

CRIMSON & GRAY

SPRING 2016



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Foreword

This year's issue of *Crimson & Gray* presents to you the city of Philadelphia; from the shadows of former selves, to the dizzying dance of new love, to the divinity in our everyday lives, we travel through different neighborhoods, learning different stories. Just as each district of Philadelphia has its own unique personality, so does each chapter of our lives.

The lifeblood of a city is its people, each a walking novel of experiences both good and bad. When the buzz of Philly is at our backs, we return safely back to the Main Line, finding comfort in the journey home. We invite you to get lost amongst the bright lights and dreams of grandeur, but know there is always a haven to welcome you back.

- *Crimson & Gray*, *Cristiana Caruso*



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Dr. Catherine S. Murray



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Crimson & Gray Award for Best Photography
“Reminiscing” - Rodrigo Corral

Crimson & Gray Award for Best Visual Art
“Split Vision” - Samantha Weirnerman

Crimson & Gray Award for Best Short Story
“A Prayer for Fleetness” - Tess Doggett

Crimson & Gray Award for Best in Poetry
“Breathless” - Alisa Verratti

Driving with Grandma

I'll think of you, remembering
when Sean and I would climb
over papers and files and bags
(and what the hell was all that crap?)
into the back of the Beemer
always, a BMW.
And we'd go flying down the road
sometimes missing stop signs
sometimes not missing other cars, people,
and we'd scream with gleeful terror every time
you tried to jump a light
(it's about to turn green!)
and we'd try not to laugh when the cop who
pulled us over asked if perhaps
we were lost
since we'd been speeding, and slowing
and you nodded innocently until he let us off
and we'd cackle down the road
because you programmed that Beemer to tell you
when you were doing over 80.
Do you remember that time
trying to park on that hill in the city
and Sean and I shrieked as you were getting out
because the car was rolling down the hill?
I'll never forget that your students drew
a comic about that,
titled the comic "The Black Beemer of Doom!"
and you hung it on your office door.
Of course, there were many Beemers
a station wagon, sedans, a sporty coupe, and the damn racecar,
and with you at the wheel
they all drove like rockets strapped to laser beams.
In those sleek speeders we went
to museums, the garden store,
to visit Foy and the brothers where we ate all their snacks

to Philly, to New York
and when we got back
Mom would always hug us extra tight
because she knew how many points you had on your license,
and we all saw how often you had a loaner car,
and we'd all ridden with you at least once when you went the wrong way down a one-way road.
(It's so long to go around!)
You loved driving those cars
I love driving, too,
so that's one of the places
I'll think of you.

- *Cara Murray*,
In Loving Memory of Dr. Catherine Murray.





Franklin's Garden,
Zachery Bowman



Old City

The Woolery

I'll wait for you in the woolery.
Through the trapdoor your little feet
Stretch behind you, looking for the foothold.
I'll shake the magic eight ball near the
Dancing Tigger on the wall, while you
Finish your bacon, with sticky fingers
Of maple syrup and dog hair.
Follow the smell of mothballs and
Dusty lamp light to the hole in the wall.
Don't mind the tight squeeze now,
Because soon you won't fit at all.
Bring the steam from the sugar house
In a Ball jar so we can take turns
Untwisting the lid, letting it out
In little puffs.
Come before dark, so you don't let the bats in.

- *Tess Doggett*



Flat Iron,
Rodrigo Corral

Stonehenge

There is a place our parents didn't want us to go not too far from the place they had brought us. We waited perched in plastic blow up rafts for empty Bud Light bottles to pile and for the Grateful Dead to drone on louder. Then we made our move. Into the cabin, pack our bags. Fading birthday money, walkie talkies, expired sunscreen, and bottled water. We're going, we'll be safe. The bottles clink, the bass drum hits, they don't mind anymore.

We don't know when it got here, but we know it was before our parents. Erosion of the stone masses and the graffiti covered pillars. All of it breaking down, down, down. Watch your step. Sand scraping wet on the toes between the thongs of your flip flops. Unbearable but favorable. Favorable to the cuts and the blood from the seagull's seashell massacre and the teenagers beer bottle debauchery.

Abandoned is where we are. Life of what once was hidden here, and we are Indiana Jones. We dig through the shattered porcelain and biting vines. There is nothing to find, only everything. We stack bricks onto one another to scale the wall. Higher and further from safety so we can look down upon the world safely. We aren't kings or queens but warrior children. Dismembering wood stake fences into swords for our defenses.

We splinter, burn, slip, cut, fall. We brush ourselves off. Burn our feet on hot coal sand, the path back to the temporary homes we float on. Touch the back of our legs for ticks hitching a ride, brush whatever debris out of our hair. Swim back to clean the cuts and dirt, and surface to the glazing faces of our parents. The salt will crystallize on our skin and beneath the blood will turn us yellow, black, blue, bruised. They pick us up still damp, and sing us songs of their past.

- *Paige Burr*

The Static Channel

My first memory is my mother's hand on my back,
Her delicate fingers tracing the names and skylines of French cities across my skin.

I blink and the memory expands.
I feel the leather cushion of our old couch beneath me,
See my mother's hazel eyes come into focus, etched with an emotion I don't yet recognize,
Hear the quiet crinkling of indistinct chatter nearby,
Watch the faces of the people on the big-screen TV change as I flick through the channels, finally
 landing on black and white static.
I realize that it's nighttime, that I've never been awake this late before.

My mother's hands move to gather up my tangled hair, gently twirling the knotted strands,
 working to calm me.
I realize I'm not calm.

Fear, dense and heavy, gets stuck in my throat, and my breathing syncs in time with my heart,
Beating too fast, too hard, like I've been running for too long.
I realize that I want to run, that my legs are twitching, telling me to go.

I tilt my head so that I can face mom, ask her what's wrong.
The memory, having been nudged, switches the light in the living room off, then back on.
My father has materialized, a tiny pop announcing his appearance.
He's in front of the television, a dark mass with his back to the static,
Strangely shadowed, pixelated by the crackling light behind him.
Dad's saying something, the words are pushing, pulling, stumbling out over one another,
Each is louder than the last.

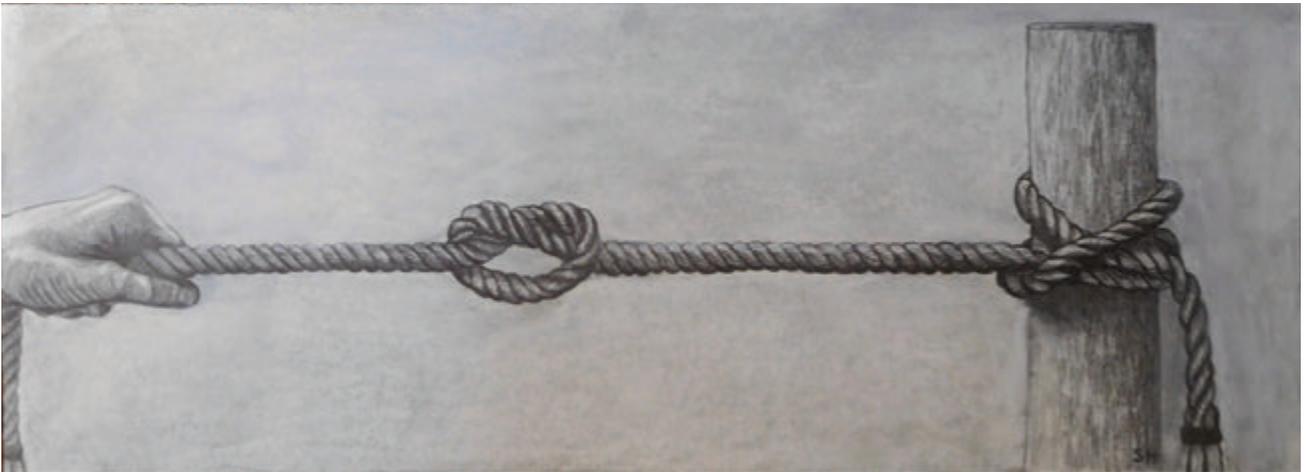
Mom's hands lift me and pull me closer, squeezing me lightly on my scabbed little knee.
I climb into her lap and her arms, a soft shield, fold around me.
I realize that I'm not afraid for me.

My father's voice cuts through the humming of the static.
I look at him and know, try to brace myself for what's coming.

The memory points a shaky finger at the glass table my mother's slippered feet are resting on.
His mouth is closed tight, eyes locked on my mother. She's busy holding my hand.
As easily as mom picked me up, my father hoists the table.
It's over his head, then shoved into the space between us.

The memory, a starry galaxy trapped inside an hourglass, freezes.
The glass shards bouncing off the wall behind my head are stuck in place,
The rest of the table above us is suspended in mid-air.
The memory collapses in on itself until all that's left is the pressure of my mother's hand in
mine,
The static playing on a noiseless loop in the background until the sand runs out.

- *Samantha Puelo*



Taut,
Susan Henry

Shedding a Ghost

Oh Darling, you may forget
those summer moonlit nights
reflecting upon your silhouette.
We waltzed around the river,
young with bare-feet;
two souls colliding
and becoming complete.
You gave me your loving words
to hold and to keep,
while the world and winter
laid quietly asleep.

We're halfway across the bridge,
a dividing line between East of Jersey
and West of New Hope.
The passenger view,
once vivid and clear,
now a dimmed kaleidoscope.

Our feet began to blister
from dancing too long.
Before I could even realize,
you changed the song -
Summer skin
disowned and shed,
while once evergreen trees
were left for dead.
You disappeared;
a vagabond gone astray.
Captivated by your ghostly memories
continuing on replay,

I'm halfway across the bridge,
a dividing line between East of Jersey
and West of New Hope
with a note that states,
"Return to Sender"
on the envelope.

I abandoned my ghost
when sunrise came,
because you took the better pieces
leaving nothing to reclaim.
Resigned to a twin size mattress
as two heavy bodies defuse.
Once raw skin, now calloused feet
settled into refined shoes.

- *Alicia Ezekiel-Pipkin*



*Notre Dame,
Ryan Lofland*

Famous Last Words

Famous last words
do not explain gasps
before and after

- *Jennifer Nessel*

The Wind Shapes the Sky

The wind shapes the sky
the clouds follow behind her
like molded clay

- *Jennifer Nessel*

Ye Olde City,
Zachery Bowman





Heirlooms,
Susan Henry



**SOUTH
STREET**

Around and Around

I can explain my life like this:

Imagine you're sitting on a park bench; it's a lovely day, not a cloud in the sky. You see a woman with a box walking near the edge of a trail. She opens the box, looks in, closes it again, then stands and waits. While you're watching, a man comes up and sits on the bench beside you. He asks for a smoke and when you say you don't have one he replies,

"So what do you think she has there?"

You look up to see a completely different woman in the same spot as the first, holding the same box and looking the same way. You turn back to the man, for friendly speculation, and find instead the first woman sitting beside you.

"Well?" she says to you.

And on and on it goes, until eventually you can't remember which lady was which, or the lines of the man's face, or even the color of your own eyes. It's a carousel, spinning endlessly through a life you're not sure you want. But that's just it, you never get off the carousel, and you're never quite sure when you got on.

If you've been on the carousel, you know exactly what I mean.

I have NO fucking clue what the old man is talking about. He leans on the "Entrance" gate next to my operating booth reeking heavily of both gin and sweat. Mr. Hall is the park maintenance man, a position he only keeps because his brother-in-law owns Adventure Mountain and two of its water park extensions. He wipes sweat from his balding head onto his sleeve.

"Do yah," he leans in closer, "do yah get it?"

I hold my breath, avoiding the poltergeist of his smell.

"No, Mr. Hall, I gotta let the kids on."

I motion to the line of anxious toddlers and parents, craning their necks over one another to see whatever spectacle might be keeping them from their carousel ride. He looks behind him, suddenly aware that he's been holding up the line, and grumbles his way through the crowd and off my ramp, thank the gods. I unlock the gate and usher the first group of people through. What many park goers don't realize is that they can get a whole lot more bang for their buck by lying. I don't know a single ride operator who actually pays attention to whether you've handed them three green tickets or four. The only time I've ever felt inclined to call someone on their bullshit is when they try to pass off the blue tickets from the water park as the green Adventure Mountain tickets. That's just sloppy.

I hold out my hand in front of a little girl in a Kim Possible t-shirt. She's too young to have ever seen the show, and too short to ride alone.

"Do you have an adult... sweetie?" I ask.

She glances back at a woman in a too tight Def Leppard T-shirt screeching into her phone with a cigarette between her lips. I sigh and try to flag down her mother. The woman squints her eyes at me as if I've flipped her off and storms forcibly up the ramp, tiny metallic thuds with each step. In my head I picture the water glass from Jurassic Park.

Thund, shake, thund, ripple.

"What's the problem, heh?" the woman asks, breathing smoke into my face.

Up close she has small watery eyes and blue eyeshadow clinging to her crow's feet.

"She's too short to ride alone." I motion to the board behind me, a board on which Eddie the Safety Friendly Clown insists that anyone under 4'5" must be accompanied by an adult.

"It's a goddamn carousel," the woman says. "What's she gonna do, fall off?"

"Well, yeah," I try not to roll my eyes. "It spins, she's gonna be balancing on a horse, someone has to tie and fasten her belt..."

"This is fucking retarded," the woman grabs the little girl's arm and yanks her through the entrance.

"Please put out your cigarette." I mumble while letting another five riders on.

Once all of the horses are taken, I climb the entrance gate myself and do a walk around to check the safety belts. Most parents have fastened their children's a little too tightly, including Jurassic mom. Some older kids that don't need adult riders try to hide the fact that they haven't put on their belts at all.

I stop a redheaded boy and his friend who look to be about thirteen.

"Safety Belt," I say, motioning to their laps where they're each trying to hide unfastened clasps.

"They are fastened, see!" Redhead chuckles and pretends to pull on his belt. He grins at me with unflossed braces.

I put my hands on my hips; aware once again that everyone is looking to see what the holdup is.

"Fasten your belt or get off the horse."

The boys stare at me, their preteen eyes shining with amusement.

"It is fastened," Red insists.

"Yeeeeaaaahhhh," his friend chimes in.

I stand immobile and silent, willing twenty two years of no time for bullshit into my glare. Parents and kids begin shouting for the ride to start. I keep my eyes on the problem. A beat Red starts to look uncomfortable.

"Okay, okay," he and his buddy click the clasps together.

"If I see them undone I'll stop the ride," I tell them.

I hear one of them mumble "bitch" as I walk away.

* * *

It's hot even under the awning at the operating booth. A rusted metal fan disturbs the hot air, pushing it in different directions without changing the temperature. I wonder if I smell at all like Mr. Hall. Maybe if I filled my water bottle with gin the days wouldn't seem so long and ordinary. Another group of riders approach. This time a father holds the hands of his two little boys, all three smiling brightly.

"Twelve tickets please!" he says.

"I'm sorry. You don't buy tickets here; you have to go to one of the kiosks by the front gate."

His smile falters.

"But you have some right there," he points to the bucket of collected tickets.

"Yeah but I don't sell tickets, these are the ones I get when people get on."

"Can't you give me twelve of those?"

The little boys have stopped smiling and are beginning to look hot and agitated.

"No, sir. I'm sorry. I don't sell tickets."

He lets go of his son's hands.

"Well this is just ridiculous. Are you saying I need to get out of line, go all the way back to the front of the park, and buy tickets just so my kids can get on a damn ferris wheel?"

"Carousel. And yes, that's how this works, sir."

"This is pathetic!" He's shouting now.

One of the little boys tugs on his sleeve.

"Dad, are we going on the ferris wheel?"

"Carousel," I mumble.

The man grabs both his kids roughly and stomps back down the ramp, dragging their little arms behind him. One of them starts to cry which sets off three more toddlers in the crowd. Parents groan, I wipe the sweat on my forehead and allow another group of riders on.

After a mercifully short safety belt check, I find myself cooling my legs against the metal folding chair at my operating booth. The fan cranks more dry air in my direction, and I pretend it's a breeze. Looking around, I can see a line of kids waiting to get on Mine Cart Railroad across the walk. I wave at Andrew, the ride's operator, who shoots a sarcastic thumbs up at me. His long brown hair is tied in a ponytail and glued to his back with sweat. It isn't easy being a hippie in the summer.

Further down I can see Mr. Hall staggering around a recycling bin. He struggles to pull the full bag out of the bin, and struggles harder with separating the plastic sides of the new one. When the task is complete, he leans against the bin and takes a sip out of his water bottle. A kid walks past him, throws a can at the bin and misses. The boy laughs, not offering to pick up the trash he's thrown at Mr. Hall's feet. Mr. Hall doesn't seem to mind, he raises his water bottle to the boy as though he's toasting him, and then bends to pick up the can.

I turn back to the carousel. Above me circular bulbs of light flash on and off, and the red and white ceiling tiles spin whimsically round and round to the music box soundtrack. I can hear that somewhere on the ride a child has started to cry. The sound hits me sharply, then fades away, hits me again, then fades- around and around and around. Somewhere in the hot irritating blur, I see the faces I just took tickets from, and watch as they spin into one another, around and around and around. The crying melts with the music, the red and white with the circular lights, and for just a second I know exactly what Mr. Hall meant.

- *Kelly Gaines*



Two-faced,
Samantha Weirnerman

God Bless Vonnegut

Oh darling, darling,
How I miss never having to look down.
And no one knows how you got that black eye,
they don't want to ask. (It was a soccer match.)

I tell you to fly away,
go save the world,
make sure those kids know their basketball fundamentals.
I know my place isn't at your altitude.

In the cement confessional of your basement,
Where we had done penance so many times before,
I had dangerous thoughts of stability and assurance.
How very unlike us.

Because my darling, you're an earthquake where there is no land,
And I'm a deep sea diver in the desert.
Directionless perfection, free of mortal parameters.
It doesn't have to mean something to anyone but us.

Amongst coffee shop philosophers and cancerous daydreams,
I pretend to craft something of substance.
In front of colorful cardboard cups we slave,
trying to crack the code of human failings.

Crazier, crazier, we spin,
down the moral coil's chute.
You hold my hand, while the winds of change
blow through my hair.

- *Cristiana Caruso*

The Prosecutor and the Defendant

I.

Your arms encircle me and we coalesce
as always, I delight in your pillow talk
a bright summer wedding at the courthouse
sweet mango sauce dribbling down my chin as we share dessert,
an apartment littered with used books and bargain bin movies.
Together we negotiate how much of me I can keep.

II.

You hold me tightly,
as if to eclipse my body with your own.
You grip and hold and kiss
all the familiar acts of possessing.
You make me say it,
I am yours, I am yours, I am yours.

We split me in nice even pieces,
we split me down the middle.

Sex with you is like a strip search.
You deploy those Eckleburg eyes,
inspecting my skin carefully for
evidence of transgressions.

I am liable, I am culpable, I am at fault.

We agree that I am better off with you
than someone else.
I am so in love it hurts.
We split me down the middle,
you wax and I wane.
I am yours, I am yours, I am shadow.

- *Amiah Taylor*

Brenda,
Brenda Emery



Both

People aren't supposed to be both,
But I am.

There exists a blackness in me that eats up all of the light,
There exists a sun beating beneath my skin, glowing through the dark.

I have my father's olive complexion, his quick temper.
The same paranoia that kills him will get me one day too.
I have my mother's button nose, her stubborn heart.
The same resilience that sustains her keeps me alive too.

You ask how I am, I tell you I'm fine.
It isn't the truth, but it isn't a lie.

I am a half measure, I am a full measure,
An emptied glass, an unopened bottle.
I am too big, I am too small.
A gamble and a sure thing.
I am a homebody, I am a world traveler.
A peaceful silence, a deafening cacophony.

I feel everything and nothing at all.

I shouldn't be both this and that,
But I am.

- *Samantha Puelo*

Split Vision,
Samantha Weinerman
Crimson & Gray Award for Best Visual Art



Goldfish People

Last night you loved me, openly—
Outside your bedroom—which you would never do.

We sat on the front lawn of my high school and
I rested my head on your chest—which I would never do.

Without a word of explanation you left me
To drive around Germantown with your little brother.

Later we ran into the ocean, disintegrating into goldfish
When we breached the surface—which I would never do.

We swam down electric eel lit alleyways and
Dark passages of barnacled-over crags and rocks.

Until we were scooped out into a fishbowl
In an auto-repair shop in Germantown.

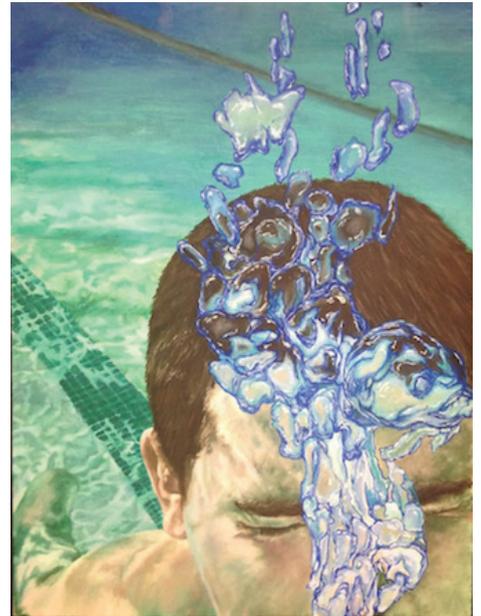
The mechanics were arguing about
carburetors, and the good old days.

While we were left to plead—
“We aren’t fish, we’re people!”

But all that came out were bubbles
And we exchanged fish-eyed stares.

- Tess Doggett

Transparency,
Samantha Weinerman



the last time i will ever speak of cigarettes in a poem

i was seventeen and i used to glamorize smoking cigarettes,
used to feel as if i could inhale tobacco-laced confidence,
as though each cloud out of my mouth was another wispy insecurity breathed out of my body.
i ignored the lingering tightness in my chest,
the film of tar coating my teeth and tongue;
i mistook the burning in my throat with the fire of unsung poetry —
words i only spoke with my teenage lungs filled with both smoke
and a childlike longing to be angsty.
i wrote about drugs i never did and boys i never did
and girls i never did from coffee shops i never visited.
i wrote about liquor and tears and blood and lust like
some Nabokov knockoff when in all actuality i was a girl
with thigh-highs and low self-esteem
who wanted so badly to be edgy and envied.

i turned twenty-one on the fifth of november.
a great deal has changed since the days when i had envisioned myself living the “sad manic
pixie dream girl” lifestyle.
i’ve become the woman i never expected i’d be:
i’ve let my hips fill out without constantly wanting to whittle them down.
i’ve filled out applications. i bought a blazer,
and i don’t really blaze anymore,
even if the Beatles still sing to me about how
they get high with a little help from their friends.
i started enjoying cream and sugar in my coffee again
instead of writing lines about crying into a steaming black brew,
denying myself life’s sweetest little pleasures for the sake of appearances. i no longer smoke, so
i know now that the burning i have in my throat
is truly the fire of unsung poetry; my hands, instead of reaching out
for the pulsing flesh of that man, sketch and write and type and make.
the same hands that once brought death up to my lips
now caress me and sustain me and make me strong.

“you’re boring,” seventeen-year-old danielle will sometimes say to me.
“look at you — you’re basic and fat and ugly and bland.

how did i ever let me get like this?"
you let yourself be happy for once, danielle.
i know that word isn't in your vocabulary just yet, but you did it.
you'll do it. you'll see.

i realize now that i don't have to claim to be cracked and fragile
to be seen as something of significance.
beauty is not mutually exclusive to brokenness.
i'm no longer starving, i'm not suffocating, i'm not looking to be completed or complicated,
fascinating or fabricated.
i won't shatter myself to make others feel whole,
to make everyone seem stronger, to make me less of a threat.
out of the flickering, flicked off ashes of my past i have come,
ready to go about living without looking back — at least, not for too long.

she'll still visit me every so often; danielle will lean against a doorframe
or sit on a bench, flick a bic and light up a smoke.
i could stop her — i could give her that pretentious metaphor i just wrote above about rising
from ashes — but i don't.
i think i'll make it just fine on my own.

- *Danielle Zabielski*



*Chiara e Firenze,
Mary Madeleine de
Regnauld de Bellescize*



Pope Visit 2015,
Rodrigo Corral



LOVE
PARK

Ulysses

The way he looked,
It wasn't natural- the slender tendrils of his hair gracing his face- they looked
Too forced, as if they seemed placed on purpose.
He surveyed me as if I was the one who was going to disappear.
Why can't I survey him, too?
The strokes against his shirt,
The placement of his hands on the table in front of him,
Those glass-like eyes...
What is wrong with picturing yourself with him against the backdrop?
Noticing the lines that separate two worlds.
The space between you like a slap in the face?
Where does he begin and I end?
The outlines that grace him and me are obvious remarks.
A grimace to greet him,
A cold stare for me.
The lights dim on us both, and I feel a tap against my shoulder.
"Museum's closin' ma'am."

- Jennifer Nessel



Kiwi,
Hannah Kerkering

It's Not That Deep

The stars are so much brighter here
After months of haze.
They glisten and they shine
Like one million tiny sprinkles
Falling randomly into place
Exactly where I need them to be.

The world is quiet.
The sky is endless and I'm tiny.
I look in every direction and can't find one single end.
I feel lonely and lost and free and alive.

The house that I grew up in has never changed.
Even though it's bigger, it still never changed.
It's quiet, like the sky and the stars around it.
It feels alive somehow
Like an old battered ringing that won't leave my ears
Reminding me where I came from.

No, it's not that deep.

The stars are just stars.
They shine just as bright
For every has-been and never-will-be
In this ankle deep town

The sky is only the sky.
It's everywhere at once and it doesn't belong to me.
It's just atoms and vapor.
One day it'll all dry up.

A house is just a roof,
Plastered to walls and then floor.
It holds heat and it's full of boxes,
Things that were once a part of me
But now exist to catch dust.

And a person is just a person,
No matter how hard you hope.

If you're waiting for them to save you
From all of that loneliness
You better keep waiting.

It's not that deep.
This poem means nothing if you're
not reading it.

- *Emma Seely*

Mydriasis

You know when you look at a
distant array of lights in the dark?
tail lights, street lamps, drug store neons,
but your eyes
they're unfocused,
so the lights take on a fuzzy circular contour;
watch them expand, explode into uneven halos
and your pupils,
they stretch across your clear irides
creating a new focus, a balance
so the lights retake their form.

that was me
when I first saw
you

- Paige Burr



*Interpretation of
Horizontal Flower,
Elana Valentin*



Reap,
Susan Henry



Discovery,
Susan Henry



Puckered Vase,
Susan Henry

My Lucky

I think about you,

Catching fire so quickly, it's addictive when I drink you in.

You're filtered thoughts taste like poison,

They burn.

Slowly infiltrate my mind as clocks turn. And I wonder why

You continue to take

my breath

Away.

- *Maura Holcomb*

What One Seas

A wave is not a wave until it crashes over you.
Obscurities consume, those lovely depths of blue
Turn green with jealousy, a natural habit to be sure.
Flickering under the light is animosity's allure.

For water is not water until the ice falls.
Crackling, gleaming with cold sweat, betrayal comes for all
You think - until the Kraken comes for you.
It tempts with many tendrils. Gulfs engulf the crew.

For an ocean is not an ocean without some mystery,
And bridges mask the bay's soft shore, shade the
Water rippling underneath, hiding pearls with little gleam.
What many see as oyster's treasure discreetly ties the seams.

- *Elana Valentin*

Greece,
Ryan Lofland



This Mess

I love this mess, this mess we've made.
This home we've created is filled with memories and stories.
I look around at the mess, the clutter,
And I'm instantly brought back.

To the time that we saw that play.
Remember it?
I'd wanted to go for years and I had to fight to drag you along.
You loved it though.
You laughed the whole time.
And now that old crumpled up playbill grins from the corner of your desk.
God, I love your laugh.

Oh, and what about that hat,
The one that's hanging on the closet door.
Do you remember the first time you wore it?
You wanted to impress me.
So you went to the store and bought the first thing you saw with a logo.
And you showed it off to me, shamelessly.
You loved baseball, couldn't get enough of it.
And I could only laugh.
Because that's not a baseball team, you idiot, it's football.
I love the way you care for me.

The floor's not clean either.
There are guitar picks everywhere.
From when you come back from your shows and you're so tired,
That you just drop them there, letting gravity do the work for once.
No one gives like you.

The dressers are overflowing with clothes.
You have so many t-shirts, most of them never even worn.
You just like to buy them.
You see one in a thrift store and you can't pass it up.
The Greater Lowton Area Chili Cook Off and Dance-athon.

You didn't go to that.
You don't even know where Lowton is.
But now its "participant" shirt is slumped in a pile next to our drawer.
I wish I could see into that beautiful mind of yours.

The ticket stubs and photographs,
The maps and souvenirs.
This house is a scrapbook.
I love to fill it with you.

Our home is a mess.
But it's never been dirty.
It's just as messy as it should be,
As it needs to be.
And we're messy too,
Strange patterns of neurons,
Mismatched and struggling.
Throwing around memories.
Hoping something sticks.

But you?
You're my favorite mess.

- *Emma Seely*

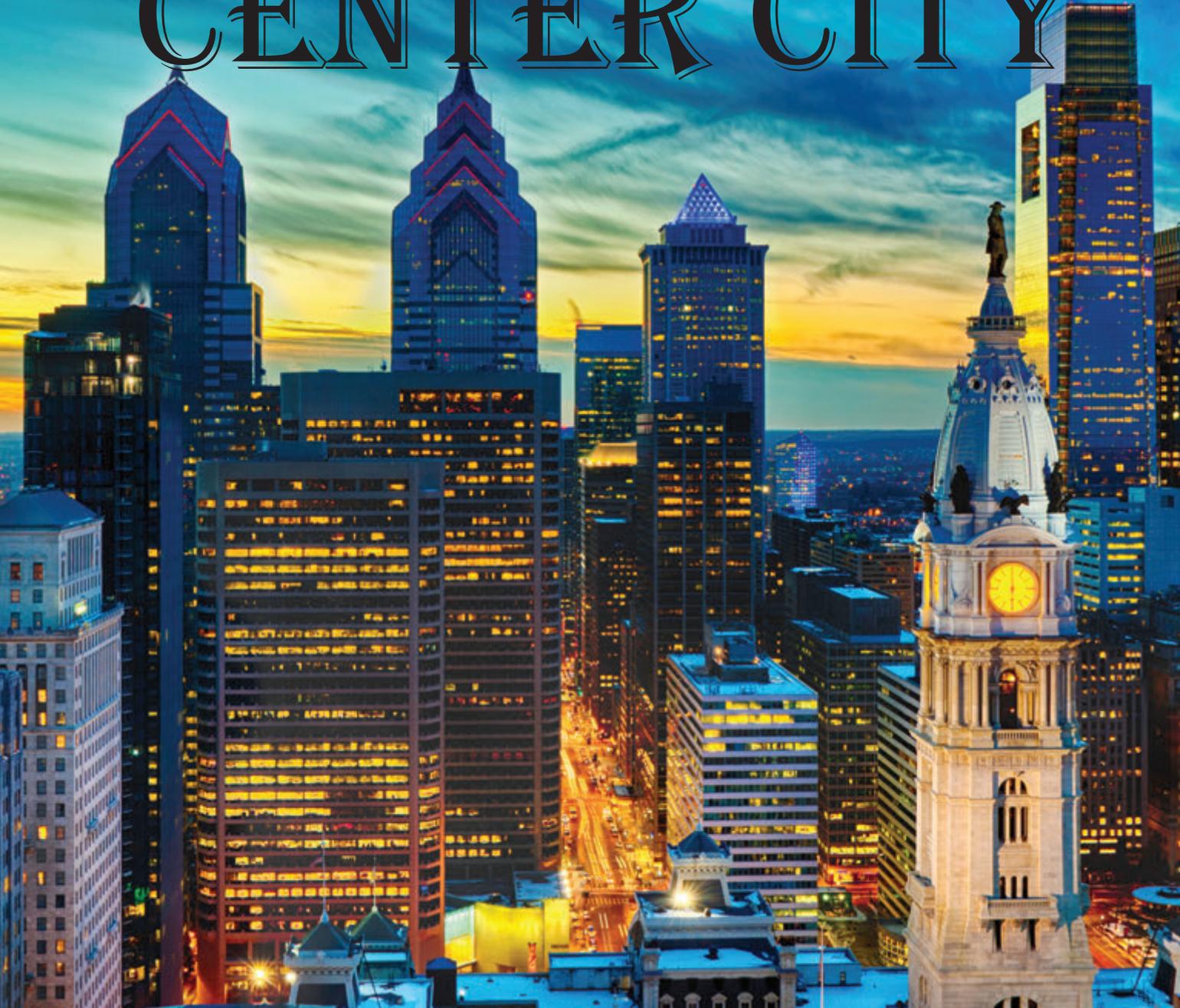
Reflections,
Vivian Milan





Blue City,
Rodrigo Corral

CENTER CITY



Cherry Red

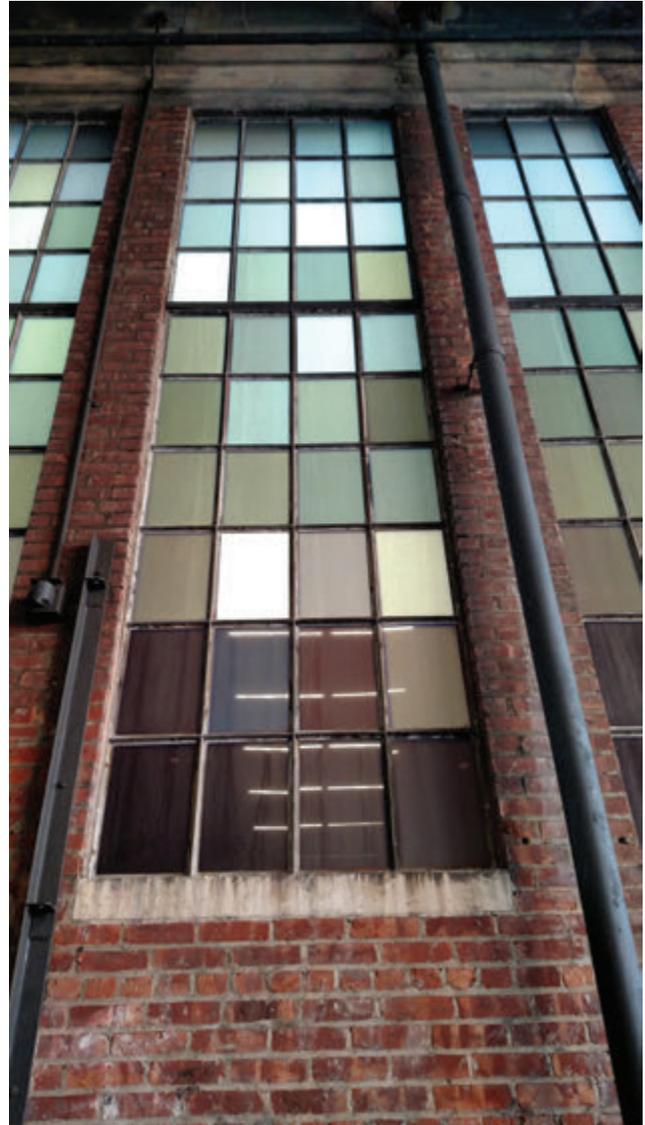
She said I needed cherries,
cherries to deepen and darken
my pale face.
Her touch like sandpaper,
her hands of ice,

I could feel her brush strokes
sweep across my eyelids.
She said you'll be as pretty
as the midnight sky, but all
I could see was the devil in her smile.

Her makeup was her mask,
her brushes her act. She said
I need cherries to decorate my lips.
Just one more polish, just one more gloss,
That's all she ever wanted, a twinkle,

A red cross.

- *Kayla Winters*



Panes,
Zachery Bowman

Hanging Out With My Friends On a Saturday Night

Sometimes
I feel like a ghost
Walking around
Unseen
In the backdrops
Of these other happy lives.

- *George Fenton*

*Reminiscing,
Rodrigo Corral
Crimson & Gray Award for Best Photography*



Monsters

Let's start at the darkest hour of an affair.
During a full moon,
When the velvet sky
Wraps the night in bitter silence.
Bare your teeth
And let me see,
Your fangs,
your jagged edges,
your potential to hurt me.
I'll show you mine if you show me yours.
Let me taste the lies
in your venom,
And I'll spit words laced with hate
on your tongue.
Enjoy a taste of your own medicine.
Strip me of my armor,
claw my back,
slice through untouched skin,
and I'll sink my talons
into your rough exterior.
Our scars are tattoos of vengeance.
We can scar each other.

But right now,
there is no venom,
teeth,
talons,
tattoos,
but I fear the full moon.

- Kelly Wittman



Poe,
Bria Hawkins

Pull or Flip

Today I stared at a ceiling fan.

It was on.

The setting sun illuminated the clear light bulbs.

And the cool breeze did its best to shoo away my worries.

The brass was very pretty.

It was faded and worn like the day.

Like me.

The light and speed chains swayed in circles

Cause it was going too fast.

Like me.

We're both shaking.

But the only way to slow it down is to flip the switch.

Or pull the chain.

The chains are harder to reach than the switch.

They're so much higher.

But I don't want to flip the switch.

If only I could stand up.

- *Krista Rossi*



*Philia Rose,
Emily Smedley*

Don't Let This Life Pass By

Be abuse, we accuse
We set our sights too high.
We need to breathe
And learn to seize
Not each blink of our swollen eyes,
But each blink of our ultimate worth.
We're all confused, we have to choose
Right from wrong and this from that.
It breaks away, right from our reach
It floats right on to find a better match.
Up in the sky, where we as humans do not fly
We just look and look and contemplate things
And the birds do all that we aim for.
Our minds race like they reached the Olympics.
We always lose, so we pay our dues
And let the beauty walk on through
With our backs turned, heads down.
Our minds are blocked
We try too hard
It's sometimes good to stop.
We need to clear our musty brains,
So clouded by our thoughts.
Don't think, don't do,
Be still for once.
And so you ask, "What can it be? What is this rant about?"
I speak the truth, and nothing but,
So listen close:
Don't let this life pass by.

- *Lauren Castaldi*

Breathless

Crimson & Gray Award for Best in Poetry

I saw you this morning
You were in my coffee
It seemed too bitter,
I kept adding sugar

Last night,
I heard you in my head
while I wrote on a piece of loose leaf
I quickly scribbled everything out,
there wasn't enough detail

So tonight,
when I'm sitting next to you in your car
my insides are shaking,
 from all the caffeine
and my fingers are cramping,
 from never getting the endings right

I go to meet your eyes,
but the street lamp above us
flickers out

Nevertheless,
I know your pupils are dilated
and your eyelids are lowered

Your rough calloused hands
reach out timidly
and intertwine mine

It feels like free falling
all over again

Your grip tightens
once you realize
I wasn't pulling away.
I lift my head to level with yours,
taken back
by the closeness of your nose to mine

Heat arises within the car
and I notice your legs tensing

I watch as your lips whisper,
"I missed you"
It was scared and lethal

My voice stays mute
while my chest tightens

You lean in to kiss me,
hard

So, I kiss you back
with all the words
I cannot say
and all the months I spent
biting my tongue

Oxygen begins to dissipate
but our lips refuse to cease

Because what's the point of living
without being a little breathless.

- Alisa Verratti

Illuminated

Power flowing through veins.
Determination is my core.
Every move staccato but strong.
Your heart tightens,
your muscles explode,
your soul becomes a star.

You sync
and resonate with the titans
on a level not comprehensible.

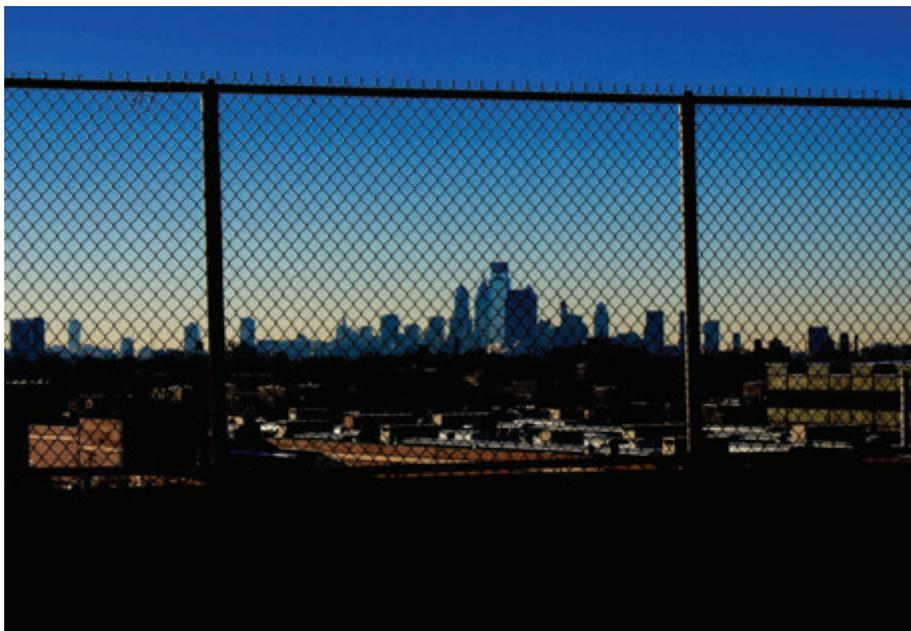
Divine gifts through swords and fists,
running as fast as your lungs can pump,
that fire in your eyes
burns and consumes that spirited fuel.

Your failures are your foundation,
but your successes are your wonders.

The angelic wings meet with demonic power,
forming the ultimate,
forming the life.

The feel of the closed fist
clenched not by gravity,
but by your immense power.
Feel the pain
as you grip to the absolute maximum,
and embrace the extremes.

Everyone has the power to be a god,
but you need a core fueled by the best of you;
A conflagration of presence,
these fill the gauntlet and allow you to sip
from the drink of men great and everlasting.



Outside Looking In,
Colin Becker

Nothing can withhold your manifestation.
Let the chains not hold you back,
but become part of your breaking punch.

Freedom in body, mind, and spirit;
No bindings may hold you.
The physical is meaningless
for your power lies within.
You fight with soul, not knuckles.

Let it all flow,
damn nothing,
damn nothing,
Know the limits,
and then decimate them with overkill.
If you aren't the best, you aren't done
working.
If you are the best,
you aren't done working.

Always accept the challenge
And maybe secretly hope to fail
For the metal that pierces your fingers
Makes the punch all the deadlier

Grab the smile
Use it and give it
Potters welding your hands, sculpting you
sockets
For the hearts together form one
A deity of immeasurable, unfathomable
Power

Mark my words:
Scream into the night
Transcend your body
And let those golden flames within your eyes
Set the world on fire.

- Christopher Pendleton

Reading,
Bria Hawkins



The Things They Moved:

A Model of The Things They Carried

They moved things because they had to do it. Among the things they moved were the necessities, stoves, bed frames, couches, mattresses, televisions, dressers, wardrobes, microwaves, computers, display cases, picture frames, vacuums, tables, refrigerators, chairs, boxes of china, and bags of clothes. These items weighed varying amounts, depending on the wealth of your client. Kenneth Schwinn, a rather wealthy man, bought a lot of extra amenities; he was a great enthusiast of large fine art. Don Thorpe, a blue-collar worker, had a lot of televisions, computers, and several ornate tables he commandeered from a closing hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Kelly Violet, a schizophrenic, had many mirrors - until she was locked up in a looney-bin just outside Richmond in late-November.

By law, and due to customary methods, the movers wore yellow t-shirts and denim jeans including extra thigh pockets and carpenter hooks. They also had standard hard-palm gloves and work boots. Some had sunglasses. Headwear was also an option - usually baseball caps.

Pat

Pension had several different hats and a spray can of Lice-A-Way to prevent the spread of lice. Until she was taken away, Kelly Violet shared a vast amount of marijuana with the crew. Wallace Grandor, the truck driver, always stole some green. Eric Dakery brought his own. Shawn Treyvon never smoked. Jaun-Luke, a French striving comedian, always had a notebook in his hand and a pen that was given to him by his brother, who was a writer in Philadelphia.

As a hedge against a bad joke, however, Jaun-Luke also had the ultimate deterrent against laughing at him: a stolen switchblade. Its use was joke dependant. Because of Kelly's mirrors, it was mandatory that the crew had to wear softer, rubber-studded gloves, which was less protective, but made it easier to grip the mirrors. Because the mirrors were fragile, each member had to have their hard-palm gloves as well, usually put in the back pocket, just in case of an accident. Because the crew smoked, and because the smoke lingered, the crew had to pull out fans from the back of the truck and open windows to blow the smoke clear. With the windows open, the room got hot quickly, but it was worth it to get the smoke out. In November, on the job, the day after Kelly was taken, they had the windows open and the fans blowing, smoke pouring out the window.

* * *

They were called movers or shitters. Most likely from the name of the company: Schietter's Moving Company.

To cart something was to "dick" it, like when Shawn Treyvon dicked moving a solid, wooden bear up the porch stairs and through the front door at Don Thorpe's new place. In its

indirect form, “to dick” meant “to cart,” or “to wheel,” but it implied you were weak.

Almost every member dicked refrigerators. In the truck, Eric Dakery dicked a refrigerator of Kelly’s. There were two pieces of paper magnetized to the face of the fridge. The first was a polaroid of Kelly taking a picture of herself in a mirror. She had a series of mirrors behind her creating an infinite mirror illusion. That night Eric wondered how Kelly thought of the idea, how she planned the picture, what she saw in the picture, and why she was so interesting with mirrors. The second was a newspaper article. It had a name on it that wasn’t who he thought it would be – Kelly Violet – but it was about her sister, another schizophrenic, crazy, wild, infatuated-with-reflections type of person. There was nothing Eric thought that was strange. Just a schizo.

As he read, he thought he was reading a story about Kelly, not her sister or anyone else that he knew, but about her. Eric remembered talking with Kelly. In the room full of mirrors and smoke, they talked about repetition, eternity, and the idea of everlasting anything, all the while moving around mirrors to create new and different illusions before loading them on the truck. He remembered everything about her, but not her reason for why she was infatuated with mirrors. At that moment, he thought, he should have been paying closer attention to her, not the mirrors. He should have valued every word with the weight of every mirror. He should’ve listened. When he looked back at the Polaroid, he thought of things he should’ve asked.

* * *

What they moved was mostly done by seniority, partly by weight.

As the truck driver, Wallace Grandor rarely moved anything but the smalls - microwaves, clothes, vacuums, chairs, or bicycles. After all, he carried the keys and was responsible for the load.

As a manager, Pat Pension carried a clipboard with all the information about the job.

As a weight-lifter, Shawn Treyvon carried most of the heavy things, like ranges and televisions and dressers and wardrobes and tables and desks, along with all the miscellaneous stuff like heavy boxes or bags.

As a jokester, and a fake hard-ass, Jaun-Luke did work he could not manage alone, but yet he tried anyways. He also tried to keep the morale of the members up by telling jokes, all the while patting his trusty switchblade.

As they were nothing special, none of the group had any great company ranking. Depending on the job, they brought different equipment with them. When it was needed, they would bring handcarts, or a twenty-five foot truck – or if space mattered – an eighteen wheeler. Among the groaning, they loaded the truck with a bed frame and mattress. Then they carried out all but one of the mirrors. There were many mirrors. Kelly Violet had a mirror in her hand when she was taken away.

They go to move the largest and last mirror, which takes the whole crew to handle. But the flimsiness of the mirror, accompanied by the sheer size of it, caused the mirror to topple forward off its mounts, shattering into pieces as it smacked against the ground. The mirror was gone. Thousands of smaller mirrors were now in its place. Jaun-Luke, who tried to save the mirror, said he didn't see it falling forward until it was too late, but he did note that it was very quick – contrary to popular belief – there was no slow-motion. Jaun-Luke said it just fell and shattered and that was it. Crash. Shatter. No drama, just simple.

On that November evening, Eric Dakery blamed himself for the destruction of the largest mirror in Kelly Violet's collection. They stared at the vast amount of broken mirror for a short while, then they slowly started sweeping the large mirror into a small pile. Shawn Treyvon swept, and Wallace Grandor shoveled the pile into a box. Once it was finished, Wallace folded the box over to seal the mirror way forever. Shawn carried it out to the truck and slid it in, just to get rid of it later. Eric Dakery lit up, and kept to himself. He tried not to imagine Kelly's face when she learns her largest mirror is now many thousands of smaller mirrors. The crew finished loading up the truck without Eric, as he wallowed in his own mind, distressed by what he pictured Kelly's thoughts would be like when she returned. Jaun-Luke, upon their departure, recounted what happened to the large mirror. "It just fell forward, and shattered", he said. "No drama, just crash and then it was over."

- Zachery Bowman

Melody

His melody bounced across my back
Tickling the fine hairs of my arms
Trickling down my back

Tick tick
Tack tack
Rimble rible
Rap

Fine watery notes crawl
Over the soul and in through the ears
Chime
Are you home?
Let us play
Swing and sway
And awash away
Dripping
Trickling
Tickling your imagination
Be the places you could never see
See the people you could never feel
Feel the days you will never live
Sink into yellow waves
And float away.

- Brenna Ritzert



Schuylkill,
Avery Brown



Main Line

Pretentious Pearls

Kill me now with the words you disguise as pearls
and drape around my neck in a circle
that is too small and too tight
for hope to fill my lungs
and fear to exhale out.

Let the white beads shine with your lies
and choke the truth in my voice
that struggles in vain to call for a God
so my soul can be saved.

Your pretentious innocence gleams with deceit
around my throat and makes them all
believe that heaven is on earth
in your hands, which pull the strand too tight.

Go ahead and tie it tighter
so you can extinguish my life and voice.
But the clasp you lock is worn and tarnished-
the slightest tug will make it break.

- *Krista Rossi*



*White Hall,
Zachery Bowman*

Guile

He shuffles home,
into the kitchen
at eight—always masking
the woman's ember scent
from last year's Christmas cologne.

He plants his smile, twisting
his fingers around my waist
as if he never cleared himself
from the padlock-bed.

Treating us, we, as carved paintings.
His fictitious tongue swallows his charm.
Apologies and faults coils
within my ruinous ruby mouth.

He feeds me propaganda,
I infuse us with lies.

- *Irina Ginberg*

Blood Money

May you drown in the chaos
of your own black soul,
be swallowed in the abyss
of your selfish heart.
May you bear the burden
of responsibility I have borne
for your love, as the weight
brings you to your knees.

May your childhood memories
be robbed, your light stolen, your love
manipulated,
so you can feel the bite of the knife
cutting through your flesh,
leaving your bones exposed.
May you collapse beneath the need
of the thirsty parasite.

May you bleed
for the daughter whose spirit

You stole.

- *Kayla Winters*

Grief

Those sunday afternoons that we treated like mornings,
the alternately brown or yellow oil drippings that
seemed to invariably smatter whatever shirt you wore
like some sort of commemorative badge.

You would wield the spatula like a Japanese katana,
your hair crowned with powdered sugar
like a garland of crushed pearls and baby's breath,
and together we'd set the smoke detectors off to Don Henley.

I liked the heat of those days, as familiar as shower steam
crowding around us...

I awake alone.

- *Amiah Taylor*



Seasonal Forces,
Cara Fierro

Kryptonite

I can't tell you exactly when it started.

Maybe it was that first look you gave me on a drizzly February Tuesday, when we got kicked out of Starbucks after being there for six hours, clocks becoming useless amidst our musing of classic muscle cars and how much we dislike ranch dressing.

You take your coffee black and your bad news with a shrug and a sigh. If something is particularly amusing, the right corner of your mouth will curl upwards, like ivy clinging to a building's side. You don't think I notice, but when we're walking you'll strategically and subtly nudge me to the inside of the sidewalk, casually letting me keep my avid independence, insuring I'm not mowed down by a West Philly driver.

I don't think the passenger seat of my '99 Camry has looked better, than when your gigantic frame has tried to squish into it. I remember looking over at you, asking if I should race the BMW next to us. You laughed, because you didn't think I'd do it. But as soon as that light turned green, I gunned it, and down City Ave we shot, me cackling and you bracing yourself to the worn grey fabric. Nothing felt impossible in those six seconds before the Beemer to cut me off. And there you were, still clutching, with total, unrelenting faith in me.

That night when the world was falling down around me, and the flood gates were cracking and the walls were crumbling, you stumbled down to the lobby of your apartment, your own battle wounds still healing, your head fuzzy from sleep. At 10:42pm I collapsed into your arms, whimpering despondent nonsense into your faded Jeff Gordon t-shirt. You watched my armor hit the floor; it was plastic all along. I figured that'd be the end. You'd see the little girl playing make believe, still very afraid of the monsters in her closet. But instead, you helped me pick up my sword, adjusted my crown, held my flushed face in your palms, and told me that even warrior princesses cry sometimes.

I never saw you coming.

I remember the park we stood in for two hours, both necks craning towards the heavens.

It's easy to feel insignificant when you're having a staring match with oblivion.

With you, I never felt small.

Under floating rocks of fire and ice, I could see you contemplating what difference a Sicilian boy from Bucks County could possibly make in an endless universe, a singular grain of sand on a beach. I know that look, the one of wild bewilderment, unhinged excitement, crippling fear. It's the same way I look at you.

No, I can't tell you exactly when it started because we moved in slow motion, and then all at once.

Surprise birthdays and Beat poets and meatballs and NASCAR.

You were like a midday storm in late July; the air became thick, the electricity palpable, and for a second I thought it would all pass. That I was delusional, silly.

But then the clouds cracked open, and let loose something much bigger than myself. I wanted to spend the rest of my life dancing in the rain.

I was under the impression that to be happy and accomplished, to live a life of meaning and worth, I had to hold every ounce of the universe,
but all I really needed was the Sky.

- *Cristiana Caruso*

A Prayer for Fleetness

Crimson & Gray Award for Best Short Story

1.

For a smart kid I can be really dumb sometimes. That's what Coach Claire tells me.

I want to break 5 minutes in the mile. Or maybe more accurately, I want to prove to my coach I was worth the investment.

In high school I had a coach who thought I was just the best. I'm serious. He never even cracked a smile after he told me I could go to the Olympics. Even when I laughed in his face.

And you see, now my coach is my high school coach's wife. So that's where some insecurity comes from. Lauren got a scholarship because she ran a 5:01 mile. Sara got one because she ran a 2:17 800m. I got one because my high school coach thought I was just the best, and that is what he told his wife.

2.

The big problem I have in trying to break 5 is that when it comes down to it, I'm too apathetic to let myself really suffer for it.

I tell Coach Claire I don't know why this is. I say I lack confidence when it counts. That's a safe answer. Understandable even. What I can't say is that when the going gets tough, when the race "starts to matter", I can't convince myself to care.

My theory is that when I really start to suffer in a race, the whole thing becomes trivial. How can I care about the outcome of a stupid race when some girls just like me are dead? Of course, I mean Kendra. Kendra is dead. She was my friend on a Thursday and dead on a Friday. Nobody told me it was like that.

3.

Before Kendra died, she was a Birch Captain. She lived in Rhode Island and summered in New Hampshire. She said "summered" like it was a verb. That is where we met when we were nine. Summering up in the mountains at camp Singing Eagle Lodge. And we really did sing and everything.

We put on our handmade politically-incorrect Indian dresses, adorned ourselves with earned wooden beads, raised our hands toward the wood fire, and sang:

*Young man, Chieftain
Spirit of the mountain
hear a prayer for fleetness
keeper of the deer's way
reared among the eagles
clear my feet of slothness.*

And the song was so long we rested our arms on the shoulders in front of us. Still now, I imagine the Chieftain didn't mind.

4.
Sometimes I think I use Kendra as an excuse for my apathy towards racing. And how sick is that? To blame your dead friend for your athletic shortcomings? Like she is standing there at the 5 minute barrier wagging a finger at me to ease up.

I had problems motivating myself long before Kendra died. Sometimes during a race I would think of ways to fake an injury so I could roll off the track. I mean really, I consider breaking my own ankle and ending an entire season just to get out of suffering through another two minutes of race time. I confided in Lauren once about it, and she told me she has had that very thought herself. But I have my doubts.

Another thing: Lauren's brother is one of the fastest milers in the NCAA. He runs for Syracuse. She hates when people ask her about his season. Chalk it up to sibling rivalry. I wonder if he ever thinks about breaking his own ankle.

5.
Death shows up in stupid and unfair and weird places.
It goes like:

'I can't believe I'm almost 21! I wonder what my first legal drink will be.' Kendra never had a legal drink. She never will 'cause she's dead, and time is linear just like that. And that is what death kind of does. Especially young death. It makes every milestone a guilty pleasure. Like something stolen and unearned. Which isn't all bad.

6.
I want to talk to Kendra, but Kendra is not here. I know we can't have regular conversations so I am trying to stay open to alternatives.

One time I drunk messaged her on Facebook. It was just like how we used to talk in the off-season, when she was wintering in Rhode Island. Only no matter how long I waited for the little 'typing' ellipse to pop up, it never did. Which I had to be okay with.

Dead people still have Facebooks. Weird isn't it. I listened to an NPR Morning Edition about it once. Apparently about 3 million Facebook users die every year. So Kendra is kind of buried in a social media graveyard. I can look back at our conversations when I want to feel particularly sorry for myself.

I'M SO JEALOUS THAT YOU ARE TOGETHER!! i hate you no.
i love you more than life.

your hair is so long!! and all black..kinda emo, but thats ok miss youuuu

Kendra was always saying, "love you!" and I always knew she desperately meant it. It was one of those things that made you worry though. She gulped at love like air. Like maybe she wasn't getting enough. Her friends at boarding school were mean to her, so she clung harder to us. Sometimes she forced it so much we had to push away. And now that hurts, to know I pushed away a friend who only had 19 years.

But Kendra didn't kill herself, which is the weird part. Because we would later confess that she had been on our radar. We watched out for things like that since she was so unhappy and all. But no, she died skiing. I know, sounds fake. A total freak accident. A weekend excursion gone wrong. The definition of eerie is looking at her last Instagram of snow-capped mountains with the caption "Good morning Vermont!" The funny part is she doesn't even ski. Well, not 'haha' funny, although I must admit I have laughed about it. She would have laughed too if I could tell her.

"Kendra, you'll never guess how you died...SKIING! You were skiing!
No I'm dead serious. Haha sorry, poor choice of words."

The hardest part is that I can't tell her how she died.

7.

*Let my sins be all forgiven
Bless thy friends I love so well
Take us all at last to heaven
Happy there with thee to dwell.*

*In flame of sunrise bathe my mind
O master of the hidden fire!
That when I wake
Clear eyed may be
my soul's desire*

I don't believe in God. Just wasn't raised to. The first part I always got; a hundred girls standing in a circle holding hands and singing a prayer of thanks and protection. But what about that last part? Were we singing about the devil? Were we pleading with him? Christians are always asking for things. Such a sinister prayer for a bunch of little girls dressed in white, out in a soccer field.

8.

Before Kendra died, I saw my life as a narrative; like a story that sometimes doesn't make sense, but at the end of the day has meaning. But stories don't end in the middle of a sentence. That's how life ends sometimes - in the middle of a sentence. Like when your foot reaches for that last step and it isn't there, because you are already on the ground and you have to reorient yourself to the world. I guess I am still reorienting.

9.

Kendra loved to sing. We once performed a Death Cab for Cutie song. "I'll Follow You Into the Dark," at the camp talent show. She sang louder and more theatrically than I did, and I was jealous. The irony of the performance is too perfect to bear, so even though someone recorded it, I never watch it.

I never heard her voice alone until after she died. There is a Youtube video of her a cappella solo in her school's winter concert:

*I still believe in summer days.
The seasons always change
And life will find a way.
I'll be your harvester of light
And send it out tonight
So we can start again.
Is love alive?
Is love alive?
Is love alive?*

I blame the a cappella conductor for her death. How do you get a solo like that and then *not* die.

10.

So I keep on running because it is what I love to do. There is something gratifying about utter exhaustion that I always come back to. When I run I come to life in a way that is so real and tangible, that I just can't find anywhere else. When I win my heat, or do particularly well, Kendra is alive. It sounds absurd because Kendra was only peripherally aware of my running. Because she knew me well before I ever stepped foot on a track. To her I imagine she knew I ran like I knew she sang a capella. Singing was a hobby and a passion, but it was an addition to her character and identity. Running is my identity. Everything I do and am is in relation to my training. But I never thought it was important to explain that to her. It wasn't imperative to our friendship.

11.

I ran a 4:49 1500m last weekend at the Colonial Relays down in Virginia. That's 100m short of a mile. It converts roughly to a 5:06 mile. Coach Claire hugged me. It was the best I had run since high school. Everybody was really proud of me. When I went to go cool down I cried, and I didn't know why.

12.

Kendra is invisible. My goals are invisible. That is about all they have in common. How they got so tangled up I can only guess at. I don't believe in closure, at least not when it comes to death. Whoever said that was kidding themselves, and I can't kid myself. Kendra will always be dead, even one day when I am dead too. And I will never make peace with that. Still, I am here among the living, and there is no sense in making two deaths out of one.

So I will wake up tomorrow and train. I will do it on days I would rather not, and I will do it on days I would *really* rather not. And when I break 5 I will feel weightless and airy. Then the next morning I will wake up to break 4:50. It goes on and on every day like that.

*No blinding lights or tunnels to gates of white
just our hands clasped so tight
waiting for the hint of a spark.*

- Tess Doggett

The Return Home

I want to stand in the middle of a slow crowd
and be swallowed by the smoke curled air,
directly wandering into late night city traffic.

It makes my home the backseat of taxis,
memorizing each torn leather seat and secret
nail-engraved love note he hoped
she would run her hand across.

Red lipstick makes love to
my arms in early morning light while
mascara slices my cheeks
'till I sew them up with water
from some less than holy faucet.

I want to walk to the edge of an underground escape
and close my eyes so tightly that I see the blackest dawn.

I want to have my breath taken away by the blurred line
of hundreds of strangers going home to their sleepy lover with tousled hair,
or biting a rusty key and praying it will finally fit into the lock
that will lead them to their bed.

I want to forget my umbrella
and curse the sky for teaching me to fall in love with a seasonal resurrection.

I want my body to tremble in the arms of a soul
well more versed than mine,
and my back to arch in a garden of forbidden fruit.

Instead I wrap the hands of this clock around my shoulders
and bite the lips of time until I return,

“Home.”

- *Amber Denham*



*Safe and Sound,
Colin Becker*

