kingdom	Meg Shackelford	16
Lights Out	G. S. Salazar, Jr.	18

ARTWORK

Daniel Beltran	"Alone"	1
	"Oldest Tree"	4, 5
Lingfei Zhou	"Lotus"	2
Savanna Schacherer	"Old Roots"	3
Alisha Lefebvre	"Pine Tree"	6
Nolan Odom	"Origin of the Arrow"	6
Megan Riley	"Eyes in the Night"	7
Chelsey Williams	"Isolation"	8
Justin Fuller	"Drawing Tree"	9
Hannah Ellis	"Skull on Red"	12
	"Living Room"	14
Carson Brown	"Signs of Love"	16, 17
Aaron Paschal	"Wind in My Sails"	19

DOMESTIC WAR

Allison Miller

I am an American soldier,
Fighting a domestic war.
I never leave home,
And, yes, I fight it alone.
I don't have weapons or armor,
And I think I am losing this war.
I am an American soldier,
Fighting a domestic war.

I'm only a teenager;
Youngest in the family.
I can't stand being her,
And school's my only leave.
Even there,
The battles rage.
We have such
An immature age.
I'm an American soldier,
Fighting a domestic war.

I trudge along
Through the day
Because home is
Where I have to stay.
My music is blaring.
I still hear the yelling.
Why won't they stop this?
Are my tears not enough?
I was a little soldier,
And I survived the domestic war.



Daniel Beltran



Lingfei Zhou

A MUG OF TEA

Matthew Firpo

Over a mug of tea I stare,
 Reminiscing, holding onto memories,
 Painting pictures, drawing water from the well in
 my mind,
 and pouring out my heart's secrets on paper.
 Fondly, I watch as friends trickle by and gurgle
 with laughter,
 and as they condense, they boil and burst,
 evaporating.
 Nightmares, fears, steep, staining water,
 deep, drowning the soul.
 A little sugar and milk added,
 Sweet, wholesome happiness. A dream I dreamed.
 And of all these things, I stare into my tea,
 I see the eyes, staring, of the better half of me.

OVILLEJO

Samantha Loff

For years I've hunted for a verbal cut,
 and what
 I've found has only forced me to repent.
 I meant
 to ask around for someone to get through
 to you,
 but in your absence all was clear. I knew
 that nothing I could do would ever bring
 you back. You left, and that said everything
 and what I meant to you.

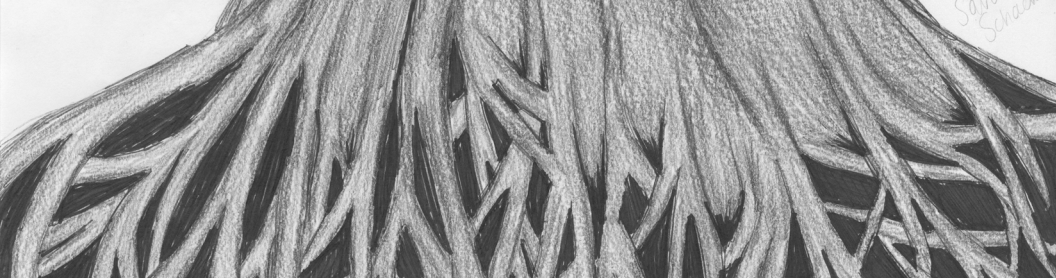
HUNDREDS OF YEARS

Allison Miller

I've seen years and years
Beyond imagination.
From animals to people,
Beginning when I was planted.
From start to finish
I will grow.
I could live forever.
We'll never know.
I could die tomorrow,
Eight cuts, nine, ten and I'm done.
But lovely friends saved me.
I'm a special one.

More than a century,
I have been here.
I will still be in hundreds of years.
"Old and sturdy,"
The log cutter says.
"The trees around it
Just look a mess."
Sharp pains to my base,
I fall to my death.
But I cry no tears.
For I have lived hundreds of years.

Savanna Schacherer



REDEMPTION

Jamie Leverette

I wander into a cathedral, old, abandoned and broken
Nothing remains but fallen wood, damaged pews, and lost hope.
But as the sun begins to rise, so do I.
And my scars are painted with reflections of stained glass
This place, old, abandoned and broken, is beautiful once again



WISH YOU WELL

Buchanan Watson

On a hill by the woods was the treasure he found.
Not a pirate's chest buried beneath a mound
Or a store of riches under the ground,
But rather a wishing well made of stones and built
so round.

In the hole, the boy could hear
A whispered promise meet his ear:
Inside this ring is magic aplenty
But an answered wish will cost you a penny.

Pockets pushed out and purse soon emptied,
The boy produced three coins for spending.
A wish each will buy, but only one
Give me the money now, or I'll give you none.

Eager, the boy threw in his cash,
Never knowing what he did was rash.
Thinking only of the promise ahead,
Each wish he made and this is what he said:

"I wish for love of the purest kind,
A wife so beautiful she strikes me blind,
And many children both young and strong
That I may cherish and raise all day long.

And riches galore I want for me,
Never again will my pockets be empty.
Silver and gold, if you so please,
For a purse so heavy sends me to my knees."

You have paid the price, so shall it be.
Your wishes I will grant, one, two, and three.
Dancing with the joy, the boy ran away
Believing what the well did say.

Lazy was the boy, from that day on,
Waiting for love, children, and riches with each
new dawn.

Events happened, of course, that much is true;
But soon the boy learned things don't always
happen the way you want them to...

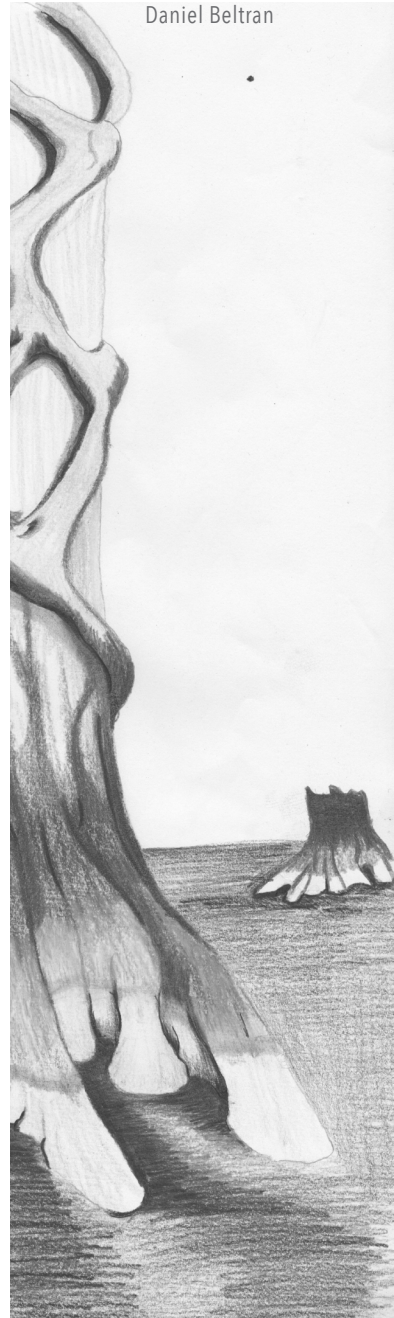
Years later, as time went by,
The boy became a man, sad and weary-eyed,
Heart weighed heavy by reality of life,
His countenance tired and full of strife.

Old and decrepit, he walked with a cane
Up the side of the hill, mind and body in pain.
He leaned forward again, before and now as
the same
And screamed down the well, which he felt was
to blame.

"My wife left me for another man,
And my children hate me and moved to a
foreign land.
My pennies are gone, all I gave to thee
So take now my gift, I give to you for free."

And the man pulled down his pants and started
to pee.

Daniel Beltran





Alisha Lefebvre



WANTING

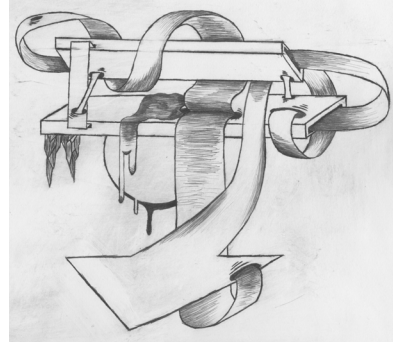
Hannah Dobbs

Her moss-muffled footfalls,
 Leave damp and shallow graves
 In sun-dappled fairy beds.
 Lordly grace cushions her movements,
 Still and silent her breath mingles in air.
 Whispers tickle pointed ears,
 She turns to ken more clear.
 Silver orbs find ancient oak,
 Spindled fingers reach to un-choke
 And loose the voice of spirit encased.
 Slow they ghost over knot and scar,
 Feel their way to demon-laced
 Cage that holds him shuddering.
 Fair face betrays naught,
 Conceals wrenched heart, devil wrought.
 She backs away as she came,
 Distance desired from devil caught as
 Evil chains fall away.
 A voice deep as earth, wide as heaven
 Shimmers through air, echoes and sways and
 Forms the pieces of her name;
 It seems, at last, she is brought to being.
 She answers back his demon name,
 Voice seeping to blackened soul,
 Curling and grasping to catch hold.
 Heart a flutter at its own daring,
 The air, no longer faint and gold,
 Now thick with mildewed hatred.
 He numbs her heart with putrid ice,
 A final effort, vengeful spite.
 Oak and pine lend their life,
 Vain efforts undone by wicked might,
 As fair face now rots to dust.
 He caught her heart and made it still,
 The final terror, unnatural chill.
 Chaos fueled poison ardor,
 Demon love, deadlly harbored.

JOY OF RECYCLING

Melissa Morris

Today I saw this necklace
 Made of recycled stuff.
 It was called a "joy necklace."
 And, like a flash,
 I thought of the joy of recycling.
 Several age-old pieces,
 Normally thrown away as trash,
 Were rescued from the bin of doom
 And transformed into art.



Nolan Odom

RUBAIYAT: MOUND

Samantha Loff

His graceful, swooping wingspan grazes chalk
 as he ascends into a balanced stalk.
 He cranes his neck in search of easy pluck,
 adjusts his bill, and settles an imposing gawk.

He lifts his drawing leg, retreating tuck
 into a chance bravado. Hoping luck
 and natural ability defend
 his home, he turns his head. And then the chuck.

Megan Riley





Chelsey Williams

SET ME FREE

Jamie Holmes

I don't want another day
in depression.
Shades down. No company.
I'm under covers.
Waiting for the day to change.
Give me another.
Gin. Ciroc. Crown. Who cares?
I'll take whichever.
Set me free.
The sun, once so bright to me,
Now is hidden
behind the clouds of misery.
Am I forgiven?
The pain, the hurt, and the shame –
yet still alive.
Me. Her. I know her name.
But she has died,
waiting for another sun.
Begin to shine.
Set me free.

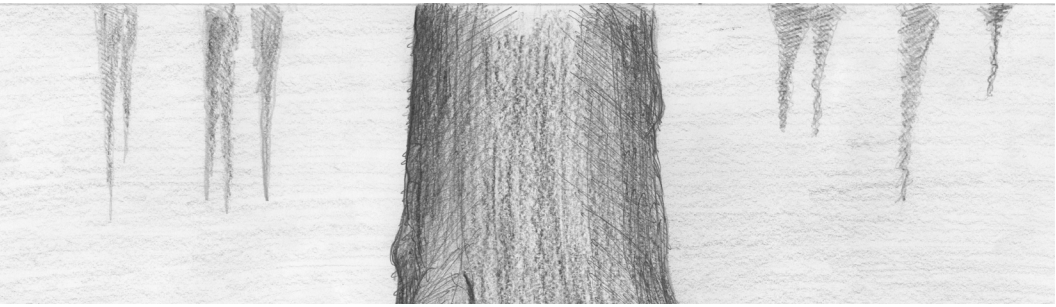
DYING CYCLE

Josh Richards

Maybe it's odd to notice how someone's hair smells when everything is falling apart, but it's what you notice. Her head is buried in your chest, and she is sobbing, saying something you can't quite understand, not just because her words are broken by gulps of air but because your ears are blocking them out. You don't want to understand. You don't want anything, except to ask her a question.

"Did you switch back to your old shampoo?"

You don't say it out loud, but you want to scream it. You want everything to be casual again. You want this day to rewind, to not exist, to not pass go or



collect two hundred dollars. The question — did you switch back to your old shampoo? — would be enough to make you start crying, but you suppose you already are.

"I just need time," she says, from another world, and you want to pinch yourself for hearing it. You are both standing in the shade of the trees which are in the dying part of their life cycle. The leaves are withering, shriveling up, falling to the ground to be blown away or stepped on or otherwise exterminated. Perhaps they aren't *really* dying, but the thought has always been interesting to you — a constant cycle of death and rebirth. A romantic idea.

"We don't make each other happy anymore."

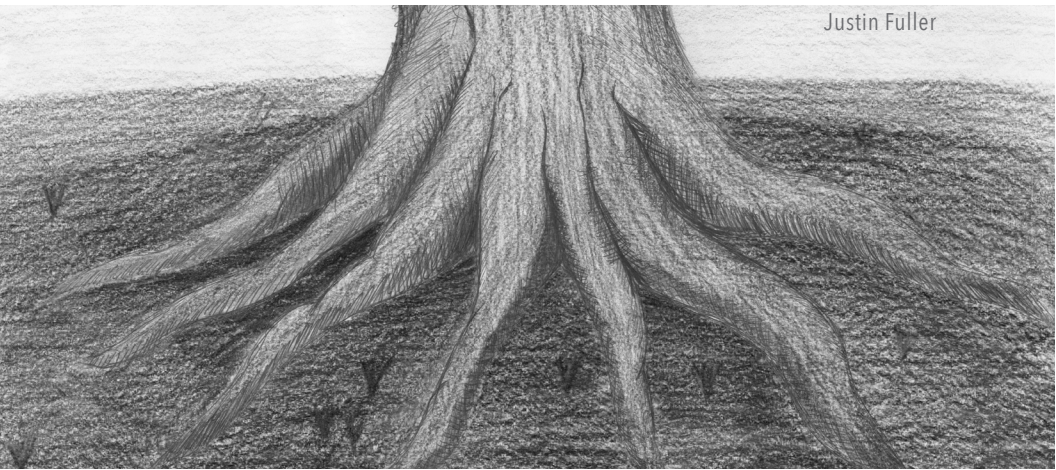
But who decided that? You think it but don't say it out loud. *I was happy. I am happy. It's been a bad few months, but I haven't stopped being happy with you.*

She unlatches her arms from around you and steps back. She looks at you — her eyes are swollen and red, and her mascara is running in a thousand different directions on her face. It is October. The bizarre way she looks now comes just in time for Halloween. She looks as if she is going to audition for a new low-budget horror film. The thought would strike you as funny, if it weren't so horrible.

She is wearing a black coat that you think you've seen her in before, was it on a date? She has paired this coat with ridiculously tall, black high heels, and you notice they are digging into the dirt. You have seen her running in heels like this before, through mud and over gravel and every other substance imaginable, and each time you have been amazed and impressed.

She has always amazed you.

Justin Fuller



"Are you going to say anything?" Her eyes get bigger, and you think that if you play your cards right here, at this exact moment, you can fix everything. Her head is cocked to the side, her lips are pressed tightly together in that adorable way she has, and her body is leaning slightly in your direction. It is the same stance she has given you many times before, when she wants to ask for help but doesn't know how.

Yes, you think. I'm going to say that I'm sorry for how we got here, that I'm sorry for making you cry, that I was never unhappy. I'm going to say that I don't agree to this; I don't agree with you, and if you'll just tell me if you've switched back to your old shampoo, we can fix it all.

But you say nothing. For the first time, you are scared.

The wind picks up and sends familiar chills of Fall through your spine and to your brain. It is a sensation that would normally delight you, but as you watch the wind toss her brown curls about her shoulders you feel your stomach tighten into knots.

"Where did we go wrong?" she asks.

You are nearly certain that she has switched back to the old shampoo. You have been thinking of it this whole time, trying to remember the old scent and compare it to this one. You know she wouldn't understand the significance of such a thing – maybe even you don't understand it – but it calms you, despite the range of emotions flooding over your mind. You take a deep breath.

"I don't want it to end like this," you say, but it sounds hollow. It has the same ring of a lie, like whispering into wide open spaces and hearing no echo, like one voice in the midst of a million others, like a leaf falling from a tree and being blown away or otherwise exterminated. It is only part of what you want to say.

"I guess we don't have a choice." And then she kisses you on the cheek and tells you that she still loves you despite what has happened. She tells you that maybe one day everything will work out. You want to tell her today can be that day.

You want to tell her it takes work to make it work out, but it sounds too much like a bad jingle. You want to tell her that everything matters, that you have never been unhappy, that it's so odd how her old shampoo is back at just this moment when everything else is changing. *This can be like your shampoo, you want to say, everything can come back.*

You gotta work to make it work out, you think.

"I love you," you say. She nods and walks away. Pressure grips you. At any second, it seems you could fall through the earth and land wherever. The

memories, the shampoo, everything is walking away.

You are alone.

But you look around and notice the trees again. They are still there. You feel as if they are there for support, as if they have a decision whether to be there or not. You wonder if trees have souls or hearts or feelings. The thought doesn't seem too absurd.

You find that, in a funny way, you relate to these trees. And you think that it would be okay to stay here forever.

LIQUID LIGHTNING

Josh Williams

The glass sat anchored in the middle of the obsidian table. Phil couldn't quite tell if the liquid in it was black itself or if that was just the surface it was on. Obsidian? He thought. Not a regular fixture in his vocabulary. He took a moment for a brief glance at it before raising his eyes to meet the woman's face. Light from the thunderstorm outside the apartment flashed across her face, igniting her eyes into twin stars, burning back into his own.

He stared deeply into them, daring her to blink. They sat like this, bodies tense as piano wire, for what seemed to Phil like something between five seconds and fifty years. A quick smile tinged her lips like a lightning flash, and she turned her head to look out the large window that opened to the city on their left. She stood up and quietly padded around her furniture over to the window, her sable robe clinging slightly to her thin frame. *I take it she won that round*, he thought. He allowed his muscles to relax and eased down into the leather chair she'd led him to a few moments before.

"It's a beautiful night," she said, a flash of lightning prefacing her remark and a thunderclap punctuating it.

"You like thunderstorms?"

"That's not what I'm talking about."

"What do you mean?"

She inhaled a breath sharply, possibly preparing her answer. There were a few moments of silence between them as she continued looking out over the roiling clouds. She exhaled slowly, apparently deciding against it.

He leaned forward, staring into the liquid contained within the glass. It was definitely a dark color, made more so by the black tabletop. He caught

his reflection in the surface of the drink, his features almost entirely clear to his eyes. He wafted it's strange, half-recognizable scent. This disturbed him somewhat, as the half that he could recognize reminded him of his father.

"Please, have a drink." She still had her back to him, but it sounded like her request had been whispered in his ear.

"You still haven't told me what it is. This might seem strange, but I'm not in the habit of taking drinks from strangers—"

"Relative strangers. We've developed something of a rapport over the course of the evening, Phillip. Wouldn't you agree?"

"Well, yes, I think I would."

"You only think? How disappointing.." She turned away from the window,

Hannah Ellis



a slight smirk twisting her face. He found himself captivated by it, even though it was not exactly a pretty thing. An image flashed through his mind briefly, that of the smile a hyena might make circling a baby gazelle.

"I mean, yes I agree. I must say, it was a rather a strange coincidence, us both being stood up by our dates like that. Awful shame."

"I think it's safe to say we've gone a long way past shame, Phillip." Her smirk evolved into a full on grin as she slowly stepped over to where he sat by her table, her robe carelessly parting to reveal a flash of the porcelain flesh beneath, quick as a lightning strike. "Or coincidence." She slinked her way around to the back of his leather chair, clearly not noticing or not caring about her wardrobe. She paused there to let her fingers fall on his neck, her fingertips like warm drops of rain. She started to massage his neck and shoulders, lightly

at first but with strength behind all of her movements. He was surprised at just how warm her hands were. She had seemed so cold back at the restaurant, emotionally and physically.

He felt her breath on the nape of his neck as she leaned her lips down to his ear.

"I'd like you to try it. It's a special brew I've been learning how to make. I just want to see if I got it right."

"So I'm your guinea pig? Comforting."

"Oh, little piggie," she cooed, warm fingers tracing paths through his hair, "Oink oink."

"I don't know if guinea pigs really 'oink,' but okay," Phil said.

He gripped the glass in his right hand. The glass itself was warm, the liquid inside surely hot. Even as he moved the glass to his mouth, the black liquid remained still, unchanged.

It touched his lips, flowing through them and down his throat so quickly he could hardly register the aftertaste. *Cinders*. He coughed slightly, preparing to put the glass back down on the table. One of the warm hands left his neck and grabbed the cup in his hand, pushing it back to his lips and tipping the rest of the drink down his gullet.

He could definitely taste it now. *Liquid fire*.

The pressure on his neck and shoulders began to lessen slightly, as did the feel of the smooth hardwood floors on his feet. The leather chair seemed to fall away as his entire body began to go numb.

Something seemed to be lighting up the room, but it sounded as though the lightning had ceased. He turned his eyes down to find his hands were glowing with a harsh orange light, so much that he couldn't stare at them too long.

He opened his mouth to shout, to ask what was happening to him, but all that came out was a dense cloud of smoke. The woman sat down on the black table, gazing into his face, occasionally fanning some of the smoke out from between them. Her grin was gone, replaced with a decidedly cool and objective visage, observing him.

Something began to churn in his gut, like a pool of hot lead, spreading out from his toes to his eyebrows. That's when his skin began to melt.

Later that evening, the woman sat at the foot of her bed, robe askew and journal in hand, making slight adjustments to her recipe and adding a reminder to look up how to clean singed leather.

WHAT IS A NIGHTMARE?

Ryan Taylor

"Good night, Sam. I'll see you in the morning."

The door closed behind Sam's mom, leaving the young boy in near darkness. The only light entered from below the door—the small slit of light that separates childhood from adulthood. Sam could hear his parents talking, but he couldn't discern any words. Everything was muffled. To Sam, he was now alone.

Sam wasn't afraid of the dark. He was a big boy now. No closet monsters, underneath-the-bed monsters, or monsters outside his window could scare him. With his eyes now shut and his mind moving toward pleasant thoughts, a young boy drifted off to sleep.

It was now time for Sam's parents to get ready for bed. Sam's dad turned on their bedroom light and turned off the hallway light. He then shut the bedroom door.

"Can you make sure the alarm is set for 5:30?" Sam's dad asked. It was a nightly routine.

"Sure, sweetie," Sam's mom said, although she knew the alarm was already set. After all, it was a routine. Sam's dad then turned off the bedroom light and joined his wife in their bed.

Everyone was encapsulated in darkness.

Some people are light sleepers; some people are heavy sleepers. Sam was a light sleeper. He awoke to a creak from above his head. Sam opened his eyes and looked around, unsure of what awoke him. When no noise greeted him, Sam closed his eyes again, unworried.

Creak.

Sam sat up in bed, now knowing what he heard was real and not just his imagination. As his parents liked to tell him, Sam had a very active imagination.

Creak.

It was coming from the attic.

Creak. Creak. Creak. Thud.

The attic door, attached to the ceiling, was now open.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap.

Someone was going down the ladder.

Sam wanted to call out, but he figured that it must be



Hannah Ellis

his dad. After all, who else would have a reason to be in the attic? Certainly not a monster. Sam didn't believe in monsters.

Creeeeeak. Thud.

The attic door closed.

Sam could hear footsteps, but the sound grew fainter with every step. He sighed in relief. It must have been his dad.

Sam's parents were awake. They were startled by the closing of the attic door. They figured that it must be Sam. After all, he was a light sleeper and eternally curious. Sam's dad was in the process of turning the attic into a playroom for Sam. The young boy had probably just wanted to play.

They heard footsteps. Which direction were they heading? Did Sam want to spend the night in their bed, or did he just need a drink of water? Was he wide awake and just wanting to play? Nothing would surprise them. Well, at least they thought.

The footsteps were coming closer. The doorknob began to turn.

"Sam, is that you?" his dad asked, feeling worried.

The door opened. A shadow greeted them. It looked to be Sam's height.

"What's wrong, honey? Do you want to sleep with us tonight?" Sam's mom asked.

A voice, a childlike whisper, responded, "No."

She barely had time to scream. Sam's dad tried to run, but he too was overcome. He tried to shout, but the only noise he was able to accomplish was the sound of his body hitting the floor.

Thud.

"Mom! Dad!" Sam shouted, fumbling with his bedroom door before running out of his room and down the dark hallway.

The bedroom door opened.

Creeeeeak.

Sam stopped. He was almost all the way down the hallway. His parents' doorway was now just a few feet away.

"Yes, son?" An adult-like whisper-of-a-voice greeted Sam from inside his parents' room. It sounded like his dad.

Sam tiptoed closer. "Are you and Mommy okay?"

"Of course, son. Would you like to sleep with us tonight? It sounds like you had a nightmare."

"I guess so," Sam replied, as he reached his parents' doorway.

He didn't have time to scream.

MAGIC KINGDOM

Meg Shackelford

"I hate you."

I don't mean to say this out loud. I don't mean to say a lot of things out loud, and I usually keep my mouth shut, which is why this sudden outburst hurts so much. I know it does. I can see it on your face, in the way your eyes widen, the sides of your mouth drop, and you begin biting the inside of your lip to keep from crying. You don't want to cry; that'll make your makeup run and then where will your face be?

It is a very pretty face. I won't begrudge you that. Your particular mixture of tan skin, long curly brown hair, and big brown eyes is killer by itself. On top of that, the hour you spent this morning carefully applying the glittering makeup and taming your wild hair was effective. Just ask any of the passing men, or women, because lesbie-honest you like attention of all types. It's such a pretty face. Too bad that's not enough.

"You're immature."

It's not the brightly colored backpack, shiny Mary-Janes (Yes, I know your shoes by name, you drilled it into my head often enough), or half-finished popsicle hanging from your hand that makes me say this. Those don't matter. Well, at least they didn't matter.

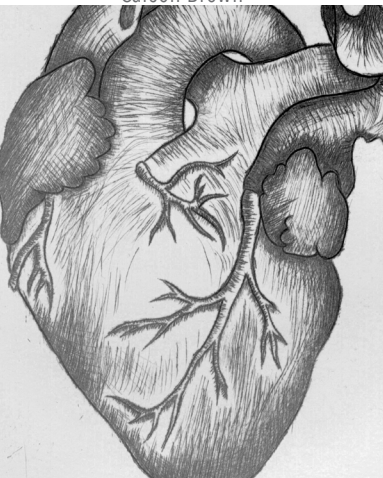
You have this weirdly irresistible way of dressing like a thirteen-year-old girl whacked out on too much Lisa Frank and yet still exuding enough "fuck me"

appeal to pull guys and girls in, like mosquitoes to a thin-skinned meal. Take your outfit for today: a bright blue Eeyore t-shirt paired with little white shorts that show off your long tan legs to their best advantage, topped off with pink sunglasses perched on your head, matching the big pink necklace and earrings. Childish innocence mixed with the cute face, small waist, and big behind demanded by rappers everywhere. That look had worked on me. It was still working on me.

"I can't do this anymore."

Confusion flips over the top of your face, while

Carson Brown



your eyes start to get that “say one more thing” look in them. You’re hurt, no doubt, but that’s disappearing behind a wall of anger. I can almost see the words crowding behind your shiny lips. I am about to get it.

You’ve always been able to defend yourself from anything. I’m the one who stays silent. You blow up like a red-headed stepchild at the family reunion—all stomping cowboy boots and swinging fingers, causing a scene and cussing out the object of your dissatisfaction.

But for now you just sit there, across from me, in brightly colored silence. It’s odd. I can’t tell if your silence is from shock, which usually doesn’t stop you from making snippy comebacks, or if it’s because of where we are. Come to think of it, now, and especially here, was probably not the best time for this.

It’s Saturday in Disney World’s Magic Kingdom. We’re eating lunch at an outdoor cafe that is hot, crowded, and loud. Red-faced children bounce around the park, pulling their frazzled parents through the streets dedicated to magicking attendees from their money. Tigger and Piglet just bounced their way past our table. We’re here celebrating our 2-year anniversary and your final year at college.

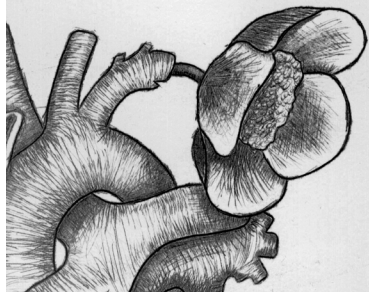
“I’m done.”

I don’t know why my mouth decided to speak these truths now. I’ve quite happily kept them inside for a long time—they’re not anything new. I know they’re hurting you. I can see them hitting you like big, black blobs dripping from an overloaded pen onto a white page. My words fall and when they land, they spread over the page, obscuring the previously written definitions of our former relationship, changing how you see and know me. Forever. Because ink can’t be erased. It fades, but it can never be removed.

I want this though. I won’t pretend I don’t feel relieved. Pressure for a change, any change, has been building up for a while. Maybe there’s something behind the whole “truth shall set you free” line, or maybe I just needed an excuse to make you dump me. I need this so I can gain momentum to finally move on from where I’ve been the past six years.

You look at me, your face set, lips thinned. Oh yeah, here we go now. I’ve really stirred things up this time.

“Ryan, shut up and finish your ice cream. I want to get a picture with Belle before we leave.”



LIGHTS OUT

G. S. Salazar, Jr.

"I can't recall the last time I felt warmth. We took it for granted since our inception thousands of years ago – and we never quite grasped how important it was – until it was gone. Now all that lights the sky are the moon and its faint accompaniment of white gems; but even they only show themselves in the night. A day used to be bright and warm. A day is now only a shadow – an eclipse – of its true potential. Something happened to our star. I can still remember the news stations filtering through every channel, and FEMA sending out its emergency broadcast signals.

The smart ones prepared the moment something leaked into the public, though their efforts were inevitably pointless. Heat is essential to human survival. Former Lieutenant Colonel James Bratka, dishonorably discharged for disobeying direct orders in an unrelated sortie, felt it was his duty to release extremely sensitive information regarding the fate of planet Earth. For an unapparent reason, he ended up here on our island, though he later died of a brain tumor. If only he had anticipated the magnitude of chaos that resulted from his spill to CNN. Every news network in the country ate up his story like a pack of starving wolves.

That was only the beginning.

"Soon, the rumors that had frightened so many became real. The sun's brightness had decreased 20% in only a few months. Permanent temperature changes quickly altered the physical appearance of Earth, and more was yet to come. As more ice began to form at the poles, salt water was driven into coastlines all across the globe. Natives in the Congo could no longer grow wheat because the soil had softened to mud. The Amazon River inflated to ten times its original volume, turning much of Brazil into a forbidden swamp.

With much of the equator crippled, repercussions soon were felt by the northern powers; with food imports gone, they began to starve. Russian officials literally abandoned Moscow and fled to China, leaving their citizens to starve in the wake of an incalculable chill factor. The United States was forced to surrender its borders to the Latin American crowds who were resorting to cannibalism. Famine had ultimately dissolved the U.S. by 2056. Europe was hit hardest by the cold. Greenland had expanded past Iceland and into Norway,

opening a channel for wind to funnel from the North. In eighteen days, England was buried by thirty feet of snow which quickly froze over and formed what we in the Oceania call "Hadrian's Glacier." No one has attempted a journey north of the Tropic of Cancer since.

For some reason, the South Pole never quite chilled to the extent that the North had. Some proposed that the carbon monoxide from automobiles had thickened the skies when the temperatures plummeted. Others out of spite simply claimed that the northern powers had it coming to them. Regardless, we were alive. Our small island, surrounded by ice on all sides, didn't need the sun for warmth – rather, the Earth itself kept us from freezing. Hawaii's very own Mauna Loa, considered extinct by volcanologists in the year 1981, became active again soon after Kilauea was corked by ice and debris. Lava flowed harmlessly to the south, and civilization flourished to the north. The volcano was our blessing in disguise.

"But even though we were self-sustaining in every way, we found that other geological 'hot-spots' were not so fortunate. Small pockets of survivors from various volcanic zones were forced to abandon their camps and fortresses. Unlike Mauna Loa, Mount Fuji, Reykjavik, Krakatau, and others were far too unstable. As a result of ice migration, they all froze to death. As more water vapor condensed and fell to the surface, the Earth's mass became disproportionate. We asked a local volcanologist of Hawaii what was causing such sporadic eruption cycles. His response was simple and genius: 'A flat plank of wood, in this case, the Earth's crust, will float on water undoubtedly - but when the wood becomes damp and swollen with water, it loses buoyancy and floats at a lower level than before. As a result, the water beneath the plank is slightly displaced, and pushed through small openings in the wood. The "water" underneath the boat-' he continued, '-is magma. He wouldn't tell us why Hawaii hadn't followed the same path as most of the other 'openings' in the Earth – but it didn't matter. We were on an active rock orbiting around a star with a life span no longer than my own.

Something happened to our star. NATO forbid all nuclear testing north of the equator in 2017. Still, tensions between the U.S. and Russia continued on the rise, and technological advances beckoned for a new deterrent - still nuclear - far more powerful than the formidable Hydrogen Bomb. A Russian anti-war effort device, deemed AWED, was constructed

Aaron Paschal



without the knowledge of the Western powers. It was nicknamed the “Stellar Bomb” because it was calculated to contain the energy of a thousand suns. In an attempt to avoid NATO jurisdiction, Russia launched the AWED at the moon, where satellites could safely view the effects of the explosion and where the world could watch underneath in fear.

“The Stellar Bomb missed the moon on the back of a flight trajectory derived from a miscalculation of the density of the moon.

Ironically, the Stellar Bomb, with help from inescapable gravity, plunged into the surface of the sun seven years later. The explosion, far more powerful than the Russians had predicted, dwarfed the sun. Our star’s core was consumed by a shockwave that halted its nuclear reaction. And so the fate of mankind was determined by mankind. The Earth was to freeze and die.

“Our ‘luck’, if you will, hasn’t run out in over 60 years. Our sun is burning only at 17% of its normal luster, yet our homes and beaches synchronize to the remedy of *Earth’s* nature and remain warm all year-round. If this letter has survived, then as you read this now, prepare for the sleep of the sun. Your leaders will not understand – your Nobel Prize winners will not understand – CNN will not understand – but *you* will. When the sun begins to dim and the world begins to panic just as we have seen, you will have already found refuge on this island, waiting for an answer to a prayer or an answer to wished luck. Remember the date 05-05-2020 - that is when the missile will shoot for the moon and *miss*. Remember this letter and this island - this is where your family will survive. Remember these things before it’s ‘lights out’.”

Former Lt. Col. James Bratka glanced away from the letter. His thoughts were running aimlessly. His eyes were now flashing back and forth between the date stamped on top of the letter and the copying machine the letter seemingly came from. He realized that he wasn’t holding a piece of history – but that, somehow, he was holding a piece of the future. Without a second thought he pulled out his cellphone and called Linda Strauss, a CNN news reporter he had met in New York months earlier.

“I have something the world needs to see.”