

The background of the cover is a complex, abstract pattern of overlapping red triangles and polygons of various sizes and orientations, creating a dense, crystalline or organic texture. The pattern is contained within a white rectangular area that is itself set within a larger white frame.

ARBEIT

The Eastern Shore Community College Literature and Arts Magazine

Cover by Angelica Garcia

Issue 1

THE TWO OWLS

by Ryan Brady and Bethany Meissner
(Artwork by Bethany Meissner)

O mysterious magistrate!
Your feathery mask of a face
and your illuminated eyes
pulse and throb
in the quivering dark.

Your head flits back and forth,
twitches, and swivels on the
bridge of your neck
as your puckered beak
repeats your universal question.

You are a sentry, a bystander,
a modernist painting on the wall
watching all life undulate
and flow before you.

You are an ancient deity
watching the world
as it consumes itself with fire.

Startled, you unfurl your
grand flag of wings
and pull yourself
into the black.

— *Ryan Brady*



You are a sleuth,
An investigator
Hidden as well as
Your car keys at dawn.
Your body creeps closer
To your target.
Tension winds up
Like guitar strings
Being finely tuned.
One crunch and
Your devil horns perk.
Your head twirls as
Quickly as water
Rushing down a drain.
You leap, suspended
For only a moment
Until your fish hook talons
Dive down and pierce
The body of your prey.

— *Bethany Meissner*

Song of Summer

When the cicadas start their song,
You know you should come along.
If the sunshine's heat is too far shot,
There's a place beside me in a moonlit spot.
See where the sand finds its end
And the water rushes in again.
Later tonight we'll celebrate with a bonfire,
Where shorts and bikinis are the main attire.
Once the fireflies decide to stop by,
They'll be a joy to chase around the sky.
An adventure waits in the summer air.
I hope I see you out there.
When the cicadas start their song,
You know you should come along.

-Bethany Meissner



Photo Credit: Quintara Smith



The Suburb

by Ryan Brady

Photo Credit: Ryan Brady

The houses are falling down,
as houses tend to do.
Vinyl siding fading,
Burgundy shutters peeling,
Loose shingles wagging in the wind.

Weeds sprout from webs of cracks
stretching across the sidewalk
and the splintered driveways
where we learned to drive our
parents' cars.

The sidewalks and driveways where
we waited for sulfuric school buses
lumbering through the streets
in the breathless sunlight dawn
of brittle winter days.

The school buses where we sat
with our faces pressed against the glass
and the foggy silhouettes of our hands
through which we saw the houses of
our neighbors pass.

The empty houses which now sit with
their windows boarded, foundations
half-sunk in the grass, rusted swing
sets buried in the mud, and graffiti
scrawled across the front doors

Doors which led to hallways which led to
living rooms where donkey tails
were pinned and televisions blared
and where creased black belts
slashed bare buttocks.

Buttocks which sat on mattresses
strewn with magazines and untouched
homework – mattresses stained with
tears and apple juice and peanut butter
in upstairs bedrooms lit with fishbowl lights.

Bedrooms from which we emerged
in the cruel mornings and stumbled
down to uniform lockers and stale
schoolroom hallways where we watched
our lives sift through our closed fists.

Hallways and classrooms lit with halos of
fluorescence and covered with pencil eraser
dust – rooms where we split ourselves into
tribes and fought silent wars with each other
on battlefields of linoleum and concrete.

Wars fought with an invisible venom, with
blood-soaked daggers made of words and
laughter and betrayal; bitter arrowheads
chasing us out of buildings and down the
streets until the blacktop stopped and the fields
began.

Fields where sweating boys wrestled in the
valleys and hillocks of budding breasts amid
tangles of silken hair and jungles of coarse fur;
tasting the animal milk of each other's flesh
while the rising sun quivered on the horizon.

A horizon perforated with the glittering
gold lights of the city – Nirvana beckoning,
singing a song of wild promise, hopes
and dreams hidden in mazes of iron giants
and blurred taillights, calling our names.

We flocked to these cities in droves, travelling
on roads paved with cigarettes and chewing gum,
our broken hearts beating in time with the bass;
our arms and legs dangling out of the windows
of ancient cars bought with our parents' money.

The city – where we were lost, found, and lost
again; where we stood in neon convenient store
parking lots under a blanket of night, and where
the last of our innocence escaped in whips of
smoke curling around the moon.

The city – where we slept all day and stayed up all
night; where we listened to the sermons of sidewalk
prophets and wept for the martyrs of the streets; wept
for those who gave their lives for music, for love, for
sex, and for our lonely apartments flooded with
industrial dawn.

The city – where, among Babylonian cathedrals
of stone and iron, we built new houses, bought
new cars, forged new names, and cloned ourselves
in the time machines of our bodies until the cycle
was complete, and we became our parents.

Now we search for each other's faces in the
windows of passing minivans.

Above the suburb where we grew up, those
monolithic clouds roll on as they did when
we were young; great grey soldiers marching
across the sky like the steady stream of minutes,
of hours, of our endless numbered days.

And
whatever
comes
after
that.



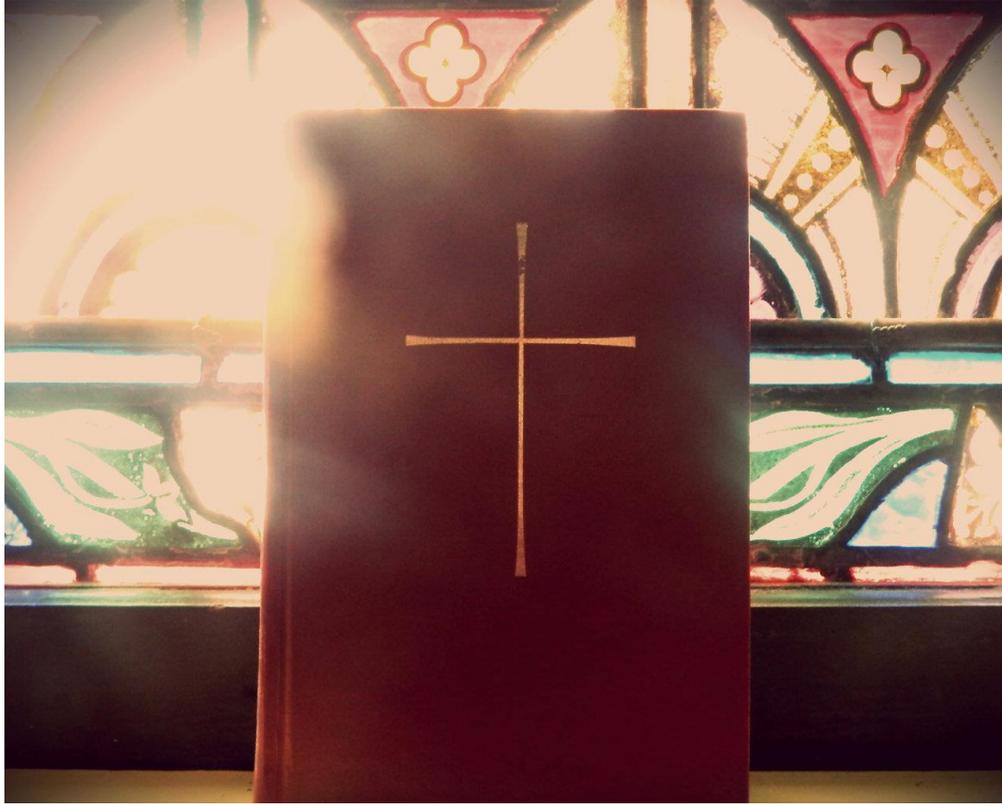


Photo Credit: -Bethany Meissner

Twenty

He lied. He cheated. He should have died – we would have been better off if he had died. By his dying we would have had wonderful memories of him to share - forever. We would have had a beautiful funeral and held a dinner afterwards at the church. But he did not die. Instead, he exited - stage left - with his daughter's Sunday school teacher. How could this have happened to me - to us – to our family? He was a pastor, and pastors are not supposed to do such things. Pastors answer to a Higher Authority. He preached against adultery. How could this have happened to me - to us – to our family?

I will never be the same. My daughter will never be the same. I have to find a job. It has been twenty years since I held a “real” job. He did not leave us with any money. If he had died, we would have had money – insurance money. Now, we must look to others who feel sorry for us to help with the mortgage payments, the bills, and the groceries. I have to find a job, but what can I do? The world has changed and passed me by during those years of being a pastor's wife. I am forced to find my way back on this merry-go-round called life. I am too old, and I am too sad.

The Sunday school teacher is twenty years younger than me. Everyone within a hundred mile radius of our little hamlet has taken sides. Some people think it must be my fault because he is such a nice man and gifted person. Some women are terrified that what happened to me could happen to them. They shun me out of fear that adultery may somehow rub off. After all, if a pastor will leave his wife for a younger woman, why not their husband? Some people secretly enjoy the fact that a pastor has fallen. They say a pastor is no better than anyone else so why expect anything different from him! The pastor tells everyone that he has done “nothing wrong.”

I am embarrassed. I am ashamed. I am so scared. Where did I do wrong? What could I have done differently? I hide. I go to the grocery store late at night when no one else is there. I attend a little storefront church with ten people. I do not answer the phone. My trust is broken. My faith struggles. My friends are few. My enemies seem to be many. I wallow in mourning. I have decided that marriages do not end in divorce, they die a living, breathing death.

Some days I still believe that it was all me – all my fault. It has been nine years since he left that Memorial Day weekend. “The pastor” and “The Sunday school teacher” are now married. I have asked God why He allowed my marriage to end. God could have stopped it! Will I never recover from the demise of those twenty years? I was young then. I feel so old now. What will I do with the rest of my life? I was dismissed for a younger more vibrant woman. I cannot seem to let that go. The loss of my marriage is never far from my mind. I am such a failure. I feel so ugly. I have come to understand that I trusted and loved a man I did not know.

He told me he never loved me; twenty years of marriage, and he never loved me. How could that be? We made love. We had a child. We had God and a church. We had friends and family. Yet he never loved me?! I think those words hurt me most of all. I never want my daughter to know that he spoke those words to me. I want her to hold on to her memories of a happy family who lived together in harmony; a family who ate dinner together every night. I want my daughter to remember a family who respected one another and supported one another through life’s ups and downs. I tried so hard. I did what any good wife would do.

I have changed. I am not the same. Does anyone see that I am different? I try to pretend that all is now right with me, and that I have moved onward and upward. But, how can I forget that he stole my life from me when he left? The life I show to the world is a sham, a charade that will continue until I die. I do not ask for pity but for understanding – understanding for what I do not understand myself.

My daughter and I work diligently to show each other and the world that we are happy. I know we are far from it. She struggles to find a man she can trust and measures each one by her dad. It is no surprise that she cannot find anyone. I cannot let go of the past. I constantly re-examine my twenty-year marriage trying to discover where I went wrong and ask myself what I could have done differently - Did I try too hard or not hard enough? I am a disappointment to myself. I see so many of my mistakes. Funny thing – I do not see any mistakes he made – except for the adultery. Death for him would have been so much better for us. Am I right?

-Anonymous

The Suit

Once upon a time there lived a king named Hugo. He desired to marry but could never trust any of the women in the kingdom. King Hugo felt he could never be sure if a woman loved him for him, or just wanted to become the queen. One day an old tailor approached the king. The tailor gave the king a white suit. He told the king that once he put this suit on, the suit would lead him to a woman he would marry for love. The king was told never get the suit dirty, or the suit would lose its power.

Once the king put the suit on he was shocked to find out that everyone he saw looked dirty, no matter how much they scrubbed themselves. Every woman that approached the king looked filthy and the king would turn them away disgusted. The king couldn't stand even the most beautiful women in the kingdom, they all appeared filthy. The king became disheartened and felt he would never marry.

One day the king was walking outside in his courtyard and he heard a woman on the other side of the wall. He could not see the person over the walls of his courtyard, but he was in need of a friend. She told the king her name was Annabelle, and she was on her way to the well to fetch some water for her animals. When Annabelle asked the king what his name was, he only told her that he was just a lonely old fool and begged her to come back and talk with him again. She agreed and came back every day.

Annabelle would talk with the Hugo for hours at a time. After several weeks, the king was convinced that this woman truly loved him because she had no idea who he was. The king asked Annabelle where she lived and Annabelle gave the king directions. King Hugo told her he wanted to come see her because he wanted to speak with her father about her hand in marriage. Annabelle was overjoyed. The next day Hugo set out in his white suit to propose to

Annabelle. When the King arrived at her house, he was shocked to find that she was the daughter of a pig farmer. It did not take the suit to see that she was filthy, but to make matters worse the smell of the farm could be smelled from a mile away. The king walked away with his head held low, not able to shake the fact the she was disgustingly dirty and even worse, smelled like a pig. If the king was to come close to Annabelle, his suit would become dirty, and then could never be sure if she truly loved him. As the king walked away, he began to think about all of the talks he shared with Annabelle. King Hugo began to realize that he truly loved her and wanted to marry her. He ran back to the pig farm and jumped in the pigpen with Annabelle. The now filthy king embraced his bride with joy and



gladness while his suit would never again have its power. The king would have his bride,
and that was just fine with him.

- Kevin Cornwell

Photo: Sierra Brady

No Limit

The butterfly
flutters his
wings to

the smallest of
the smallest
flowers;

however,
he wants more
than these

the smallest is
no limit
for this one.

-Sarah Freeman



Watching

I watch,
the frost glisten and dance,
in the between of daylight or night.
We walked and watched,
my dog and me.
It felt as if we were meant to see,
my heart over running with the love
of God and the wonder of how it
all came to be.
Just walking along,
my dog and me.

- Paula Blackwell

The Peter Pan Bus

I saw a Peter Pan Bus,
that reminded me of younger years,
and to tell you the truth,
I cherish those remembered days.
I saw a Peter Pan Bus,
and it came to mind,
those days are forever mine,
even though just a moment in time.
I saw a Peter Pan Bus,
and watched it drive away,
as does youth on life's highway,
so forward we go,
come what may.

- Paula Blackwell



Photo Credit: Quintara Smith

My Old Home

On Oak Island there is a street and on that street is a house. Its roof is brown, and the porch is screen in. Over time the screen has fallen in and the wood has started to fall away. And on that porch there is a swing, a few shelves, and refuse from inside. The driveway has been cut by years of tires going back and forth. Two trees sit in the front yard; one alive, and the other dead. The backyard overgrown with weeds, some reaching eight feet high, has an old disused shed showing years of neglect.

Inside the shed one may find toys, books, spiders, and boxes. The tree next to it looks like gnarled hands reaching for the sky. There is a shower attached to the back of the house, however it doesn't work anymore. The bushes by the side walls cover the windows.

Knocking upon the front door it creaks open. The stench of mold flows from this portal. Walking inside the remains of old shelves and cabinets catch your eye. Desks and boxes clutter the corners of this room. A few couches sit alone and dusty arranged around a large chest of drawers with a television on it.

The metal stove and fridge shimmer in the sunlight from the door. The windows are blocked off from the inside. Walking into the hall you find an old shelf with DVDs on it. A bathroom sits off to the right unused; its old toilet and tub stained from years of dirt and grime. A door across the hall is shut tight and a light shines from beneath it.



Photo Credit: Quintara Smith

The door pushes open and the light from the ceiling sways back and forth. Three computers sit rusting and waiting for the person who once had them to come back. The shelf beside the small bed has trinkets and small candles. Leaving this room to your left is a wall of tapes and junk and another room. My room. In this room is a bed, still made up

from when I left, a chest of drawers collecting dust, a television, and a desk sitting to the left of it. An old chair still waits for someone to sit in it. The mirror on the back wall still reflects back the room.

Another door is closed across the hall. It opens to reveal a library of movies and DVDs; a large desk sits in the middle of the wall with a large flat screen on it. Its screen gone and the plastic is rotting away. The bathroom to the right with its pink, and peeling, wallpaper has a few old tubes of toothpaste. The sink, old and discolored, has the remains of an animal long since dead. The window in this bathroom has been broken in many years ago and the elements are starting to take the wall. The mirror, cracked and broken, sits still in its frame. Leaving this room to the right is a hallway.

Down the hallway is a room. In that room there is a broken freezer, a washer and dryer, and boxes stacked on a wooden plank over the washer and dryer. The two machines look very old and rusty. The freezer sits still turned on. Its low humming is the only thing you hear in this room. The boxes contain Christmas things never to be opened again. Across from this room is a small area with three chests of drawers, a bed, and a television. The bed sits alone and stripped. The television its plastic rotting away and the screen broken awaits someone to fix it. That person will never come. A few shelves await something to be put on them.

Turning around to see the back door, its blinds closed, and boxes. It opens with the wind and slams shut with it as well. Walking down the hallway to the living room the walls scream silently of the carnage that happened here. The front door is still open and the wind has turned cold. A car waits in the driveway, your car, you turn around and look back when the door closes.

It has been a long twenty years since the people left. The damage is done and the neighborhood moved on. The house looks vacant and empty as you drive away. Then something catches your eye. A man walks out from across the street. He stands for a few minutes looking at the house. He hums a tune and turns to face the car. He waves and walks back into his house.

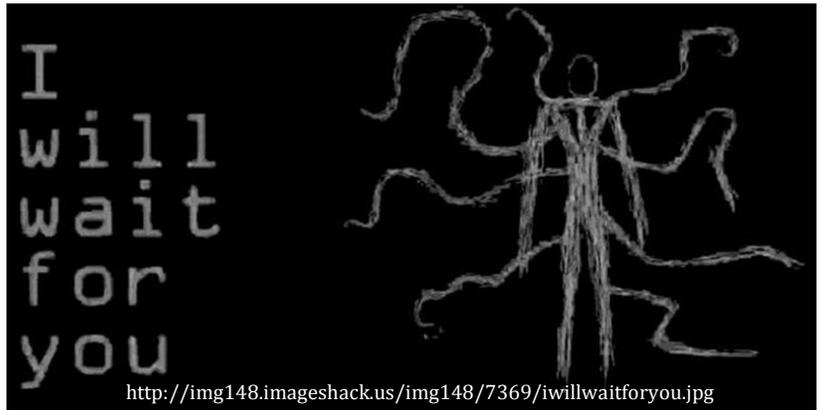
-Ian Paré

Lost

He waits.
Waits for us to come
Getting lost in the woods.

As we run He comes.
Makes Himself known
Standing by the trees.

Some run in terror but not I
His hands wrap around mine outstretched
I kneel to Him and fade into the night.



-Ian Paré

The Tree

When I walk at night,
the moon's pitch of light engulfs a relic of a tree,
my blood turns to liquid ice.
I adjust my stride to give this tree wide berth,
holding disturbing thoughts at bay.
Still, images of hanging tormented souls
permeate my mind.

A tree hiding secrets beneath its flaking bark,
dressed in an intricately woven vine that attacks
from battle station ground, incarcerating the evil
within,
stockpiling with intent of release upon some
unsuspecting
foe who happens by, unaware of its decay as
oversized
branches protrude upward in a scattered pattern.

I tell you, this tree possesses an odd power,
the residue of an ancient curse held captive by
roots and vine
For now it lies, lurks, and waits until it can unleash
vast horror

-Paula Blackwell



Photo Credit: Ryan Brady

The Interview (with a Vampire)

By Kevin Cornwell

Characters:

Ms. Damselle- She is an overworked single mother about to lose her job at the blood bank for not hiring people when she needs to. She has been left by her baby's father to raise their son alone. While she has a little help raising her son from her mother, she is feeling the pressure from life. Despite all of this, she still has some sass left in her.

Count Dracula- Classic look and accent. The Count is trying to start a new life. He is tired of killing people, but finds it hard to stop. He left Transylvania because the people of the town ran him out to open a day spa.

Scene: Starting off with a black stage.

Damselle: (*shrieking scream*) Ahhhh! (*Lights turn on to an office setting. Damselle standing next to a desk*) I hate cold spaghetti! (*Exits stage right with the bowl in her hands*)

(The phone rings, Damselle runs back quickly to answer the phone from stage right)

Damselle: Yes Mr. Lugosi, I understand sir. I'll make the hire for the blood bank tonight. (*Pause*) By six o'clock, yes sir. You'll see when you get here with everyone else. (*Pause*) No sir, please don't. (*Pause*) Yes Mr. Lugosi, I'll be good, no attitude sir, I promise (*hangs up the phone and rolls her eyes, snaps her fingers, and swivels her head*) Shoot...you bald headed bastard.

Damselle: (*Looking up at her watch*) Oh! (*Picks up the phone*) Hey mom, how's Bram. (*Pause*) Oh that's good (*said with a little stress*). (*Pause*) Yeah, I need a new job; Lugosi is sinking his teeth into me again. He's got it out for me. He told me if I didn't hire this foreigner tonight, he was going to fire me. (*Pause for a second*). I dunno, maybe because I'm a single mother. You know all men are nothing but blood-suckers. (*Pause*) Well that only happened a few times. Anyways, they were all losers and they didn't deserve the stinking jobs to begin with. (*Pause*) I know I need this job; you don't have to remind me...a-gain. I got to go, the next loser is coming soon, and I gotta' eat my dinner before he flies in. (*Pause*) He's the last one, then I'll be home and hopefully still with my job. (*Pause*) Love you toos, bye. (*Damselle getting up from her desk walks off stage right*)

Count Dracula enters stage left

Count: (*Walking from stage left, looking back at the audience creepily, cape over his mouth, eyes peering at the audience, then clumsily trips*) Oh Mummy! (*Falls on the ground*) Wolf balls! (*Said with less confidence*) My pants! My pants! I need to make a good impression. I need this job. Ok here goes nothing.

(The Count brushes himself off, then walks up to the desk)

Count: Hello? (*Looking around*)

(Damselle walks in)

Damselle: Hello. I'm Ms. Damselle. I'll be conducting your interview. What did you say your name was?
(*Puts her hand out to shake his hand*)

Count: (*Damselle is surprised as she shakes his hand*) Count Drac... (*Damselle interrupts*)

Damselle: Your hands are freezing, it must be chilly outside. So Mr. Drack, you are here for your interview, so let's begin. Please have a seat (*both the Count and Damselle sit down*). I'm going to start by asking you a few standard interview questions.

Count: Very well

Damselle: What is your greatest strength?

Count: I am proficient at the violin, and

(*Damselle interrupts*)

Damselle: Oh, that's a good one Mr. Drink. (*Hurriedly shuffling her papers around and looking at her watch*) What is your greatest weakness?

Count: Um...I am photophobic

Damselle: What? Uh, ok. I don't consider a photogenic person to be a weakness. But, I guess that will do. (*Looking at her watch and shuffling her papers impatiently*) Ah, when you look in the mirror, what do you see?

Count: I see nothing

Damselle: (*Damselle stops as both surprised and confused by his answer, then looks up at the Count and suddenly appears to make sense of what he said*) Oh I see, existential, I love it. (*Damselle looking at her papers*) I took a look at your references and spoke with a Mr. Frank N. Stein. When I asked if he had ever worked with you, he said (*classic Frankenstein voice*) FIRE! BAD! I told him not to worry; we weren't looking to fire anyone in the blood bank. He was a man of few words, just how a man ought to be. (*Looking at her watch again and surprised at the time*) Oh! Ok, time is getting short, and I don't want to rush this, but to get straight to the point Mr. Drew, you've got the job. What do you say? Are you interested?

Count: Yes very much. It's a dream come true, I assure you

Damselle: (*Damselle breathes a sigh of relief*) Great. We just need to fill out the paperwork. (*Looks at her watch and appears slightly more relaxed*) Looks like we have a little time left and it's been a long day. I haven't eaten since breakfast, do you mind if I finish my dinner while we go over the paperwork? (*Damselle pulls out the paperwork and gives herself a paper cut*) Ouch, nothing hurts worse than a paper cut, don't you think? Got me good. (*Sucks the blood, then shows the cut to the Count*)

(*The Count turns his head with his hand over his mouth*)

Damselle: I'll be right back (*Damselle leaves exits stage right*)

Count: I can't take it. I promised I wouldn't (*looking distressed*) It's too much (*Pause. Appears like he is trying to fight the urge to drink her blood, but is failing*) I hunger! (*Damselle enters stage right. She is*

right in front of him as he turns around. The Count has his mouth open as if to bite her. She is holding a bowl of spaghetti with garlic bread).

Damselle: Wants some of my garlic bread Mr. Dave?

Count: *(The Count pulls back and Hisses)* Heeeeh!

Damselle: *(stops and looks at the Count shocked)* Not a Garlic fan I see. I guess I'll finish it later.
(Damselle exits stage right with the spaghetti)

(Damselle enters right back in on stage right without the spaghetti)

Damselle: Ok we're nearly finished, let's get this paperwork finished before things get even more batty. Now, because you have virtually no experience aside from a...what is that word

Count: An Impaler

Damselle: huh? Oh! Well we call that a phlebotomist in this country. That's not much experience in working in the blood bank though. You're not squeamish around blood are you?

Count: *(A sly grin falls on his face)* I assure you, just the opposite.

Damselle: Ok then, you don't have a lot of experience with working in an actual blood bank, so we are going to have to train you. Even though this is a night shift position, we have to train you on the day shift for a few days before putting you out on your own on nights. *(Busily shuffling through the paperwork)*

Count: *(Appears shocked)* Dayshift? *(Distressed)* No, I can't, I won't.

Damselle: *(Stops everything. Annoyed)* Well, it's our policy sir to start new hires on the dayshift. That's just the way it's done! I don't make the rules, because if I did, things would be different around here for sure! So do you want this job or not?

Count: I'm hungry for it, but...

Damselle: But what Mr. Drunk? *(Now strong agitation in her voice)* It is almost the end of the day and I need a decision by the end of today; in fact, I need the decision now. I don't need another indecisive man, I can't take that now. My life depends on this decision.

Count: *(silent thinking. Still appears anxious)*

Damselle: *(pleading)* Mr. Drove, is it really going to kill you to work a dayshift a few times?

Count: *(Answering as if to tell her the truth)* Well,

Damselle: *(Interrupts the Count. Speaks as if she is trying to understand his dilemma)* Did you get burned on your last dayshift?

Count: *(Surprised, but relieved by the question)* Yes, That's exactly what happened!

Damselle: Did your last job get rid of you?

Count: You could say that.

Damselle: They'll do that. All companies are the same. Don't worry about the blood bank though, people stay there forever. They always need help down there. So what did they do to you?

Count: (*pauses for a sec then speaks*) They kicked me out and turned my castle (hand over forehead) into a day spa!

(The clock strikes six o'clock)

Damselle: Let me give it to you straight Mr. Drack, we've got an angry mob coming and they'll be here any minute. If we don't have a decision by the time they arrive, they're going to eat me for dinner.

Count: (Happily surprised) Well, then, maybe this place could work out after all.

Damselle: Great! I'm glad the dayshift didn't scare you off.

Count: (*Count turns to the audience and smiles*) I hear sunscreen works wonders.

The End

Discovery

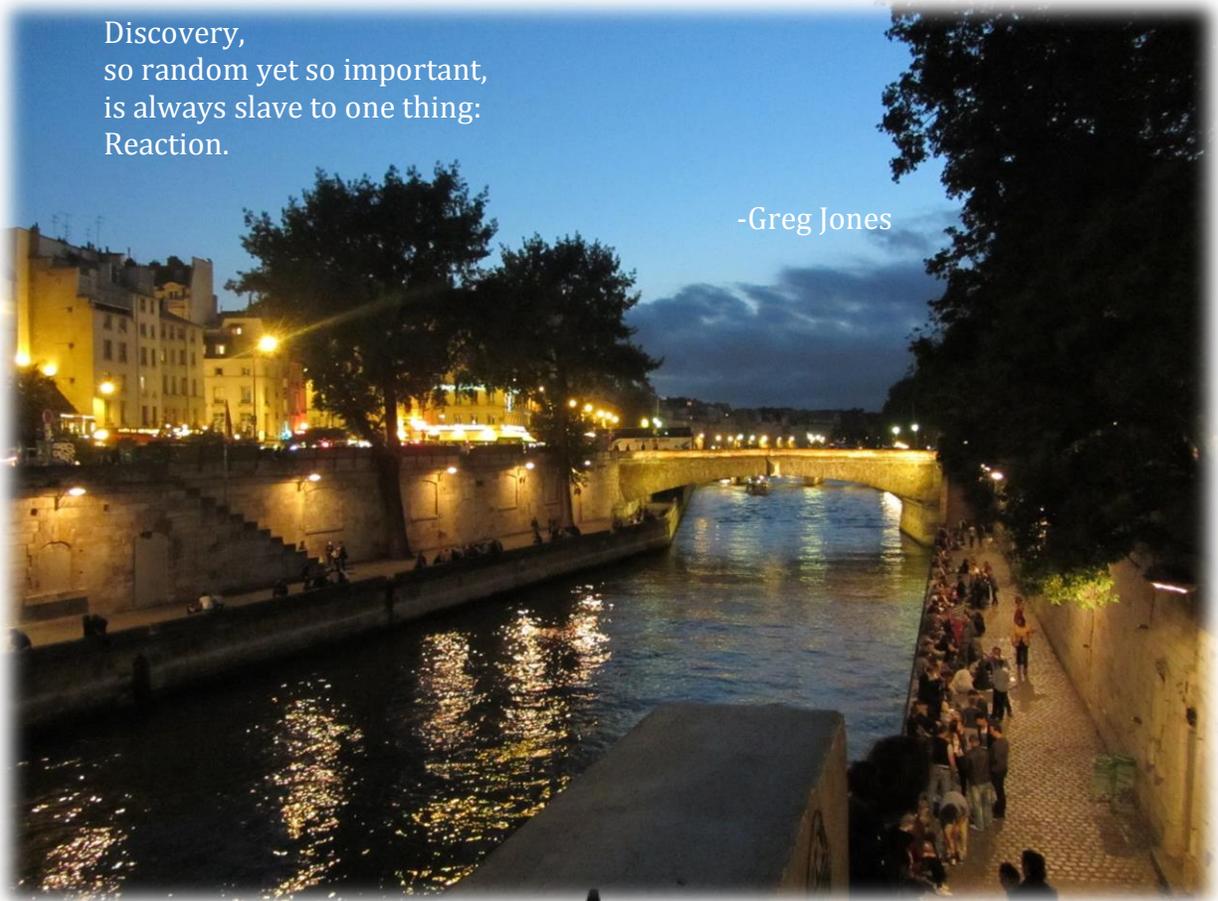
To finally eat eggs my way:
Overdone, rubbery.
Feeding bacon to the cat
 with fingers
doesn't satisfy
in the absence of possible discovery
by a love so gone but so quick to forgiveness.

Or finally, out loud, to say:
"Cruel you." "Distant you:
Thinking jabs about your child
 was funny"
doesn't satisfy
when forgiveness can't be found amidst age's mist.

Columbus knew full well the harm as well as the good
 of discovery.
He heard the bloody howls of the conquered on one side.
He saw the royal smiles rewarding conquest on the other.

Discovery,
so random yet so important,
is always slave to one thing:
Reaction.

-Greg Jones



Little Torches off Vermont & Sunset

Tick
Tock
Tick
Tock
Right foot
Left
The way you walk
I lose my breath trying to catch up
The avenue means nothing to you and
everything to me

Orange.
Navy.
Orange again
Every 50 feet
Repeat
Little torches on the street
Lamp posts casting glowy beams
On you
On me
On everything

Can you look at me when I talk to you?
Remember me,

the person you knew?
Little torches on the street casting beams
on everything.

You've sped up to "feed the meter", you
say
A statement that justifies striding away
But the words are as sheer as the screen
of my porch back home.

The truth is, it eats me too
I hurt like you do, little blue
But still,
I will
will
will not
Let any angry, lonely feeling of mine ever
cut you off.
Please walk with me
slowly
until the pavement stops.

- Angelica Garcia



Olds

You are what I aspire to be
But yet, almost nothing about you inspires me
And so I look over your words and phrases
But it seems to be nothing but phases
Of these emotional roller coasters you've faced
And now, you write to express, meanings laced

The way I see it
If this is all I have to do to be where you are
Then why aren't I the star
You've had this light shone on you
But I am able to express how you do
I apologize for the hands you've been dealt
Many works created from how you felt
But—time's up

You are what I aspire to be
But yet you do not faze me
Just think of all those you've intimidated
I'm not, because quite frankly, you're out dated
I'd never overestimate my abilities
You've just made me think so differently

To each his own
Because of your success, my opinion doesn't matter
Not your ego, person, nor feelings I wish to batter
I've got my own style; you've definitely got yours
Through this experience, I have opened doors
It's no competition, although I'd almost like one
But know this isn't my best; just had to be said and
done
But—time's up

-Quintara Smith

Tear

Rolling down the
side of a soft
cheek, I glisten

as if
I'm beautiful
but I am

just the product
of pain
on a lonely

night that's just
here to smear
your mascara.

-Quintara Smith

Night Train

Night Train

In a secret moment I sing
what it's like to be alone
what it's like to be away from home

Hot rails
hold another tune
under metal man machines
hiss out inner city dreams
in under-city streams

When you're in the night
you become the dark
you become
Night train.

-Angelica Garcia





Photo Credit: Laura Gawryns

Calluses

By Ryan Brady

Characters:

SAM WHITEFIELD – the son

ANGELA WHITEFIELD – the mother

(The stage is bare except for a single chair and a table adorned with a vase of flowers. On the chair sits SAM WHITEFIELD. He is shirtless and his chest is wrapped tightly with thick cloth bandages. He wears an expression of concentrated discomfort as he thumbs through the yellowing pages of a worn book. Every now and then his expression lightens as if he has read something humorous. However, this expression inevitably fades and his previous pained face returns after some moments. He has just entered one of these light-hearted

spells when his mother, ANGELA WHITEFIELD, a stout, middle-aged woman with disheveled, graying hair and wearing a faded, floral print dress, enters the room with a pair of brown grocery bags. She is the type of person who loves to listen to her own voice. She appears to be agitated.)

ANGELA: Oh, Sam! You still reading that book after all the time I been gone? Do you ever think about doin' anything constructive?

SAM: (*Muffling his annoyance.*) Such as?

ANGELA: (*Placing the groceries on the floor.*) Are you serious, Sam? You coulda' brought more wood in for the stove or milked the cows or fed the chickens or somethin'. There's never a shortage of things to do around here!

SAM: The farmhands did all that stuff this morning, Mom.

ANGELA: (*Exasperated.*) I shouldn't have to spend your father's hard-earned money paying two farmhands when my own flesh and blood is perfectly able to work himself! Now put up these groceries! I almost gave myself a heart-attack pullin' on them out there in the yard!

(*SAM closes his book angrily, places it on the table, and limps over to where his mother has placed the two paper grocery bags on the floor. Holding both in one hand, he somehow manages to hobble off the stage. ANGELA walks over to the vacant chair and pushes it under the table. She stands thoughtfully with her hands on the back of the chair.*)

ANGELA: (*To herself.*) I've never in all my days seen a young man who just sits around and whines like he does! Poor boy'll never get himself a woman like that! I've told him again and again no woman wants a man who just sits around and reads all the time like some sissy. (*Wistfully.*) Why, I remember when I met his father – the man had so many calluses on his hands that whenever he touched me it felt like somebody was rubbin' sandpaper on me. That's what women want! A man with rough hands – a man who'll take charge and who isn't afraid to get a little dirty every now and then.

(*SAM reenters.*)

SAM: Who were you talking to?

ANGELA: (*Defensively.*) I wasn't talkin' to nobody.

SAM: Oh. I thought I heard your voice.

(*ANGELA says nothing. SAM stumbles over to the table, pulls the chair out, and sits down again. He picks up his book.*)

ANGELA: (*Under her breath.*) There you go again, sittin' in that chair, readin' that book of yours. Ain't never seen anything like it in my life!

(SAM *rubs his forehead indifferently.* ANGELA *places her fists on the table and leans forward in a decisive manner.*)

When are you goin' to get off your rear and find a woman? You're gettin' old enough to be married now. Why, me and your daddy was married when he was seventeen. Showed up on my front doorstep and said "Ms. Angela, I'm just here to say you is the most beautiful woman in this here town and I came today with the intention of asking your hand in marriage." The happiest day of my life. Women like being thrilled like that. They don't like men who just sit around and look out the window all day – that much I can attest to.

(SAM *doesn't respond. He hasn't looked up from his book once throughout this entire speech.* ANGELA, *exasperated, starts to straighten the flowers in the vase. She hesitates, then begins speaking in a sad tone.*)

I just don't know what we're going to do without your father around. It's just been one thing after another for me. First him and then your accident and now all this with the farm – it's just too much for one woman to handle! There ain't a man or woman alive who can take care of a farm by themselves without any help. (*She tosses a pointed glance in SAM'S direction.*)

SAM: We could always sell.

ANGELA: (*Confused.*) Sell what?

SAM: The farm.

ANGELA: (*In disbelief.*) Have you lost your mind? After all the work your father did to make this farm a respectable place? Whitefield Farm is one of the most reliable farms in the area –

everybody whose anybody knows that! Lord knows we don't have much to be proud of otherwise. Your father would be ashamed if he knew we were entertainin' the notion of *sellin'* his pride and joy.

SAM: (*Under his breath.*) I don't think he's in any position to be worrying about that.

ANGELA: (*Shocked.*) How dare you speak of your dearly departed father like that! I don't know what I've done to deserve this kind of behavior from you. It's bad enough that you scoff at me, but then you go and slander your hard-working father who isn't even here to defend himself! You oughta' be ashamed! I know that you're angry about him making you join the football team, but he did it for your own good! He wanted you to have a good character so that – (*She hesitates. She begins to fidget with the sleeve of her dress.*) So that when it came you would be able to . . . to handle the responsibilities better.

SAM: (*Warily.*) What are you talking about? When what came? What responsibilities?

ANGELA: Oh you know what I'm takin' about, Sam. We all knew his time was comin'. And after all *somebody* has to take care of the farm. I certainly can't do it.

(SAM'S *face goes blank. He says nothing.*)

I've been tryin' to go easy on you, Sam. The grievin' has been tough, I know. And then you had your accident and everythin'. But it's been a few months. I think it's high time you grew up and took on the responsibilities your father left you. I know you think it's a burden now but trust me when I say that it'll be a blessin' in the scheme of things.

(SAM *appears frustrated. He doesn't say anything for a while. ANGELA continues to fidget with the sleeve of her dress.*)

SAM: How come no one asked me for my say in this?

ANGELA: Well, I didn't think it would be *this* big of a deal for you. I know you dislike hard work but I never in all my days thought you would be *this* opposed to takin' care of your father's farm after his time came. I mean, after all, it's not like you have anythin' else to be doin'. You ain't on the football team anymore and then you're gonna' be graduatin' in a few months and then what? You think I'm gonna' let you just sit around all day like you been doin' all this time?

SAM: (*After a pause.*) Actually, I was hoping to be able to start attending university classes in the summer.

ANGELA: (*Incredulously.*) *What? You? At university? With what money?*

SAM: (*With a twinge of sarcasm.*) They have these things called scholarships, Mom. And financial aid. They have lots of help available for people like us who can't afford it. I just

got my award letter back and it says I've received \$2000 for the semester. That's enough for a few classes. And I can just commute into town a couple of days a week, so I wouldn't have to pay for room and board or anything.

(ANGELA, *for once, appears to be at a loss for words. It doesn't take long for her to recover, however.*)

ANGELA: Why in the world would you want to go to university? What's it gonna' do you in the long run? Why, your father never went to university and look how good he turned out!

(*A brief silence. SAM seems tense. ANGELA starts to sweep dust off her dress.*)

If you ask me, people put too much emphasis on educatin' and book learnin' these days. All anyone really needs to make it in this world is a little hard work and a good disposition. There ain't nothin' that you can learn at that university that'll help you take care of this farm.

SAM: Maybe I don't want—

ANGELA: (*Cutting him off.*) And please tell me how you hope to benefit from goin' to university, anyway. What in God's name are you gonna' study? I don't suppose they teach classes on how to run a farm and be a responsible adult? Cause that's what *you* need!

SAM: (*Fuming.*) Actually, I want to study anthropology. If I take classes during the summer—

ANGELA: An-throw-puh-*what?*

SAM: Anthropology. The study of humans.

ANGELA: (*Indignantly.*) Studyin' *humans*? You're tellin' me you want to spend \$2000 and go to university so that you can study *humans*? Why, you can do that anywhere – and for a heck of a lot cheaper too!

SAM: It's not really the same th—

ANGELA: Seems to me that they're always comin' out with some new study of somethin'-or-other. Whatever happened to the three R's – “reading, 'ritin', and 'rithmetic?” When I was a girl, those were all that mattered. Now everyone has to know everythin'. (*In a snide manner*) The study of *humans*. What a load of hogwash.

SAM: (*Clearly angry.*) You're wrong.

(*An uncomfortable pause. ANGELA looks at SAM.*)

ANGELA: (*Quietly.*) What did you say to me?

SAM: (*Breathing heavily.*) I said you're wrong. You don't know what you're talking about.

ANGELA: (*Offended.*) Well excuse me if don't understand why anyone would want to forsake their parents' wishes and study some good-for-nothin' subject at some hot-shot university—

SAM: (*In a loud, shaky voice.*) So I can get away from *you!* That's why!

(*A cruel silence. No one says anything for several long moments. ANGELA stares at SAM, then turns and walks over to the other side of the stage.. Eventually, she begins to speak.*)

ANGELA: I don't know if it's because your daddy didn't beat you enough when you were little or what, but I've never seen a young man disrespect his mother like you do me. What have I ever done to you? I've loved and supported you since you were born and I always will, but all I ever get in return is your . . . your *hatefulness!*

(*She begins to weep.*)

I just don't know what to do with you. Sometimes I watch you out of the corner of my eye and I see you just sittin' there and lookin' at me all disgusted like I'm some kind of mangy *dog*. Wait – I take that back. You would probably treat a mangy dog better than you treat me. (*More weeping*) Well, I can't help that I'm not smart enough for you! Lord knows I've given you my all and not gotten a cent in return! I've given and given and given and all you ever have to show for it is your spitefulness!

(SAM looks horrified. He reluctantly gets up from the chair and crosses over to where his mother is standing.)

SAM: Mom – Please don't cry, Mom. I–

ANGELA: Don't come near me! I've had it with you! I've taken all a poor woman can handle! You go ahead and go off to the university and study your books and leave me to take care of this whole farm by myself – but don't you dare show your face around here when your money runs out or when you can't get a job. I'm through puttin' up with your disrespect!

SAM: Mom, I wasn't trying to disrespect you. I was just angry, that's all. You were just going on and on and I couldn't– (*He fumbles*). I couldn't get you to–

ANGELA: Ain't nothin' you say or do is gonna' make me change my mind! Now go!

(SAM stands motionless next to ANGELA for several moments before he begins to slink away dejectedly. ANGELA, however, isn't finished.)

It's because your father didn't beat you enough. (*Stifling her sobs*.) That's why you act like this.

(SAM slows to a stop. He is quiet. Then he speaks.)

SAM: You mean the way he beat you?

ANGELA: (*Uncomprehendingly*.) What are you talkin' about?

SAM: I think you know exactly what I'm talking about.

ANGELA: Your father never touched me in that way. Don't be ridic–

SAM: (*Suddenly angry*.) *Bullshit*. How stupid do you think I am, Mom? Do you really think I never noticed the bruises? Or the crying? Do you think I never wondered about those tense silences at dinner? (*His voice gradually grows louder*.) Huh? Or the yelling in the dead of night? *Huh? Do you?*

(ANGELA begins sobbing again – this time more desperately.)

ANGELA: (*Sobbing*.) He didn't do it out of meanness! He was stressed and upset and–

SAM: Do you hear yourself? Do you hear what you're saying?

ANGELA: (*Crying loudly.*) I deserved everythin' he gave me! He was a good m—

SAM: He was a *bastard* and you know it! Tell me something, Mom. Did you like it? (*In a shaky voice.*) Did you *enjoy* feeling his calluses digging into your skin? Or his knuckles against your jaw? (*ANGELA wails*) Was that *manly* enough for you?

(*ANGELA breaks down completely and lunges at SAM, swiping and tearing at the bandages on his chest. He eventually manages to restrain her. Limp and broken, ANGELA cries into her son's arms as the curtain falls.*)

END

Flight on Fear

Hush now little one.
I see you over here alone.
Are you afraid of the wind?
Have you lost your way home?
You can venture any way,
Without fear of fall, you soar high.
Dancing across the blue with confidence,
Sifting through clouds up there in the sky.
While still hugging the winds with your curves,
You can pierce the atmosphere with your corners.
Dead, cracking leaves can drive you away
But I watch you creep up on bread like the predators.
You are no majesty despite your talent,
A coward covered in feathers to hide your fear.
Sing your song and put up your front.
When it gets tough, you don't have to stay here.

-Quintara Smith



A Sky of Multi Hue on a Stormy Day

Thunder rumbles, rain drops bounce on the window pane,
with each rumble I go more insane,
so I fear each bounce on that window again.
Thunder rumbles, rain drops bounce on the window pane,
shattering my mind more with each drop,
oh, how I wish the bouncing would stop,
so I fear each bounce on that window again.
Fear of storm is not a game,
shattering my mind more with each drop,
and it calls to me with maddening urgency.
Fear of storm is not a game,
it is hard to complain when there is no one to blame
and it calls to me with maddening urgency.
A sky of multi hue on a stormy day,
it is hard to complain when there is no one to blame,
with each rumble I go more insane.

- Paula Blackwell





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