Our Lives in Dance
Alex Dugas

We were born with bare feet kicking, eager for our first two-step without falling down.

You danced ballet with a mouth still full of baby teeth, while I was wishing my Converse could click.

We learned the quickstep on the desert playground, and scraped our knees when we ran out of pavement.

Your slippers grew heels, and my sneakers a sheen as we waltzed along the balustrade of time.

Calypso and salsa tempted our toes into sandal straps, and your metronome breath kept my feet in step.

We had our nights in transcendental tango, like foreign spices and orgasm below the moon.

When our feet grew tired, we took to the ballroom again, slower then, and walked home with arches aching.

We danced our way into the dark, and died with feet beneath the covers.

We did the foxtrot in limbo, no longer aware of our bodies, until Eternity popped the final question.

Then we tap-danced on our graves, and back through the womb again, shoeless.
The Onion River Review is the literary and visual arts review of Saint Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont. Edited entirely by undergraduates, it has been published at least once a year since 1973. Full text can be found on the databases of EBSCO Publishing.

The review welcomes submissions from anyone in the Saint Michael’s community, including alumni. Submissions should be sent to onionriver@smcvt.edu. For further information, go to http://www.smcvt.edu/onionriver/.
Editors’ Note

Each year sparks a metamorphosis of the Onion River Review. It begins to change in front of our eyes before we can even begin to realize what the final review will hold. Each year brings with it a beautiful and different creation.

This year included many transformative moments. An all-new Core Editor staff was chosen to fill the significant shoes of last year’s graduates. Philip Noonan, along with our incredible auxiliary editors, fearlessly led the Onion through the fall semester, while the rest of us Core editors cavorted through Europe studying abroad.

The change to the spring semester brought the Core back to a beautifully crafted beginning of this year’s issue. We were greatly sad to lose Philip, who graduated in December. We are extremely proud, though, to add his remarkable shoes with the rest of our former Core editors’.

The process of the Review remains the same every year, with those metamorphosing tweaks thrown in. Every literary and art submission first goes through the trusty hands of our faculty advisor, Will Marquess, who removes the name of the submitter before putting it into a folder to which we and the auxiliary editors have access. Each piece is then reviewed with care by every single member of the Onion staff. Comments are made in the margins and various notes are taken as each individual reads through the submissions on their own.

Then on a blissful Saturday in February we meet with the auxiliary editors and verbally go through each piece. We discuss, deliberate and occasionally rumble over every submission until each person’s viewpoint is heard. We couldn’t have successfully done so this year without the help of our brilliant auxiliary editors: Allyson Berger, Beth Davin, Amber Downing, Alex Dugas, Sarah Fraser, Sarah Lubold, Maggie Lund, Chris Schleper, Jenelle Roberge, and Amy Wilson. Without them, the review would not be possible. We likewise owe our sincere gratitude to our
faculty advisor, Will Marquess, for his continued support, neutral guidance, bagel provision, and upbeat huzzas.

We would also like to thank the Student Association, the English Department, the Marc and Dana VanderHeyden Endowment, and local businesses for fiscal support. Without them, the Review would be without a body. We are extremely grateful. We are incredibly thankful as well to Becky Colley from Printing Services, who provides the wonderful graphic quality to the Review.

Finally, we owe thanks to our talented and brilliant submitters. Without you the Onion River Review would be without heart and soul. You provide the words and images that create the Review.

We are happy to present the 2011 issue of the Onion River Review. May you enjoy falling down the rabbit hole and seeing what lies beyond.

– Lauren Fish, Heather Lessard, Jenna McCarthy, and Erica Sabelawski
Core Editors 2011
Cover: Frank Huseman, Weightless, 8 x 10", silver gelatin print

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“But I don’t want to go among mad people,” Alice remarked.

“Oh, you can’t help that,” said the Cat: “we’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad.”

“How do you know I’m mad?” said Alice.

“You must be,” said the Cat, “or you wouldn’t have come here.”

–Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland
Congratulations!
Philip Noonan

You just found the cure for small talk.
No longer will you have to suffer the embarrassment of flaccid conversation caused by castrated head.
Now your head can swell with the wonders contained in this splendiferous glowing box!
In here, O wonder of wonders, the only sin is to leave!
In here forever is your solution to loneliness.

Are the women in your life unwilling to yield?
Or, castrated by the progression of powder-puff politics, do you find it difficult to wield?
Well, in here you are intimate with an all-nude lady though, for the grace of God, she never speaks, always submitting to your electronic chauvinism.
She will absolutely make you a sandwich if you can figure how to pass it through the screen.
But we know you.
You are a Casanova of the Seventh Natty Ice whose Johnson is clearly so skyscraper that you don’t need Our lady advice.

Are you bored and looking for a thrill? Stay out of the cold!
For no money at all, you can watch a man turn to Swiss cheese from the comfort of your warm carpeted home kingdom.
Later, use God’s-eye to scour a dumpster full of the Holey Victim.
In 160 characters describe how the deceased’s eyes bulging reminded you of the time that for hours you stared, expressionless, at the bulging eyes of a dead fish in a waste pond, your mind a tabula rasa of coping.
Mike likes this.
Sandy laughs at your picture of death.
We love this.
God is silent.
In here there is an unstoppable Reich of robotic singers all humming at Ultra-sonic levels. the persistent, sorrowful tone of the brain-damned. Read about the horrors of a man who spontaneously learned to live in the West, subsisting only on roots and slow animals. Find comfort in the fact that nature is an unforgiving bitch and that twelve bones lie scattered on rattlesnake sand. The bones were picked clean by coyotes who watch T.V. on a full belly waiting for the return of their Messiah, who rots at the druggy end of his last vision quest.

Forget about adventure, mystery and wonder. Put on these 3-D glasses and view the new Drive-Thru Shangri-La right in your living room! We cut off the stink-smelling cultural history. We laughed as it slapped the ground like severed stone arms reaching skyward toward ideas that can only be expressed out loud in the harsh air of the frightening snowscape. Your new adventure is only a step away. Shaking leg syndrome is natural for new born chicks freshly out of their futon shells. Who needs sure legs when voluntary disability makes walking to the bathroom a quest of the ages? Don’t undersell yourself, Oh-dysseus. The cleverness it takes to shake it twice boggles the mind. Be fair to us, you 30-minute Abyssinian you, and learn to love the unadulterated thrill of dental floss. But always, sweet Alexander driving your Internet Lexus, come back to us.

For we are your sworn yarn weavers, your B-movie alchemists, your slop-culture sages. Study at this grimoire of cute puppy videos. Gaze upon this goblet brimming with purple drink. Auto-tune the very name of YHWH! Play this song in STD tuning to unlock the secret-prize penis pump. Become one with the HIVe-mind. We are the virus inside your noggin, sport, making sure that you never get bored and that you get mired out in the profundity of the blog. There are answers in this Garden of Easy. Just click the button and ignore the smell of sautéed organs in a butter-wine sauce, smells let off by the awful productivity of our machine; an aroma alarmingly familiar, like millions of boiled corpses lying awash on the empty beach of expectation against a painted sky of cremated dreams.
For Phil
Alex Dugas

I once passed an old woman
On the sidewalk.
I swallowed her cane
And my heart bowed
To mimic her spine.
I loved her in a world
Where we met as children.
She was my baby grand-daughter
On my last hospital visit.
She broke my heart
When I was thirty-two.
And she kissed me back
When I was five.
She delivered me
When I was born.
She birthed me one instant before.
We laid each other to rest five minutes ago.
And in five more, I’ll pass her again.
Stairway
Erica Sabelawski

Her disease had hit the family in waves, like the aftershock of a bomb, pushing them to the ground when they thought the worst news had come. Her parents had no knowledge of proper care, or the intensity of her illness. Her siblings avoided her, taking the time to walk the length of the house to use the other staircase if necessary. The first time she was allowed to leave the hospital she walked into the room she shared with three of her sisters and immediately noticed that one of the bunk beds had been separated and three beds now huddled in a corner, as if whispering secrets.

The nightmare had ended, but she was still gasping for air, panic becoming tangible. She sucked in and mouthed, “Dad . . . Mom.” Small droplets of sweat from under her nose rolled onto her lips and sprayed her sheets while she attempted to call for help.

“Becca, Abby, Melissa . . .” No one heard her.

She lifted her knees to her chest, bending them one at a time. She pushed them over the bed and gripped the nightstand for support. Hundreds of small circles floated before her eyes and she felt the hardness of the floor on her face, still desperate for oxygen. Now she was back in her nightmare, lying with her right side pressed into the dirty wooden floor, dried mud and small pebbles scraping her bare leg. She reached her fingers forward and found a fissure in the floor where she anchored her fingernails and dragged herself forward. At the top of the stairs she squeezed her eyes, and pushed herself over the top step.

The scenery outside her window matched the white and cold that was inside her heated room. She had always disliked winter. Now she blended into the landscape and she wondered how much longer she would see the same view out of the window before she became a part of it, fading slowly so no one would notice until she was gone. She would dissipate like the frequency of her family’s visits, like the sympathy of the nurses, like her ability to breathe on her own.

Her head pounded in sync with her father’s footsteps. The door at the base of the stairs cracked then flew open. While he called to her mother to start the car, he slid his fingers under Joan’s armpits and in the bend of her knees. The screaming car horn cut through the melodic tune of bullfrogs and in the luminance of the headlights Joan saw a tear slip silently down her father’s face and land under her eyes, pooling with a larger bead of sweat that dripped onto her nightgown.

“Well I think she almost died tonight, Dr. Harrison.”

“I know, Mr. Rastallis, I am sorry that you and the Misses had to deal with seeing your daughter in such a helpless situation.”

“You’re sorry, Dr. Harrison? Six hours ago you were in my kitchen enjoying a nice cold home brew, telling me that she would be perfectly okay until we brought her in tomorrow, at her own leisure.”

“Yes, Mr. Rastallis, I do remember our previous conversation—”

“Then why the hell did my daughter have to drag herself out of her room and throw herself down a flight of stairs to get my attention because she could not breathe, let alone speak?”

“Oh Stanley, don’t berate the poor man, how was he supposed to know that she was going to take such a turn for the worse. He was trying to help us, let it sink in that she had polio before we had to ship her to the hospital for God knows how long.”
“Liz, you didn’t see her on the floor, eyes glazed and desperate, looking at me like I was Jesus Christ himself. Now this man here happens to acquire more money in two months than I do in a whole year; can you explain to my lovely wife why that is, Dr. Harrison?”

“Well, uh, sir, and ma’am, I suppose that I might make a higher salary because, uh, I went to school for a longer—”

“You see, Liz, the man went to school. Got himself more than a high school degree. That means that this man before us is educated, and educated men who have enough money to support our family through a second Depression certainly should have some know-how to back up his piggy bank.”

“While I do not deny that your daughter has a bad case of Poliomyelitis, I stand by my original decision that her condition was not enough to warrant her immediate removal from the comfort of her home. After just several months—”

“Months!? And how much is that going to cost having her shacked up in that breathing monster for months? You have any idea what you are doing to our family, Harrison?”

“Sir, I really think it is the disease, not me. Those months also include a period of physical therapy and shock treatment where she will not always have to stay here.”

“Listen to what the doctor is telling us, Stan, just a few months, not bad at all compared to the other children we’ve heard about. They were paralyzed forever . . .”

The voices were muffled by the hum of the metal object that encased her entire lower body. She took a deep breath and struggled to roll over. After several minutes she accepted the compromise of lying on her back. This allowed her a more encompassing view of the cylindrical fish tank where her body rested, detached from the rest of her. Fat droplets of water collided with the window, drawing her eyes away from her lower half and towards the splattered, foggy glass. She could make out the dark green outline of plants sagging with the weight of water. She was glad that she could see plants from her bed. She liked it when they reached towards the sun, an intrinsic talent that was responsible for their food production. She learned that last week in one of her first sixth grade science classes.

“But Mr. Herzim, what do the plants do when they don’t have the sun to feed them?”

“Ah, now, there is the question that all of your work this semester will relate back to; what are nature’s defense mechanisms?”

Joan remembered this conversation and was upset that she might never know how or why the rainy days killed the flowers. She simply knew that they did.
Sacred Space: Rural America (December 2010)
Mallory Breiner

locally sourced tissue paper, clay, yarn, cardboard, and fawn vertebrae in 1891 Wisconsin barn
approximately 25’ x 100’ x 30’

Coast Marked
Amy Wilson

You have taken the words out of me and left me with letters, postmarked for the night train neatly sealed on the lick of a phone, after Lorna Dee’s papers.

Under the moonlight of Vermont I stretch my see-through limbs across the telephone wires. These silent tubes slice through the buzzing air with no wake.

The sound waves bounce off my skin so faintly, I don’t even feel them. The wiry tides comb my hair and leave the hardened texture of salt, the sting of metal.

How many steps to the ocean from this land-locked lakeside? How many minutes to see the mail boat chugging over its Atlantic railway? There, I will toss you back.

The sound waves hit me so hard, that the knocking from every angle keeps me on my feet. What becomes of this bending balance when the record stops turning?

Like water, I trust in gravity to hold me down, but tell me, where is my moon to rock me in its steady pull? I was told there would be moons.

Until then, so sincerely, I wait, in the upper left corner. Until then, sealed up tightly, I rest, my returns addressed. Now I see, I mistook you for a moon.
To-Do
Timothy Fitzmaurice

We sit, each
with our list, chores à la carte,
at the breakfast table,
unshowered, unencumbered
in our Saturday clothes.

How many times have you asked me,
exasperated, why
we never seem
to shorten these agendas? How,
in God’s name, could we go
all season and still
have the driveway to seal,
the gutters to cleanse,
the shower to retile.

The answer is breakfast.
I sit across from you
and watch your lips
as you kiss the coffee cup’s
stone edge, your hair
hastily tied behind your head
and wisps reaching out
into the humidity.

Even the jeans
you wear with the torn
extra pockets on one thigh
and the loop of denim
on the other that has no
discernible purpose turn my heart
into something less
like a four-chambered fist and more
like the cranberry muffin
you’ve cut in half
and bite into so neatly.

Clearly, our flagging
productivity is your fault,
but instead I blame breakfast
because such fault draped
over your shoulders
would be the blunder of the man
looking to leave the dishes and
the gardens, to forget shrubs
and shutters and unwashed cars
and return, the two of us each
a little more unencumbered,
to an unmade bed in an untidied room.
Árbol de invierno
Jacqueline McClatchy

Árbol, alto y delgado,
como un hombre viejo,
ligera y torcido
por alcanzar al sol.

Por ahora, libre del
peso de la nieve implacable
tus ramas cuelgan,
cansadas de días sin luz.

O pino duro, ¿quién
te ha visitado,
dejando huellas misteriosas
que llegan solas a tu tronco?

Las huellas marcan su soledad,
y sus pinochas caídas
esperan el deshelo
que trae
vida.

Windswept
Diana Marchessault

acrylic on canvas
18 x 24"
Trails
Molly McGillicuddy

What does it look like? Me leaving? How does that go? It’s a trail of being, I think. First, when I go, I leave the things of no consequence. And as soon as I’m gone, it turns out they have consequence. Because you will find the mug with the lumbering manatees on it, turn it over in your hands, and remember split-level ranches on the side of the highway as we drove south chased by darkening Florida storm clouds. You will step on the bobby-pin I never knew I had, and the pain will be sharp, quick, and over soon, but it will be there. When you go to thaw the peas I left in the freezer, you will only think of me if you remember that they are my ninth favorite vegetable.

The morning I laughed at a newscaster reporting on a spike in the sales of fireworks around the Fourth of July, my coffee sloshed from the side of my mug and onto the couch cushion. The stain I left is not going anywhere. When I’m gone, you will look at it, and curse my careless hap-

A winter cap. Four boxes of rigatoni. A deep scuff mark on the hall floor. The orange t-shirt from a 10k road race. A good pair of scissors.

Then the things I leave become more important because they are the things I wanted to take with me but left for you—my copy of Twelfth Night, the snowglobe, and the picture of us the day we drove into the mountains and then out of them.

In the picture, my forehead is too big. With no one around but us, I took our picture with an outstretched arm and the angle is funny. You’re making a face that says you’re happy to be with me because I’m such a dope sometimes. You will find this picture in the back of the desk drawer on a humid day in August, a day very unlike that fresh, blue one we spent driving into and out of the mountains. You will walk, with the picture in your hands, to the window and watch the thick summer air curl off of the asphalt and the hot grey sky pulsing with heat, still days from

storming. You’ll wonder how two days, so different from each other, could happen on the same earth.

You will trace your fingers over my pillowcase and wonder how many of my skin cells are left behind. Trillions? I had a garden in the small scratch of grass that was our backyard. You might wonder what of me is growing up tangled in the tomato vines, the plump zucchinis, and the weeds, now at your knees.

There are things I left all around and you throw them out or when you can’t, you tuck them in drawers or in between unread books. I left memories waiting in the places you least expect them, like the cupboard. These hurt, more or less, depending on the day, depending on the time. And the trail of being leads all the way to where I am, standing barefoot at the scummy edge of a lake watching the hem of the sky deepen as the sun ekes out, thinking about what I have left.
I stay awake, all night, every night. Why, you ask? In barter for dashing good looks, cunning, and overall panache, the devil took my ability to sleep. I’m not sure what he gets out of it, but who could pass up all that panache? Anyway, along with my constant wakefulness I’m concurrently punished with bad infomercials on television from the hours of about 2 to 6 in the morning. What’s worse, their advertising guile works on me like a whore on 42nd Street. I find myself ordering compulsively and without reason.

As any nocturnal viewer will testify, today’s infomercial market is overrun with opportunities for natural male enhancement. Being the naive and trusting home-shopper I am, I’ve invested thousands of dollars in many different brands. All I’ve ended up with is an empty bank account and comically huge genitals. You’d think they’d put a warning on the bottle. I mean, I had to upgrade to a king size mattress to accommodate my extra body mass. Showers take much longer now, as my surface area has trebled. I endure chronic back pain and I tend to tip forward when stopping too quickly. A dip in a swimming pool has become something akin to a water displacement experiment. Letters from Guinness flood my mailbox. Pilots of low-flying planes often call my home phone, asking for clearance to land. I’ve ruined many a surprise party as the guest of honor always notices a hulking bulge protruding from behind a piece of furniture. While lying on the floor, an ill-timed arousal will often catapult me into a ceiling fan. I often overturn the family dinner table when simply crossing my legs. After I begin urinating, I must wait nearly three-quarters of an hour before said urine actually leaves my body. Oftentimes while sunbathing, other vacationers will mistake me for a beached whale and attempt to push my genitals back into the ocean. Even the largest of underpants become “tighty-whities.” My oversized proboscis will often become entangled in the spokes of my bicycle. I’ll often wake to find that my impish gardener has sculpted a pubic hair topiary. The government keeps close tabs on me, as I am now visible from space.
The list goes on and on. For example, many a cowboy has tried to saddle and domesticate my monumental genitalia. At the gym, I frequently receive a violent pummeling as I’m often mistaken for a heavy bag. No matter how many times I tell them no, scores of Hollywood production teams keep harassing me to star in Anaconda II. I’m forced to stow all of my luggage on an airplane as I already have a “carry-on.” Gamera has waged war with me several times, mistaking my genitals for a giant fictional monster. No one makes eye contact anymore. I can’t go bowling without committing a line foul on every approach. I was obligated to work for the fire department during times of drought. I was obligated to leave the fire department after several run-ins with a skittish Dalmatian. I was responsible for the deaths of 29 people at a local dance club. People make jokes any time the conversation turns to Viagra, the Battle of the Bulge, or the Washington Monument. I now have to claim a dependent on my taxes.

As if all this weren’t enough, buying pants is nigh impossible, as my measurements are now only available in cubits and spans. Intimacy has become problematic. I turn away dejectedly from revolving doors. Escalators pose numerous threats. Upon being tested for a urinary tract infection, the doctor passed on the Q-tip and was instead forced to use a plumbing snake. I spook horses. My blues lyrics seem to miss the mark with mainstream audiences. I can’t listen to the Wham! album Make it Big without weeping bitterly. The same goes for watching Honey I Blew up the Baby. My lucky merkin no longer fits properly. When I hike through the woods, ambitious B-movie Foley artists follow me with boom mics, searching for that “dragging-a-dead-body” sound. Company picnic officials never allow me in the three-legged race. I still have several pending lawsuits from my brief career as a department store Santa. Every Halloween I have to be the same old thing: manatee jockey.

I hope you will all heed my warning and learn from my mistake. Natural male enhancement is a topic not to be taken lightly. While the above problems may seem like the greatest hindrances in my day-to-day life, there is still one greater: the snickering behind my back. No matter how many times I hear it, the laughter is never easy to bear. I mean, I hate dick jokes just as much as the next guy.
Email 1973
Ron Roy

If we’d had email back then, we might have written every day and learned about each other the way that we have, now.

We might have fallen in love, been soul mates, made beautiful children (other children, different children).

We might have fallen in love, but been a bad match. I might have been your glommer and you my proof that life is small and sad.

You might have taken out a restraining order against me.

You might have roused me from our bed when the monoxide alarms sounded.
I could have jumped to my feet, mumbling drowsy gratitude.
We could have taken the children (other children, different children)
And trudged arm-in-arm through snow drifts to the guest house
And huddled together by the fire, free from fear.

I might have soothed you, told you not to worry.
You could have drifted back to sleep
Content with the knowledge that safety
Was indeed your world.

We might have fought.
I might have told you that you
Worried needlessly
You might have taken the children (other children, different children)
And gone without me.
I might have drifted back to sleep
And died just to make a point.
Infrared Silo
Jordan Douglas

silver gelatin lith photograph
8 x 10"

Waterfires Providence
Tayla Reo

acrylic on canvas
16 x 20"
If my engine ran on jazz
Tom Chandonnet

If my engine ran on jazz,
I’d be flowin’
down the street;
tappin’,
tappin’ my pedal
to the beat.
And that engine
would
be
purrin’—
like a laid back cat pluckin’ upright quarter notes,
down round
Broadway and 7th.

If my engine ran on jazz,
I’d be steerin’
with my sticks held
at 10 and 2.
I’d be bangin’ out corners
rollin’
through stops and breaks
ridin’ on
through cymbals,
and you’d
be waitin’
to hear
that
crash.

If my engine ran on jazz,
I’d be cool,
real cool.
I’d be blowin’ my horn,
playin’
off the other cars,
improvisin’
my own melody.
But
my engine rides
on regular unleaded,
clunking and clanging
like a Church St. sideshow.
If only my engine
ran on jazz.
Flux: An Impermanent Installation (December 2009)
Mallory Breiner

Latch Quadrant
Jordan Douglas

fishing line, vinyl blinds, toothpicks, styrofoam, iodized salt, clay, and found objects
20' x 20' x 10'

silver gelatin lith photograph
11 x 12"
Your friend Peter ———, the sex addict, lives alone in a climate controlled self-storage unit. Pete spends hours a day calling call girls. He has a PhD in porn.

The warehouse where Pete lives, it’s on the Berlin Turnpike, a road to nowhere. It’s a ten-mile divided highway connecting the parkway to the interstate. Big box and cheap motels.

Driving to Pete’s place, there’s the Walmart . . . the Home Depot, a duckpin bowling alley.

There’s a strip club.

A sex shop.

A strip mall Olive Garden.

The speed limit on the Turnpike’s forty-five, so the cars doing around thirty, you know they’re out trolling for hookers. Every thirty yards or so, the streetlights on each side of the road make you think of a runway.

The motels here, they all have these signs out front with letters missing, neon signs with some of the lights burned out.

These signs, they say FREE ICE.

KITCHENETTES.

CABLE TV.

They say rates by the week or the hour.

The signs on the doorknobs read DO NOT DISTURB, and the ones near the roadside say VACANCY.

Since he can’t park in the warehouse lot at night, Pete leaves his car at motels where the desk clerks know him. All these cheap motels, for some reason, they use the names of majestic birds.

The Swan Village.

The Flamingo Inn.

The Pelican Motor Lodge.

The American Eagle.

The whores who post ads on the Internet, Pete says, a lot of them instruct their clients not to park at these places. Instead, they direct their johns to lots across the street—to a Dunkin’ Donuts or Circuit City—so they can look out and watch them sprint across lanes of traffic.

Some girls, Pete says, this is their idea of discretion. Some girls, it isn’t their idea.

Meanwhile, Pete can’t park in the warehouse lot at night ’cause his car will get towed.

He’s got a good thing going here, Pete says: $120 a month and he doesn’t even have to share a bathroom. Plus, he’s actually starting to enjoy the elevator music that’s piped in all night long.

Lionel Ritchie, Tears for Fears . . .

You run through your preset stations and stop at another red light.

How you met Pete is you grew up together. You’ve known him since forever, since back when you still had imaginary friends.

Later, when you were twelve or thirteen, that’s when the two of you started hanging out. You developed a kind of friendship. The inferior kind Aristotle would classify as something based on utility, or pleasure.

These days, it’s called enabling.

In Aristotle, your friend isn’t other so much as your “second self.”

Combine this with Freud, and that makes Pete your id.
To fulfill his desire for attention, Pete began performing lewd and scurrilous pranks. In the bathrooms at your school, in the locker rooms after gym.

Pete, he was that guy. The one everybody knows. The asshole friend who gets you into trouble.

For a while, Pete’s persona was appealing. He harassed friends and objectified women in ways that were amusing enough to be socially acceptable, and whenever he crossed the line there was always someone to step in and apologize for him.

Usually, you played the straight-man role in his double act.

How Pete ended up living in a self-storage unit is another story. But for some reason, you can’t help feeling responsible.

For years, you encouraged Pete’s bad behavior until it took on a life of its own. Until it became what he was known for. Until it became impossible to live up to the image he’d created.

Play any role long enough and you become how others see you.

After college, you and Pete went into business together selling things on the Internet. You started your own website, opened an eBay store.

An online gallery, you called it.

Meanwhile, you sold everything: jewelry and watches . . . antiques and memorabilia . . . Most of it basically junk.

You went to yard sales and estate sales.

Goodwill Donation Centers.

Book sales at libraries and churches.

You became like those crazy spinsters, the cat ladies you’d see rummaging at tag sales each week. Hagglers who’d offer three dollars instead of five for an old picture frame. Some said you had a “good eye,” that you’d found some “interesting pieces.” Most, however, viewed you as competition.

For a while, you and Pete were roommates. You were twenty-five, twenty-six, living in a two-bedroom apartment—living like you were still in college—and each night you fell asleep listening to a relaxing sounds CD.

The babbling brook.

The ocean waves.

The hypnotic drumming.

The Sounds of Nature.

Meanwhile, you sold used books, baseball cards, post cards and postage stamps . . . Anything people collect.

You sold computer software and video games.

Ataris and Nintendos.

Vintage toy sets and Lionel Trains.

After a while, it got so that Pete was out buying every day, hunting down items to sell online. You posted ads on Craigslist that said WE BUY _______ (whatever) and you filled in the blank.

You posted your phone number, a link to your website.

And Pete went out on calls to people’s homes.

The one time he came back empty-handed, Pete said he offered this woman cash for a cash register that had been in her grandfather’s bowling alley. This woman, she countered at a higher price then offered to throw in a bonus, and before he could even say what, Pete said, she had her hand on the front of his pants.

Afterwards, he didn’t realize he’d forgotten to take the cash register till he was already halfway home.

Now, Pete says, what happened there, that was the beginning of the end.
For a while after that Pete doesn’t want to sell his finds. An antique typewriter, a baseball signed by Mickey Mantle . . . at first, he wants to keep the nicest acquisitions for himself. But before long, he wants to keep everything. Can’t bear to part with that Miracle Blade knife set, or a doormat in the shape of home plate. After a while, you’ve had enough. The apartment’s cluttered. The living room’s a deadfall of furniture. Pete’s crap is everywhere.

You tell him, once upon a time, there used to be this tribe of Indians in Alaska—they burned their wigwams whenever they became overcrowded with material goods. They just burned their homes and started over, unburdened by personal property.

You tell Pete he should be more like those Natives in Alaska.

You tell him, one day he’s gonna see a bonfire in the lot outside your building.

After Pete moves his things into the storage unit, things go back to normal for a while. Of course, you don’t realize it at the time, but Pete’s behavior was a warning sign. A cry for help. An obvious case of transference.

Pete collects junk the way alcoholics drink bottomless cups of coffee while telling stories in the backrooms of churches. He hoards trinkets the way smokers overeat while quitting their main addiction.

Eating.
Smoking.
Stealing.
Fucking.

Most addicts end up substituting one compulsive behavior for another.

The thing is, you don’t know Pete has a problem until you read his diary. Before that you just think he’s really good at meeting girls online. You figure, he knows how to pick up women.

Then you see that black book out on the counter and it looks so old and used and the leather looks worn. It’s just another one of Pete’s finds, another random accessory. Something else he just couldn’t do without.

After he writes in the diary, and after you go through and read it, that’s when you know Pete has issues. No doubt it’s obvious. The patterns of behavior, the way he chronicles the details of all of his past encounters . . .

Some people film it, Pete says. Pete, he just likes to keep a journal.

Well. Maybe you should have gotten rid of that thing when you had the chance, sent it to his college fraternity, even.

In the right hands, Pete’s diary would be the stuff of legend.

To a certain audience, that book would be a work of art.

It would be menissance.

Dicklit.

Fratire.


(...)

Now Pete lives alone in a self-storage unit.

Up ahead, flashing lights alert you to an accident, two cars smashed on the other side of the road. Streetlights like upside-down Ls like the graphics for Rad Racer. A signpost that says welcome to where you are . . .
Pete, he doesn’t get what the big deal is. Basically, he’s just improved his game. He’s invented a new persona, figured out how to close.

With a new partner every couple of weeks, after a while, you have to write down their names.

Then you find the second book. Volume two of The Diary of a Sex Addict. Tan leather, a bound-in placemarker. The word on the front, it says JOURNAL.

The girls in this book, most of them are prostitutes who advertise online. Some have their own websites with photo galleries and calendars naming cities and dates. Others are locals who used to post ads on Craigslist.

That woman with the cash register, she triggered something and now it’s getting out of hand.

Pete, he goes to see the same girl two or three times. Until she wants to see him. Until he isn’t required to pay for her services . . .

When you tell him he can’t make an honest woman out of a whore, he takes that as a challenge.

Pete, he says, Wanna bet?

A mile from Storage Haven and you’re parked outside a bar—the only one you can walk to from the warehouse—

Only this place is technically a private club . . . You pay a fee and you’re a member . . . But they usually serve you even if you’re not . . .

The bartender tonight’s a redneck with a wallet chain; he holds a cloudy glass beneath the tap . . . and while you sit at the bar and drink stale beer and wait for Pete (he shows up after a few drinks), and guys in cowboy hats dance around women in flannel shirts, it’s like you’ve wandered into a Twilight Zone episode set in some defunct Western ski town, or maybe a Coors commercial gone horribly wrong.

Meanwhile, you’ve started sweating. It’s hot inside and everybody’s smoking. Air so thick you can hardly breathe.

The woman next to you, her cigarette’s extra long. It reminds you of those cigarette holders propped between the gloved fingers of fashionable women in vintage ads. Only this woman, she’s like three hundred pounds. Makeup caked on so thick and glittering.

The word on her pack, it says More.

Stepping back, you watch the cloud of smoke that hovers above you like a comic strip bubble.

It’s 8:16 p.m.—you check your watch.

And the jukebox plays a song.

And the fat woman’s smoking.

When Lance arrives, you follow him to the men’s room; he latches the door with a rusty hook inside. He looks like a drug dealer named Lance in a movie, and that’s the story of his name. You pay him and he hands Pete the bag . . .

Meanwhile, this bathroom reeks like cherry cough syrup. There are paper towels crumpled on the floor. The toilet-lever glistens with beads of condensation. A strand of pubic hair appears fossilized in dried urine on the rim of the bowl.

After Lance leaves, while you wait for Pete to piss, you stand and look on as he hangs into the urinal. On the wall above it, a sign advertises prices of piercings at a local tattoo shop. Framed at eye-level the list goes:

ear,
eyebrow,
nose,
tongue,
labret,
nipple,
bellybutton,
and what you’re holding right now—with the last part being the most expensive.

On the wall next to the sign someone’s inked the cartoonish quote “Alcohol is the cause of and solution to all of life’s problems” in blue marker.

SAY NO TO DRUGS is printed on the red urinal mat in white.

( . . . )

Back at the bar now, Pete’s talking up the fat woman. He’s standing at the jukebox, hitting on hot white trash.

The next round comes, and Pete, he says he’s buying.

Another round arrives—he’s smoking Mores.

Sitting at the bar, you don’t know how this happened. You check your watch and push aside your glass. Over by the pool table, a cowboy’s holding a cue stick like the pitchfork in American Gothic.

You’ll have what he’s having, Pete tells the bartender.

On the way back to Storage Haven and Pete’s not even pissed about the timing of your departure. Back in the day, he’d be dissing your skills as a wingman, but it’s almost ten o’clock and he ran out of time.

That old public service announcement, It’s 10 p.m., do you know where your children are? Well, Pete hears it every night.

It’s the alarm on his MP3 wristwatch.

The ringtone on his Blackberry.

Each night, the voice of a different celebrity reminds him to get his ass home.

Ten o’clock’s when Storage Haven closes for the night. Seriously, the place goes into lockdown. You can get out, but there’s no getting back inside. Even Rod, the burnout security guard who knows Pete sleeps in one of the units and lets him stay there for free pot, won’t let you pass.

The system records everything, Rod says. The computers, he tells you, they know. All that information gets downloaded and sent back to headquarters. Every time someone keys in an access code to start the elevator . . . to enter the building . . . to open the mechanical gate at the entrance to the driveway . . .

Pete, he sets all his clocks about ten minutes ahead.

“It’s 10 p.m., do you know where your children are?” This is Jane Fonda or Susan Anton, maybe. All these celebrities, they each place the emphasis on a different word.

Do you know where . . .?

Do you know where . . .?

Pete snaps his phone closed, cutting a voice off midsentence.
Croatoan
Amber Downing

If I just said
croatoan
and left it at that,
would anyone try to solve the mystery?

Forget the Flowers
Joe Tyson

digital photograph
I have to be a vegetarian, for the slugs.

Erica Sabelawski

When you are confined to an island, surrounded by family members all sleeping in the same tiny cabin, inevitably someone will crack. After taking the evening mile-long walk around the circumference of the island we would separate into respective groups: cards and cigars. Those of us who weren’t interested in either category were left drifting between.

“Hey, you kids ever heard that slugs melt when you put salt on them?”

Yes, uncles, we have been to school.

But knowing and seeing are so different and when the large box of salt was dug out from the back of the cupboard, the thrill of experimentation was on me. Blood pounded through my ears and I made contact with my first victim. Apprehensively, I poured a small lump of salt on the end of the slug. It hissed and began to melt down. Excited with the results, I covered the rest of the body in salt and watched the whole thing melt and begin to slip through the crack between the planks on the deck. Science experiments from school dictated that I needed more data and with this in mind, I moved to the next unfortunate target and enclosed it in a salt mound so impenetrable that only white crystals were visible. Soon a wet spot emerged in the middle and a salt/slug mush formed that was tracked into the house by the exuberant dog. Eyes bulging, I looked up and watched the aunts shake their heads and return to bridge. The uncles “aw cool”-ed and “that’s awesome”-d and I knew this was the moment: it was my time to become family reunion legend. Hands clenched and eyes wide I danced around the deck as if in ritual and sprinkled salt everywhere. I stood in the middle of sizzling slugs and reveled in the sound, the transformation and the piles of goo pushing together forming islands of innards.

Suddenly the uncles parted and, in the doorway, I saw my mother. She looked at me, hands still clamped onto the salt container, and I saw the horror, the absolute horror, of what I had done. Carcasses everywhere, the smell of decay, the jeers of the uncles, the dark night and animal sounds from the forest behind me.

And so that’s it. I have to pay tribute to the fallen. I have to be a vegetarian, for the slugs.
Summer League
Tom Chandonnet

We’re batting rocks over the horizon—
sporting duct-taped flip flops, swim trunks
and old white tees.
Uniforms are casual this season.

I’m batting a thousand
using withered logs corked by the sun.
A splintered mist sprays from my follow through,
and I’m coughing in a sawdust cloud to first.

Through every cracked bat,
I squint to find my rock hurtling over left.
The tree lines dance and cheer,
as dusk breathes out over the field.

We never keep score;
we just wait—
until the next inning rises
from the east.

Limericks by A. Sociopath
Justin Whittinghill

There once was a fellow named Cline
Who was a coworker of mine.
He’d borrow my pen,
Again and again,
But I suppose the true root of my frustration with Cline was that I long
suspected he had been sleeping with Carol. It’s not as though I could blame Carol for running around on me. I hadn’t been the best husband, and in the last years of our marriage our sex life had been dropping off steadily. Or should I say “de-Cline-ing”? Oh God, why do I do this? I spend so much time beating myself up when it was Carol who refused to stand by my side during the years of impotency. Why do I go on making excuses for her? Is that all it was to you, Carol? Sex? God, have you ever been content with life when you weren’t straddling someone? You’re fucking pathetic. Do you remember when you invited me to your book club meeting, and you volunteered us to read the parts of Lady Ashley and Jake Barnes? Was that supposed to make me feel good, Carol? But then have you ever asked yourself that question? And then Cline walked into your life, big and tall, at that damned Christmas party. He wore those insufferable reindeer antlers that you couldn’t seem to compliment enough. You started spending nights away from home, then weeks, but we were barely speaking at that point. I remember the day you walked out for good. “My back hurts,” you complained casually. “Maybe you should stay off it for a while,” I replied. The worst part is I still can’t stand sleeping alone.

---

I once knew a woman named Star,
Whom I met for a date at a bar.
Without being cautious,
Drank till I was nauseous,
signified much of what I hated about him. I mean honestly, Lee, a bust of Ramses II? Christ, why not just scrawl “overbearing” across the drapes and save yourself four thousand dollars? Ah, but all this would matter little in just a few deliciously vindictive moments. I ascended the staircase slowly, silently, imperceptibly. I navigated the upstairs hallway with great heed and located the master bedroom, betokened by a pompous “L” etched into the door. As one hand reached for the knob, the other stealthily pulled the blade from my belt, just as smoothly as I had practiced. The door inched open heavily, and I entered. Lee slept every bit as presumptuously as a man can. Making haste, I held a pillow over his face to muffle the coming screams that would be borne of his painful demise. I raised the knife, and as I plunged it downward forcefully into his egotistical chest, I heard a voice at the open door behind me. “Daddy?” the voice asked drowsily. I turned to see a child no more than four wiping the sleep from his eyes and staring blearily into the room. Oh God, what had I done? And what would I do? Lee had been a single father, I recalled suddenly, a fact that had not occurred to me in my rageful plotting. I couldn’t bear to leave behind this newly orphaned child, almost as little as I could bear leaving a witness to my crime. Lee’s son died in much the same way as his father. It’s not something I’m proud of.

---

Not really from drinking too much, but rather nauseous at my own rampant alcoholism. It’s gotten so bad I can’t even finish a godforsaken limerick anymore. There comes a point regarding alcohol addiction where it perilously corrupts your judgment, and my rock bottom was agreeing to go out with a woman named “Star.” In hindsight, she was obviously a prostitute. Well, obvious I guess to anyone who didn’t spend ten hours a night propped up by a tumbler of gin in some dive bar. And what a low class whore she was at that. God, I was lucky to have woken up with both my kidneys. But the bottle made my decisions in those days, and Star it was. I can’t blame myself entirely though. I think my father played a large role in my affliction, the mean fucking drunk he was. Yay! Daddy’s stumbling up the sidewalk! What did he bring home for Christmas dinner this year? Oh no, it looks like another box of whisky! Hide in your rooms, kids! Well, at least he did remember to dress as Santa. But I do realize that every time I put the demon to my lips, it is ultimately my decision. And what must that have done to poor Carol? God, the guilt. It just hurts so much to feel.

---

I once fought a fellow named Lee
Whose arms were as thick as a tree.
I struggled and sadly
Was beaten quite badly,
So later that evening I set my vengeful mind on murder. Years earlier Lee had been a consultant at Carol’s firm, and we had actually visited his home several times to attend various parties and seasonal get-togethers. Carol didn’t know it, but I had also tailed her to Lee’s place on a few of her midnight excursions, where she would proceed to cuckold me several times over. As such, I had no problem finding his home on the night in question. I crept through a downstairs window and gingerly felt my way around the darkened first story. As my eyes adjusted to the night shadows, I could begin to just make out the moonlit Egyptian theme dominating most of the family room. It sickened me. Lee’s taste in interior design
Little Towns
Ben Aleshire

They put the wire in
the artery down near the groin—
that blood highway leading
all the way up to his 78 year-old heart.

The wire had a camera.
They were watching on a screen.
It was very much like The Magic School Bus.

We're coming to a junction, the young doctor would say.
That's when the artery splits in two directions.
Let's go right, the older doctor would say.

We're coming to a little town, they'd say
which is when the artery splits
in many different directions, but
a little town is also where the man raised me—
a place, a little place leading in not so many directions:

Cuttingsville, Vermont, which few have heard of
or been to, or care to. Its directions lead
up the hill or down, mostly. Cradle or grave.
Goodness or sin. What else is there?
Cuttingsville has no junction, no stoplight
no big blood highway leading from groin to heart,
no highway like this one taking me home
from Hanover, NH—another little town.

I wonder where in Hanover is J. D. Salinger dying
Salinger who my father read at 5 a.m.
on Manhattan curbs, when the magazines
hit the sidewalks in the 1950s. I wonder if Salinger
is lying in a robotic hospital bed, like my father is,
a robotic bed that moves of its own accord
a bed that knows more than whoever's lying in it
or dying in it, a bed so unlike the one
my father built out of maple wood, for my mother,
and conceived me in, in a town, a little town.
Scarred roots drink, silver ears listen. Listen:

almost nothing survives years of neglect,
blue flax twining sky to dirt, stone to rhizome.

I’ve come back to triage lamb’s ear from iris,
to plant this crimson mum in a welcome mat of dirt
saying come in,
this was once a garden.
Here’s What I Know About Love and Marriage
David Patterson

They are best understood in a guttural way—
known more by the joints and sinews than by the mind,
known more by the pit of the stomach or
the inside of the thighs or the tips of the fingers or
the heat in the cheeks. It’s a knowledge you have
as much when your face still holds baby
fat as you do when your hair’s turned
grey or all fallen out for that matter.

It’s something that visits you in a dream
that you’ll forget minutes after waking—and
the only thing you do remember
is a certain smell or the vague image
of sunshine and tan skin.

You know it by the way a smile
comes to you for no good reason.

It’s the layering of years one on top
of the other until your love is a thick
white pine—ring on ring on ring.

You know it as a taste in the back of your throat.

Or the way you know you’re going to hit
the pitcher’s first pitch over the left field wall
even before he begins his wind-up.

It’s the way you know you’ve found your new
favorite song—the way it settles your mind
into a groove that softens your heartbeat.

It’s a drive along the ocean with the windows
down as you slap the beat against the metal
of the door—the wind tightening your skin,
so that you feel it when you smile.

It’s waking up in the middle of the night
and hearing the steady, soft breath move in
and out of the lungs that give life to the woman
you love and have loved and will love—
it’s as if you knew this person in a past life,
and when you met you vaguely remembered her
and what you were doing was more like catching
up than getting to know each other.

And you find yourself staring at her sometimes
trying to pin down what it is about her that has
grabbed you so hard by the heart that you think
it might explode in your chest in a beautiful
mess—and it would be a great way to die.

But your heart doesn’t explode.

Doesn’t even really come close. And more
and more days pass and you’re more alive
than you’ve ever been and probably deserve to be.

And it surprises you every day.

Then, one day, I imagine, you’re old
and your hands are slightly arthritic, and you still
rub her back as she sleeps, and she still smiles in
her sleep when you do that.

And though you’re both older, the sunshine’s
still brilliant and it still lightly brushes her hair,
and your heart, against all the laws of physics,
still does not give in to the crushing weight of love.
Dreams
Ann Giard-Chase

Every evening,
the stacked remnants
of daylight erupt into stars
and somewhere
under the orange waterfalls
of moon, your dreams are born.

No one knows why
or in which secret alcove
they take root, creeping
among the pale lobes and wrinkled
hemispheres, the bundles
and branches of neurons—
swollen and heaped full
of your mystical wishes,
your sweetest desires, your wildest
stretches of imagination.

But, if you lift
the iron latch of sleep
and go stumbling out
to the mind’s luminous ethers,
you will find them there
growing wild as honeysuckle,
their stems rooted
in the deepest circuits as all night long
they call out to you
demonstrating each time
how to unwind
the delicate blossoms, unfold
the shimmering petals,
and rearrange your remembrances
over and over again
in a place where time is fractured
and is forever reborn
in your dreams—those tumbling
kaleidoscopes of fire.
Pine Tar
Bernard McGrath

We went to Lusardi’s when I got my raise.
The weight of the world was off our shoulder.
“I’ll be your right tackle,” I said,
thinking it was something romantic and clever.
You never liked football.
We split the tartufo for desert and talked in the park
until the sun rose from the corner of the sky.
You never liked sleeping.

We went back to Lusardi’s when Rachel was born.
Our futures sat in that high chair beside the table.
“I think she should go to Harvard,” I said smiling
at something that seemed like an eternity away.
You never liked the Ivy League.
I finished Rachel’s chicken fingers, and even
forced myself to eat her string beans.
You never liked letting things go to waste.

We went again to Lusardi’s after I got laid off.
I could see the fear in your eyes.
“It’ll be okay,” I said, helplessly trying to figure
out how to go back in time.
You never liked lies.
As I shoveled the last fork-full of lasagna into my mouth,
my bowels busted open like the cables of the Minneapolis Bridge.
You never liked changing diapers.

black and colored Sharpie on sketch book paper
8 x 11"
She is Jazz
Alex Dugas

It dawns on me
that she
is jazz.
We are woodwind
in stagnant air,
but she
is jazz.
She is the crash proceeding
a high hat night.
The return of the groan,
nymphosaxophone,
the swing.
She takes her tempo quick,
just to peak and
steal it back,
and whisper Slower,
as if it were improv.
She is knowing,
while wearing
indecision like rubies,
sipping the sound of
pulmonary tap dance
from a wine glass,
blessed, not stained,
with lipstick love.
She is a stroll,
with a glance
that walks like a bass line,
but manages
to tip the scale
after all, and make the keys cry mercy like an octave eclipse. She is familiar brass, gleaming in the stage’s drowsy sheen, sparing a breath to make every last candle pout— from the farthest table to the haunts of angels, who sit in the dark of a void-obsessed era. She is the back-beat, with syncopation promenade. She is time, until the band stops, and lights go lower . . . then she is the last lay out that I reach for, as she walks away. I’m left to stand inside the echo, without a measure to speak. She is elusive, makes my voice go diminished, to silence.

Not a sound in the interlude, the immensity meter, can response her skin, as it slips away again. And then it dawns on me that she is jazz.
The dark cloud stretched over the sky, its presence giving the ominous feeling like the storm would hit soon. But the mysterious lurking storm wasn’t what was quickening Andrea’s heartbeat as she sat by the window sill. Her eyes were fixated on a tree in the distance, standing lonely on a hill. Unlike the other trees that lost their leaves in the cold autumn winds, the black leaves on the tree clung tightly, no matter how hard the wind whipped.

The tree stood alone from all the others, who didn’t dare to grow anywhere near the edge of the hill. It was as if its twisted, thick, mangled branches and coarse, rigid bark frightened everything else away. Andrea could even see the hole in the tree from the distance, staining the tree like a giant ink spot. The tree was lonely, hideous, and cursed.

It was said that the tree grew on an ancient burial ground of the natives who lived in the Valley before. That the tree was revenge from the ones who had stayed and died fighting the colonists. That their drops of cold blood hardened, and created the seed of the Black Leaf tree.

Now no one dared to go near, even little children were smart enough not to dare each other. Some who walked by the hill said they could hear echoes of screams and monstrous growls coming from the tree’s hollow. Sometimes two luminous eyes stared unblinkingly from the hollow of the tree at those who passed. There were a very few who said they heard singing, a soft and peaceful melody. Nevertheless, to all the tree meant death.

Rain began to pelt the window, and smudge the frightening landscape outside. The wind spun around, pressing on all sides against the wooden cottage.

When Andrea heard her mother groan she whipped her head quickly to the sickly figure on the bed behind her. Her mother was still sick with fever, and if she got one shade paler, she’d be dead. She clenched her bony hand spotted with circles of white ringed with gold, and...
writhed in her bed. She was deep within the sickness, the closest way out for her was death.

Sometimes it felt as if the sickness was killing the both of them. Watching her mother slowly deteriorate into an immobile splotched body was painful. It had started two months ago, and ate away at her mother slowly, first as itchy yellow spots and fatigue, and got worse from there. The Spots was something that sickened little children and the elderly. It shouldn’t have infected her; she was healthy and young.

Andrea gave one last wary look at the black leafed tree, and went to fill the basin on the nightstand with water. As she went into the kitchen, the door was open. The basin clattered as it dropped on the floor. Andrea raced over to shut the door, to keep out the wind from forcing itself in. It took her a moment to notice Julian, her brother’s friend, standing beside it.

Andrea’s older brother, Thomas, worked in the butcher shop with Julian since their father died four years ago. Sometimes Julian would always stop by when he and Thomas came home from their shift, with dinner in their hands.

Julian shivered, tugging his red wool scarf over his bright pink cheeks. He then tried to mat down his straight black hair that the wind had played with.

“Andrea took a breath and released her tension. “She's getting worse.” She looked out the kitchen window, which like the bedroom window showed the tree.

Julian was still staring at her. “You both are.”

For a moment, the pelting rain was the only sound. “She’s had a good life, Drea, death can take years, but not happiness. She’s had her life; she wouldn’t want you to waste yours. You need to learn how to live again.”

Andrea didn’t say anything, like she didn’t hear him. Of course she did hear him, though she wished she hadn’t.

She could hear his boots pound on the rickety floorboards as he walked up behind her. “You can’t stop death, no one can.”

“Medicines can.”

“No,” his voice was patient and soft, “they just prolong it.” He grasped her hand gently, pulling her away from the window. He was using his brotherly tone, the one that often comforted her, but became more and more irritating as her mother got sick.

She decided to not say anything. She refused to budge, she was still staring at the cursed tree, watching as its leaves were pushed mercilessly by the wind.

“The leaves aren’t death, they’re only its messenger.”

Andrea didn’t care; they still meant the same thing to her. The leaves of the cursed tree never fell like normal leaves. When one would fall it would fly in the breeze, and all who saw it knew whoever it fell on would die. Sometimes it would take days, weeks or a month, but within that year the person was gone.

Andrea could feel the warm tears sliding down her face. All the fear for her mother she had tried to contain was unguarded due to the lack of sleep she got. She felt Julian rest his hand on her shoulder, which she quickly knocked off. She dabbed her eyes with her apron, and picked the basin she dropped off the floor. She kept her back to Julian as she filled the basin.
“You need to get out of here.” Right as he said that, Andrea spun around with spiteful eyes.

“Just for a day,” he added quickly. “Thomas will be home tomorrow, he can watch your mother. Take the day off. I could teach you how to fly a kite.”

The corners of Andrea’s mouth twitched, remembering the last time Julian and Thomas had tried to teach her a year ago. She had been impatient, which was fueled by the fact that she was sixteen and unable to fly a stupid piece of cloth. Julian and Thomas, who were both eighteen at the time, were just as bad. They spent half the day hoisting Andrea up onto a tall tree, trying to untangle the kite from the numerous branches.

“Well?” Julian’s eyebrows arched his eyebrow, then his tired blue eyes regained some of their playfulness.

She wanted to smile, but she didn’t feel right smiling when her mother couldn’t. “Just for a day,” she answered half-heartedly.

As promised, Julian returned the next day, with the old green kite in hand. It took him and Thomas an hour to coax Andrea out of the house; every time they tried to get through the doorway, she either had forgotten to feed her mother breakfast, clean her sheets, or adjust her pillows. It wasn’t until Julian tossed her over his shoulder (she was rather small for seventeen), and Thomas locked the door behind them that she reluctantly enjoyed the day.

“You have to run faster,” Julian explained to Andrea after her fifth failed attempt to let the kite float in the air. He teasingly pushed her to the side and grabbed the kite from her.

“Like this.” He ran across the meadow of yellow, prickly grass up to a hill. The kite rose gracefully in the air. Julian started running backwards with the kite, showing what a professional he was.

Andrea would’ve warned him, if his smile wasn’t so cocky.

As Julian began to disappear over the hill, he fell to the ground as if he tripped. A couple seconds later there was a splash and the kite began to sink down back to the ground.

Andrea burst out laughing, it was loud and uneasy, but it was the most genuine one she had in two months. She ran over the hill to find a wet and dirty Julian on the shore of the lake. He was pushing his soaking hair out of his face, his blue eyes narrowing, as if daring Andrea to say anything snide.

She walked over to him and held out a hand to pull him up. “You didn’t mention anything about swimming lessons,” she gibed.

Julian gripped her hand firmly, and swung her into the water.

They returned home hours later, soaking, muddy, shivering, and laughing. They had forgotten the kite at the lake, after splashing and throwing fistfuls of mud at each other. It was a simple thing they spent hours doing, but it made Andrea happy just being with a friend on a warm autumn day.

Andrea could see her house among all the other small brown huts, in front of a backdrop of a sunset. She was reluctant to go home, back to worry, back to sickness, back to sadness.

Julian seemed to notice, and squeezed her hand gently. It was then Andrea realized that she wasn’t home yet, there were about ten minutes worth of footsteps between her and her fears.

A gentle breeze pushed up against the two, making them slightly regret getting wet. Then from the corner of her eye Andrea saw it. A black spot a little off in the distance, on a direct path to her house. A black leaf tumbled gently through the breeze.

Andrea screamed, running towards her house. She wouldn’t let it happen. She would never forgive herself if a black leaf touched her mother while she spent the day goofing off. Andrea prayed that the breeze would die out; that the leaf would plummet to the ground like Julian’s kite had.

The leaf became more visible as it took its time to find its prey.

Andrea reached the door first. As the leaf plummeted right into her arm’s reach, she held out her hand to grab it. The leaf dropped in
her palm with no hesitation. She looked at the tattered black leaf in her palm and swore that the holes looked like an evil grimacing face. She had always wondered what a black leaf felt like, but her hand was too numb to describe it.

Her heart beating quickly, she tossed the leaf in the air out of curiosity. It slowly drifted back to her hand. As it landed in her palm she noticed the small yellow spots that had formed on her palm.

Julian had finally caught up to her; he saw the leaf and her hand and seemed at a loss for words.

Death can take years, but not happiness.

“You told me I needed to learn how to live,” Andrea said quietly, staring unblinkingly at the death omen. “Show me how.”
Poor Cerberus
W.J. Watson

Were you but a pup
when Hades plucked you from
that filthy mill?
How you must have struggled
to keep all three heads up.
Which should I address?
Are there no cats to chase in the Underworld?
No sticks to fetch? Not a bone to bury,
Only boneless, ethereal phantoms?
Hades is too busy to play fetch right now.
Filthy Lethe lapping some dull opiate.
Do you wake or sleep?
Poor Cerberus, when Heracles dragged you
from that reeking cavern
did you spot your constellation?
And how the moon must have looked,
glistening in all six eyes, howling,
for the first time.
Totem
Ralph Culver

One fall day, J., a boy of eleven, found the decomposing body of a dog. It appeared to have been dead for some time. The boy worked the dog’s head off the carcass, shoved a tree branch in at the neck, and carried the head down through some woods into an adjacent public playground.

This new spine screwed tight in the under-pulp of a skull, formerly dog—as an invention of meaning in your hands it makes sense. The park trees beginning to smolder with autumn colors jangle and jag: the possible beauty of things pisses you off. Your mouth waters at the lift and bell of young girls on the seesaw, but there’s this terror of whatever’s pushing the black hair outward at your armpits and balls, and who understands it at all?

Left no choice, you came down out of the oak and locust trees, head high, leering, spittlish and lousy, concessively marking your borders—

your little corner of hell in September, school just on and just out that day, down to the playground and the children who must recall it better than I.
Red Scarfed Crow
Denelle Noyes

black and colored Sharpie on sketch book paper
8 x 11"
She trills in reply; a flutter of strings.
I crescendo, humorously fingering untouched keys,
raising my eyebrows to the tension of the rising melody.
Then I say,

“Shall we unison?”

And she,

“Oh . . . no,”

she hushes me piano, “listen, Love,

There was a theme in Movement I;
I, with him slipping into unison often,
as often we slipped out; and though
only echoes of that melody reverberate now
in Movement II
( echoes are to you only phantoms)
they are the sound of dreams bursting,
not dying, but sustaining
—but rooted and pedaled—
and my theory holds that the echoes,
to prove their essentiality to the greater song,
must hide until they saturate once more
and burst—not into old theme,
but rather loving variation.”

I listen, dampened, yes, but not muted out;
It is a minor distraction, what she has said.
So, I follow her lead and remain to her only
a perfect fifth.
As such,
I will keep hovering above, leaving space between us,
until the day she forgets those echoes and movements
and she comes home to my theme
and our melodies
and our hearts
resolve.

Onion River Review
To the Poet William Davis at Café Muddy Waters

Luis Lázaro Tijerina

I.

Auld Lang Syne in the endless nights,
to the wind, to water, to the old streets
in Paris, you visited so many times
with your words. We, who write word after word,
will remember you in these harsh times,
at this café, with the girls all around
like "spectral colors from flags and dresses,"
as you wrote in The Coach Road Landscapes.

Now, we say good-by among wooden tables,
from chairs that are frail wood
with bohemian airs to the cold winds
brought in from snowy nights,
all this memory in your poems and sonnets,
that smell of Ecuador in a language cast out,
a beautiful fisherman’s net,
your life, a language of light and torrents.
Since you have been gone,
barges and children’s paper boats are submerged
along the Louisiana coast,
railways, houses, and port buildings burn
in New Orleans
like those “cataracts and rags of empire”
you wrote about after studying the Masters’ paintings,
where bridges and horizons once met
in a subtle pigment of glory and heartache
at the turn of the coach road.

II.

What we were is no more,
for the era of our youth is gone,
what remains is jazz in dim cafés
and a Blues woman singing
as if all the music was Mardi Gras once again,
when we were young and green.
Lincoln Gap
Annemieke Spoelstra

digital photograph

Oh, for a Bee's Experience!
Annemarie Messier and Daniel Messier

digital photograph
The Country of Your Garden
Adrie Kusserow

Despite everything,
there you are again
deep in the humid thighs of July,
propagating Eden, little by little
as you walk, regal and measured,
lip curled, hands clasped behind your back,
through the hay strewn paths between raised beds,
the blazing democracy of your garden flourishing beyond
all expectation, wild flags crawling up its borders,
but hurry, you know our children won’t sleep
for much longer, gummy lips pouting as they follow
the rugged terrain of a scary dream’s plot,

and before the morning steam burns off
in another humid, hilly country
too close to Sudan
swaddled in green jungle,
another war is brewing,
for now, the machetes silently glistening
like stones in the river,
the toddlers waddling with their pumpkin bellies,
the farmers, methodically
turning their dried beds of resentment
over and over. This country you have tried so earnestly to understand,

soon to be dug up again with the claws of war,
the wild blood beds of the harvest,
the fetid human compost strewn everywhere.

Hurry.

The Country of Your Garden
Adrie Kusserow

Despite everything,
there you are again
deep in the humid thighs of July,
propagating Eden, little by little
as you walk, regal and measured,
lip curled, hands clasped behind your back,
through the hay strewn paths between raised beds,
the blazing democracy of your garden flourishing beyond
all expectation, wild flags crawling up its borders,

butterflies, deer, children, dogs, crows,
all clamor to be inside its gates, with you,
your fingers combing threads of cosmos,

scabiosa, marigold, hosta
rubbing the furry brown abdomens of Echinacea,
soft and eerie as fontanelle.

Huge mopped puppets of sunflowers
bob in the wind
as you tear the juicy weeds
from what they know is good and sweet
smoothing the soil back again,
as if putting a child
back to sleep in a hurry,

I’m waving from the window,
but you can’t see me. There’s still time
for me to cross the border,
slip under the fence
and lie beneath you
flooded with your rough, blond soiled hands

Come, after all these years, prune me.

I promise I could still rise up to you
like the sunflower, wild haired, glad and naïve
On the Practice of Writing a Novel in One Month
Diane LeBlanc

A woman tells me she wrote a novel in one month
by offering it everything:

Would you like my laundry?

Here, my bagel, please.

Look, instructions for boiling penne rigate.

Surely my razor.

So one night in Chicago at Heaven on Seven, I begin my work.

I order my novel a bottle of Darkened Dixie Voodoo,
Cajun crab cakes with Cajun coleslaw
and a small salad with honey jalapeño.

As hungry as she is, my novel hesitates.
She wants to know what makes coleslaw Cajun.

I can’t stop to explain if I am to give her
a wall that exclaims

Oysters Calypso!
Get it on the side!
Take home Jimmy’s Beans!
Heaven’s Frozen Key Lime Pie!

A sign above the hot sauce warns

Do not disturb bottles, contents WILL explode
The Source

Liz Reid

silver gelatin print
5 x 7"
Contributors’ Notes

Benjamin Aleshire is an artist based in Burlington. His poetry has appeared in Seven Days, Poetry East, Green Mountains Review, and others. His play, “Gauvain the Good Knight,” won the 2009 Nor’Easter Playwrights Competition. He currently edits The Salon: A Journal of Poetry & Fiction, and plays cornet with the ol’ time group Vermont Joy Parade.

Mallory Breiner ’07 is currently happily pursuing her MFA at Hunter College in New York City.

Tom Chandonnet is a recent English grad from Saint Mike’s. He is pleased to announce that there are thousands of filing jobs for those about to graduate, so the future is not bleak for those who know their ABCs.

Ralph Culver has been a grant recipient in poetry of the Vermont Arts Council, and is a past contributor to Onion River Review. His poems have also appeared in Albatross, Bateau, The Bitter Oleander, 5 AM, Off the Coast, and many other publications. He lives in Burlington, where he provides writing and editorial services to commercial clients and nonprofits throughout the country.
Jordan Douglas teaches darkroom photography in the Fine Arts Department. He works with various alternative analog techniques, old and new. *Infrared Silo* was shot on the now extinct Kodak infrared film; *Door Latch* was shot with a medium-format Hasselblad camera. Both images were printed in the darkroom with Lith Developer, which yields a potentially grainy and usually colorful shift in the normal black-and-white tones.

Amber Downing lives in Topsham, Vermont and is an English major and French minor. “Croatoan,” however, is a history word—as it turns out, 8th grade social studies does come in handy.

Alex Dugas is a boy from New Hampshire. He would like to thank his Mum, his Dad, and everyone who is jazz. Just keep improvising—for everyone’s sake.

Megan Durocher is a junior Psychology major and Art minor. This film photograph is of her 91 year-old grandmother by the pond at their home in late fall.

Michael Fecher says, “You take a really sleepy man, Esme, and he always stands a chance of again becoming a man with all his face-intact.”

Lauren Fish is a junior English major and Peace and Justice minor from Bedford, New Hampshire. She took this photo while studying abroad in Ireland. Lauren has a great affinity for the cow species and is happy Mr. Moo is debuting in the *Onion River Review*. She is extremely proud and happy to be a part of the ORR staff!

Timothy Fitzmaurice ’03, lives in Albany, NY, where he is getting certified to torture high school students with Shakespeare, Hemingway, and proper comma usage. He also teaches writing at Hudson Valley Community College and is eternally editing a chapbook of poems due sometime in the next year.

Ann Giard-Chase received both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from SMC. She lives in Vermont where she has raised four wonderful children, owned a few companies, renovated several homes, and escaped into the world of poetry whenever time allowed.

Frank Huseman is a Psychology major, and has studied photography since early high school. Inspired by the works of Jerry Uelsmann, the image was created using dark room processes with four negatives and four enlargers.

Jon Hyde and Kimberly Sultze are environmental photographers who are faculty in the Department of Media Studies, Journalism and Digital Arts. They are passionate about exploring natural spaces, making eye contact with the more-than-human world, and the value of wandering.
Adrie Kusserow is a professor of cultural anthropology at St. Michael’s College. She and her husband Robert Lair are very involved in promoting girls’ education in Sudan with AFRICA Education and Leadership Initiative (www.africaeli.org). They are both very excited that South Sudan will now become its own country.

Diane LeBlanc ’86, a former Onion editor, has published two poetry chapbooks: Dancer with Good Sow (Finishing Line Press, 2008) and Hope in Zone Four (Talent House Press, 1998). Diane directs the writing program and teaches at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.

Diana Marchessault is a History major who loves to write poetry, read, and paint. In particular she loves to paint trees, because, in the words of Willa Cather, “I like trees because they seem more resigned to the way they have to live than other things do.” Indeed, trees remain standing on this earth longer than one human ever could. They see all history even if we do not take the time to notice them.

Jackie McClatchy is an Anthropology major from Norristown, PA.

Bernie McGrath is a guy from New Jersey. His strengths are using a fork and sleeping until two in the afternoon.

Annemarie Kennedy Messier ’99 and Dan Messier are backyard beekeepers in Rhode Island. When not blogging about honey bees, they photo-stalk them around the yard.

Kate Neely is a lover of clay bones, teeth of all kinds, giant gems, and glitter. She and her girlfriend are moving to Seattle in a toaster-car with Whale the cat in the fall! You, lovely reader of the Onion, can see more of her art at www.internalapartments.blogspot.com.

Denelle Noyes is a senior who is studying art as well as psychology and marketing. She loves everything to do with art and plans on pursuing it as a career after she graduates this spring, whether it be in marketing, art therapy, teaching, or beginning her own business with her own unique crafts. She loves art because of the joy that it brings not only to herself, but also to others, and loves the fact that art can be adored and appreciated in any language, from any culture. Her favorite styles of art are impressionism and illustrative works and her personal favorite mediums are acrylic paint and black pen.

Alicia Pacelli is a senior Art and Anthropology major from The Shire who loves to paint outer space. The daughter of an astronomer, she has grown up with a fascination with all things astral. And there’s also just something so liberating about painting an entire canvas black.
Dave Patterson '02 lives in Cape Elizabeth, Maine with his wife Anna Patterson '05. He is currently working on an MFA in fiction writing through the Stonecoast MFA Program.

Jason Rapczynski graduated summa cum laude from Saint Michael's College in 2001 and received an MFA in creative writing from Emerson College in 2005. His debut novel The Videographer won the 31st Annual International 3-Day Novel Contest and was published in 2009. He lives in southern Connecticut and teaches at Three Rivers Community College. “Self-Storage” is an excerpt from Self-Storage, the novel on which he is currently at work.

Liz Reid is a Sociology and Anthropology major from West Bolton, Vermont.

Tayla Reo, a first-year Biochemistry major, painter by night, used her love for the beautiful and diverse atmosphere of Providence, Rhode Island as inspiration for this piece. This is a painting of the WaterFire art sculpture (created by Barnaby Evans in 1994) that illuminates the heart of the city.

Lisa Ritter is a first-year student from Westford, MA.

Ron Roy is a 1975 graduate of St. Mike’s. His first novel, Passing Time, was published in February by Blue Cubicle Press of Plano, Texas (www.bluecubiclepress.com). He recently visited the campus as part of the Alumni Reading Series. He particularly enjoyed the class visits he made while on campus.

MJ Russell enjoys surface design on fabric, art quilting, textile and mixed media collage, and just recently discovered encaustic painting. She keeps her left brain busy serving as the College’s budget officer.

Annemieke Spoelstra is a piano teacher in the Fine Arts Music department at SMC. She likes to be in nature by foot or by bicycle and to get inspired by Creation. www.annemiekespoelstra.com.

Ryan Strobel ’05 has recently finished a pottery apprenticeship in Wisconsin and is now living in New York City.

Luis Lázaro Tijerina is the poet of 23 Jazz Poems and Other Works, published by RA Press, Burlington, VT. Mr. Tijerina is also a military historian and fútbol (soccer) coach. He lives in Burlington and Quebec City.
Joe Tyson is a junior at Saint Michael’s, where he studies Economics. This picture is a rare break from his normal work, which is made up almost exclusively of cell phone and web cam photos. His largest influence is Terry Richardson, primarily due to a respect for his work with Justin Bieber and the Olsen twins.

W. J. Watson is an English major from Fletcher, Vermont. He is currently attending his second year at Saint Michael’s College. He’d like to say something more about himself, but he’d rather just meet you in person.

Justin Whittinghill has long believed that the third person can turn arrogance into acceptable praise. He is also one of the best and most important people in the world. Originally from a small apartment in Kentucky, he spent four years in a meager flat in Japan and then went on to settle in one of Vermont’s tiniest walk-ups. Justin has never broken a bone. Of his.

Amy Wilson is a first-year double major in English and Religious Studies. She enjoys riding trains, getting lost, and people-watching (not necessarily in that order). In her daydreams she imagines houses and gods, and in her night dreams she visits Neverlands and Shadows. Her poem “Coast Marked” is about a boy and for a girl. She aspires to be a mermaid.
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The students, faculty, staff, alumni and members of the community who contributed to the Onion this year; it is because of you that the Review exists.
The open forum for Saint Michael's students to perform and showcase their art in an accepting safe environment.