

The Aerie

Volume 11 • Spring 2010

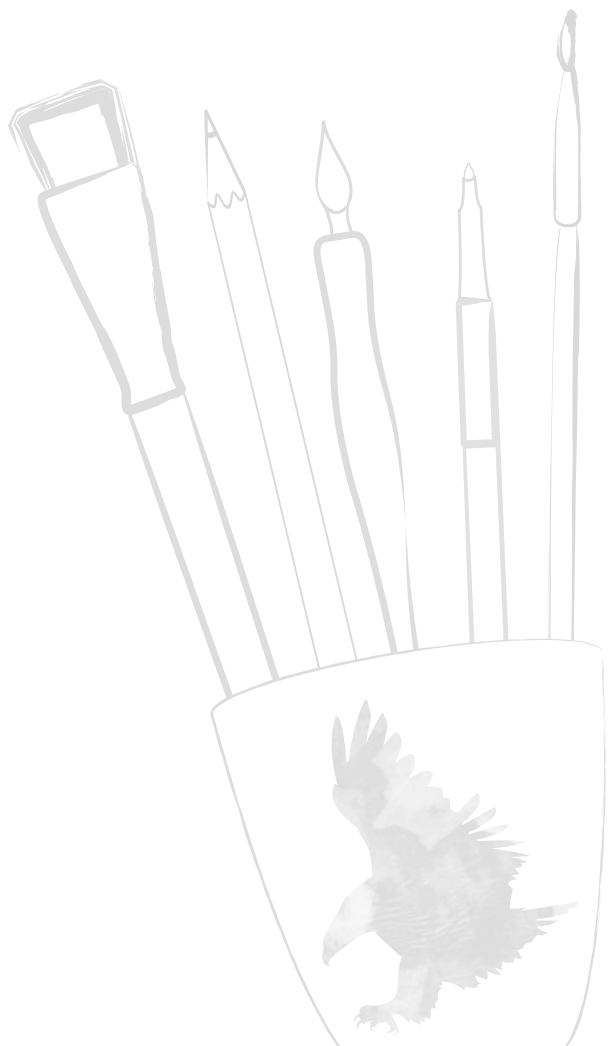


The Aerie

Concordia University's Literary and Arts Publication

Volume 11 • Spring 2010

Concordia University, Irvine, California



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aerie

also aery (âr'e, îr'e) n. pl. -ies

1. The nest of an eagle or other predatory bird built on a crag or other high place
 2. A house or stronghold built on a height
 3. The literary and arts publication of Concordia University, Irvine
- [Med. Lat. aeria < OF. aire.]

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Charcoal
Leanne Garcia

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Cairns
Photography
Jarid Rollins



Memory

she was eight and I was ten
ages made no difference then
we rode bikes and climbed trees
as our hearts danced with the breeze
two houses down and one across
quite literally a stone's toss
dad still made me call him though
couldn't understand why he worried so
we were safe there on our street
we owned it, made it our retreat
made a fort with cardboard boxes
escaping Boredom and her toxins
used up the hours before the night
our only watches were streetlights
calling us to dinners and to bed
sleeping faster than the dead
we awoke to each new morn
bright and happy at a new day born
trampolines and swimming pools
children live with their own rules
we grew up and reminisce
of the days we often miss
years do pass as they did then
not one's the same as eight and ten.

Jamie Buster



Catastrophic Molt

Photography
Emily Watson



Loving the Paperboy

Dog chases paperboy,
Bestows her love daily,
Kisses his heels.

The paperboy just runs,
Not feeling the same love.

Reno



Yellow Waterfall

I think it was my mother who taught me that dead things ought to be buried. Which is the reason that each time I stumbled upon the corpse of a toad, or bird, or squirrel, I dug a small grave, marked the resting place with a stone, and decorated it with dandelions that I plucked from the neighbors' yards.

I remember one particular occasion when I came across the stiff, bloated body of a Robin. She lay on her side and a large black fly buzzed around her puffed out eye. It never occurred to me to feel sad—finding her like that. I rolled the Robin into a small grave using the end of a long stick and marked the spot with a sizeable rock. Next to the tombstone I placed an abandoned bird nest that I found a week earlier—meant to be some sort of reminder of what lay beneath.

And after I admired my little project for a few moments, I skipped off to find a new adventure in a different corner of the backyard.

I can't remember if a day or a week passed before I found the egg.

I do remember that I was on my hands and knees digging in my mother's garden when something blue as sky caught the corner of my vision, and I crawled over to the Robin's resting place to get a closer look. Lying among the gnarled weeds and broken twigs of the abandoned bird nest was a bright blue, porcelain-smooth Robin's egg.

My heart leapt into my throat as I registered the scene. Blue egg—in a nest—on the ground. Even at 6 years old, I knew that no bird in its right mind would leave her offspring alone on the ground. Which was how I knew that this egg—this perfectly whole, uncracked, blue egg—was meant to be mine.

My mother had taught me once that for an egg to hatch it not only needed to be kept warm, but it needed to change positions occasionally to keep the chick from sticking to one side of the shell.

I housed the egg in the tool shed and kept it warm by swaddling it in a washcloth that I ran under hot water. I religiously turned it every ten minutes.

The egg continued to lie motionless, but I imagined what it would be like when it finally started wiggling, imagined how I would gasp as the flawless surface of the egg would crack into pieces and a tiny bird would poke her head out and chirp lightly as she looked at me—her momma. I imagined digging for worms to feed her and imagined how she would sit on my shoulder while I walked to school and how impressed my teacher and all of my friends would be. I imagined how she would flutter about the yard—but how she would always return to me because she would love me the most.

Then it was time for dinner. When I told her about my find, my mother thought I was fibbing. I took her to the tool shed and unwrapped the cloth, which had turned icy cold in the crisp northern Ohio spring air.

"I think the most loving thing to do," she said after a moment, "would be to put the egg back in the nest you found so that the bird's real mother can find her."

I knew my mom was right—she was always right. We put the old nest in a low branch of a tree in my backyard and carefully set my fragile, blue egg inside it.

"This is where she belongs," my mom said. "She'll be safe."

I was told to stay away from the nest for a while so I wouldn't scare the mother bird. But I couldn't stand it. Something begged me to check on her.

I shimmied up the tree trunk and peered inside the nest. All the breath escaped my lungs. The once smooth, bright blue surface of my egg had been pecked open and out of the cracks yellow goo seeped out and cascaded down the shell like a slow moving, yellow waterfall.

I dropped from the tree and struggled to catch my breath. Once I did, I screamed.

My mother ran from the house and I wailed and thrashed at her because she had made me put my egg in that tree—she had said my egg would be safe.

My mom pressed my body to hers anyway. My tears flowed in a river down her shoulder and soaked into her shirt as she murmured comfort into my ear.

"These things happen in nature," she whispered. "They just happen."

As I choked with sobs in my mother's arms about my bird that never really existed, the image of the stiff Robin that I buried forced itself into my consciousness. When I could breathe again and my tears began to dry, I buried the cracked remnants of blue.

And I carried the empty bird nest back to the grave of the Robin and carefully placed it near the large stone. I pulled something pretty from my mother's garden—a clump of hydrangea—and laid it among the twisted leaves and sticks of the bird nest.

Extraordinary Wallflowers

Photography
Amanda Marburger



Humming in the Garden

It was an herb garden. Wooden containers overflowing with parsley and peppermint, aloe vera and ginseng. Not a single flower touched this garden. It was only colored by multiple shades of green. The thyme always grew so fast it spilled over its designated section while the basil delicately stretched upward just the way it was supposed to. Michael's mother loved cooking with her herbs and often used the aloe vera to heal Michael's wounds. Even if Michael was nursing a different kind of wound—a wound deeper than the eye could see—she would direct him to her garden still. She would sip tea on the stone bench that hugged the garden wall while Michael told her about the bullies at school. But this was all before her funeral.

It had been three months. Michael sat on the garden's bench, hunched over, reading. He did everything in the garden lately—he ate, finished his homework, and just a few days prior, he had attempted to weed. This was where he could feel his mother's presence the most. He would pretend he could see her smile, feel the way she used to nestle her cheek against his, and hear her hum as she gardened. Not even the herbal scent that lingered on her dress all day was as soothing as her humming. She wouldn't come back and he knew that, but in her garden, memories were fresh and alive.

Michael turned the page mindlessly, drooped over his once favorite book.

"Hiya!" hollered a high-pitched voice.

Michael sat up straight and quickly cast a glance around the garden. It was empty.

"Up here!" came the voice, hitting two octaves.

A freckled girl sat on the garden's brick wall, just above where he was seated. Two red braids were dangling by her big ears. Michael had never seen such red hair or a smile with so many missing teeth. If he had a shell, he would have retreated inside of it.

"Your garden doesn't have any flowers!" she exclaimed, swinging her legs playfully. The wall was only a couple inches taller than his head and although he hoped she wouldn't, he knew she could easily jump into his mother's garden.

"Wee!" she sang while leaping off the wall and landing on the Aloe Vera plant.

Crunch.

Michael's heart caught in his throat. He gripped his sweater and stared at the aloe pulp seeping out from underneath her sneakers.

"Woopsie!" she laughed. "I'm your new neighbor! Hey! Wanna play a game? It's real fun. You see, I be the lady and you be the knight. Yeah? Wanna play? We'll have to pretend you're dressed in armor and not in those sloppy clothes. Anyway, the knight defeats the drooling troll, which the lady is real happy about because he was slobbering all over!" By this time, she was reenacting the stabbing of the troll. She then jumped a foot to the left to act out the lady's dramatic sigh of relief. "And then the knight asks the lady to dance in a garden. Oh! But before he does that, he has to give her a—oh no! I forgot. You don't have any flowers, do ya? The knight always has to give her a flower before they can dance in the garden."

"This is my mother's herb garden," Michael mumbled, avoiding eye contact. He was clenching his sweater so hard his knuckles seemed about ready to burst out of the skin.

"Oh, well, I'll just have to go dig out some of my flowers. Be right back!"

But before she could turn to step on the stone bench to climb over the wall, Michael grabbed her wrist.

"This is my mother's herb garden," he said, looking at the ground.

"I know. I'm getting some flowers to plant in it."

"The garden doesn't want your flowers."

"But we need flowers to play the game!"

"I don't want to play your stupid game," Michael said nastily, now looking directly into her eyes.

The girl's ears dropped an inch along with her smile. Her lower lip quivered and her eyebrows puckered together.

"But don't you want to be my knight?"

There was a burning feeling in Michael's chest and he couldn't hold it in any longer. In the corner of his eye he could see the Aloe Vera plant laying crippled beside the stone bench. That was his mother's favorite plant. And there was not a single flower in his mother's garden. There never had been. This was an herb garden. He crossed his arms and puffed up his chest.

"You come back into mother's garden and I'll... I'll... hurt you... real bad," he said.

Tears welled up in the girl's eyes before she slipped her wrist out of his grip, stepped up on the bench, and climbed over the garden wall.

It was the next day when Michael felt something was terribly wrong. He looked around the herb garden. Although each plant was still lined in its designated container, alphabetically ordered, just the way his mother liked it, something was not the same. The garden was strangely still and he couldn't smell his mother. He closed his eyes to try to see her face and to hear her voice but a featureless glob stared back in silence. His breathing quivered and tears began to blur his vision, but then he heard something from the other side of the wall. The red-headed girl was humming. Michael uncoiled his hunched back and perked his

ear. His mother used to hum in her garden just like that.

"Hey, what's that you're humming?" he called out, despite himself, wiping his cheeks. But the girl said nothing and ran back inside her house.

There was an emptiness expanding in his chest and he could think of only one way to fill it. He grabbed his bike and pedaled frantically, just as fast as he would if the third grade bullies were chasing him. He had to get to the garden store and back before sundown. In a matter of minutes after his arrival at the store, he had picked out a small carton of red petunias, paid the cashier with change from his piggy bank, and ridden back one-handed on his bike with the flowers carefully tucked under his other arm. Once in the garden, he plucked a single petunia from its stem. On his tippy toes, he stretched to place it on top of the wall, and then he sat on the stone bench and waited. It only took a minute before her little hand from the other side swiped the flower off the ledge.

She climbed a tree, hopped onto the wall and swung her legs over the side. Her gappy smile stretched ear to ear, and she had stuck the red petunia in one of her red braids.

"Hiya," she said excitedly, jumping off the wall and looking around the garden. "Ya need help planting?"

Michael nodded with his head bowed to hide underneath his hair, and handed her his mother's trowel.

"A knight saves the lady, the lady plants him a garden," she declared, but she was gripping the trowel awkwardly and dug too shallow of a hole and planted the petunias in petals first. "Woopsie," she said with a giggle, but continued to dig holes and shove the petunias in the soil all the same.

And just as his mother would have, she did all of this while humming.

Brittany Amsler

Fountain of Diamonds

Photography
Amy Lund



Energy
Photography
Amanda Marburger



Beyond

Oil Paint on Canvas
Senzelumusa Khumalo



DON'T

"Don't kiss me," I beg.
"Why?" I know he will ask.
"This disease, it's of the mouth.
And I want to protect you.
You don't want it,"
I answer.

"Don't touch me," I beg.
"Why?" I know he will ask.
"This disease, it is of the body.
And I want to protect you.
You don't want it,"
I answer.

"Don't love me," I beg.
"Why?" I know he will ask.
"This disease, it is of the heart.
And I want to protect you.
You don't want it,"
I answer.

You are my everything
And no matter what it takes,
I will keep you safe.
I will keep you here in my arms
Where I can hear you breathing,
See that you are safe,
See that you are protected.

All this time,
I have been protecting you.
All this time,
I forgot to protect myself.

Danielle Garvin



Life Starts Now

Adobe Photoshop
Karin Peterson



The Beauty Queen and the Beast

Beauty McQueen lived in her perfect pink world of country clubs and convertibles, a world where everyone always got what they wanted... but not necessarily what they deserved. Her father, James, ran a prosperous real estate agency. Her mother, Eva, did... well... nothing. That's what the maid was for.

"Beauty, come down here," her mother called, "Cliff Burton's on the phone. I think he wants to ask you something!" She said the last part in a syrupy-sweet singsong voice that Beauty despised.

"Ok... coming." Beauty was annoyed, but tried to hide it from her mother. Every so often, Eva's brain would actually kick in and, with it, a certain sixth sense that enabled her to clearly read every thought that passed through her daughter's mind.

Beauty couldn't stand Cliff. He wasn't the sharpest tool (although, make no mistake, he was a tool), but ever since preschool it had been practically preordained that the two of them would get married. Then, Beauty would be a trophy wife, just like her mother, and this vicious cycle would begin again. Maybe if she took long enough to get to the phone, he'd hang up. No such luck.

"Hello," Beauty said, wishing her mother would leave so she could give Cliff the old dust-off.

"Hey, buh-bay!" He literally said that every time he called. Beauty envisioned him popping the collar on his pink Izod shirt, and inadvertently giggled into the receiver, giving poor Cliff a sense of false hope.

"Hey, Cliff, what's up?" she asked with dread, pointing her finger in the opposite direction and hoping her mother would take the hint. She did.

"Well, uh, ya know," he couldn't even string together a full sentence, "It's, uh, the big school dance next Friday... and, uh, I was thinkin' that maybe you'd like to go with me."

"Ooohh, next Friday, huh?"

"Yeppers! Whaddayah say, princess?" Beauty hated being called "princess."

"Well, ya see, Cliff, the pumpkin carriage is in the shop, my fairy godmother got hit by a bus, and one of my glass slippers is cracked, so I'm afraid you're just going to have to take Snow White. Thanks anyway!" Click.

She slammed the phone down with her head held high, and walked out into the back yard to decompress. It was short-lived. She hadn't been outside for thirty seconds when the ground started to shake as a sonic boom of music flowed over the neighboring wall and into her eardrums. Her mind felt like it was going to explode as the opening hook of Iron Maiden's "Aces High" began playing.

Beauty peeked over the wall and saw Kane "Beast" Roberts simultaneously rocking on air guitar and unloading boxes from his black-and-red truck. She'd known him since they were kids, too. The only difference was that, as far as her parents were concerned, he wasn't good enough for her. He was a greasy MetalHead who always wore band shirts to school and blasted his music while driving, and he was just what she wanted.

"Hey, turn that down so no one can hear it!" she yelled, even though she secretly loved the song.

He responded, in kind, with a gruff remark and an unfriendly hand gesture. He didn't talk much, yet always knew what to say. She waited for him in Biology the next morning at school. They sat next to each other every day, but never spoke. That was all about to change. He walked in just as the bell rang.

"OK, I've decided that it's too much of a pain to actually divide you up into groups," said Mr. Turnicky, the Biology teacher. "So I'm going to make it easy on myself and just have you partner up with the person sitting next to you. OK? Now get to work!"

Beauty took out the worksheet and put it between her and Beast, staring at it awkwardly. "So, uh, what do you think we should do?" she asked.

"I don't care, just pick one. I'll do all the work."

"Let's do the one about pheromones and animal attraction. That sounds interesting!" He didn't get the hint.

"Kay," he said, whipping out a pencil and beginning the assignment.

"So, uh, it's funny... we lived right next door to each other, but I haven't talked to you since elementary school... How's your mom?"

"Fine. Dad's fine. The dogs are fine. I'm fine. I'm trying to finish this."

"So, uh, who's that on your shirt?"

"GWAAAARRRR!" Beast growled.

"Ok... fair enough," she said, not realizing that was actually the band's name.

She offered to come over the next night and help Beast work on the project. He grudgingly agreed. Beforehand, Beauty stopped at Mr. Witch's Chemical Emporium to pick up some pheromones ("guaranteed to work!"). She put some on her neck and wrists before knocking on Beast's door.

As her knuckles hit wood, a funny thing happened: her hair turned black, her eye makeup got darker, her jeans were

perfectly ripped, her high heels turned into black Converse sneakers, and her designer blouse transformed into a White Zombie tour t-shirt from the '80s. She looked like a Metal chick, she felt like a Metal chick, she even smelled like a Metal chick... which is to say that she smelled like a MetalHead... only more flowery. Needless to say, Beast was stunned, as made evident by his bulged eyes and the dull thud heard when his jaw hit the floor:

"Huh... hey, Beauty. You look... different," he said.

"I'll say," she responded, unimpressed. "So, you gonna invite me in, or do I gotta stand out here all night?"

"Oh... yeah... sure... come on in. The stuff's on the table in the living room."

Beauty spent the rest of the evening looking at charts and information. Beast spent the rest of the evening looking at Beauty. They finished the assignment, and the rest of the week flew by. It went so well, in fact, that Beauty didn't even have to worry about asking Beast to the school dance... because he asked her.

They had an amazing time together until the last song of the night — a slow dance. Things started off well. The song was Metallica's "Nothing Else Matters," the most romantic Metal song of all-time. Beauty had her head nestled on Beast's shoulder as the two swayed back and forth in the middle of the floor. But once Kirk Hammett's guitar solo started, Mr. Cheech, the herbology professor, was so moved that he got his lighter out and hoisted it up to the ceiling.

The sprinklers went off immediately, showering everything in a flood of water. Beauty felt different as soon as the cold liquid hit her skin. The pheromones were washed away as her hair regressed to its "natural" blond state. Her eye makeup evaporated. Her Black Sabbath t-shirt turned into Britney Spears. The illusion was over. But Beast didn't look upset.

"Metal is something you're born into. You showed me that you had it in you all along. I'm glad this happened. Really," he said, taking her face in his hands and kissing her. And from that night on, the two lived happily ever after... just like Ozzy and Sharon.

Erik Olsen

A Moonlight Serenade

I pitch my words in rising crescendo, swooning rubato
While we sway on the dance floor
Who could ask for anything more?
I've heard serenades in blue, felt indigo moods
But none can croon the melody
Of sweet moon glow upon your cheek.
And even notes caressed by Ol' Blue Eyes,
(Which much to his surprise)
Would falter to describe the symphony of your eyes
The glimmering stardust adorning your hair, your ears, your neck—
Shimmering in pure, clear tones
As cool breath in my ears
Until I'm taken by the dizzy atmosphere.
Around and around we spin
Twirling amongst celestial beams
Until Duke's Place is but a blur and distant melody
Oh how high the moon!
I gliss a kiss off your lips
As the dancing descends—an adagio pace
And I whisper a pianissimo note.
You linger in my arms—a fermata's embrace
Closing a moonlight serenade.

Justin Solis

In the Music

Intaglio Print
Leanne Garcia



Vinyl Records

Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator

Roberto Avila



Over-Rated, Flat-Billed Hats

You think you play the game better
Than me?
I know more than you think.
I know your ways.
I know that every move you make
Is a way to make me think you have no moves.

You barely look at me all night,
Purposeful strategy, as you collect conversations
From passerby sluts.
You down the cheapest beers you can find
As you glue yourself to an empty wall.

Your backwards, over-rated, flat-billed hat
With reflective sticker still attached annoys
Me as I count the other indistinguishables
Like yourself. I use the girl's fingers next to me
To count as I have run out of hands to show
All the future counterfeiters of life.

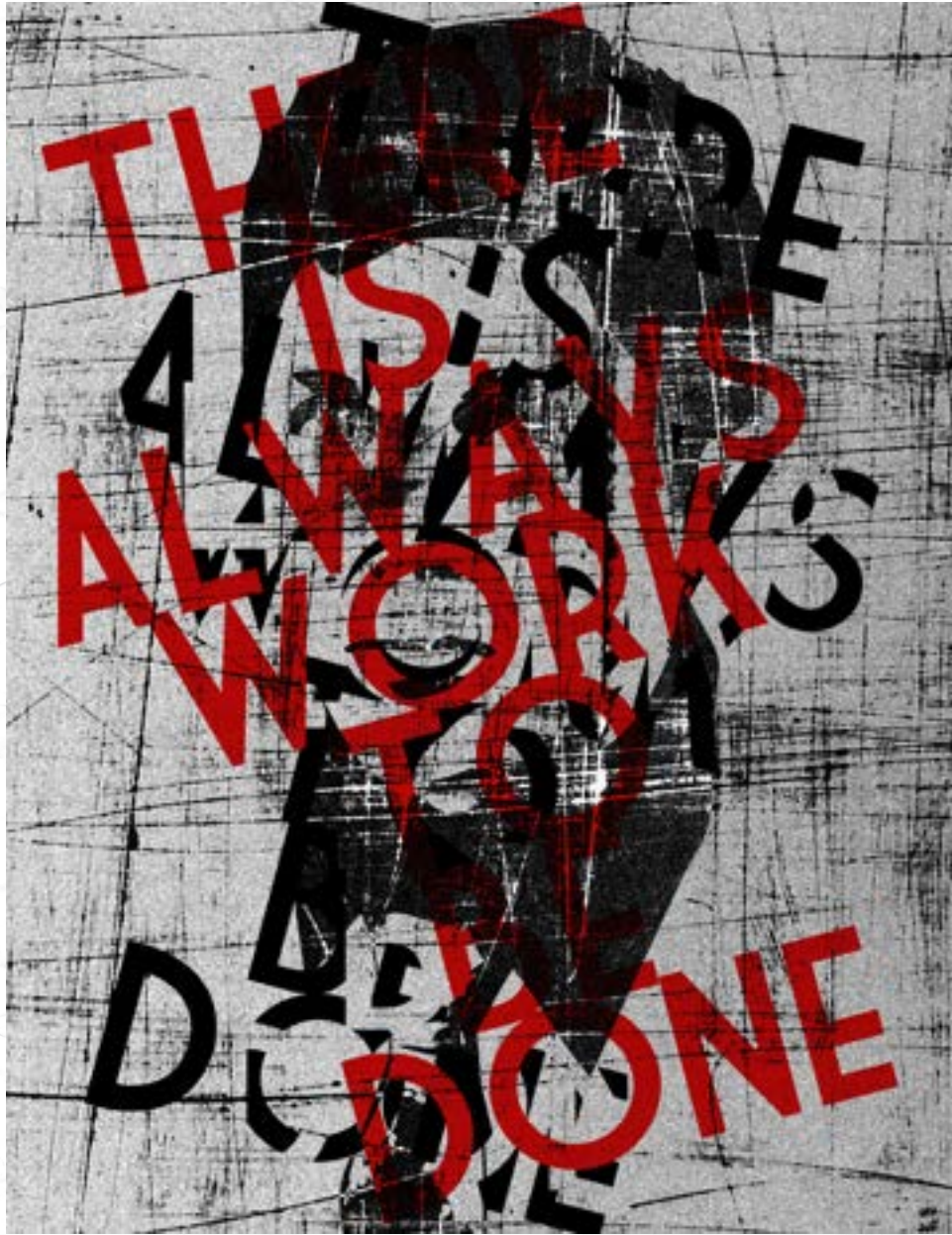
You throw around the words "Real" and "Truth"
Like you've ever know what they mean
Especially to someone like me
Who's never seen either one before.
I can play the game just as good as you.
You want to know how?
Because I learned from you how to con
My way through people's lives
Without them ever knowing who I am.

Ali Smith

Work

Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator

Roberto Avila



The Soul of an Artist

Straining to see the room before her, the only sensation plausible is the gentle scraping as he sketches away the blank canvas within her eyes. His eyes fixate on hers, squinting to measure every last detail of the intensity of her iris. He lifts his pencil from his drawing and his gray eyes come into focus as her vision clears for the first time in her subliminal existence.

Dropping the pencil to the table next to the easel, he runs his hands through his disheveled dark blond hair and sighs in the stale air of the tiny room.

His eyes graze her body, noting every curve, every shadow, every possibility. Picking up the eraser, he softly rubs away the stray wrinkle on her forehead. She is beautiful for him.

Cupping his hand to his mouth, his eyes focus and his eyebrows tense as he pushes himself back from the easel. Rummaging through the pile of clothes collected in the corner of the small room, he pulls out a black fleece sweater and shakes it out. He pushes his head through the sweater, followed by his arms, and moves toward the table. "I'll finish you later," he says as he slides his silver smudged hands into two black gloves and leaves the room.

Her gaze follows the closing door. Allowing her vision to absorb every inch of her world, she notices a quote that hangs from the wall beside the door: *Every work of art is a piece of the artist's soul exposed for judgment.* Her newly found understanding pieces itself together. She is he; her existence stems from his soul. From his mind, from his passion, from his talent.

In the hours that follow, she revels in every detail of her surroundings. Old used books line the walls that are covered in juxtaposed sketches and paintings that shrivel at the corners, held in place by silver tacks. Small cracks reach across the ceiling above her and water stains crawl along the corners of the wall. A large blanket, carelessly thrown onto the bed, gently caresses the aged wooden floor next to an open window.

A cool, moist breeze creeps through the room, chilling her colorless body. She waits.

When he finally returns he hovers above her. Judging, "It's not quite there," he mutters, as he walks past her to the window. She watches him as he shifts his attention between her and the world outside the window.

Striking a match, he gracefully eases the flame to the end of his black cigarette and inhales.

Fix me.

He draws the smoke in and gracefully exhales, allowing the milky smoke to trickle towards his cheek.

I am your creation, your soul, we are one. Make me perfect.

Striding back to the counter, he picks up his pencil. He begins by softly sketching at her ankle. A piece of gray ash from his cigarette drifts across her face, landing lightly on her shoulder. He brushes it away, leaving a smudged gray streak across the paper.

Slowly he rounds out her heel, shading the arch of her newly conceived foot. He gently rubs the shadow onto her calve and blows the remaining silver powder surrounding her.

Pausing, his gray eyes harden like cold cement and he mutters, "Impossible." Slamming the pencil onto the table, the silvery tip breaks off, and she watches from her perch as he pulls his shirt off. He slaps off the light. "Impossible." She hears his bed squeak for a moment and then silence. Her heart breaks in the darkness. Silence.

When the sun's rays stretch through the window, they glimmer across the back of his head. His dark figure is gradually illuminated and she sees his eyes fixated on her. His body, framed by the window, casts a long shadow across the wooden floor that reaches for the leg of the easel. He squints disapprovingly. *Finish me.* "Why try, it's not worth it." Coffee in hand, he walks away, lowering his eyes to the ground, gently shaking his head. *You can make me what you want.* "Impossible," he whispers to himself in self-defeat. Walking past his drawing, the chilly ghost of wind follows him out the door.

Her eyes drift to the objects in front of her. The black stereo grins at her with its two black eyes, gently cooing "...*nothing is real... Strawberry Fields forever.*" The spiraling coffee stain sits somewhat free of the three-week-cup of molding coffee standing erect on the desk. "*Living is easy with eyes closed...*" The porcelain ashtray sits beside the cup, dirtied with yesterday's cigarettes and Black Clove butts surrounded by the powdery gray ash.

As the daylight leaks out of the room, he returns with white plastic bags in his hand. Placing them on the counter, he opens the refrigerator door, ignoring the sheet of drawing paper propped up against his easel. Grabbing a Red Stripe beer, he squeezes the cap off and takes a gulp from the fat round bottle. His muscular protruding knuckles grow pale around the edge of the counter and he sighs out his frustrations. *I'm sorry, how can I change? How can I be better?*

From the kitchen, she sees his head turn to look at her. Planning her out. She watches and a hint of happiness and anticipation flutters within her as he approaches her. Lifting her from the easel he skims the lines of his picture. Her eyes meet his and, for a moment, the two figures lock in what she feels is a subliminal understanding between creator and creation. *I love you.* "Worthless," he sighs, shaking his head. He releases the sheet of paper from his grasp, allowing it to sway in the air into the black metal trashcan beside his drawing table.

Kaysie Ellingson

Sense of Place

Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator
Jordan Kimura



A New Decade

Photoshop
Karin Peterson



Back in the Day

Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator
Roberto Avila



Need to Sell Item

Will sell for \$1000, but worth more. Much more. A lifetime more.

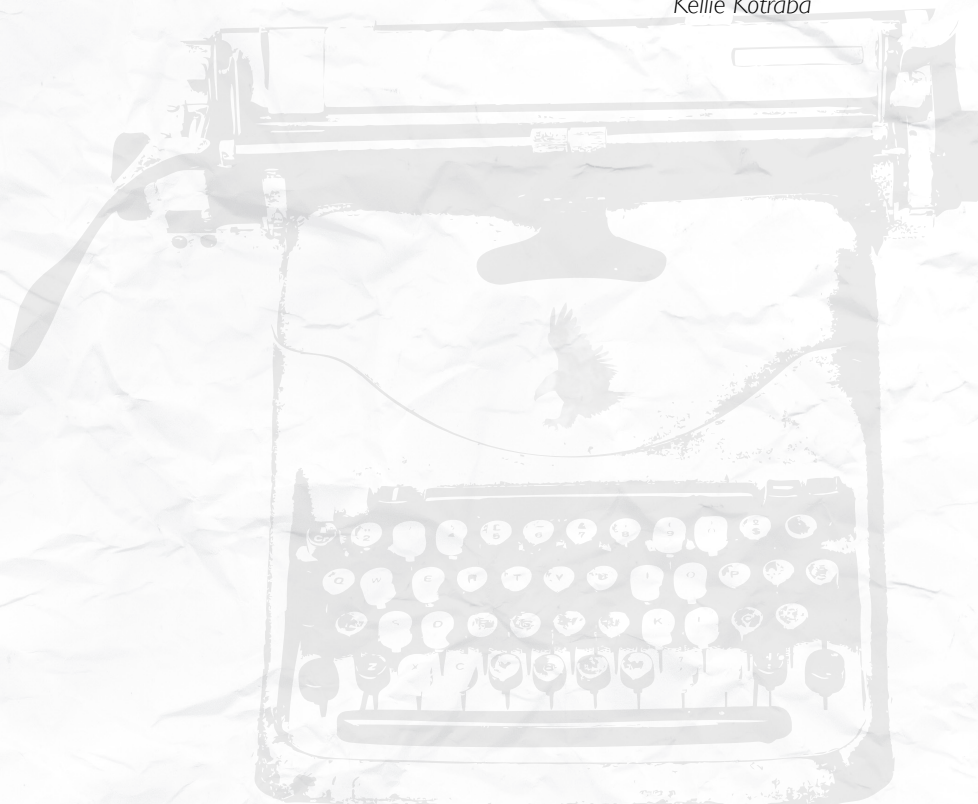
He had sent flowers, and chocolates, and a letter. Letters—six of them, one for every month since then. He never received a response—he wondered if she even read them. And even if she did, if she even thought anything of them, or if they were dismissed as nothing. Whether she smiled or sighed or screamed when she saw his familiar handwriting and address, he did not know. He only knew that he sent them, and he meant them. And she never responded.

He wondered what she had done with the dress. Did bridal stores take them back, or did those sell on Craig's List, too? And what would she say? He didn't know if he wanted to know, or if it was better left unknown.

He scrolled down the list of other jewelry postings. Lots of rings. He wondered how many other men were in the same position as he—a broken engagement, and a store that won't take back the ring, and resorting to selling it. He wondered what sort of man would buy a used, failed engagement ring, and what they would think when they saw it.

He stared at his posting and the simply stated truth.

Kellie Kotraba



Tribute to Tony

Everyone knows my Mama. She lives in the house on the corner of Maple and 5th Street with hundreds of Christmas lights twinkling, including the big burning candle in the top left window. She takes great care in placing every decoration. The holly wreath welcomes people at the front door. Lights link the first floor rooms like a brighter version of the running lighting on a Greyhound bus. Three stockings hang over the fireplace. Angel ornaments dangle over the tree. A nativity scene waits by the Christmas tree on the coffee table.

I walk in through the back door with dishes of mashed potatoes and corn bread in hand. I place the food on the counter and cut through the kitchen to hang my coat on my rung in the hall closet. I see Mama fiddling with the baby Jesus figure. "Ma, I'm here." Her dark coffee hair is pulled into a messy bun.

My Mama has never been the same since my brother Tony died in December 1989. He was five. I don't remember him because I was two, but Mama makes sure I will never forget him.

"Mornin' Gracie! Hope you didn't hit much traffic," Mama says and shuffles into the kitchen as the timer dings. I glance around the family room, and finally at the tree.

Every year there is one present for him under our tree. I thought it was harmless until Daddy moved away. A few Hot Wheels, Paddington bear, an autographed Trevor Hoffman baseball. But it continued with a toaster for his college dorm room and a Budweiser stein for his 21st Christmas.

This year I see two presents set aside under the tree.

I step into the kitchen as she takes the cherry-apple pie out of the oven. "Mama? Why are there two presents under the tree?"

"Why, Gracie. I had to get a present for Tony and his would-of-been bride-to-be. He'd be 25 by now, so I assume...you know."

"Oh Mama."

"Dear girl, don't give me that look. I have seen that look in your eyes many a time before. It's just an old music box anyways—a romantic one with Mister Rhett and Miss Scarlet."

Because it's Christmas, and because I know my Mama, I close my mouth and set the table.

Stacey King

My View Does Change
Photography
Michael Hartley



Slow Asleep

I am going to walk slowly today
And let the small fragments of the day fall around me.
I will shuffle my feet pulling my heavy legs
Up concrete steps of education,
My commitment being a rope around my waist pulling,
Pulling me through the desire
To sleep, sleep, sleep.
I will idly putt down the halls
Slightly shifting to the side
Letting others pass to their futures.
I will remain in the now,
A slow molasses of the present.
I will use exhaustion,
A stronger excuse for rest than illness.
I will sleep slow today,
Swimming in my fatigue
And drinking my rest through a thin straw,
Relishing my mattress and sheets.
I will be found in a blue quietness
Slow asleep.

Jamie Buster

Depression

Adobe Photoshop
Larry Beausoleil



Under Cucamonga Peak

My youth was spent at the feet of Cucamonga Peak.
The Peak was my compass,
my father and my mother;
it was North.

In the folds of its shoulders were deep ravines
where the snow became ice and never melted.

I slept outside to converse with the skies.
I learned the stars and planets,
watched them disappear in the west
while others rose up from the east,
turning slowly, imperceptibly, around the North Star,
and around its closest companion, Cucamonga Peak.

Natanya Moody

Beautifully Done

Photography
Amanda Marburger



Bring Your Skull

Oil Paint
Ariel Podas



Pink Champagne on Ice

These walls are haunted you know. Every night after the guards make their final march down the pallid hallway and the emergency light above the door is poured into my cage of solitude, I see him. First, he peeks his head through the barred window. Watching me. He has no eyes, only holes. Deep, black, magnetic holes, swallowing and destroying any form of light or life that dares to venture too close.

As the shaded bars cast by the flooding light stretch across the floor, gracefully touching the brownish wool blanket that covers my legs, his black figure reaches inside, first with his bony fingers, stretching towards the ceiling from the shadowy bars cast on my floor. The pointed elbow makes its way followed by his balding head. He is a master of shape shifting. Like a cockroach contorting his body to slither under your door frame, so does this man slither into my bedroom.

After the head comes the rest of him, until he lies in the center of my chamber floor, slumped over, slightly illuminated by the flowing light. I watch in silent fear. Half running, half crawling, he stammers to the wall. Crouching by my head he stares and I see him smile as he whispers *Jai guru deva, om*.

Clenching my eyes, his voice scratches at my eardrums: *Jai guru deva, om. Jai guru deva, om*. His hot breath tantalizes my hair as his head draws closer to my face. Only eight more hours until that river of light is forced back to its dam, carrying this wretch in the corner of my cell back to his dwelling place. His breath, now hot on my face, drifts into my lungs. Only eight more hours. Opening my eyes, I stare into those consuming black holes. *Bodhati Paul, bodhati*, he scratches. Shoving my fingers into my ears, attempting to squeeze out the demonic voice of my intruder, still I hear, even louder than before, *bodhati*.

I remember the first time I saw him. He didn't have to slither through bars or shape shift as he does now. He simply walked into my room as I lay next to my wife. He stared. He stood at my bedside, silently watching. For eight hours he watched, and for eight hours I lay beside my wife paralyzed with fear. As the sun pierced through our maroon curtains, he walked out.

A week later he made his second appearance. Only now he knelt by my head. Whispering into my ear he said *apahanti*. Turning my head, I looked into those black holes and he smiled a toothless smile. *Apahanti* he repeated as he peeked his head over my covers, staring at my wife. The following morning, as I woke to the sunlight warming my face, I turned to find my wife's limp, lifeless body draped over the edge of our bed.

I remember picking her up, checking her pulse and weeping over her dead body. Examining her for any clue as to what could have happened, I saw that her throat was decorated with purple. In the midst of my panic, a strange sensation overcame me and I saw him, crouched in the corner of the room behind the dresser, smiling. He killed her.

Now, here I lay, ten years after the murder of my wife and my incarceration in Patton State Hospital for her murder, being tormented by this same ghostly figure whispering gibberish into my ear. Only six more hours until he leaves my side and retreats to the dark shadows.

In the morning he has left and I see that he has stamped a handprint on my arm, matching that which was on my wife's slender neck the morning of her death. As I walk down the white washed walkway and through the dining hall, I weave past my fellow inmates, avoiding any eye contact. The buzz from the flickering fluorescent light above my head lingers in my ear as I move to avoid the medication distribution counter. I've refused medication for a week now. That soft pink, transparent liquid served in the flowered Dixie cup is the object of their vacant promises. The doctors and psychiatrists said he would go away. They said I would get better. They know nothing. I make my way to my scheduled weekly appointment with my psychiatrist, Dr. Lend.

"Paul, I want to talk about this man. Have you seen him recently?"

"Yes."

"When did you see him last?"

"Last night."

"And does he still say things to you?"

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"Nothing. Gibberish."

"Can you only see him at night?"

"No. He hides in the shadows."

"Can you see him now?"

"Kind of."

"Where is he?"

"Crouching behind your chair." Dr. Lend turns around searching behind his large antique chair.

"Paul, there's no one here."

"You have your blinders on. You can't see him when you do that."

"How do I take them off?"

"You can't." I allow my eyes to drift from Dr. Lend's inquisitive face to the shadowy figure slumped behind his chair. His bent knees reach his ears and he holds his head in those bony, dark fingers of his. He peers out slightly, mocking me, and gently whispers *adya raatrau*.

"Are you taking your medication?"

"No."

"May I ask why you stopped?"

"Because you said he would go away, and he hasn't."

"No, Paul, he won't go away with your medication. He just won't tempt you anymore."

"I didn't kill her. He did."

"How did he kill her?"

"I don't know. I don't want that medication anymore. It doesn't work. I won't."

"Ok Paul, I can't force you, but I need you to understand that this medication will not make this man go away. He will simply become more pleasant. Say nicer things."

"It's gibberish."

"Ok, well the choice is yours."

"Are we done?"

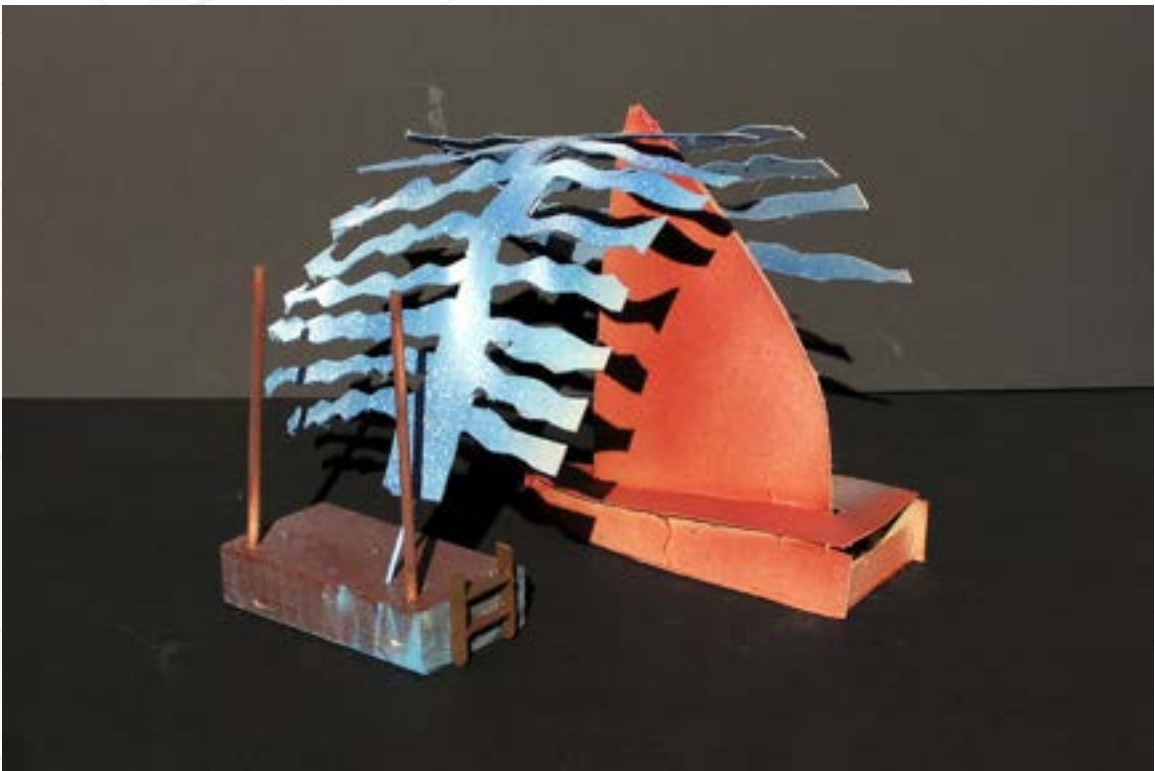
I quickly walk back to my room. Head down, hands in my pockets, trying to put my blinders on, but I see him. Galloping under the tables, following me, jumping from shadow to shadow, screeching, *adya raatrau. Adya raatrau. ADYA RAATRAU.*

Laying in my bed, the flooded light seeps through the window. Inch by inch he slithers through the bars. First his stares, then that hand, and then his arm, his head, and there he is. Slumped over in the center of the light, he glances up smiling at me again. *Apahanti*, he whispers, as he did that night. He stands erect now and runs to the window, slamming his fist into the glass. *Crash!* It shatters. *Apahanti*. He stares at me, gawking with those two black consuming craters.

The guards rush into my cell. Unlocking the door, I hear one of them yell, "Get the nurse on duty, he's losing blood." Slumped in the corner of my cell, I sit as the guards make an attempt to conceal my wounds. I look at my disheveled bed and at the dark figure perched on my sheets, staring at me with those consuming holes and toothless grin. *Nidraati*, he says. *Sleep*, he says, and I close my eyes.

Kaysie Ellingson

Wind
Cardboard
Ross Bennett



(Red)iscover Chicago

Photography
Karina Sweeney



The Lieutenant

He came back from the mountains, from the jagged points of granite and ice. In the winter, snow swept over the peaks—a sheet drawn over death. He came back to the valley, where we watched—or forgot—the surrounding white cliffs and spires.

In the valley we soaked in the green, the waves of grass, the ripples of water. Sturdy houses of pine logs circle like wagons. We were alive, from fathers and daughters to dogs and fowl, nodding to one another, gathering and dispersing. Everyday. Living.

We knew him once, in his springtime, before he left three years ago for the war: His grey hat was silhouetted black against the sun when our eyes turned their gazes up, past his nervous mare, to recognize his face. Men spun around to wave their wives out of their houses. Boys seeking to prove their worth sidled up to take the reins while the Lieutenant dismounted. Girls stood on porches, listening to his combat boots kick up dust and watching him part the widening crowd.

Voices garbled together, welcoming hands clapped his jacketed shoulders, beating out a cloud of unknown—age, dirt, ash, dust—which rose and hung around his head, lit by the sun. He was nervous like his pacing mare. He kept his palm open by his side. Ready. Wary.

The old folk had not changed but for added wear or greyer hair. The boys had lengthened and found their stride. The girls—there was nothing like them in the mountains, only cheap renditions. He'd left them in soft dresses with their hair in long braids. They had also lengthened, found their stride; they'd tailored their dresses to their bodies, some of them round with child. They'd pulled their hair off their necks, all seemingly untouched, all cream. Waiting.

He must be tired, yes, he must be tired—the wives echoed each other. The Lieutenant allowed himself to be steered indoors, a washroom, a bed. He placed his bag on the swept floor. He would not bother to unpack it. He would not be staying long. They let him be. The small crowd parted with promises of dinner. They did not understand that he was comfortable, that he did not hanker for a wash or a nap. He sat on the edge of the cot and waited. They would fetch him soon enough.

He was content to pass the next hour in silence, keeping watch on the edge of the cot, listening to the noises outside, wondering if he recognized the voices or only imagined he did.

The unmarried girls abandoned their mothers who set dinner alone while they scrubbed their necks and combed their hair and let their minds wander and hope that the Lieutenant was back for good. Or looking for a wife.

The dinner table had room for only the Lieutenant's closest relations and friends, though others passed in and out to wish him welcome. Nieces and nephews he'd never met before played with their food, and grandparents' chairs had been inherited by their children.

While dinner rounded out, while children were herded to bed and the men left to tend to their duties, the door creaked open once more. Another friend here to see the Lieutenant's reappearance. A man he did not recognize, with an unfamiliar stride and an unfamiliar baby in his arms, approached. And a young woman, her head bowed to look down into the Lieutenant's face, appeared from behind the man and child.

"Tenant, my wife tells me she was a good friend of yours once upon a time. We've come to welcome you back."

The Lieutenant looked at this stranger's wife. Her.

He had not expected her to still be here, had counted on it even. She was too much for the valley. The valley surely would not, could not, hold her—that was always his belief. And yet here she was, beside this man. Her man. Her husband. And her child.

Once upon a time, indeed.

The strange husband was invited to polish off the left-over plates at the other end of the table. He handed the child to his wife and lumbered over to the food.

It occurred to the Lieutenant that he'd forgotten to rise, or offer his chair, or speak to his old friend who remained by his side. When he did, she smirked, murmured a thanks for the seat, and patiently waited for the Lieutenant to mouth words while her husband patiently munched and shoveled, captivated by the plate. The room was nearly vacant, only the four bodies at the table and wives aimlessly cleaning.

"Your child?"

She smiled and looked down into the baby's face. "Yes. Brooke."

The Lieutenant moved his lips inaudibly, "Your husband?"

She nodded. Offered her hand. He took it and felt a small ring on her finger.

The Lieutenant also nodded. He looked down at her hand, tiny in his own, and rolled his thumb over her knuckles. She was weak—not unstrong, only weaker than he was.

Looking up again, he saw that the husband had finished eating and was rising to fetch his wife and child from the hands of the strange Lieutenant. He released her—her ringed finger and smooth knuckles—before her husband rounded the table and to whom she would give back her hand.

She had not known to wait.

We've not seen the Lieutenant since.

Natanya Moody

Soledad

Eterna, fiel compañera,
atrapante de penas y pesares.
Su silencio y franco zumbido calmará
aquel día de tempestades.
Cuando en paz quieras refugiarte,
solo Ella con inmensos brazos te acogerá.

Eternamente te mimaría.
Solamente, Ella, eterna Musa
que por siglos ha sobrevivido.
Miles de décadas por su piel
se han remendado
y heridas han cicatrizado.

Ya ni al Dios, todo poderoso
se le atribuye tu creación:
tu ya existías, tu respirabas, tu suspirabas.

Soledad,
tu tenacidad invoca calma
en las almas de los solitarios,
esa calma que los Buendía tocaron y olvidaron.

Soledad, Soledad, Soledad,
en este momento tus alas me amparan ...

Jorge Sanchez

Solitude

Eternal, faithful companion,
engager of hardships and sorrows.
Her silence and honest droning dampens
the day of tempests.

Eternally she will indulge.
Solely, She, eternal Muse,
who for centuries has survived.
A thousand decades have patched
her skin and airs of rejuvenation
have dispersed.

Not even to God, all mighty,
Is your creation attributed:
You had existed, sighed and perspired.

Solitude,
your tenacity invokes tranquility
into the souls of the solitary,
tranquility the Buendías caressed and abandoned.

Solitude, Solitude, Solitude,
at this instant your wings engage me ...

Translated by Jorge Sanchez

Leaf
Photography
Jarid Rollins



Psalm 93:4

Photography
Amanda Marburger



Walking on Water

He is there.
I see Him,
glistening as the water slides down His porcelain skin.
Sliding off as easily as a white lie escapes one's lips.
The moon lights a path along the calm water to show me the way.
To Him.
It is dangerous, impossible.
I.
Am.
Scared.
Testing the crisp water with my toe,
I take a step.
Walking on water.
To Him.
I.
Am.
Free.
His hands reach out for mine.
The wind sings a gentle, teasing song in my ear.
I take another tentative step.
We are not touching, but I can feel the warmth radiating off His hands.
I see the softness of His fingertips.
Delicate, like the surface of the water.
Unbroken.
I can smell His sweet scent as clearly as I can smell the salty ocean.
I move forward along the surface of the daunting ocean.
Greedy, because He is in reach.
Slowly, because I am afraid.
I step.
It breaks.
I fall.
Sinking into the piercing darkness,
into the cold, cruel ocean,
shocks my sensitive skin
blinding me, choking me.
I couldn't make it.
To Him.
Gone, while I sink.
In reach, but I lost Him.
Nothing left but the sound of the wind.

Cassie Ells

Perkins
Photography
Michael Hartley



Concordia University at a Glance



Why CUI?

Concordia University Irvine, founded in 1976, is part of the national Concordia University System of ten colleges and universities. As a liberal arts university, Concordia offers undergraduate as well as graduate degrees through the School of Business and Professional Studies, the School of Education, Christ College (School of Theology) and the School of Arts and Sciences.

Concordia takes a broader view of education. As a liberal arts university, we focus on preparing students for their vocation — their calling in life — rather than simple job training. Students have the opportunity to develop themselves as wise, honorable, and cultivated citizens of a global world. And as a Christian university, our faith is woven throughout the curriculum rather than relegated to a few subjects.

We encourage a free interplay of ideas, where students are involved and able to voice their opinions. In our small classes averaging 20 students or less, students are able to fully participate. The faculty members will really get to know you. The faculty members get to know students — and with faculty as mentors, students learn about research and educational opportunities for a richer experience.

Location

Concordia University Irvine is located in the heart of Orange County, one of the most attractive and fastest growing areas in the nation and minutes away from the beaches, shops and outdoor activities. Everything right at your fingertips! Perhaps most attractive is the duality of the campus location, being within 40 miles of LA while being secluded and tucked away in rolling green hillsides overlooking the city of Irvine.

Accreditation

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education

Schools

- School of Arts and Sciences
- School of Business and Professional Studies
- School of Education
- Christ College

Faculty

- Full Time Faculty – 100 (61% with terminal degree)
- Student to faculty ratio – 16:1

The opinions expressed in this edition of *The Aerie* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the administration, faculty, staff, or student body of Concordia University, Irvine.

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