

Trestle | CREEK | Review

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Note: An arrow (→) at the bottom of the page means no stanza break.

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Trouble with Intimacy

When my mother thought
my fingers knew which scars to touch,
she unbuttoned her blouse.

The barbed stitch that ran the length of her life,
the breath that snagged beneath
the flesh she came to accept as some other—

what she wanted, I knew.
I stared at the blow-fly on the sill,
the hairy legs of it, the iridescent drone of it

reflected in the night window
where the city hardly blinked
at what was missing.

What My Grandmother Said

...there is no love apart from the deeds of love;

—Jean-Paul Sartre

Maybe because my grandfather left her
not much more than a girl
with three children, locusts, the farm,
and everything shy about her
a kind of turbulence,
she preferred the cellar,

or maybe the furnace soothed her,
the quiet underground—
cobwebs stirring as the air stirred,
floor joists creaking with footsteps above her,
and always the possibility
of coming up from the going down.

The mending room she called it,
chose that space in the basement where
each morning I could find her,
cast iron treadle under her pumping foot,
cast iron trademark in capitals
two inches high: *SINGER*.

And she did sing, content
among the sounds of belt and band wheel,
bobbin and spinning spool,
the speed of the needle,
as yards of fabric gathered in her lap,
her voice finding, losing, finding again the tune.

The weather outside is frightful, she sang,
squinting under the bare bulb

→

that swung beneath the furnace duct,
snow filling up the window well,
our house sealed against the cold
that had held us hostage for days,

and the little quiver in her hands
lockstitch after lockstitch,
as her fingers so close to the presser-foot
deftly smoothed and guided the wedding silk.
Never once had she asked me,
“Are you certain? Are you sure?”

Let it snow, let it snow, she sang,
small squeaky notes of soprano
floating up the stairwell.
How... I hesitated, *how do you do love?*
Her long silence paralyzed me.
I see her still.

She has stopped the machine
and is attaching lace to the hem of the sleeve.
Oh my, she says at last,
pulling the thread through,
as if she knows what’s happened
and what’s going to happen to the whole world.

What did I understand of womanhood,
or this woman, for that matter, who survived
South Dakota winters, the Great Depression...
me, thinking now, now
she will explain everything?
She knots the thread and bites it off.

On the Lost Side of the House

October already gone wrong,
the first snow down from the Rockies
came not as a storm,

but more a cautious familiar
that haunted the window, fingering the sill,
powdering the porch, the path to the barn,

smoke slow out of the chimney,
and the dead cottonwood, still upright,
its limbs heavy with cold.

What had burrowed into the heart
he couldn't say, exactly,
but he would fell it next spring,

stack the logs beneath the eave.
He imagines the cut,
where the branches must lie,

how the trunk should angle
away from the porch,
how he could live with the stump,

plant something to twist around it,
a creeper, perhaps, or bittersweet,
how suckers might sprout up

and he will let them grow, if they have to.
Pointless to think of this now,
snow closing the lane to town,

his fork pushing uneaten beans
from one side of the plate to the other,
odors still heavy in the kitchen,

empty coat hook in the front hall
where her books remain, tossed in boxes,
words fading with last light.

Trouble is a holy place.
He'd wanted to explain to her
how he had emptied himself into the land,

and he had taken her, as he had taken
the land, wind clawing out of the north
with a passion he recognized.

He thought he remembered it right,
the soft moan of her (how she loved him,
oh how she loved him),

even the cold that would not end
that night she locked the door against him,
and he had wandered out into the weather

hunting for something
no man should have to explain.
She would return. He was sure of it.

What else is left for him to do?...
his life a small damage
he would have back.

Salt Creek Island



Hope in the Darkness

She couldn't remember the war or a time before it, a time when stark, blinking electronic lights pulled at her heartstrings and kept her so connected to the world. She couldn't recall the glow of a computer monitor, the shrill sound of a cell phone, or what it felt like to read a text message from someone she loved. She couldn't remember the feeling of high heels, smooth lipstick or the sound of her cat's gentle purr. All of life's pleasures had been torn away in one bright white flash.

It was all gone now: her life before the war. *Herself* before the war.

Now, her reality was the cold, muddy hillside somewhere in Northern Idaho. Pine needles and dead leaves covered the forest floor. The smell of dirt and moss hung heavy in the air. The Spokane River roared somewhere in the background, but she couldn't hear it. All Hope heard anymore was a scratchy, white noise in her head. She hadn't heard the sound of another voice since she had stumbled out of her parent's bomb shelter. Built for some cold war that never came and filled with munitions and food, it was the only thing that kept her alive when her parents never returned.

It could have been ten or fifteen years. She lost track after the first year her calendar ran out. The last road sign she had seen had been the ruins of a city called Coeur d'Alene. It had taken her the entire summer and fall to drag her sled along the remains of Interstate 90 from the shelter to this place. She hadn't seen another living person in her entire journey. And yet she continued forward, searching for signs of life among the rubble. Secretly, perhaps, she searched for a source of power, some semblance of the life she once knew.

Hope wiped the sweat from her brow and adjusted her grip on the wire cord that held her sled. She took a moment to catch her breath—but just a moment, she had to keep moving. Rain started to fall and the chill wind had long ago stolen the warmth from her jacket. Her layers of clothing became damp and her legs stiffened with each labored step.

She struggled across the muddy ground, her boots slipping. She had followed a path obscured by pine needles and years of decay. It had been so hidden she had barely seen it from the road. She wanted to get under tree cover before nightfall and guessed she had only an hour of daylight left. Her stomach growled in protest at the thought of the journey toward the river.

Something rattled off the side of her sled and she paused, carefully rearranging the items she had carried for hundreds of miles. She mentally cataloged the contents of her sled, taking precaution that nothing else had fallen off. The TV was the heaviest and she shifted it to the side, re-centering it on the sled. A picture frame had fallen off and had snagged in a power cord to a video game controller. Her hand trembled as she felt the familiar buttons press beneath her fingers. The picture frame was not broken, just a little muddied from the fall. She stared at the image and couldn't recognize the faces behind the glass.

A black and white stuffed monkey stared up at her. She patted him on the head, made sure he was safe on the sled, and continued down toward the river.

Her breath caught in her throat when she realized something *was* missing—her cell phone. At one time, it was a top-of-the-line smartphone, and it never left her side. It made the journey with her, the screen long ago smashed beyond repair. She recalled the first few days she had been on the road and had used the phone's light to stifle her fear of the dark. As the nights went on and the battery died slowly, she had become less and less afraid. Eventually, as all the technology around her failed and she lost touch with everything that once seemed normal, a white noise crept into her head to fill the space.

Now the phone wasn't on the sled. Her mouth went dry. She dropped the cord and backtracked her steps, head whipping from side to side, searching the wet ground. That the cellular device was obsolete didn't matter to her; it was *hers*. She needed the feel of the screen, the presence in her hand, the memory of connection. It hadn't been just a phone for a long time. Just as tears fogged her vision, something glinted. She fell to her knees, hard against the rocks, and plunged her fingers into the pine needles. She tore the phone from the greedy earth, wiped the broken screen with her sleeve and held it close. Hope stayed on the ground, clutching the phone, until the rain numbed the fear in her bones.

The sky was dark overhead by the time she had set up camp and built a respectable fire. She held her cell phone in one hand, running a finger along the broken glass. Blood smeared against the screen. Hope didn't notice. Food had appeared near the fire. Tonight it was some faded aluminum can with a picture of a dog on it. The night before, when she took shelter in Coeur d'Alene, it had been a bag of dried fruits and nuts. Hope never knew where the food came from, but she had her suspicions—she looked to the stuffed monkey and smiled knowingly. He had taken care of her and kept her fed for a long time.

Hope stared at the TV screen, blank these fifteen years. No static had danced across the cracked screen since before the war. Whatever sound she believed it made in order for her to sleep was all in her imagination. She pulled the stuffed monkey a little closer for warmth.

Firelight reflected from the TV screen. If she imagined hard, she could see something playing across it. As she began to drift off to sleep, she let go and decided to forget. Tomorrow, she'd wake up and leave the sled. She'd take the monkey, of course; he had protected her. But she'd leave the sled, the TV, even the phone. The stuffed monkey stared at her, firelight reflected in its dead plastic eyes. It was time. Time to let go.

The white noise faded away as sleep began to embrace her.

Something startled Hope awake. The noise in her head was silent. The river roared in her ears. She clutched at her head and cried out. Sound had finally returned—and with it, something so strange and unfamiliar, she didn't understand.

Somewhere in the distance a cell phone was ringing.

The stuffed monkey was gone.

On Thin Ice



Card from Montana, only snow on the cover

Well, another year gone, and I'm older.
Nothing goes on here. Weather only knows

how to blizzard. We don't get out much.
The town has casinos now, so play them

sometimes. Don't win though—
they're rigged. Kids still live around.

Oldest cooks at the rest home.
Youngest just retired, so nothing.

Middle one drives school bus, adopted
two foster kids—teenagers.

I dread winter. Heard from a cousin
with cancer. That's about all.

Crew Boss

Hail and wind pound the garden
 into confetti, blow smoke from August fires,
 crash a giant willow onto the footbridge.
 I work all day with the city crew,
 noisy diesels and chainsaws,
 log chains dangle tree trunks
 above our heads.
 A brass belt buckle flashes
 beneath the crew boss's vest:

*Yeah, it's a turtle. Mexico,
 five dollars thirty-five years ago.
 I do things slow like a turtle,
 always drive five miles under the limit.
 Women, everyone, passes me
 uphill on the double yellow line.
 I'm still learning to go slow.*

End of the day, give him a copy of Snyder's *Turtle Island*.
 He knows work, I say.
 And studied Buddhism in Japan.

*I don't have much religion, Crew Boss says,
 but you know, when I bought my ranch
 a large beaver was there
 and he had a beaver house near the river
 that was big enough to stand up in, really.
 I took a heavy bar and a shovel
 and went down there and broke it all in,
 broke it down and filled it with dirt.
 In the next week he dug it all out
 and I realized I'd been wrong,
 so I fenced off that section
 and I call it Beaver's Acre.
 I'm more or less isolated, mind you,
 and I like it that way,
 if you know what I mean,
 but I owed him—
 that much.*

Bridge over the Yellowstone

Minneapolis Steel & Mchy. Chas. T. Sacket, Co. Eng. 1908

A guy with blonde eyebrows
 hauling a D-8 cat
 (load limit 8 tons)
 thunders across.
 We hardly notice
 wolves smiling the corners of the rusty sign
 or the girl wearing eye glasses in the water.

The river, full and brown and fast,
 funnels wind off Absaroka snowfields,
 stacks up snags,
 small teal in the reeds.

A black eagle eats up the road
 to the bison jump
 (deep blood kettle)
 that founds sandstone cliffs;
 mud swallows skim
 back and forth across the cliff face.

You say Karl Menninger
 got his therapy practice
 from the Pueblos,
 are grateful for Grover Wolf Voice
 who brought the wooden flute back
 to the Cheyennes.

Rusty wolves from all four winds
 sing Big Horn Mountain flutes.
 Bridges can take you somewhere...
 so damned clean.

for Alonzo Spang

Money

My dad died a millionaire.
 Left it all to the Methodist Church.
 He told my older brother, *Hell if I gave Roger
 a hundred thousand dollars today
 the damned Indians would have it tomorrow.*

I remember when Montana still had silver dollars,
 coins so pocket-heavy they damn
 near pulled your pants down.
 One hot day I lay naked on a mattress
 covered completely with silver dollars. Cool.
 One of the best things about Montana. When you bought
 a pack of smokes with a twenty you got back
 nineteen silver dollars and some change.
 Had to cinch up your belt.

Rilke thought coins had a longing
 to return back into the mountains
 where their metal had been mined.
 The inflation in Germany after WWI,
 so high it took a wheelbarrow
 full of Deutsche marks to buy a loaf of bread.

I remember
 the kid, Tangiers, 1966,
 following, then leading me around the city—
*What you want Charlie? You want hashish,
 you want cocaine; You want my big sister,
 you want dancing boy? What you want Charlie?*
 The dancing boy sits at the bar smoking,

→

his gold brocaded jacket slightly frayed.
 Weathered face betrays his boyish body,
 shards of broken Coke bottles cemented
 into walls all over the city.

How many hundred billion did the Fed
 “magically” print to save us from our current
 speculative craze?
 “Follow the money trail,”
 the investigative journalists always say.
 Too bad it doesn’t lead us, as Rilke thought,
 back into the veins of the mountains.

Mother of Thyme*In Memory of Mother*

After coming home from town,
 I observe the mother of thyme
 has not blossomed yet.
 Five adult blue-green plants
 straddle the plot of tender earth,
 trimmed back, waiting
 for love to enter them.

I walk into my mother's house
 unnoticed, and where I think
 I hear her talking to someone.
 The passing train rattles
 the double windowpanes.
 I smell coffee from her one-cup
 coffee pot. She sees me,
 sits down on the couch,
 and retreats under layers
 as if a honeycomb.
 Her arms are tightly crossed
 with no warm reach.
 It's inside her and can barely speak.
 She is imprisoned by her sadness.
 The cat rubs against my legs
 and wants out.

I am the mother now:
 It is how things are.
 I try to get her to take her pills.
 She likes me to wash and
 comb her white, silky hair.

→

I cook her meals to her liking.
 I encourage her not to worry.
 And I plead with her
 to wear her hearing device.
 So I tell her about my visit
 with her granddaughter.
 She smiles and watches
 my lips, nods back
 as her hearing aid,
 like a tiny kidney, peeks
 from the vanity, and stays there
 on its one silver wing.

Then she asks me whether
 I have seen her granddaughter.
 "Sweet Jesus!"
 It's a daily occurrence.
 I feel invisible, worn-out,
 and my throat is hoarse
 from the straining of my voice.
 It's her reality and mine
 of background noises
 and missed words that test us,
 so I repeat each word
 loudly again, but with empathy.
 While the mother of thyme
 waits outside
 with the help of bees.

Jacobaea maritima no.2



Six Months In

Six months in and
I can't stop thinking
the way you wear the color
green reflects the way
I pick out candies, and
cigarettes, and shoes,
and I'm about to
go to the corner cafe
and order a caesar salad
because I feel like
eating you

Laundry

Apple Jelly

it's funny because when I stumble into my home
returning from your home
scrambling off my pants
because I've been wearing the same
pair for almost forty hours
several Budweiser bottle caps fall
out my pockets
maybe a die or two
a cigarette butt
peculiar things, trash

it's funny because a week might pass
I don't see you
or your bed again
I don't chug Budweiser in between
sticking my tongue in your mouth
but I find these bottle caps
littered on my desk, dresser, and sink
and think of
sticking my tongue
in your mouth

it's funny because you told me the other day
not to expect much
so I don't
but I still think about the snow drift
and you in the cold
and you at home
drinking Budweiser alone
and I want to call you
to see
if I can sleep in your bed

There you go dipping your fingers
into the apple jelly again

With the rain falling into the kitchen
we talk about your parents
There are so many apprehensions with you
I'm not sure if it's blanket-worthy

But if you were to bring up their Chevrolet for sale
It very well might drive through the house

At the Interface



At the Interface

catch fire, move on.

—Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island*

If it all went up in flames, what would I do?

Before her right hand shriveled to a claw, Mom tilled soil
around her son's paradise lily. Once my brother, then a flower.
Mom carried on, weeding with her left.

What would I do, if the log cabin burned down?

The oregano patch round the house should be defensible
space: firefighters in bloom. I don't clear the oregano
patch. I cannot weed whack the forest's fragrant interface,

the line the wolverine expert, with beaver musk and bear scat in a pocket vial,
calls "the edge": fir, cedar, and pine, blister rust, tenacious
cottonwood. Our oregano.

Would I lose my mind, to forest fire at the edge of memory and renewal?

I scrape burnt toast to save the bread underneath.
Imagine this fire, jumping treetops, flames a giant pogo stick,
my bark flamed free, my uterus gone, my mother gone, my brother gone.

Why would a fire matter now, when that family has flamed out already?

My dachshund wants to hunt the squirrel's latest path
to the chicken coop, to kill one more mouse. Her tally
rises. A high-pitched bark at the wild edge of cuddle.

I accept death by dog, not by firetrap.

Weightlessness

In the space of imaginary fire, lightning refutes my sleep. My tube of fur wakes,
illuminated by Orion's flashing belt. Mother's Moon Garden becomes
her namesake's glow.

I pack a tub of pictures by the door. Wear my gold necklaces, Mother's
silver bracelet. Carry my brother's Swiss Army knife in my pocket.
Fire plays no favorites.

"As long as we have the dog," my father and I say, echoing Mom,
the loss of her. We follow Hoot Owl regulations, stop running the chainsaw in
the afternoons. Stop nattering like squirrels.

We keep keys in the car, hold the dachshund close.
My mother said: "when fire comes, get out sooner than later."

We dip our bare feet into the freezing water.
The few inches at the surface the only warmth,
a barrier to be broken.
We venture slowly, unsure of each step,
the sun shining too bright to allow us to see clearly in front of us.
We rush in through the burning of hot sand,
sharp rocks digging into our uncalloused skin.
We take the chance to feel the slow push of waves,
increasing with the busy purr of boats in the distance.
Only our base senses to guide us, we feel
the coarse and jagged stones,
the slimy texture of driftwood,
the creeping of plants whispering at our thighs.
We risk the unknown,
the sharp, rusty lure of a fisherman who cut his line,
the morphed and torn pieces of plastic barely floating
mistaken for something precious,
the imperceptible depths and
the creatures lingering there.
The perceived risk is worth it for the weightlessness we feel.
We long for the chance to meditate on
the slow currents that push our bodies
inch by inch away from where we set in.
For all of our efforts to be in control
are gone in the water.

Fly or Die

Drive



I'm smoking a joint when I see a guy with his thumb up standing on the side of the road. I stab it out, and pull over. He has a travel case over his shoulder. It flaps at his side as he runs. He slides into the seat next to me, and throws his briefcase in the back next to the beer.

"Where you going buddy?" I say.

"Away from here. You getting on the interstate?"

"Yeah, headed east, to Missoula."

"What's in Missoula?"

"Shit."

We merge onto the interstate going east. I light up a joint and ask if he wants some. He says he doesn't smoke pot, that it makes him paranoid. I get that. I smoke. I drive. When the Rolling Stones come on the radio he taps his foot. I like that. As long as it's not AC/DC. Angus Young drives me fucking insane.

"So, you never said where you were headed," I say.

"I did," he says.

"Oh yeah?"

"Away."

"Oh yeah, you did say that."

We drive some more. He stares straight ahead, out the windshield. I reach into the back, and after fumbling over his briefcase, I break open the case of beer. I open my first. He looks over as it opens with a hiss and crack. I am smoking my fourth cigarette before he finally asks me for one. I light another joint.

"Want some?" I pop another beer.

"I'm good."

"Suit yourself."

I smoke it down to the crutch I made from my cigarette pack. I let it fall out the window, and roll it up. I look to him.

"You alright man?" I say.

"Yeah, yeah I am alright," like he's trying to convince himself.

I slug the rest of my beer, and toss the empty behind the back seats. I crack another beer from the case. I ask him if he can light me up a smoke, and when he nods, I throw him my pack. I tell him to take one if he wants. He lights up two and

hands me one. After a few drags he cracks his window and tips out the ash. He looks at me.

“Why are you going to Missoula?” he says.

“Funeral.”

“Shit,” he says, “someone close?”

“Mom.”

“I was afraid it was something like that. Guess we all lose someone some-time. Or we don’t and we’re the good who die young.”

We drive some more.

We pass some shithole town, Kingston maybe, but they’re all shit out this way. I crack my fourth beer. When he asks for one, I hand him a Rolling Rock. I like the green can. It looks less like I am drinking and driving. We slug them down as we go. I ask if he is hungry, but he shakes his head. I am hungry, and three beers deep, so I get two burgers in some shithole town I definitely know isn’t Kingston. He shakes his head at his burger. I eat both. We get back on the interstate. With the food down, I think it’s safe enough to crack another beer. He takes one too. He lights two smokes up. The radio goes to static so I turn it off.

“You ever wonder about dying?” he says.

I shrug. “Everyone does I guess.”

“Yeah.”

“Anything in particular?” I say.

“I don’t know it’s just—when I die, I don’t want to die alone. You know?”

“Yeah, I think I know what you mean.”

He turns his head real quick and looks at me.

“Yeah,” he says softly. I hand him a beer and crack another. “I was always afraid of dying alone, so I thought of joining the army once. At least in the army you get to die next to your brothers.”

“Poetic,” I say. “Yeah maybe. I didn’t really believe it though. Besides who wants to do all that running?”

“Hmmp, not me. I’ll take a cold one over a run any day.”

I drink some more and I drive some more. Getting on into Montana probably, I think we passed the border over the last pass.

“I think dying would be better than running,” he says.

“Nothing worse than running,” I say, and we laugh.

We laugh all the way to the next round and we are out of beer. I light up a joint, and this time he hits it pretty impressively. He coughs, and I hit it, and cough too. He lights up two smokes, and we smoke them down. I drive. After a while, he asks to stop for more beer. He gets the kind with the blue ribbon on it.

We stop and round up some more. We start slugging and driving again. We do ninety down the interstate slugging the new beers.

We’re getting close to Missoula, so I light up one last joint. It makes me cough. I swing into the righthand lane. I look at him. “Hey man grab the wheel,” I say. “This time I’m gonna light the smokes.” He takes the wheel. I am lighting two smokes in my mouth when he jerks the wheel. We hit the barrier with a thud. The car slides along it for a moment and then we are back in the lane. I hand him his cig.

“Nice one,” he says.

“Still alive I guess.”

We laugh. We laugh hard. I swerve, but it’s time to slow down. We are at the last Missoula exit. I let him out. He’s a ways down the road when I decide it’s time for another beer. I go to reach for one and I see his briefcase.

“Hey man, you forgot your bag,” I say. He is far enough away that I am not sure he hears me, but he stops and turns around. He stares at me for a bit. “Keep it.” He walks away with his thumb in the air.

I go to the funeral. He continues hitchhiking. He stands, not on the interstate but on the on-ramp with his thumb in the air, while I go to see my mom off. It’s illegal to hitchhike on the interstate. I get more drunk. I get as drunk as possible before I give my eulogy. The eulogy sucks, and I don’t remember much about the rest of the night, but I think about it with my headache in the morning. I throw out his briefcase with the empty case of beer when I clean out my car before I head home. The headache is all the thinking back I do that day. I have a lot of driving to do after all.

Winter Tree



High Water

the west pasture creek

I was six, fallen,
pinned against a tree,
the youngest and last
to start across the sapling bridge.

My brother turned, took one step back,
then bolted ahead of the others.
I watched their backs until
the last flap of coat vanished
over a curve of hill
and no memory or wish
could ever bring them back.

The water took both rain boots,
one shoe, one sock.
Two small, numb hands
began to slip along the curve
of gray-brown bark.
Then voices, blurred and far away,
the shadow of a blanket descending beneath
the windy halo of my mother's hair,
and beyond the bridge,
just below the surface,
my foot, like a dead fish,
belly up, blue-white,
shimmering.

The massages make her happy

and calm, said her daughter-in-law
 who brought Giulia to me every week
 for half-an-hour.
 Giulia would tell me stories:
 how her immigrant father worked at the mill,
 how she met the husband she couldn't quite
 believe was dead,
 where they used to walk looking for arrowheads.
 When she was nine,
 her Sicilian father took her
 on the train to San Francisco.
 "You don't tell Mama," he'd said
 when they spent a night in a bar
 with men who spoke her father's dialect.
 "You don't tell Mama."
 Giulia sang one of the songs from that night,
 laughing, telling the rest in Italian,
 so I let my hands listen,
 open on her scapulae, fine as chiseled flint,
 scarcely hidden beneath her well-worn flesh.

Early Season Ball at Ruby's Café

Friday night is busy.
 There's a Phillies game on, loud,
 in the bar
 but Irene has made a deal with Charlie
 to keep the radio in the kitchen
 on the California station.
 She loads her arm with a hot turkey sandwich,
 a club special, and a chef salad
 when she hears
*... bottom of the sixth, runner at third,
 all tied up at two and
 the new pitcher, a right hander,
 is Jake Aurifaber...*
 Her son. She can hardly grip
 the plates. She wonders if his dad knows,
 if he's out there, at the ballpark.
 She brings orders from two more tables,
 rocks on her sore feet.
 "He's doin' good," Charlie says
 and they listen to the radio voice say
*...strike two. A ninety-eight mile-an-hour
 fastball. This kid's got good stuff.*
 Irene picks up a T-bone dinner,
 a seafood fettuccini, a kid's chicken fingers plate.
 She tucks a ketchup bottle in her apron pocket.
 The crowd in the bar cheers and whistles,
 their stamping feet making the sound of
 baseballs against the garage.
 When she takes the order at the next table
 she faces the kitchen window,
 hands chest high,
 looking in for a sign from Charlie.

Mailboxes



Tailgate

For the most part, it started out like any other mid-September weekend. Still shorts-weather, not a cloud marked the sky, oodles of sunshine warming my back. We didn't hatual and highly-anticipated consumption of life-shortening fried fare, a few thrill rides and trips down a zip line.

The day before this outing, we all got together for a mostly unplanned family dinner at Grandma's house, and in all honesty, this Saturday was not all that remarkable. What, then, caused me to experience one of the most knee-buckling parenting epiphanies I've experienced to date?

My wife and her family conversed on the other side of the front room after we had just finished a generous helping of one of my mother-in-law's soul food offerings: sausage-potato casserole. There was a familiar sense of joy in the air, the kind of latent happiness one feels on Christmas Day in the gentle lull between opening presents and preparing dinner. The room was filled with the kind of aura that makes a smile feel effortless.

Just as I noticed this feeling wash over me, I turned my attention to the front room window. My two youngest kids had just gone outside to play in the yard, and I saw them hop up and over the tailgate to my father-in-law's truck, where they started jumping up and down, making the truck bounce slightly. At that moment, it felt as though I had entered a time warp and was peering through a hazy mist at my own childhood memories.

The year was probably around 1985 or 1986, but I couldn't tell you for sure, since concrete details like dates, times, and exact places are trivial and meaningless in our most formative memories. What really counts are the experiences we share: jumping off a tailgate just to be able to dunk a miniature basketball and pretend we were Air Jordan, or trying to hit a whiffle ball hard enough to force our best friend to knock on the cranky old neighbor's door to retrieve it from his backyard.

This is not wistful reminiscing or digging up old memories as a way to dodge the oft-complex difficulties of the present. These are memories of the power and glory of our youth. These were likely some of the greatest days of our lives, back before the weight of the world shifted to our shoulders.

As I watched my kids play with their cousin outside in the driveway, I

Resilience

realized what I was watching. These are their glory days. These are the greatest times of their lives, and I consider it a gift—no, an absolute miracle—to have a front-row seat. Seeing them play at that moment filled me with gratitude and joy, but it also altered my perspective.

What if I was mindful enough to be able to recognize these moments, as they happen and then step into those moments, so that I might become an actor within them?

This is the essence of being a mindful parent: to recognize the moments when we are needed most and to have the initiative to step in and play the role.

Here's to the dewmorning, dropping
from the lap of clouds
and lyinggold-grey on the horizon
patient, with winkinggentle breathing
waiting to be waked by the sun-rays
so, leaping up in shoutingyellow,
it may greet the moaning mumbling
bipeds who slam open hands on alarms
and then guzzling falsesweet coffee creamer
in opaque stained mugs (with a splash of actual brew)
head off to work in walls in walls

Whiskers



Vacuuming the Stars

Already Orion, Draco, Pegasus
have littered themselves
under the kitchen table
along with toast crumbs
and meteors of huckleberry jam

It is time to vacuum the stars!
I announce to the one
who has energetically drawn
spiral upon spiral of colored lines
easily demonstrating
the string theory of the universe
On it he has written *I wish to control the world*
and carefully placed a banana to the right
of the vortex presumably depicting
our own Milky Way

When you control the world, I ask
How will you help people
who do not have enough to eat?

*I will rain down some magic stuff
that turns into turkeys,* he replies

When we get to Pegasus, he hesitates,
a shame to suck up
this spree of circles punched
from Nana's good white paper
our "naysayer" constellation,
but the roar of the vacuum
urges him on
The Controller of the World
must have a powerful sound

Glacial Ocean (Triple Divide Peak)

Take what you know
a paper wasp nest flecked gray
twisted windswept marvel
tumbled brick buildings
busted fragments, yesterday's news

Take an old jewelry box
jade necklace rarely worn
pink quartz you gave your mother
for her heart—now it's yours
Take that green pasture
snow melted into lush chartreuse
a horse's soft mouth, firm teeth

Take it back—before wasps,
your mother ever existed,
horses six inches tall
through ridge-backed
castle-loaded enormity
of glacial built mountains
quiet as bear grass in this breeze

Take every red blood cell
you've ever made
every skin cell ever shed
You aren't quite finished
humanity premature
Your birth waits behind
a piled slab of melted stone

You know you could die here

Walk the thinning cervix
of Mother Earth's womb
afterbirth of ocean floors
one heaving contraction

Contributors

Ameerah Bader is an alumna of North Idaho College. She is currently attending Boise State University in pursuit of a degree in illustration and printmaking. One day she hopes to be living in the woods, creating graphic novels about the simple, sweet, and horrific parts of being alive. She enjoys laughing, gin, bluegrass, and the color yellow paired with the color blue.

Michelle Brumley is a non-traditional (and proud!) student of North Idaho College in the pursuit of becoming a dark fantasy and sci-fi novelist. She won an award for Best Short Story in 2010 from Spokane's Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention for her fantasy short story "The Burning City," and will never let anyone forget.

Jessica Cassens is a student at North Idaho College, majoring in graphic design. Not only is she a student she also does freelance graphic design on the side. When she isn't designing, she loves to be outside enjoying nature. She hopes to someday work for a design agency within an outdoor company.

Jois Child's work has appeared in *High Desert Journal*, *Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies*, and *Women Owning Woodlands*. She lives in Bonner County.

Renée E. D'Aoust is the author of *Body of a Dancer* (Etruscan Press), a Foreword Reviews Book of the Year finalist. Forthcoming and recent publications include *Brevity*, *Essay Daily*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Ragazine*, *Rain Taxi*, and *Sweet: A Literary Confection*. She has received grants from the Idaho Arts Commission and the Puffin Foundation. Honors include three Pushcart nominations—one from Trestle Creek Review—and six "Notable" mentions in *Best American Essays*. D'Aoust teaches online at North Idaho College and Casper College. She is an AWP "Writer to Writer" mentor and the managing editor of *Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies*. www.reneedaoust.com

Roger Dunsmore moved to Coeur d'Alene in 2013 after teaching literature and wilderness studies in Montana for fifty years. He is a founding member of the Bent Grass Poetry Troupe of Missoula, Montana. His most recent book of poems, *You're Just Dirt*, is available from FootHills Publishing of Kanona, New York. He is married to the yoga-practitioner, musician, poet, and painter, Jenni Fallein.

Jenni Fallein has worn many hats including pediatric nurse, yoga instructor, and elementary/junior high school teacher in the Northwest area—Spokane, North Idaho, and Montana. For several years in the 1990s she was creative arts director at Lakeside Elementary in Worley, Idaho. With her husband, Roger Dunsmore, she co-founded Bent Grass Poetry Troupe, has taught poetry in the women's prison in Boulder, Montana, and supports Roger in his endeavors to staple poems on utility posts and elsewhere in Coeur d'Alene. She is an avid fan of Garden Street Yoga and plays kirtan music there once a month. Her first volume of poems is *If Beauty Were a Spy* (FootHills Publishing, 2011).

Paige Leslee Hogan Hatfield is a photography major at North Idaho College due to graduate in the fall of 2016. She has a passion for all art forms, from design and architecture to fashion and—most predominantly—photography. She feels very fortunate to live in such a beautiful corner of the Inland Northwest. North Idaho College is allowing her to expand both her educational and experiential horizons. She plans to take these valuable lessons with her in the not-so-distant future as she volunteers and backpacks around the world.

Tanner Hunt is a freshman at NIC. Been drawing since he was a little guy and painting/printmaking since he was in high school. Undeclared major for right now, but definitely loves the arts. Recently moved to CdA from Moscow where he had an extensive senior year developing his artistic ability.

Stacy Isenbarger's artworks incite viewers through dynamic interplay between media, space, and cultural signifiers. Her work simultaneously investigates ideas and materials, transforming the familiar in new and thought-provoking ways. Her philosophically-charged works challenge our assumptions of our environment and the cultural barriers we build for ourselves.

Stacy is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art and Design at University of Idaho. Stacy received her master of fine art degree in sculpture from the Lamar Dodd School of Art at The University of Georgia in 2009 and received her bachelor of fine art degree in sculpture at Clemson University in 2005.

Andrea Jensen discovered that photography is more of a passion than a hobby. Aside from raising her three daughters as a stay-at-home mom, starting a portrait photography business in Coeur d'Alene is the most rewarding job she's had. Any time with her husband, John, is her favorite, especially antiquing and traveling. A quote that sticks with her states, "If you don't think photographs are important, wait until they are all you have left."

In 1969, **May Jordan** served in the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. She has a bachelor's degree in English from Fresno State University. She published her first poetry book, *Dreaming of Horses*, in 2006. It is about her brother's and her horrific experience of being abducted in the summer of '64. Her poetry book is available in a few independent bookstores, Hastings in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Auntie's in Spokane, Washington. Her poems have appeared in *Loss Journal*, Couer d'Alene Memorial Gardens, *Clarkstreet Review*, *Plato's Tavern*, *Penwood Review*, *Trestle Creek Review*, and at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Couer d'Alene.

Ann Lewis was born and raised in northern Idaho and has worked at North Idaho College since 1994. In the fall of 2015, she took her first photography class (for credit) at North Idaho College and now wants to do nothing but practice, learn, and explore all there is to know about photography.

Chris Locke lives in Coeur d'Alene. He is an English major and loves to read and write.

Sammi Lowman is a recently relocated NIC alumna. She is currently caught in the throes of a struggle to decide to which "useless" creative field she wants to dedicate her remaining college years and, ultimately, life. Another daily struggle for her is reconciling her love of cheese with her horror of the practices of industrialized animal agriculture. She loves North Idaho's forests with an undue passion but is pretty okay with Boise's desert beauty as well, and probably wants to paint landscapes of both in the near future. Some of her artwork has been published before, and she hopes more will be someday soon.

Above all else, **Josh Misner** is a dad to four amazing children, but beyond that, he teaches communication and leadership studies, and he researches ways that mindfulness can be used to make us all better people. Mostly, he's intrigued by what happens when parents slow down, savor the little moments, and offer their children their full presence. After working with parents for several years, he founded a collaborative community effort that seeks to reconnect dads with their families on a deeper level. For more information, please visit www.joshmisner.com or facebook.com/drjmindfuldad.

Cody Olson is a current student at North Idaho College. She has been writing for over ten years now, and enjoys it as a hobby, and hopes to make it a career for herself at some point.

She is an English major and hopes to transfer to University of Idaho to take part in their Professional Writing program. She loves all writing styles, but enjoys nonfiction and poetry immensely.

Timothy Pilgrim, a Pacific Northwest poet, has over two hundred seventy acceptances by dozens of journals such as *Seattle Review*, *Windfall*, *Cirque*, and *San Pedro River Review*. He is author of *Mapping Water* (Flying Trout Press) and co-author of *Bellingham Poems*. His work can be found at timothypilgrim.org.

Georgia Tiffany, a native of Spokane, Washington, holds graduate degrees from Indiana University and University of Idaho. Recipient of grants from the Washington Commission for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, she serves as a visiting scholar for the Idaho libraries' "Let's Talk About It" program. Her work has appeared in various anthologies such as *Poets of the American West*, and *Labor Pains and Birth Stories*, and in such publications as *Chautauqua Literary Review*, *Threepenny Review*, and *Weber Studies*. Her chapbook, *Cut from the Score*, was published by Night Owl Press.

Kateri Warnick has been told she's a great kisser, which only pisses her off because she'll never be able to kiss herself unless scientists really kick it into gear in the next few decades.

Kateri Warnick is currently pursuing her bachelor of arts at the University of Idaho with a focus on printmaking. She has never been punched in the face but is open to the prospect.

Kateri Warnick has seen some shit.

Kateri Warnick might be attending University of Idaho. Her favorite color is probably yellow. You'll most likely find her eating food that isn't good for her or wasting time thinking about all the cool stuff she could do if only she had the time. She probably loves One Direction more than you do. She might even be a real person.

Don't complain about the United States Postal Service in her presence if you value your life.

Kateri Warnick is bad at making bios.

Kateri Warnick attends University of Idaho, studying art. She is too interested in too many things and as a consequence knows not a whole lot about any one thing. She is only pursuing a degree with the hopes of landing a job that pays enough to let her have a pet dog or two.

Kateri Warnick Kateri Warnick Kateri Warnick

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No previously published work can be considered, but simultaneous submissions are welcome. Please include a brief bio with your submission. More information and complete submission guidelines are available at our website, www.nic.edu/tcr. Submission deadline is **January 31, 2017**, for May publication.

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