

The Crucible

The Crucible

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Preface

Nav-i-ga-tion \na-və-'gā-shən\ *n* : the art of directing or plotting the course of something.

When we think of navigation in its very literal sense, images of ships, compasses, pirates, peg legs, and eye patches come to mind. But when navigation is placed within the context of human expression, it reveals itself to be a rich representation of the creative process, regardless of the medium.

The creative process is, at its core, a distance traveled, a progression from one point to another, and sometimes back again; it is the navigating of emotional and physical uncertainties, a passing between destinations, time, dimensions, and emotional states. Though we aren't always conscious of it, our deepest and our most mundane experiences constantly direct us to certain observations and insights, insights too important to be left unrecorded. So, as expressive beings, we turn to writing, to painting, to photography, to log our most treasured wisdoms as well as our most regrettable follies.

And what is left once the "agony and sweat" of creation are over? A road map, a constellation, a compass—guides to discoveries that are sometimes harrowing, but rarely unendurable, that are often profoundly optimistic, but never naive or specious. These guides manifest themselves as poems, artwork, photographs, and short stories—maps of the human condition, all of which offer some clue into the logic and history of the creative process, into the source of inspiration itself.

The works in this edition of *The Crucible* reflect the infinite paths of creativity, the ever-changing maps we simultaneously create and follow to say something of value, something that reveals a fundamental truth about the human experience.

Though the line separating artistry and madness will never quite be demarcated, the works in the following pages are nothing less than bread crumbs for finding ourselves when we are lost, evidence of a voyage endured, and a testament to the transformative power of shared experiences.

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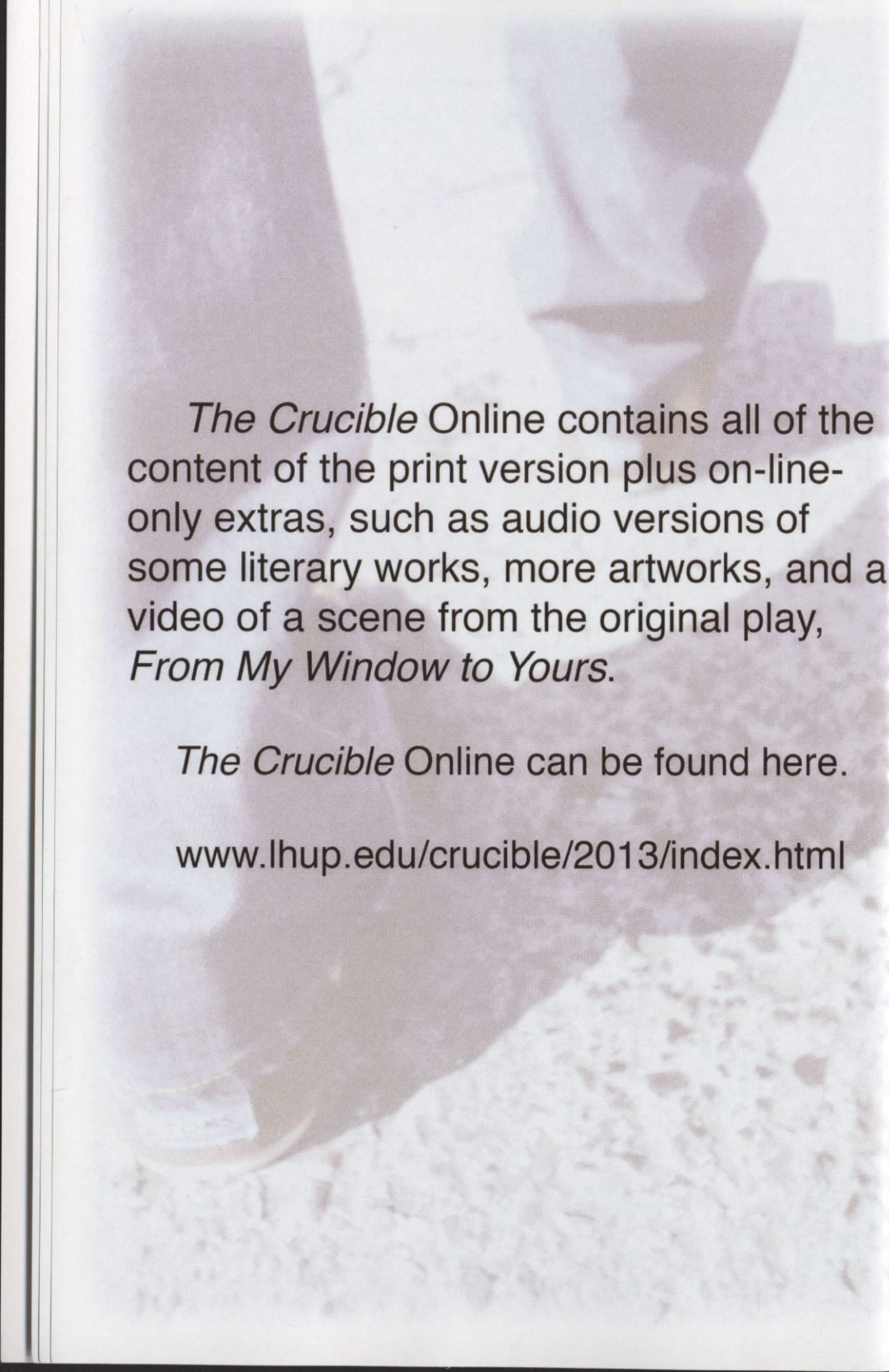
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The Crucible Online contains all of the content of the print version plus on-line-only extras, such as audio versions of some literary works, more artworks, and a video of a scene from the original play, *From My Window to Yours*.

The Crucible Online can be found here.

www.lhup.edu/crucible/2013/index.html

Light Years by Nico Salvatori

These days—
like the cosmos:
black,
empty,
vast.

Each glimpse of opportunity—
a star
beyond human reach,
permeating the blackness
with old snapshots of itself.

The stars are old,
the vestiges
of a long forgotten glory.

They tease
with their luminous caress.

What would it take
to laugh in the face
of loneliness?

Two Worlds by Russell Dauberman

Through a sunny window, I peered into the day
and tried to find myself among the children long at play.
Gathered on the blacktop in a broad unbridled glory,
a separate world my eyes beheld, an innocent display.

It thrived upon their faces and carried in their cries:
life to them so ageless, their days come free of time,
unaware that seconds gravely paint the sky with blackness,
hidden from the bitter truth that all that lives must die.

Still my eyes persisted warmly, capturing this place
remembering my own time spent in the effortless grace.
But with the image in my sight, their grace went blank and blurry
and tired in the window ached my cold defeated face.

So on the floor, I fixed my gaze to contemplate, beguiled,
the world beyond the schoolyard walls that waits to rape their smiles.
In pain, I raised my face again but found a vacant void.
The blacktop bare, my heart prepared to house a murdered child.



Mandi Englert

Untitled

Ripper by Kayla O'Connor

An innocent mind
changed, seared, corrupted.
Turned bloody.
Empty, forgotten
A ripper.

A life left behind,
a new existence begun.
Life lost, born again,
the start of a brand new
Ripper.

He was the worst,
feared among all.
The master of death,
a monster,
The Ripper.

Years of damage,
pain, sorrow, and death.
All followed him, wherever he
went. He was known as
The Ripper.

To go down in history,
jolly red fangs.
He brought the saddest gift,
the ending none believed.
Cursed immortality, to make another
Damned Ripper.

A change, like the tide, a gift,
love. Created from lust.
She slayed his demon,
brought out the true man
he had once been; no longer is he
A Ripper.

Steps by Rachel Mazza

I awoke from what seemed to be a very long rest. When I exhaled breath from my lungs, it appeared before me in a small cloud, joining the misty, hollow half-light that was the morning. I turned my eyes toward the open window. A grey mist was all I could behold as it clung thick and heavy to the very air itself.

Slowly, I rose from where I had fallen asleep at the bottom of the stairs and smoothed my dress. I drew a breath as deep as the constrictive corset would allow. How could I have fallen asleep? I had a splitting headache. And at the bottom of the stairs no less. It was already getting late and I had to fix dinner; Godfrey would be home from work soon, and Leonora would be returning from her adventures outside.

As I moved from the living room to the kitchen, I looked lovingly upon our little home. It was not large or fancy, by any means, just a few simple rooms that my husband and his father constructed as a wedding present those ten short years ago. I was pleased simply to have a bit of land to farm and a roof to raise a family under.

"It's all for us, pretty lady," Godfrey said to me as he carried me into our home for the first time and set me down safely on the other side. His strong arms circled around my waist protectively as he kissed me and stared into my eyes. He did the same on the day Leonora was born.

"She will be one of many," he whispered to me and tucked a stray lock of my brown hair behind my ear.

It was easy, at first, to fall into the routine of married life, and I found it to my liking. Leonora was our joy, our reason for me to keep the house and his reason to work and provide for us. Our life was a simple one that progressed a little further each day. I'd learn a new recipe from our elderly neighbor or Godfrey would work a little later in hopes of being promoted. Leonora learned to crawl and walk and then to laugh and run as children do. She spent most of her days playing outside with her dolls under the kitchen window where I worked. Her songs and laughter reminded me of my duties. Now just shy of seven years old, she was brilliant and already beautiful with a mass of curly brown hair and my grey eyes.

"Mamma," she said to me one day as I went outside to collect her for dinner. "What's at the top of the hill?" She pointed her little finger to the horizon where the shadows always met, just so, to obscure the peak of the hill from sight. Our house was nestled right at the base of the hill.

"I'm not sure," I replied taking her by the hand. "What do you think?"

She scrunched up her freckled nose and her grey eyes shone. "A beautiful meadow with wildflowers," she said and went on to describe how each flower would look. I praised her creativity when she told Godfrey

about it later at the dinner table. The next day, he carved her a picture of flowers out of wood to hang above her bed.

"Leonora," I now called from the kitchen window. "Time to come in now."

I moved about then, setting the table for our dinner and tidying up while trying to ignore the pounding in my head. I finished crocheting a shawl I was working on and pulled it around my shoulders, a perfect fit. I loosened my hair from the bun it was pulled into and pinched my cheeks. Perhaps I should put some color over my eyes? Godfrey seemed to take notice of me then. I wondered if he would even be home for dinner. His rifle had not been in its usual place on the wall in our bedroom. Perhaps he would be out late hunting again; yes, that had to be it. I could not bear to think of any other reason as to why he would be late.

I sighed; he had not really looked at me for quite some time now. Not since the day he came home late for the first time. The tea kettle screamed and frightened me from my thoughts. The moment jolted my aching head and in the flash of fear, I thought I saw Godfrey at the top of the staircase. But when I looked again, of course, he was not there.

"Leonora?" I glanced out the window to look for my daughter and to clear my head. She had not heeded my call to come indoors as she usually did. Her usual place under the window was vacant. "Leonora, where are you dear?"

I shouted her name, rising an octave each time. Perhaps she was just on the other side of the house or maybe she had fallen asleep on the woodpile again. I hurried outside with a lantern in hand and into the oppressive cold mist that was hanging low around our house today. I circled the house and visited all of her usual places, but she was nowhere to be found. Just as I returned to the front door, I noticed a figure standing in the mist that I recognized at once as my husband. He stood motionless a little ways from the house, staring forward at the hill.

"Godfrey, what are you doing there?" I asked him. "Please come and help me look for Leonora. I cannot find her anywhere. Perhaps she is playing a game with me and she has hidden herself away in the house. I cannot bear to think of anything else."

Godfrey did not turn his blond head or even seem to hear me. He continued to stare straight ahead and then walked toward the hill. I hurried after him, shouting his name, but he would not respond. He

continued on in the direction of the hill, leaving me standing there in the yard.

"Where are you going?" I shouted. "Have you been to the tavern again?"

I followed his path with my eyes and discovered he was headed toward a set of steep stairs that had appeared on the side of the hill. They were white, a strange and sharp contrast from the shadows darkening the hillside. The mist clung to each cold and hard-looking stair. Fear that was not alien to me crept into my heart and throat. He paused at the base of the stairs with his hand tucked into his coat pockets. I was taken back to years ago, before Leonora was born, when he had arrived home and stood at the bottom of the three stairs up to our porch.

Continued at www.lhup.edu/crucible/2013/steps.html#2



Kimberly Mihiel

Garden Glisten



Cassandra Englert

Flower K

Fear by Christine Mako

It's holding her back from conquering all.
It pushes her down and makes her crawl.
She can't surpass it, it's holding her down.
She has no help, there's no one around.

She can't seem to get rid of it.
It never fails and will never quit.
It's something she never seems to avoid.
It's crazy about her being destroyed.

With the feeling of hopelessness, she tries to hide.
It has beaten her up and stolen her pride.
It has her trapped with no way out.
She's feeling defeated without a doubt.

It's pulling her hair and driving her crazy.
Her future is fading and turning hazy.
It's planted its seed, and it's here to stay
as it takes her body, and she starts to decay.



Kimberly Mihiel

Untitled

Coffin by Andrew Price

No one can confidently say that he will still be living tomorrow.
- Euripides

Matthew Buhrmann was better than most young men one would find roaming in the world. He was hard working, graduating from a reputable college with a Ph.D. in chemical engineering. His current employment was with a large and powerful pharmaceutical/chemical engineering company with very promising pay and meaty benefits that many middle-class people don't see in the world.

With his healthy salary, he has just bought an excellent two-story home, with an outdoor swimming pool, patio, two-car garage, and a fire pit. His backyard contained a fine lawn with the aforementioned perks, along with shrubbery dividing his lawn from the Great Basin Desert, a plain of sand and rock that stretched into the vanishing point of the world.

Matt loved the fact that his bedroom overlooked his backyard and then the dry, flat desert beyond that. He found it calming and aesthetically pleasing. At this point in his life, he might as well label himself as upper-class, but he was slightly appalled by the thought of being so pretentious and consciously refused to see himself as such.

He usually spent his Fridays with a large group of college friends, each retelling old stories about their "grand escapades involving women and running from the law" and such. Half of the time it was for remembering the glory days. The other half was to impress anyone (primarily women) that was listening.

Matt didn't talk to impress any potential suitors. He had found his match already—his steady girlfriend of three-and-a-half years, Faith Corman. Relatively unbeknownst to Matt, Faith felt that she was the luckiest girl in the state of Nevada for finding such a loving, trustworthy, and caring boyfriend. And in return for these excellent traits, she was completely his. Both were thinking heavily about marriage, but both of them were still too nervous to approach the other regarding the decision.

Each Saturday, assuming they were both free from their busy schedules, they met up for the afternoon. Most of the time, the two ate dinner at a fancy restaurant, went skinny dipping in Matt's pool, watched a movie at home or at a theater, and then ended the night twisting and writhing in beautiful passion and lust. The first three activities were subject to change and replacement, while the last was al-

most a necessary part of the schedule. This weekend, Faith had agreed to come to his place around three in the afternoon on Saturday.

With ten minutes counting down his last workday before the weekend, Matt stared at the new blueprint for a new product. He felt troubled, truly troubled, in an otherwise enjoyable life. He was staring at the blueprint for a casing that would house 500 L of VCX-5, a new and very complex chemical agent he was tasked with housing and distributing.

He rubbed his temples. The compound, according to the order sheet, which was retranslated in an attached sheet into something not English, stated that the chemical would be used for "experimental testing" for decontaminating wide-spread areas of pest infestation.

Matt was also aware that the chemical was 35% more lethal than VS, another extremely dangerous nerve agent used exclusively for chemical warfare. If any living thing came into contact with it, there was an extremely slim margin of survival. And he was going to make sure that it wouldn't leak from its container on the trip to wherever it was going and to whatever poor souls it was going to be used on.

Lately, the Rothschild Heller Company had been giving out many different projects that were going on behind closed doors. This was Matt's fifth substance that was written about in several different languages for overseas transportation.

Stop. Do not think about this. You know what it is. You cannot do a thing about it. Once you get your foot further in the door, then ask for a department transfer. In the meantime, play it cool, do your work, cross the t's and dot the i's. And don't look so goddamn sick with yourself.

He signed the release forms, handed them through the shielded glass counter, clocked out, and drove home.

He stepped through the front door and looked at his home. All things in place.

"I'm tired," he mumbled. He'd spent the drive home thinking, wondering about the chemicals he had signed off on, where they were headed, and for what purpose. It seeped through his thoughts like poison, inflicting pain and dread the more he thought.

Now he wanted to sleep, so he went around, doing the "closing up" routine of his home—checking the windows, locking the front door, making sure hazardous appliances were off, etc. Matt ended at the back side of the house.

The back door was actually a little ajar. A sliver of light peered through. The sun had begun its daily descent into the horizon's vanish-

ing point. He went over to it, putting his hand on the handle to shut it. He felt the strong breeze push the door against him in protest. Forcing the door shut and locking it, he retired for the night.

He walked up the stairs to his room, turned to his closet, threw his clothes in the hamper, and set his cell phone, wallet, and keys on his desk, and turned around to face a suited man standing right in front of him. He had a burlap sack covering his face, complete with misshapen eyeholes cut into it. And a white cloth in his left hand while his right forced Matt's head into the white fabric.

Matt was unconscious before he hit the floor.

When Matt awoke, he was aware of only four things. One: it was completely dark, and very, very warm. Two: he felt two plastic objects taped to his left hand. Three: he was lying down. The surface was hard and level. And four: he tried moving his whole body to find that he only had less than several inches or so of room on either side of him. He then reached up with his right hand to feel a solid surface also about six inches above him.

He felt what was in his left. Instantly he felt the tape-binding around his hand. He immediately recognized the texture, shape, and overall feel of his cell phone pressed to his hand.

The other object took a few seconds, but Matt suddenly recognized what it was. The thing that he'd lit his first, and only, blunt with: a small, plastic butane lighter. The most obvious thought occurred to him right then and there: use the lighter to illuminate his world. He felt panic grip him. He pried the lighter from the cheap tape and flicked.

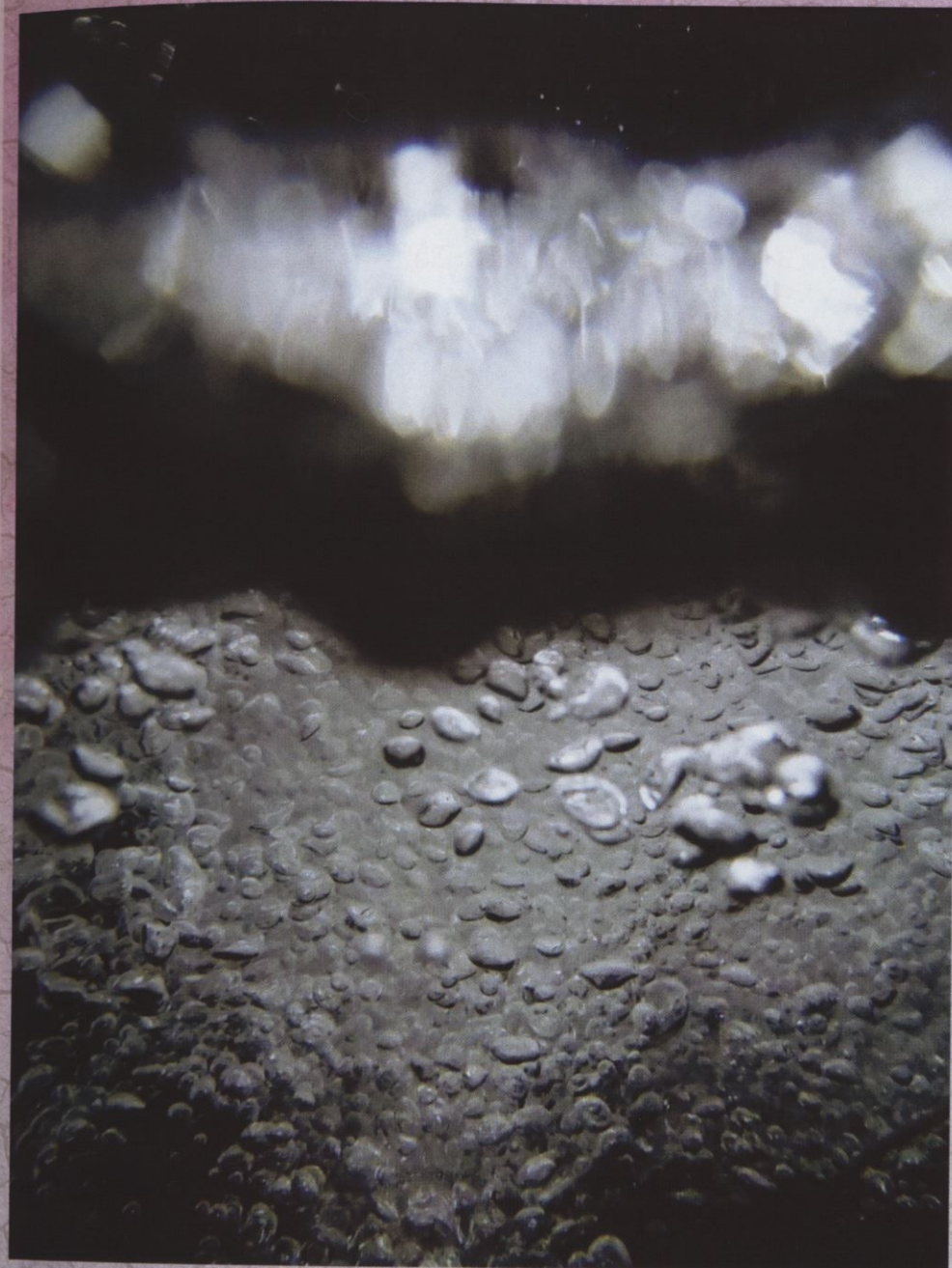
A spark. No flame. He rolled the spark wheel again.

A spark, and then a steady flame rose from his hand.

And right there, Matt Caleb Buhrmann felt his heart race up into his throat.

He knew the shape, had seen it in a million movies. He was lying in the unfurnished, unmistakable belly of a coffin.

Continued at www.lhup.edu/crucible/2013/coffin.html#2



Cassandra Englert

Underwater Series 5e

Perspective by Olivia Jones

Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom.
I'm beating. Barely.
In this blackened cage
slice the chest open, have a look
and you will see why she wants to leave.

Boom. Boom. Boom...boom
Can't you hear? Can't you see?
I'm getting exhausted.
There is nothing left inside of me.

Boom. Boom...boom...boom
I feel: hurt? pain? No. Nothing. Not at all.
Empty. Abandoned. Bare.
She's given all my love away;
It's like she doesn't even care.

Boom...boom...boom...boom
I am not pumping on anymore. I'm done.
Don't believe me?
Here it goes:
Ready? One, Two, Three—

boom....boom....boom.....

Stop.

...Am I free?



Kimberly Mihiel

Classic

All Along by Russell Dauberman

A boy began to die one night;
the ground became his bed.
Buried under pain and time,
he thought that he was dead.
Scarlet skies and fallen leaves,
September nights alone.
Chilling air recalling screams
and sympathy unknown.

Then came a storm that washed away
six feet of muddy weight,
but left a void of hungry space
to fill with doubt and hate.
When suddenly the pit became
a watchful wishing well
that held a face; reflection framed
a smile that broke the spell.

Cassandra Englert

Old



Mandi Englert

Untitled

Waking Up by Shelli Bond

The weight of a long day and a busy week push heavily on my posture. Exhaustion tugs down on the blinds - eyes desperate to block out the harsh sun's rays slicing through my windshield. I let my eyes fall shut once, and the shades snap up suddenly, and the sun is laughing at my weary, watery eyes.

I yawn. I cough. I smack my dry, sticky lips. I turn the knob of my radio clockwise, and yet energy from the exciting melody is not reaching my limp, fatigued bones. Squinting against the bright setting sun teases my heavy lids. I open my eyes and I am somewhere new—yards from where I was last. My heart startles for a moment and my body tenses, but the sun continues to taunt me.

I wake again to a loud rumble and a jolting vibration.

My lungs expand wide—relieved to take another breath. The rays warm my skin as a slight curve in the road ahead reminds me of the contour of my lover's warm arms that comfort me—a visual, physical lullaby. The sun and road torment me.

The blinds fall once again, and finally I relax; a fleeting dream of the man I so long for...I've only just said, "goodbye."

A violent shake of my vehicle wakes me just as the rearview mirror catches the sun sharply across my closed eyes. The wheel turns sharply away from the oncoming traffic, the brake beneath my sleepy right foot hits the floor beneath it, and the speedometer falls quickly from 80. The slowing white minivan in front of me is unscathed by the hard steel of my small, speeding, swerving red car. There's a sticker in the window—Baby On Board. My trembling fingers grip the wheel tightly. My clenched knuckles pull me into a parking lot just a few miles from home.

I force the shades to close; breathe slowly against a racing heart.

I wake again to a dark evening, but am safely where I left myself.



Sarah Hakes

Decomposition

On January 1, 2011 by Shannon Glynn

Withdrawal
hit in waves and detachment dissipated.

The sun was high, and I was not as I sat on hard concrete in pajama pants, vomit pooled between my sneakers as I feverishly scratched my limbs; scraping the bend where elbow meets forearm, my best friend softly massaging the marks, the tiny imprints where the needle last slipped under skin.

One hundred and thirty-seven miles later, my head in her lap, my heavy-lidded eyes leaked for hours, a bucket full of bile at our bedside, her arms tight around my trembling body.

Eight and a half months later, I am still roused from sleep by diseased dreams and stumble to my bathroom, and stare hard into the mirror, taking notice of the navy blue ring around my sleep-deprived brown iris; but I make my way to the balcony in the serene silence of dawn, and breathe in September's morning breath just as the sun stretches its arms across the sky, my stomach still, my eyes dry, my body shivering only from the chill of early autumn.

Daniel Reeder

Open Water



Mandi Englert

Steps

Just Another Suicide Story by Assunta DeSanto

Everyone needs their fix right before class. Whether you're walking to the school property limits to inhale some cancer, hotboxing in the back corner of the parking lot, or stopping in the bathroom between periods to listen to your favorite song – hoping it will get you through the day. I would carry a knife into the school with me; tuck it into my pencil case, carefully concealed beside the perfectly pointed pencils.

A butter knife, albeit; that's all I could sneak in. How'd I know it was not okay? I asked the principal once. Played pretend that I was overly concerned with the environment and didn't want to use the plastic utensils the school provided anymore – for the betterment of Mother Earth, of course. Doe-eyes, blink a few times – she melted. As predicted, she practically printed off a list of the different metals that would make it through our detectors. She said she trusted me. She had no reason not to.

Always charming, I was. Walk up to the teacher's desk – "Umm, I already finished my assignment. Do you think it would be okay if I went to the bathroom?" Don't forget to widen your eyes, hands Adam & Eve style – ashamed, embarrassed, but not too much so. You don't want to look crazy. You just want to look like you have to pee. They always said "yes" of course, with a smile – that proud teacher smile; I was a shining star. No teacher ever told me no. With my straight A's and polite demeanor, how could they deny me a trip to the bathroom? Even during the PSSA's and the SAT's; you know, you're not supposed to leave the room during standardized tests. But I was special. I mean, I said the morning announcements every morning – I was perfect, wasn't I?

Not perfect enough. Not perfect enough for myself.

I'd take a seat on that grimy high school bathroom floor, stare into the abyss of dirty water and porcelain before me, sometimes throw up, stick my fingers down my throat just for the hell of it—just for the joyful pain of acid climbing up through my body. That sweet burn when it gets into my mouth. Often I'd find only bile swirling in the water; I rarely ate breakfast.

I'd wipe the remnants from the corners of my mouth with my sleeve momentarily look with disdain at the stain it would leave on my shirt before pulling my sleeve up past my elbow. I'd withdraw my knife from my pencil case, rest my arm against the cold white porcelain, and pronate my wrist.

The dullness of a butter knife made it hard to do, but I was relentless. I hacked away at my skin, ripping up piece by piece, and after eons of pain and glory, I got a droplet of blood. I stuck the knife in at just the right angle to expand that vein; let the blood flow. Eventually I had a pretty good stream – not as good, though, as the Wolfgang Puck filet knife which I favored at home.

I never liked razorblades; knives seem so much more fitting. Razorblades were made for people, knives were made for animals. And the emotionless-ness of hacking away at my body with a device used to rip dead things to pieces was more reassuring than using my Venus razor. Plus a knife went deeper, could hurt me more: more blood, more risk of infection, death.

True, there are more effective ways to commit suicide. But my family doesn't believe in guns, and none of my friends were hunters. I could never figure out how to tie a noose – I tried, trust me. We had this thickly corded rope in the garage, and I tried to hang myself once, but I'm so worthless I couldn't even tie a knot. So instead I fell, skinned my knee – a bloody infection – which sufficed. I tried popping pills over the years – my dad's heart medication, my mom's vicodin, someone's depression pills, and other assortments I'd find in the cabinets. It didn't work, though. I probably didn't take enough, or I didn't mix them with enough alcohol. But, I didn't want to learn the process of druglore. I thought I was above that. Plus, using drugs would run me the chance of being high or happy. I couldn't do that. I needed to die.

Torn by Kayla O'Connor

Say a silent prayer,
to the demon that tremors
within. Let him think
he has won,
only to be
amused.

One single speck,
small spot of light,
fills the sweltering darkness
within the soul
of the one who is,
lost.

Darkness surges,
like the magic the demon
makes, the blood that flows,
like sacred red wine
on that beautiful, holy
day.

The voice of the angel
lost in the fray,
Screaming, Begging, Pleading,
for a single clean
breath of fresh
air.

The demon laughs,
chuckles at the hope
from the light within.
Both can't reside, both cannot win,
the fight rages
on.



Christina Englert

Psychological State 1



Christina Englert

Sound Experiment 1b

AUTUMN by Shannon Glynn

In autumn, we clung to life like the last two shaking leaves on a barren, October-ridden tree. We were almost streaks of red, orange, and gold on wet pavement. But something caught us, like the autumnal wind carrying trembling leaves to safe ground. We were scorned, then saved. Before storm clouds could choke our sun, emissions of mercy shone down on us despite our shortcomings. We were blessed while still broken, battered, and beaten. The skin beneath your nose dry and cracked, doubling deceased oak leaves beneath your solid black Vans; the bend of my left arm, a blended bruise branching out halfway down my forearm, mimicking the naked maple whose lifeless limbs reached and grabbed for God but received nothing. Though death wasn't ready for us yet, we were barely alive.

We met on a Friday, with dense smoke lingering in our lungs. Out of class at 2:30, I was drunk by 3 o'clock, on the porch of the house of a mutual friend on Fifth Street; the tart taste of Apple Pucker and toasted oak flavor of whiskey tainted my tonsils. The way you staggered outside,



Nathan Simeone

Urban Decay

face flushed and fumbling for your cigarettes, let me know you were also prematurely wasted. We had the same burdened brown eyes, yours hidden behind glasses; the same heavy hair to hide behind, mine under a flat-brimmed hat. The first things I noticed were how your bottom lip bowed out slightly, the way you clicked your tongue ring against your teeth, and the way you flicked your cigarette. After the last puff in the midst of your exhale, the filter between your thumb and middle finger flew a foot into the middle of the street, still smoldering. I smiled, nodded in inaudible approval. Silent, you headed up the steps of the porch, stopped, and turned around. I knew you were as reckless as I am.

The Fall of Stormpyre by Kevin McKee

Kendall Stormpyre stood proud on a mossy hill, looking at the fallen church with a wariness tempered by experience. His Band came up behind him, hardened adventurers that had seen many strange things in the travels of their leader. The church in question, once a site of a tremendous holy power, had since been defamed and warped. Twisted into a place of inverse worship, the church long ago ceased being a sanctuary. As time passed, the neighboring village sank into the marsh along which it had been built. Now the vine-covered church was the only reminder that people once lived here.

Sighing at the morbid air that clung in his lungs and the sense of pervading doom coming from the ruined building, Kendall motioned his Band forward. Silently, they crept through the dismal marsh, frowning at wet socks, but focusing on the mission. The church was the last known repository of a powerful grimoire, and Kendall was intent on recovering it and entrusting it to safe care.

As they approached, Kendall and his Band saw the church much clearer, without the swamp haze in the way. It was old, even for those days, and where it might have inspired awe, it was now simply gruesome. Two stories tall, it had rows of statues of the heavenly host adorning the edge of its roof, before rising up to a tall steeple. The angels had been glorious once, sculpted and lacquered to an artist's perfection. Now, they leaned slightly over the edge, glaring down at the invaders with beehive eyes and cracked, sinister grins. The lacquer had all but faded away, replaced with the greens and yellows of swamp mildew. Suppressing a shudder, Kendall tried to ignore their baleful, stony gaze and pushed open the heavy wooden door. Although the door was slick to the touch, Kendall was surprised that it did not appear to be rotted. It was as if the swamp itself was protecting this place. Maybe it was.

The inside of the church was no less disgusting. The pews were warped and stuck out at odd angles like rotted teeth; the pervasive vines had grown into the building itself, and the floor had returned to an earthen state, seething with worms. One of the members of the Band pointed at the corner of the room, and Kendall turned quickly enough to see a cockroach the size of a cat scuttle into the darkness, away from the torches.

Perhaps the most disturbing of all, though, was the altar. A block of rock the size of a good table, the altar was covered in moss stained red, as if copious amounts of blood had dripped down its dark sides. If there was any consolation, Kendall thought as he drew near, it was that the red was rusty and not fresh. Grooves were cut into the floor around the altar, suggesting the blood would be channeled into some magical device, while above the altar hung numerous wicked images; inverted crosses and pentagrams, rust-red symbols, and iconographic devils decorated the back wall of the building.

A rustling sound came from beside him, and he tensed immediately. Raising his hand, he paused and listened. The Band was every bit as on edge as he was, if not even more so. Only one was truly calm in any situation: an ancient khaalafi known to them simply as the Archon. His tufted ears twitched, straining for any sound, but his leonine features remained still otherwise.

Again, the rustling sound came softly to them, over the sound of crickets and frogs. This time, the Archon caught it, and slowly paced towards the source of the sound. Steadily and with purpose, he strode towards the pews near the wall, making scarcely any footfalls. He hefted his war axe, and reached down into the muck that lined the walls. The Band waited nervously, wondering if a trap was about to be sprung, and looking around uneasily for signs of any ambushers. The church remained still, however, its silent corruption ineffable and unchangeable. Kendall caught himself holding his own breath. Their mission was nearly over, and then the Band would be able to find happier work in nicer weather.

The Archon's arm slowly came up, holding by the back of its neck a very large frog which merely blinked with annoyance at the fearsome khaalafi. Instantly the tension eased, and Kendall relaxed his hold on his blade. Striding swiftly towards the altar with renewed purpose, he saw the heavy, leather-bound book that he sought lying open atop the altar's grim surface. Kendall reached for it: a gateway to the past, a challenge to the present, and the undoing of his future.

Too late did Kendall hear the dying sounds of his men behind him. Far too late did he hear the khaalafi's roar. And much, much too late did he see the form which arose behind the altar. Even as he turned to aid his men, the devil that inhabited the fallen church reached over the bloodstained altar, grabbing his neck and pulling him back. The Band fought valiantly and claimed the lives of many of their foes, but the lesser devils that swarmed up from between the pews and down from the twisted vines simply overwhelmed them with sheer numbers. One of the last to go down was the Archon: his

shaggy mane and catlike features soaked in blood and ichor. Yet by the end, he too succumbed to the never-ending swarm that spewed forth from every crevasse within the fallen church.

Kendall tried to reach for his sword, but the devil slapped it down, inflicting a purple corrosion with just that one simple touch. He felt his neck bubbling and seething under the devil's grasp, succumbing to that same corruption, warping and twisting, even as the church itself had warped and twisted with the devil's presence. As his sight grew dim, Kendall could hear nothing, but the devil's scraping laughter.



Christina Englert

Hand Hybrid

A Call from Apathy by Sarah Eckrich

I know you want to languish in your defeat.

Lounge in chairs of despair
and feel your last iota of anger sigh
away from you—heat rising off your spine.
I feel it with you—the uncomfortable cold
whose awkward sensations you bask in,
trying to draw something from it, but
never reaching beyond “what’s the use?”

Ambivalence is the key
to those long smoke-ring nights
raining gin and tonic by the window.
No attempts are made to wax philosophical
about the loneliness, the loss, the desperation.
Depression is there—both
the blanket of black atmosphere,
and the soldiering heavy woolen coat.
You are too clever not to know that
sunburn comes even on cloudy days.

I propose that you consider,
just for a moment,
the thought that your dependence
on your resolved apathy
may not be in the interest of your health.
Like rising from your couch
when sleep’s hands are grabbing you,
getting up, ill at ease, and stumbling
through the dark spaces you’d know in light,
and finding the utopia of bed and rest
all for rousing, from escaping the ease
of just staying stuck where you are.

As storms blow over,
someday, you’ll roll over, too.
Standing in the fake guise of progress
that you know to be falling backwards
won’t show you any missed shortcuts
that put you back ahead of the game.

Shun the arms of complacency
whose love is a carefully contrived high.
Falling down the ladder doesn’t raise you any higher
if you get scared and climb back down the rungs.



Mandi Englert

Ladder

Two leaves tangoed around my feet as I stood waiting for the 8:30 a.m. bus, the weight of my backpack forcing my chest to feel tight, tighter than the bite of the cold in the late November air. The gusting winds never seem to cease in Pittsburgh. After three and a half years of being away, my lungs longed for the country air of Spencer, Iowa, the air I had grown up in. No matter how much I tried to pretend that I could fit in, I was no city-slicker. I was at best a misplaced country-girl who had managed to hide among a crowd of 45,000.

People hustled by on their way to work. It's pretty easy to ignore how many people bump into you once you've lived in the city for a while. I was entirely lost in my own thoughts—was I ready for this exam, how was Mom's physical therapy going back home how, was I going to work an eight-hour shift after class and still manage to get my Nursing Ethics paper and care plan done by tomorrow morning at nine? I didn't even realize that my phone was going off until I heard a rather loud "ah-hemmm" that sounded slightly like a cough but more like a disapproving "Answer the phone or turn down of that stupid ringtone" from a woman beside me decked out in the highest fashion that Pittsburg has to offer. Her Louis Vuitton purse and Gucci sunglasses failed to impress me.

"Ohh, sorry!" I said in her direction while hurriedly pulling my phone from my pocket.

"Hello?" I asked, frazzled.

"Hey, Sis; what's up?" my older brother answered.

Ugh was my immediate response. The only time Michael ever called was to ask for money or tell me something had gone wrong with Mom.

"What is it this time?" I asked irritated. I noticed the woman watching me from the corner of her eye, looking at what I was wearing, how my hair was done, how old my shoes looked, judging. Who are you to judge me? Why had I even moved to this city in the first place? Everyone was so self-consumed, so rude, so shallow-minded.

"It's Mom," he said, and my stomach jumped into my throat. "She fell again this morning."

This was the third time in a month. The cold always makes the simplest things so much harder for her, but it has been more than that lately. She was deteriorating quickly. When she was diagnosed just over twelve years ago, the doctors said she'd be lucky to get another three years of walking in before the muscles in her legs would entirely seize up, and that was only if she had weekly physical therapy.

We had just moved from Pennsylvania out to Iowa for her promotion when the doctors finally pieced together all the clues from a lifetime of health issues. Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia was the official diagnosis, characterized by progressive weakness and stiffness of the legs paired with muscle

atrophy that would eventually lead to resistance to stretching. After some research, we discovered that it could lead to impaired coordination of voluntary movements, blindness, and dementia. Complications that arise from all of these symptoms often lead to early death.

As if all that weren't enough to look forward to, we also had the "hereditary" part to consider. I was more concerned about the havoc it was going to wreak on my mother, but when she found out that the disease is X-linked, meaning that it is carried from one person to another through the X-chromosome, she went into Super-Mom mode. Because women have two X chromosomes, they are more likely to receive the disease from family members.

In layman's terms, I'm fairly likely to also be a carrier.

Despite just learning that she would probably be paralyzed from the waist down in only three years, my mother's first reaction was not one of tears, but questions: "What are the chances that my daughter is a carrier as well? Can you test for it before any symptoms are showing? How early can it start affecting her? How soon can she be tested? Are there any preventive measures she should be taking?" She drilled the doctor, one question after another, rapid fire.

That's Mom for you, and that's what makes phone calls like this so damn hard.

"Is she okay?" I asked.

"Michael, what is it?" I repeated.

Silence.

"Mikey, is she okay?" I yelled, "Just freakin' tell me already!" The woman, startled by my sudden outburst, sent a wicked glare my direction, so I took a few steps away from her and turned my back. A wickedly cold gust of wind stole my breath and forced tears to my eyes.

"They're saying she needs to go into a home," he finally answered.

"What?! She's only 46," I pleaded, knowing that it was pointless because he had no control over the situation. The wind-induced tears in my eyes were joined by ones of sorrow and anger. I struggled to keep it together.

"I know," was all he said. We knew that this point was going to come eventually, but never expected it to be when she was this young. Why didn't these calls ever come at a convenient time: while I was alone, and could process having to deal with the world?

After a few moments of silence, he continued, "You and I both know that we can't afford the type of care she needs here at home... She'll be better off there, and you know that it's what she wants," he urged. I was mad at him for being right... Since when had he gotten his shit together?

"I'll call you back when I'm done with class this afternoon, and we'll figure out what we need to do then," I said hanging up the phone before he could give a response. Why had I come to college in Pittsburg when I should

have stayed close to home, close to her, while she was still healthy? I hated myself for being so selfish and hated her for saying she wanted me to come here and follow my dream.

Embarrassed that I was crying in the middle of a busy street, I gathered myself for a moment and turned back around to see that the bus had finally arrived. As I went to climb on and escape the cold, I met eyes with the woman that I had already forgotten about. Her brow had softened and her blue eyes seemed to have changed from an ice cold, stone grey, to a warmer, deeper blue. She offered a kind smile and motioned me ahead of her in the line of people waiting to load the bus.



Jace Keller

Life Like an iPod by Christine Mako

Her life stays on repeat,
stuck on the same song.
She can't shake the feelings;
stuck on him, she can't move on.

Wide variety of genres,
but it's too late; she froze
back to the main menu.
Time to start all over, I suppose.

Wanting to fast forward
to see what the future holds.
But no, we all follow a playlist.
She'll be waiting to see what unfolds.

Earplugs in, blocking out the rest.
It's the same songs, different day.
Her feelings constantly on shuffle;
The thought of him won't go away.



Thomas Kessinger

World On My Shoulders



Nathan Simeone

Untitled

Laughing Philosophy by Tifarah Williams

You sit back and watch as I struggle to comprehend the minds of the insane, questioning what is and how things have come into existence. You chuckle, viewing my mind as weak and feeble. Plato's "Symposium" was only the beginning of your madness. Questioning love through old men and boys to circle people cartwheeling up to Mount Olympus. I pull my hair as my mind scrambles to make sense of these views of love. You decide to throw in St. Augustine's "Confessions" and his struggle with lust until he finally converts. A good Christian, but twisted, locking people in churches and burning them to the ground for the sake of humanity. Laugh it up, Philosophy, while you still can. I will learn your every thought until you scream in terror at the monster you have created.



Hand Hybrid 2

Christina Englert

The Origin of Voice by Reginald Pinckey

"Jasmine, it's supper time," Dahlia called from her porch. The sun had already sunk past the mountain's horizon towards the west, and the skies were painted with various colors of amber and twilight. The village a short walk east from Dahlia's home was already lit with torches throughout the streets. Between her home and the village was a luscious green field that she could see her six year old daughter playing in. Jasmine was running around with the other children who lived in the village, laughing with her friends and playing their games. "Jasmine!" Dahlia called again.

"Coming, Mommy!" came Jasmine's reply. She said her farewells to her friends and skipped across the field to meet her mother on the porch.

"Did you have fun with your friends today?" Dahlia asked.

"Yup! We played a lot of games in the field today. We even got to play Find the Witch in the village."

"Find the Witch?"

"Yup."

"How do you play that game?" Dahlia asked.

"It's really easy. First you have to have a witch. The witch then has to go find a hiding spot while the others count to sixty. Whoever finds the witch first becomes the witch and then they get to hide. It's a really fun game."

"Sounds like it. Did you get the chance to be the witch?"

"Yup! I got to hide first because I'm already a witch, just like you, Mommy," Jasmine said with a beaming smile. Dahlia returned the smile. She was happy knowing that none of the villagers, in all her years, had ever tried to purposely keep her and her daughter separate from their community because they were witches. Living just outside the village was Dahlia's choice. Whenever she and her daughter went over to the village, the villagers always saw to it that she and Jasmine felt welcomed in their community.

"You children and your games," Dahlia laughed. "But it's good to hear that you had fun. Ready for dinner? I made your favorite vegetable stew. I also baked a cherry pie for dessert."

"Yay!" Jasmine yelled as she ran into the house.



"Your belly full?" Dahlia asked. Dinner had already passed, and she was now inside Jasmine's candle-lit room, tucking her daughter into bed.

"Mhmm. Dinner was great, Mommy," Jasmine said, following her answer with a gentle yawn.

"Sounds like someone's ready for bed," Dahlia said, chuckling to herself.

"Will you tell me a story tonight?"

"Of course, dear. Which one do you want to hear?"

"Something with a happy ending," Jasmine said as she snuggled within the sheets. "You'll have to be a little more specific, honey. There's a lot of stories with happy endings," Dahlia explained as she sat on the bed beside Jasmine.

"How about one with a witch in it? Or maybe one with one of the gods you taught me about?"

"A witch or a god, you say? Let me see," Dahlia pondered. "Aha! I know the perfect story to tell you with the perfect blend of both. It's a bit of a long one, though. Do you think you'll be able to stay awake long enough?"

"I'll stay awake, I promise!" Jasmine said, elated.

Continued at www.lhup.edu/crucible/2013/the_orgin_of_voice.html#2



Daniel Reeder

Time Flies



Mandi Englert

Untitled

I am an artist; who are you? By Adria Stokes

Music:

I am the artist, much like the painter, making silence my canvas and the notes
my water
colors of

Expression;

I control space and time when the notes leave my bow. I am the
Teacher,
clinging to the history, the mathematics and the -ology—the study of
Love.

I fight to have the right to participate in the arts, to be the art-east, studying
west-ern philosophies, but I have
Passion,
something that one needs along with talent so that one could give the music
Soul.

Separate from the mind it draws its energy from the body and leaks into the
Universe.

The billions of stars, combusting and starting anew; the helium orbs of gas that we
tell all our secrets to—our
Desires.

What is it that one aspires to be?

Bach?

Beethoven?

Vivaldi?

Lounging somewhere in
Italy?

Reminiscing on the days when you were lonely, dreaming, always
Sleeping.

Open your eyes and seek what you can conjure up, sashaying in the
unconscious mind,
Love.

If one cannot rewind time or dance on the rings of Saturn for recreational time,
what is left for one to do in
November?

Just remember that one can be the artist,
The Teacher,

the passionate lover composed of soul exerting itself into the universe,
dancing with stars fulfilling the desires of those who aspire to be the next Bachs
and Beethovens and Vivaldis,
lounging in Italy;

Reminiscing about loneliness, dreaming, but only while sleeping,

Sashaying in the unconscious mind too afraid to be IT,

In love with time that cannot be rewound on the rings of Saturn in November.

I am an artist.

Who are you?



Chrissy Englert

Crucible Cover Design

In the Snow by Russell Dauberman

A boy walked outside of a large, metal building and rounded the corner to its back side. The ground was covered with snow and he stood in frozen silence as the cool winter wind subtly grazed his face, freezing his snout. He saw the trees, still, but alive, looming and stretching mightily to the sky above him.

The night was young, but the moon was large and beaming bright onto his face as he beheld it with wonder. Its beauty was accentuated by the scattered stars surrounding it, twinkling through the crisp January air so beautifully that his eyes, unable to blink, began to tear. Overcome, his eyelids unwillingly met and his tears streamed, freezing to his cheeks.

This sublime image, now too overwhelming, directed his face back to the trees in front of him before a faint steam began to rise into his vision. In that curious instant, the boy looked to the ground and examined the snow just in front of his feet that was now melted down and yellow with his piss.



Mandi Englert

Untitled

Emerald Green by Adam Williams

Let's get one thing straight: I ain't no hero. I'm not Sam Spade, that overrated hack. Him and his damn bird. He got lucky on his case; so does everyone in this era. There's no real detective work, there's no real cop work, there's nothing but dirty, stinking, filthy luck and that lady eluded me all my years. But this case, this case lying in my lap, begging for answers and a fall guy or gal, I need luck on this one.

* * *

We are film noir. The city is corrupt and black and white. As much as you search for any bit of color, the best you'll get is either light or dark versions of the colors. We're as gritty as sandpaper—no refinement whatsoever. People walk with different struts, speak with different dictions, and live with different motives. It's a slimeball system I'm stuck in, and my loafers are covered in filth. You can only tiptoe around dirt and scum so much in this town before you're scraping it off with a dirty razor blade. I've been cut and infected, just like everyone else, but I'm smarter than them; I stepped out before I got got.

Helluva life I tell ya.

Puff.

I'm sitting in The Shack, reading *The Horn* and that big, black, blocky bold lettering makes my stomach flip like them rollercoasters popping up all over the scene.

"Elizabeth Short slain; found on 39th and Norton."

Los Angeles used to be bright until the dark side took over. Now beautiful gals getting sliced and diced by some sickos—despicable. I take a drag of my cigarette and feel the tar sticking to my lungs. I don't feel the pain. This should give me a stronger chest, some protection over the vitals. This will pay off in the long run, I guarantee it folks. Nothing wrong with puffing a pack or two to sooth you throughout the hustle and bustle of this sporadic, dying city.

I remember when the sun shone on this area, but in one night and several drinks later, everything changed. Can I explain the change? No, not really. I was a casualty of it, a bystander who was in the wrong spot at the wrong time. Timing is everything these days and just like Short, we all got chopped in two, but we don't have permanent smiles etched in our faces. No, we have our mouths stitched nice and tight until we want to drown ourselves in the glorious poison served by Arthur tonight.

"Hey guy, whaddya got that's good?" I ask the tall, balding man, wiping down some glasses behind the sticky bar table. Ash trays line the railing and some drunkards down to my left are causing a ruckus with some dame, but she's holding her ground.

"Whatever you'd like, Bull," he says in an easy voice. The one perk of being a copper out here—the bars treat you like royalty as long as you don't bust them and you bust up the ones damaging their gig. Arthur was always good in my book.

Puff.

"Hit me up with a double on the rocks and snappy. I got a problem to solve without addition tonight."

"Coming up," he says as he puts down his towel and glass. He dishes up the ice and pours the finest bourbon he has behind the counter. The brown stuff looking so fine, I mute out the dame's cry for help several times until I get that first sip. Don't want to get in any scuffle tonight; I got enough scars. Just because it's on ice doesn't make it any cooler going down.

"Help!"

And then it all clicks, and I hear the voice of an angel. I look to my left and see a couple of grimers taking turns shoving her back forth while they hold up her purse. I guzzle down the liquid fire, grimace a bit, and muscle up the courage.

Puff.

Standing up, adjusting my beige trench coat and matching fedora, I make my way over to the drama, not knowing what'll happen, but having a pretty good idea.

"Hey fellas, why don't you leave the girl alone?"

"What for, Bull? Trying to gum up the works?"

"Listen, we can do this the easy way or we can do this the hard way."

"You're as clever as a cliché," the taller doof on the right says in a slightly slower tone than his brainiac partner now holding the damsel's purse above his head.

Without thinking, I pop him one right in the jaw. His eyes roll back, and he drops like a sack of flour. He falls right through a table with beer bottles smashing around him. Other drunk cats in the bar are pointing and laughing at drunken entertainment. The other, smarter bunch are leaving, avoiding any further possibility of a slobber-knocker.

"That wasn't real smart there, tough guy," the smaller thug says, throwing the purse back at the woman and approaching me. He reaches into his jacket and shines a blade at me.

A lump comes up in my throat, and it would show if he lands a strike. I choke it down and while backing up into the bar, grab a bottle, smash it, and form my own kind of blade.

"Be careful, Mister!" the beautiful blonde screams across the room. There's a tremble in her voice, but a relief.

Her knight in shining armor helping her? I don't think so. More like a drunk idiot who still believes in chivalry, protection, and respect.

We dual with our eyes for a while, jazz playing in the background of the smog-filled bar, his partner still cold-cocked in the corner. The lights are a tinted white, more dim because of the smoke from unfinished roaches.

"Make your move, Bull. This is going to be duck soup when I'm through with you," he sneers. "Best put that blade away bud; don't want more than what's coming to ya," I say, slurred.

"Oh yeah, copper, and what's coming to me?"

I light up another cig in mid fight.

Puff.

"First off, public intoxication. Next, disorderly conduct and damages to this bar. Lastly, disrupting a beautiful night for an equally beautiful lass over there," I point with my right hand to the Monroe-like girl standing next to the door. "Do you really want to add assault to a dick on that list too?"

He mulls it over, sweat dropping into his eyes and fear overcoming him. He takes a deep breath, looks at the angel in the corner, back at me, then to Arthur. His eyes are racing all over the place. He's scared shitless.

"Uh," he stammers. "You got this one, Bull, but so help me, next time I see you, you're sleeping with Nemo!"

He drops the blade and runs out of the bar. His buddy is still knocked out and lying on the ground from the punch earlier. I nudge him with my boot, but he doesn't move. He's out for the count, just like Graziano.

I walk over to Arthur, nerves settling themselves down, and I reach into my wallet.

"My tab, Boss?"

"Jesus Malsby, you're going to be living under one of these tables with the amount you owe me from the last few nights."

I shake my head. "Sorry, Boss."

Arthur shakes his head, stares me down for a few seconds which feel like an eternity. "I'm going to do you a solid Malsby, just for the fact that you taught those lackies a lesson tonight. I'mma let you slide, but just for this week, you hear me?"

A sly grin overcomes my scarred face. "Done deal, Arty."

"Now, get the hell out of here before you cause more drama."

A Marine salute to him, and I head to the door, grabbing a cig from my coat pocket. I dig for my lighter, but can't seem to find it. I frantically search every compartment until the dame comes over and offers.

"Lose your flame, hunk?" she says in this sexy tone.

"Yes, ma'am. How'd you guess?"

She perks her eyes upward, in an annoyed glance, like I insulted her.
“Please, I’ve not seen so much flailing around since that poor kid drowned last week. Terrible shame,” she says as she puts her head down and shakes it back and forth.

I grab the light she offers me.

Puff.

Sweet armor building up; ah, I love it.

“What they call you, Miss?”

“Kaye McHale. And you?”

“Malsby. Detective Colin Malsby.”

“Pleasure to meet you, Detective.”

“Likewise, Doll.”

Continued at www.lhup.edu/crucible/2013/emerald_green_by_adam_williams.html#2



Sarah Hakes

Untitled

Muse by Adria Stokes

You have inspired my greatest works:
a collection of selfless expression
centered on the joys of loving you.

Without your knowledge, I stumbled,
after I tripped on the brick that is your being:
concrete, coarse, complex.

You ushered me through womanhood with your intellect,
mouthing words that I could not hear,
until I understood them first, in your music.

You prefer to play interpreted chords,
and they roll off your fingertips.

I hear your silence in the whole notes;
I syncopate against your heartbeat:

Da. Da da. Da. Da.

In your left hand harmonies I hear you imitate your deepest desires—
at least, I think they are,

driving forward with moving eighth notes,
crying out, laughing out, smiling widely.

We connect, beyond the physical,
letting our sound waves collide.

In the open space I strip you
with each chord change,
modulation,

upbeat, downbeat,

In my verse I sing to thee,
wanting a duet, but instead I recite poetry.

It was a humid evening in June as the last beams of amber sunshine quickly retreated and hastened the end of my labor. Earlier that day, I had borrowed a flatbed trailer from a friend and hoped to get all the camping and fishing gear that my family would need for our outing loaded onto it. With only a few hours of daylight left, I worked like a beaver slapping the mud and hurried to get the trailer filled before the sun relinquished its dominance to the moon. The stars were brightening up the night sky as I finished strapping my two kayaks to the roof of the SUV. I had gotten just about everything loaded and decided that I was done; whatever was left could wait until morning.

When I finally found my bed, sleep avoided me like a friend who owed me money. I tried to bore myself into slumber by mentally reviewing everything I had already packed for the trip. The list flowed in my mind. There was the tent, sleeping bags, fishing rods, tarps, and fishing lures, etc... Check! That offered me no rest, and no matter how hard I tried to find sleep, the Sandman remained delinquent. With that idea gone bust, my mind strayed to thoughts of catching bass, and I wondered if I had the proper bait for the trip. I knew I had plenty of artificial lures that worked relatively well, but I had no live worms. Now my cousin Randy swears they are the best lure for bass fishing. Well, I really wanted to score some nice lunkers on this trip, so I reasoned that I had better get up and try my hand at wrangling up some worms. This is significant because as an adult I haven't been much of a worm-dunker in my pursuit of catching fish. I've always preferred using artificial lures, but for some ludicrous reason, I felt the need to go out and catch a can full of night crawlers.

It was in the waning hours after three a.m. when I shifted softly and quietly from my bed. I was as silent as I could be so as not to wake up my wife. I didn't want to have to explain this to her. She most likely would call me a fool and tell me to get back to bed. I dressed quickly, and moved silently downstairs. It didn't take long for me to find my worm-hunting stuff, which consisted of a tiny L.E.D. flashlight and an old mixed-nuts can. These two items were all I needed. "Oh yeah," I said to myself, "this is gonna be EE-ZEE!"

As I exited the front door, I paused on the top step of the porch and looked up at the sky. I saw many of the celestial fireflies fade behind a huge mass of clouds, and it immediately seemed darker. The early morning air was oddly humid, and there was a very faint hint of mist coming off the creek as I moseyed across the bridge to the fertile worm grounds of my uncle's vegetable garden.



Olivia Butkiewicz

In Lieu Of Flowers

I strode through the silence of the still night air contemplating this worm hunt. I stopped walking and stood at the border of the garden. I paused to remember what it was exactly that I enjoyed about this. I focused on memories of how fun it was when I hunted worms as a kid. I saw myself as a spindly boy with a dying flashlight running around the yard hunting worms for my dad. When I was young, we were relatively poor. My parents didn't have money to waste on something, that with some effort, we could find for ourselves. When I would catch them for us, it gave me a feeling of self-sufficiency which has always been an intrinsic attitude of mine. With those memories swimming in my mind, I decided to try my hand at wrangling them once again.

Slowly and methodically, I scanned the freshly tilled earth. I quickly realized my flashlight was far too bright. I had to use my fingers over the lens to stymie its brazen beam from scaring away the worms. I assumed the garden, a once-pristine worm resort, would be overpopulated with fat, lounging squirmers. As a kid, it seemed as if this patch of earth birthed slimy fish nibblers in abundance, but now, I barely saw one or two. After what seemed to be a long amount of time, but in actuality was only about ten minutes, I had but one fat worm in my nut can.

I decided to change it up and moved to another area of the garden. Rounding a far corner, I came across a good group of those slimy sinkers. Now, I can't validate the possibility of this, but I'd swear, on the honesty of a politician, that those slimy bastards could hear my approaching footfalls. When I'd get near, more and more worms retreated back into their subterranean slumber dungeons. The blazing beam of my flashlight limited my catch as well. I struggled to get the bright ray fingered down to a fine beam, and after some whispered expletives and experimenting, I managed a slim, hazy bit of LED luminescence.

I was determined to catch thirty-six of those slimy crawlers, the same amount in the pack I could buy at Wal-Mart. A half hour into the wrangling, I had a whopping seven worms in the can. When I was a kid I would've easily had two or three times that, but oh well; so I started a little slowly, but it was still fun. At least that's what I kept telling myself, even after circling the damned garden five or six times in an hour, with only fifteen worms filling the can. I figured my luck would soon change. It was only a matter of time, and I knew I'd find that sweet spot that I could always count on. There was always a particular patch of ground that I would stumble upon that held a veritable orgy of languid slimers.

"Son of a bitch," I almost screamed. Those slippery slugs were just



Sarah Hakes

To Kill a Mockingbird



Cassandra Englert

Hats 2

barely avoiding my grasp. For every one that I'd catch, I'd lose five or six. I snatched at them as deftly as I could, but I came up either with nothing, or with half of a worm sundered by my less than dexterous digits. I decided to switch hands for a short while, but my left hand gave me no better satisfaction than the right one in getting worms in my nut can. My sudden inability to coax a worm out of its hole made me feel like a baseball player in a batting slump. I'd sneak up on one, get a decent grip on it, and try to manipulate and wiggle it out, but the worm would tear in half with a spew of guts and slime. I left an uncounted number of dying and wounded worms behind me, and during a brief mental respite, wondered if this death for them was better than being eaten by a bass.

As I was continually coming up short, I started thinking deeply about this worm wranglin' stuff. There had to be logical reasons as to why I wasn't filling my can with them. The first reason I pondered was that these post 2k worms were smarter and faster than their forebears, most of which caught by me, ended up swimming with the fishes. This new generation of night crawlers had to be bionic or chemically and genetically altered in some way.

I reasoned that this absurdity of thought could be possible. With the advent of more and more lawn chemicals and fertilizers, and a bit of gamma radiation flowing across the jet stream from Japan, these suckers were obviously hopped-up or mutated. They were quicker than I remember and far more shy of my artificial light. It couldn't be me, it was the worms! I knew it! They had to be bionically enhanced or else manifesting some mutant gene that had remained latent, until it was activated by the gamma radiation flowing across the Pacific from the land of the rising sun.

Circling the garden seemed pointless, so I strayed off into a bordering grassy area. Stretching out before me was the obscene worm orgy I was hoping to find. It was just like I remembered when I was a kid out here in the dark. The fat crawlers were spread out; some were alone, but most were stuck together in a slimy embrace of worm ecstasy. I started grabbing up all those horny little invertebrates as fast as I could. I was as happy as a tapeworm in a meat patty that my nut can was starting to fill with all those squiggling worms.

After catching quite a few of them, it was time for a head count (which end is the head anyway?). I dumped them onto a bare patch of ground and counted twenty-five fat squirmers. With a fresh sense of confidence, I put the worms back in the can and got myself back

in the hunt. But the confidence that quickly soared from the harvest at the worm orgy, rapidly ebbed with the disappearance of the worms. I wondered, "Where in the hell did they all go?" I walked around the garden a few more times and realized I had invested a good hour and a half now in my pursuit of worms. I really was at a loss. I didn't even come across the small worms that are always out waiting to be picked, but never are, because they are just that—too small.

It was during this unwanted break in action that I started having really strange thoughts. The last two worms I had groped from their holes were stretched across the moist and inviting earth. They were two squirming lovers locked together in a slithering tryst. I must confess that I felt like a violator, rudely molesting both worms during what could've been the very climax of their copulatory passion. This idea must have been the catalyst for my next line of thought. I wondered if it is possible for a worm to snake each of its ends out of separate holes and join together with itself, not realizing it was locked in a masturbatory embrace. It's quite odd thinking about the possibility of worms being able to think, but the mild insomnia and extremely humid air obviously had me in a strange place as I thought about all kinds of nonsensical things.

Well, I knew I had to clear my head and start some serious worm wrangling because I was determined to catch my target of thirty-six worms. I wandered the perimeter of the garden and caught nine more worms very quickly. I was just two worms shy of my quota. I saw plenty of them lying around in the dew-covered grass, but then my hands and fingers just seemed like they didn't care anymore and wouldn't cooperate with me. I poked and jabbed in the dirt at countless worms for twenty more minutes before wrangling the final two into my can.

Catching worms like that is hard work. My body had attested to the truth of that as my lower back and legs ached and burned from my hunching dragon, skulking ninja stance. My body was covered in mosquito bites and muck. Now that my contrived enjoyment of worm wrangling was subsiding, I realized just how miserable I felt. It wasn't worth the effort. My whole body ached, and I needed a shower to clean off all the grime and grunge.

As I limped back across the bridge, I turned and gave a final glance back over the darkened area of the garden. I doubted that after all that effort, I would even use more than two of those thirty-six worms to fish with anyway (which I didn't), and I could've just saved my time and bought the three dozen box of worms at Wal-Mart for less than four dollars.

After showering, I finally crept to my bed and settled in under the cool sheet next to my wife. I settled my sleepy mind on the wrangling I had just done, but I roused again with a flash of intuition. I fully realized that my whole worm hunting escapade was really an unconscious attempt to restore and relive those cherished memories with my dad. Catching worms just a short while ago certainly didn't fulfill my childish notion of it being fun, nor did it make the idea of my self-sufficiency satisfactory. Simply, my desire to catch worms that night sprang from other feelings deep within my being. I did it for my dad. I did it because he was always thankful and quick to express his pride that I took the effort to catch worms for him. We both knew that if I caught a good mess of them that he'd take me and my brother for a fun afternoon of fishing.

My dad has been gone for almost half of my life, and I miss him tremendously. I strive to hold on to every memory of him that I can. Despite a very good effort for worms out in the night air, I failed to recreate that special sense of pride and accomplishment that my dad made me feel. I realized that my desire to hunt worms wasn't based on my perceived ideas of how fun it was, but rather, it involved my longing to once again feel that measure of pride and appreciation as my dad would smile at me, his bug-bitten and muddy little boy, bringing him an old can full of worms.

Home-Sick for Midwest Fever by Keith Meredith

L.H.U. International Airport to O'Hare...Now approaching

I tried giving up on myself,
with my eyes rolling to the back
of my head. Sorry, but I'm far from
being dead.

I lost all of my friends due to my imagination.
Because, I was sick in the head
my Ex-Friends would always say that "two's company and
three's a crowd."
So, I was stuck in this small Pennsylvania town,
with chills from the mountain wind.

It's strange how the trees lean west when
the wind blows east.
But, my thoughts are fighting against me.
My parents have too much faith and the girl
in the mirror gave up on me.
I'm now a Lake Effect kid, because Lake Michigan has a
hold on this city.

Planting my soles
in the downtown part of Chicago,
I've made enemies that were supposed
to be friends.
I suppose that was God's way
of trying to save me.

I spoke with my conscience, and we agreed to disagree
on the terms that the wind's chills stop hugging me.

I've tried growing imagination on Chicago trees,
because Pennsylvania didn't care enough to love
me.

All of the boys wouldn't touch me, and
my shadow wouldn't follow me.
When days got bad or went fast it's always easiest
to rewind, by looking at outdated calendars.
But, I'm guessing things got their worst, when
I left my Pennsylvania home for the

Midwest.



Mandi Englert

Untitled

Pennsylvtucky by Sarah Eckrich

In the light of day,
no doubt it is a slum.
Crackheads skitter on West nervously;
cars drive around Lincoln and A,
A and B, Pitt and College,
marking the perimeter
where cops don't roam –
an unspoken oath to let
the community run
or ruin itself.

The dog two yards down
feasts on stray cats and
twice has had a gun pulled on him.
It's more than I can say –
two times more in ten
times as many years there.

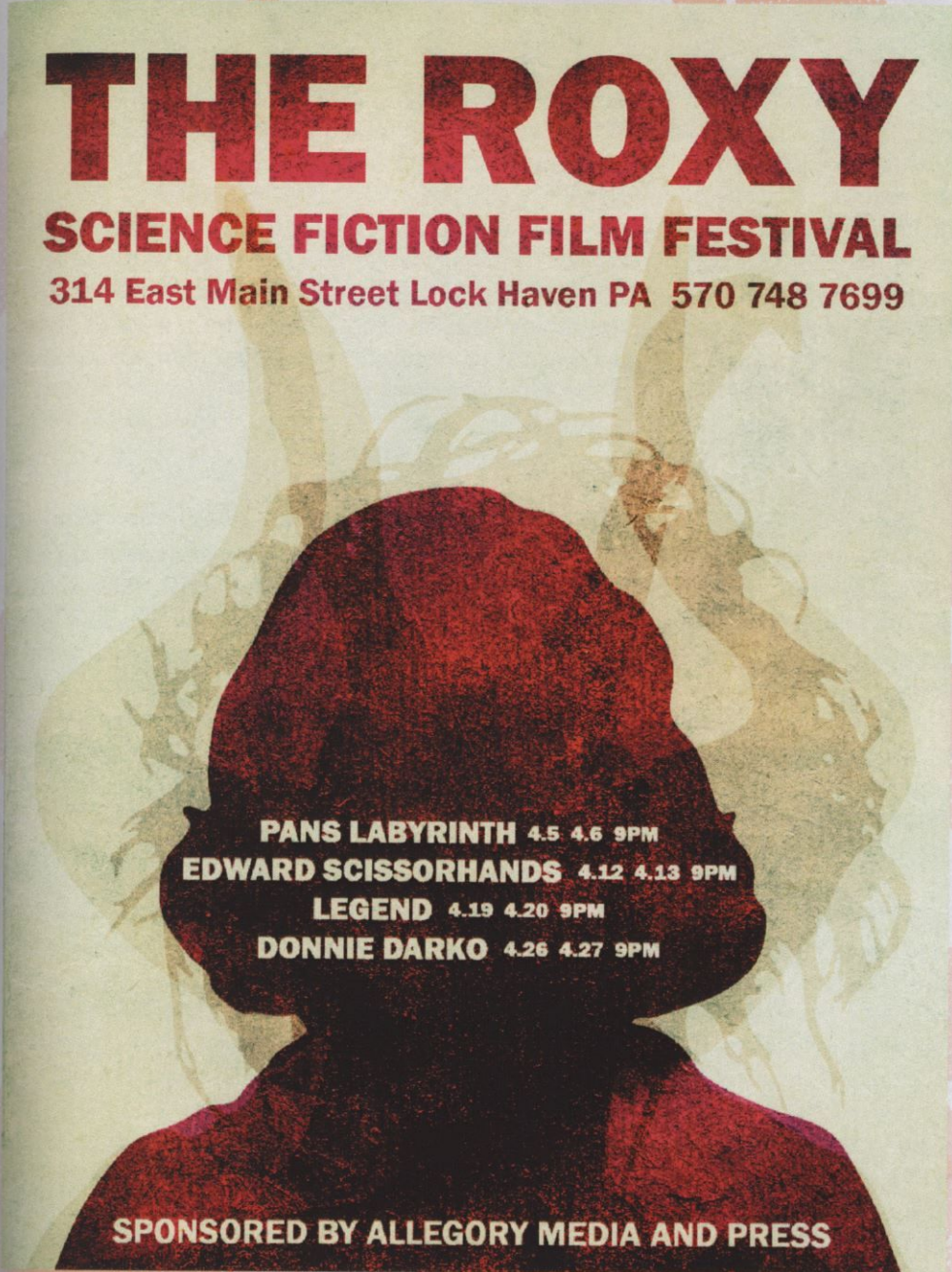
At night, the rowhomes
stacked and smashed like the
trash they think we are light
up the cracked chasmic pavement.
Junkies who can't find their wallets or
sleep aimlessly lounge
on porches and stoops in shadows,
observing Carlem through cigarette rings.

A place where toddlers cry alone
on old stone sidewalks at 3 a.m.
is no place to raise your kids.

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DONNIE DARKO 4.26 4.27 9PM

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Sarah Hakes

Film Poster

Author Biographies

Shelli Bond is a junior and a dual major in English and Spanish. "Waking Up" was written in her Advanced Topics of Creative Writing class. It's an account of a very scary realization that she didn't have much control over her life in the 45 minutes it took her to drive back to Lock Haven from State College.

Christina Briggs is a 2012 Lock Haven graduate who majored in Secondary Education English. Her submission was originally written for Professor Maddox-Hafer's Creative Writing course, a course that rekindled her desire to write. Her mother, Victoria Briggs, was the inspiration for "The Bus Stop." Although a work of fiction, she hopes this piece will raise awareness for a rare, but very real, medical condition that has deeply impacted her life.

Russell Dauberman graduated in the spring of 2012 with a BS in English Secondary Education.

Assunta DeSanto is a Secondary Education Major with a concentration in English and a Psychology minor. After graduating in the spring of 2014 she plans to teach in a high school setting, and get married in summer 2015. "Another Suicide Story" is a creative non-fiction piece which she wrote based on her experiences in high school.

Sarah Eckrich is a sophomore majoring in English. "Pennsylvucky" is about the neighborhood where she was born and raised. "A Call from Apathy" is a response to the disturbing and destructive lethargic tendencies gripping society, and was inspired in part by The Shins' "A Call to Apathy."

Shannon Caitlin Glynn has been a frequent contributor to *The Crucible*.

Olivia Jones is a sophomore majoring in Social Work and minoring in Women & Gender Studies. This poem is written from the perspective of a heart speaking about the person it's living inside. Instead of the mind of the person being expressed, the mind of the heart is its own being, voicing how it feels. The rhythm of the poem is structured around the booming sound a heart makes. Each time the ellipses get longer between the 'booms,' the heart is slowing down, dying. The end of the poem? You can make of it what you choose.

Christine Mako is a junior studying Health and Physical Education. She started writing about 6 years ago as an outlet to express her emotions. She writes based on what she's going through, sometimes she writes after seeing someone else go through something. If she thinks she can come up with enough insight, she tries her best to put it into words.

Author Biographies

Rachel Mazza, a senior double majoring in English writing and Communication print journalism, says writing has always been a major part of her life and plans to begin a career in publishing. Her story "Steps" was inspired by Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily" and "The Turn of the Screw" by Henry James. She attempted to shift the passage of time around while employing a few of her favorite Victorian themes.

Kevin McKee graduated with a BA in English Writing and a minor in Philosophy.

Kayla O'Connor graduated in December 2012 with a degree in English with a concentration in writing and a minor in Women and Gender Studies. These poems, written for a creative writing class, reflect aspects of humanity which are often mistaken for something else. What that is, however, is left to the reader.

Reginald Pinckney graduated in the spring of 2012 with a BA in English Writing.

Andrew Price is set to graduate in 2015 with a health science degree. He spends a good deal of time writing short horror/suspense/fantasy fiction. With "Coffin," he visited a mortuary and saw a man pretending to climb into a coffin, thinking he was funny. The idea went from there. 'Umbrall', was a lot of fun to write. I had heard about the Lost Roanoke Colony, and it just started turning the gears, from other-worldly Gods to Lovecraftian horrors.

Nico Salvatori is a senior majoring in English Literature and is set to graduate in the spring of 2013. He is also the Opinion editor for the student newspaper, the *Lock Haven Eagle Eye*, as well as a tutor at the Writing Center.

William Shetler, a non-traditional student majoring in Secondary Education English, is student-teaching and will graduate in May 2013. He had fun including some strange and hilarious tropes in his story while imbuing it with a sense of nostalgia.

Adria Stokes, a second semester junior studying Music Education, began writing poetry in the fifth grade after reading Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee." Since then she has written over two hundred pieces, performed at dozens of spoken-word events across NYC, and been published in an all-city collection of high school poetry. For "Muse," she thought it would be interesting to link unrequited love with jazz because of its similar unpredictable quality. "I am an Artist; Who are You?" was originally a free write assigned in a creative writing course. She was given a list of words to act as the framework, and this piece was the outcome!

Tifarah Williams is a Business major with a concentration in Management and a minor in International Studies.

Artist Biographies

Olivia Butkiewicz is a transfer student going into her senior year at Lock Haven University. Olivia previously attended Luzerne County Community College and received her Associates Degree in Commercial Painting and Illustration. Art has been with her since before she could remember, and it continues to be a large part of who she is to this day. With her work, she enjoys bringing more than just any medium to the canvas; she shows emotion and uses that drive to give her viewers the same feeling.

Cassandra Englert says, "*Art has been my passion since the 8th grade.*" She enjoys working in all mediums, but she is particularly drawn to photography and web design. She will graduate in Fall 2013 and hopes to attend graduate school soon after.

Christina Englert is a senior working toward her Bachelor of Fine Art degree with a specialization in online and graphic design. She prefers working in multimedia combining digital art with paint and pastels. She doesn't want to be limited to just one medium, so she chooses to do them all. This pushes her to try new things that can be seen in the variety of her work. In the future, she hopes to further her education, but most of all to never stop creating.

Mandi Englert is a senior earning a BFA in Graphic Design. She loves going on adventures with her camera, taking photographs that evoke emotion.

Sarah Hakes says, "*My life is a contest and I just won*".

Jace Keller is a senior at Lock Haven University working towards his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a specialization in online and graphic design. He likes to design logos and other sports-related graphics.

Thomas Kessinger is an Art Major at LHU. He is senior and an aspiring graphic designer. He plans to graduate in May 2013.

Kim Mihiel is a sophomore art major with a graphic design concentration.

Daniel Reeder is a senior at Lock Haven University, pursuing a BA in Fine Arts specializing in the 2D arts. He traveled to Italy in the summer of 2011 for photography. He plans to graduate in Fall 2013 and hopes to work for either Disney or *National Geographic* in the future.