

AMERICAN
TENSIONS

MAGAZINE 2021

CURIOS

CURIOS

Curios fosters the breadth of creative expressions across our northern Arizona community by providing publication opportunities to local writers and artists. The magazine is produced annually by Coconino Community College students with the guidance of CCC faculty and staff.

The 2021 edition of *Curios* recounts a tumultuous time in American history. Over the course of this year, we've mourned the loss of so many lives during a global pandemic, we've unified in the fight for human rights and equity for all, and we've learned how to get along with technology while working and studying remotely.

The contributions on the pages inside reflect some of these American tensions and illustrate the potential for positive change. As you flip through the pages of this issue, we invite you to consider your personal contributions to the growth of an inclusive and philanthropic society.

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ON THE COVER



Crackhead
by Eliza James

A STATE OF EMERGENCY

Hunter Blackwell

	\$52.00	
Queen		Apply
Discount:	-9.60	
Total:	\$42.40	

“State of emergency declared before decisions due to potential for civil unrest

4 new polishes:
Black, emerald, a faint pink—mistaken for ivory on initial addition to cart—and sky blue

20 shots, with 5 striking, in Apartment 4

What color would she have bought—
one to match her uniform?
Did those brothers in arms, see her picture—
sworn in and smiling—
and think about a sister in blue?
She would’ve gone for the green,
liked it more as it settled against her skin.

Our goal is ensuring space and opportunity for potential protestors with an executive order, exercises emergency powers: enact curfews order restriction to parking garages downtown

Another whoosh comes in—
confirmation of subtraction,
voices with digital fists raised
bookended with banners
of new arrivals, Black Girl Magic
& Black Boy Joy sparkling
on black sweatshirts.
I almost buy those too.

An officer indicted by a grand jury on first-degree wanton endangerment

charges—

Maybe I should commission
her name in Bamboo earrings,
carry her on gold chains
around my neck.

placing 3 individuals in
Apartment 3 endanger of serious
physical injury or death.

I should've bought red nail polish too,
should've poured some on my hand
when it arrived in the mail,
let it sticky, watching it web
between my fingers. Maybe
I could get blood-soaked sheets
out my head, admit buying Black
won't release me of subjection.

The 2 other officers receive justified
use of force. Every ear listening, told
Justice sought by violence is not
justice. It just becomes revenge.

Attorney General Cameron,
I assure you, I ache for revenge,
and it does not taste like protests
it does not sound like die ins
it does not feel like tear gas.
My revenge is not hashtags,
emails, and tweets. My revenge
is not signs, t-shirts, and nail polish.

My revenge is tied rocks around
ankles sinking to the bottom of lakes,
whips opening back flesh, sugar
shakers through windows, standing
outside your front door and a
burning cross staked into the ground.



Downtown Flagstaff · R.M. Lunday, Jr.

NORMALITY

Megan Latin DeBono

My guilty pleasure is imagining normality.

My mom calls and asks did you see the news? There was once a time where I'd idly skip the channel. Now it never sleeps; now I fall asleep to the sound of its words. My professor asks how are you feeling in these uncertain times? I'm uncertain about which aspect he's speaking to. Another shooting, another speech, another spike.

At night I fall asleep to voices of those who too are trying to make sense of it all and fantasize about an empty TV screen without stories to share. My friends ask will things go back to normal soon? But I can't remember normal.



DISASTER BEACON

Lee Marlo Anderson

called out of both my jobs on a random Friday in March 2018 to visit the Mothman Museum in the town he watched. Point Pleasant, West Virginia, was close—about a three-hour drive—and my window of opportunity was rapidly closing as I readied to move back across the country for graduate school. In small-town central Ohio, I was half an hour from Columbus, growing the buildings up around me in gray; an hour of farmland, shrinking the buildings into golden flatness; two hours of weaving through the low verdant hills of the Appalachian Mountains; cresting through a large, looming silver bridge into West Virginia.

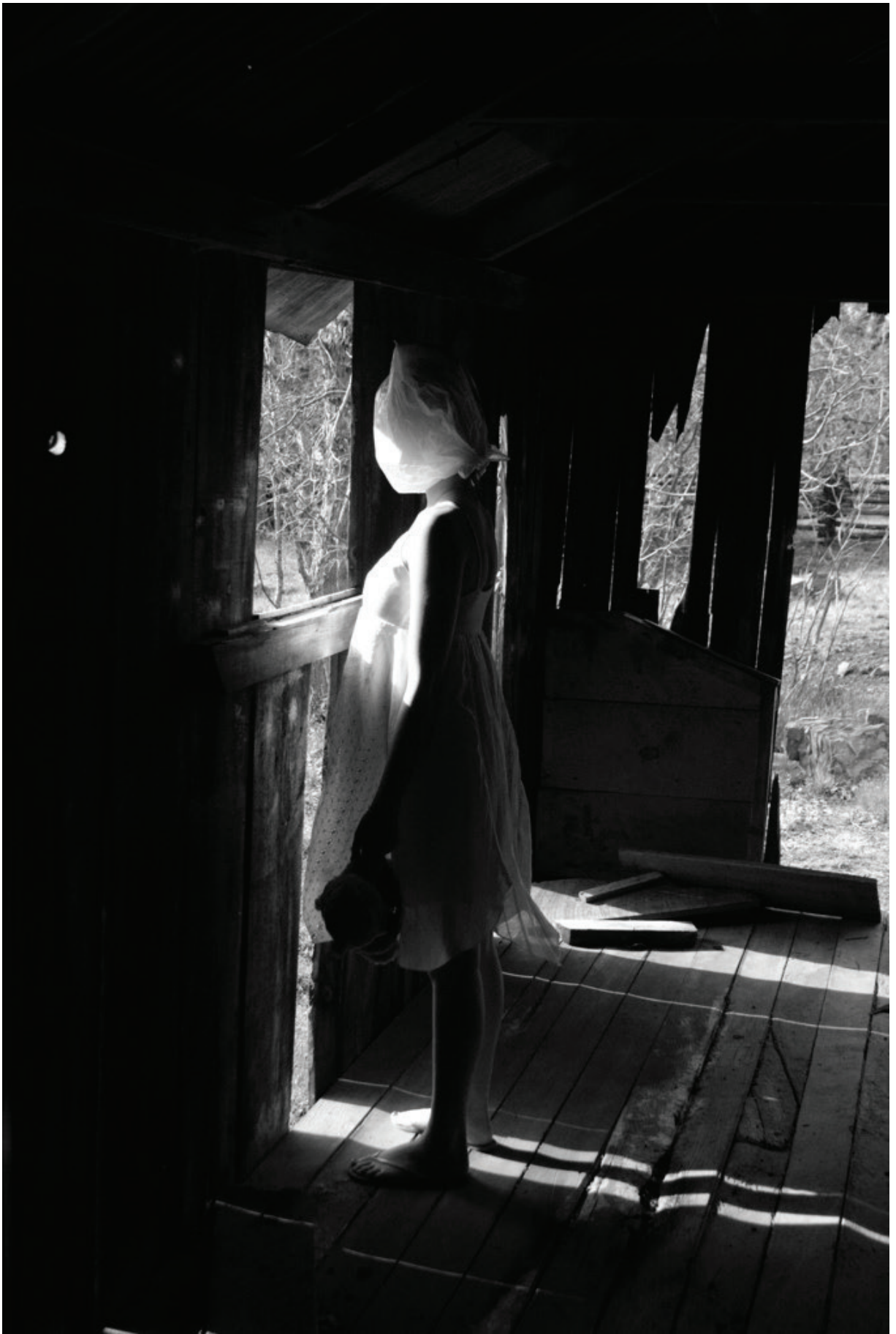
A three-hour road trip was nothing to me. It was a day trip, a long drive up to the city or the beach or my grandparent's house. But I learned, moving from the American West to the Midwest, that regional differences vary more than different names for fast-food chains. My girlfriend had grown up two-and-a-half hours away from our college campus one state north and talked about it like a different world. To her, the six-hour-round-trip joyride was not a day trip but something that might otherwise take her a week. I was determined, but time moves differently out there.

The original story of Mothman dates back to November 15, 1966. He was first spotted by a couple driving home from a date, approximately man-sized with a seven-or-so-foot wingspan and glowing red eyes. He was seen intermittently, on tops of buildings, in abandoned

warehouses, on the side of bridges, by several others in the following months, each time to a burst of media uproar, always in Point Pleasant. His legacy was spurred by the media, who coined the term “Mothman” for the creature, who wrote books about him and made documentaries and publicized his every move. The last time he was seen, exactly thirteen months to the day, the silver bridge on the edge of town collapsed and forty-six people lost their lives. After the collapse, they rebuilt the bridge exactly where it had fallen, where it still serves as the crossover point between Ohio and West Virginia.

The first time that I visited my parents in Oregon—the first time it was a “visit” and not a “return”—I realized just how many pieces of Bigfoot lore had come out of the woodwork. It was late 2015. The 2016 election still felt like a joke whose punchline would never land correctly. Bigfoot was commonplace at home. That “the” Bigfoot was actually one of a species, the sasquatch, traipsing

He was first spotted by a couple driving home from a date, approximately man-sized with a seven-or-so-foot wingspan and glowing red eyes.



Girl · Veronica Miller

the ancient old-growth forests, ducking around draped moss, all felt like common knowledge. Now, though, the local jokes exploded, and stickers and cutouts and children's books about the myth were everywhere.

Americans don't always know where to look for answers, or that we necessarily are. In order to process the tumultuous nature of the angry, failing world around us, sometimes we turn to folklore.

My curiosity about Mothman, which started shortly after that trip home, went abruptly from a personal niche interest to something commonplace. In early 2016, all of my friends were involved in grassroots politics and canvassing and gritty documentaries. I'd watched from the sidelines, handing out fliers and debating people in the cafeteria as I could, but focused my time on understanding the American mythos. What had actually happened there in Point Pleasant? Netflix couldn't tell me, and neither could the over-sensationalized tell-all books that came out in the 1970s. It was after the election but before the plague, between 2016 and 2018, that all of my friends hopped on board to talk with me about Mothman. I could buy stickers of him, shadowed with owl ears, on a skateboard; I could Tweet about him and go viral. Everywhere that I hadn't deliberately curated to be gentle and silly online soured in the shadow of former President Donald Trump.

In late November 2016, a man not too far from Point Pleasant spotted a large, winged creature with red eyes at night. The news quickly rolled back that it wasn't Mothman—it couldn't have been, more likely to have

been a sandhill crane off its migration route or a hawk carrying a snake or frog—but it was almost exactly 50 years to the date from Mothman's original appearance. Science writer Sharon Hill stated that "there are too many, far more reasonable explanations than the Mothman." Sandhill crane, barn owl, red-eye refractions, disaster.

Late 1966 into 1967 was a time fraught as the overlap between one era and another, a transitional year-and-change full of anger and disaster and social upheaval. We became aware of how loud our voices can grow in order to demand change and how loudly we can be silenced. In 2016, the election was a joke until it wasn't. Our awareness of our position in the global network of power, civilian's power, the power of climate change on the world around us—1967 was the year the first global model of climate change was released—: it's overwhelming. Americans don't always know where to look for answers, or that we necessarily are. In order to process the tumultuous nature of the angry, failing world around us, sometimes we turn to folklore. Mothman begins to appear and re-appear on top of abandoned World War II bunkers and on bridges set to collapse, two red eyes glowing in the dark.

The Mothman Museum in Point Pleasant is a little weird, but earnest. It is one cavernous room in a strip mall downtown, run by one man, with movies playing on televisions in corners and mannequins wearing accurate police uniforms. It dives into a perfect documentation of one moment in time, of what 1967 looked like in an otherwise quiet corner of rural America. In some contemporary interpretations stemming from his 2016 revival, Mothman is not a harbinger of doom, there to decimate the city. Rather, he is a beacon, red eyes glowing in the dark like a lighthouse, warning those who care enough to pay attention of imminent danger.

~





American Bison · Michael O'Connor

LIFE ON THE MOUNTAIN

Laura Brady

I

Just one more
knotted boulder
this heavy sack
the crucial extra
weight

I discarded

everything

II

Now I wear strangers

'clothes

One decent strain:

fall back

a year

My feet walk under covers

In the morning

I find pollen

on ankles

In the morning

I lift thighs

of sand

In the mourning

I overturn every rock

looking

for legs

of the sea.



THE MOUSE'S CHANCE

Laura Brady

In a past life

there is a box

of memories

I can no longer

touch

On long days

my dark owl

mind takes flight

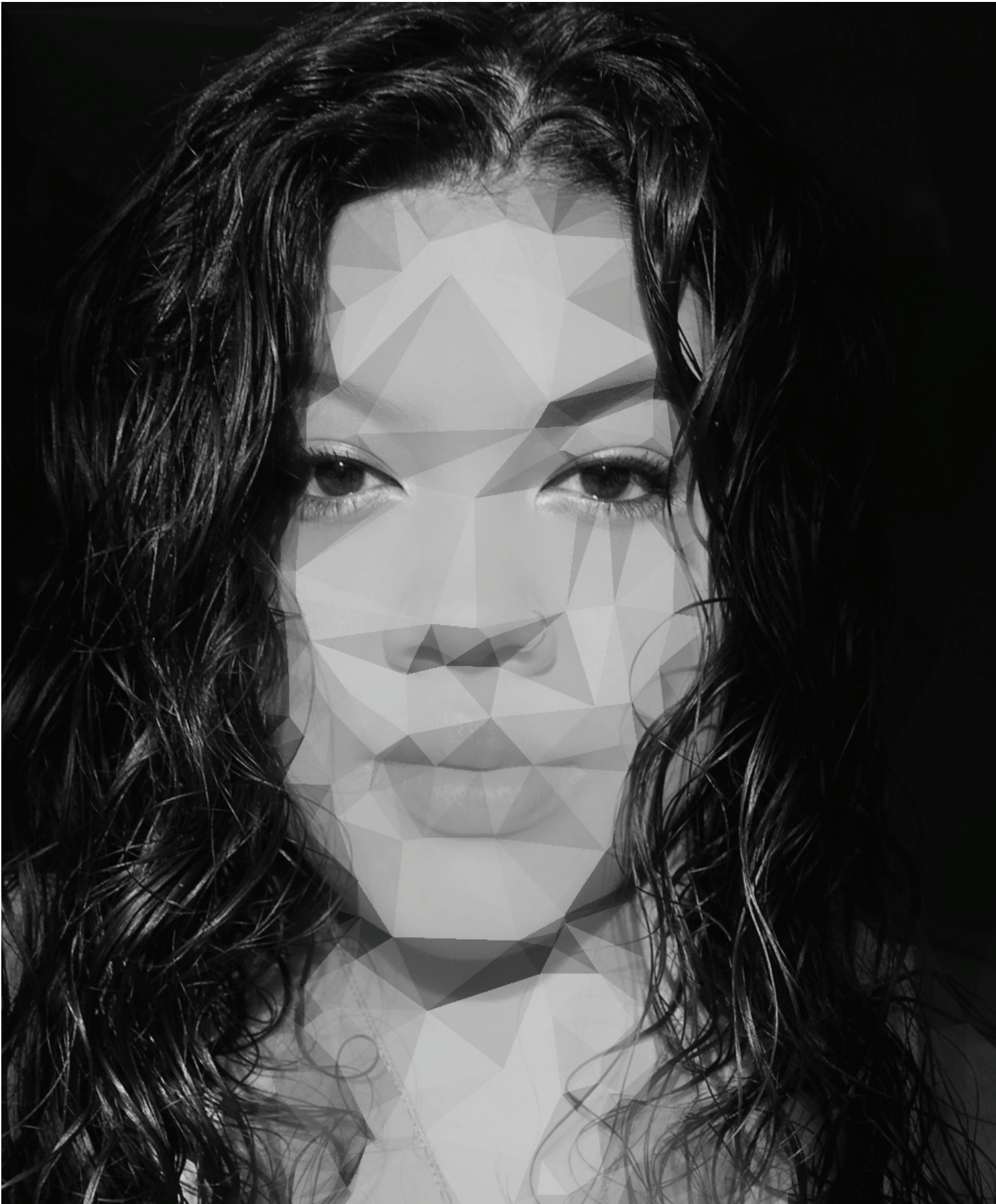
pries off the lid

and bathes

in the shadows

I croon her back

Untitled · Leslie Molina





Training · Larry Hendricks

ROYAL BADNESS

Seth Muller

Aright, his name is Izzy Dominguez. Satisfied? And yes, I broke the laws of the Borderland to be with him forever. On the day I had discovered Izzy, he took the stage fronting Used Karma Salesmen, the best name for a band.

They played in Tucson at a block party on Fourth Avenue, an end-of-summer deal even though it was kill-you-hot. The band laid down a serious groove. Izzy sang a jazzy reggae song about how stupid it was girls were microchipped and monitored across the range of El Gris Tormenta, which ran from San Diego to El Paso. The Task Force officers surrounded the block party for god-knows-what. The crowd learned the chorus on the fly. We shouted along.

Give the girls back their freedom!
Give them back the wide, wide sky!
Give the girls back their freedom!
I just keeping singing why, why, why!

Allie-Rose dragged me to the front of the stage. We stared at him and his snap-button vintage cowboy shirt, clunky glasses, and wild, sweaty hair. Whether he was a hunky dork or dorky hunk I could not tell. We both fought over him as the set went on, until it was too obvious, he lingered on me. I usually don't believe it when it happens, but he was totally scoping. We even made faces at each other during one of his solos. He kissed two fingers and held them out to me. Seriously, it was me. Not Allie-Rose or any of the girls in the crowd. Me.

When the set ended, he had signaled me backstage. We talked for more than an hour. We walked for blocks and blocks before we ducked into the Marigold Café. It was mostly small talk, swapping the basics, and me telling him what a killer set it was. He was still amped from the show, and he downed three iced teas. He smiled too much, but god that smile. It was pure golden goodness.

Izzy Freaking Dominguez. I doubted a cooler name was ever given to another human. When we talked on the phone for the first time, two days later, I asked for his full name.

"Israel Marco Dominguez," he said.

"Born rock star name," I said.

"Hardly that."

"Isn't Israel a conflicted country or something?"

"It was the name given to Jacob in the Bible," he said. "It also means 'He who wrestles with God.'"

"You wrestle with God?"

"Doesn't everybody? What about your full name?"

"So boring! It's Brea Amber Meadows."

"Sounds beautiful to me. I love how it flows. What does Brea mean?"

"It's Irish for 'Hill.' How's that for exciting?"

"And I guess there's La Brea Tar Pits."

"Great, my name comes from some pits. Or maybe a hill, and a meadow along with it. I'm a walking geography lesson."

"I'd like to get to know your geography."

My face went hot. It was so cheesy to say, but coming from his beautiful mouth, it tickled all my nerves. He could have told me fart jokes and it would have been foreplay. I asked him what was going on in his world, because I still didn't feel like I knew him. He had told me he would perform his first-ever solo-acoustic show near his home in Ruidoso, at a coffee shop wrongly called Sacred Grounds.

"I so want to be there," I said.

"How could you even?"

"I think I know a way. Would you be cool with that?"

"More than cool," he said. "Stuff of dreams. You could totally stay with me."

"Then it's definitely happening."

I daydreamed of the moment I would return to him. At school, I wrote his name in my notebook dozens of times over. I loved the feel of writing two Z's together. It turned into my favorite letter to write. Sometimes I wrote the I and the Y with a big space between them. In the middle, I did a double-slash move with the Z's. I had turned his name over in my head. I liked how Izzy also sounded like Is he? Like Izzy seriously the one?

On another phone call a few days later, Izzy gave me one important homework assignment before I showed up at his gig. He said I had to, had to, just had to, listen

**Maybe I'm Royal Badness,
I thought. I toyed with
these words in my head.
I liked how they went
together and could mean
something else. Because I
could be royally bad, as in
truly not good.**

to Prince. He was covering a bunch of his songs.

"Who the hell is Prince?" I asked.

"Prince, as in one of the greatest musicians ever."

"Never heard of him."

"He's my biggest influence," he said. "He brought funk, rock, and R&B together in a way that changed music forever. It's saucy awesomeness."

"Wait, maybe I've heard his stuff. Wasn't he in the eighties or something?"

"Not the just eighties," he said. "Way beyond. An amazing cat."

"Someone has a guy-crush."

"I'll own it. I mean, his nickname was 'His Royal Badness.'"

"Well, I think you're royal badness, my dear."

"Not even."

"Even," I said.

Maybe I'm Royal Badness, I thought. I toyed with these words in my head. I liked how they went together and could mean something else. Because I could be royally bad, as in truly not good. Also, my life was filled with all kinds of royal badness. I wanted to use the phrase when the next horrible thing happened. As in, that's some royal badness right there. Life was like that. The Borderland Task Force was royal badness. My frenemy Opie was royal badness. What happened with my little sister Lily was royal badness.

"After he died, they found out he had a vault of songs he never released," Izzy said about his man-crush. "He just sat on them. It's insane."

"How did he die?" I asked.

"Overdose of painkillers."

"Which kind?"

"Does it matter?"

"Just curious," I said. "Was it morphine? Buprenorphine? How about Fentanyl?"

"I don't remember. It was just a big, fat loss is what it was."

A cloud of shame passed over my sunny feelings. I

gave away how I knew too much about Schedule II narcotics. I should have kept my mouth shut. I was curious, though. I wondered what soft landing it might give to have all pain removed and take the freefall. Death by a million feathers.

“I’ll send you a playlist,” he said. “Listen to it before you get here. Keep the songs in order. No shuffling or skipping. You need a Prince 101 course before the show.”

I found a seat to myself on the bus. I pulled up into a ball. My nerves tightened around my chest. Fear was back on the job with my high wearing off. I needed a distraction. I slipped on my headphones, closed my eyes, and cued up my first Prince playlist listen. I focused all of my attention on the music. I willed myself to love whatever I heard. The first song started out churchy. Prince was the preacher. The song launched into a full-blown, rock-out deal. I opened my eyes. The music was a strange contrast to the depressed people on the bus as we rumbled onto the interstate. But I loved it. The song made me want to run up and down the aisles and dance and throw my arms out to the world and everyone.

I finished out the Prince playlist and listened to it a second time. The song that hit me hardest was “Purple Rain.” The rocker ballad went on forever and was filled with all the feels of love and ache and longing. I dreamed it could become a Brea and Izzy anthem. I still wasn’t convinced he was the greatest of all time. I tried to listen for the blend of music Izzy said Prince brought together. I’m not sure if I totally got it, but I would at least get on board for “Purple Rain.”



Fake · Jill Divine

The bus rolled toward San Simon. I needed to turn off my phone, music and all, before we actually crossed the state line. I forgot about the music being on there and how I had to turn it off. I stitched together a playlist of my own and sent it sent to Izzy. It was mostly underground indie bands Dylan had introduced me to, when he still lived at home and called mom Mom. I took suggestions from my music queue and grew out a weird list of songs. It made me appear cooler than I actually was.

I felt for the bandage under my shirt sleeve. For the first time in almost four years, I roamed without a microchip, sliced out on the underground by a guy Allie-Rose knew (she always knew someone). The chip was such a part of me and such a part of all our lives. Most times we forgot about it. We sometimes forgot about

the Borderland Task Force, too, often hidden in secret headquarters where it monitored our every move. It was the only thing that freaked out my mom when it came to me. She mostly let me do what I wanted, so long as I didn't get stuck in the desert or stumble across state lines. I don't want another thing like when you and Allie-Rose ended up lost on a hike and half the task force in Tucson turned out to find you. In short, stay out of

I felt for the bandage under my shirt sleeve. For the first time in almost four years, I roamed without a microchip, sliced out on the underground by a guy Allie-Rose knew . . .

trouble and you and I are good. Just you wait, Mom.

But Mom didn't care what the hell I did anymore. She had a new life with my stepdad Henry, cursed with the oldest old-man name ever. Her new and rich and smart husband, Henry. His house was our house, but his house was not my home. I felt like a tenant. Henry wanted me to feel like I belonged there, in his Mr. Tenured Professor villa in the Catalina Foothills. The one with the too-heavy wooden door and vaulted ceilings and hot-tub grotto he and my mom spent every other evening in. The kind of residence that still received a print subscription of the newspaper. The kind of place one of my dad's sisters, like mi tía Lucia, would be hired to clean. When I could, I stayed at Allie-Rose's. Or I slept in my beat-up Volvo. I made up excuses as to where I was when. Every so often, I rolled into the house and shut the door to my undecorated room. I laid

on the too-massive king mattress to stare at the wood-beamed ceiling some fifteen feet above my head.

Problem was, I did have a tendency to freak out the Task Force for being parked out in the middle of the desert in one place too long. Could be a dead body, people. Task Force, assemble! Everyone must have been nutso crazy to think this was all such a fantastic idea. I get it. People want to keep the children safe: helmets for every possible activity that might involve falling down, elbow pads, knee pads, safety seats, seatbelts, not letting children under fourteen walk around on the streets unaccompanied by an adult, all that shit. The Tormenta preyed on all this hard with the mass abductions.

I remembered how it went down in school following the onslaught. They had announced a medical team was coming to provide chips for the girls. It wasn't more than a month after the Event. They lined us up for the procedure. Local anesthesia and an incision. The chip was pulled from its plastic wrapping and inserted. It felt like they put the bastard deep into my arm. They stitched me up and sent home a small booklet. The cover showed some innocent-looking teenage girl with her hair in her face. The words underneath, next to the logo for the Borderland Task Force, read something like: Join us in protecting innocent lives from harm. Let's not let another tragedy happen again. My mom took one look at it, shrugged, and tossed it into the recycle bin. Dylan found it and read it in dramatic voiceover. Bull ... shit! he said.

My stomach rolled when we finally crossed the New Mexico border. I thought of my fake ID that said I was twenty-two when I was seventeen. At least I did look older, with the faux-designer sunglasses and pulled-down Wildcats baseball cap. It was enough to get me a ticket and get

on the bus, but I wouldn't fool anyone else. Especially not the cops or the Task Force. I was illegal now, across the state line as a female minor with no accompanying guardian. I stood up and walked to the toilet of the bus. I locked myself inside, and I cried a dumb-scared girl cry. My least favorite.

I pulled the Opies from my front pocket and shook one out into my hand. It was so lonely all by itself, and I still had a hellacious-long bus ride ahead. I shook out Opie number two, and it struck me for one terrible second: I was in a Greyhound bus bathroom doing drugs. It carried a rock-bottom vibe. Izzy deserved better. I decided to stay clean for him and for whatever happened with us. With all my might, I put the pills back in the bottle.

Too often, the itch to ride the Opie wave came at times like this, when I found myself on my own. The dark thoughts came out to play. They whispered in my ear. Remember that day? Remember? You were supposed to be watching her. You were in charge. This is a stone-cold fact. Are you worthy enough to go on living after what happened? Probably not.

■ returned to my seat and fell into an old daydream about the first day I met Opinydol. Opie: the doctor and the shaman. The tiny white god who always bestows mercy. Opie brings rolling waves of euphoria, divine intervention. Sure, this is what opioids do. But this variation was marketed by the drug company Merrickson as deeply effective and less addictive. Finally, everyone said, a lesser addictive narcotic. As Dylan likes to say, Bull ... shit!

My ex Nathan had taken me out to Madera Canyon for a Saturday bike ride. We parked near the bottom and pedaled our asses up the road to the top, with the plan to ride the trails down. We collapsed with the view of the canyon below us, and everything in me was beyond

We collapsed with the view of the canyon below us, and everything in me was beyond hurt. Not only my body, but my heart. I watched a roadrunner trot across the hot pavement and thought of Lily again. Her ghost whispered. Did you see it Brea?

hurt. Not only my body, but my heart. I had watched a roadrunner trot across the hot pavement and thought of Lily again. Her ghost whispered.

Did you see it, Brea? Isn't it amazing? The desert is so beautiful sometimes. I pedaled harder, but I kept hearing her. You should appreciate the special moments. You should appreciate life. You are the one who is alive right now. Embrace it. Or was it my voice?

I hoped Nathan brought us a pot-only lunch, edibles and all. Instead, he pulled out a vial and shook it.

"I have some special friends with me today."
"Tell me about these friends of yours," I said.
"Opies, baby. Best ride in town."

We each popped two, ate handfuls of Kahna gummies, and coasted down through the canyon. I was no longer human. I was a thousand butterflies held together in a bubble. I was not fleshy. I was fluttery and feathery. I was not muscle and nerves. I was leaves and branches. I was not moody and twitchy. I was effer-effing-vescent. On the drive back, it was a windows-down sing-along to

bad pop songs on the radio. A sunset projected onto the streaking clouds. But they weren't clouds. I was clouds.

Nathan and I hung out with Opie for days and weeks, until he met another friend named Juvie. He told me I needed to go direct with his supplier. One morning after another refill, I left for a hike. I took two-and-a-half pills with more gummies. I stretched across a flat rock near Signal Hill and daydreamed about nothing—or about me becoming nothing. My insides puddled and pooled into the cold, flowing water of a creek. I could not feel Lily

watching when I was so far away from myself. She could not find me like this. I wanted to believe no one could.

I needed another distraction to get me through this bus ride. I dialed in all my thoughts to Izzy, to his show tonight with mostly Prince covers and to the final scene where we would step into his room and it was only us. My head dropped against the window, warmed by the sun despite the cool air blasting from the bus A/C. I fell into a half-dream of my own, made-up version of Ruidoso, one that likely looked way



Storm's Approach · Larry Hendricks

more enchanted than it probably was in real life, with oceans of flowers and strange animals and everyone being awesome and beautiful. What was the word for it? Utopia. I was sure I was on my way to my utopia. I had to be, after all I had been through. I needed Izzy. The New Real Honey. Real, Honey.

When I stepped off the bus on my way to Sacred Grounds, I pretended I was royal. I pretended Izzy was a real prince. I imagined the day he saved me from the

dragon. Or, I finally slayed the damn dragon myself.

And I only needed to text him I was running late for the café.

~



PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

Ryan Drendel

Your screen time is up 74 percent this week, for An average of eight hours, four minutes a day. APPL is up 5.1 percent, to 219 dollars today. Facebook reminds you to wish your brother a Happy birthday! And Iris would like to FaceTime You again. But who are these new people in Your area? Open Tinder to find out. Unlock Your iPhone and tell your mother you miss her. *I feel homesick, even though I am home*, admits Your brother. Before you message your mother, You have a memory from this day. If you do not Want to be disturbed, open your Settings. Toggle Off all banners, sounds, and badges. Still, Siri Will ask you to approve the new user agreement.





No Human Being Is Illegal · Jill

TIPS

Ryan Drendel

To delete a city from your Weather app, swipe left, then tap Delete—

To see your Memories, open Photos and go to the For You tab—

The Photos app recognizes the faces of people in your photos and groups them together. You can give names to faces, choose your favorites, and explore every photo a person appears in—

With Live Photos, your iPhone records the second before and after you take a picture. What you get is more than a great pic; it is a moment captured with movement and sound—

If you accidentally delete a photo, you have 30 days to get it back from your Recently Deleted album—

If you lose your phone or think it might be stolen, use Find My to protect your information. You can search for it on a map, file a theft claim, or remotely erase all your data—

To choose who can see your device and send you content in AirDrop, go to Settings—

Suggestions in the Tips app can help you get the most of your device—

Suggestions from your father might help you get the most out of your life—

Live near a hospital. You can follow the rush hour ambulances all the way home. Whole miles of green lights—

Night Shift uses your device's clock and location to determine when it is sunset. Then it adjusts the colors of your display to the warmer end of the spectrum—making it easier on your eyes—

Screen Time gives you a detailed report about how your device is used, the apps you've opened, and the websites you've visited—any time you want to see it—



· *Jill Divine*

QuickType knows your text messaging style. It knows who you're writing to. And it knows what your conversation is about—

But sometimes you have to talk instead of type; tap your mother's picture to give her a call—

You know, you don't have to believe in God to pray when someone asks you to. But don't bother folding laundry with dirty fingers—

If you want your battery to be alive in the morning, close all the apps you're no longer using—

Stop trying to shuffle Rubber Soul on Silent mode—

Stop asking Siri if it will rain tomorrow in Marseilles—





Masked · Bill Hobbs

DILATED

Myles Lum

When I got a letter in the mail saying that I was due for an eye-appointment, I wondered how long they could go without a new prescription. Can cataracts develop in a year? What else would need to be checked? My sister used to tell me when I drove that I brake too close to the people in front of me, but I have yet to see any ticket proving her claim.

Still, eye health seems somewhat important, so I scheduled the appointment (what a useless word nowadays) and forced out a “Sure,” when the receptionist called a month later to confirm it.

When I walked in, I felt an uncontrollable desire to say to the patients leaving with dilated eyes and plastic sunglasses, “I haven’t seen anyone in five months.” One lady, wearing one of those disposable sunglasses, must’ve been really impressed, cause she gasped as she was being led out by a nurse.

“Your hair looks like Sonic the Hedgehog,” the nurse told me as she grabbed the top and left side of my head, rotated it a degree, and pushed it into the puff test, blowing molecules of unfiltered air into my moist corneas.

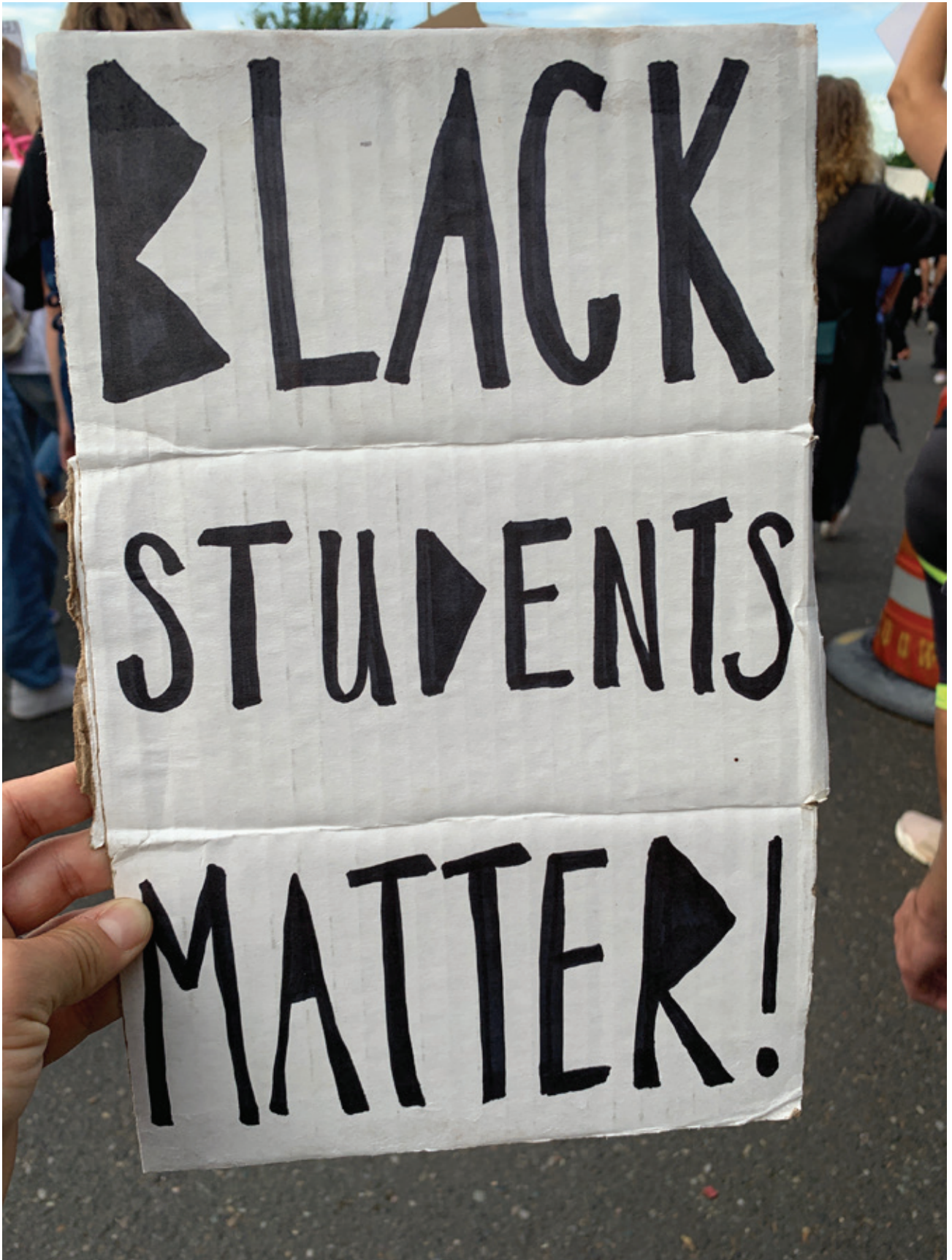
Even though I was sad to see all the businesses begin to shut down, I was glad when my barber cancelled my appointment for me. I’m glad I don’t have to lie anymore that I’m “running errands” when my friends ask me out. I’m glad I can buy groceries and masks and supplies and toilet paper online. People tell me that I am, but I don’t see myself as a hypochondriac. But I also don’t want to rule it out. I’ve done enough research online to know what one actually is. Nowadays, I can find out anything online. I can even do anything online: shop, research, get ordained to marry people. Anything’s possible. Why do they still need to do eye exams in-person?

Just don’t think about it, I thought when I first walked into the room with glasses covered in smudgy fingerprints blanketing the walls. I tried not to think about the movie *Outbreak* when the news started listing the growing number of cases in Europe. I tried humming out my own thoughts from dwelling on the first case numbers, popping up on both ends of the US. I tried wiping the worries out of my mind when I scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed the shared office keyboard with Lysol wipes, which I just so happened to buy the week before it all started happening.

A nurse held a clipboard and shouted my name through a flimsy piece of fabric. I walked behind her, and tried to imagine my 6’3” tall brother Alex lying down, separating us. She turned the door handle with her latexed hand and ushered me to a seat, which I prayed was disinfected.



Caution Slide · Sandra Dihlmann



Black Students Matter · Anonymous

Faux leather. That's good. Easy to wipe. Just don't lean on the arm rests. And don't sit back. Just look ahead. Don't worry. They've disinfected everything. They've had to. They've had to. Just breathe. But not too deeply. Relax. You'll be fine.

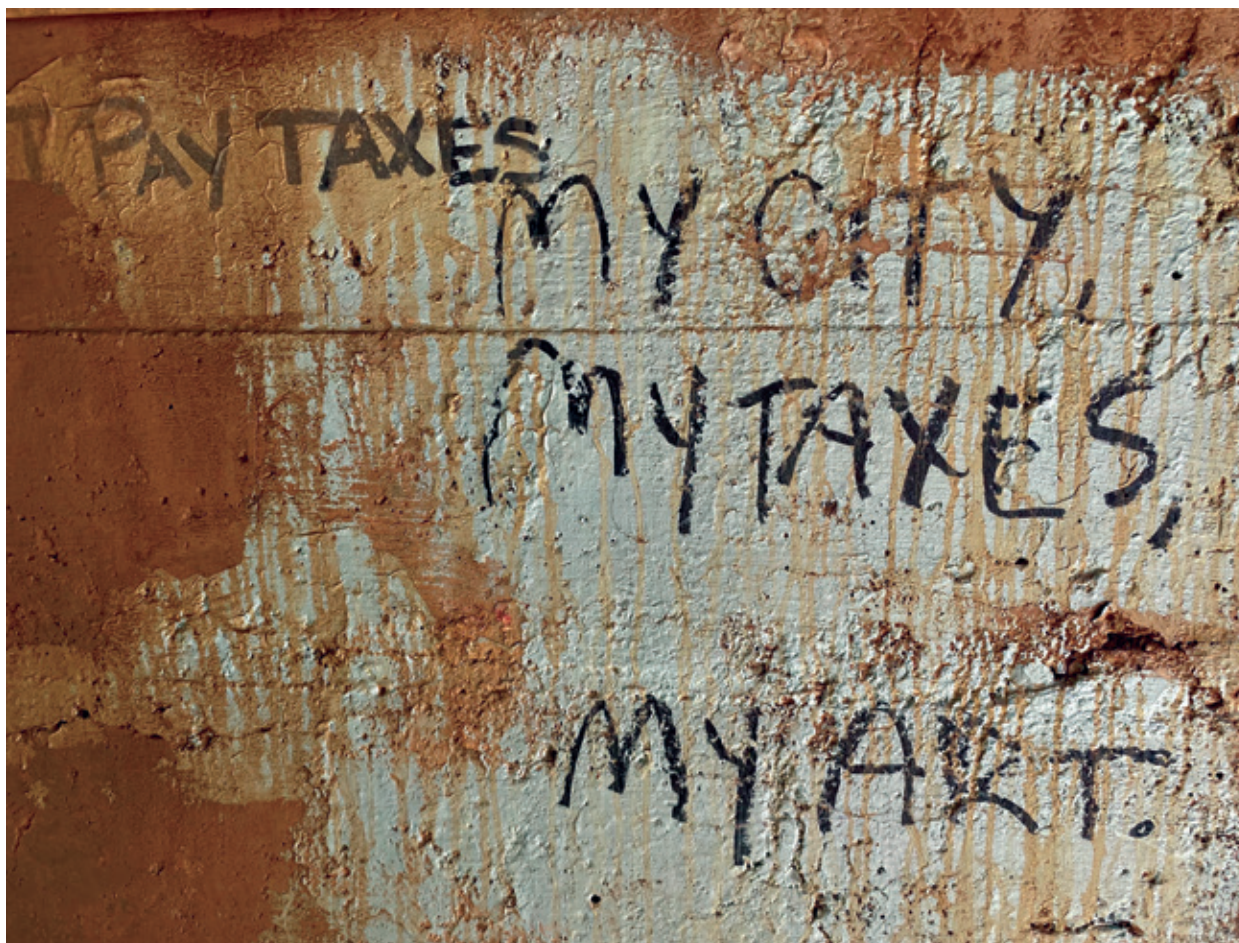
"Your hair looks like Sonic the Hedgehog," the nurse told me as she grabbed the top and left side of my head, rotated it a degree, and pushed it into the puff test, blowing molecules of unfiltered air into my moist corneas.

Excuse me? I tried to laugh, but I don't think she could see me forcing a smile through my CDC-approved fabric. "I haven't gotten it cut since February," I replied.

She said some more words to me—I knew that much. But I couldn't read her lips through her mask. Should I get my hearing checked too?

I wondered that again, when the doctor later came in, shared a photo of my eye from the glaucoma test, and said more words. She spoke so quickly that I couldn't tell if she was being serious or sarcastic when she pointed at the nebulous cosmos photograph of my eye and said, "Everything's healthy."

~



Pay Taxes · Sandra Dihlmann

Nalani · Sandra Dihlmann



PERSEVERANCE ROVER

Cutler Dunn

A black expanse envelopes all around
Behind, bright stars; before, a spinning sphere.
I fall in flames unto the stony ground,
The first to mar the eternal silence here.
I stretch my limbs and look through many eyes;
An endless quest begins again at last,
But the windswept realm stained red by rusted dyes
Will hold its secrets in a fist shut fast.
My search is for another form of life
My hope from dust a mystery to pry.
Though they that sent conflict in ceaseless strife
Their work will let imagination fly
And far above their lonely planet's haze
The views of stars both near and far amaze.

AGREE OR DISAGREE

Cal Ritterhoff

I live inside a box and in that box there is another box and in that box there is the whole world such as it is and sometimes the box likes to tell me about the weather and the end of the world such as it is and every morning the box tells me I look just a little bit more dead just a little bit more like a corpse and so on and so forth offer valid until the sea finally swallows the earth.

Agree or disagree with this statement: I find it easy to 'read between the lines' when someone is talking to me.

Once upon a time there was a man with a shovel, and when you have a shovel there's really only one thing to do, so before long he found himself in a deep black hole and the sun was hard to see, so he said, "Oh well, nothing for it," and kept right along figuring eventually he'd dig well enough to get out to where he started. Once upon a time there was a man with a flashlight.

Once upon a time, there was a white man writing an essay about his life—everyone get excited.

I've been doing a lot of thinking about flooding, recently. When I was young, the beach behind our house stretched out twenty feet, and the water lapped gently at the shore. The neighbors all got angry at my parents for installing a revetment to shore up the bulkhead on their

property, said there was no need for it, said it made it impossible to walk across the beach. Fifteen years later the beach is gone and the water comes halfway up the bulkhead. I've been to the year three thousand, not much has changed but they live underwater.

A man once asked my father if he could accept mercy, love, and grace. Agree or disagree with this statement: I often notice small sounds when others do not.

Sometimes I'm not sure I had a childhood. Not in the way people normally mean, like my childhood was hard and I had to grow up fast, exposed too soon to the bitter realities of the world, having to wash dishes or shine shoes to provide for my eight siblings and pet iguana. No, the childhood I remember was mostly comfortable, and quite privileged—I'm just not always sure it really happened. If you told me I was born twenty-three and hating myself in an apartment in Arizona, I would nod, and say, *yeah, that makes sense.*

Someone once told me that I speak in essay format, and I think he meant it as a compliment, but the truth is I would like nothing more than to stop talking because once I start talking I find I'm not making sense and once I stop making sense then oh buddy we're off to the races because I can't stop until I make sense and I'm certain that the next thing the next thing the next thing I say will



Resist Hate · Jill Divine

put it all into place but it won't and it doesn't. People are like paintings. The world is like a bucket.

But you know what does make sense? A nice cold Coke. Together tastes better.

Once my family played a game where you had to hum a song and your partner had to guess what song you were humming. This game is impossible; however clear you think you have been, however perfectly you have conceived and executed and captured your music, the space between you will peel the meaning from your noise and leave you with an empty murmuring, and they

will stare at you without seeing, and you will stare back. We played for twenty minutes and gave up.

A little while ago my friends and I played a game about green/red blue/purple white/grey men and they changed all their names to be stupid jokes mostly about penises, and I found I kept having to ask, "Wait. Which one is Sam, and which one is Dylan?" and they would say, "Sam is red, and Dylan is green," and I would ask again, and then they remembered my eyes do not work, and they changed their names to be their names so I would not have to ask. I was grateful that they did that.

Agree or disagree with this statement: When I talk, it isn't

always easy for others to get a word in edgewise.

Hear ye, hear ye. All goode townesfolk of ye olde village are hereby notified that the Dreade Necromancer of the Alabaster Castle, who hath long sown terror and misery amongst us with his Unlifed Minions and blacke magicks, hath himself run afoul of the Red Plague he delivered unto our houses. Though we and the Dreade Necromancer hath had our differences, as when he bid foul daemons to pluck the firstborne childe of each householde from its cradle or accursed our drinking



The List · Anonymous

wells to spit forth naught but bile and the most putride slyme, we gentlefolk of the village wouldst never stoop so low as to call down a fate so terrible as the Red Plague unto the immortal soul of a fellow childe of God. We give prayers for the Dreade Necromancer's swyft recovery, that our noble heroes of stalwart character mighte continue their queste to rid this land of his villainy this coming Novembre.

No, fuck that, I hope he dies.

Black boiling fucking rage that grinds between your teeth and clenches in your fingers and seethes fucking seethes when you hear about the shitsouled ghouls digging their talons into the corpse of America so my sister won't be able to get an abortion if she wants one. Men with guns and badges who we did not invite.

Coughing and wondering. Hatred so pure it is an act of love. Remembering to look as angry as I am. Self-loathing. Waves on the rocks. Twenty-four children we have to pretend aren't doomed. Email from the hospital. Men with faces like mine who took everything, who pillaged this land and took and took and took until there was no more to take and there was nothing left to keep 200,000 people from dying alone gasping weeping drowning on land where is my son where is my daughter, where is the life I was promised, where is the America they said I lived in.

And we all say be nice, and we all say use our inside voice, and we all have an easier time imagining being Marie Antoinette than a French peasant or a black man with a knee on his neck. All is well and all is well and all is well. Let them drown with us. Let the sea wash over this bloodsoaked nation and fail to make it clean. I hope every fucking AutoZone in America burns to the ground.

Once upon a time there was a white man who was angry. Nobody's ever heard this story before.

Agree or disagree with this statement: I know how to tell if someone listening to me is getting bored.

And we all say be nice, and we all say use our inside voice, and we all have an easier time imagining being Marie Antoinette than a French peasant or a black man with a knee on his neck. All is well and all is well and all is well. Let them drown with us.

Notes to include before the beginning of this essay:

- I am unsure about the necromancer thing.
- I am, unspecifically, unsure.
- Content warning: this essay contains a Jonas Brothers reference.
- Are you there? Are you there? Can you see me? Please tell me you can see me. Please tell me you can see me. Please tell me.
- Bread, turkey, milk, goldfish, shampoo, graham crackers.
- Fuck.
- "...A neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by significant difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior and interests..."
- I have written about the only thing I can, which is how it feels to be right here, right now. I would have liked to do something different.
- What do autistic donkeys eat? Assburgers.
- Red her cheeks as Rowans are / bright her eyes as any star / fairest of them all by far / is our darling Marie.
- I live inside a box and in that box there is another box and in that box there is the whole world such as it is and sometimes
- Read it upside down for the real meaning, read it backwards for secret satanic messages. Read each sentence backwards to find out how long it's been since I folded my laundry. Read each letter backwards, then upside down, then frontwards, and maybe then you'll understand, and maybe then I can stop fucking talking.

- I wonder how the Tarheels girl is doing. She was nice.
- What color are the leaves on the trees? What color are the walls I live in? What color are your eyes? What color is the sound of waves on the shore? What color is the space between us? What color are all the things I cannot hear you say?

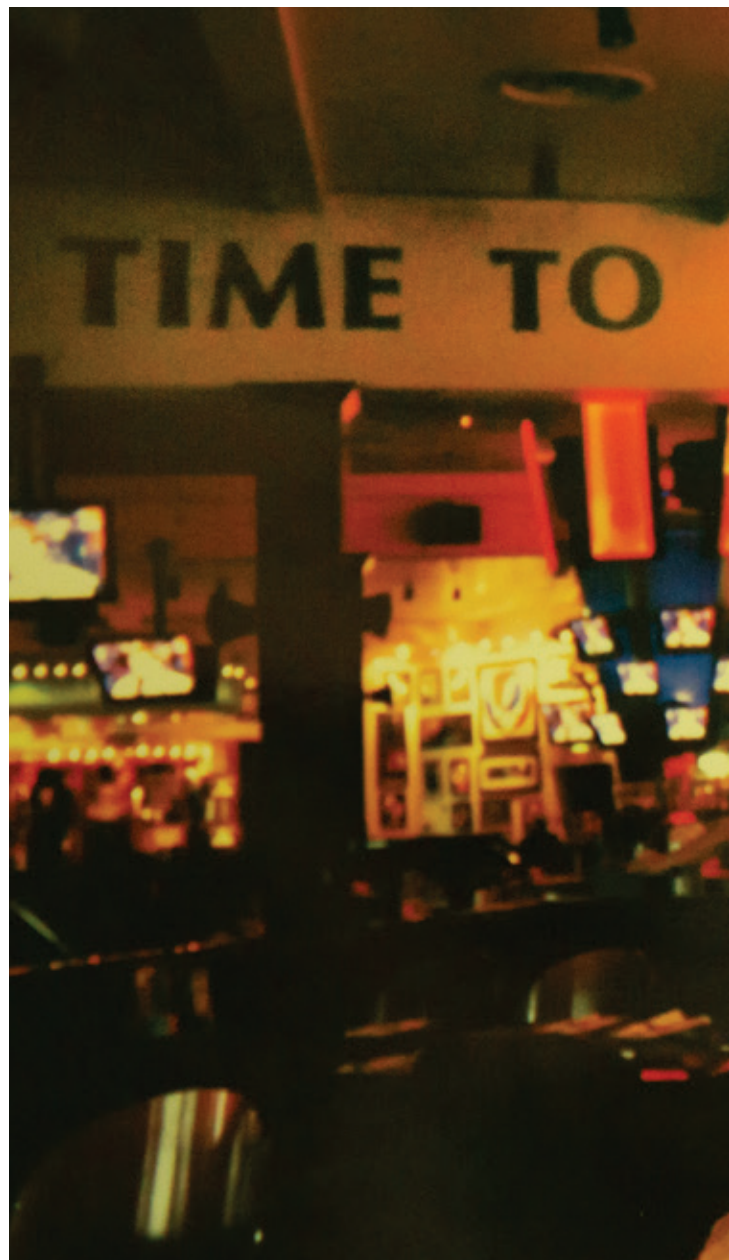
Agree or disagree with this statement: I usually notice car number plates or similar strings of information.

I don't belong here. It's much too bright in Arizona—there's too much brown, too little water, too much sky. I miss the dark grey clouds and the fog hanging heavy on the coastline and the sound of fishing boats carried over water. I miss the cold winter wind that blows the waves to a white frenzy. I miss the snow that used to fall, years and years ago. I miss the movie theater.

Did you know that Louisiana doesn't look like Louisiana anymore? The maps we use are all outdated, show too much land—the state is sinking fast. Normally, the rivers deposit silt and sand on the coast to replace what the ocean strips away, but we've long since put a stop to that, built dams and dykes and levees that stop the silt from flowing, and so the sea is grinding Louisiana down like salt. Someone call Lewis and Clark, tell them that the great dream of the colonizer is coming true, that the world is shrinking and will soon be small enough to fit inside the palm of a lily-white hand.

Not too long ago a friend of mine wondered if they could write fire; I think all I've ever tried to do is write water. Write wind. Write crickets. Write black rocks. Write numbers. Write silence. Write distance. Write the dark.

I live in a box and inside that box there is another box and inside that box there is, functionally, me. The funny



thing about the tests you take online is that they kind of assume you're either an introvert or you're currently speedballing cocaine, and I never felt that there was an answer for me—an answer that said, 'I need other people but I am so desperately afraid of them' or 'I am face illiterate' or 'help me oh god help me please I need to understand I need to be understood please' or being in elementary school and everyone is laughing at you



*Time to
Be Kind · Sandra Dihlmann*

and you don't get the joke and forgetting sometimes to move your face and figuring out how to laugh and pretending you know what people are talking about, and nodding, and trying not to bring up Dungeons and Dragons out of nowhere.

Agree or disagree with this statement: I am a sperg, a spaz, a total fucking freak.

Lights in Connecticut. Adding the numbers on license plates. Being bad at math and soothed by numbers. A level 65 World of Warcraft character I don't remember making. Covering my head in the back of the bus so my sister's friends will stop trying to talk to me. Restarting the same song thirteen times. Ordering French toast at every diner on a seven-day roadtrip. Being selected for a psych experiment. Throat closing up on dinner dates.



*Corn
Tassel · Jerrel Singer*

Being told to slow down and start over. Misgendering a person nine times and only realizing I'd done it two months later and understanding why they all stopped talking to me. Being forgiven. Mercy, love, and grace. Being on stage and telling the crowd I belonged to them, and smiling without meaning to. Understanding. Being understood.

I live in a box and in that box there is another box, and I need that box to like me like a flower needs the sun.

What else is there to say? Fuck it. Everything is going to be alright.

It's dark here in my apartment, and I am always alone. I used

to be very afraid of the dark, or more accurately of the zombies or the Leatherfaces or the Slendermen lurking inside it, but there are some things we outgrow. Every now and then I'll hear a car pass by the window outside, and as long as that happens there are still people, and still an outside. Everything is going to be alright.

Are we still what we pretend to be? Then I contradict myself. Everything is going to be alright.

A video of Andrew Scott reading *Everything is Going To Be Alright* by Derek Mahon in front of a white wall. Everything is going to be alright.

Agree or disagree with this statement: Everything is going to be alright.

I am here. I am real. My chest is rising and falling, and I can see five things, and hear four, and touch three. Say for the sake of argument: Everything is going to be alright.

Seven-legged centipedes crawl up the wall, call the ghost down from the clocktower, say it's time for supper. And nineteen angels and four architects and two good

Irish children pull up seats around the table and break bread together. I mean, literally snap bread in half. Everyone is laughing. Everything is going to be alright. I offer no explanation. Everything is going to be alright.

Seven-legged centipedes crawl up the wall, call the ghost down from the clocktower, say it's time for supper. And nineteen angels and four architects and two good Irish children pull up seats around the table, and break bread together . . .

Can you accept mercy, love and grace? Everything is going to be alright.

In spite of it all, I still believe in people. I believe in people reaching out, stretching hands and straining fingers to touch across the distance, to see, to understand. I believe in the sacredness of hands, of an unbroken chain like a railroad track across our parking lot nation, believe without a reason, without desiring any. Everything is going to be alright.

I am a revolutionary optimist. Everything is going to be alright.

I have not said the word 'autism' yet. Do you think I am afraid of it? I am not afraid. Everything it means, I already knew. What is a label if not a chance to forgive ourselves for everything we cannot be? When the world comes back to life I will seek my answer, and I will content myself with whatever I am told. For now, I pour myself into the word like lemonade, and it fits me, wraps its arms around me, feels like mercy, love and grace.

Everything is going to be alright.

~



BROOD

David Pischke

I'll shave my beard in spring when it is warm. In winter, I wear one against the cold.

I wish, like a cartoon, that baby birds would nest and sing within my hairy chin. We could live symbiotically: they filling up on the bits of food my wife is so annoyed by, trimming the less than sparse gray hairs that seem

to be twice as long as the brown to use them as weavings for tiny blankets or token handkerchiefs of our time together.

I'd be a superior bird mother: in my chicks' fragile times, when they first test their wings, I could move my beard close to the muddy earth. And if they didn't fly that time, I'd scoop them back up to try again the next day, or the next.

But they will have to have left by spring when I'm to shave again; my bald head, which cannot bear hair, can provide no second brood.

SLIP IN BETWEEN

David Pischke

Tiffany Davis said a fucking cobra got out at the zoo and no one knew where it was. I did a report on cobras in third grade, and I still know at least two things about them: they can spit poison and they're the second fastest snake ever. You can't outrun them. Maybe an Olympic runner can outrun them, but I'm not even on the track team at school, and school runners suck anyway, so if I see that cobra I'm going to just sit there and let it spit poison into my eyes, even though I hope it knows I'm happy it got out of where it didn't want to be.

In third grade I had Mrs. Armstrong. She drove one of those vans where you can sleep in the top, but she was so old she's probably dead by now. She assigned everyone an animal to research, and Benito Torres got a capybara. Benito's brother got shot when we were in sixth grade. He was in a gang or something. I felt bad, but I didn't know Benito that well. A policeman came and told us about Benito's brother and then showed us pictures of people dead from other gangs. It was supposed to scare us so we wouldn't join a gang. I never did, so I guess it worked. Tosh Lightfoot got a gila monster. Those are poisonous too. Tosh's uncle painted a mural of an eagle and the desert in the hallway by the woodshop room at the elementary school. No one was assigned an eagle. I guess eagles are just too normal. I don't remember if Kelly DeDea got an animal or if she was gone by then. I was telling Tiffany about Kelly

DeDea the other day because Tiffany is funny and has big tits. She's also really smart and has curly red hair. I was telling her about Kelly because I was thinking about Kelly, and I thought Tiffany would think I was sweet.

"She was this greasy girl that really liked cats. She'd meow all the time and was fat and no one liked her. We used to tell her we saw her cat dead in the street on the way to school, and she would cry every time. I feel bad now, but she was really mean to us too. That might have been our fault, I guess. She was so fat and stunk though. And then one day she didn't come to school anymore and no one really cared. We used to chase after her shitty station wagon on the curvy part of Brown yelling meow or whatever. But then we didn't see the station wagon either. We didn't do that when we were really little. We started in like fifth grade. I guess it takes a while to get mean. When we were little, we just walked home without causing too much trouble.

"I remember my mom asking me if I knew her. Mom had heard something, and I said, 'sort of,' and that was it. I guess they found out she went to live with her dad. He was one of those guys that would sit in a foldable chair in the driveway that was all oil-stained and there were always car parts laying around.

"I feel a little bad for her now, you know?" That last part I figured Tiffany would like, and she seemed to, so I'm glad I said it.



Choose Love · Jill Divine

At lunch me and Andrew Jaw smoked a cigarette between the oleanders and the fence around the football field. Teachers were stupid not to know about that space because kids were always up to no good in there. Andrew is Chinese or something, and he looks older, so people at the Circle K sell him cigarettes even though he's only fourteen. I'm fifteen, but I'm skinny and not Chinese and not very tall. I'm not short like Nick Heuer short, but Tiffany's a little taller than me and she's a girl. I told Andrew about the cobra and how oleanders are poisonous too. He knew about the oleanders but not the cobra, and he kept looking around like the cobra was going to pop out of the bushes and spit venom at him. Then I told him we were only a mile from the zoo and that cobras can slither fast and like dark places with dried leaves. I'm not a fast runner but Andrew's slow

as shit, so I told him how I could at least outrun him, if not the cobra. Andrew thought that was pretty funny. He's a funny guy. His parents don't like me, and I don't get to go to his house very often, but we ride the bus to and from school together and smoke at the bus stop in the morning. Andrew takes a shit every day during PE. He still has an A in there somehow. I think Coach Colletti thinks all Asians are good students, and he's scared to fail Andrew at the only class he sucks at. I have a B because Coach Colletti's an asshole.

Andrew asked me what I was talking to Tiffany about in English. He moved here in

7th grade, so he didn't know Kelly DeDea. He said some kid he knew in New York disappeared, and I guess that kid was a good friend of Andrew's, so I let it go because he seemed a little sad. We just kind of stood around until we had to go back to class.

Kelly had a cat named Cinnamon. She said it smelled like cinnamon. We said it probably smelled like cat piss. She had another cat too, but I don't remember its name, other than it was something stupid like Cinnamon. We have dogs with real names like Daisy and Sophie. I think it's better to give animals real names. I told all that to Tiffany in Ceramics. She said she thought Cinnamon was a good name for a cat. That was the first time I thought Tiffany was being dumb. Usually she's really smart.

We went to the library for History and I looked up cobras and Kelly DeDea on the computers. There were lots of things on cobras, but nothing on Kelly. I thought maybe there would be a microfiche or one of the things the librarian with the enormous ass was always yapping about when we had to do research. But there wasn't anything. I found one of the books on cobras, but Mr. Gutierrez saw what I was reading pretty quick and figured out it didn't have anything to do with my report on the Battle of Ypres. He's pretty smart about stuff like that. He told me to put it away before I could find out about cobras more.

I told Tiffany that maybe I'd call her that night, and she said okay. She has a private line in her room because she's rich, so you can call at any time and her parents won't know. That's what she told me anyway because I had never called her before.

I walked home because I didn't want to go to Dad's apartment. On Thursdays Dad picks me up at five, and I have to stay at his place until Monday morning. It's so boring and he only has Grapenuts for breakfast. But he usually gets pizza for dinner and there are a couple of old *Playboys* in the filing cabinet in the second bedroom's closet, so it was okay, I guess.

Also he left me alone most of the time and wouldn't care if I talked to Tiffany all night. He had one of those clear phones that you could see all the electronics inside that lit up when you used it. Even the cord was clear, and you could see the copper wrapping its way from one part of the phone to the other. I asked Mom to buy me one but she forgot.

I saw James and Sonny skating in the parking lot by the park on 63rd Avenue. We all used to be really good friends but now we just talk as if no one else

is around. I went over to them because I wanted a cigarette and they knew about Kelly DeDea.

"Hey assholes, remember in third grade when Scotty Barnes had a seizure in class and Mr. Schmidt threw all the desks away from him and everyone was freaking out except Mr. Schmidt and Kelly DeDea because she was so clueless? I don't know why I was thinking about that."

Sonny said one time he went to Scotty Barnes' house with Brian Babbit, and Brian and Scotty got into a fight, and Brian hit Scotty in the face with a tent pole. Scotty's lip got cut off his face. Sonny said he jumped the fence and ran and never went back. Scotty had a plastic surgeon put his lip back on. Sonny said it looked like a tiny bloody snake on the grass.

James told me that Tiffany said a cobra got out from the zoo. He said that he said Sonny should tame it with one of those flutes. He said Tiffany thought that was funny. Sonny wears a turban because he's from India or something. He also doesn't shave, but he has a pretty good beard already. Other than that, he looks regular. Sonny told James he could tame Tiffany with his dick.

Protesting and Flagstaff Police substation vandalized

June 2nd, 2020 at 8:14 PM



Flagscanner has confirmed that the East Side Flagstaff Police Substation has been vandalized. Initial reports are that a rock was thrown through a front window causing it to shatter.

A large group has formed at 4th street and route 66 and traffic is restricted.

Substation Vandalize · Flagscanner

Sonny's going out with Jennifer Parker, who's super-hot. I don't know how he got her with that stupid turban. I decided I wouldn't call Tiffany that night, but I didn't tell James or Sonny that.

Sonny had cigarettes and he gave me one. I told them to watch out for cobras, even though it probably wouldn't bite Sonny's dick. I asked them if they remembered Kelly DeDea. James said there was a little space between her backyard fence that was lined with oleanders and the neighbor's brick wall. People didn't see it because the entrance was behind one of those plants that got a million little red berries on it once or twice a year. I bet Kelly ate those berries more than once.

I found that space pretty easy. I could really only fit in it if I moved sideways, but it opened up a little at the end so I sat on my backpack with my shoulders touching both sides. The ground was all wet leaves. I could see a blue stripe of sky and little pieces of Kelly's yard through the fence and the bushes. Nothing was surprising back there. It just looked like one of those yards with dirt and little patches of grass that are all dry and you can't walk on in bare feet. Every now and then one of those long curled clouds would drift over. I wished I had bummed another cigarette from Sonny. I figured it would be pretty nice to live in there. No one could really bug you or anything. When I was little, I liked to have the blankets over my head for a long time at night. I never

I never fell asleep fast. I'd pretend I was hiding during a battle or from something that was trying to get me. I'd practice not breathing, because some of the things after me had excellent hearing.

fell asleep fast. I'd pretend I was hiding during a battle or from something that was trying to get me. I'd practice not breathing, because some of the things after me had excellent hearing.

After a while I came out and started home. But Kelly's house was right there. It was one of those houses with an arch over the walkway that leads to the front door and the house number, 5656, goes up diagonally on the side closest to the carport. It doesn't have a garage because her house is poorer than mine. Tiffany's garage had room for three cars and a boat. Kelly's house was painted an ugly tan, and the posts for the carport and the house numbers were painted shit brown. And all the plants were dead and the roof was brown. And she had rocks instead of grass. And I was going to ring the doorbell to see if anyone who knew Kelly was there, but I didn't, and when I turned around that fucking cobra was there.

It wasn't curled up and it didn't have the hood on its head open or anything, but it was on Kelly's driveway moving real slow toward me. It kind of looked like a long oil stain. Like it almost belonged there. Like Kelly's dad's car had leaked it out ten years ago. Like maybe Kelly had turned into it. Sonny believed in reincarnation. Mrs. Brady taught us about reincarnation when we read Siddhartha. How you didn't want to be stuck in the same cycle of life. How you wanted to break out the same shit and become something better until you were so good you turned to ash and became part of everything: the cobra, Tiffany's hair, Andrew's cigarettes, the oil stains, Kelly, the clouds.

I didn't move, and the snake just glided by me through the rocks and the dead grass and into the bushes in the yard next door. When Dad picked me up, I told him I had seen the escaped cobra. But because he hadn't heard about it, he didn't believe me.

~



Boba Tso · Randall Wilson



Protest Collage

Anonymous, Jill Divine & Sharri Penland



Boba Yazzie · Randall Wilson

FAMILY HANDS

Nathan Lemin

Decks split clean and dirty, dirty
on top, so dirty the deck cuts clean

in two without counting.
Dirt oil dark, family hands wave

dicks at men exiting the ice
stiff outhouse. Uncle's eyes shuffle

the nights we play cards; cross he crosses
thresholds of flesh, lapels hands, cries

“cheater!” and “cheating!” Crucified,
his eyes cannot light, cannot

thieve or trick or table talk. Here I come
from bad men who can't see it in the cards.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

Lee Anderson is a nonbinary MFA candidate at Northern Arizona University where they are the Managing Editor of *Thin Air Magazine*. They have been published sporadically but with zest, forthcoming or appearing in places such as *The Rumpus*, *Columbia Journal*, and *Unstamatic Magazine*.

Hunter Blackwell is an MFA candidate at Northern Arizona University. She is a Black and Native bisexual poet who hails from Virginia and writes too much about her family. Her previous works have appeared in *ang(st) zine*, *The Knights Library Magazine*, *Kissing Dynamite*, and others. When not writing, she bakes and cosplays.

Laura Adrienne Brady is a writer, educator, and singer-songwriter currently pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing at Northern Arizona University. Her poems have been featured on King County public buses and in the journals *Scribendi* and *Bricolage*, and her essays appear in *Brevity*, *The Rappahannock Review*, and in the book *Our Food, Our Right: Recipes for Food Justice*. Laura has released three albums of original folk music under her stage name, Wren. Her most recent project, *Pink Stone: Songs & Writings from Moose Lodge*, is a body of songs and a paired companion book inspired by her healing journey in Washington's remote Methow Valley. Explore Laura's music and writings at SwimmingRabbitArts.com.

Jill Divine was born and raised in Kansas but has spent much of her adult life in Flagstaff, Arizona. She received her MFA from Northern Arizona University and was awarded a Poetry Fellowship from the Arizona Commission on the Arts. Her poetry has been published in numerous magazines as well as in an anthology, called *Game*, which was published in 2008.

Sandra Dihlmann is a graduate of the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University and an MFA candidate at Northern Arizona University. Her work has appeared in *Happy*, *Hearth*, *Narrow Chimney*, *Flag Live!*, *The Power of Words*, *Ursa Minor*, and other publications. Sandra lives in Flagstaff with her husband, daughter, and two spunky dogs—Badger and Chewbacca.

Cutler Dunn is a student at Northern Arizona University in the College of Engineering, Informatics, and Applied Sciences. He aspires to work as an engineer for NASA after getting a degree in Mechanical Engineering and is obsessed with space and the human endeavor to step beyond the world it knows. His poem, "The Perseverance Rover" is a tribute to America's decision to build a space program to benefit the world instead of individuals.

Ryan Drendel is an MFA candidate at Northern Arizona University where he edits *Thin Air Magazine*, co-hosts the *Cinder Skies Reading Series*, and serves on the board of the Northern Arizona Book Festival. His work has appeared—or is forthcoming—in *Meridian*, *Quince Magazine*, and *Complete Sentence*.

Jackie Eliason is a student at Coconino Community College.

Larry Hendricks worked for 18 years as a newspaper reporter and editor in Flagstaff before jumping the fence to be a storyteller for Coconino Community College. In his spare time, he writes stories, shoots photos, and tries his hand at filmmaking.

Bill Hobbs is a professional photographer and digital artist. Bill has had his work shown in New York City; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Portland, Maine; and Shanghai, China. He has also been published in several books and magazines both in the United States and abroad. Bill is currently living in Flagstaff and has travelled extensively throughout most of SouthEast Asia including Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Eliza James is a Flagstaff native and a student at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM) in Los Angeles, California, where she studies costume and prop design.

Megan Latin-De Bono is a fiction writer from Phoenix, Arizona. She is an MFA candidate at Northern Arizona University and is on the editorial staff of *Thin Air Magazine*.

Nathan Lemin is a hungry writer from Wisconsin. He cares for two mutts, Benny and Rio, who care for him too. They all love water: skipping rocks and chasing sticks. Nate's writing has been published here and there. He is the fiction editor of *Thin Air Magazine* and the treasurer of NAU's graduate English organization.

Myles Lum is an MFA candidate at Northern Arizona University and has earned his BA in English from UNLV and his MA in Literature from NAU. He has presented research at NAU's Peaks Conference, ASU's Composition Conference, and at UNLV. His writing involves existentiality, sincerity, theism, and lionfish.

R. M. Lunday Jr. began capturing, creating, and manipulating images from an early age. He learned photography in the analog era, logging many hours of darkroom time. Within the digital age, he moves comfortably among the array of traditional and electronic formats.

Veronica Miller is a student at Coconino Community College.

Leslie Molina is a student at Coconino Community College.

Seth Muller is an English instructor and writer based in Flagstaff. He is the author of a narrative nonfiction book *Canyon Crossing: Stories from Grand Canyon Rim to Rim*. The late Navajo illustrator Bahe Whitethorne Jr. and Seth partnered to create the three books of *Keepers of the Windclaw Chronicles*, a young-reader fiction series set on the Navajo Nation. And his title *Heart in the Bony Middle* is a collection of poems inspired from hiking and backpacking the Grand Canyon and Colorado Plateau. Along with his work as an author, Seth has written stage plays. This includes *Convergence*, a stage drama loosely premised on the 2009 Sedona sweat lodge deaths. He was the recipient of the 2014 Copper Quill Award and is a five-time Viola Award nominee.

Mike O'Connor is a recently retired Arizona physician. His passions include outdoor, wildlife, and underwater photography. This photo was taken in 2009 while on a winter snowshoeing expedition to Yellowstone with friends. Welcomed by a fierce storm, the group was treated to frigid temperatures and a serene fresh layer of deep snow across the entire park. This created a stark and beautiful backdrop for some up-close and personal wildlife encounters. The American bison in the photo was only mildly interested in the presence of the photographer and briefly interrupted his grazing for this much-appreciated photo op.

Sharri Penland is a glass artist who has lived in Flagstaff for over twenty-five years and is currently employed at Northern Arizona University. In her spare time, she reads, takes photos, makes jewelry, and studies evolutionary astrology and vibrational healing techniques.

David Pischke lives in Flagstaff, Arizona, with his wife, two boys, two dogs, and a desert tortoise named Speedy. He teaches middle school Structured English Immersion and college-level English Composition, and holds teaching certificates in English and Art. He is a founder and the Chief Operating Officer of Tolsun Books.

Cal Ritterhoff is an MFA student and Graduate Teaching Assistant at Northern Arizona University.

Jerrel Singer, an alum of CCC, paints about the area around his Navajo Nation home of Gray Mountain and Cameron and what home means to him. His work is regularly featured in shows across the Southwest and beyond.

Randall Wilson, an alum of CCC, blends the modern with his traditional Navajo culture to make connections across time. A teacher, he is a member of Art of the People, an organization dedicated to showing Native Americans of all ages they can aspire to become artists.

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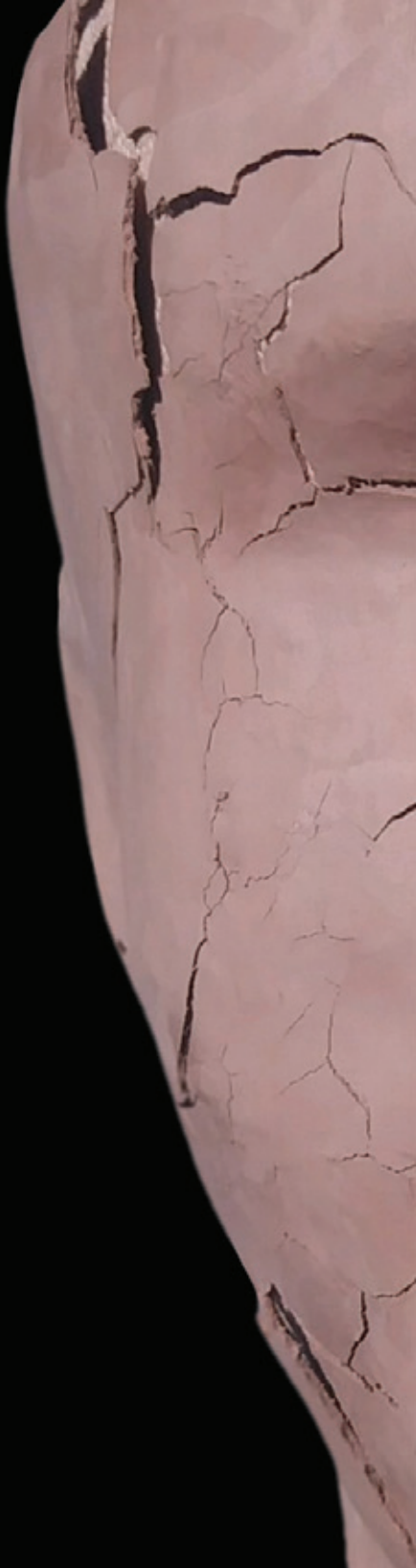
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