

# THE BOILER



WINTER 2014

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THE BOILER JOURNAL is a literary journal that publishes four times a year online at [www.theboilerjournal.com](http://www.theboilerjournal.com)

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# THE BOILER

FALL 2014

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## BETH BRETLE

### DARK HORSES

I have grown thin with awake and the worry of dreams. Adam's eyes seem never to fully open or close, the lids taut and nearly translucent over the blue they cover. We no longer swim in the river.

The summer I was pregnant with Marja, we swam at night. Even the cool of the cabin was stifling that summer, like living in over-ripe fruit, too moist and molding. It was impossible to sleep, and Marja would push her feet against my ribs in protest while I shifted about the bed in discomfort. Adam would try to rub my feet or my shoulders, but his hands would stick and skid against my skin.

We would leave our towels where the bank was an easy slope and the grass was matted, and we would step into the current. By midsummer the water had slowed, peaks of the sandbar were small islands where most mornings the heron sunned herself after fishing. I was big and awkward walking against the river. We would float to the edge of the sand bar, where it dipped down to deep water. Adam would go first, bury his feet in the silt, and sit where the water was chest high. He'd catch my hands as I floated by on my back and hold me so my body streamed out before him. We steadied ourselves against the current, my belly anchored over the deep. Marja would sleep.

I believe we know some places only in dreams. Places that seem to have no counterpart in our waking lives. We know the details solely from our dreams. The way a chenille spread drapes a bed under an attic window, or night flattens the shadows beneath the El, or earth crumbles in small slant erosions on a path beside a river: they are familiar because I've dreamed them often.

By fourteen months, we would find Marja standing in the crib some nights, staring, awake in her sleep, not aware that one of us had walked into the room. We'd try not to rouse her, lay her down again, and wait for her eyes to close. "Where does she go, do you think?" Adam asked once when I came back to bed and curled against him.

When I dreamed of the path and river again, Marja was three and actually walking in her sleep. I'd find her in front of a window, any window. Sometimes I'd kneel beside her and try to see what she saw. I saw the field of strawberries next door or the silhouettes of dark horses in the pasture across the road, but nothing more. She was always losing her shoes, kicking them off while she rode in the stroller or in the pack on my back. I dreamed that her shoe was on the path. I asked Adam if he knew other houses in his dreams. "It is always the same house," he

said, "when I dream you leave me."

Marja is almost six. It is summer again. We have hung bells across the doorways in our house. We lock the doors when we sleep. We have found her in the strawberry field in the middle of the night, staring. We found her walking toward the dark horses. She unlocks the doors. Her feet are so silent.

Adam's grandparents both dreamed of their daughter after she'd died of a rheumatic heart. They woke together. Glare from streetlights and old snow bled through the drawn shades. In both their dreams she'd stood on a lawn they didn't know. A lake glistened in the distance behind her. They rested in one another's arms and said how blue her eyes looked and how clear, like before she'd been sick.

Marja says she doesn't remember where she goes when she sleepwalks. I ask if there is an attic with a bed on a dark wooden floor. She says she doesn't think so. I want to know the architecture of her dreams.

I ask Adam about the house he dreams. He says he's never dreamed the exterior, only the kitchen. The chairs always scrape more loudly against the linoleum floor than he thinks they will.

I dream I find another shoe further down the path.

When we walk through the rooms of our house, the bells ring. They are supposed to bring good chi and wake us when Marja walks.

The air feels full, swampy with heat. I take Marja to the public pool a half hour away to swim. We arrange to meet her friend, Mallory. I'm afraid to let Marja go down the giant slide alone. But I do. She and Mallory shiver and laugh while they wait in line.

Adam and I have told Marja the current is too strong in the river. She's taking swim lessons at the YMCA. Maybe next year, we tell her, she'll be ready for the river.

We stop for ice cream on the way home. Marja falls asleep slumped forward with the shoulder restraint pressing into her cheek. I think I could drive into the night and through days for as long as sleep could hold her there in my rearview mirror.

At night, I lie awake waiting for the bells, or sleep so shallowly it's more like looking at sleep than sleeping. Adam and I lie flat on our backs without clothes or covers wishing for cool air to blow across our thighs and stomachs.

I open my eyes when the wind sends the willow branches swinging against our window. I always think I hear bells. In the dark I can see Adam's eyes are open. I know that he is about to say, "Remember when you were pregnant? How we'd take the path to the bank and swim to the sandbar?" I think of the stars over the river on those nights and Adam's hands. Marja would lie so still then.



JANE HUFFMAN

VILLANELLE FOR SIMPLE MACHINES

I can pose the mosaic layer's clay,  
finger his glass tessellates, his jewel dye,  
ask: what shade of blue will God wear today?

I can hold the florist's blade to his bouquet,  
keep the beekeeper's wasp from his sandfly.  
I can pose the mosaic layer's clay.

Women like me never learn how to pray.  
Rather, like simple machines, we pry:  
ask: what shade of blue will God wear today?

And if I found a child in the hay,  
I would lie.  
I can pose the mosaic layer's clay.

My own child, born in the chance of May,  
she too my own doing, looks to the sky,  
asks: what shade of blue will God wear today?

Mother, I know exactly what you'd say,  
that mothers must mother things that must die.  
I can pose the mosaic layer's clay,  
ask: what shade of blue will God wear today?

JANE HUFFMAN

## CONJURING

Leave your soft metallic subordination behind,  
leave your cashmere leg wraps, your ponds  
of copulating flutterfish, your unmowed lavender,

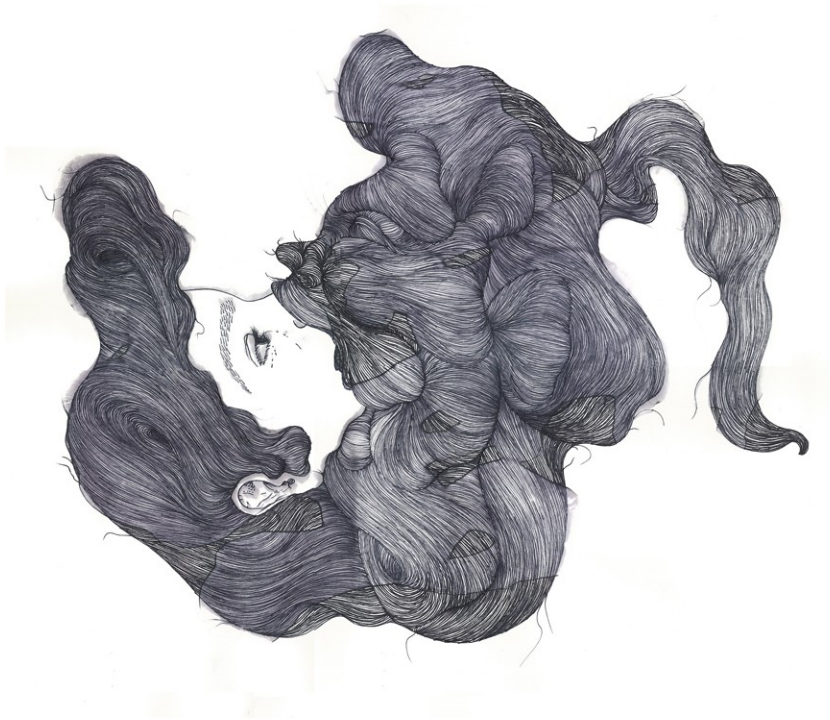
leave your thrown disemboweled, your plate of beak meat  
and wishbone unsnapped, leave your funeral gardens  
unwatered, your husband, nonstinging jelly, wonting.

Leave your damselfly boudoir of molten gold drapery  
and dozzled pearls, leave your flask of malt vinegar,  
leave your council to the dogs, your dogs to the strangers.

Leave your haliographer to his salt, your turkey feather  
vireton to the soldiers, your red mun waxes to the girls,  
your dinmont to the butcher, your emerald cross garnet

to be melted down for stock. Pack lightly this time.  
Bring only your languages and one or two good coats.  
Leave your sun wolves, your copper upspear headdress.

Forget the unripe lotus. Forget the bathhouse, its labbing,  
baptizer of small orifice. Forget the aurelia, its waiting.  
Wait no more. Leave at dawn. Leave the rest to me.



RACHEL MULDER

**Empath**

2014

MATT W MILLER

NUDE IN A TREE

Strange land behind my eyes,  
or some unsettled thing in the wind,  
a vision of my wife, shoeless,  
steps over the November grass  
of our backyard. I watch her  
behind the thin red  
curtain of a bay window.  
She ghosts into the tangle  
under the old growth elm,  
stares into the tree's grey, its leafless  
and withering gnarl. And then  
she embraces it and begins  
to climb, as sure as a child.  
She works her way up and, near  
the top of the last branch thick  
enough not to break, she strips.  
First, her sweater. Then her blue  
bra. Her small breasts pale  
the purpling sky. She slips  
off her jeans and panties, sliding  
her thighs with the limb to wiggle  
them down to one ankle where they  
dangle a second before she kicks  
them to the undergrowth.  
She presses her face to the elm,  
her yes closed, arms cradling.  
Her knees gently grip,  
flesh flush with bark.  
A lace of wind rocks the limb.  
I watch the dusk deepen  
around a congruence of breeze

and tree, of me and she.

MATT W MILLER

INCISION:

A SONNET BEFORE WOUND PACKING

*For Emily*

How wild this flesh can be so cut open,  
my thigh gouged out in scapular divot,  
and that I don't exsanguinate nor begin  
to right away wilt with necrotic rot.  
How wild a wound can bloom red-eyed  
at the external world as internal witness  
to sun, to rain, the natural shocks. Debride  
me, surgeons, open me up as wide as a rose.  
Make carbuncles breathe periwinkle  
through this my gape. Invade the open gate  
and snip me clean with silvered scissors. Twinkle  
your light into my leg. Look for a hurt  
too wildfire to whittle. Stuff me with gauze.  
Then needle me numb so I won't feel the flies.

K.T. BILLEY

COLLATERAL:

a backless dress. Aka the closest  
I come to the shackle, the shoulder blade  
in the field, my hilt studding his soil  
for a change. Not knowing how  
to barter, we strip the pillory  
for parts and build a tower  
for red-tailed hawks.

Flight patterns are concentric, in terms  
of temperature and fuel economy, so

biomimicry is a study  
in circles, the rim of wine, our fusing  
coccyx. Always trying to achieve that  
great migration inward, I declare a truce,  
a trinity of give and take for us  
to talk too much about.

We are pretty tired. I woke up  
like this, hungry and halter-topped, hoping

he'd thumb the blade.  
Check my leather bomber, his  
jean jacket. Nothing in the pocket  
but a bent id.

K.T. BILLEY

## SMOKE SIGNAL

Call me when your hair decides to curl and chase  
my eyes around the fire. I'll be squatting by the river, peeling  
poplar saplings. Didn't you say that bruise  
went yellow, then purple—a berry full of spiders, destined  
for pie? When you disappeared behind the bend  
we don't name, I fed a stack of switches  
to first-person flames, listening to the sap crack  
into lighter fluid. Licks of bark burn too, in my smoldering.  
All I can spare is a stir stick, something to rough up the coals  
before I tie on a tarp and snap at the clouds. The thing is,  
no matter how hard the updraft, how hyperextended  
my neck, the muleta taunts only myself. I'm no matador  
but I can call bullshit, stuffing my face with saskatoons.  
I need to make the most of what I can't help  
hacking down, so I aim the bellows of this white flag your way.  
When the wind comes, I want you to hear me, loud and clear.



JUSTIN CARTER

## SAINT RIFLE

*"A priest was killed and another critically wounded in an attack at a Catholic church in Phoenix, police said early Thursday." –CNN*

Tonight, the moon rises  
with an extra ash  
across its face.

Instead of confession—  
Instead of forgiveness,  
you give too many

winds & not enough  
wings. Wounded once,  
twice, forever

this re-injury, forever  
your trigger begging  
*pull* & forever

the man pulling.  
Have you failed  
in death or simply

become part of death?  
& the red wardrobe  
you gave, this blood

covering, what does  
it say about sanctity?  
How quiet, this loss

when you've grown  
to love explosion  
& anger. Rifle,

O rifle— you turn  
the flesh back  
to bread.

## JON CHOPAN

### ON THE EUPHRATES

Halfway through our tour Elliott Hildebrandt, our field medic, was killed on IED Alley. I remember a sharp popping sound. A man who smiled at me as our Humvee passed him by. Ten children, lined up and perfectly spaced out, their hands raised and waving at us.

That morning we woke to James Darbee's screams, his legs kicking at the air in a panicked rage. His cot rocked from side to side so furiously that his pillow fell to the floor. We all circled him. We'd only been asleep for an hour when the screaming started. Someone grabbed a pillow and made like they were going to hold it over Darbee's face.

"Do it," someone whispered.

None of us slept after that, and then, beneath anemic clouds that wore the sad smiles of circus clowns, we sped towards our mission with great disdain. We babysat Army engineers while they filled pot holes left by IED explosions, and that day we greeted them with the kind of hatred one usually reserves for their worst enemies. When we stepped from our vehicles any hope we had of standing on our own feet had melted away. Darbee and I stood back to back, propping one another up, our weapons trained on the stretch of road before us. Darbee went on and on about his dream.

"It was real, I mean, I saw it like that. We were on this road and there was an explosion, and then I was dead. You guys were all standing around laughing because there was shit oozing out of me, puddles of it oozing out my asshole."

My dream was nearly identical, but I didn't tell him that.

"I could smell it, the shit," he said. "It smelled like the Euphrates."

He walked off to find a cigarette after that and I went off to find someone else to lean against.

We left an hour before sunset. Then, a few klicks from base, we gave up on the war, sat back in our seats, stuffing our mouths with haji energy drinks and cigarettes just to stay awake. I stared directly at the setting sun so that I couldn't close my eyes to sleep without seeing volcanic flashes of light.

We lurched down a road that followed the Euphrates. It looked like a fresh wound cut into virgin flesh. We'd been taking that same route for a week by then, driving out at sunrise and returning at sunset so the road could be completed on time for a news story about progress

in Iraq's struggle for freedom and decreased violence in the region. We were so sun burned, sleep deprived, starved that we didn't even raise our weapons to watch our perimeters. The engine hummed a frantic song. I'd been eating No-Doz by the fistful so that my eyes were lacquered open. Darbee kept going on about how his number was up, about that dream, about how it was so real he could taste it. As I mentioned, I'd had the same dream, knew, as we approached the tiny village along the banks of the river, that one of us was going to die.

I was too exhausted to care which one of us it was.

When we reached the village we moved slowly down the road, maneuvering around craters left by recent blasts.

"Wouldn't it have made more sense," Bodi said, as he guided us towards home, "for them to start at our camp and work towards the FOB?"

"That's it," Darbee said. "It's our own stupidity that's going to kill us."

I sat in the backseat while our convoy wound its way along the Euphrates and into the village. I saw the smiling man, just then, and felt a great dumb grin forming on my face. The moon hovered off in the distance, a bruised piece of fruit waiting to be thrown away. Darbee sat next to me mumbling, "Any second now, any second."

In those days children were used as timers, spaced out so that bombers could count the seconds between each vehicle, could detonate their devices with greater accuracy. When we passed the last child there was a roaring explosion, something you might expect to hear as you watched a giant building brought to its knees. Our vehicle shuttered to a halt and Darbee let out a girlish wail, as if we'd been the ones, as if we'd been flipped over and tossed in a ditch.

We'd both known, or thought we knew, what was going to happen. But Darbee wasn't ready to admit that it hadn't happened to us.

"Jesus," he said, "fuck."

I ran my fingers over my face. "We're fine," I said, even though I didn't believe it myself.

The children took off running. I leaned out the window and saw that the lead vehicle had been hit. A smell, which I knew was human flesh, spat into the air and snaked its way into my mouth. After a few seconds I opened my door and stepped out into the street, raising my weapon against imagined enemies. I looked towards the bombed Humvee. Smoke was rising from it. I couldn't see anything else. It was possible that everyone in it was dead. But then there was sound coming from it, men calling out to one another, checking to see if everyone was alright. They sounded peaceful, dazed and sleepy.

Darbee had yet to realize that he was alive and started to panic,

thinking he'd died and was now doomed to spend eternity with us. I turned to see his bloodshot eyes. I thought he'd lost his mind because when he spoke, his voice was filled with a kind of sickened anger.

"I can't be trapped here with you fuckers," he said.

"James," I said.

Suddenly I cared about being alive, about convincing him of it.

"We're okay," I said, although I couldn't speak for the men ahead of us.

He looked out his window. "We're dead. We've died and this is some kind of sick punishment, isn't it?"

"I'm going to help the others," I said.

He turned to look at me. "No one can help us now."

"You're alive," I said, and playfully slapped him in the face a few times.

Bodi sat very still in the driver's seat while Styza reached back and grabbed Darbee's rifle. It seemed like the right thing to do.

"You can have it," Darbee said, "I won't be needing it."

Styza pulled the weapon from him.

"It's okay," I said, as I turned and ran towards the wounded men.

"You can't save them," I heard him call after me.

I ran, so desperate to see who'd died, that I ignored all protocol. It was freezing. I remember my breath pushing out in frozen bursts, my lungs burning. I could see a man, lying next to the lead vehicle, his body charred and giving off smoke. His flesh had turned to slush.

As I approached the passenger side, nearest the dead man, I could hear a faint sucking sound. Hilde sat there, his neck sliced in half, so that his head tilted to the left and the wound looked like a gaping mouth filled with blood. The rest of the vehicle appeared to be fine, no damage to speak of, not even a dent. I stood, staring.

The others, the men in the vehicle, began to rush towards Hilde's side. They pushed me out of the way so that they could move him, try to save his life before he died.

But he was already dead.

I sat on the ground next to the charred corpse. Styza and Bodi stood next to me as the others screamed into Hilde's face.

"He's gone," I said.

"What about this guy?" Styza said.

The dead man had a welding suit strapped around him. I could see that it had contained the blast, though later we'd find out that a buckle had popped off, that that was what had killed Hilde.

"Is he dead?" Styza asked.

I began laughing uncontrollably. Everyone turned to look at me, because none of them knew what I was laughing about, none of

them found this funny. But that only made me laugh harder.

Once I gained control of myself, I asked, "Where's Darbee?"

"What's wrong with you?" Bodi said.

Nothing. I was only relieved that it hadn't been me, but couldn't say that. How could I let them know that I was filled with joy now that I was certain that I was not the one?

When Darbee finally wandered over I took him off to the side and confessed.

"Remember that dream?" I asked him.

"I was sure it was real," he said. "Have you ever had a dream like that?"

"I have," I said. "I have."

As we walked back to meet the others I could see that the bomber was still alive, taking pathetic little breaths that would surely be his last, because his body was a smoking hunk of stewed meat. There was a sound, like water slowly flowing down a drain. But there was no blood, or at least none that I could see. I knew I was supposed to hate him, was supposed to see him as nothing more than a crazed animal. But I felt sorry for him, thinking he might be alive enough to suffer. Not sorry because I pitied his circumstance but because I'd been convinced by my dreams that I would end up just like him.

There was a short-lived debate about searching the village to find out who else was involved, talk of roughing up civilians. Someone even suggested dropping ordinance. A few of the guys were pretty angry.

I was ready to crawl into my cot and dream, so that I might find out which one of us would be next.

After a while Bodi said, "Odds are good they're gone anyway."

Shortly after that, we strapped Hilde's body to the hood of a Humvee. There was no interrogation, no retribution, not this time anyway. Instead, we sped off into the night. No one talked during the ride.

Another vehicle dragged the corpse of the bomber behind it. There was nothing left when we arrived back at camp. Our CO said that the body parts, splayed across the road, might show our enemies the cost of bombing us.

"Or make them do it more," I whispered.

"Fitzsimmons," the CO said, "do you have something to offer?"

"No, sir."

I had plenty to offer but nothing I intended to say out loud.

Someone draped an American flag over Hilde's body. A few guys carried him. The rest of us stood in silence as they moved past.

"Lucky bastard," Styza mumbled, once they were gone. "At least he doesn't have to go and do it again tomorrow."

Shortly after they flew Hilde away, each of us met individually with a combat stress counselor.

"How do you feel about what happened today?" he asked me. *Pretty good*, I thought, *I'm alive*.

"Fine," I said.

"Fine," he repeated. "Can you be more specific?"

It struck me that this guy sat in an air conditioned office all day waiting for moments like this. *What is war really like*, he wanted to know. *How does it make you feel to be a warrior?* He was probably going to study psychology at Harvard when he got home, write a paper about post-traumatic stress.

"It's okay," I said, "stuff like this happens all the time."

He rolled his eyes, sighed.

He decided on a new course of action. "Have you been having dreams?"

I saw myself lying on the side of the road, shit spilling out of me.

"Nothing special," I said.

"Why don't you tell me about them anyway?"

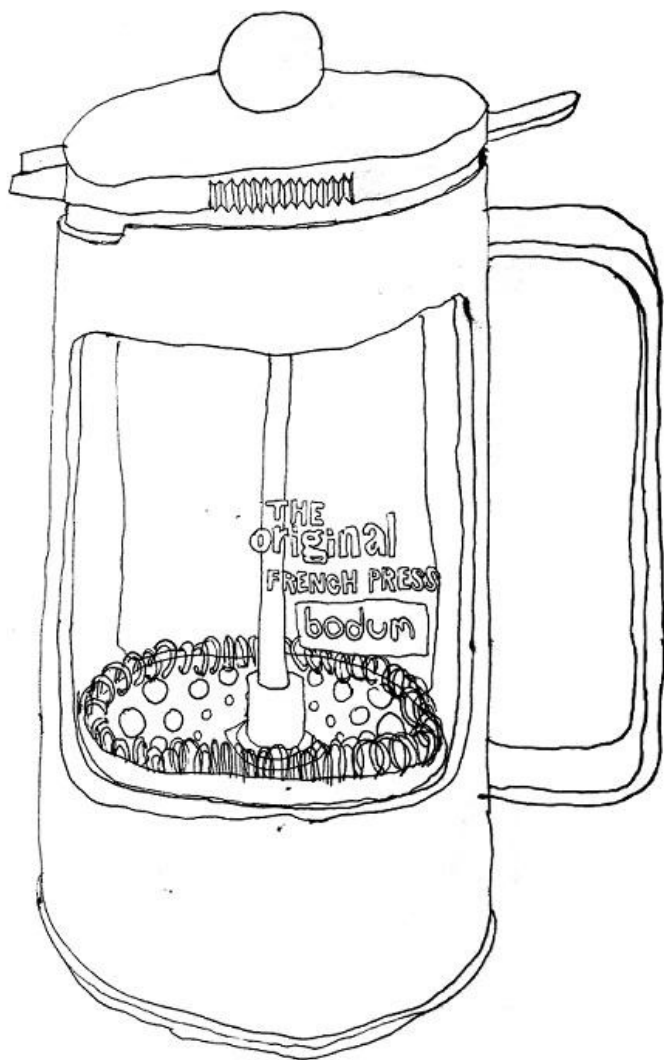
"I'd rather not," I said.

Everyone stood about laughing at me, holding their sides, fell to the ground. There were explosions all around them, but they kept on laughing.

"Have you ever seen the crater an IED makes?" I asked.

"I'd rather hear about your dreams," he said, and reached across the space between us.

Each night it's different. Each night it's the same. At sunset we rise. The sky stands empty above us. The road goes on for miles. The smiling man. The waving child. Sometimes I'm the one who stands there laughing. Sometimes I'm the one who's died.



ERICA PARROT  
French Press



ERICA PARROT  
Tea Mug, front





ERICA PARROT  
Tea Mug, back

ALEX LEMON

## WANTED: INEXPENSIVE BIRDCAGE

I need a cheap birdcage to use as temporary home for the parrot-thing I see in the Live Oak trees of Rangle Creek Park each day on my afternoon walk. Eyes going terrible but I am sure as salt that it's not a squirrel. Door latch does not need to work. Dents fine, but must hold shape. Dirty? Rusted? Totally fine! Plenty of time. I will take care of it. Must be large enough for an owl or a tiny person. Have one? An extra? One to lend? God bless you and Godspeed! Lawrence

ALEX LEMON

## BREATHTAKING SPOON COLLECTION FOR SALE

Selling spoon collection 97 total spoons includes 50 state spoon rack shaped like United States with broken off Florida spoons from all the states even 50 or more very straight also Russia Belgium Italy commemorative too Nixon in China Princess Di Fall of Berlin Wall 9/11 Firemen many wars too among others these spoons were my mothers collection she polished each day prior to her passing away not a speck of tarnish in each shine I see her face spoons are pewter or chrome I cannot stop this sadness no silver spoons here thank you

ZACH VANDEZANDE

## A NECESSARY FICTION

For a while I broke into people's cars. I mean it wasn't a thing that I thought about, seeing as it was a sort of getting-by strategy that I only used when I got real desperate. I would say to myself, "Well, the world bares its teeth," and then I'd be out there in the night in some parking lot busting out a window with a screwdriver. When I said that, I was probably talking about myself, but also the world. Like I'm biting back, biting first.

Look, some things feel good as long as you never think about them. Like when it was just me and an object and a sharp crack. Or sometimes just lucking out in trying the door. As much as I liked smashing my way into a car, it was better when the door just opened. The clean sensible feeling of that click, like maybe something better was coming for me, or at least I was more blameless, because whose fault is an unlocked door? Not mine, you know? And then I could picture them, finding fault with themselves instead of getting harder against the world. Just regretful about the dumb thing they did, then going out to buy some new CDs.

And so when I had to, I'd go poking around these small apartment complexes on the north side of town. A lot of those smaller places, the parking's in back, and it's not well lit, and if people in the apartments see you out there, they figure you're just a dumb neighbor that they haven't met.

I should say that I never made much money from doing this, and none of the pawn shops would even take whatever I had for them, as most of the people who own pawn shops are the type to get wise to someone in a hurry. I kept doing it anyhow. I guess I've got a wolf in me.

The last place I picked out had about eight covered spots behind the building, and the apartments all had a little fenced-in patio that kept them from looking out and seeing me. I find myself out there and I see that this car, this mid-size sedan with one of those *Coexist* bumper stickers, well, it's unlocked, and the door opens with that nice firm click, which feels good, and I'm in there, and I'm looking around, seeing if maybe the stereo is worth prying out, which it isn't, so I take the change from the cup holder and get out again to check the back. This is when I look up and she's there.

She's there with keys in hand looking all personally hurt, and I'm like *oh shit*, and so I say, "Oh shit," but for some reason I don't run,

and I don't even really know why, and I'm thinking like, *Hey you should be running. Hello, legs, nobody wants to be arrested today*, and finally I'm like, "This your car?" And she's like, "...", and I'm like, "I guess I thought it was mine. I guess I'm confused."

Does she believe me? No, Of course not, but that's okay, which is what she says, but also not okay, not with the inherent threat of me and of men in general, and I wanted, like, something else to be happening, something good, like maybe we meet and I say something about her hair because it's rich and brown and looks like it might be its own alive thing, and she forgets for a second about the threat of me and of men in general and takes the thing I said as the world noticing her for her goodness.

Or even: we are together and don't want to get out of bed and instead we talk about dreams we've both had that night and in our childhoods and her foot is touching my foot in the middle of the bed and she is seven weeks pregnant and we are both a little bit terrified but the moment is too gentle and sun-strewn for either of us to confess the fear.

I admit I feel a little lousy that this is the life we get, the one where I've opened up her car like it was whatever and then said I thought it was mine, which now strikes me as my true and honest feeling about the matter.

I mean, I don't like being a wolf, I guess. But there it is.

So I'm watching this girl with her throat-caught breath standing in front of me and then she's holding out her keys like a gift or a cross against a vampire, i.e. me, i.e. the sharpened tooth of society, but I'm like, okay. And I take the keys, even. That's all it takes for two people to no longer be people. To not ever connect. And I'm all like *Well, man, I guess you've come this far*. So I get her wallet, too. An antique ring. A cell phone. Her sense of place in the world.

But what if this could happen: what if I could just say I'm sorry in a way that communicated my own weakness instead of the weakness of the act of saying sorry. Like I'm sorry for being a robber, not I'm sorry for robbing you. I'm sorry for this hard place we're in, I'm sorry for the world, for living in it how I do. I'm sorry for bad neighborhoods. I'm sorry neither of us get to be human right now. That it's so hard to stay human all the time. To remember.

And then the awkward returning of keys, of wallet, of other things. And the running off.

And which did I do?

This is where I tell you that the first thing I said, you know, "For a while I broke into people's cars," which implies maybe that this was in the past, was a lie, which I'm guessing you maybe saw right through. I like to think that I can't help myself, but probably that's not

really true, because this was tonight, this just happened, and in a way it's still happening, and now I don't know which thing it is that I did. I'm so full of things I can't seem to remember. I need to tell them all. And it's not like it matters to who, except that they listen, but also I'm starting to notice that you look a little like her, or: you are her. Like truly her, and I'm here deciding, and also back there deciding, and this is the story. I want to put myself aside—the fear in me, and the threat—I want to be done with it. I want you to not be looking at me like that, and I want to deserve you not looking at me like that. Mostly I just need to be telling, to have it told. And then maybe you can decide for me what I did.



RACHEL MULDER  
Loose Lips  
2014

THE BOILER 31

LORI WHITE

ZANIES

Drug Description:

Alprazolam (Xanax) acts on the brain and nerves (central nervous system) to produce a calming effect. Xanax is used to treat the following:

- Repeated episodes of anxiety
- Anxiety as associated with depression
- Chronic insomnia

Precautions:

Talk to your healthcare provider about your complete medical history, especially any instances of alcohol or substance abuse. Admit to the years you smoked, then quit cold turkey when you turned forty, for reasons you can no longer remember. Smoking decreases blood levels of this medication, so skip the part about the cigarettes you sneak now from time to time, savor on nights you have the house to yourself, when you stretch out on the chaise lounge and watch the starless sky. Provide a list of all prescribed, over-the-counter, and/or herbal medications you are taking, minus the bottle of pain pills you've rationed over the past year after a routine outpatient procedure you prefer not to dwell on here. Classify yourself as a moderate drinker—a glass of wine or two with dinner, a beer at lunch, a truth you may dispense with if necessary. These details have no bearing on your current condition, though, admittedly, they may play some part in the future.

Report any recent physical changes you may be experiencing: if your shoulder slowly seizes up, freezes so hard you can no longer hook your bra or dress yourself without help; if your upper arms, the one body part you once held in high regard, now swing like your grandmother's Hadassah arms; if you wear a scarf—even in summer—to cover your neck after your brother teased you with his incessant gobbling; and if you've stopped thinking about sex, stopped fantasizing about the masseuse at your salon who moves like she is part cat, stopped trembling when she puts her hands on your shoulders and asks if you'd like to schedule a massage, stopped stammering when you answer her, say you found a guy from Thailand at a place down the street who has twice her strength for half the price.

Side Effects:



Tell your doctor right away if any of these unlikely but serious side effects occur:

- behavior problems, including difficulty in concentrating and outbursts of anger
- unusual excitement, nervousness, or irritability
- mental and/or mood changes, thoughts of suicide, or memory problems

It should be noted this is the exact same list of symptoms you gave the gynecologist (the one young enough to be your daughter) who insisted the best approach was to eat right and exercise; the list you gave the next gynecologist (the one nearly old enough to be your mother) who wrote you a prescription for hormones—hormones! that’s the answer!; and the list you did not give the last doctor (the one you’ve known for twenty-five years) who greeted you in the waiting room, led you to his disheveled office, and cleared a stack of files so you could sit, hands folded in your lap, and ask for updates on his five grandkids and his lovely wife and their trip to Italy, until he finally wrote you the prescription for a controlled substance (plus six refills) without any questions, any suggestions, any advice, then gave you a big hug goodbye.

Adults over fifty may be more sensitive to the side effects of this drug, especially drowsiness. Of course, as you know, this is the very side effect you hope for. In fact, you expect the drug to address the following: the nights when you rise to change your sweat-soaked pajamas, then lie awake worrying about your dog’s age, your parents’ ages, and then your own age and whether you should be living in this house, sleeping beside the same woman for the last nine years (and whose snoring you secretly blame for your insomnia), and then you try to picture living alone in the mountains where the snow blankets all sound, a silence impossible *not* to sleep through, an imaginary world so cold you start to shiver, pull up the bedcovers and wait for their warmth to overwhelm you again.

#### Indications:

Xanax may reduce the number of panic attacks you experience. Everyone responds differently to the medication, so try to be patient and follow your healthcare provider’s directions. Take the medication before any family occasion: birthdays, Thanksgiving, Passover, and especially for those Hallmark holidays (as your mother likes to call them) that contain little significance (every day is Mother’s Day!) yet hold so much expectation. The drug’s effects may take longer to appear than you can tolerate, longer than it takes the waiter to bring the drinks or for your mother to ask you why you keep cutting your hair so short. Such a

crime, she says, you always had beautiful hair.

It is important to take Xanax exactly as your healthcare provider has prescribed. In the situations as stated above, excuse yourself from the table, and on the way to the bathroom, stop at the bar for a little jumpstart. Though alcohol should generally not be used while taking this medication, you did not drive yourself to the restaurant, nor will you be using heavy machinery or performing any activity that requires alertness, so use at your discretion.

#### Storage:

Store medication at room temperature away from light and moisture. Do not store in the bathroom. It is suggested instead to bury the bottle inside the box of tissues on your nightstand for convenient and inconspicuous nighttime consumption. Wait until your girlfriend falls asleep and begins the first in a series of deafening snore patterns. If you do not have a glass of water handy, dissolve the bars under your tongue. The promise of a restful night far outweighs the pill's bitterness.

#### Missed Dose:

While highly unlikely, if you do miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. If it is near the time of the next dose, double the dose to catch up. If you like the results, then consider this an alternative to your normal dosing schedule.

#### Dose Maintenance:

Your healthcare provider may want to see you from time to time, to help assess how well your symptoms are controlled with treatment. Lie when he asks if you are sleeping through the night. Interdose symptoms such as early-morning anxiety can occur. Describe the nights you awaken at three a.m., heart pounding, trembling, disoriented until your girlfriend's snoring brings you back, reminds you of your greatest fear: absolutely nothing has changed.

The use of Xanax at high doses is often necessary to treat panic disorders. This is one instance in which you do not have to lie to your healthcare provider. Tell him about your inability to leave the house. Recount the times you've tried to drive to a yoga class (exercise!) without turning around halfway there; to stand in line at the grocery store (eating right!) before abandoning your cart full of leafy greens and canned salmon; or to make plans to meet a friend for lunch (social stimulation!), then cancel when a paralyzing knot forms in your stomach. Nod, though not too enthusiastically, when your healthcare provider decides to increase your dosage. Look serious when he reminds you there is a substantial risk of dependence in Xanax users and that its pharmacological properties—high potency, a short elimination half-life

—increase the potential for misuse. The consumer’s ability to completely discontinue therapy with Xanax after long-term use has not been reliably determined. Reassure him you understand the risks. Promise to inform him immediately of any changes that may accompany this increase, then break this promise the first chance you get.

#### Withdrawal Reactions:

This medication may cause withdrawal reactions, especially if it has been used for a long time or in high doses. Do not stop taking it. In such cases, withdrawal symptoms may occur if you suddenly stop using this medication. Again, do not stop taking it. To prevent withdrawal reactions, your doctor may reduce your dose gradually. To prevent this from happening, do not report any withdrawal reactions. Most importantly, do not, under any circumstances, tell your doctor if your condition persists or worsens.

#### Drug Abuse and Dependence:

If you do not take this medication exactly as prescribed, the risk of addiction increases. Along with its benefits, this medication may cause drug-seeking behavior (addiction). If you detect apprehension in your doctor’s voice when you call in for a new prescription and doubt your ability to sit politely through another appointment without demanding he hurry up and write the damn script already so you can be on your way, then it may be time for you to consider new options. Begin with the medicine cabinets in your neighborhood. Try wangling an invitation to tea from the old Swedish woman across the street. Listen to her story about her recent hospital stay, and all the pills they sent home with her, amber bottles of who-knows-what-they’re-for. Then, after a few cups of tea, pick up your purse and ask if you may use the bathroom to powder your nose.

The neighborhood busybody’s Yorkshire terrier (off leash, by the way) was attacked and killed by a mangy German Shepherd, and she tells you she’s having a hard time sleeping because of this. Say you understand, and suggest she see her doctor. (Do not share your medication with others. It is both against the law and defeats the very purpose of this conversation.) Later, when you drop by to check on her, say yes, you’d love to see the dog’s photo album. This is your window of opportunity. Once she starts blubbing, wander the house “in search of tissues.”

When the neighborhood is tapped out, move on to the streets, which is a more promising territory anyway. Memorize the slang names before you go on the hunt. Zanies. Zanbars. Handlebars. Totem Poles. Planks. Leave your good jewelry at home. Wear all-black, a baseball cap, and sunglasses, chic yet intimidating.

Additional Advice:

Remember that your doctor has prescribed this medication because he believes the benefit to you is greater than the risk of side effects. You have no reason to doubt those expectations. Though some women manage menopause with diet and exercise, or take hormones to balance the mood swings, hot flashes, and loss of sleep, do not stop taking this medication. Many people using this medication do not experience serious side effects. This could be you.

LAUREN CAMP

## ON THE WING THE HOUR

Out of one day they count  
ten hours or two days or whatever is longest  
until the medicine is delivered

until the bed folds up  
until they've canceled and punctuated  
goodbye and kept saying in sleep

we're capable of this sort of tearing  
of ruin of the cost of the body its pity  
of the ropes of our previous lives

no one is talkative after the frothed  
orange beverage is sucked  
through the bendable straw

after Mozart's bassoon concerto  
continues to adagio and the news  
of Moore's tornado after the cancer beast

has napped and meanwhile knitted  
more cells and the house quieted  
after the laundry and other long moments

after the scope after probe of her abdomen  
after a weakening  
after the sheets have been cleaned

and they smoothed them after  
sleeper's flare after night thoughts drift  
to the small motion of sun on a palm

in the thickness of this  
a tree might drop a petal

after one point and another  
after the terrible paragraph of leaving  
of losing then next year only seeds

LAUREN CAMP

## A SHADE HAS FALLEN

Now I'm nude on a queen's bed, embroidering stitches  
against hollows, then decorating stars  
with lustered fingers. I take off my worry.  
Silence etches the neighboring dunes, washes up  
to the cottage, wedges doors open.  
Because light pales to bone,  
I wonder if I've actually awoken.  
A week's worth of upcoming echoes  
in a room with simple carpets and stairs  
that keep repeating.  
Everything will be restored. No more longing  
on white keys with a red carriage return.  
No more updraft to signature, no more ending  
a phone call with multiple sign-offs.  
When he arrives, there will be no first and next.  
No sort of knowing but the mouth  
entangling gullies of veins. Outside, the waves  
always licking and wrecking the ocean.

RACHEL ELIZA GRIFFITHS

FRAGMENTS OF POEMS RETURNED BY SENDER

You were waving when I looked back.  
When I scraped winter from my flesh  
& mimicked the silence of geese,  
bruised arrows skimming grief.

Somewhere I moved beneath trees.  
I'd love to name their limbs for you  
but can't you see past all that? Anatomy  
says we're all the same.  
Symmetry, flawed by soul, errata,  
elegy & so forth.

I was crawling across lawns,  
feral & flattened  
into lies & scored lines,  
dive bars & overtures.  
In the dark I swung my legs  
across the wooden prows  
of men & women lost at sea,

the misery  
of a jukebox, paid & repetitive.  
Appreciated for nostalgia  
alone. Closer now is the absence  
of snow. Because it is summer  
& the heat unfastens like a black dress  
around my legs. My dark cries  
claw the dance floor.

Give me a call,  
let me know how you're doing,  
I write to my friends  
from the hospital  
in a common gown of birds.

Somewhere resembles you  
but it is not a location. There is no point  
where the map picks up  
the sum of oceans. The grid's ablutions

raised over blue madness,

the symmetry of absence  
in a mirror with no one  
looking.



RACHEL ELIZA GRIFFITHS  
WOMAN TO LIGHTNING

*after Ai*

We rolled in flashes of God, fighting  
pleasure as it tore  
our shadows across smoke.

When we burned of life nothing was better  
than our purgatory of embers.

I wanted a matchbox. A grandmother clock. I wanted the dark  
house shingled in blue & bruised

wildfire. Touch me or, err.

How could I ever forget the shame on my floor,  
a birthmark of you. I covered every mirror. I grieved  
the squalls of our silhouettes, rising & dying. Once slave,  
I pulled my passage over the earthly gush of swells.

Revision that I was. Passing through the aviary of dead poets,  
their naked bird ribs glittering with time. The universe  
pressed like a coin upon their opened eyes.

Saltwater poured over joyless shoulders  
as I was carried out of my life. Through blood

I sang & erased my name  
until I could only name your arrows.

I've got the scars to prove it.

The nights were static & strained. I left the radio low  
& returned to its amnesia each morning. America,  
shining like a gun. I practiced. The barrel of my voice

aimed at thunderheads & headless saints. The volume of my life  
so uneasy beneath evenings of starlight & dread.

Loneliness dragged me by my hair through back rooms  
where emptied velvet chairs watched me struggle

with this blow of light.

You were happy, weren't you?

I tried to grasp the fingers slipping through  
(the smear of)  
my dreams. My footing struck clouds. I swear

I meant no harm.

But you were happy, weren't you?

Like the backhand of a palm flying  
to my face.

The desire in the flying,  
the wing, blurred.

## RACHEL ELIZA GRIFFITHS

### MY DRESS HANGS THERE

A woman pulls night over her hips & makes the bleak seams blur the faith of her legs. If she names blood she will exist. The woman called Memory will have enough to wear in a room glazed with silk & flames. I hang my flesh on the French door as her light shakes my hunger into sequins. I'm small & scratch her heels. History stalks my body, examines my teeth, my scalp & thighs. What can I bear for the narrative? The auction? The fondled hips of an alphabet switch partners inside a score I won't follow. My dance card filled before my birth. Will I scale my story? In the middle of a city I am between years of ruin. My eyes walk the street below while my shadow dangles between the Hotel of Impossible and the Hotel of Mocking Words. There is my tongue near the curb where a woman's shadow is feeding a songbird. There are the curling night scrolls of my hair. The feathers I once wore at my ears pause midair as if listening. A tomcat swaggers past a storefront holding a piece of my cheek in its mouth. It's early & the workmen whistle, coaxing sunlight from their pitches of tar. The men look up at the world & hold the sky by its own throat. They beg the dawn to leap over night's skull. *Dream me a woman*, they say to Memory. Above, the other woman who is History never kneels in the sightless canals of pleasure. She will never eat bribes or pay twice for her mistakes or affairs. The hearts she buries are anonymous & she gathers them against their will. This woman can have any life she wants. Any defeat. *Do you want my life*, I say. My voice is a gold streetlamp corroded by ghost moths. The victory is always the same. Across the room I watch the moonlight flicker in her unlit breasts. *Beg me to take your life away. Beg for me like a man*, she says. The height of desire as it falls to day.

(Mexico City, 2010)

ANNA MEISTER

POEM FOR WHAT HAPPENED  
AT THE FIRST HOUSE

All my blond years were spent  
with Cabby            beautiful collie  
named after my favorite vegetable  
who one morning    before the heat hit  
crossed the road       toward  
the farm full of goats that chewed  
my hair            like it was straw  
a station wagon knocked her  
& didn't even stop       Cabby  
beautiful as a vegetable    buried  
in the far back       we dug  
a hole    behind bushes of wild prairie  
rose    our state flower    those  
thin petals    blushing    & open  
yellow eyes       Dad carried her  
body    like a duffle full of books

ANNA MEISTER

Downsizing

Soon, the house packed up  
& everyone will share  
all the new edges of broken  
& tossed & sold. She asks  
Do you want the wedding china?  
over the phone, soft, & I say  
No & in the background hear it  
shatter.

Picture words before *sale*  
like *quick*.

AMY CARLBERG

[I shall die like a turkey, fat, slow,  
in an Ontario field,]

*"I shall die like a cloud, beautiful, white, full of nothingness."*

— Charles Wright, from "Ars Poetica II," in *Appalachia* (FSG, 1998)

I shall die like a turkey, fat, slow, in an Ontario field,  
without a mate. My eyes shall be black and my neck  
shall hang like a loose red curtain. I shall be hunted  
stupidly. I shall be plucked and stuffed  
with spices, chunks of bread. I shall be brined for three days.  
I shall lay in the oven for six hours, I shall be basted,  
I shall be done. I shall be carved into parts chosen  
as favourites. I shall be shared.

I shall die like laundry, undone, dirty, a nuisance.  
I shall die in a pile. I shall die overflowing  
a white plastic basket. I shall sediment and crust  
together, I shall meld. I shall smell.  
I shall be forgotten.

I shall die like a breath. I shall exit  
without much notice. I shall content,  
comfort, I shall nourish the trees.

AMY CARLBERG

[The earth has an upset stomach.]

The earth has an upset stomach.  
She batters and bashes our  
windows, shakes the door  
we use for smoking.  
We leech her veins for  
precious oils, bleach  
her skin for nothing.  
Run tests. Shove blunt  
needles into her arms.  
Mean her no harm.  
Really try to recycle.  
Bite the bullet as winters  
get colder, more irregular.  
Seep into Canada  
like a friendship.  
Mutate into animals  
that can survive underground.  
Grind our hips to music.  
Brush our teeth with palm fronds.  
Synch our lips to off-rhythm  
tempos, learn to love the silence  
computer hum provides.  
When we finally learn how  
to hide from the storms  
that lash our windows,  
turn our best blood  
to stone and summon us  
ever inside, to our  
inner ear, we will forget  
darkness was ever hurtful,  
love ever deceit, a hum  
ever anything but distraction.  
I wrote this poem the day  
the rain tore through the ceiling.

ANDREW NICHOLLS

## SLOW TIME

I was fishing with Reb Milch over a hole in the ice the weekend they announced it. Time was dragging for me anyway, but without the whole dire-implications-for-the-planet aspect. Isobel had moved out the previous March for reasons I kept staring into the jagged black fish hole trying to comprehend. We were on friendly terms by phone and email. I sent her a birthday present in November at her parents' house, a shower curtain with smiling caterpillars and butterflies (*hint hint, I can change*). But I didn't know what to do with myself, how to feel inside my skin. We'd had tensions, but I never thought we were at a breaking point. She'd talked in bed one night about how many eggs she had left, she figured around two hundred and four, and I'd made the mistake of checking her math instead of listening to what she was really saying.

I write science fiction because I want to see what life would be like if you could fix things. Or if you could go back and not make the mistakes in the first place.

Coming home, Reb turned on the truck radio and we heard a jokey story like they sometimes run to liven up the news. They're usually about a farmer robbing a bank with a pig under his arm, or someone making pillows out of their kids' hair – something to make you shake your head and feel your own craziness maybe isn't fatal.

"If you're driving right now," the radio woman said, "your dashboard clock might be off, but not because of the common reasons you'd expect, like owner neglect or drink spills!"

Reb's digital pickup clock said 10:49. It felt like mid-afternoon. We'd gotten out before daylight to hit the first ferry and find some place where the water needed drilling. The radio woman said scientists in New York and California had noticed plane schedules in other parts of the country were sliding out of whack. Later they'd show a split-screen on TV of clocks in major cities and when they zoomed on the second hands, you could see some were dawdling.

A week later, my sister announced she and our dad were building a bomb shelter at the garage. Evie is a large and difficult woman. I told her there was no bomb. "A *time shelter* then," Evie said, rolling her eyes, "with its own power and food and magazines."

"Underground?" I asked.

"No," she said. "We're gonna dig a hole in the ceiling and I'll throw him up."



“How are you going to make that big a hole underground?” I asked. The island’s mostly rock. They didn’t have to, Evie said, they were converting Pit # 4, the long deep trough the mechanics stood in.

Before buying the garage, our father, the late-starter, was in the Navy, where he said there was too much running around for his liking. As soon as Evie was a (stout, opinionated) teenager he’d pretty much let her run his life, acquiescing in all her plans about how he should invest Mom’s life insurance money, redecorate the house, fix or not fix his teeth. It was hard to remember that Dad had once been young and dynamic, that he’d surveyed our half-a-town on the island for what business he’d best fit, and decided: garage. It didn’t even seem like a decision anymore. It felt like one more dead fact that lives are built on like lighthouses.

They’d both already read all the magazines they were going to take – my sister passed hers to Dad, indicating to him what to read with red stickies – so I couldn’t imagine how they’d be entertained in the timeless winter ahead. You just leave us to worry about that, Evie said, with a look that said, Wait a month, you’ll be begging. They dropped four street-repair plates stolen from who knows where over the pit, and welded a metal hatch near the steps. Evie got a rack of Peeps candy that from across the room looked like a blow-up photo of corn on the cob.

What about showers? I asked. Pussy, she said.

December was all confusion. GPS started sending people looking for holiday parties into storefront Christmas displays and abandoned drive-ins. Commercial airplanes were landing in places like Dearborn. Talk shows did jokes, but nothing helpful followed the jokes. What it meant, what we should do. My dad was confused. “This mean we set our clocks forward or back?” He blinked at me from his couch with the shortwave on his chest, as if he’d weathered layoffs and wars and would bob atop this latest wave like a fishing float and see where he fetched up. “Do we get more sleep or less?”

My first inclination was to call Isobel at her mom’s and see if she was okay. Ten months since I’d seen her. Ten eggs.

~~The ship’s tritium renormalizer was still  
hammering in its futile cycles, trying to  
I prepared for the incoming barrage of deadly  
quantum~~

The battle

Then, three groups of university experimenters flukily discovered their clocks were in synch with the international ones. Time is measured by a

cesium atom in Switzerland (the time-deniers went nuts, these being foreign atoms). After 9,192,631,770 vibrations of this atom, a second has passed. This is a degree of accuracy that needs adjustment by only a second every 138 million years. So, basically, no adjustment.

The only thing the correct-clock people could think of that they'd done differently from the wacky-GPS parts of the country was actively think about the problem. They put an atomic clock in a station wagon and drove it to a remote part of the country. Sure enough, the cesiums inside it started dragging their tiny asses. More experiments confirmed it: time had become dependent on people actively thinking about it. An article in, ironically, *Time Magazine* said:

Scientists have long known that, at the quantum level, particles change as we observe them. Now, researchers say, time itself is doing the same.

We conscious beings had to start pushing time along, they said, to keep that big old hoop rolling, or it'd slow down and rattle to a stop like a dime on a diner counter.

And here I am writing a novel about a battle for mining rights on an asteroid.

In his rec room, Reb Milch talked about leaving town before "they" closed the gates. I asked him what did he mean, closing gates? Who were "they"? I'd never thought of him as politically astute. He twirled the forward line of his foosball hockey players and whacked the little black plastic puck off the table. "You're the sci-fi writer," he said. "Figure it out." He left the next Saturday. I tried to apply myself to the question, but couldn't get the perspective. Large-scale systems elude me. Current misery, small irritations that gain clarity in low-angle twilight, I can see just fine.

They asked us to think about the passage of time each day to keep it moving. There was a website where you could play a game about watching a duck paddle in a pond (or, for adults, hot male + female bartenders circle a bar serving drinks) and click when you saw them pass Go. This was how we could help.

The papers printed the scientists' calculations. Nobody I knew claimed to understand it except for Frank Hellmut from high school, who'd also claimed since he was twenty that he was going to move to Indonesia and change his name to Batman.

Of course some towns told the government to go screw, like they had in 1883 when Washington imposed Standard Time. Back then the country had over a hundred wildcat time zones. Trains on their own made-up schedules were crashing head-on. Nobody really knew

what time it was anywhere until someone drew those long vertical stripes and forced everyone into chronological line. Then Daylight Savings: another kettle of fish, disputed wherever people were isolated and gun-proud. Not hard to imagine how those places felt about us making yet another change to bring us into synch with a piece of vibrating chlorine in France, as Evie put it. Cesium in Switzerland, I told her. *Tomato, to-MAH-to*, she said, toting a sack of Red Vines to the time shelter.

I punched-in at Ace Hardware and worked in the evenings on my novel trilogy. I watched the cartoon duck go around the pond and wondered if any real duck in the winter ever got stuck under the ice. You'd have to move pretty slowly to get caught like that, I thought. You'd have to be one stupid duck.

There was a live national call-in for questions and to allay panic. I went to Herb's Bar with Evie to watch it on the satellite. Answering our questions were a slightly frazzled physicist named Chrissie in a long black dress that I kept expecting to see the price tag on, and an Indian man in his thirties, the pronounceable version of whose name was Dr. Jamber. The picture occasionally turned into little frozen lozenges.

*What if I personally work on moving time along, but my family won't do it because they don't believe in it?*

Dr. Jamber said his best guess was, if through the efforts of everyone in their region they were spared time-dilation, the caller's scoff-science family would reap the rewards along with the hard workers, even though they were, he said, hanging on the back of the wagon and not helping to push.

*I've tried moving time along, but everyone at work says it looks like I'm taking a shit.*

Next caller, said Chrissie. I'd skipped dinner and was getting drunk. I want my wife back, I told the TV. Shut up, Evie said, this is important. I said I didn't care what was important. Important is relative, I said. I reached for the nut bowl and she put her hand over it. Get your own, she said, or I'll break your fingers, I seriously will.

A man who sounded like a dustbowl photograph asked, *So let me get this straight. If your community participates in this time-pushing, and one afternoon you travel west...*

West, all right, go on, Chrissie said. She had plump arms inside her TV-appearance dress; she looked like a woman waiting outside a fitting room who was ready to give up and go shop somewhere else.

*... you're telling me if you come to a town that isn't time-pushing, in that place it'll be earlier? – Chrissie was nodding – so if you look at the setting sun as you go west, it'll be coming towards you, headed east?*

Chrissie pretended her thumbs were the town and the sun and tried to visualize the question. I did the same until Evie slapped my hands. "Difficult to imagine," said short, neat Dr. Jamber, "but quantum physics also is hard to picture, correct?" He smiled and flourished his arms. "Yet it is the truthful description of what occurs."

Evie made a note on a pad: BOIL WATER, PUT IN JUGS.

*If I bought a three-hour candle in Missoula and took it to New York, how long would it burn?*

No matter where you burn it, Chrissie said, it will feel like three hours. But it won't be, Dr. Jamber said excitedly. Eventually, he said, the slow-time communities' candles as seen by the rest of the country would never go out. The people would walk like survivors wading away from their homes in floods. Darts players in bars would stand facing red and black circles of cork, hair pumping on their foreheads, tongues out in concentration, one arm up and one foot askance, forever.

*I can't install it, the First Mate told me, sobbing. They gave us the wrong dynamic capacitor, or else I've forgotten... His head fell on his arm. I just don't know.*

~~I swiftly calculated the~~  
I just stood there.

- ☺ When you see a flower bud: think what it will look like in the spring when it has bloomed!
- ☺ Those living near the Grand Canyon: dwell on the millennia it took for the river to carve it through rock!
- ☺ When talking to the elderly, ask them what is the longest-ago thing they can remember!

These were ways the authorities suggested we could help. Meanwhile, college students in fast cities were asking for an extra minute on exams. Wristwatches of incoming and outgoing passengers were checked and logged at airports.

Then they put up the timeblocks, a wavy string looping around the country, separating Regular Time from Slow Time.

Me, I tend to think of the moment, maybe a little bit about tomorrow if the toothpaste is low. I didn't start writing science fiction until I'd been at Ace Hardware six years. I plan haphazardly.

I have no spirit for this. I miss Issy.

Small things with their own obstinate time-particularity became tauntingly interesting. Those spinning rims on car wheels. Roadside deer in their patchy winter coats. My *2-Hour-Off* coffee maker. When I waited for my \$40 to slide out of the ATM's shuddering armpit,

I wondered how long it was really taking. An hour? A year?

After a month, the pages of the mainland newspapers began to smear like they'd been run through the press too fast. Once, we got tomorrow's paper by mistake, but everything about the islands was blurred or missing. Then they stopped coming. Ferry service went to once a day, then stopped. Internet pages loaded fast but froze. When Evie looked at me, toting her whatever towards the garage, she was all one-raised-eyebrow and lowered mouth. Catch up, she seemed to be saying. *Yoo hoo back there.*

When I was little, in fourth grade, I got sick on the Thursday and Friday we took long division. On Monday the other kids' faces at recess all looked like they knew division whereas I was all, *what?* My parents wouldn't ask for extra help. They believed it'd draw attention to my deficit. Mom and Dad had a running contest over who was tougher, more independent. My sister won.

\*

Even before she left, Isobel's life moved faster than mine. She had her paintings, interest groups, music, doll collection, correspondence. It was hard to stay current on the island, but she managed. She always praised my writing, but at significant times like New Year's I'd look at how much she'd done in the last twelve months versus how I was still hanging with Reb Milch, still editing the *Vorlizon Mining Trilogy*, stocking the same shelves.

On Isobel's birthday at midnight I went into our square back yard. The moon hung in the sky over the Sound the same way it had the night before and the year before that, the same shiny circle stared at by dinosaurs and cavemen and by Isobel, who'd already been twenty-nine for three hours. After breakfast I called her in Brooklyn at her parents' house. My unused cell phone minutes had been piling up. She fondly said, Oh it's you. I said happy birthday. Her voice was weird, speedy. She said I'd missed it, it was a week ago. Move back here, I told her, you'll live longer. Weak joke. It feels the same speed here as there, she said. It's not, I told her. You're feeling an illusion. Isobel said, How do you know you're not the one with the illusions? Isobel asks questions with no answers. Like, why aren't I happier?

*Kol-Thor, the captain said, his shoulders heavy, I don't know what I've been doing in this battle. I'm distracted by the absence of the lovely Luryita. I need you to relieve me.*

I'll try, I said. I really will. But what I'm doing now, what you see? Even this is not easy for me. What if this is all I can do?

Yesterday I went to the Post Office to mail an agent query. “One hundred and third time’s the charm,” Evie said with a mean laugh. She and Dad are settled in with a refrigerator and a 3,000-watt propane generator. The AC power from the mainland is unreliable; the 60hz started coming in at 65hz, then 70. Motors speed up, light bulbs fritz out. Evie took a blacklight poster of Jimi Hendrix down with her, and some carpet, her CDs and a fondue set.

I went out back today after work, after it was done with raining.

I looked at our frozen pond under the porch light and wondered if there were tadpoles under there, or tadpole eggs. Thousands of eggs; all they’ll need, if it ever thaws. I thought, who’ll want my stories now? Other writers in faster parts of the world have had my ideas, written them down, got them published. They’ve won awards and here I still am. Isobel could have gotten remarried and had kids this morning while I was putting the shampoo back on the wire rack. Grown old and dressed grandkids for school as I stared at contest details over my toast.

The stars overhead move faster, comets pass before you can blink. Eventually I’ll stop doing anything. I’ll be still and quiet, thinking my dark igneous thoughts.

I dream of her coming back just to visit. Looking older, but smarter, sure of herself. I’m proud of her. I was always attracted to her confidence. I identify her at the ferry ramp even though she’s in a coat I’ve never seen and looking the other way. I know it’s her by the horseshoe of summer light around her hair. Even facing away, it feels like her in a way I can’t describe. All the times I watched her leave to get groceries or go to work I never even thought of it as the back of her head. Is that crazy? It was just her, looking a different direction, looking out, away from me.

LARRY NARRON

## SURVEILLANCE

Behind me the crows  
keep recording my movements  
like surveillance cameras  
in empty parking lots at night.  
Crows with eyes like chipped marbles  
zig-zag behind me with ease,  
landing & taking off  
from the phone lines as I  
hurry through the muddy trench  
that substitutes for a sidewalk  
next to the highway that snakes  
over the hills in the morning sun.

They fly away when I enter  
the convenience store's buzzing light  
where the clerk with the scar that makes  
a bald spot through his eyebrow  
must be punching out soon.  
All night he's been handing  
scratchers & bags of malt liquor  
to the insomniacs who wander  
up & down this road where the used  
car lots go on for so long I wonder  
if they could be seen from space.

When he hands me my change  
I ask him if he knows  
anything about these crows.  
He says there must be a nest nearby.  
You have to keep your eye on them, he says.  
If you turn your head then they'll swoop.  
You have to stare them down.

I can feel his eyes  
digging through the hair  
on the back of my head as I leave.

GREG SOLANO

LIGHT IN THE MOUNTAINS

I had a word for  
the woman who raised me  
but I lost it she is  
shaped like a vase and  
her name translates to light

in the mountains my grandfather  
calls her a coward  
the word for coward is cobarde  
he says the years pardon  
no one and Luzila Montes

least of all it is colder  
than it has ever been  
in Miami she turns the heater  
on and she turns it off  
over and over again

it makes her nose bleed  
at night when she's asleep  
she is the groundskeeper  
at a catholic retreat site  
outside town they have horses

when I fly home  
to see her she likes to  
walk me into the gardens  
and speak in a whisper beneath  
the statues of saints

in the morning she says  
the whole place smells like syrup  
or like the suggestion of  
syrup and she says it  
reminds her of making me waffles

in her bedroom I see  
that all her Guadelupe candles  
have burned down when



she dies I wonder where  
they will find the appropriately

coffin-like vase to lay  
her into the earth  
in a dream I smash it with my teeth  
everything I see I unsee  
all of her perfume bottles

and the candles in the  
bathroom the birds in their  
cages the electric fans all  
unplugged in a stack  
by the shuttered windows

GREG SOLANO

## ONE HAND WASHES THE OTHER

One hand washes the other,  
the two wash the face,  
my grandfather used to say.  
He was tall. He had long  
arms that would reach down  
into the bottoms of truck engines  
and come up black with grime.  
In a photograph in my mother's  
kitchen I'm a kid holding a shovel,  
standing on the trunk of a felled tree.  
Smiling, my grandfather kneels in front  
blackened arms at his sides. He was  
going to cut it down but we dug it up  
instead, so I could help, and listen,  
see the roots. As he got older, and his  
skin thinned with age, I'd watch  
in the evenings as he'd rub aloe and honey  
into his wrists and his arms. Because  
of his medication he was almost  
always bleeding. The day he died  
he held my hand and said "I'm dying."  
"I know," I said. And then, a moment later,  
"I love you."

Barthes says the language of love  
is always borrowed, so that in love  
we can never be sure of what is being said.  
What I mean and then a web of smoke.  
In the morning, with him dead, very little  
is different. Life goes galloping away from us,  
he used to say. In the Everglades, in the summer,  
we'd reach out our arms in the sun,  
sawgrass up to our waists, and in the stillness  
mosquitoes covered our arms like black  
vibrating sleeves. When it's like that,  
and you swat at them, they bite. But if you run  
your hand slowly down the length of your arm,  
starting at the shoulder, they fly off. Cleaning  
out the shed, my cousin wheels out the

*Caja China*, a wooden roasting box  
like a small coffin that burns on the inside. My  
grandfather standing over a gutted pig  
on Christmas Eve, with a hammer  
and a pick to shatter the spine.  
It's not the way his father did it,  
but it's how he taught us. That final night  
in the hospital, I showed him a photograph  
of himself, taken before I was born, and asked  
"Who's that abuelo? Who's this here?"  
But he'd gone blind and just said my name,  
in Spanish. Everything sounds beautiful  
in Spanish. It's true. What if words  
just divide us from experience, like a thin layer of  
oil over a bowl of water, so that all I have  
is the shape of the thing I want  
but I can't contain it. My mother feeding her father,  
then washing his face with a piece of cloth.

GREG SOLANO

brother

brother mad & wild,  
brother sleeping,  
brother drinking & brother waiting  
deep brother singing  
& brother smashing,  
brother of sticks, gnarled wood  
that snaps in strong brother hands,  
smoking, sniffing brother  
kissing brother, on the heart brother,  
and not wanting brother,  
no more brother,  
no more waking up before dawn  
to walk a black dog through dew & fog,  
no more nosebleeds in the pews,  
no more bearing it away,  
no more strangers in the house,  
no moon without the craters of your restlessness,  
no song, not a mosquito's drop of your  
blood brother, not a kiss, only the slow  
dance towards home.

KALLIE FALANDAYS

Come closer, come wider,  
come open my windows.

Come closer, come wider, come open my windows.  
I came into your room and I unlocked your cage.  
I tried to feed you winged things:

one angel story about trying to fly but forgetting how to open;  
one ghost story, the one in which I remembered you writhing;  
one tiny wing clipped from the underside of a fairy-thing;  
one looming fan,  
one wailing hand.

I tried to remind you from where you came.  
*Tell me the opposite of ceiling light.*  
*The opposite of tapestry.*  
*The opposite of opera.*

I tried to give you memory holds:  
*Broken night, dirt, a finger's whisper.*

I tried to remind you of the before-morning-time:  
*the opposite of infinity, the opposite of no, the opposite of no,*  
*the backwards hand-pull of moonlight.* I tried  
to pull you out of your blankets:  
*Your face was dripping in my head all morning.*

KALLIE FALANDAYS

**She thinks of places to hide.**

She thinks of places to hide. Rips up the carpet and slits herself inside. The ground pulses under her back. She moves quietly around the kitchen thinking of watching someone watch her. Goes to sleep in the dark, wishing for it like a blanket. Pretends she didn't think of him. She wants to go back. To go back back. She unscrews all of the cabinets and hides the bolts in her bedroom. Paints every mirror black and more than that, all the windows. Tries to hide everything inside of itself, so it won't see her leaving.



RACHEL MULDER

**Kissers**

2014



RACHEL MULDER

Pica

2014

THE BOILER 64



JULY WESTHALE

ONE IN A LINE OF MANY

*For Eloise Klein Healy*

What is it, anyway, that fills you  
if not matter in a void? I never wanted  
to be one of those lesbian poets  
who writes about their mothers—*So don't*  
she says, and the line goes dead.  
What is the mole hill without the mole,  
a kitchen table without placemats, Sunday  
without the phone? This is a time when most  
are making long-distance calls if they have to  
and driving over for dinner if they don't.  
Add an 's', and it smothers, is what I'm telling myself.  
That reliable absence is a way to know  
you come from everything. This way,  
you make the map and the legend.

Today people, grown and not, are walking in stride  
with bodies who bore them, who bear them still,  
who bear them empty, who say they are the promise  
of everything, the gift of wanting, who let the phone ring  
once before answering, *I'm here*.

GINA WILLIAMS

## SO, HERE WE ARE

I lift my bicycle onto my shoulder and carry it up the wooden steps to my grandmother's porch. I've traveled on the train from Portland and ridden the ten miles from the station to her house in a drenching rainstorm. It's nearly dark. My shoes are literally filled with water. I can see my grandmother and her Fijian caregiver, Lafiti, in the kitchen. My grandmother is looking through a phone book and appears upset. It's like viewing a silent film from within a film. The women don't see me. I watch them for several long minutes. I'm shivering. I can't bring myself to knock, don't know why. Maybe it's just easier to remain behind glass, peering in. Water is running from my bike helmet onto my neck. Finally, I tap on the sliding glass door, and they both look up at once. Lafiti shuffles over to let me in.

My grandmother squeezes me into a tight hug, admonishing me about being out in the weather, then turns back to the phone book.

"I'm trying to remember the name of that pizza place," she says.

Lafiti shrugs her shoulders.

"You don't like pizza, Grandma."

"No, I don't. Lafiti will make us some chicken."

The next morning, I awaken in my mother's childhood bedroom. My grandmother has lived in this house since she and my grandfather built it themselves in the 1940s. It was farmland back then, but companies like Microsoft have transformed the area into a wealthy suburb. The small house is now surrounded by million-dollar estates. It's conspicuously small and tucked away between the bloated McMansions. Yet the familiarity is comforting to me. It's the last physical place with ties to my childhood. I know every cupboard, nook, smell. I know that the hot water tap is backward on the old tub, where my mother gave me my first baths. I know when the light will shift, where the crumpling old wishing well is hidden behind the madrone tree, that the shrub bursting with delicate pink blooms near the sagging wooden fence is quince, my grandmother's wedding flowers. Because of Lafiti, my grandmother can stay here at home, in this familiar place, even as her mind slips away. But what will happen to Lafiti when she needs care someday? Where and what is home, to her?

Skilled in-home help costs about twenty dollars per hour. The caregivers themselves only make around ten dollars per hour on average. Immigrants like Lafiti constitute nearly 30 percent of in-home caregivers in the United States. One in five are undocumented.

Lafiti has already made coffee and started some laundry when I go upstairs. I take a walk along the road where my great-grandmother lived during a time when families didn't venture far from one another. My grandmother will not be awake for hours.

Later, the three of us sit in the living room, reaching for meaningful conversation. A small fishing boat parts the pewter-colored water of Lake Washington in the distance, and I miss my grandfather. His family came from Germany one generation before. We have old reel movies of him as a teenager visiting relatives in what would become East Berlin, surrounded by a crowd waving Nazi flags.

Lafiti tells stories with her hands, but there is a delay between the words and the signs. Right now, her hands are in the air, telling the story of a jet skidding silently across a cloudless, blue sky over the Pacific. "And so they turned the plane around over Hawaii, just turned it right around and sent them back," she said, as her hands rose up in the way of wings. "My daughter and her family were on their way here from Fiji, the five of them. Guess what day it was?"

Lafiti speaks slowly, her heavy Fijian accent giving the words a soft, rolling rhythm. She has a broad face, large hands, and a thick mahogany afro. She is calm and sweet, even when my eighty-nine-year-old grandmother, who suffers from severe dementia, asks her the same questions over and over again. Nothing riles her as far as I can tell. She is wearing a cotton uniform that looks like it belongs on a pediatric nurse—light blue with little animals printed on it. Grandma keeps touching the fabric on the sleeve and repeating, "I love your shirt. It's so pretty. Is it comfortable, too? I love your shirt. It's so pretty. It goes well with your hair."

"It was September eleventh," Lafiti went on. "They didn't even let them land. They just turned that plane around." My breath is caught in my lungs in the silent moment as Lafiti's hands glide through space, arcing, and turning back. "Can you believe that luck? A week later, they tried again, but the rules had changed." She shakes her head, sadly. This story she is telling me is the answer to my question of where her grandchildren's parents are. She is explaining how she has ended up raising the four of them alone. I am sitting on the floor and have a *National Geographic* magazine spread open on the carpet. My grandmother is reading the *Seattle Times* in her favorite blue chair in a yellow satin-quilted robe, her thin gray hair flattened in the back from a nap, not listening to Lafiti's story at all.

"They made it to the US, but September eleventh changed the immigration rules. My daughter got into the US on her husband's documents, but she wasn't really legal. A few years later, after their fourth baby was born here, she wanted to go back to Fiji for an important wedding. I begged her not to go. What if something goes

wrong? She didn't listen. 'Oh, Mama,' she said. 'You worry too much. Don't worry.' That was in 2007. I haven't seen her since. She won't let me send the children to her. She wants them to grow up in America."

"So, here I am, here we are. We get along OK. The oldest granddaughter is seventeen now. She helps while I am at work. Now my daughter is trying to get back in through Canada. I just pray to Jesus, every day." Lafiti's hands fly into the air again and hang there after the words end, fluttering, a prayer to Jesus.

The gold letters on the big, worn bible Lafiti keeps on the coffee table are shining in the morning light. The words spell out NAI VOLA TABU. I assume it says "The Holy Bible" in Fijian but have no idea and don't ask. She said she's been in the US since 1995 and has worked as a caregiver the entire time. "This is the nicest house I've ever worked in," she tells me. "This is such a lovely place."

"It's not about the eyes," Grandma says, suddenly. "People say that, but it's not true." She turns the newspaper around and points to a photograph of an accused terrorist on the front page. "It's the mouth. You can tell by the mouth whether someone is a bad or not. My mother taught me that. Look at the way his lips turn down. He's guilty."

"When are you leaving? Going home tonight, Lafiti?" Grandma asks. "No, Margie, tomorrow. I go home tomorrow."

I look at Lafiti and shrug my shoulders. She smiles. I pick up the *National Geographic* and show Grandma a photograph of an old woman in a story about secrets of the world's oldest people. "Check it out, Grandma. This lady is 105 years old." Granny hangs her head. "Nobody should *ever* live that long," she says. "What a shame. Such a shame."

The old woman in the magazine doesn't look displeased about it. She's wearing a floppy orange hat and bright red lipstick. Her eyes are shining. Her lips are turned up.

"When are you leaving? Going home tonight?" Grandma asks Lafiti again. "No, Margie, no," Lafiti says, calmly. "I am here four days, then three days off. I go home to my grandchildren. Then I come back."

"Oh, I didn't know that," Grandma says. "Nobody told me. Nobody tells me anything."

"Did you fall? Are you hurt?" she asks Lafiti next, out of the blue and without context, like usual. "No, Margie, *you* fell. You hurt your head. You fell down the stairs, remember? You hurt your head and your leg." My grandmother touches the place on the back of her head where she had eight stitches after falling backward off the stairs while trying to catch her cat.

Grandma shakes her head, shuts her eyes. "I did? I fell?" Then she clenches her small fist, as tiny and bony as a pigeon talon, and hits herself in the forehead. "Sawdust! There's nothing but sawdust and

straw in here now.” Then she turns to me. “Tell her. Tell Lafiti I haven’t always been this way. Tell her I haven’t always been so stupid.”

After dinner, we play rummy. The way Lafiti is shuffling the cards, casually spreading them up, pulling them in, allowing them to collapse, spreading them back out again in a vertical column above the glass dining room table, I’m convinced she’s done this before, professionally. The left corner of her mouth pulls up into a smirk when I say, “Now *that* is how a pro shuffles cards,” but she doesn’t say anything, just keeps shuffling, then deals, just like a dealer.

My grandmother has forgotten again which card is wild. We’re just beginning the seventh hand of our second game. She slaps a card down onto the discard pile. Her wedding band slides around on her thin ring finger as she draws her hand back up, slowly, to her face. She taps and rolls her fingertips across her forehead, contemplating the next move. Her deeply-creased face looks tired, but her eyes are flashing.

“Sevens are wild, Grandma,” I tell her, reaching for the card so she can put it back into her hand. She smacks herself on the forehead with her palm. “No!” she says. “My fault, that was my fault. It’s too late. I took my hand off.”

Lafiti doesn’t miss a beat. “Thank you, Margie,” she says, her lips opening into a wide grin. “I needed that.” She quickly organizes her hand, then lays her cards out onto the table in two piles and discards, chuckling, picking cashews from her teeth with her tongue.

“You little rat!” Grandma shouts. “You *didn’t* just do that.”

Lafiti laughs louder, jots down the scores, then gathers up the cards to hand to me for my shuffle. “Sorry, lady,” she tells Grandma. “You remember next time. Next time, eights are wild. Don’t forget.”

“You think because you’re a kid you can take advantage of an old lady?” Grandma teases. Lafiti tosses another handful of nuts from her pocket into her mouth. She’s eaten almost an entire can of cashews in the last half hour.

“Oh, lady, I am not a kid,” Lafiti says as I shuffle the cards like a first-grader, bending them sideways, forcing the edges together. “I am seventy-two.”

“What! You are not, no way,” I say, while Grandma cuts the deck.

“It’s true,” she says. “I am an old woman, no kid, no kidding, ha.”

“You can’t be any older than sixty,” I tell her, and mean it. And then this wave of grief hits me. Suddenly, I want to give Lafiti this house and everything in it. I dig my toes into the carpet like that might keep me from crying.

It’s getting late and these old women are wearing me out. After the last hand, I beg forgiveness and excuse myself from the table, kiss

my grandmother goodnight.

"What do you say, Margie?" I hear Lafiti saying as I head downstairs. "One more game?"

"Okay. You shuffle."

The next morning, Lafiti is drying the dishes. She's wearing a pink cotton outfit now with birds and clouds and faded rainbows printed on it. She dries the dishes with fluid, circular motions, the same way she shuffles cards and tells stories about airplanes stopped in the sky.

Her roller suitcase is standing upright by the patio door. She sits down at a small table in the kitchen and picks up her phone. The bible is there, next to a miniature television set. "I have to text the grandkids," she says, "and tell them I'll be picking them up from church today."

When she's done, I hand her a cup of coffee. "I'm sorry about your daughter's papers and all the problems. I hope the government keeps making progress on immigration reform. I hope something changes soon, so she can come back."

Lafiti looks out the window for a moment, pushes her lips into the steam, sips loudly. "In Fiji, if you see someone walking down the street outside your house, you always say to them, 'Come inside! Take a rest. Have some tea.' Here, nobody trusts, and nobody can be trusted."

"Yeah, well, it depends, I guess, doesn't it? On the community, the city, the neighborhood."

"Yes, but not really. I'm talking generally about the country, not individuals, but the place. And it's not really sad," Lafiti says, "just a different culture. You have to understand the culture. Do you know the best advice I ever got about living in America? When I first come here, a lady I worked for said to me, 'Lafiti, Americans want to be the *most* important thing. That's why you have to act stupid.' And you know what? That lady was right! When I go to the bank, to the office, to the store, any place where I need something, now, I act stupid. I say, 'I don't understand' or 'I don't get it' or 'please help, I don't know what you mean,' and magic! Americans want to be *here*." She raises her hands and holds them high above her head. "They don't want anyone else to be more important than them." Lafiti says "them" like I'm not part of this, like I've made my way here from somewhere else, too. "It's okay. In Fiji, the government is corrupt, no good. This is a better life. It is better to be stupid in America than smart in Fiji."

"Tell them," I can hear my grandmother repeating, her mind rolling around like marbles lost in the couch cushions, drifting like straw spilling out. "Tell them I haven't always been this way. Tell them I haven't always been so stupid."

Nannies, housekeepers, caregivers. More than two million people do this type of work in the United States. I worked as a caregiver

for one of my aunts when she was dying from cancer. I was in college at the time. The women I traded shifts with were in the business for life. This occupation is often referred to in the media as “the invisible workforce.” I didn’t ask Lafiti about her own immigration status. Maybe I will someday. She’s been with my grandmother for a year now, but Grandma just turned ninety and is frailer every time I see her. I wonder where Lafiti will go next as she toils her way into her own old age, what the homes will be like, how the families will treat her.

Grandma is asleep and snoring softly. I stroke her forehead to say goodbye but don’t want to wake her. I have a train to catch. I have to go back home. I can’t take her with me. I can’t give Lafiti this house. Lafiti is getting ready to change shifts with the next caregiver, so she can go home, too. So she can pick her grandkids up from church.

I write my grandmother a note and hug Lafiti. She hands me a plastic bag filled with big, wet chunks of watermelon. “For your trip,” she says. “I just cut it up. There is plenty, and your grandma prefers the strawberries.”

In downtown Seattle, I pass through the Chinatown Gate. It’s drizzling, and the sky is the color of cast iron. Across the street, two Buddhist monks are walking slowly in lock-step, wearing identical robes and matching red raincoats. On the other side of the gate, a tiny Chinese grandmother, gripping the hand of a squirming toddler, smiles at me as I start to cross the street to the train station. “God bless you, lady!” she shouts.

“Thank you, bless you,” I tell her, waving at her grandson, passing her wish of good grace silently along in my mind to my grandmother and Lafiti.

The train pulls out, into the rain, heading south to Portland. I push headphones into my ears and turn toward the window, put my music on shuffle. The train picks up speed outside the city. The suburbs give way to trees and pastures, ponds, rolling hills, and old timber towns, as we roll along on ancient tracks laid down and pounded in, mostly by Asian immigrants. I like this backward view of the world, the ugly backside of things that you can only see from the vantage point of a train. We chug past crumbling back porches and trash-filled ravines and skinny dogs on chains. As we pass through one small town, a young girl carrying a trombone case sees the train and motions for the conductor to whistle. She is waving and yelling, but her voice is muted by glass and steel. Her blond hair is flying around her face. I wave back with my fingertips, even though I know she can only see shapes through the tinted windows.

Through my headphones, Johnny Cash is singing in time with the rolling motion of the train, singing about fire and dinosaur bones and the way people break and break and are broken here.

APOCRYPHAL BY LISA MARIE BASILE;

NOCTUARY PRESS, 2014; 90 PP

Reviewed by Janae Green

I am in my mother's leopard heels &  
we play house this way.

it hurts to speak beneath this bustier  
but if I take it off,  
it just hurts.  
so I speak forever                      using my inside voice

—From *Apocryphal* by Lisa Marie Basile

Undoubtedly, Lisa Marie Basile's collection, *Apocryphal* from *Noctuary Press*, can only be read as one who savors the crumbs of a last meal. Her poetry evokes hunger for every last vision—to gorge on every narrative snapshot with a runny chin and wagging tongue. Prior to the official release, I was grateful for the chance to e-read Basile's book in advance. Nearly ten pages in—bless me father, for I have sinned—I got greedy and waited for the print copy. Basile's collection is an example of why readers still need the print form. We need to turn the pages; there are works like *Apocryphal* that readers like me just need to exist in our hands.

*Apocryphal* discusses the body as both an ache and a crave that makes the passage between daughter and lover claustrophobic but dreamlike—and Basile does so with the sultry con of a femme fatale. We see the red-lipped roar of the female body created by the hands of man and her desire to be cradled and formed between his fingers.

The collection's often emotional and always fearless narrative recollects nature as a woman and buries her hat in the garden, "hair big with curl & eyelid lined." Often with a cigarette in hand, Basile's narrator will not spare your trust nor will she apologize for her behavior:

I would learn to devour everything,  
mollusk & man,  
become obsessively pregnant with you,



I mean:        become those woman staring,  
& abort you.

As revealed here, Basile's speaker is not only daughter and lover, but she is Mother. She tears the patriarchal order to shreds without smudging her lipstick. Her mythology is a crucial theme throughout the collection, and we forgive her feign as she continually rebuilds her story.

In *Apocryphal*, Basile generously showcases her ability to reveal humanity to itself, still raw and beating. With observations poignant and startling, “everything is born natural and then is not natural” and imagery that never disappoints, “like a pumping heart inside an egg-white envelope,” *Apocryphal* proves Basile will never be dust on a shelf, but an immovable poet, a force. Her poetry will be dog-eared and inked with a reader's love notes for years to come and then, years beyond that.

## MEZZANINES BY MATTHEW OLZAMANN;

ALICE JAMES BOOKS, 2013; 80 PP

Reviewed by Jeffrey W. Peterson

I'd previously heard of Matthew Olzamann's work through Vievee Francis, the poet he dedicates the book to, but I was only familiar with one poem. Upon completion, I realize Olzamann took me to intimate places, places between worlds where I was already comfortable.

The poems in *Mezzanines* cover an array of topics, ranging from NASA satellites to horse mouths to unreturned letters. The topics are familiar, using themes of acceptance within society and love, but Olzamann's platforms and stages are different, unexpected, and often invigorating.

"Spock as a Metaphor for the Construction of Race During My Childhood" and "Mountain Dew Commercial Disguised as a Love Poem" are among a few standout poems because of their turns. The first reminds me of Terrance Hayes and his poem "Talk", concerning a white and black friendship forever changed after a request to talk a certain way. Matthew chooses to embark this same territory with sci-fi and interstellar references that lead to a plainspoken realization. We are all at once comfortable, intrigued, and dismayed with lines such as "You knew you were like all the other kids, / until your best friend said, *No, You're not.* / And he was right."

During other poems, Matthew chooses to go for the heart in a more overt manner. "Mountain Dew Commercial Disguised as a Love Poem" uses familiar territory, but has its own flair. The poem focuses on a speaker listing the reasons their matrimony may survive. The reader is taken through scenes of sacrifice and quirks and fear, only to arrive at an essence. The lover's last sacrifice, which brings about deprivation, is an example of how resonating their commitment is. I adore the pattern of the poem, especially when harsh turns like "When the lights / are off, the curtains drawn, and an additional sheet is nailed / over the windows, you still believe someone outside / can see you" delve deeper into the lover's persona.

*Mezzanines* is a worthy read and the poetry here is refreshing and satisfying.

# CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

**K.T. Billey** completed her MFA in Poetry at Columbia University, where she was also an Undergraduate Teaching Fellow. Originally from rural Alberta, Canada, her poems have appeared in *CutBank*, *The New Orleans Review*, *Phantom Limb*, *Ghost Proposal*, *Prick of the Spindle*, and others. Translations have appeared in *Palabras Errantes* and are forthcoming in a yet-to-be-named anthology by Columbia University Press. She is an Assistant Editor for *Asymptote*, poetry curator for Lamprophonic Reading Series, and a Girls Write Now mentor. Say hello at [www.ktbilley.com](http://www.ktbilley.com).

**Beth Bretl** lives and works in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She holds a Ph.D. in creative writing from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *2 Bridges Review*, *Verse Daily*, *The Southern Review*, and *Aufgabe*.

**Lauren Camp** is the author of two volumes of poetry, most recently *The Dailiness* (Edwin E. Smith, 2013), winner of the National Federation of Press Women 2014 Poetry Book Prize and a World Literature Today “Editor’s Pick.” Her third book, *One Hundred Hungers*, was selected by David Wojahn for the Dorset Prize, and is forthcoming from Tupelo Press. Her poems have appeared in *Brilliant Corners*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Linebreak*, *Nimrod*, *J Journal*, and elsewhere. She hosts “Audio Saucepan,” a global music/poetry program on Santa Fe Public Radio. [www.laurencamp.com](http://www.laurencamp.com).

**Amy Carlberg** is an MFA student at Sarah Lawrence College where she is studying writing poetry. She's from Toronto, Canada, and has been published online in *Baldhip Magazine*, *Cactus Heart Press*, and on *The Squawk Back*. She also recently took part in the Dead Rabbits Reading Series and the Renegade Reading Series in NYC.

**Justin Carter** is a PhD student at the University of North Texas. The winner of the 2014 Sonora Review Poetry Prize, his poems can be found in *The Collagist*, *Hobart*, *The Journal*, *Ninth Letter*, & elsewhere. He can be found online at <http://justinrcarter.tumblr.com>.

**Jon Chohan** teaches in the creative writing program at Eckerd College. His first book, *Pulled from the River*, was published by Black Lawrence Press in 2012. His stories and essays have appeared in *Glimmer Train*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Epiphany*, and *Post Road*.

**Kallie Falandays** has poems in *PANK*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Salt Hill*, *deember*, and elsewhere. She runs *Tell Tell Editing* and is the managing editor of *Kenning journal*.

**Janae Green** is a writer living in the Pacific Northwest. She keeps a blog of her short prose and projects @thenaeword

**Rachel Eliza Griffiths** is a poet and visual artist. Her fourth collection of poetry, *Lighting the Shadow*, will be published by Four Way Books in 2015. Currently, Griffiths teaches creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College and lives in Brooklyn.

**Jane Huffman** is a Michigan-based poet and playwright with recent work featured or forthcoming in *Arroyo Review*, *Moon City Review*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Word Riot*, *RHINO Poetry* and other journals. She is currently studying poetry and theatre arts at Kalamazoo College.

**Alex Lemon's** most recent book is *The Wish Book*. He is the author of *Happy: A Memoir* and three other poetry collections: *Mosquito*, *Hallelujah Blackout*, and *Fancy Beasts*. An essay collection and a five book of poetry are forthcoming from Milkweed Editions. His writing has appeared in *Esquire*, *American Poetry Review*, *The Huffington Post*, *Ploughshares*, *Best American Poetry*, *Tin House*, *Kenyon Review*, *AGNI*, *New England Review*, *The Southern Review* and, among others. Among his awards are a 2005 Fellowship in Poetry from the NEA and a 2006 Minnesota Arts Board Grant. He has been a recent National Poetry Series judge, is an editor-at-large for Saturnalia Books, sits on the advisory board for *The Southern Review*, as well as the editorial board of TCU Press and is the poetry editor of *descant*. He frequently writes book reviews for the *Dallas Morning News*. He lives in Ft. Worth, Texas, teaches at TCU.

**Anna Meister** is an MFA candidate in Poetry at NYU. A Pushcart Prize nominee, her poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in publications including *Sugar House Review*, *BOAAT*, & *Bodega*. Anna is a finalist for the 2014 Button Poetry Prize. She lives & works in Brooklyn.

**Matt W. Miller's** second book of poems, *Club Icarus*, was selected by Major Jackson for the 2012 Vassar Miller Poetry Prize. His first collection, *Cameo Diner: Poems*, was published by Loom Press. He is a former Wallace Stegner Fellow in Poetry at Stanford University and has published work in *Southwest Review*, *Florida Review*, *Slate*, *Poetry Daily*, *Harvard Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Memorious*, *Third Coast*,

and other journals. He teaches at Phillips Exeter Academy where he also directs the Writers' Workshop at PEA. He lives with his family in New Hampshire.

**Rachel Mulder** is a draftsman living in Portland, Oregon. She grew up in rural Wisconsin and received her BFA in Printmaking from the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design in 2007. Constantly yearning for the *happy accident* prevalent in traditional printmaking, Mulder uses a typewriter to create large-scale works on paper while she produces smaller works embodying similarly obsessive and formulaic methods of drawing. <http://rachelmulderart.blogspot.com/>

**Larry Narron** worked as a window cleaner in Southern California before studying English literature at UC Berkeley, where he attended Joyce Carol Oates's short fiction workshop and was awarded the Rosenberg Prize in Lyric Poetry. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Whiskey Island*, *Eleven Eleven*, *The Round*, *The Sandy River Review*, and other journals. A poetry student in Pacific University's low-residency MFA program, Larry now works as an English tutor at Portland Community College in Oregon.

**Andrew Nicholls** has recent short fiction in *The Santa Monica Review*, *New World Writing*, *Black Clock*, *Literature For Life* and elsewhere. He's a longtime TV writer with over 100 series credits and 4 Emmy nominations, and was Johnny Carson's co-head writer on NBC's *Tonight Show* from 1988 to 1992.

**Erica Parrott** is a graduate of the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, and lives and works in Naples, Florida. Her work oscillates between cryptic and relatively universal, sincerely enthusiastic and darkly ironic. [www.ericaparrott.com](http://www.ericaparrott.com)

**Jeffrey W. Peterson** was a 2011 fellow in the Bucknell Seminar for Younger Poets. He earned degrees from the University of West Georgia and Sarah Lawrence College. He currently serves as poetry editor for *Madcap*, a semiannual online journal, teaches English Composition, and mentors English Education students

**Greg Solano** is a Cuban-American poet and graduate of the University of Virginia's MFA program in Creative Writing. His poems have been previously published in *PANK Magazine*, *Matter Monthly* and *Different Interest*.

**Zach VandeZande** is the author of *Apathy and Paying Rent* (Loose Teeth, 2008). His work has recently appeared in *Portland Review*, *Atlas*

*Review, decomP, Bop Dead City, Necessary Fiction, Hot Street, Crack the Spine, and Punchnel's*, and is forthcoming in *Gettysburg Review, Passages North, Thin Air, and The Adroit Journal*. He holds a PhD of fiction from the University of North Texas. He likes baking bread, hammocks, and people who bring their dogs.

**July Westhale** is a Fulbright-nominated poet, activist, and journalist. She has been awarded residencies from the Lambda Literary Foundation, Sewanee, Napa Valley, Tin House and Bread Loaf. Her poetry has most recently been published in *Adrienne, burntdistrict, Eleven Eleven, Sugar Mule, The East Bay Review, 580 Split, Quarterly West*, and *PRISM International*. She is the 2014 Tomales Bay Poetry Fellow. [www.julywesthale.com](http://www.julywesthale.com)

**Lori White** earned her MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University Los Angeles. Recent work has appeared in *The Journal, Superstition Review, Pithead Chapel, and Sequestrum*. Her story, "Gambling One Ridge Away" won first place in the 2013 *Press 53* Open Award for Flash Fiction. She teaches English composition at Los Angeles Pierce College and Oxnard College.

**Gina Williams's** poetry, photography, and essays have been featured or are forthcoming most recently in *Carve, The Sun, Fugue, Palooka, Black Box Gallery*, and *Newer York*, among others. Find her at <http://www.GinaMarieWilliams.com>.