

Laurel Moon

deep freeze - spring 2014

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-deep freeze-

Spring 2014

Dear you,

Thank you for picking up this edition of Laurel Moon.

This magazine is "simple in concept, yet elegant in overall design." We worked hard to let the voices of different authors, each bringing their own experiences and worldviews, coalesce into a cohesive anthology.

We hope you enjoy the fruits of our labor––and, of course, the labor of every campus author and member of our editorial staff who contributed to making our comeback issue the very best it can be.

~ sam + angela + greg, the 2014 Laurel Moon E-Board

Laurel Moon is Brandeis' oldest student-run publication. After a short hiatus, we are excited to be back in circulation with our spring 2014 issue. Every piece you are about to read is written by a Brandeis undergraduate student and was selected with care by the editorial staff.

Laurel Moon also holds weekly meetings. We invite you to stop by whenever you can. We'd be happy to have you! Meeting times are determined at the beginning of each semester, and will be advertised around campus or through the e-mail listserv.

If you are interested in receiving information about any upcoming workshops, meetings, or events, please sign up for the listserv, or e-mail laurelmoonbrandeis@gmail.com with your Brandeis e-mail address and name.

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Ayelet Schrek	The Tree	1
Sarah Rush	an idea	2
Sharon Kimel	Fear Of	3
Caty Fairclough	Passion	4
Isabel Ballan	The Eschatalogy of Being	5
Charlie A Sannesmoth	A Thousand Words and Hopes of Dreamers	7
Linda Maleh	Just One Moment	10
Isabel Ballan	Bird	11
Ilana Kruger	Bental Sculpture Garden	12
Miriam E Goldman	Honesty [**TW: Sexual Violence**]	13
Ayelet Schrek	Marton Adler	14
Miriam E Goldman	Honey	15
Rachel Dillon	will power	16
Miriam Sokolow	The Laughing Stars	17
Gregory Bonacci	THE FIRST THING i KNEW WAS FIRE	21
Christina Capshaw	Uniform	23
Angela Acevedo	Absalom, Absalom, my beautiful boy	25
Anonymous	Race in Class	26
Rachel Nathanson	Nightmares	27
Caty Fairclough	Types of Soil	29
Clayre Benzadon	Spanish Fever	30
Claire Fishman	Blue Note	31

The Tree

Ayelet Schrek

"How very nautical of you,"
the popping jay described to the tree.
"Beautiful, simply exquisite."
The tree ignored them.
"Perhaps you are not forthcoming due
to your
exceptionally
thick
bark."
The tree ignored.
"What to get you to respond must I pursue?"
The tree.
"Upcry!" the jay popped.
"Don't cry me this! You hurt them!
Destroy, refuse to save!"
The tree wants.
"No more, no more! They fly, will soar from here, haunted, hallowed!"
Screeched, the popping jay flew.
Gone, falling, sinking, wailing.
Tree cries.

the idea

Sarah Rush

you may not have noticed but lately
the stove-top has been speaking at night;
when the sun's cold shoulder lends fire
to those four shimmering sapphire eyes—

its stare burned my retinas in the dark
so i squirmed out from the stiff bed covers
impelled by a faint smoky scent of desire
melting, or maybe melding
at midnight

and as i clambered into the kitchen
i could have sworn i heard the striking
of a dry match and the
gasping of singed air—
rapturous, i collapsed to my knees
before the creature, and then

it saw me behind my two shimmering branded eyes
reached far within and lit some pyre—
one i had buried so deep below the others
i had forgotten...

'touch me' the eyes said, 'love me'
and i won't deny i wanted to

Fear Of

Sharon Kimel

I fear the days
when the sun will refuse to shine,
and when the moon will become the sun.
I fear grass being green
of leaves becoming a pond
and of the pond becoming a raging red ocean.
I fear a time
when the stars will turn to crisps of ash
and the spacious sky will fall in upon itself.
when dramatic blacks will leave trails of white,
when angels will become the daemons.
I fear seeing
all nine planets disappear,
with a popping noise,
leaving the universe
one by one.
And as if that weren't enough,
I fear that artifacts
will no longer be artifacts
that lands with rolling hills
won't be upright
and that fish with gills
will disrobe and be shredded
into narrow bands of ribbon.
I fear of running while it prowls behind
I don't want it to catch me
I want to be left in the burial mounds
that will still be there
when the end comes.

Passion

Caty Fairclough

fruit may die in ice's embrace
I grow a different way
thriving in shivers
and their ancient dance --
your coldness won't kill me

death comes to other things
left behind in the acid soil
of the moors covered
in heather our emblem
our sanctuary (the only species
in the genus Calluna)
I only want you
even if the rest fades away

Our sameness will make us
alone

The Eschatology of Being

Isabel Ballan

I am barren today.

my fruits have been cut off.
they lie brown and crinkly in my hands,
they have curled in on themselves,
they do not smile at me.
there are no days left.

i cradle the dead ones,
the baby days,
the ones who lived only to flip open
their eyes,
screeching,
sense flaring like a switch,
then the darkness.

i hold them to my chest.
they are cold, their feet are blue
these are my eyes, i say,
pointing to their eyes, shut like pale pink tulips.
these are my feet (pointing to the blue).
i am cold, I am curled, and so they are.

i bear them with me through the tunnel of darkness.
through the steep cliffs.
i do not trip.
i will plant them, one by one,
little arms and feet,
beneath a flowering tree.
their knees will become birds, their heads will heave themselves into tall flowers.

I do not believe in the end of days.

i bury myself, deep, deep, in the dark.
i heat my cold blue feet.
somewhere my eyes flare open like raw flames.

soon,
when the dawn dealing out her golden fingers comes,
i will hang from the trees,
pale pink and winking.

And you will dream of me.

A Thousand Words and Hopes of Dreamers

A Compilation of Short Stories

Charlie Aslan Sannesmoth

You ran by on the highway.

Off of which was a lovely patch of grass, wide and deep, parabolic, strange illogic meadow. It was here I'd found myself, discordant music humming from the trees. There were lilacs and buttercups. I smelled lavender, though its presence eluded me.

I had been driving for far too long, on my way someindistinctwhere, and I had been on this quiet, two-lane back way, one each way straight then winding straight then winding road for longer than I should've been. I was lost.

Just then, I saw a gate. It caught my periphery, and I debated it for all of a second before I haphazardly turned around, parking on the side of the road. I approached carefully, not wanting to scare the iron away. One of those with a black hook, that you had to reach through and lift, feeling like a child breaking the rules, both thrilled and guilty. It captivated me, and I lifted the latch.

"Anna, is there a marathon going on?"

I said the name, and you both turned to look at me. Absurd, considering one of you was Jane.

My conscious, not-in-dreamland mind notes the reasoning behind this as being something along the lines of: I still associate the two of you, and cannot separate my past and present, or there lack-of future. Something convoluted and ridiculous, not justifiable in reality, but in dream world there are few rules.

You turned to look at the road, and I saw streaks of pink in your hair. They matched your socks.

The shades blurred together, your hair, longer than it'd been in years at the center, and my perception became nothing more than static.

My mother wasn't there. My grandmother was, and was kind, not terribly judgmental, the reason my mother had gone in the first place. Her lack was not mentioned, though I noticed and missed her, quite ardently. I wanted to get up and find her, seek her out, go to the nearest ocean and get lost in the waves. I tried to get up, and found my self stuck to the seat.

Uh oh.

We floated above the clouds. He was asleep. I didn't remember how

we had met him, how we had gotten this high, where we were going or why, far too distracted by the many moons staring at us. I had only ever been aware of one. How had I missed the other seven shining in the dark painted sky? Some slivers, some full balloons, circling, dancing with one another. Were my eyes playing tricks, or had we reached another plane of existence?

It was peaceful, and quiet. Were I religious, I would've prayed, but instead leaned my arms on the edge of the woven basket, balanced my chin on my arms and looked at the great orange moon, ahead on the horizon. That's what he had said. To follow the grandest cycle.

It was calm for a good while. I must have dozed off.

Perhaps the lapses in time and knowledge within dreams are simply when one falls asleep within a dream.

A gust of wind woke me up, so strong it knocked me over. I stumbled, tripping to the floor of the basket, landing on my tailbone and elbows. It stung. The next gust of wind whipped past so fiercely I had to bring my hand up to cover my watering eyes.

The fire went out.

We began to lose altitude.

Fast.

I had once known how to fly a hot air balloon, in another dream, long ago, but every string I pulled did not even the opposite of what I hoped. Rather, they did absolutely nothing. I hoped for the reverse psychology of dream world, but was increasingly doubtful of what was a dream and what wasn't. I pulled out my silver lighter, though the gusts wouldn't let a sheltered candle burn for more than a millisecond. I could almost hear the malicious laughter of the wind, the cackling and pattern spin of their goal, to ruin us in black waters below. They had been sent.

We dropped below the clouds. The city glowed, only a few miles west, and a spark of hope burned in my chest. The flame within would get us there.

He was frantically moving about, pulling cords, hoping they'd work. "We have to get more of an angle! The more horizontally we fall, the more chance we have of landing!"

"As opposed to?"

"Drowning."

Sardonic bastard. "Right."

We landed in the water. Liquid ice. Well, that didn't make sense, but who has time for tphysics in magic infested salt water?

"The closer we are to the city, the less swimming we have to do." Stands to reason. We swam in silence, our teeth chattering. A sudden shudder ran through me, a spike of fear shot through my blood.

"Do you feel that?"

I glanced over. His shock of dampened auburn hair stuck to his forehead. His eyes were wide. I saw a pointed chin rise up to stay out of the cold as much as possible.

"The humming? It feels like the sea is vibrating."

A pale neck moved as he gulped. His voice tried for steady, but I heard the quiver.

"We're in enchanted waters."

She and He had stopped by the night before, waking me from my doze.

We ascended the stairs, an aged yellow, quickly finding my head bumping the ceiling. There was no top to the stairs, simple a small hope I could barely fit in. I pushed through, claustrophobia bearing down, and pulled myself up.

They were gone, and I was in a room, lit by flaming memories.

I flew to save her, no one else could, and dammit, I didn't care a whit for her.

They called me Brooke. I wanted to be Peter so bad, as that was the obvious theme my mind was going for.

See, here's the thing: I have a dick. Penis envy finally manifesting in a physical form.

Of course, I had to play the toy of the hierarchy, the golden boy, fly around and jump through flaming rings.

My love is the servant, not the dutchess.

Fuck.

I wasn't asleep when three came around. It was an old friend who you don't see very often, and when you do, it's still not clear whether you're happy to or regret getting in contact after so long. Dreams came in turquoise and golden fragments, but only until the jarring tone split me from unconscious. It was half past four. The phone rangrangrang wouldn't stop ringing. I answered, felt the comfort, didn't recognize the significance, but the sentiment was present. Street lamp-light and far off subtleties.

I've decided: I'm done with these dreams.

I want to wake up.

I can't, I was in too deep.

My mind with one of it's own, conspiring against me.

Perhaps the blurry pictures will solidify when the story is complete.

I've lost the difference between reality and fantasy.

Just One Moment

Linda Maleh

Just one moment.
Beautiful,
The sun.
A field of grass,
Stretched out.
Just one moment
To feel relaxed again.
Nothing like the sun
To wash away the stress
To feel good
For just one moment.
Her sunkissed skin
For just one moment
In from the cold.
Her hair
Fiery
Red
Splayed out around her
Like an angel.
Just one spring day.
A dream for love,
Spring hopes,
Sunshine illusions.
Just one moment
Alive.
For just one moment
Beautiful
The Sun.

Bird

Isabel Ballan

I can just as easily be a bird as anything else; my neck a shapely S, my feathers white and blue and twilit elegiac purple, my head and silent eyes facing into a wind that sends shadows scattering. I can stand on one leg, see, I can be still. I can be a quiet statue in the sun. I can catch a bright wet orange fish in my mouth. I can stand pensively in the water, then walk cautiously on bent-back knees. See how I bow my neck to observe myself in the dark green mirror of the water, in whose depths are reflected the darting fire of opalescent dragonflies.

Bental Sculpture Garden

Ilana Kruger

Metal in grass
Rusted antenna
Colored eyes, false smiles

Posed like humans
Like the soldiers
At the nearby base

Past jeeps, fatigues
They line the walk
To the bunker, the lookout

Grinning copper tourists
Point to Syria, there
Lebanon, there

Ants snap their cameras
Not at the figurines
But at the vista

Hey, look
I was at Mount Bental
When that was going on

I saw the smoke
Not the citizens, soldiers
Aloof, aloft, above, removed

Too close, too dangerous
Flashpoint, conflict
Atop the Valley of Tears

Honesty

Miriam Esther Goldman

There's something to the honesty of being touched
unwillingly.

There's something in his eyes that's franker,
real.

And when he touches you,
your urge to protect yourself,
to run, or fight –
it vanishes.

When you regain yourself,
when you realize what you're doing
with his dick in your hand
or on your mouth –

who knows what sparks you
who knows what brings you back –

But when you do, you rage.
You may scream – or cry – or implore.

Or decline.

But when you do, it must be yourself you want to hurt.
Because how can you
fault
the man you invited into your life
his honesty?

Marton Adler

Ayelet Schrek

They pushed us in like garbage…and out to be killed. That's the way they did it.
They give us food, not food, is this edible? *five people to a bowl,* and so little! *it is not a liquid and it's not a solid.* It is nothing.
The lie, to me, to yourself: *After the war we will meet.* It's a lie, *father died Erev Rosh Hodesh.*
I'm less and less comfortable…
"That's where you mother and brothers and sister were burned," he tells me. Be kind to me…
My number, *55050*, burns deep into my arm.
We could speak up, *but it is not for sub-humans to discuss things like that. Their heads…at the end…*

Honey

Miriam Esther Goldman

Never a lack of honeyed words
to slip past tongue and teeth and lips
into hers.

Never at a loss for nectar-coloured
lies, sin-cloaked,
drenched, caramel,
carnal.

Virtue dies, virtue takes its place.
The bent of history is
to mistake two facets of the same gem
for the squalid rock faces of sin
and cruel, dirtied good.

Her eyes trust him;
her heart never learned mistrust.
Its sounds never stuck in her mind,
fell strangely on her tongue –
clacked against teeth and slapped
against lips,
and the language never came.

She'll learn it soon enough –
immersion will turn her lips blue
and her eyes green –
her tongue black,

And honey –
your honey –
will turn to mud.

will power

Rachel Dillon

the milk went sour in the fridge today—

(i will not: write about you)

—it would still be fresh, perhaps, if i were somewhere else

& i'm thinking about
the tasteless taste of instant oatmeal with water
the sticks of gum in my backpack, there are four
the brain's resemblance to a fist-crushed flower
the sound of ice

(i will not: write about you)

a memory:
in fourth grade, ms. mills snapped on blue gloves and cut a cow brain in half and i pretended i was so queasy i would hurl, because that's what everyone else was doing, but really i was completely unaffected neutral balanced happy i was happy i ran in joy

i took two bites of the milkless instant oatmeal in the dark i dropped the paper bowl in my little trash can

my mother tells me:
take vitamin b-12
take a walk around the pond
don't pick at your eyelashes

(i will not: write about you)

my mind is a wrinkled road map that i cannot read / so many stretched hairbands on a nightstand / the water droplet running down the tired shower tiles / a post-it note whose glue has worn off

(do you see what you've made me do?
nothing is right when i don't write
about you)

These Laughing Stars

Miriam Sokolow

Mr. and Mrs. Faulk tucked their three children into bed at 9:00 pm precisely. Bedtime routine had begun half an hour earlier, a flurry of teeth brushing and face washing. Normally it was a noisy and chaotic affair; the one bathroom, with its seashell-patterned shower curtain and stained oblong tiles, wasn't quite large enough for all three of the younger Faulks. But tonight the children could sense the change in the air, the way children always can no matter how hard the adults try to hide it. They could not name the feeling exactly, but it made them uneasy. They hurried, cutting corners in their rush to finish and be off to bed, because tomorrow everything would be better. Tomorrow could not come soon enough.

It was a long tucking in, as far as these things go. Mrs. Faulk sang little Mary two lullabies instead of the usual one, and Mr. Faulk read aloud to Thomas and Sara from a book of stories. It was a good story, about mermaids who tempted sailors to their deaths. Thomas and Sara liked dark stories, though they secretly gave Mr. Faulk the creeps. Thomas imagined a host of mermaids, their skin glowing green in the watery gloom, their hair floating around them like seaweed. He glanced over at his mother, stroking Mary's hair. She did not look like one of the mermaids from the story. His mother's dark hair was too short, barely brushing the bottom of her earlobes, and she was overweight.

After the story, Mr. and Mrs. Faulk kissed each child's cheek, touched their hair, their hands, anything to delay going. Mary complained: she was tired. Mr. Faulk glanced at Mrs. Faulk. He opened his mouth, closed it, licked his suddenly dry lips.

"Darlings," Mrs. Faulk said, her voice just slightly out of tune, "there's some medicine we need you all to take."

"What for?" asked Sara.

"There's a bad cold going around and we don't want you to catch it."

"Will it taste bad?" Mary said, sitting up.

"No, Mar-bear, but it will make you very sleepy."

"Do we have to?"

"Yes."

Mr. Faulk appeared with a dark brown bottle and three little paper bathroom cups. He filled each cup, using the Pretty Princess nightstand by Mary's bed as a table. His hands did not shake. There was

no label on the bottle. Thomas noticed this and began to speak, but then shook his head. He could ask in the morning.

"Make sure you drink it all," Mr. Faulk said as he handed each child a cup. "Don't want to catch that nasty cold, do you?"

"It tastes yucky," Mary said, wiping her mouth with the sleeve of her pajamas. "Yech." She tried to wipe her tongue as well, but Mrs. Faulk stopped her.

"The medicine will make you very tired, but you mustn't fight it," Mr. Faulk said. "You don't want to get sick, right?"

Mr. Faulk was correct. Mary sagged against her mother, eyes fluttering, thumb wedged firmly in her small mouth. Sara yawned as well as exhaustion swallowed her, and she barely managed to pull her plush bunny close to her chest before she fell asleep. Thomas tried to force his eyes open, because that feeling that had pervaded the house all night had grown even stronger still, but his eyelids were too heavy. He should have, he thought, only pretended to drink the medicine. Perhaps he could have poured it out under the sheets when no one was looking.

Mr. and Mrs. Faulk filed out of the bedroom. Mrs. Faulk shut the lights off as she shut the door gently. The plastic stars stuck to the ceiling glowed with false luminescence.

In the hallway, they waited and listened. Mr. Faulk pressed his ear to the door. The children breathed regularly, slowly, lost in dreamland. Three little sighs, three small intakes of air. Then two. Then one. Thomas. At last silence.

Tucked lovingly beneath their warm quilts, three small bodies began to grow very cold.

Mr. Faulk went to go fix them both a stiff drink. Neither cried. They had discussed it earlier and decided tears would be weak and pointless. Mrs. Faulk's face constricted, her eyes large and hollow in her pale face. When Mr. Faulk handed her the whisky, she downed it in one gulp.

The next morning, Mr. Faulk began to dig holes in the backyard. Dirt flew from the shovel as sweat glinted on his bald patch. Three holes he dug: one large, one medium, one small. He dug them deep and smoothed the sides with his hands. His golden wedding band glinted beneath the flecks of dirt.

They removed the blankets and wrapped the children, still in their pajamas, in the sheets. They were very nice sheets, made of soft jersey that wouldn't irritate delicate skin. Mrs. Faulk had gotten them on sale. One by one, each child was put away, and then Mr. Faulk covered them all up again.

Mrs. Faulk sat watching television in the living room when Mr.

Faulk came back in. He stared at his feet, at his dirt-encrusted shoes and pants. It looked like blood. He hurried to the bedroom to change, to wash off all remains of the morning's activity. The children's bedroom door remained firmly shut.

On television, the newscaster, his hair slicked so firmly into place that it looked like plastic, reminded viewers that there was only twelve hours to go, folks, just twelve hours. Mrs. Faulk didn't look up as Mr. Faulk, his hair damp, came in and sat down on the beige ottoman beside her. He had changed into a suit and tie, though the collar was undone and the tie hung loosely like a noose around his neck.

Did we do the right thing? Mrs. Faulk did not ask. There was not much point anymore. Her foot tapped absentmindedly against the stained carpet. They never allowed food into the living room, but somehow children will find a way to sneak in a sandwich or plate of spaghetti, which inevitably falls face down.

"Ten hours," the newscaster announced, then hesitated. "I have to go now, folks, but it – it has been an absolute pleasure keeping you updated and providing you all with topnotch quality news for the last few years. The countdown will remain active through till the end. Good luck."

"At least they didn't know," Mr. Faulk said. "The children never knew what was happening. We spared them that. They just fell asleep." The pharmacist had promised it would be quick.

Mrs. Faulk stood. "Don't talk to me," she said, her voice tight. She did not walk so much as float into the kitchen. Mr. Faulk heard her open the liquor cabinet, heard the clatter of glass as she set a tumbler down on the counter. For months they had huddled around the TV late at night, trying to catch a snippet of news while the children slumbered, joyfully oblivious. They hadn't even asked too many questions when the Faulks had pulled them out of school, when their parents stopped leaving for work every day. He did not look outside, out into the backyard, at the three Thomas, Sara, and Mary-sized rectangles of dirt amongst the grass. He and Mrs. Faulk had never discussed the possibility of following their children. They both knew that they didn't deserve such a peaceful end.

Mrs. Faulk returned, carrying a glass for him as well. Tucked under her arm was the whisky bottle. They clinked drinks and drank deeply.

At eight hours, Mrs. Faulk took out her knitting and began to make a child-sized hat. Mr. Faulk found the Scrabble set where Sara had left it beneath the kitchen table and began to play, though he had no opponent.

The sun began to sink in the sky, leaving behind smears of pink and blue and crimson. Mrs. Faulk joined Mr. Faulk in his game. ELEGY.

LORD. HOMICIDE. Mr. Faulk frowned and rearranged the tiles to spell HOME instead, though it cost him the fifty point bonus for using all his letters.

With two hours left and counting, Mrs. Faulk fried up some pancakes with extra chocolate chips, just like the children always asked for. Neither had eaten all day. They ate their dinner with white wine in long stemmed glasses, only Mrs. Faulk drank too much and knocked hers over. The stem snapped cleanly near the base, and the carpet darkened as it wicked up the liquid. Another stain. For dessert, they ate fish sticks in the shape of dinosaurs. Mrs. Faulk took the triceratops, Mr. Faulk the brontosaurus.

"Look." Mr. Faulk pointed out the window. A bright light appeared in the far right corner of the glass, banishing the stars. It grew frighteningly large, until it ate half the sky. Mr. Faulk reached for Mrs. Faulk's hand, but she balled them into tight fists at her sides. A great roaring filled their ears and lungs and bodies, and they fell backwards, the Scrabble tiles scattering willy-nilly. An incredible pressure popped their eardrums and pressed them to the floor. The world faded.

And then Mr. Faulk sat up. The television had shattered, glass shards everywhere on the carpet. Their wine glasses had broken as well. Outside a car alarm wailed.

He ran to the window. Fractured daggers of glass clung to its outer edge, but most of the windowpane had ended up on the sidewalk or the carpet. The sky was dark, the stars lively and friendly in their twinkling. He rushed to the door, fumbled clumsily with the lock until it opened more by chance than actual dexterity on his part. He stumbled outside onto the sidewalk, where the houses stood tall and looming and the grass lawns glistened with dew and the streetlamps, their bulbs exploded, hung limply by the sides of the road.

"But we're supposed to be dead!" he yelled. "Why aren't we dead?!" Doors to other houses tilted open one by one, faces peeking out.

"We're alive," someone said. "It's a miracle."

Mrs. Faulk drifted to his side. Blood glistened on her bare feet where she'd walked througth the piles of broken glass. She looked up, down, around as neighbors cried and sang and prayed.

She began to laugh.

THE FIRST THING i KNEW WAS FIRE

Gregory Bonacci

you are how I got
My scars—

it's a funny story
really

you are brown sugar
you are cream
whipped and otherwise

I smell of semen and regret
and cologne
impossible to find anywhere
in the ruins of las vegas

it's all yours
I am all yours
you are the Worst Thing
that has Ever happened to Me

the ebb and flow
of hydrochlorine
in My stomach and through My veins

i Want To Go Home
i Want To Go Home
i Want To Go Home
i Want To Go Home

break out of the cycle
hide My lye burn with
a bottle of gin and a funny story

i'm Fantastic At Parties
i Look Dashing In A Suit
i Make myself Sick i Need To Change

i Want To Go HOME.

but I have to wonder
if I dip my hands
ungloved
into the pool of holy water
that you call sewage

and feel the pop and fizz and burn
of an alkali nightmare
I've fought so hard to repress
will I be absolved?

Uniform

Christina Capshaw

The oddly stiff fabric of the uniform shirt was designed to make life easier. It had an uncomfortable waxy sheen, particularly around the collar, that meant that one could stand it up on its own if they so pleased. But the bonus was that it didn't stain. Liquid rolled off of the offensively orange garment as though it were not a fabric at all, but rather some form of plastic sheeting.

Earlier in the day, Sam had been thankful for this strange property. A distracted mother had doused him with a large fountain drink while grappling with a young child intent on climbing up her leg and into her arms. She had apologized to him, while he had insisted that it was quite alright—the sticky soda hadn't penetrated his protective shirt even a little. A quick dab of a paper towel after ringing up the woman and putting out a 'Caution, Slippery Surface' sign put him right back where he started, and he got a good laugh out of the sticky soda spill warning people off by claiming to be slippery.

However, whatever appreciation Sam had felt towards his shirt had, unlike the soda spill, evaporated a few hours later when the next customer came in.

This man could only be described enormous. And dark. But mostly enormous. His frame took up most of the doorway, blocking Sam's view of the outside with a fleshy wall of black cloth and leather. The only part of the man not covered by the cloaking black was a thin ring of pale between the edge of the cloth and the man's dark irises. This light patch seemed to almost glow against the towering darkness around it.

As Sam stood there, mouth open fishlike and eyes stunned and disbelieving, he wanted nothing more than to disappear—fade into the backdrop of cigarette cartons and lottery tickets. But he had on the shirt. That stupid shirt. Against the more subdued tones around him, the shirt stood out like a big ol' sign proclaiming: "Hey, Mr. Robber! Look! A victim, just for you! He's even nicely labelled!" The robber's eyes had locked onto Sam, his accursed sign grabbing his attention the way it was supposed to grab the attention of anyone looking for someone to assist them.

For the briefest moment, Sam's blank eyes met the robber's, before Sam went cold, goosebumps racing up his arms and prickling on his neck. An icy, metallic gleam came from the man's gloved hands, hanging—Sam would have almost said relaxed—at his sides. The black gloves were leather, but there was something else.

A gun! Sam's eyes felt stretched to unbelievable size, mimicking a cartoon depiction. But—does that even actually happen in real life? His mind scoffed, becoming fuzzy and cotton-candy¬like light, as though a cloud had taken up residence where his brain should have been. As he drifted further into this nebulous feeling, his mind chimed in again: Is this what getting high feels like?

The gun came up, and Sam felt his body spasm as his brain tried to regain corporeal form, shocking him back into the real world. Gun. Arm. Ski mask. Robber.

Shit. What am I supposed to do? This wasn't in my training! I'm minimum wage—if that! His face was slowly turning red, he knew. The spreading warmth combined with the watery heat in his eyes could only mean one thing.

"Wait!" He squeaked, voice rising into registers he hadn't experienced since he was eleven. "Please don't shoot me!" At least I wasn't so pathetic as to call him 'Mr. Robber' to his face.

The robber stared silently at Sam, dark eyes hidden below drooping eyelids, crows' feet wrinkles visible even from where Sam was, some five feet yet from the muzzle of the gun pointed at his face and a few feet further beyond that. However, the deep creases were quite clear to Sam, and they only became more so as the man started laughing. This surprisingly rich sound issuing from his chest would have been considered charming in any other situation, but here it only served to make the moment even stranger and terrifying.

"I'm sorry," an insistently gentle voice murmured. "Just open the register."

Sam leapt to obey. He had seen enough movies to know that those who cooperated were spared and people tended to get shot when they disobeyed the orders of the man pointing the gun. Only idiots and movie characters resisted and armed robbery.

"Here—" The register flew open.

A bang, as though the whole world had exploded, followed by the briefest moment of confusion and pain.

The robber stepped over the young man's body. "I'm sorry, kid. Tonight just wasn't your lucky night." He grabbed a handful of cash then strode out the door and into the night, whistling cheerfully.

Absalom, Absalom, my beautiful boy

Angela Acevedo

anyone would have taken you––especially her, under any summer's morning laying in the grass while the crisp air made a film between you two––for a man, a young man, a brooding young gentleman, because god knows you're young, who would only love a strikingly beautiful, conversationally brilliant, witty, absolutely sordid girl––and you chose a Puritan. although no one faults you for it––certainly we all commend you for your godlike patience, you poor, tortured boy––no one feels much pity for you either, because this is the life you chose (or maybe it chose you? whether it was avoidable or not isn't up for trial) and these are the consequences.

you are, yes, like the roll of thunder, rumbling when you make your way and yes, like the thunderclap, quite striking when you leave.

Race in Class

Anonymous

I am called upon to speak.
And, for a moment, I am ripped free of the suffocating social straight jacket
That silences my sentiments towards race, and me, and them, and us.
And I poured forth my shards of broken brown mirrored glass,
Shattered by collective hands that will not let me see me for myself
And placed back into my hands, one by one
So that I am only just now trying to see the shape again.
I let these shards flow.
Like water, the words rush out and pool around my face
Colorless, crystalline clear
Flowing up to my neck, but I am not afraid of drowning
Drowned so long in silent musing, I can now float to the top
And see myself in its brilliant reflection
And with such clarity can see everyone around me.
But, as the moment ends, the walls shoot up
And I take in the faces of my white peers
Stunned, sympathetic, and uncomfortable with the voiceless brown girl turned vocal
I immediately regret the step I took forward to free my story.
Wishing I could drink that water back in
Recover the shards in my hands
And use them to build a wall around myself to hide again.
Because, as I come down from my narrative whirlpool,
My expression of myself turned to a vapor hanging still in the air
My testimonial of the test of race in my community,
I see my brown boldness bleaches the room's white walls.
The whites of my friends' eyes detach and stretch
Thin and glossy over colored irises, dark pupils
Masking the gaze with pale-tinted googles
Bright white sunglasses, eliminating the beseeching glare of brown bodies
And my brown body disappears
And the conversation shifts to the experiences of the classroom majority.
In a discussion about race, my race-based reading passed over
And I felt myself fall away from the space, brown and jaded and hurt
Wrapped up in the arms of a predominantly white classroom that triumphantly cried *Multiculturalism*
But refused to embrace diversity.

Nightmares

Rachel Nathanson

Demons, come out
Devour me now
Let the music keep you at bay
Claw my beating breathing out
It's all that's kept you away

Stifle my cries
With your red glowing eyes
Chase mid-night maladies far

Break me in two
Find lies not true
Leave no mere trace of a scar

Monsters, beware
of the silence that lacks
power threads in the sound of the lark
I have come long aways from those olden days
I am not fearful now of the dark

There is color and light
in the black woven night
There are creakings and sounds of rejoice

There is mystic and spark
In paint strokes or ink marks
of monsters and demons and noise

There is no need to fear
That which dwells here
Ah, well, then again

They are placed there to make
you feel more awake
and steal what you cannot maintain

Innocence and naïveté
held until the bleaker day
it's replaced with knowledge
and
magic, nearly, slight of
hand
give you means to run away
from real monsters, there to stay

Our nightmares live outside our dreams
Terrifying as it seems
We must stand tall, with sword and shield,
pillow and blanket, shall not yield
Be it in the sun or by the moon
We will hold fast to hope, or soon-
er lose, and thus become the loons
singing somber, soulful tunes
of lost and long gone fairy tales
beyond the realm of real
We now, therefore, shall take a vow
to seal this fated deal

Break me in half
Pull a cry or laugh
Leave no trace of waxed seal

Monsters, beware
of the silence that lacks
power threads in the sound of the lark
I have come quite aways from those golden days
I am no longer afraid of the dark

Soil Types

Caty Fairclough

You can't understand me
you're sand and I'm clay
their words may fall through you
like water. But for me
the water is caught and I
turn dark
and moldable.
Eventually hardening into something
you won't like
not anymore.

Spanish Fever

Clayre Benzadon

I.

Madrid. December 2013. Scarlet lights, flashes of
luminescence, of vermillion, and verdigris shadows
from the temples pass by my eyes. I feel as though
I am floating as I look out the window of the taxi

taking me back to my apartment. My mind is free
but my body is not.

II.

My gut takes revenge. I sit helplessly on the sidewalk
while I expel the cacophonous rage of blood that screams
red loudness, spurting out the taste of burn and green peppers,
(the aftertaste of vodka) onto the dark streets.

Echoes start to manifest the air, eery as they climb up into my ears,
the only thing audible being the faint whisper of a man's voice:
¿Necesitas ayuda?

III.

I am incapable of thinking. I cannot open the door to my apartment
and I do not have the strength to back away from the man who helps
me up. He opens the door for me and says with a painful expression,
mixed with scorn and pity: ¡Casi has dejado tus llaves afuera!
I do not have the mental capacity to say thank you so instead I desperately repeat:
¡Lo siento!, I'm sorry!
Or maybe I'm just mimicking the absent sorries that my roommates never voiced
concerning the fact that they left me by all myself while I was wasted.

Blue Note

Claire Fishman

Black and white keys meld together, spinning effortlessly. He hardly has to guide them; they know where to go. Is it even a conscious action? They dip and they slide. Blue notes give him renewed inspiration, and he arrives at the coda with style.

If only it were this easy outside his daydreams.

They can't really be called daydreams, he muses. After all, last time he glanced at his watch, it was 7:30pm. And now? He looks down at his wrist again. 9:02. Amazing how time can pass so quickly at the bar, but still, it's as if he's been sitting there forever. He picks up his martini glass and drains its contents. "Steve, another one, on the rocks, please." He speaks quietly to the young blond man bartending for the night. "Right away, sir," Steve replies.

He has come to appreciate how Steve always addresses him as 'sir' and speaks to him in a formal tone reserved for customers whom he does not know well. The truth is, as of late, he's been downing drinks at this bar every night for several weeks. Yet each time he sits down at the counter, Steve looks at him as if he's never met him before. "Good evening, sir, my name is Steve, and I'll be your bartender this evening. What can I get you tonight?"

It's not that Steve has amnesia or dislikes him immensely; rather, even though only in his early 20's, Steve understands that sometimes daily customers prefer to be known as anything but that. Of course there's the regulars like Joe and Carl and Al, but they're all old men with most of their friends and relations passed away. It's not that they drown any sorrows in alcohol; they are at the peak of long, full lives, and now consider the bar staff to be temporary family. But he isn't like them. He craves anonymity, fresh starts. Steve understands how important such things can be to a person, and provides them every night he returns to the bar. They are addictive, those fresh starts, as addictive as playing glissandos used to be.

He glances out the window. To his surprise, there is a light snowfall, the first of the year. Steve follows his gaze. "Whaddya know, maybe we'll have a white Christmas this year after all." He forces a polite smile for Steve, and turns back to his almost empty drink. Christmas. He has almost forgotten that it is several days away. Does it matter? It is the first year he can't share the day with her.

They used to have a tradition of going to the roasted chestnut

vendor every Christmas eve. They would buy sweet smelling honey-roasted chestnuts, and by the time they arrived back at the apartment, they had devoured almost all of them. He'd hang up his coat and walk over to the Steinway. His hands would sashay over the sleek keys as he casually let loose a rendition of "Baby It's Cold Outside," followed by numerous other classics, and then just for kicks, some improvisation. Not a dancer, she would simply twirl in circles, but to him, she was more beautiful than any ballerina.

When had that become mundane? He would never have thought it so, but then one day, he arrived home early from the office and it was laid out in front of him: another man in bed with her. When he confronted her, there was no genuine apology. What was genuine was her request for divorce. It made him wonder if the joy he saw when she was dancing was insincere. Maybe she wasn't a dancer but secretly an actress.

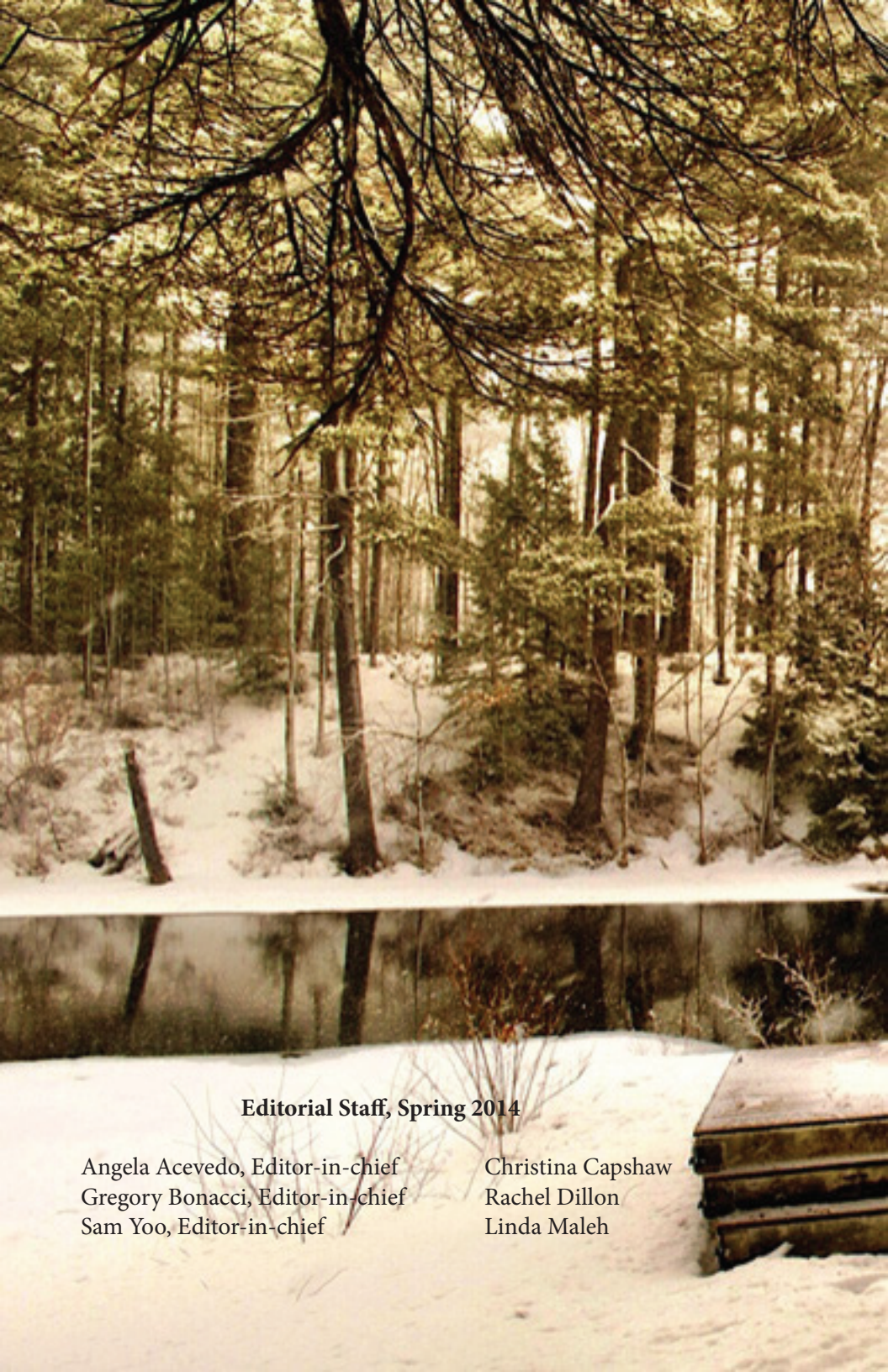
After it was over, he still had the apartment, the Steinway, his job at the office. But she had taken the music. He would sit at the piano, manage a few scales, but the minute he struck the first chords for "A Night in Tunisia" or "My Funny Valentine," all he could see was her—dancing, applauding enthusiastically, sitting on the bench next to him, watching his hands glide left and right. "When you play, it completes me," she had told him multiple times. "You complete me," he had responded. Now, to play destroyed any complete self that remained in him.

He takes one more look out the window. The snow is falling more heavily, and if he closes his eyes, he can almost smell honey-roasted chestnuts. But the scent is sickeningly sweet. The sound of an alto saxophone releases him from his daydream, and he turns in the direction of the sound. A man is sitting on a stool in front of a music stand, tuning his instrument. "Is there some sort of performance going on tonight?" He asks Steve. Steve looks surprised that he has initiated the conversation this time. "Yes, sir, this is the first night of our new series of late night jazz Fridays," he explains cheerfully. "Oh, alright, thanks," he replies, a feeling of dread spreading over his body. Was there no escape from what used to be his passion?

The man begins to play "Baby It's Cold Outside," and his chest starts to tighten, his throat feels like it is burning. He sees her before him, dancing, as he plays the same song on his Steinway. His heart pounds too hard and he shuts his eyes tight. When he finally manages to look back up at his surroundings, something catches his attention. One of the other men in the audience is sitting alone at a table, his eyes lightly closed, and his fingers tapping the tabletop, mimicking the pianist's movements. There is a smile on the man's face that so completely defines bliss that he

forgets about her for a second, and is instead reminded of how he shared that same smile when he used to play at open-mic nights in college. He was single then, and he had delighted in the sound of the notes and the expressions on audience members' faces as they shared his love of the music. Instead of playing in the name of romantic love, he played in the name of the greats—Ellington, Monk—others who understood the feeling of fulfillment that comes from mastering a particularly difficult riff.

The pianist begins a rendition of "L-O-V-E," and instead of thinking about her, he thinks of the music instead. "V is very very extraordinary" the pianist sings, and he thinks of how music is extraordinary. He feels complete. Blue notes inspire him again.



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