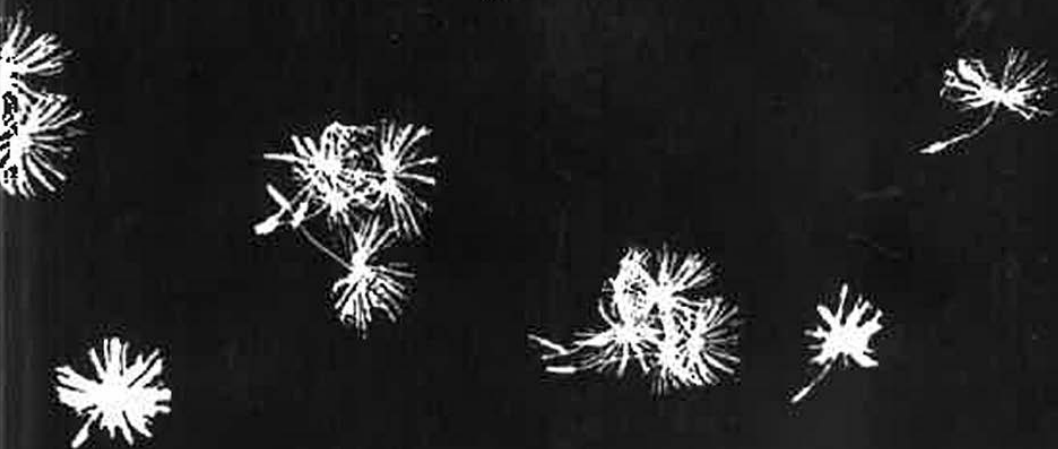


GERMINATE

VOL. V



Geminate

Volume V 2008-2009

Black Pepper	Caroline Kenworthy	1
The Mother's Tale	Erika Dickerson	2
Lake Monster*	Alex Bertsche	4
The Acrobat	Ian Karbal	22
Gravestones	Anna Green	24
The Father	Florence Helbing	26
ain't no mansions on rampart street	Erika Dickerson	28
Veins and Vines	Marissa Cameron	31
Kissing the Sun	Vanessa Mendenhall	33
Sharps and Flats	Becky Bernstein	34
Afterthoughts of a Silent Discussion	Anna Green	36
The Burning	Florence Helbing	40
Winters ***	Caroline Kenworthy	44
Before Mama Told Me You Were High in Your Videos	Erika Dickerson	45
slept & awoke ***	Jack Dunphy	46
Childhood Friends **	Florence Helbing	47
Properness	Julia Markham	48

* Best in show - Fiction

**Best in Show -Poetry

***Honorable mention - Poetry

The Chicago Academy for the Arts prepares young artists for life through rigorous academic education and professional arts training.

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Cover design by Alex Bertsche

Letter from the Editors

Our task in editing *Germinate* was to capture a snapshot of the Media Arts Department through the work created this year. This proved to be quite the difficult task. We take pride in the diversity that exists in our department but also in our tendency to be, in the end, on one accord. This year we noticed that all of the pieces speak to the human experience in respect to interactions with nature, animals, and each other. We feel that this edition of *Germinate* demonstrates the department's growth not only in form and structure, but in our awareness and perception.

As we prepare for college, we know that the department we leave behind this year will change next year, adapt new perspectives, evolve. We will do the same. We encourage the Media Arts department in all of its future endeavors and hope that we can give back as half as much as we learned.

Julia Markham
Erika Dickerson
Florence Helbing
Anna Green

Black Pepper

Caroline Kenworthy

The wife cooks dinner. She marinates steak
with Worcestershire, garlic, wine.
She concocts a seasoning so hot
that the lips pucker,
the tongue sears. It is her way
of speaking with the man across the table,
who trudges through the front door,
too tired to speak.

Nothing stirs him,
not her hands, not her advances—
only, she has found, the sharp dark aroma
of the black peppercorn
set on his plate.

barefaced in camouflage, his tongue, a machete
or in a stiff suit darker than midnight
and kiss the brown of your hand.

So Joséphine, you mustn't sleep.
Lay on his left with your legs spread.
Wear your skirt upon your face
and show your nakedness.
And in sorrow, in sorrow Joséphine
bring forth a girl
and teach her that this is her inheritance,
that the body she inhabits
does not belong to her:
it is a temple he will reside in
whether barefoot or buskined,
each time pulling at the ribcage
he let her borrow.

Lake Monster

Alex Bertsche

My best friend is a lake monster, and his name is Leo.

He was actually born Lionel Samson, but I call him Leo. I didn't know his name was Lionel when I gave him his name, but it fits. Strange, yeah, but nothing ever seemed normal about our friendship.

All I know about Lionel is that he was born three blocks from the lake in the Wood Marsh town hospital. I know this from my mom, and she knows this because she was a nurse there before she met dad and moved in with us. My mom told me that Lionel's mom, Margaret Samson, didn't have a husband or a boyfriend when Lionel was born, and that he got picked on until halfway through fifth grade. She said that on that day, His mom was late to pick him up from school because of

a rainstorm that made the roads bad. She said it was such a bad storm, dad and I probably felt it, even in the city where we use to live. So because his mom was late to pick him up, the bullies got the chance to tease him they didn't get when the teachers were around.

Once, I asked him about that day, but all he said was that the other kids beat him up pretty bad. He showed me the scars.

My mom said that when his mom picked him up, she had to drive home on the roads by the lake. My mom said that the roads by the lake were still packed dirt a few years ago, so the rainstorm turned them all into mud. She said that Margaret lost control of the car and it rolled off the road. When the ambulance found the car, the only thing that had stopped it from rolling into the lake were the two great big trees it hit. My mom said that Margaret was dead at the wheel,

and that Lionel wasn't anywhere. She said that the police figured that he had gotten out and fallen into the lake and drowned, so they buried an empty casket next to Margaret at her funeral.

But I know better. I know that Lionel got out of the car, and that he did fall into the lake. I also know that he didn't drown. He became the lake monster, and now lives in the marsh next to my house. Only now he's Leo.

I met Leo when dad and I moved here with my mom. She isn't really my mom, but she likes it when I call her that. Her real name is Sally, and she married my dad when I was in sixth grade. We lived in the Keyroot City for a while, but she got homesick, so we moved back here to Wood Marsh. Dad would've done anything to make her happy, so we were packed and out of our old apartment by the fourth day of Christmas break. I didn't like the city all that much, but I was used to it and I didn't like the idea of moving all

the way out to Wood Marsh halfway through the school year.

My mom, dad and I had been in Wood Marsh for two and a half months. They were happy as I'd ever seen them. I tried to be happy for them, but something just felt wrong with the whole move. I didn't really know what it was that I was uncomfortable with. I didn't have any friends at school, but I also didn't have any enemies. I didn't mind though, because I was mostly left alone. And I was doing fine in all my classes. But Wood Marsh was like someone else's clothing. It just didn't fit me. It didn't feel like home. Most of my stuff was still in boxes, any way. I never got around to unpacking it. Thinking back, it was almost the sound of Wood Marsh that got to me. That was why I couldn't sleep. Our house was mere steps from the shore, and not only did my room smell of lake water, but the sounds of the waves, no matter how faint, kept me

up every night. It wasn't the constant noise of the city, where there had been fire engines and the blare of traffic and passing trains, and it wasn't completely quiet. Every time a wave washed against the shore or a bird called across the lake, it was always just a tiny sound on the edge of my mind that wouldn't let me fall asleep. But I guess the quiet is why I met Leo.

The night I met Leo was a Thursday. By one o'clock I had almost gotten used to the water's sloshing against the shore. I was nearly asleep when it happened, but the new dock my mom and dad had built started creaking. I thought it was just the wood settling, but the sound was steady as a heart-beat and moving closer. It stopped as suddenly as it started, and for a few minutes there wasn't any other sound. The creaking started again, but it retreated towards the water. There was a muted splash, then nothing. I tried to sleep again, but the creaking came back less than an hour later and

left before I could see what caused it. By then there was no way I could sleep with whatever was making that noise on the dock. I sat with my back straight against the wall that served my headboard, waiting for the sound. The next time the sound came and settled down, I climbed out my window onto the front porch's overhang. Ten feet away, standing on the first plank of the dock was Leo. Several large strands of seaweed, dark green and flecked with brown, were stuck to his gangly frame, which was soaked wet. His dark hair hung down almost to the base of his neck and in front of his eyes, which seemed to glow in the light of the porch lamp. To me, he looked like a drowned body I had seen on a TV show a few years ago. His gaze shifted from the front dock to the overhang, where I was sure he could see me. I stared back, and after a minute, I climbed down the ivy trunk and onto the front porch. Leo hadn't moved or spoken, only watched my progress as I crossed the driveway

and stood in front of him, my feet on solid ground while his remained on the dock.

As I took in his face, I realized that he was taller than me by almost a head. He was also pale, and he didn't blink very much. We stood there, watching each other, for what felt like hours, until he finally spoke.

"...h-i." His voice sounded scratchy and hollow, but I could still understand them.

"Hey." Was all I could say. I couldn't think of anything else to say to a stranger who looked like he had drowned and crawled up onto the dock.

There was another awkward pause before he said, "You... live here?"

"...yeah... I moved here over Christmas break."

"Oh."

"..."

"Okay." He picked up my hand with his own, but his fingers were like ice on my skin. I winced at that first touch, and he backed away as if he'd been

slapped, letting my hand drop.

"Wait-" I said, reaching out to stop him. He withdrew another step, and then another. I took a step forwards onto the dock and put my hands out in his direction.

He studied my hands carefully, then took a wary step forwards. I stayed as still as I could, and he moved towards me again. He took another half step, and picked up my hands. I ignored the coldness of his hands and stared straight at his chest.

He stared at my hands intently, and then, as if remembering something, gave me the most lopsided handshake I ever received. Without a word, he let my hands go and turned around, running to the end of the dock and diving into the water with a small splash. I ran to the edge of the dock, watching to see where he surfaced, but he never did.

I turned back to the house, climbed the ivy trellis, and got back into bed. I think that was the first time I had a good night's sleep in Wood Marsh.

The next day was Friday, and the happenings of the night before seemed so much like a dream that I didn't have time to think about meeting Leo until science class.

"Now students," the teacher, Mr. Vicci, had split us up into teams and handed out Bunsen burners, cups of ice, and test tubes with pieces of seaweed floating in them. "I know its Friday, but settle down. We only have another thirty minutes left of the class period. Now, I want you all to set up your experiments with one vial of the seaweed in the ice and one over the Bunsen burner. You'll record the number of bubbles that comes out of each stem, and if you follow the direction on your handout, we should all get consistent data."

My partner was Finn, whose mom was the gym teacher. He immediately grabbed the burner and turned the flame up as high as it would go. I pulled the bucket of ice over to my side of the table, taking a tube of the seaweed from the rack. The plant was a dark

green, with tiny brown flecks along its surface. It looked like something had seen before, but I couldn't thin where. Mr. Vicci, who had been wall between tables, stopped at ours to check our progress.

"Mr. Slovenski, I specified that the Bunsen burners were to be opened up more than halfway. I will not have you wasting fuel." He turned the burner with a swift motion and looked across the table to where I sat.

"Is something the matter, Ms...." He paused a moment, checking the name on my notebook. "Ms. Azellen?"

"No Mr. Vicci. I was just wondering where this seaweed came from."

"Oh, yes. I borrowed a staff boat this morning and collected it from the It only grows out near the middle, rather deep down, too, so I had to nets to-"

"Mr. Vicci, my plant is all weird and lopsided." Finn held up his test tube where half of the leaves on his plant were the normal green, the others dark brown and slimy looking.

"I see. Ms. Azellen, would you please get some more samples for your table?" Mr. Vicci asked. I took Finn's sample and stood up, walking past him to get to the bench of samples. I was walking back behind Finn's chair when he suddenly stood up, pushing his chair back into my legs. I fell forwards, the test tube slipping out of my fingers and shattering on the floor in front of me. I landed on my elbows and forearms. "Huh-?" was all I heard from Finn. "What is going on—Ms. Azellen?" Mr. Vicci exclaimed, looking over a table to see what had happened. "Are you alright?" "Oww." I winced slightly, sitting up on my knees. "Yeah, I'm—ouch!" I looked down at my forearms to see small, sharp pieces of glass embedded mostly in my right arm. There were a few drops of blood already mingling with the water on the floor. "Oh my god, she's bleeding!" Some girl shouted, and everyone was on their feet in seconds, crowding around. I heard glass crunching under heels and

the squeak of sneakers on wet tile, but no one got close enough to get blood on their shoes. "Sit down!" Mr. Vicci shouted, and they did at once. He grabbed a roll of paper towels off one of the tables and proceeded to wrap my right arm with it. "Go to the nurse's office." He ordered, helping me to my feet. "And Mr. Slovenski," he said, turning to Finn, "you will escort her. Then report to the principal's office."

"Damn it!" Finn muttered, kicking a locker once we were in the hall. The sound rang out and reverberated off the walls, but no one opened their door to see what was going on. I stood behind him for a minute, watching disquietedly as the blood started to seep through the paper towels. "Finn." "What do you want?" He spat, turning on me. "I'd rather not bleed on the floors, so if you could tell me where the nurse's

office is, I'll go there myself and you can stay here kicking lockers." He looked shocked for a second, and turning back to the locker, he gave it another kick, leaving a small dent in the metal. "Let's go."

The nurse's office was a small room on the first floor. It had two cots, a sink, a table and some chairs, a closet full of first aid supplies, an unused body board and a desk. The walls were white and neatly lined with filing cabinets. A lady in a blue sweater set was bouncing a tennis ball off the wall when we came in. "Hey Ms.," Finn said, flopping down in one of the chairs. "Why hello Finn, it's so nice to see— oh my goodness, what happened to you?" "Ms. H" said, seeing the bloody mess around my arm. "She tripped and landed on a test tube," Finn answered as Ms. H pulled me to the other chair and laid my arm down on the table. "She was bleeding all over the place." Finn continued, but

Ms. H ignored him, washing her hair and snapping on a pair of latex gloves before peeling away the makeshift bandage. "That's an awful lot of cuts," she said, unwrapping the last of the paper towels. Ms. H picked out all the bits of glass with tweezers, then washed my arm off and wiped it off with some thing that stung more than landing the glass. Finn just watched while she covered my right arm with gauze and my left arm with Band-Aids. "Oh my, look at the time. School's almost out, so I don't see the point you going back to class now. But where are you here, Finn?" "Mr. Vicci said I had to bring her here." "Did he also send you to the principal's office?" She asked. "No!" "Yes." Finn and I spoke at the same time. Ms. H glared at me, and I glared back. "Finn, you can't always come here." Ms. H scolded, throwing out the blood-soaked paper towels.

"Yeah, whatever," he said, getting up from his chair and slouching towards the door. "It's too late to go to the office now, Finn. Just get..." she stopped mid sentence and crossed to one of the filing cabinets. "What's your name?" "Azellen. Corrin Azellen." "Yes, get Ms. Azellen's things from the lab, please, and bring them here. I'll write a note to Mr. Vicci, and you can go to the office first thing tomorrow." "Sure thing, Ms. H." Finn said, slouching out of the room. "Such a trouble maker, that Finn," she sighed, flicking through the folders. "Always getting himself sent to the office... here we are." She held up thin manila folder with my name stamped on it. "By the way, my name's Ms. Haley, and I'm the school nurse. Now let's see here... oh, you only transferred a few weeks ago. No wonder I haven't seen you around." "Yeah," I muttered, frowning at the blood that had soaked into my shirt. "Over Christmas break."

"Oh, and you live by the lake! Seen the 'lake man' yet?" "The what?" "The lake man. It's our version of the Loch Ness monster." "Uh... no. I haven't. What does it look like?" "Well," She said, tapping her chin as she scrawled a note into my folder. "I've heard a couple stories where the lake man is tall human figure covered in the local lake weed. But I've heard just as many where he's part fish and has glowing yellow eyes." "That's dumb. There's no such thing as lake monsters," I said, looking out the window. It was overcast, and a few streetlamps had already turned on. "I agree. I'd venture a guess that it's nothing more than a log, or something of that ilk. But it brings in tourists, so I can't really complain—" "Here's your bag." Finn stood in the doorway, my backpack under one arm. "Thank you, Finn." Ms. Haley said, setting it on the floor next to me. "Are you really going to send her

home like that?" he asked. "What do you mean?" "She looks like she got mugged." He pointed to my shirt, once a pale blue but now discolored where the blood had dried in vague cloudy patterns. "You're right." Ms. Haley frowned, eyeing my shirt. "We can't let you go looking like that." "Then what am I supposed to do?" "Here," Finn said after a moment of silence. He unzipped his sweater, a dark blue hoodie with the school logo stitched across the front, and threw it at me. "Use this." "That'll work very well. Thank you, Finn," Ms. Haley said, just as the last bell rang. "Great." He grumbled, shouldering his own bag and walking away.

When dad picked me up from school, the first thing I saw was a big suitcase in the back of the car, the tags still looped through the zipper pull. "Dad, why's there a—"

"Corrin, listen carefully," he said as he drove out of the school parking lot. "Sally's brother is sick, so she and I have to go to Oregon for the week end. We know you're a responsible kid, so we're trusting you to stay by yourself. There's no school on Monday night. There's enough food in the pantry and the refrigerator to last next week. Other than that... well, I know the drill. Lock the doors, answer the phone but don't tell anyone we're not there, get your homework done, let the cat out every now and then, call 911 if there's an emergency, do not let strangers in and don't go swimming by yourself." The rest of the drive home, he muttered to himself a list of things he would need to pack, not noticing the sweater wasn't mine.

My mom was waiting in the living room with a pile of clothes for her and dad. She packed them hastily while dad got his toothbrush, shaving razor, and boxers, which my mom had forgotten. Ten minutes later they were gone, having repeated my list of instructions, given me \$40 in emergency money and said goodbye. That was the first time I had been the only one in the house, unless you counted Sulfide, my mom's cat. He didn't do a lot, mostly just eating and sleeping on the downstairs window seat. I didn't feel like doing homework, so I sat down on the couch to watch TV.

It was at least eleven when I heard creaking from the dock again. Leo stood on the first plank of the dock, just like the night before, staring up at my house. He tilted his head to look down at me as I met him at the dock. We were silent for a minute, until he spoke.

"You're still here." He said, like he was

asking a question.

"Um, yeah. I live here now.

"What about the others? They left. Do they still live here?"

"My mom and dad? They had to go to Oregon, but they still live here."

There was another moment of quiet.

"Your voice... you sound better than yesterday." I said. "Were you sick?"

"No. I practiced."

"Oh... so... you don't talk?"

"Not to people. You're the first."

"...ever?"

"In a long time."

We were quiet again. I fiddled with the edge of Finn's sweater, which I had forgotten to change out of.

"Do you have a name?"

He paused a moment before answering. "I used to."

The tone of voice he used was the hesitant kind someone uses when they don't want to talk about things anymore. I hastily changed the subject.

"Uh... do you want something to eat?"

"...sure."

"How about Captain Crunch?"

"Okay."

Ten minutes later, we sat on the edge of the dock eating Captain Crunch. My toes barely brushed the surface of the water, but his were in up to his ankles. We chewed in silence, staring at a cluster of homes lit up by porch lights across the lake with dad's camping lantern and two glasses of orange juice between us. I had avoided eating dinner by myself by watching TV and snacking on crackers, but it was peaceful, and almost nice having someone to eat with.

"What about you?" He asked suddenly, setting his bowl down and turning to me. "Do you... have a name?"

"Yeah. It's Corrin."

"Corrin." He paused for a moment, then leaned forwards over the lantern, throwing his already pale face into deep shadow. I sat as still as I could while he lifted a strand of my hair between two fingers. Normally, it was ashy blonde, but it in the lantern light

it was almost white.

"Corrin." He repeated, studying the strand for a moment, then releasing as he pulled back. He picked up a lock of his own hair, which hung to his nose. Next to mine, his was inky against almost colorless skin.

We sat for another minute, and without a word he slipped into the water. I watched the lake for a few minutes before taking the dishes inside, hoping for some reason that he hadn't noticed the bandage on my arm. I lit the lantern on the dock, though, and from the kitchen window it looked far away as the houses on the other side of the lake.

I woke up the next morning on the couch, Sulfide's orange tail flicking my face while the rest of his weight crushed into my chest.

"Ugh, get off of me, you fatty," I groaned, swatting at his pudgy form. He meowed indignantly and pounced on my right arm, like he knew it still stung from the day before.

"Ouch! Stupid cat." sat rubbing the sleep out of my eyes and staggered to the door, where Sulfide sat. "Out with you." I opened the door, and he swaggered outside and sat on the porch stairs. I glanced out at the lake, which reflected the cloudy morning sky above like a mirror, despite the cool breeze. Nothing moved to disturb its surface. I closed the door and went upstairs to change.

My clothes were in bad shape. The blood had dried on my blue shirt, my jeans were wrinkled beyond recognition, and Finn's sweater was covered in cat hair. I hesitated for a moment before I threw it into the washing machine with the rest of my clothes, hoping that it would come out clean. Breakfast was a bagel. Just a plain bagel, no cream cheese even. Homework was easy, and it didn't take too long. After that, I just walked around the house, finding things to do to keep myself busy. I swept the floors, but they

were already clean. I watched TV, even though there was nothing on. I made a halfhearted attempt to unpack more of my stuff, but I just wasn't up to it. I read one of my mom's magazines, did another load of laundry, sharpened all the pencils in my room, organized the soup cans in the pantry, and stacked an old set of dominos 'til they fell over. Then I picked them up. In the end, I went outside. I sat on the porch with Sulfide and stared at the water. It was still undisturbed by the breeze, but it glimmered every now and then when the late afternoon sun broke through the thinning clouds. I closed my eyes and leaned against one of the pillars that held the porch's roof up, trying to think of something to do. Sulfide, who had been rubbing against my hand, suddenly hissed and arched his back. I opened my eyes and saw him, standing at the far edge of the dock, his eyes fixed on me, the lantern swinging from his hand. I stood, making sure that Sulfide couldn't get in

another swing at my arm, and walked to where Leo was. "Corrin." He said, almost smiling. He seemed out of place standing soaking wet on my dock in the afternoon light, his skin too pale and his hair too dark. Especially his eyes, pale amber to the point of being yellow. He handed me the lantern. "Hi... you." He either ignored the fact that I didn't have a name for him yet or just didn't care. I put the lantern down behind me. "I didn't thank you for the Captain Crunch," he stated. "...that's alright." I said, surprised that he had come to thank me for a bowl of cereal. "You can swim, right?" He asked. "Yeah, but what does that—" At that moment, he grabbed my arm and jumped off the dock, pulling me into the water after him. The water was cold and rushed into my open eyes and mouth, choking, blinding and nearly paralyzing me at the same time. I kicked my way out of his grip

and broke the surface of the water, coughing to get the water out of my lungs. I stuck my arm out and groped around blindly until I found the edge of the dock, and I hung off of that while I tried to catch my breath. "Are you okay?" A voice asked. I blinked the water away to see it was Leo, no more than a few inches away from my face. "Why did you—" I tried to sound angry but instead I broke into another fit of coughing. "Why did you pull me into the water?" "You said you could swim," he answered, confused. He looked first at my face, then my arm. "Did you get hurt?" At first I didn't understand, but then it hit me. He was staring at the arm that I hung on to the dock with, my right arm, which was still covered in gauze. "No!" I said, dropping from the dock and pulling my arm close. "It's just a few cuts." "But can you still swim?" Leo questioned again.

“Yes.
He cracked another almost smile.
“Then follow me.” He grabbed my arm again and pulled me back under the waves.
He swam inhumanly fast, even though he was dragging me behind him. It took a second before I could right myself and start swimming, but by then we were already flying through forests of seaweed. There wasn’t a lot of light, but what there was reflected off the scales of monstrously large fish, fish that seemed too big to live in such a lake.
My ears popped as we swam deeper, and my lungs ached for air. I squeezed his hand, and he stopped and turned. His eyes glowed yellow, reflecting the tiny bit of light that reached this far down. I struggled upwards against his hold, and before I could react, he rocketed upwards, dragging me behind. A second later, we broke the surface. I looked around to see that although we had swum mostly parallel to the shore, the dock was just a speck behind us.

“How did I didn’t have time to finish before I was pulled back down and we were swimming again. When Leo pulled me up again, it was in front of a steep bank topped with trees about ready to fall into the water below. There was a split in the bank that led into a narrow, marshy ravine where the trees grew thick overhead and their roots poked out of the earthen walls and into the water.
“Where are we?” I asked, but he didn’t answer.
He pulled me after him into the ravine, where the water was still deep enough to swim. The channel we were in forked into others, and after passing a few we turned into one of the forks. We stopped where a frayed rope hung against the wall of the ravine, its end trailing in the water.
“Here,” he said, climbing up the rope and over the edge. I followed, favoring one arm over the other, until he reached down and pulled me up by my wrists. I stumbled for a second, then looked up.

In front of me was an overturned metal rowboat, propped up by its single oar. It rested on a makeshift floor of wooden boards in many sizes and stages of decay. Several plastic milk crates were lashed to a tree next to the boat, filled with miscellaneous tools and trinkets. A length of fishing wire ran was strung between some of the trees, and numerous fishing lures dangled from it, like a bizarre strand of Christmas lights.
“What is this?” I asked, turning to Leo.
“Home,” he said.
We stood in silence. I felt his eyes on me, strangely expectant. I took a step forwards and touched a fishing lure, watching as the whole line was set in motion.
“Why did you show me this?” I asked, turning to face him.
“I saw your house,” he answered. “And we ate. Together.”
“Oh. That wasn’t... I mean, I would have... you didn’t have to,” I faltered.
“But it’s fair,” he stated. I didn’t have anything to say in response.

The swim back was slower, and Leo stayed nearer to the surface. He helped me out of the water and on the dock, careful of my arm. We sat next to each other, looking out over the water.
“Thank you... for showing me you: home,” I said.
“Thank you for the cereal,” he said. We sat in silence again. The sun was getting low on the horizon, and the air was getting colder. Leo shifted his weight and slid into the water, turn to face me.
“Bye.” He said. He was almost under water before something possessed to yell.
“Wait!”
He stopped and looked up at me.
“Do you... um, do you like movies I asked.
“I haven’t seen many,” he said.
“Okay- just... uh, wait here for a minute.” I said, standing up. I ran to house, where Sulfide was scratchin to get in. I picked him up and threw

open the door, running up the stairs. After suffering several scratches from an angry and now wet Sulfide, I managed to lock him in my mom and dad's room. I ran to the upstairs bathroom that I used and turned on the water for the tub. I ran back downstairs and to the end of the dock, where Leo was floating on his back, staring up at the sky. When he saw me, he climbed back onto the dock.

"Follow me," I said putting out my hand. He looked at it warily. "Please?"

His cold hand slipped into mine. We walked together to the end of the dock, up the front steps and into the house. He looked around the house while I got the box of Captain Crunch out of the kitchen. He followed close behind as I walked up the stairs and to the bathroom. He saw the tub and immediately sat down in it. I went to the hall closet and got the mini TV that had survived the move from Keyroot, along with an old VHS copy of the wizard of Oz. I set the TV

up on the countertop put the tape in. I sat, my back leaning against the wall of the tub, and he propped his arms up on the edge next to me, his head resting on them. The movie started to play, and I could hear his breathing next to my ear.

"I... I remember this," he said, pointing to the screen. I said nothing, though I could hear the excitement in his voice. We watched the movie, hardly moving except to reach for the box of Captain Crunch. When it got to the part where Dorothy and the Scarecrow and the Tin Man met the Cowardly Lion, he pointed again.

"He was my favorite, the Lion," he said. I smiled, reaching for another handful of cereal.

"Mine too."

I watched the rest of the movie smiling. When it was over, he stood and got out of the tub, dripping water on the floor. We walked to the dock and stood there, looking across the lake.

"Thanks," he said.

"No, I... should thank you." He

looked at me curiously. "I mean, you showed me your home, and you kept me company, and I..." I paused for a second, suddenly realizing something. "I don't even know your name." This didn't surprise him. He stood for a moment, then gave me a half smile. "If you want to thank me..." He leaned in close so that his eyes were almost level with mine. "Then find me a name."

I spent the next two days looking through every book I owned and every website I could think of, looking for a name for him. Sulfide had refused to go outside since seeing Leo, so he sat in my window, glaring at the lake. My mom and dad returned late on Monday and fell asleep before I could ask them about her brother.

The next day was Tuesday, back to school. Finn's sweater had sat folded in my backpack since Sunday, and I was sure that any blood that had gotten on it had been washed out. I found Finn at

his locker before science.

"This is yours," I said, handing him t sweater.

"What is?"

"This." He looked down at it with i disgust.

"I don't want it," he said, slamming locker shut.

"Well, that's too bad. It's your swea Take it back."

"I said I don't want it. You probably blood on it, anyways."

"I washed it, idiot."

"I still don't want it back." By now were walking towards Mr. Vicci's ro "You don't have to be a jerk about it," I huffed. "Just take back the stupid sweater."

"Look," he said, turning to glare at me. "I don't want it back. Why don't you just keep it? Okay? I don't want back."

"Just take it back," I said, shoving it into his chest. "It's not like I dragge through a leper colony."

"I don't want it back," he said, shov it into my arms, "After you've worr

Get it through your head! Just keep it.”
With that, he gave the sweater a final shove, pushing me back. I stood there, fuming with rage, and shoved the sweater back into my backpack.

It was at least two in the morning, and I sat on the edge of the docks, waiting for him to show up. I was still angry with Finn, but it was dying down. I didn't have a reason to be angry. Finn was just... Finn. That was just how he was, how he would always be.

“Did you find one?”

I looked down to see him, his eyes almost glowing yellow in the dim light.

“Yeah,” I said, leaning over. “Leo.”

His eyes widened slightly, then he smiled. A small smile, but a real one.

“I like it.”

The Acrobat

Ian Karbal

Rungs vanish beneath me.
Reaching my platform above,
I step out to the rope ahead.
It sways and bends
before me. I feel
A thousand eyes fixed
upon me. Judging every
Baby step

In the spotlight
I bow for them, callous,
after perilous balancing acts.
Giant, Drop knee, carroll tree.
One final trick.
On the ends of seats
sitting stiff, they wait
silently for
Blunder

Blades of a fan
dance above me.
I lay alone
on top of sheets.

The hollow clapping
fills my ears. I envision
earnest smiles.
Alone behind curtains,
I sink into a final

Bow

Gravestones

Anna Green

The only sound,
is the hiss
of the moles' claws on the grass.
Digging around,
searching for treasure under the ground.
A token to give to Charon
as payment for a partner.

The moles scrape along the surface of stones
making a grating noise
that joins them in the night.
Accompanying the jarring music
are the words carved into the stones,
traced into a tune by the claws.

Wiggling their pink noses,
the moles sniff the stones' surfaces.
While tracing the head-like tops
they are surprised by the shapes of the stones.
Those shadows much like their own.
Shock soon turns to joy
as the moles dip their heads to bow

then weave among their stiffened partners,
leading the motionless stones
in the most moving dance since they left the earth.

The Father

Florence Helbing

Won't you tell me
how to kill—where you found
the quick bite
and snap of your teeth. When you felt
the permanence in your bones.
Please, tell me:

where does that hide?

Please, show me
your teeth one more time.
What happened
to your restlessness, and
where do I put mine?

I see you
laid out in the sun on the grass:
made, a tired mountain. What can I do
to wake you to me,
small enough to you to lose myself
on your back. To disappear
when you blink.
Will you show me
your teeth one more time:

place of marching knives and old meat,
black and hot; please, show me
what it means.

aint no mansions on rampart street

Erika Dickerson

I aint never seen Ronald use a paper napkin in my life he's got a habit of wiping his hands on his work pants and this I've known since I was in pigtails and trainin bras I know its rude to people watch but there's just somethin a lil strange about a man who lives on rampart street but can't afford no paper napkins to clean his hands wipes the mustard from his muffuletta sandwich right on his good pants he got a nice truck he say is for work purposes only but Geraldine a waitress down from the bar on Bourbon street say he take care of more business than he get paid for in that truck it's no concern of mine but Miss Maybell's wellbein is

Miss Maybell Mason is Ronald Mason's mama bless her heart she only got him for a son and he do her all the

shame in the world comin round here only durin the evenings before he go home to get changed for a date with any one of his floozies of the week I seen him just last night I seen him pull up in front of his mama's house with some woman in the car he had come to give Miss Maybell her dinner my mama used to make Miss Maybell breakfast every morning and send one of us kids cross the street to give it to her she crippled and aint got nobody to help her my mama got lupus now and it's bad got her bones sunken over like lard so I cook for Miss Maybell now and stay right on at my Mama's to keep a lazy eye on both of them Ronald showed up a quarter past nine knowin his mama was already sleepin with some floozy in the car and when he went upstairs she got outta the car

to have her a cigarette it was a
lil breezy out but I tell you it burned
my ass to see her in that tube top she
forced into a skirt Ronald aint got
no taste no class when it matters

Miss Maybell keeps her bedroom win-
dow cracked at night say
she feel suffocated in her square room
sometimes

aint no smokin in front of Miss
Maybell's house! I yelled from my
porch
she's an old woman for God's sake go
kill yourself somewhere else!

the woman switched back to the
car and slammed the door shut like
she was hurtin somebody's feel-
ings I tap butt of my
own cigarette and the ash falls down
on the concrete like shootin stars get-
tin their last bit of shine I go in the
house before Ronald pulls up with his
latest when I get inside mama is on
the chesterfield tryin to nap the

butterfly rash across her face looks
like it's flyin into her her breathin
is course and I tiptoe past so I wont
wake her

Martha why were you outside so
late? she asks

it's not late ma have you taken your
medicine yet? You know Dr. Frazier
said you can't go to Sunday morning
service unless you pop them pills like
you suppose to

I didn't ask you what Dr. Frazier said
mama's words are real short cuz she
say it hurts when she breathes she
closes her eyes again and I don't say
nothing back cuz I know she likes to
have the last word Casey
screams to the top of his lungs like he
done lost his natural mind

Man aint nothin to eat in here!
I can hear him slam the refrigerator
door close and he steps on my big

toe tryna stomp away

Casey you too old to be throwin
tantrums its crawfish in there I just
bought some yesterday Mr. Wilson
even gave me lagniappe I grab
Casey's arm before he can run off and
his complainin wakes mama

I don't like crawfish I don't even
know how to eat that stuff ma
me and Casey both know he know
how to eat crawfish aint nothin to
it suck the head squeeze the tip I
take one outta the refrigerator and
show him anyway Casey turns his
head
Daddy wouldn't make me eat crawfish
he mutters like he don't know I got
ears that could hear dreams it's
the first time Casey done mentioned
Willie in a long time mama used
to tell him not to use the devil's name
in her house and Casey didn't under-
stand cuz he neva said satan or the

devil he just said daddy
any man who done eva came home
with a passion mark on his neck th:
his wife aint put there and have the
nerve to pack up and leave was the
devil a shameless devil
I tear off a paper napkin and leave
kitchen I hear Casey try slurp the
head like I showed him at the bott
of the stairwell

Veins and Vines

Marissa Cameron

In all woods
of moments,
there is one of you and me.
What you have seen, I could not hear,
and you can no longer tell me.

Your hairs, lush and brown, fall into
the water we wandered and loved in.
The river weaves it into dangling vines,
intertwining with the willows.
Branches lift your hairs from my touch.
Birds grasp your strands and carry them higher,
merge them into their nests.
With your head bare,
you leave me, in leaves and white waters.

Budding under your skin,
roots breathe and drain red.
Saplings burst your surface,
gracing the ground with dew.
Blood leaves you freezing, in snow and tints rivers.

The cold comes and the plants retreat,
giving space for the sun to enter
through the holes in your face and bones.
Spots of light scan your ruins,
your tongue, and your heart.
Ice pulls at the veins,
bordering what you kept fenced within yourself,
Nature leaves me questioning you.

Perhaps I will never know,
why you guarded your thoughts,
and what things you could not reveal.
The remaining parts of you,
will keep branching higher.
All that is left for me to find
is if your hairs have died or grown.

Kissing the Sun

Vanessa Mendenhall

Diana and her stars glow
When the rest of the world is asleep

I turn my back to her and run west
To the flaming arms beckoning to me
The way rose petals unfold to morning light

Fire licked the skin from my lips
Just as the wind pull leaves from the trees
It singed the hairs from my arm

I ate from blazing palms
Danced on white ashes
I lay with blushing embers
On fiery ribbons of gold

Sharps and Flats

Becky Bernstein

Night after night

My hands glide over the keys,

My mind races over the notes,

eyes drift to the floorboard.

The pattern of a keyboard rises from its wooden slats.

An owl hoots relentlessly outside my window.

And the fence surrounds my house,

white in the light of moon.

Tonight, I'm up late practicing

I have played Moonlight Sonata

Two hundred times,

forever missing the second A note in the twenty-third measure.

I slam my fists against the keys, and leave the bench.

Moving through the house

out the door

I find my self in the garage.

My self in the dark.

I snatched a can of paint.

Black brush strokes against the white fence

Back at the piano
I lay my hands down
black keys, white keys
the sounds are in my head.
They flow onto the keys, into the air.

Afterthoughts of a Silent Discussion

Anna Green

I. Here

I had a thought the other day that
I stopped just to write it down.
After all, you said that you couldn't understand
Why there were miscommunications
Without even saying anything.

I can explain anything without a sound:

At the moment we are born
There is something beating
Within each moment.
We are petals spread from the budding center,
blood red and vulnerable.

I could write "we are flowers,"
Only to see that petals are for plants alone.

From those moments, you can see
Not petals
But words separated into
lines.

I don't know what you see most of the time.

II. Making It (whatever that is)

So, I'm finding things out.

You want to see everything before you believe it.

And for me to create something known to our eyes and ears.

That we can hear it so well that we don't need our eyes to begin with.

I can feel the sounds I hear.

I can trace the words I sound out.

I have told you that

flowers are just images to show how we feel,

Where's the tangibility?

There may be a move to make us connect
with concepts alone.

Am I unchanged for the better?

III. Two Sides

We are somehow different

because of the way our thoughts work.

I found one mindset.

We're here by addition. We leave by subtraction.

We barely connect because
we think there's something more
Bonding us together in the
Flimsy strands of the imagination.

I'm losing my breath
not saying anything.

IV. What we are

You told me there was something annoying
About what I was doing.

How trying to talk in this modern world
using silent messages is
time consuming,
I understand now.

I'm going to water everything down
so that you can understand my side of thinking:

I could tell you what kind of flower I am.
I could still use words to describe it.
About how the lines along the leaves
are as unique as the lines along my hands.

I put my palm face down.
V. Now

After the moments pass.
After both sides to the petals have been overturned.
All flowers bent away. Dried up from lack of rain.
For your imagination's sake,
I am still here
And these are the words you won't read.

The Burning

Florence Helbing

It was noon, Monday. Matt and Martinez sat on the curb in front of Marco's Deli on the 22nd street strip, smoking. "I heard smokin' squares lowers your body temperature."

After a while, Martinez asked, "where you heard that?" They both watched a group of kids in their bathing suits across the street, gathered in front of a corner convenience store. Their hair was slick with water and they dragged their heavy, wet towels on the ground, laughing hard about some joke.

"I don't remember. A magazine." Matt pulled the bottom of his shirt up and wiped the sweat off his forehead with it. "You think it's true?" They had sat on this curb for quite a while, after having walked all the way up from Martinez's three-flat a couple of miles away. There was no place else

to go besides the strip. Everywhere else was either residential, or run-down and industrial, like the empty warehouses on that asphalt lot past Wright Avenue. On 16th, a guy could go to the Italian American Association—if he was Italian, over 55, and possibly out of a job—or the bowling alley next door. But Matt and Martinez returned to the strip even on their days off, the way most people did, and now they had nothing to do.

"You feel any colder?" Martinez asked.

"Nah."

"Then it ain't true." He flicked the last of his cigarette onto the ground, and then snuffed it out with his shoe. The group of kids finally broke up and they all ran off in different directions.

"Maybe you just gotta smoke

a lot of 'em... dunno. It's too damn hot out." The TV said that it was record heat this summer, and that old people were dying faster and in bigger numbers than usual. Outside, Matt didn't have a hard time believing it, because right now the asphalt was sticking to the soles of his sneakers. It was too hot out to move much, either, and even walking from Martinez's house to the strip had been an ordeal. As Matt sat there with Martinez, though, so sure it was too hot to move very far, his sister Sarah came around the corner in her jogging shorts and running shoes, ponytail bobbing as she ran. They silently watched her pass. Matt leaned forward and rested his elbows on his knees, looking blankly across the street. A few girls in t-shirts and short shorts stepped out of the store with a big bag of Cheetos, and a two-liter of soda.

Matt watched them walk down the block, slowly, laughing with each other, and into an ugly brick house. He wiped his forehead again

with the back of his hand, and blinked as a drop of sweat trickled into his eye. It was stupid that he and Martinez had left the house; it was too hot to be outside.

"Bet it's cool down there. Think they'd let us in if we asked real nice?" He said. But Martinez either hadn't heard, or wasn't listening. He drank from the two-liter they had bought in silence. Matt sat back again and closed his eyes. He and Martinez had spent entire days in Matt's basement during other summers when it was ungodly hot. They would close the blinds, plug in a couple of fans, and unstuff the hole in the ceiling, because sometimes it blew cold air.

Once, when Martinez had crashed at Matt's the night before, on the couch in the living room, they had drifted gradually down into the basement the next day. Eventually, they went to the fast food restaurant a few blocks away and bought hamburgers and fries.

When they got back, they turned on the TV and watched COPS.

Martinez sat on the floor, unwrapping the hamburger, paper crinkling loudly, and Matt sprawled out on the couch. Whenever he watched this show, he couldn't help but look for people that he knew. He expected to see those people who had disappeared with the years, hiding out in one of the run-down apartments or shabby single-floor houses. But it never happened. He held his breath a little each time before he found out where the show was taking place. Then he let out a little sigh, thinking that it was safe—it was never anywhere close, no place where he would know anyone. He felt that Martinez always thought the same thing.

"You ever seen anybody get tased on this show?" Martinez asked around a bite of hamburger, while the cop drove around in his car, talking to the camera man.

"Probably they do that shit off camera."

They stopped talking once the cop got out and made his rounds,

waiting for a chase to begin. This time it was a guy in a ratty t-shirt and jeans cut-offs, one of those that they pick out off the side of the street for a suspicious. He immediately started run, and at first Matt and Martinez both laughed. "They always get the pidiest motherfuckers on here, man guys don't know nothing..." Martinez said.

The man's white t-shirt was a beacon in the night, receding, then falling closer to the camera. Matt held his breath. The policeman's uniform blended in with the ground and the sky, and only sometimes could Matt see their arms or their heads in the light of the camera or streetlamps. He watched the man in the white scramble over fences and skirt around his hedges, fast and stumbling and panicked. When he tripped, Matt stiffler listening to the panting breaths of the camera man and the policeman from the car. He did not want the police men to converge. He wanted to see the man disappear into the waiting

dark, the thick maze of cheap houses and decrepit alleys and trees.

Instead, he was tackled by several policemen and the camera zoomed in. Martinez made a low laugh. The man was like an animal about to get hit by a car, wide-eyed and washed-out by the camera's light. A cop ground one side of his face into the dirt and recited his rights. They cuffed him, one cop with a knee in his back to keep him pinned to the ground. Matt stared at the screen, but then looked over at Martinez. He wasn't sure if Martinez was laughing still or if he felt the disappointment that Matt did, embarrassed by it.

Winters

Caroline Kenworthy

A common scene, Canadian geese necking
south, arrowing against the wind.
Every winter it happens but this winter
I see one, the leader, produce a rolling fold
in his wings, and he's slipped to the tail of the group.

Soon enough we took the sky, we built planes, and their shadows
swallowed birds, whose shadows crossed fences
and rested in the black, broken feathers
of trees, their wise eyes staring.

Before Mama Told Me You Were High in Your Videos For Mary J. Blige

Erika Dickerson

I always wondered what was under the blanket
of hot combed hair draped across
your forehead, a gold bobby pin
gleaming like the hoops dangling
from your tired lobes.

A slothful eye? A shiner? Maybe
nothing at all. And so I doused
my hair in pomade, laid
a flat iron on the chunk crookedly parted.
It sizzled like bacon on Sunday mornings.
I had nothing to hide, just
a regular black girl's eye and a shaggy brow
that somebody, maybe a boy even,
might lean into, and find a secret.

slept & awoke

Jack Dunphy

Birds jump at his hand. He to fall down & sleep.
I thought eagle, a waving star.
It ripping past gates, fly in through walls.
Poor though, the smallest bird,
Not to live in house, but to fall there.
And flew it done, rippled near coaches, mattress.
Ceiling did not bother. Safety.

But he awoke with red dirt gleam in eye.
He swatted, ripping through height,
Caught bird, & then gone.

Punched back to wind, it gone & away.
He though, slept soon after banishing.
I saw trapped, he cared none.
Bird saw through liquid, .
He though, slept & awoke, and slept & awoke.

Childhood Friends

Florence Helbing

I wonder

if you think of me the way I was:
curled up on your roof in red dusk—
muddy feet, wild, summer-sweaty hair,
oblivious. If you remember me
timeless, and keep me,
a hot gem in your pocket.

Do you ever imagine me now,
the way that I think of you? That you feel
your impermanence. That your body knows
your life is a firework
arcing from obscurity—bright
streak against the blinking stars, crashing
to the spines of mountains for whom
movement is the commitment of a millennium.
Tiny cinder cooling into blackness.

I hope you find that your separation is an illusion;
the Earth has its hand on you all the time.
It will pull you back into its body
and dissolve you into rock,
and I will see you again.

Properness

Julia Markham

The baby woke up from Joanie's breast and yowled. The sound filled the room, the entire house. The grandmother was reminded of the days when Joanie was that age, the mornings when Joanie yowled like that and Hal would take her, and calm her, and the grandmother would have to go outside and drive the truck around in her bathrobe and slippers until she had calmed herself down enough. It would take a while, sometimes as much as an hour before she could come back. She would drive along the roads and just watch the sky.

Bob took the baby from Joanie and held it awkwardly in two hands, holding it out from him before bringing it towards his body and shushing it, rubbing its back. The grandmother watched them, and Bob almost caught her eye but she turned away and was

uncomfortable. Joanie put her hand over the grandmother's, soft fleshy palm against her wrinkled knuckles. The grandmother felt that her daughter was happy.

Bob brought the baby over to the table and motioned to give it to the grandmother, smiling, propping it up on his hip and gesturing with his free hand. She took it hesitantly. It was heavy and soft, and the grandmother saw the baby's face for the first time. Its eyes were blue, like its mother's. A tiny fat fist poked out of the blanket and waved and curled, grabbing at nothing. It smiled, and its mouth was shiny with spit. It made the grandmother happy, from somewhere deep inside of her. She felt very strange and very old, and out of place. She looked at the baby and said its name, very quietly, and it smiled again.

The grandmother made a face and the baby laughed. Joanie laughed, too, and Bob laughed heartily and asked the grandmother if she'd like some more tea. The grandmother said yes, that would be very nice, and she gave the baby back to Joanie to hold. She held it over her shoulder, and it drummed its feet against her ribs and beat its hands on her back weakly, sliding backward, and Joanie hitched it up again with a jerk. The baby gave a cough of discomfort. Bob came to stand beside Joanie, and he lifted the baby out from her arms and held it. The grandmother took a sip of tea and laced her fingers around the cup, supporting the bottom with her pinkies.

In her room a while later, the grandmother held her rolled-up bathrobe in her arms, looking at herself in the mirror. She held one hand under it, thumb curved around to the side, and the other hand kept it to her thin breast. It was made of very soft terrycloth, and the grandmother stroked its back with her fingers. She

murmured quietly and pretended she was at her house, and the porch was still new and her hair was still blonde, tied up in a loose knot at the crown of her head, and Hal was inside, reading, and she was with the baby looking out into the road. The grandmother looked at the sky. It was still early, and the only people out were a couple of teenagers in puffy black coats, hitching up their pants every so often, and the sky was gray and pink. She passed a time watching it, and when it was blue she laid the bundle down on the bed, very softly, and unrolled it, and picked it up and draped it over her shoulders. She put on her slippers and went into the bathroom, stopping by the laundry room to get some clean towels.