

Trestle | CREEK | Review

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They Must Learn to Sleep by Themselves

Carl pulls to the curb behind Stephanie's thirty-year-old Volvo and kills the engine. He knows she'll forgive him for being late again, that it's not his fault there was an accident on the expressway. But his excuses are wearing thin. At some point his incompetence will become unforgivable. And then what will they do?

Inside, Sarah speed-crawls across the living room toward the front door, saying, "Da, Da, Da," something Stephanie has recently taught her. Carl drops his briefcase in the rocking chair and sits on the floor to greet her.

Stephanie takes her jacket from the front closet. "I made a lasagna," she says, "enough for three meals," and Carl says, "You shouldn't have," and Stephanie says, "Well, I did."

Carl hands her a check for the week.

"Come here, baby," she says, reaching for Sarah. "I won't get to see you for two whole days."

Carl smells Stephanie's hair as she leans in to kiss the baby, smells her skin and some light perfume he doesn't recognize. He watches her walk out the door before he can apologize for being late, wondering how they would survive without her.

He straps Sarah into the kitchen highchair. The clock on the stove says six o'clock—two hours until bedtime. Then all day Saturday, all day Sunday. The days are never a problem.

Sarah throws peas on the floor by the handful.

After her dinner, Carl sits on the wall of the tub, singing cowboy songs while Sarah splashes and shrieks. "Oh, bury me not," he sings, "on the lone prairie." Sarah pours water from one plastic cup into another. "And the blizzard beats," Carl sings as he washes her back, "and the wind blows free," and Sarah says, "Da, Da, Da."

Everything is good between six and eight-thirty, but the best time is after bath, playtime, when Sarah is allowed on Carl's bed. He blows breezers on her belly, rolls his head over her ribs as she giggles and twists, pulling his hair, patting his ear. He throws a receiving blanket over her head, covering her face, and says, "Where's Sarah?" as she struggles to pull the blanket down, "Where is Sarah?" and when she reveals her face, Carl says, "There she is!" as she shrieks with delight. He places a pacifier in his mouth, Sarah climbing his stomach trying to yank it out,

which he eventually lets her do. When he reads to her, she sucks her thumb and lets her head fall against his shoulder. He rocks her in her room, sings “Make Me an Angel,” and finally puts her in her crib asleep, covering her and closing her door.

The clock in the kitchen says two and a half hours until bedtime, ten and a half hours until Sarah wakes. Before he went back to work, naptime brought this same heavy gravity to the house. You could clean. You could wash dishes. You could listen to molecules smashing themselves to pieces in the air around you.

Carl has a glass of wine with his dinner, a glass of whiskey after. On the late news he learns that three people were killed in an accident on the expressway involving a tractor trailer, the very accident that delayed him this afternoon. Aside from some minor cuts and bruises, the truck driver is uninjured. His grief-stricken face fills the screen. There was nothing he could have done. Not one thing. He cries before an unseen audience of strangers. Carl turns down the heat and walks upstairs, passing Sarah’s door in the hallway.

After brushing his teeth, he lies in his bed waiting.

He is a disciplined man and he’s made a promise, keeps making promises. All the books counsel against bringing them to bed with you. They must learn to sleep by themselves—right now, for some reason, when they’re still so tiny. Or, the experts seem to believe, they never will.

The porch light downstairs makes shadows of the venetian blinds, long planks across his ceiling. If she wakes, of course he’ll go to her. But the books are firm on this.

And this is where he remains weak.

“Are you doing it for the child or yourself?” one book asks.

She always begins the night in her crib.

And he’s getting better about it. Only two nights this week, Sunday and Tuesday. And now it’s Friday, when everyone deserves a reward.

“The child or yourself?”

He studies the planks across his ceiling, struggles against the heavy gravity trying to squeeze the breath out of him.

Waiting is a punishment that pays for its own relief.

After an hour, he gets out of bed.

Sarah’s door creaks, causing her to roll over and open her eyes. She’s still

asleep as she looks at him. So beautiful.

You have to make some allowances—for your weakness. For your strength.

He lifts her from the crib and holds her head against his shoulder, walks her down the hall. So perfectly, perfectly fine.

If you're too brittle you break.

And then what would become of her?

Back in bed, her thumb finds its place in her mouth. He holds her against his chest, her breath, her warmth and baby smell radiating off her, all that he has here now with him, safe.

Romantic Suspense



Claus

God knows that I am a liar with a side of avocado and toast
mom watches me smile as I spill my glass of milk all over the room

three people told me to watch *Game of Thrones* while one other people told
me to start attending church again I find them both to be equally irrelevant

I'm sorry that everything is blue and white and littered with small
black letters, I'm not tryin' to whine but I can't wrap my mind around this
fucking square

let's laugh about, let's laugh about something nice like ice cream
dripping down the corner of your mouth

Are you in love with characters? Such as Hercules, Peter Parker, or Parentheses?
Six PM, seven PM, eight PM, nine PM, I guess I'll fall asleep again

Why. Well.—

If you're wondering what I think about when I think about you
I think about the smell of coffee stains in bed
folding in, coughing out the length of your abdomen
I think about trips to Oregon with traffic stops
I'm late to work but only because we've clocked in
Miles and miles of strawberry fields with our red lips
I think about a map with eleven bridges crossing one river
Entanglement of a watershed that is my throat
I think about medication with a wine I cannot pronounce
I think about snakes and their kindness
I think about thirty second timers, the sincerity of roman candles
A hot bowl of soup, jumping from high places, clean dishes
Lifting only your fingertips I become sagebrush

Ok.—

It's morning
You've reset the alarm on your phone seventeen times
And it goes off every five minutes
Your neighbor's chihuahua won't stop barking
And it makes you anxious
You crawl outta bed
You look pretty fucked
You brush your teeth
And make yourself look at least
Ok
Your mom calls, tells you about a new job
Fifth one in four months
She invites you over to celebrate
You say
Ok
It's 10:22 when you finally arrive
She says breakfast is almost ready
And you are suddenly
Inspired by pancakes

I'm impatient

this is a joke right
You said something about flying around
in paper airplanes
to catch sight of all the right things
early mornings, songbirds, strong winds, lucky strikes
with only minutes passing You've got Me
walking the tight rope above all the sounds
of mall conversations
You said something about sewing buttons onto
the tips of My fingers
god Your breath smelling sweet
of dinner calls and waterfalls
so deeply into a quesadilla slumber
You said something about eating fresh grapes til
My lips are stained viola
it won't come off
it won't come off
work My day job
sweat doesn't stop
fever doesn't stop
four years of this and
and
and
and well
everything swallows and swells
You're staring at my lips
while I'm staring at Your cock

→

You said something about counting to
the number 232
lord of the butterflies
smile at everyone
subscribe to your local newspaper
fruit juice replacing blood
fruit juice replacing eyesight
don't blink when I say something about
needing to leave

Jack and Diane: A Sonnet

a little ditty...

I know the road into Pocatello from the south like the words to a pop song I don't like but that has been worn into my memory from hearing it played over and over during my youth. My best friend Adrienne loved that song. One time, when I heard the opening notes, I screamed and ran toward the radio to turn it off. When she pouted, "I love that song," I may have turned it back on, but I doubt it because know-hating a song involves a visceral reaction that is hard to overcome. I could probably sing the whole song from beginning to end without assistance. Maybe the reason I hate it is the bad writing (sorry, John Cougar Mellencamp!). These lines, *dribble off those Bobbie Brooks slacks/Let me do what I please*, strain credulity and also intestinal fortitude. What are the chances that a teenage boy knows the brand of his girlfriend's slacks and would use either the word "slacks" or "dribble"?

Dribble means a thin stream of liquid. Driving into Pocatello feels at once familiar and painful, conjuring up memories of adolescence, awkward and uncomfortable, not unlike a pair of ill-fitting, out-of-style Bobbie Brooks slacks. Returning now, decades later, I can see the valley for what it really is, beautiful in its own right, full of water and mountains and flowers and hawks, every cliché you can think of. That's how adulthood is, you strip off the black sunglasses of despair and see what's actually there: brown, brown hills, lush green grass beside streams that gurgle, fields that stretch to the horizon, a damp smell of irrigation and alfalfa that time-warps you right back to sixteen. Still, there's no avoiding the initial reaction, steeling yourself against the inevitable disappointments: no, you will not have a boyfriend; no, your life will not go as you have planned it; no, there will be no decent restaurants.

Even now, when I hear "Jack and Diane," I change the station.

Jane Austen's "Like a Virgin"

She had come from some other place, didn't understand the customs of this society. The dresses with collars up to the chin, long sleeves. The way one conveyed ideas that weren't to be spoken aloud. There were the rituals, touching that happened in the dark, eyes closed. Words repeated, like gossip or hymns. Both involved lace. One dress was too short, it implied things.

B. asked a boy to dance with her, and he did. This was how things were arranged. It didn't help. She wandered, bewildered, through crowded hallways, the bodies signposts of what she was not and could never hope to be.

She was either one of them, or she was not. She was not.

I made it through the wilderness, somehow I made it through.

Monolith



Murmuration

“What’s complicated . . . is how startling criticality is created and maintained.”

—Brandon Keim

Searching among the crosses again,
we establish no rules, merely wander
aimless and simple.

Someone says, “Remember.”
Someone says, “It was the war,”
and war falls out of the sky

not like rain, or hunger,
but more like parts of another country
lost on its flight home.

Nobody thought words were enough,
and yet everyone found them
enough like stars to make promises.

Everybody had hoped.
How could we not?
We had all been flying home,

nerve synchronized to nerve
a spontaneous dance
unfurling, furling, unfurling again

the shadow we cast
on those long rows of headstones
language healed over.

Tesemini

For too long we have waited,
the lake—only a few hours ago
soft in the half-light before sunrise—
on fire now, a raging quiet
that has stilled the kokanee,
the air a kind of weight sticky and wet.
I watch you cast and reel in, cast and wait,

and maybe you don't mind the weight
or the waiting, maybe you still believe
dreams mean nothing,
but what if nothing has changed,
what if the lake had been a spirit once
conscious of itself, at least
conscious enough to feel something

like prayer inside the quiet,
and what if the quiet is not quiet,
but a hole in the spirit where the fish
sleep before they fly?
What if the two of us, you and me,
on the original morning, had touched down
in time to see the angels conceive

waters so clear we could hear
deeper than soundings
the silvers, fearless and spent,
still making their own underworld light,
and it was not now, but then
that held us in its arms and rearranged
the way we understood?

Between your thumb and forefinger
the line trembles, then jerks,
the fish so effortlessly reeled in
I'm not sure if there's a fish at all
until you slap its head against the dock,
slit the dark underbelly,
fling the inefficient, two-chambered heart.

At the Tail of the Riffles

After so many lives, where the river
almost quiet almost pauses,
turns back on itself, and reflects
and reflects again
the silver dead, the silver lining,

my body rises from the water
like a bloom not blooming, no,
rather, unburdening
petal by christened petal
where it has been.

It's a simple act, one the trout does
without thinking,
one a woman imagines
an act of penance,
or an act of love.

The river feeds and is feeding,
the mergansers wait, the heron wait,
autumn taking us on
in some extraordinary way.
Nothing in flight

but flight seems always a possibility
lying like this beside you,
always the night in readiness,
a fountain of feathers,
an updraft of down.

You hold my breast in one hand,
my life in the other.
It is a simple act, and you
have no intention beyond the moment,
but we are ancient wishes, the ones

acts are made of,
dusk clawing to take hold
and stars beginning then,
stars upon stars, and myths
that could be the only real kisses.

I had gone naked into the water,
no one else swimming
so late in the season,
no one hoping for anything
but a little love.

How we are condemned
by the smallness of our dreams,
how we drink from
the reservoir of sadness
to keep our thirst alive.

The river feeds and is feeding.
Once we were sleeping.
Now we turn
from one side of our need to the other,
reforming under the weight.

The Bridge



Alterations

“No more dreaming of the dead as if death itself was undone.”

—Florence and the Machine

I do still dream about the dead. One night I dreamt about the zombie apocalypse. The walking dead. In my dream, I returned home, through peril, in a rusted and rickety car. Going into my house, I expected to find storehouses of canned goods and other needed things. It had all been pillaged, the cupboards left bare.

Dad moved in with me when I was twenty-two, and lived with me for seventeen years. I had an infant at the time and birthed four more children during those years. I kept a house together through the demise of two major relationships and the start of a new one. I smoked pot sometimes. I drank at night when things were too hard. I tried to keep up with the endless needs. I failed miserably at times, and eventually stopped trying so hard. He was disappointed that I could not and would not do everything. Sometimes he spitefully called me *woman* and said he regretted having me for a daughter. He was my sixth child. I was his only.

The Caregiver Action Network reports that forty to seventy percent of caregivers have “clinically significant” symptoms of depression. A quarter to half of them meet “diagnostic criteria for major depression.” The stress level of being a caregiver is said to reduce a caregiver’s life by years. Who takes care of the caregiver?

Hospice cared for Dad during his last month of life. He had lung cancer, stage four. It had spread to his spinal cord, thus his sudden inability to stand.

The American Lung Association says that some lung cancers can actually be attributed to outdoor air pollution. It is dangerous to breathe. Yet active smoking is responsible for nearly ninety percent of diagnosed cases. Only sixteen percent of lung cancer cases are diagnosed while still contained in the lungs. By the time tumors have spread elsewhere, the survival rate is four percent, and most die within one year of being diagnosed.

Dad died in a month.

*

Dad didn't smoke. I do. Some of us persist in punishing and poisoning ourselves even when we know better.

The first hospital visit concerning Dad's sudden issues yielded a diagnosis of back spasms. They sent him home. He was in pain. He refused to take any Advil; Dad's drug of choice was food. Payday brought manic joy and bags of junk. There was no concern for nutritional value. He carefully packed away his treasures in plastic containers, laden with sugar and incomprehensible ingredients. These made him happy, gave him something to do, something to share with his grandchildren.

He had always loved to eat. Crumbs on his shirt front, smudges on his fingers. A day after surgery on his spine, he refused to eat. The nurses called me. They didn't know what to do. He did not refuse me. When I arrived, he let me feed him by the spoonful. Like a baby. This tender care, this caregiving was what we needed. I stroked his hair and held his hands. I laid my head on his chest, but not as closely or for as long as I really wanted.

Before his diagnosis, he would often pat his solar plexus softly with a closed fist. We thought it was indigestion. We ignored it. Tums were not on Dad's menu.

Pain should not be ignored past the point of repair. Tiny scratches should be tended while tiny. While merely annoying, a slight irritation. Microscopic. Unsplit. Unbroken and mended with the simplest of treatments. Minor bruises can fade. Massive ulcers are not so easily remedied.

I was an infant when my parents divorced. Dad had had a drinking problem. There was chaos. My mother tells me I may have learned as a baby that the world was unsafe. When I was five, a Hell's Angel mistook my dad for someone else and ran him off the road on his motorcycle. Dad was in a coma for nine months. Severe brain damage. I can't hold grudges against a man so badly damaged, so unjustly destroyed. He was good enough to find pleasure in small things, like Starbucks Frappuccinos in glass bottles.

*

Bringing Starbucks Frappuccinos to your hospital room, Dad, was my last ditch effort to show you my love. You were difficult to love. I didn't always do it well, and you didn't always make it easy. Starbucks coffee on your deathbed is synonymous with failure. I brought them by the bagful, four at a time, my sacrifice carried to the altar of your life. It wasn't trite. I fed you hoping you would take in my heart for you as well.

Eventually the Starbucks became difficult for him to consume, and he lost his taste for them. The nurses began to take me aside and urge me to discuss funeral arrangements with him. He didn't want to talk to anyone. He didn't want to see the children. He would not speak to his brother in South Dakota. I stopped bringing Starbucks. I barely managed to bring myself.

Years of dwelling in the same house with Dad and the relentless stresses of everyday life rendered me impatient. My father was often waiting, standing awkwardly with his walker in front of him, when I came through the door hoping to find some peace inside. I resented the stress he put on the banister. He would say my name, *Elli Ross*, with a country twang. It grated on my nerves. *Yup, that's my name*, I would respond. I found him simple. He found me complicated. We sometimes said despicable things to one another.

Amanda Linette Meder, a psychic medium, writes that one of the most common signs we can receive from our deceased loved ones is called "clairaudience." This is when we hear our loved ones as though they are actually speaking to us "in human form," often "internally, through thought or word transference." Most commonly the "hearing happens inside your mind." I hear my father's voice speaking to me often, and I speak to him too.

I'm so sorry daddy. I'm so sorry daddy. I'm so sorry daddy.

I know. Me too.

I love you daddy. I will keep you close to me.

I am.

Dad died on June 5th, 2013. The day before my birthday. I received a call from the VA Hospice Center at two in the morning and needed to collect his things and

say goodbye. Walking into his room, I could feel that his spirit was not present anymore. The room felt empty. Dad had been tucked under a beautiful quilt with an American flag print on it. His hands and face freshly cleaned. Eyes closed. I held his hands again, they felt like his but did not grip me back. They had even cleaned under his fingernails. I had failed to bring a suitcase and had to collect his belongings in a trash bag. My loss was uncontainable. The grief lasted for months. Years. I am not done.

My husband told me once that he had never known a person who needed more than a week to deal with the loss of a loved one.

Our dog died recently. The day of her passing was also my son's fourteenth birthday. I don't know why these things happen, but it isn't the fault of the dead. A few days before she died, she had gotten very ill. I heard my boy in the living room early one morning, wailing out loud. I heard him say *I tried to take care of you*. I think I will just hug him, feed him cake, and allow him to grieve.

Homecoming

Last month the grass was grey. It kept low to the ground,
carpeting itself into mounds molded by the memory of
snow that had melted more than three months past.
When we marched we felt it crunch beneath us.
The anchoring dirt was hard. It gave nothing. It didn't break
under our weight. We crossed the meadow in straight lines.
Then just like that, everything went to green. Every square foot
contained three thousand insurrections. Each shoot and
blade rose up at once, moved at the command of the breeze.
We smelled the mud and set out for higher ground.

When we finally got home, there were only egg shells
for us to walk on. We couldn't keep from crushing them.

Seeds

I have stopped
planting them
in the ground
from now on I will
scatter them into the air and
sit down I don't care if
they take root
get eaten by magpies or
drown in a flood
of downspout drainage
and March mud
I gave at the garden
already crouched
over every shoot
coaxed every leaf to life
and cried
when it was time to
prune but did it
anyway dammit
I am tired
of being the one
who waters and
weeds and walks the
length of the yard
worrying over each
thankless seed
I am done
I don't care
I have dug the dirt out
of my nails
I have shaken the fertilizer
from my hair

Leucanthemum Vulgare

Leucanthemum vulgare

Common daisy

Perennial flower of the 70s:

Cheerful plant found
on canisters and
curtains in your grandma's
gleaming avocado kitchen,
on the latch hook rug on
the wall of the den,
in your flower girl bouquet,
on your Barbie camper,
bicycle basket,
Woodsy Owl poster,
and the soft pastel dresses
you twirled in
each Easter.

Leucanthemum vulgare

Invasive species

Turned into a weed
by the end of the decade:
The bathtub stickers that
kept you from slipping but
wouldn't come clean
no matter the scrubbing,
the print on the swimsuit
when you first felt fat,
flower on the box
in that Massengill ad you
asked your mother about
but still don't understand,
the name of your first
pink disposable razor
that remains undecayed
in a landfill
somewhere.

Autofill

Women in history
Women in combat
Women in bikinis
Women in the Bible
Men in black
Men in blazers

Why do women
wear bras
moan
cheat
wear thongs
Why do men
cheat
have nipples
lie
pull away

When do women
ovulate
get pregnant
go through menopause
When do men
stop growing

When will women's
basketball be announced
When will women's
Viagra be available
When will women's
soccer be on TV
When will men
be men
When will men
carry their own babies

Women
at the well
at risk
at work
Men
at work
at work overkill

Women without
men
children
bras
makeup
Men without
work
hats
chests
women

How do women
get uti
get hpv
get pregnant

How do men
get uti
get hpv
fall in love
react to unplanned pregnancy

Where do women pee from
Where do men like to be touched

Found Lists

When I began working at a local grocery store, my habit of collecting found items prompted me to begin to collect lists specifically. A list on the ground in a grocery store is not special, but I quietly put them in my apron, and after the scraps of paper collect in my locker, I bring them home to review their records. Often the combinations are simple: bread, milk, tortillas. Other times they are vulnerable: tampons, rash cream, bones. I have begun to understand each list as a deeply intimate snapshot of a stranger's life: shorthand and poor spelling meant only for their understanding; items written down by others unable to leave the house for errands; repeated use of the same list with repeated mention of the same undone task; an item that individual may still be searching for, gloves, gloves, gloves.

The lists in this small sample magnify the concrete items these individuals and families needed for safety, comfort, health, and joy. Their authors did not intend these scraps for other readers, but with this collection we are afforded an opportunity to glance into their lives with compassion and curiosity.

—D.C.

Bones



Dads/Bed

~~10/25/23~~
Dads / Bed
Depend's
water Arrow-head
~~Orbit Pepsi~~
twist / Sierra Mist
edibles / good kind
chicken / 2 packages
~~apples / crisp~~
Eggs
Polygrip 2 (denture)
~~10/25/23 / 10/25/23~~
Ice Cream Vanilla
8 chocolate chip
area cookies
Laundry detergent
Bananas
Fit Kitchen (2)
Butter cracker
Change
raisin Raspberry

Bag ~~of~~ Baum ~~to~~ 4.5m
if possible

ADDRESS BK - like a very yellow
one)

pens

Colored pencils

marker

[S72914-73]

S72914-73

SW CC

Ester Sheaffer Triumph

Pental Sharp Grasp gear

Leaky Esterbrook Flex
no bleed, little feather,
bit of ghosting some
roughness

Flair **Sharpie**

only Sharpie bleed

~~Hot Metro Wm~~

on Clara's Birthday: June 22

Telford br, Montesa br

Osgood, bk Nexus, Tarrington, bk

hazen Stiner glenvar

Burlston

Here C16

bb12
bb101

Night-light Command
Monitor Stanel Strip x2
Asian Sauce, Bread,
Ice Cream, Beer, Apples, Coca Cola,
Bananas. lunch meat
~~burritos~~, Apricots, Breakfast
Sausage, Trail Mix, granola Chester Schnoz
Cantaloupe, Cheese
ec ~~signature~~
Lunch pagers
Jet Coffee

Call Apple Help

~~Thurs~~
~~cutlers to Betha~~
~~books at Bookworm~~
~~call Ben 278 1200~~
~~order music~~
~~Call Apple Help~~
Friday
~~blood test~~
~~groceries~~
~~call Apple Help~~ hot des
wash clothes pens
Pilgrim tri-color
Ogumoa Bulk \$3.29
res 6.49 lb

~~Call Apple Help~~

Buy postage stamps

~~Call for Ben~~

Check in uniform

Concert clothes for
all state

- HPV SHOT FOR EVAN

fill out driving record

~~Call Ben~~

~~Return items to Shopko~~

~~Hot punch for belt~~

Palomino Tetons



The Museum of Famous Idaho Paintings

The paintings contain browns of many hues and tones, browns that sound like ducks squawking and the end of summer. Many of the paintings are of fields about to burst into flames or clouds about to snow. The canvas blue skies go on forever, and they could be anywhere, spread out over any mountain range or endless meadow.

The structures are barns, or occasionally an old cabin or house.

One is an empty street in a modern town.

One is a painting of a mural in a small town that you've forgotten.

The mural is of a man who was once famous but who has now faded into obscurity. He wears a string tie and a holster.

Several of the paintings are of steer, or horses. The horses are often tethered and contrite.

Sometimes a bobcat appears, often on a rock, in winter. Other times there are elk, in the process of being pursued or already caught, reclining in fields as if merely sleeping.

People are scarce, and when they do appear, we recognize them instantly as people we might have been if we had been born in an earlier time, or if our lives had been entirely different.



The Ledge

I sit on the edge of the cliff, neither in the valley nor on the summit, halfway between two worlds, able to witness the forest floor from this ledge. Although it is not very large, a talented arborist could fell a tree on it. Looking down into the forest canopy below, I see the sea of green, mottled greys and browns, and hear the birds tweeting just after the rain, starting to come back to life, starting to move again. The raindrops sit heavy on the leaves, using them as soft springboards on their journey toward the Pacific. The leaves start to dry, and the water starts to coagulate, completely rounded, tucked under itself, sitting on the surface, glinting in the sunlight, gently waiting for what's next.

The rock I sit on is hard, metamorphic, a million years old. In the dust more recently deposited on the ledge, I can see the craters of the impacts of the tiny rain droplets. Puddles have formed in the divots and wells of the schist. A damselfly comes and visits one of the puddles and sips. After a moment, it takes off again. The Oregon grape at the back of the ledge has started to morph from its deep cadmium to an olive with burgundy tips, donning its fall costume. A snail gently crosses, weaving between boulders that to me look like pebbles, carrying his spiral home on his back.

I look just underneath the ledge. There is a small cleft in the stone; some rodent took rest here. I see its droppings and the remnants of gnawed pinecone imbedded in the small cushion of moss. It hasn't rained hard enough to wash away this exposed evidence. The serviceberries that remain on the bush nearby, just out of reach of my ledge, grow in a vertical crack within this geological timeline and are dried up shells of their former plumpness. The seeds are still inside but not stratified. These have no chance. The bird has to eat the serviceberry; the acids in its stomach must eat away at the hardened coating for moisture to penetrate it. When the bird passes the seed, it then sits in its own nutrient rich bed and sprouts, having its shell removed. The hardness of the acid brings forth the softness of the cotyledons.

There is a small pine on this ledge with a scar about four feet up the trunk, pitch all around it. The scar goes well through the cambium layer, through to the heartwood. It couldn't have been caused by a stag rubbing off his velvet—how would it have gotten down to this ledge on the cliff? No, this was made by a man, one who has shared this ledge but who had far less respect for this space than most.

Pines stand elegant, stately, and strong. They grow in the cracks of the cliff across the valley, finding any nook or cranny in which to gain a foothold, towering unobstructed by anything else. Nothing else is willing to grow there save for some moss and yellow-green lichen. Gods looking upon the valley floor, they drop the product of their love, a forest in each cone. Boulders at the base of the canyon speak to the ever-changing geology these majestic gods will eventually succumb to, Greeks felled by Titans.

I scan up the opposite canyon wall, and as I move up from the moist valley floor, the color shifts from bright greens and yellows to somber oranges, reds, and browns. There is very little standing dead on the valley floor but much habitat for the woodpecker and the insect at the top of the canyon. This makes me wonder: Had rain come a few weeks earlier, would it be green and lush like the valley, or would it still be browns and reds, russet yellows and burnt umbers?

Spirea on the opposite canyon wall has all but dropped its leaves in the hot dry ends of summer. Protecting itself by removing the place where water may escape. It sucks its life down into its roots until the conditions are more favorable. When there is enough moisture it will spring back with renewed vigor. For now it stands a skeleton of what once was, a premonition of what it will become again.

Brother birch and matron maple share the valley floor. The coral stems of the dogwood stand out in the shadows of the lower valley. Fissured bark of the giant cottonwood, standing well above the aspens, is filled with remembrance like so many faces. It has taken so much time to get a bark that thick, a tree that large. What has this tree seen in its lifetime in this valley to cause it to have such an expressive exterior? I have noticed the changes, the trails that have sprung up where there were none, made by man not by deer. I've even helped to make some of them. What has this cottonwood noticed in its lifetime? Do I wear what I have seen on my exterior as well?

I speak fewer words now than I did in my youth; my laugh lines and crow's feet tell my story just like the bark on the cottonwood stands as a silent testament to its resolve. My once soft skin is marked by scars and toughened by kisses from the sun. Like the small pine on the ledge, I bear the marks of others and am worn by the elements. When I speak, my words are far more measured than they once were, thoughts that hibernated in my mind to come forth again at their appointed time as cones that sow the forests of my constitution.

Clouds part briefly for a moment. The sun shines down transforming the sea of amazon into a glittering absinthe transparency. I hear the gentle croaking of a frog in the valley, like a wood rasp on hardwood, energetically chattering away to its lover, content with the newly arrived moisture. Years ago, the aspens weren't so tall. Now the tops nearly reach the ledge I am sitting on now. When I was younger, they were mere saplings sitting on the valley floor. They have grown as I have grown; they have become bigger, bolder. They have sought their own space, as have I. As I look down the valley, I see that the tops of some of the aspens have been snapped off by the wind that occasionally roars up the valley in a squall. We all are humbled by powers greater than ourselves.

The third tallest tree in this section of the valley is actually a standing spire, barkless and grey with a few snag branches here and there but mostly denuded. When the sun shines just right, you can catch a glimpse of gossamer webbing that spans the branches. There is life in this dead tree, not life in the tree itself, but life that uses it. It is no less important now than when it was green and lush. It's a high-rise, an oasis of habitat, the sage that supports, advises, and shoulders the burden of the young so that they also may one day see old age, such as it is.

The swallows brave out from under their rain shelters and take to the sky, diving and darting through one another, barely avoiding midair collisions in their playfulness, in their glee at the return of the glorious sun. This is a dance that they have been perfecting for millennia. A dance upon the currents of sky, which started long before they arrived to the party and will continue long after their species has retired to eternity. Rather than viewing the currents as an obstacle, they use them, perfect them, and are uplifted rather than disappointed by them. I still have so much to learn from swallows.

Wind comes up from the bottom of the canyon, starting as a small drone, moving to a swift rush and then it thunders upon this ledge as it passes. The clouds slowly move across the sky with ominous nickel undersides and edges illuminated by the sun. I know they are moving much faster than they appear to be. They move perpendicular to the wind that comes up the canyon valley and rustles the leaves of the aspen ever so gently, fluttering left and right, wavering and wobbling as they do on their frail stems. I am able to smell the earthy sent of decay, light upon the winds of time, the beginning of something new, the end of something old, its timeless march to the hereafter.

A pesky fly hectors me; no doubt he smells the decay too, and he breaks my trance by buzzing around. He thinks it is time for me to move on, time for me to go. I've been coming here thirty years; this place is home to me. I've stayed elsewhere. I have a house, but this grandeur is my home, where I am alive. I share it with the swallows, the hawk, the rodent and deer, the spiders, the ants, the gnats, and those that I love. I don't want to go; I like it here in this shared experience. The fly doesn't own this space any more than I. We don't own space; we use it for but a short while. Perhaps he is reminding me my time is up for today. I should relinquish this space to share with another. Like the seed of the serviceberry my hardened outer shell has been eroded by this beauty so the softness of my soul may come through. I step to the edge of the void, my back to the open air and face to the stone. I check my harness and rope and lean back.

Quadrant



Appraisal

- 10 I am a candle vigil on the gorgeous night
When you called my name,
“...my spirit is praying, but I don’t understand what I am saying.”
- 11 Sure as any living thing, GOD
I love you and you love me. LOVE
I count the members of my family and
23 It makes us
23
- 12 43 Rosemud seen through the stained glass.
24 I lov
e you
r eyes
and th
e ways.
- 14 There is God love presence in this room.
It makes me want to worship
I will praise until the end of my days.
- 72 There is a fear in this room
It is keeping me up
O my Lord God protect me.
- 73 The Devil is breathing against my forehead
I can feel him trying to break me down.
But my Lord God, please save me.
- 74 Wrathful God, God of Judgment. GOD
Strike down my wretched FEAR
33 ways.
- 75 And instead renew my spirit.
O sacred head now wounded.
O my blessed God, bless thee, consciously.

Holy Mountain

Last night, during the star crying,
I awoke in a great fervor.
And now, as a I lay dying,
I saw ground forth the shore.

The leather found inside of the bulwark.
The haystacks on the eastern slope
Of Michigan, in Ypsilanti.
The great burning fields of oak.

A written essay on why men
Shouldn't fall in love.
I saw you, the one distinguished,
And the heavenly host above.

My Lord is a memorial; he looks
To the great ice fields of New York
To the great class bricks of Ohio,
And to me writhing on the floor.

My Lord is supreme,
He is dignified,
He is a man of the people.
An inferno, a head with lofty eyes.

Let me sleep, Lord Almighty!
Craft my bones, break my eyes,
And let my neck rest
In the den of sheep's hide.

Winter Playground



An Old Man's Winter Afternoon

Winter slammed the damned iron door in his face,
so the old man down the street who walks with a cane
locked himself inside and glared out the window,
framing himself for the neighbor kids who decided
they must dislike him, not quite knowing why.

Does everything in their lives demand a reason?
Why, their parents ask, don't you go outside and play?
Honestly, they do not know, but their videogames
beckon and the gas fireplace with charred oak logs
that last forever.

Now they stand there in the cold
outside the old man's picture window and stare.

The Commissioner of the Unexpected

Old song from the Great Depression goes,
 “Just around the corner,
 There’s a rainbow in the sky,
 So let’s have another cup of coffee,
 And let’s have another piece of pie!”

Penned by President Herbert Hoover’s
Secretary of Cynical Optimism,
Irving Berlin, in nineteen thirty-two.

Sometimes it’s not a disaster, a roof
collapsing under the deep snow of Buffalo,
a sudden tsunami sweeping away an atoll
near Tahiti.

 Sometimes it’s just Aunt Candy
coming to town unexpectedly for a couple days
while Bob’s playing golf at Pebble Beach
with the guys and she was uninvited.

Sometimes it’s our old friend Martin
dropping by around suppertime the way he does.
Remember when Susan called to announce
it was all over with Bill? Remember how
we all felt we should do something about it?
Sometimes trouble seems more than a bubble
and smiles make lousy umbrellas
despite the old song.

 He’s going to Rome
without you. Maybe it’ll rain every day.

They’re rioting in the streets of Sheboygan
and Kalamazoo.

 Someone should do something.

→

How could they have promoted him over you?
You were making great progress when suddenly
you got sideswiped straight out of nowhere,
metaphorically or otherwise.

That's why we've decided to appoint you
unreimbursed Commissioner of the Unexpected.
You seem to have lots of experience.

Headached



I had four minutes to write and now two are gone

minutes gone: covered with sawdust and dusty
cobwebs draped between unused columns of time
filled with a vacuum nothing less than wasps combs
of ancient paper spat chewed and spat again
black smear against my face stained excuses.

excuses exuded from futuristic fish trained to admit strange fossils
the glare from ancient clouds corresponding peals of exquisite fur
For an explanation of the poem please click [here](#),
or type #hashes to hashes in rows of glittering profuseness
the futility of fecundity like sausage streaming sewage
down a pathway of putrefaction no matter how
ridiculous or pompous my poetry is, it means nothing
and this nothing is the fumes of essence
bubbles that never find their way to the surface
but are forever lodged against the glaze that flame never touched
it could not find it. find what? empty tin cans
used to contain pintobbeans—by the looks of the advertising
cylindrical billboards tossed into a sea of mud—
but now contain only infertile gasses.

do and do, do and do the compulsion to produce
out of debt—incontinent citizens cremated in cuneiform
devalued into a figure of clay bits like muddy white lice
when exposed to airs of contentment: I asked
if I detect a foreign exotic note in a burgeoning buffoon
and my suspicions were making rice for dinner
to make money I guess to fill pages with graphite pustules:
work evaluated in the face of tangential tangles in my hair
turbid deliquescences purroaring like distended cats
and I received a polite “ask the gods”
It rains in the bedroom, they confirmed.

Solid Ground

Pillow stained, innocence peeled, pride siphoned.
Torn with a snide ashtray mouth, disparaged.

I was your cymbals, bass drum, blow
up doll—bad music poorly made.
You entrapped me, I was enraptured
promises, lies, sweet serenade.

Shattered chains weaved round defeated
soul, drowning, depleted life.
I reclaimed the me I used to be
though scarred, I will survive.

The things you wrenched from every part
abound with momentous stride.

My spark has been reignited.
This ground, my poise is solid.

Sorry

Shoved through the camper door *5*

Sorry

He's chosen her *10* divorce

No remorse

15 Held mother's hand as she slipped away

Bravery

First love. *17*

Mercury

Cutting words leave *19* deeper wounds than fists

Sorry

21,23 Heavy hiking boots *25* palms pressed against a neck meant to be kissed *27*

Calvary

Luster in an infant's eyes *29*

Treasury

31 Battered once more

Sick of sorry

Tears track down silky cheeks *33* she pleads for daddy to tuck her in *35*

Contrite

37

Marriage by Peaches and Planks

for Jenni

God, it was risky,
 spring run-off, the Clark Fork of the Columbia,
our first months together
and planks bobbing downstream like tree trunks:
big water wiped out a wooden bridge
somewhere upriver.

We wade in as far as we dare,
never up to the waist,
snag those wet mothers
with slippery, cold hands,
no idea what we'll make of them,
just the rush of springtime, high water,
new love, and old bridges washed out—
wading in as far as we dare,
half-crazed by cottonwoods gone to seed
and the smell of the river.

My friends worry
I've caught buck fever,
driving icy mountain passes
in dad's hammered out Caddy,
just me and the tow trucks
on sleety roads, the Hondas
spinning like tops around us.

Or you travel my way
bringing sweet peaches
canned in empty pickle jars
from that scraggly tree
under the eaves of your
old garage.

Eventually, I make floor joists
out of those planks,
joists set on rocks heavy as I can
wrestle from Blackfoot River Canyon,
joists to hold those oversized doors
pried off your garage
that sheltered
a crooked peach tree
under its eaves.

In the Cottonwood

I stepped through the gap in the barbed wire
as my dad led us into the woods
to find the elk he thought he heard
which my mom said was just a neighbor's cow.
We thought if we kept quiet enough
we would not scare it, the elk.
But realizing it was gone or had always been
a phantom of the fall fog
we started stepping on snapping twigs
and raising our voices.
My mom planned out campsites and
my sister joked about the neighbor cows.
I wished for a camera to click at the aspens
when I stopped. I had not
come to see the elk, but to see this:
a heavenward reach like a carved model
and yellow leaves, repeating.
The cottonwood looked through my eyes
at me. He mouthed "quiet."
He told me it did not matter
why I had come, only that I was here
and that I must look, must listen.
I moved forward and I could
no longer hear what he was saying
over the sound of my steps still shuffling
the pine needle ground and the rough air
scraping against my lips.
All I could realize was how tall they were
and how right it felt to be insignificant.

Spilling Heat

Hushed, the leftover sounds from living things
soak into the waves of snow, that
melt under the moon as its light seeps
out of its prescribed edge and catches
my solid breath as it spills up
towards that single cloud.

I should have four layers of wool to keep
myself together, to wrap the gathered pieces
of heat near my chest. But this air
is stripping them away, sending each
into the quiet ice and wind. And I
am left my shivering body.

I walk inside to feel again and to sit.
The blue, red, green lights make me
think of existence and incarnation
Whether we are more human
alone and quiet within ourselves, or if
heat and love should always pour in and be spilling out.

Shattered



There Are Roots

I have spent hundreds of hours pulling out my hair.

I don't mean to conjure an image of someone frustrated, using both hands to rip the hair from their head by the roots. Although that certainly has happened, mine is a much more tedious and graceful—almost casual—approach. It has a fancy medical name: trichotillomania (TRich-oh-TILL-o-ma-nia). It shares the same category as the obsessive-compulsive disorder that so many proudly claim.

When I say I have spent hundreds of hours pulling my hair out, let me explain. I spend, on average, thirty minutes a day with a pair of tweezers in my hands. On a good day, that's all I'll do: my desk lamp propped up dangerously close to my face, the light hot against my skin, one hand holding a blue-backed plastic mirror, the other a pair of pale purple fine-pointed tweezers. On a bad day, that session might be one or two hours of uninterrupted work. It's hard to generalize an event that has happened every day for the past roughly 6,625 days.

I've owned, for a few years at a time, probably a dozen different tweezers. Not all tweezers are created equal. Like some kind of drug addict, I always know where my tweezers are and get incredibly anxious if I misplace them. If lost, they must be replaced as soon as possible. My eyebrows, eyelids, legs, and scalp have been bloodied and scabbed a hundred times or more.

What makes my specific obsessive-compulsive disorder unique is that I can identify the event that caused it, the exact moment when my brain decided to have a meltdown and sear two wires together to give me this infernal tick. How many of us can point out the exact moment when our lives became definitively weird? (It's there, we're all weird, some of us just conceal it better than others).

My father was diagnosed with cancer when I was fourteen years old. My brother had passed away when I was six years old. And now, cancer was tapping on my dad's shoulder. It wasn't all that surprising—he smoked. A lot. He knew better, but he wouldn't (or couldn't?) stop. He was a gambler at heart, including with his life. I can't remember if it was brain or lung cancer—eventually he developed both, a fact I'd later blame on his involvement in the Vietnam War. It doesn't really matter which fucking cancer because he was my dad, and in my family, a cancer diagnosis was a death sentence. Period. His ticking time bomb became my tick.

The day of his diagnosis—I was in the laundry room of our house, a cramped room in the hallway between the bathroom and my parent’s room. I remember slumping down against the wall, facing the closed door. I’m sure the room was cold, if I could feel anything at all. I had a book, *Arrows of the Queen* by Mercedes Lackey. I remember reading the book, and my hand drifting up to my face where I began to tug at my eyebrows.

Then pull. They came out, one at a time, then in chunks. Was it painful? How did I not notice what I was doing? To this day, the pain of pulling is a dull ache, and only in pulling out the hair, does the ache go away. By the end of the day, when I had finished the book, I had also apparently removed my eyebrows. My psychiatrist would later explain to me that trichotillomania is triggered by stress, that news of my father’s diagnosis was enough to start me down this bizarre path that would consume my life.

Later, my eye doctor would remark, “It’s no wonder you pull out your eyelashes—the way they grow, they curl back in toward your eyes!” From that day forward, I always had an excuse as to why I could no longer have eyelashes. I remember crying and telling my dad, “The eye doctor said my eyelashes would poke out my eyes!” My dad, dismissive and confused by my odd, hairless condition, disagreed. “He didn’t say anything like that.” Yes. Yes, he did.

My dad, in a way of trying to bond with me, since he lost the son he was supposed to bond with, insisted on taking me along on family hunting trips. This was a few months later and my dad had already been going through chemotherapy. His bald head reminded me far too much of the bald, swollen head of my baby brother during his chemotherapy. My dad was stubborn, tough, a true Montana man, and nothing as simple as cancer was going to keep him from going hunting. So my mother, my uncle, and I obeyed.

Before we left for the trip—I remember going to Ask.com (you remember, in a time before Google) and searching, “Why do I pull my hair out?” An entire page of answers came up. I had an answer. I wasn’t just a fucked-up, small-town girl who was trying to get attention—as my grandmother and maybe my parents—were so quick to imply. No, it was a legitimate medical condition. Something inside me burst open and I felt better. My need, this crazy need to pull out my hair, had a fucking name! And now I knew what it was. It wouldn’t be until after my father’s death that I’d finally see a psychiatrist and get an official diagnosis—along with one for anxiety and some fancy prescription for Paxil that made me feel like my head was floating—but I’d get there, eventually.

On the way out to hunting camp, I realized I didn't bring my tweezers. I begged my uncle to stop the truck at a gas station and buy me a pair of tweezers. I knew it sounded crazy. Who asks that? I was crazy. I could not explain why, only that I needed them. He called my dad on the phone and asked. The answer was no. I felt awful the entire trip, scraped my fingers across my skin, stared at myself in the dusty mirror of the truck. Human fingers just don't have the dexterity or precision that tweezers do, and each time I missed a hair I had been searching for, this rising sense of anxiety boiled over in my stomach. There just isn't a way to explain that kind of feeling to someone who has never felt it. I tried, and each time I did, I felt worse.

My dad fell off his horse during hunting camp. He was mid-chemotherapy and no doctor in the world would have recommended he be horseback in his condition. On the ride home—my dad was driving—and we blew a tire on the Durango. I was terrified. It sounded like a gunshot. Only his massive arm strength kept our vehicle from going off the road at seventy miles per hour. My dad, sick as he was, wormed his way beneath the jacked up Durango and changed the tire. I didn't think about my hair for once. That was probably the only time since the cancer diagnosis that I felt free of the burden of pulling out my hair. I've done it at funerals, weddings, Thanksgiving dinner in my parents' bathroom. The fear made it subside momentarily, and I haven't been that afraid since.

At some point, I started to find ways to “restore” my appearance on my own terms. I found all sorts of shapes and sizes of eyeliner and eyebrow pencils. I was very happy with my new, razor-thin eyebrows. My grandmother asked me, “Is that why you pulled out all your hair? So you could look like one of the girls from that Japanese show? *Sailor Moon*?” No, you dumb bitch, but thanks for asking. Actually, it wasn't such a bad comparison since I loved the show, but it was not that simple. Didn't she think that, if I could stop and have a “normal” life, I would have? Doesn't anyone think that if an addict just walked away, they'd be just fine? You try and take my tweezers away, and you'll get your answer.

Eventually my family stopped asking why. Nothing except eye surgery has ever stopped me from removing all my eyelashes and eyebrows with daily, obsessive diligence. My psychiatrist told me that when I felt the urge to pull out my hair, I simply needed to do something else. I had rubber bands around my wrists for a while. I was meant to snap them against my skin to break me out of that urge. I threw the rubber bands away. What bullshit. My hair pulling didn't hurt anyone, least of all me, and besides I felt a sense of calmness when I was done. It wasn't his place to take that away from me.

One night, years later, I had gone to pull my hair in the bathroom at home—the one next to the laundry room, just a turn down from the living room. My uncle was watching TV. I pulled my hair out for so long that I was in there for close to three hours. I had to pretend I had fallen asleep when I finally stumbled out of the bathroom. I walked out, greeted my uncle, who pretended to believe my story, and we watched TV together for a long time.

To this day, I have no eyelashes, no eyebrows. I can't shave my legs or anywhere else for that matter. Every single day, often multiple times, I'll move up close to a light source—like a moth—with my tweezers and spend as much time as it takes to remove each and every single hair I can feel. Sometimes that place is at home; sometimes it is in my car before school, stopping when I see anyone approach from my peripheral vision. I'm always tense, as if someone might bang on my car window: "What the hell are you doing? Gross!"

It's not gross. It's just what my brain malfunctions and tells me I should do. Gross are the trichotillomania sufferers who eat the hair they pull out. That isn't me. There is a joke: "I'm not sure what the hardest part about telling my doctor was, the fact that I have a ball of hair in my stomach, or how it got there."

My ankles have patches of bare skin, scabbed over where I dug too deep. In high school, I discovered a new, rewarding perspective about pulling my hair out: the root system was fascinating. The first time I pulled out hair from my head, my widow's peak, the small triangular wedge of hair just above your forehead, I couldn't stop myself. I probably removed two inches of hair because, one by one, the roots intrigued me.

I wore a bandanna for most of my high school years to hide it. Hair has an interesting design. Depending on where it's pulled from, there are noticeable roots. Bloodied or damp with plasma or some other fluid from beneath the skin. Sometimes it's black, sometimes white, sometimes red with blood. Hair pulled from the scalp almost always has roots. There's something about the feeling and seeing the rooted ends that brings me relief. Trust me, it doesn't make any sense to me, either; I can only explain how it makes me feel, and that is my truth.

When I am alone, the pulling is worse. I lose track of time; it slips away from me like a movie cliché. A montage. Where do I go when this happens? What could I possibly be thinking about as I'm doing this? A lot of things, actually, and that's part of the problem. The harshest words I'd heard during the day, or a memory from years or days ago. I fall back into a sort of

suffocating, obsessive section of my mind. If an event “triggers” my pulling—meaning something upsets me or stresses me out—the pulling my hair out is kind of like my emotional cigarette smoking. I feel better after I’ve done it, and usually while I’m pulling, my mind is worrying over the event that triggered it. Those events are not as often as they once were.

Now, because my life is calmer and more settled than it once was, it’s the mundane, daily obsession that has become my normal state. I sit and I pull, and I remember. I usually find myself drifting to thoughts of ex-boyfriends, of events in my life I can’t control, sometimes of the future. I tend to slip away into a foggy state and do not awaken until, for some arbitrary reason, I feel a sense of completion. There is no set number that causes me to stop. No area to be cleared, no goal to be met. I simply stop when the urge releases me, and go on with my day.

Even as I’ve written this—I have stopped ~~three~~ ~~four~~ five times throughout my day to pull out my eyebrows and eyelashes. Five separate times when the light clicked on, I fumbled for my makeup bag, and removed tiny, slivers of hairs that had pushed up through my skin over the last few hours. It’s worse when I sleep a lot, or after I’ve been sick and haven’t had the time to get up and do it.

My step-father jokingly tries to hide his unkempt eyebrows when I visit. I have, perhaps less jokingly than he’d prefer, attempted to “correct” his massive, bushy eyebrows in the past. To my family, this is something I’ve done for a long time, and they laugh and smile. I laugh and smile, too, but I always notice. It is not something I can ever ignore.

Hair has a story to tell. It continues to grow while we live our lives, impossible millimeters at a time, and no one ever notices. Well, I notice. On myself, on my family, perfect strangers who happen to suffer from incredibly distracting eyebrows. I can always tell when a lot of time has passed, if I’ve been sleeping more often than usual, because my hair catches up with me. It grows back, forcing me to take notice. It always catches up. Nothing else in my life—or perhaps yours—is as constant.

CONTRIBUTORS

Ameerah Bader

/uh;* meer-uH/ *noun*

1. not too formal singular person (i.e. ˈ\u025c(ʊ)_/ˈ)
2. lunar royalty (i.e. moon princess)
3. Justin Timberlake song, “Girl, it’s like you’re Ameerah”
synonyms: amoeba, citrus, unbelievable, ashy, happy cabin, cabin fever, catfish, will smith, fresh apple pie, smelly feet, arkansas, your crush, yellow ochre, rows of fallen dominos

Otis Bardwell was raised in Africa, went to college in the suburbs of Chicago, and since then has lived in Paris and Los Angeles. Bardwell currently teaches ceramics at NIC and lives in Coeur d’Alene with his wife and two children.

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.

Megan Atwood Cherry (cover artist) is an artist and a faculty member in the North Idaho College Art Department. In the studio, she tends a wide-ranging aesthetic territory, relying on painting, sculpture, fiber arts, and drawing as methods of communication. Her material choices are driven not by loyalty to a single material or process, but rather by her need to give tangible form to conceptual content.

Whether she investigates an idea through the lens of discarded scraps or childhood relics, the poetry of simple objects and structures takes center stage.

More information is available at: www.meganatwoodcherry.com

Danielle Combs lives in her brother’s basement and loves chili and Lilly.

Erin Davis lives and writes near the Little Spokane River in Spokane, Washington. She teaches composition and literature at North Idaho College.

Shelby Dorman is a dual-credit student at NIC. She recently moved to Sandpoint from California where she had a poem and several photos published in the *Hanging Lantern Review*. She enjoys art and film and literature and philosophy and photography and poetry and memes. Basically, she likes ideas incarnated into images, which she tries to show in all her work.

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. His first collection of essays, *Earth's Mind: Essays in Native Literature*, was published by the University of New Mexico Press in 1997. He is married to the yoga practitioner, musician, poet, and painter, Jenni Fallein.

Shane Gardner is a local photographer living in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. He takes interest in the unique people he meets, while uses photography to connect with people's passions and personalities. He believes that a proper portrait can be the first impression, something a "selfie" simply cannot describe. He loves to travel for his photography, attend live music and to visit the breweries he holds close to his heart, "Cheers!"

Lucia Gregory is a part-time staff member at North Idaho College. She approaches photography intuitively and works to discover uncommon beauty in everyday life. She shares images daily via Instagram (@looshagee). More at www.luciagregory.com

Nathan Hansen grew up in North Idaho and western Montana and moved to rural Michigan his sophomore year of high school. He completed a two-year technical certificate in ornamental horticulture and graduated from that and Madison High School in 2001. He married his high school sweetheart; they just had their fifteen-year wedding anniversary this last September. They have two kids, a thirteen-year-old boy and an eleven-year-old girl. He worked in store operations and administrative management for Lowe's for ten years, managing and opening stores from the Oregon coast to Coeur d'Alene. He left Lowe's three years ago and has been working as an artist and furniture maker.

Amber Hasz dreams of being a deep sea explorer, a scientific researcher, and a writer of anything creative. And so she's pursuing a career in accounting. She spends her free time with *the* coolest kid, Azaria, who has previously aspired to someday be a mermaid, but has recently decided on being a cheetah trainer. Someday, Amber will get to spend the rest of her days with her sweetheart, but for now he lives across the country, and the two of them work on their future together from afar.

Elli Goldman Hilbert plans to be a writer and educator if and when she grows up. Until that time comes, she will write anyway—unless she is busy with her husband, her five children, her flock of backyard chickens, her job in the Cardinal Card office, or one of her many other pets, current hobbies, or obsessions. She currently studies English literature at North Idaho College and is graduating this spring and planning to continue her studies at the University of Idaho.

Miranda Keith is a student at NIC. She is a general studies major, and she loves photography and hopes to continue growing her skills. She has three siblings, a sister and two brothers, and she has two dogs, golden retriever lab mixes named Luke and Lottie. She spends most of her time with her parents, at school, at work, or at church.

Lynn Kilpatrick's essays have appeared in *Zone 3*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Brevity*, *Ninth Letter*, and *Ocean State Review*. Her collection of short stories, *In the House*, was published by FC2. She earned her PhD in creative writing from the University of Utah, and she teaches at Salt Lake Community College.

Samuel Ligon is the author of four books of fiction, most recently *Wonderland*, and *Among the Dead and Dreaming*. He's co-editor, with Kate Lebo, of *Pie and Whiskey: Writers Under the Influence of Butter and Booze*. He teaches at Eastern Washington University, edits the journal *Willow Springs*, and is Artistic Director of the Port Townsend Writers' Conference.

Ron McFarland teaches one thing or another at the University of Idaho. He served as Idaho's first State Writer-in-Residence 30-plus years back. His most recent book is *Edward J. Steptoe and the Indian Wars* (2016).

Rachel Park is a dual-enrolled student at NIC and Lake City High School. She will be graduating this year and attending a four-year university either on the East Coast or in Switzerland. She is planning on majoring in international relations and hopes to help lead the country towards diplomatic solutions to international problems. Pursuing art as a stress reliever, many of her pieces, including *Headached*, derive from intense bursts of emotions or physical feelings.

Abel Siemens is an undergraduate student currently enrolled at North Idaho College, studying creative writing, literature, and philosophy. He has in the past been accepted to speak at the Northwest Humanities Conference, which took place on the campus of North Idaho College. His work has been published before in *The GNU Literary Journal*.

Georgia Tiffany's work has appeared or is forthcoming in various anthologies and magazines including *Midwest Review*, *Willow Springs*, *Poets of the American West*, *Expose*, *Chautauqua Literary Review*, *Lost Coast Review*, *Hubbub*, and *Threepenny Review*. A native of Spokane, Washington, she now lives in Moscow, Idaho.

Travis Trout is a graphic designer/photographer and also a North Idaho College alumnus with his web design degree. Living in places such as western and central Wyoming, East and North Idaho, it has always been very easy to find great subject matter for photography. Sometimes it's tough to slow down and appreciate the beauty that is all around us; photography helps him share that with those who don't normally see it.

Trestle | CREEK | Review

welcomes submissions of any genre of literary or creative work for its 2018 issue. Submissions of poetry (3-5 poems per submission), prose (5,000 words maximum), or black-and-white artwork (any style or medium) may be sent via email. We consider work by any member of the North Idaho College community—including students, faculty, staff, and alumni—and by residents of Idaho's northern five counties.

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, 2018**, for May publication.

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