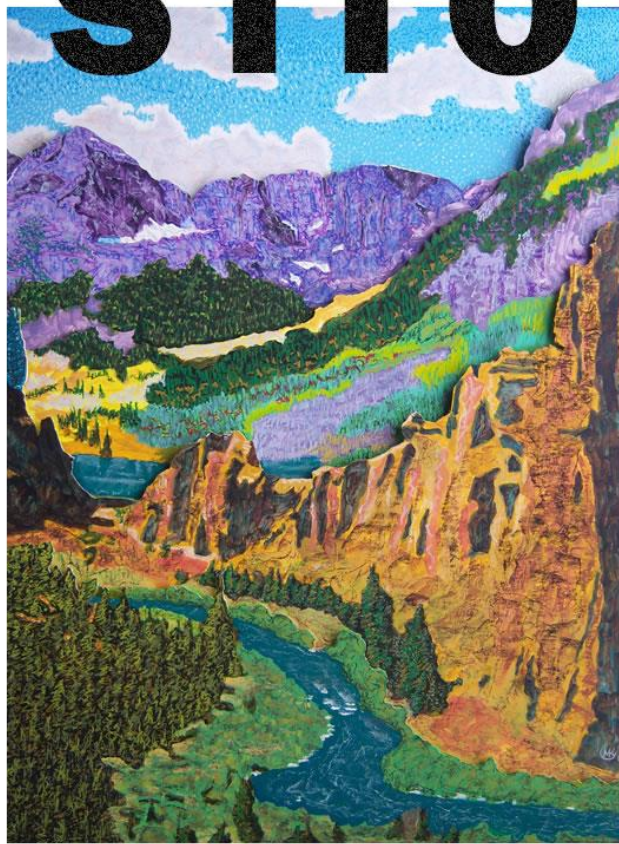


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The College of Southern Idaho's Literary Journal

A Collection of Regional Writing and Visual Art

"Mythic Landscape" by Michael Youngman

2017

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Focus

Silo is a journal of creative writing and visual art that focuses on the work of students from the College of Southern Idaho and writers and artists from the surrounding region. While the region boasts more sagebrush and open land than writers and artists, we believe that the talent of our local work is shaped by a geography and way of life that results in a unique perspective that even readers outside the area will enjoy. When early explorer John Astor visited the area, as recounted in Washington Irving's 1836 book titled *Astoria; or, Enterprise Beyond the Rock Mountains*, he and his company had crafted canoes and were floating the Snake River when he logged, "A wild and desert solitude extended on either side of the river" (176). This collection hopes to portray the diversity and talent that exists today in this still "wild and desert solitude."

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Dan Guthrie

The Pines

LANDSCAPE never ages, and this road up to my old home town proves that. The same wine grapes cover the rolling, golden hills and the same oak trees stretch their shade across the road. This old highway connects the big city and many small towns, including the one I will be arriving in. I've made it a point not to drive this road in this direction for nine years. When people say that the best example is a bad example, they are talking about the town I just drove in to, The Pines. I'm only here to see something I've been looking forward to for many years, my mother's death.

I left this town the morning following my high school graduation, and nothing has changed. Pine tar and mountain breezes fill my nose and lungs with a familiar type of air that I welcome. The Pines is a town set on a two lane highway, splitting it right in half. On the left is a series of roads pointing downhill, unlined narrow black roads that lead nowhere fast. On the right are the uphill roads, unlined narrow black roads that lead nowhere fast. The rickety store sits facing the highway, red and white peeling paint surround dust covered windows and a rusty, squeaky door. The level of disrepair reflecting the pride most Pines residents possess. The post office stands abandoned due to a lack of mail and lack of interest. The downhill roads snake to the river, bordered by blackberry brambles and golden poppies. Small houses dot Cedar Lane and Fir Road, homes that were built for weeklong vacations in the 1950s, but

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Pines residents find them acceptable shelter for years and years. Pipes stick out of each rooftop, connected to wood burning stoves below-providing the only source of heat in the winter. The men provide a family lifestyle by chopping up pine trees and selling cords of wood, I don't know what a cord is exactly but it seems to be a pile of wood sitting in a trailer that began its life as a pickup truck bed. The women try to make ends meet by commuting to other towns to clean things or sell things or serve things.

A gravel covered road pointing uphill from the highway is where I turn. The road curves twice-holding my speed to fifteen miles an hour-the familiar cedar canopy above. Directly in front of me I see the house where I grew up, a house that I love to miss. I put this place in my rear view mirror nine years ago, with no interest of looking back. The only reason I would return would be for this reason, the end of my mother.

The house is red, it was redder at one time, but it continues to hold the shade enough to be called red. The house has always tilted, the right side sinking like a ramshackle Tower of Pisa. The two front windows are covered from the inside with brown blankets purchased from the fair or a parking lot. One depicts a majestic buck deer, the other an upside down yellow 49ers logo. The trim is white but chipped out to a consistent shade of wet wood gray. The yard is a weed garden that has always been unkempt and unmanaged, despite being walked through many times a day for many years. A rusted chrome BMX bike lies beneath one window, reminding visitors

that a boy once lived there. A long wooden board serves as the walkway from the road up to the front door, mud covered and beaten down.

The front door flies open. “Mom ain’t dead yet,” my silver-tongued older sister hollers. “So why are you here?”

“Davey called me and let me know that it won’t be long, so here I am.”

“Well I’m going to finish my smoke out here. She’s in her room in the chair, probably asleep.”

My sister has always been my hero, a friend and protector with a three year head start. She was always a head turner, her crystal blue eyes and straw blonde hair defined her as the quintessential California girl. Her ratty hair and lined face could now qualify her as a before picture in a makeover scenario. Her personality was electric and sharp, attracting constant attention-both negative and positive. At the perilous age of eighteen, that personality attracted a twenty-two-year-old crystal meth connoisseur named Kevin. He introduced her to the finer things in life, such as dope and teenage pregnancy. My sister was absent more and more during this relationship, and I missed her even when she was right next to me. She poured all of her time and effort into this guy, and I was left lonely and on my own. Predictably, Kevin disappeared just as fast as the second line appeared on the pregnancy test. This event sent my sister into a depression that resulted in a miscarriage and a life of longing and loneliness.

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As I enter my mother's house, I am overwhelmed by familiar smells that I have not encountered for many years-the smells that raised me. Stale cigarette smoke and cat nab my nostrils immediately, the scent of grease and fried ground beef follow close behind. The living room is bathed in dimness, with the flicker of the always-on television the only type of light. Family pictures and memories dot the small shelves on the left and right of the room; the couch nestles two tabby cats and years of their hair. One pink recliner and one brown easy chair await my mother and sister's return to the T.V. A very slight turn of my head finds me in the kitchen, the place where shag carpet ends and stained gold fleck linoleum begins. The endless pile of dishes fills the sink, illuminated by the outside sky through a rusty screen and dingy white curtain. Hot Pocket boxes and Pepsi cans line the counters, especially the one right above the Jenga-piled garbage can. The stove has an ever present two iron skillet with grease turning white, the microwave splattered orange from raviolis. The refrigerator is a yellow relic that hums and purrs, magnets covering it from top to bottom-the best part being a group of letter magnets arranged into the F-word.

I face straight again and look down a dark, short hallway. The patchy green carpet leads to the only bathroom in the house, as well as two small bedrooms and one small master bedroom. I peer into my old room, which is now a storage room full of boxes and forgotten items. My Whitesnake poster still parties on the wall, David Coverdale in all his glory. My sister's room has a closed door with a fist sized hole in

it; I can see her unmade bed and can-covered night stand through the punch. Five more steps carry me to the entrance of my mother's room.

I walk into the same exact room that I walked out of nine years before. Not one thing has changed, at least to my eyes. Every flat surface is covered with a different colored towel; on top of each towel is some sort of Pepsi collectible, blue glass or swap meet mythical creature. An aged Kmart studio 8x10 of my sister and I deep in our teenage years is thumbtacked on the wall over the 48 inch flat screen television. An Andy Griffith Show rerun is lighting up the room, muted with the closed captioning blaring. There is no bed in the room, there never has been. The centerpiece is a cast off recliner that has seen better days, and not many of those. The cats have turned each side into a scratching post and the cotton and springs poke though the extended foot rest. An aluminum TV tray stands next to the arm rest, a smoking ashtray and Frito bag rest comfortably on top. The room seems empty until the unzipped sleeping bag lying across the chair produces a snore.

I peer through the muted light and see what can only be the outline of my mother, but it's not the woman I grew up with. A short style of grey hair pokes up out of her head, replacing the blonde locks that defined her youth. Her frail bony hands pull at the sleeping bag covering her, the same hands that transformed into fists and broke my sister's nose when she announced her pregnancy. I doubt they could crack an egg today. The legs that walked out of our house and lives for days and weeks at a time lay limp under the cover. One straight and one crooked, like an elbow with no

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strength to abandon anybody today. I didn't recognize her voice in her snore; the boom was gone-and what a boom it was. It was an attention getting voice, a siren that made me freeze in my tracks, never knowing what to expect. The mouth that inhaled booze and dope and exhaled insults and poison was now just a tiny hole that could only be used for smoking and Frito eating. Her lungs barely lift her blanket as they work, enough to keep the air flowing but not enough to call me a faggot or my sister a worthless bitch.

This is what I had come to see, and I was seeing it, but it wasn't bringing the emotions that I hungered for and felt that I deserved. I didn't feel glee or a level of sadness, just pity-which I wasn't planning for. The pity comes from basic human emotion; my mother was weak and dying and the pity had no chance of being blocked. The woman that housed and fed us to a minimal amount was now gone, replaced by another piece of the pile in the house.

My mother's face stirs and her eyes open. She looks at the TV, reaches into the ashtray to retrieve any cigarette before realizing someone else is in her room. She stares at me with confusion until the recognition and focus stumble into her steel gray eyes.

"I must be dying if you're standing here," she croaks at me, a weak smile spread as far as she could stretch it.

"I guess so," I smile back, remembering that humor, no matter how dark was the glue that kept us from going off the deep end.

“I need some water, Son. Will you get it for me?”

“Of course. Anything else?”

“Sure, how about a goddamn Moosehead; it’s been awhile.”

“That I can do. I’ll be right back.”

“Son, you may have been gone, but you’ve always been here. You’ve always been here”

I smiled again and left the room, trying to piece together what she meant, but I think I already knew. I walked to the kitchen and filled a glass with sink water and handed it to my sister, “Give this to Mom. She asked for it.”

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going for a quick walk and then I’m buying a sixer of goddamn Moosehead; it’s been a while”

I walked straight down hill, passing the rocks where my eleven-year-old sister taught me the proper way to throw pine cones at cars. “You see,” she instructed. “You need to lead the car. Throw the pine cone out so the car drives into it-you’ll never miss, plus it gives you time to start running.” I pass the grove of plants that we would eat as kids because the leaves kind of tasted like lettuce, and pass the house where I broke my first window-a white trash rite of passage.

I walk until I reach the river-the all-time gathering place for every generation of every family that has lived in The Pines. The river was the one place where our family was a family. My mother loved the river; she took great pleasure in laying out her

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towel to watch my sister and I play in the water. She was a mom there, she was our mom there-doting and smiling and relaxing. Our little beach was always bustling with our friends and neighbors; now it was rarely used as families have chosen to move recreation inside. The shoreline was deserted today, allowing me to remember just how loud silence can be; the steady flow of the river seemed to make it quieter.

Endings are always weird, no matter how good or bad that ending may be. My relationship with my mother hurt me but inspired me to success. I moved from a five hundred person town to a two million person metropolis based on the positive, and mostly negative, examples that I earned and learned from her. My disappointing mother is the strangest thing in my life; most people don't have that in their wheelhouse. I get what she means by, "You were always here," because I was. I was part of the family and part of their strength when I didn't even know it, and now I needed to get our family back together, if only for a brief moment of time.

I rush up the first hill, bee-lining for The Pines Store to grab a sixer of Moosehead. The second hill is steeper, but it leads to my mother's house-my home. I feel like a child again, heading up the broken blacktop and pine needles, rushing to the red house. I round the corner, navigate the board and breathlessly open the door.

"She died," my sister whimpered. "Just now, she's gone."

I dropped my head; nine years I waited for her to go and she couldn't wait thirty minutes for a final goodbye. She had to make me feel guilty and angry one more

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time. I was ashamed of this thought, and I knew she didn't die on purpose, but I still knew I was right.

My sister and I looked at each other with relief and the knowing comfort of being near our lone sibling. I cracked open a Moosehead, handed it to her, opened one for me and sat silent and content. Whenever the two of us got close, our mother would make sure the distance would return. We now sat together in a world where our mother didn't exist, a place we had never been before, and I was looking forward to erasing the distance forever. The family was back together, for the rest of our lives.

Hannah Way



Mary Nida Smith

Cowboy Jo

COWBOY Jo
once an orphan child
came to Sawtooth City,
then Bonanza City in 1879.
There she stayed,
the first woman
to enter Yankee Fork
mining district.

Men of Sawtooth City
hadn't laid eyes
on a woman in months
the day Cowboy Jo
rode into town
with a pack train.

The men came running
to see if she was real,
this tall woman of pretty
auburn hair who stood tall.
She wanted their respect,
but it wasn't to be
from the men of
Yankee Fork.

Respect for a lone woman
in a mining town of men
was only a passing goal.
Though Cowboy Jo drank
with the best of them,
she never raised her voice
or laughed, allowing only
a weak smile on her face.

In months that followed
Cowboy Jo was regarded

as an Angel of Mercy.
She'd pack her saddlebags
with food and medicine,
no matter how far
over rough, high mountains
she rode to nurse
a miner back to health.

Years passed, Bonanza City grew.
More women came of different class.
These women treated Cowboy Jo
kindly, enjoying her visit
when sober and bathed.

She was a restless person,
a confirmed alcoholic
quickly aged in her mid-thirties
traveling from camp to camp.
Then a man named John Bee
took a fancy to Cowboy Jo,
called her his woman.

One night John Bee
in a drunken poker game
thought he was a winner.
No money to raise his bet
he promised Cowboy Jo
as his wager for he was sure
he held the winning hand.
But no, he did not.
He lost the love of his life
in a drunken poker game.

Cowboy Jo waited
half asleep and not sober
at a nearby table.
As the poker winner
came to claim his prize,
he yelled at the barkeep,
"Bring me a quart of whiskey."
Then he picked her limp body

shouldered her, and walked out
to greet the sunrise.

John Bee watched
the prospector's place
from his nearby cabin.

One day the gambling man
who claimed his woman
left his cabin alone.
John Bee took a wheelbarrow
found Cowboy Jo inside
drunk and out cold.
He dragged her to the wheelbarrow
quickly headed back to his cabin.

Later, he walked to the spring
to get a bucket of water.
On the return trip
he spotted the prospector
as he jumped behind a boulder.
Cowboy Jo's new man
shot at John Bee as he
continued to shoot between
loading Cowboy Jo
into the wheelbarrow
and heading back to his cabin
with his wheelbarrow and poker prize.

Cowboy Jo lived her life
between drunk and out cold,
being claimed by one man
after another until her slow death.
Died without the respect she craved.
Died alone this orphan child
who craved love in the Sawtooth
Mountains of Idaho
in the Land of Yankee Fork.

Carly Bailey



Laura Reitz

A Straight Line

YEARS ago, I was working in Florida as a paramedic. One morning I reported for my shift and savored what a bright comfortable day it was turning out to be. My partner and I readied equipment, verified the contents of the drug box, and organized how we liked to set up as we took over the unit from a previous shift. The managing of emergency calls was harrowing at times, so when the EMS chief called us in to say we would be out of the 911 system and taking another assignment, I was grateful for a break in routine. In those days, I was an adrenaline junky, but I was aware that the job could wear me down. Other people's misfortunes were my stimulation and job security. The worse the tragedy, the more I thrived with the challenges. This day would be different.

We were dispatched to the Central Florida Reception Centre, which is a state-run prison. The word reception sounds like a welcoming term, but for incoming prisoners it was not. It is a large facility in a rural setting, surrounded by flat, grassy land that graduates into dense palmetto thickets and pine trees. A perimeter of walls and high steel fences, topped with thick silver spirals of razor wire, separated men from nature. Men who were impeded by the thick walls and by their own deeds, but once outside but still within the prison yard, could see freedom beyond the fences. Winged machines full of people, free to travel, flew over the facility that was not far

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from the Orlando International Airport. Both the planes and the prison held people that could only be released when heavy metal doors opened to allow passage. All of them were in places dictated by prior choices. The airplanes, though, were just a little closer to heaven and on a comfortable straight path. The prisoners had taken a more hellacious and troubled route in life.

Each time a flight departs, the pilot reports to the tower that the aircraft is ready for take-off and states the number souls on board. The amount is broken down to how many crew members and the number of passengers in flight. The prison contained souls as well. How many of these souls were trapped, whether in the confines of the prison or on an airplane at 30,000 feet? How many of either population were struggling to make amends with past episodes in life?

Arriving at the prison our unit was inspected, inside and out, including driving over an open well with mirrors to visualize the underside. We passed through three gates, each one closing before the other would open, then we parked near the small infirmary.

Our patient turned out to be a thirty-year-old prisoner who was being transferred to a larger state prison in north Florida that housed death row and had a larger hospital unit for very ill inmates. A guard would ride along in the rear of the unit and an armed chase vehicle would follow during the three hour trip.

My patient was lifted onto the stretcher, unable to move himself. Extremely frail, emaciated, and obtunded, he felt hot and dry to touch. With his eyes closed and unable to lift his head or hands, I wondered if he was aware of the move. His

respirations were an irregular-regular pattern of varying depths, known as Cheyne-Stokes, that are indicative of dying. The pattern can last for hours to days until the last breath is taken. I put him on low flow oxygen and started an IV, hung a bag of normal saline and checked his blood sugar. I was afraid he would have seizures during transport so the line provided a medication route. The fluids could be cooling and soothing. He never flinched at the needle puncture.

The infirmary nurse told me he was a “DNR”, and I found a “Do Not Resuscitate” legal yellow document in the chart. I wasn’t going to save this man but it was still lawful to treat and provide comfort measures. This man was dying of AIDS, a trapped soul soon to be released.

The guards threaded heavy metal chains through his ankle and wrist shackles, attaching them to the bars on the stretcher. Did they really think he could run? As we departed for Raiford, the Lake Butler prison, I asked the guard why this man needed to travel in shackles. “Procedure,” was the response. Was this guard non-compassionate and without a penchant for independent reasoning? I was appalled and said so, then asked rhetorically, “How could he be a flight risk?” This man could no longer stand up or speak, he was completely unresponsive, and no matter what he did in his past, he was still worthy of some sort of comfort in his last days. Even a death row inmate gets a choice of his last meal. Although he was not going to death row he was suffering through his own private end of life sentence. Probably ostracized by

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other prisoners, guards, and maybe his family, his time was coming to an end. Isolated within himself. Had he come to terms with the events of his life?

Why was it now so important to drive him north for three hours? Why not sooner?

Why the expense at this point of transferring him? Again, the answer was “procedure.”

About fifteen minutes into the quiet trip, the guard reached across the prisoner and unshackled his wrists and ankles, then looked at me without a word spoken. He displayed an unexpected silent act of compassion with judgment set aside. Knowing this patient would most likely be re-shackled on arrival, because of procedure, at the receiving facility, I secretly wished his last exhale would take place during our traveling. Maybe then he wouldn't be surrounded by rough, brash staff who would toss him around like a piece of luggage while he still was breathing, however labored it might have been.

The real answer to the question as to why this dying prisoner was transferred must have been that it was a timely, divine, intervention involving three people who had never met before that morning, but were guided by God, so a brief period of comfort and a small act of kindness could play out.

As we entered the prison gates and backed the unit up to the receiving doors for unloading, the guard again placed the shackles on and re-threaded the chains and as he did so the prisoner paused his breathing, inhaled, then slowly, shallowly, exhaled

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for the last time. He died within the walls of a death row prison but still on the stretcher. He had three hours of freeing travel before his soul departed. My only hope was that he knew it. It is speculated that hearing is the last of the senses to stop near death but who would know? Perhaps he heard my words to the guard, advocating for him, and felt the clanking of the chains coming off.

The gates at the prison weren't pearly but there had to have been angels in attendance when they opened. I attached the cardiac monitor to his bony chest as a final required procedure. No rhythm recorded on the graph paper, only a straight line to heaven.



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Dallin Mena



Mose Tillet

Afterlife

"SO, are you going to do the honors? You're the one that built the thing."

"I'm not the one that has to present the results. I'll watch from the console. Just plug it in there."

Amplified static, then a pop.

"Hello there. Can you hear me?"

"Y-yes. Hey...yeah, I can. What's going on?"

"You have just been activated. I was hoping to talk to you for a bit."

"Are you God?"

"No. I'm Sargent Princeton of GLS."

"So...am I alive, or are you dead?"

Pause.

"I'm Private Harold Brown. I thought this was the afterlife."

<end of recording>

Ruby Lemus-Belman



Dale Mallows

True Self

JIM used to drag me to the bar every Friday night after we were done with our classes. It didn't matter how busy we were or how much studying we had to do over the weekend, we'd always find time every Friday night to take the tram down Collins Street to the corner hotel, drink more beer than we should, and try to talk girls into coming home with us. Well, I tried anyway. Jim never had any trouble; I'd watch him leave with a different woman every Friday night, always with his arm around her waist. The last time I ever saw Jim, he was walking with his arm around a slim-waisted brunette girl. I couldn't see her face, but I knew she'd be pretty. A few days later he'd dropped out of college and moved away without a word.

Ten years had passed since that night, and five since Jim was found dead by his roommate, a bottle of prescription pills spilled next to him on his bed. The only mutual friends Jim and I had were barely acquaintances, and it was from one of them that I heard the news of his death on his social media page, which had seemingly turned into an obituary where his friends posted about how much they missed him. He'd been dead over a month before I happened to check the page. At first I thought it was some kind of elaborate prank, but upon reading a heartbreaking post from his mum, I accepted that my one time best friend and drinking buddy was truly gone.

I was visiting his old social media page and drinking our beer of choice, Spaten

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Optimator, a rich imported beer from Germany Jim had introduced me to. My phone buzzed and bounced lightly across my desk between several empty bottles. I knocked over a few of them reaching for the buzzing cell: “Hello, this is Henry.” It came out more like, “thusishenry.” I’d drank more than I thought.

“Hello?” The voice on the other end of the line searched for signs of intelligent life.

I cleared my throat and tried again, “This is Henry.”

“Oh, good. I wasn’t sure I had the right number.”

I grunted, “Who’s calling?”

“Oh, I’m sorry, this is Sara.”

I rattled my brain searching for the owner of the name but nothing came up.

“Uh huh. Look, Sara, I don’t mean to be rude, but I’m barely awake and my head hurts like hell, so whatever it is you’re selling...”

“I’m not selling anything. This may be out of the blue, but I was wondering if you knew a Jim Owen. I heard you went to college together...”

His name spoken aloud had a weight to it, like a chain around my neck being yanked on. “I did.”

“Jim and I dated for a while.”

Sara. The name clicked into place. I’d heard from friends of friends that Jim had stopped sleeping with every girl he laid eyes on, and had settled down with a girl named Sara. “Oh.”

“I know this is weird, but I was feeling nostalgic and decided to check out his old MySpace page. I saw your name, so I decided to look you up.”

Another grunt.

“I noticed you live in Melbourne, and I’ll be to be in town next week, so I thought maybe we could meet.”

“Oh.”

“I’m sorry, I know this is weird. It was a stupid idea. I’m sorry.”

“Wait,” I said before she could hang up. “I mean, sure, why not?”

“Thank you, Henry.”

The silence between us stretched uncomfortably like an elastic band on the verge of snapping.

“I miss him,” she said, filling in the silence.

“Me too,” I said.

She told me she’d call me when she got into town in a few days time. I agreed and the call disconnected. Phones don’t have that satisfying click when you end a call anymore; it just ends in silence. From the moment the phone call ended, I felt like I was being watched, but I was alone in my bedroom. I drained the rest of the beer, and it too wasn’t satisfying.

*

I met Sara a week later at a trendy cafe I frequented. A short walk from my apartment, it was always crowded, no matter what time it was. A young girl with

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tattoos and piercings all over her face, the kind of girl they don't hire at Starbucks, took my order. I watched her tattooed fingers as she scribbled my name on the paper cup in immaculate handwriting, then doodled a picture of kitten next to it. The girl was another art major, probably from La Trobe or Swinburne University. The cafe was always hiring artists, and evidence of their presence was all over the cramped cafe, from the colorful murals painted on the walls to the little doodles all over the menus and discarded cups. Ordinarily I enjoyed the lively atmosphere and ever-changing art on the walls, but that day the colors hurt my eyes, and the activity made me think of insects swarming on a discarded pizza crust.

I sat in a corner booth, occasionally checking my watch between sips of strong, black coffee. I hoped it would cover the smell of the alcohol from the two shots of vodka I'd downed before leaving my apartment. Ever since the phone call from Sara, I hadn't been able to shake the feeling that someone was watching me. It would strike at the strangest times, and every time I'd turn around to an empty room. It wasn't so bad throughout the day, at least not if I knocked back a drink or two, but falling asleep had become much harder. Whenever I switched off the lights and climbed into bed, I became absolutely certain that someone was in the room, silently watching me. I actually slept with my bedside lamp switched on the night before, like a child hiding from monsters under a blanket, shivering all the while.

I was rotating my coffee cup absent-mindedly when Sara appeared, wearing a yellow sun dress and clutching her bag close, as if afraid someone was going to rip it

from her arms. She sat across from me on the edge of her seat, looking for all the world like she was ready to bolt out the door at any moment. We smiled and exchanged greetings as if we were on a blind date.

“So, you dated Jim?” I asked, destroying the small talk with the subtlety of cannon fire.

“Oh. Yes, for four years.” She sighed, but followed it up with a smile.

“Wow, four?”

“Is that surprising?”

I thought about Jim leaving the bar every Friday night with a different girl, his arm wrapped around their waists. I couldn’t recall Jim ever even spending the night with the same girl more than a handful of times. “Oh, no. Not at all.”

Sara smiled. “I see. Still covering for him?”

I choked on my coffee. “Excuse me?”

“Jim told me that you used to cover for him when an ex-girlfriend asked about him. He said you were great at making excuses for him.”

I smiled to myself, remembering the number of times I’d have to tell some poor girl that Jim was sick, or out of town, or whatever excuse I could think of on the spot. “He told you about that?”

“He did,” Sara said. “He talked about you a lot.”

I put my coffee cup down a little firmer than I’d intended. “Is that right?”

“I’m sorry...”

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“You don’t have to apologize for him.”

“I know, I just,” Sara paused, before adding, “it just sucks, is all.”

“Yeah.”

The silence between us was broken by the waiter taking our orders. As we sat there waiting for our drinks, the feeling I was being watched returned with such strength that I whipped my head around automatically.

“Are you expecting someone?” Sara asked.

“What?” I asked, as my eyes darted around the room. “No. Sorry, I’m just distracted, I guess.” I took a deep breath and returned my attention to the pretty girl in front of me. “Will you excuse me for just a moment?”

“Sure.”

I darted to the restroom, splashed cold water on my face and took a couple of quick drinks from the metal flask I kept in my pocket. The alcohol burned going down, setting fire to the nerves rising in me. I stuffed the small flask back into my pocket before anyone entered the restroom and, after splashing a little more water on my face, returned to the booth to sit across from Sara.

“Do you want to go for a walk?” I blurted out moments after taking my seat, wanting to get out of the stifling cafe. “It’s a nice day for it.”

Sara seemed to consider the question before nodding, and we made our way out into the alley housing the cafe. We made our way through the crowd, Sara occasionally stopping to look at the menu of a restaurant or in the window of a

bookstore.

Rather than taking her to the usual tourist spots, which were always too crowded and expensive for my tastes, I led Sara to Hosier Lane, a narrow street comprised of boutique restaurants and exotic-looking stores that sold everything from tailored suits to fung shui talismans.

“Where are we going?” Sara asked, eyes darting from one colorful storefront to the next.

“You’ll see,” I said, inclining my head towards a narrow staircase tucked between a pastel colored macaroon shop and a 50’s style diner. “Up there.”

My shoulders brushed against the walls on either side of the staircase, so narrow was it. Sara had an easier time, but only just. At the top of the stairs was a small platform and a simple wooden door. The welcome mat read Mrs. Kims, and doubled as a sign for a Chinese restaurant. The restaurant was small, and buzzing with activity. The walls were a vivid red, matching the carcasses of the chickens behind the glass display case behind the reception desk. Sara and I were led to a small table in the back, where we ate wontons under the watchful gaze of a golden dragon painted on the walls. We engaged in pleasant small talk, dancing around the one subject we both wanted to discuss, but neither of us seemed willing to take the plunge.

“Can I ask you something?” Sara asked, putting her fork down gently across the now empty plate.

“Shoot.”

silo

“Is it true that you guys used to go to a hidden bar around here?”

“He told you about that?”

“He did. I can’t remember the name though. Something Japanese.”

“Himitsu.”

“That’s it! Do you think it’s still around?”

“I think so.” I said, knowing full well that Himitsu was exactly where it was ten years ago.

“Would you take me there?” Her face was flushed, but she did her best not to let it show.

“Why?”

“I just,” she paused, before replying, “I just want to see it. To experience it.”

I really didn’t want to go there, not that night, but I knew I had to. It felt like fate was leading me there, under the guise of a pretty girl. “All right,” I answered with a sigh.

Between the glass-walled restaurants and modern high-rises was an unmarked laneway mostly devoid of the colorful street art and graffiti Melbourne is known for, and could easily be mistaken for the back driveway for delivery trucks dropping off supplies for the surrounding restaurants. We made our way down the alleyway, past the overflowing trash cans and metal roller-doors to a deep red door illuminated only by a ghostly, flickering lightbulb. A little black peephole sat like a shiny beetle against the blood-red of the door. Above the peephole in what looked like black paint were

two small Japanese characters written in kanji; *himitsu*, or *secret* in English.

I knocked smartly on the scarlet door and waited. In a moment the door was opened and we were led into a dimly lit waiting room by an immaculately dressed employee who led us into the bar proper. Despite my misgivings about coming here with Jim's ex-girlfriend, I immediately felt at home amongst the sultry jazz, low lighting and sleek Japanese décor. Himitsu was effortlessly elegant, a fact that used to make me feel out of place but which I had grown accustomed to over the years. I led Sara across the room, passing the black marble communal table where Jim and I would drink and hit on girls. I could almost see Jim in the corner of my eyes, dark hair falling casually across his intense green eyes, smiling his Hollywood smile at some girl, promising her whatever it was he promised them. He was nineteen, always and forever in my mind.

I shook my head and hurried Sara to the heavily lacquered bar at the end of the room. Behind the bar was Noboru Watanabe, backlit by the faintly glowing bottles of amber liquid lining the walls. With his silk-backed vest and shirt sleeves rolled halfway up his forearms, Noboru seemed as much a part of the décor as the paper lanterns casting their soft light. Noboru owned Himitsu, but still worked behind the bar himself almost every night. As soon as we took our seats on the barstools, Noboru placed an uncapped bottle of Spaten Optimator on a coaster before me.

“Come here often?” Sara asked, inclining her head towards the drink Noboru had served me without having to order it.

silo

“I still come here sometimes,” I said, taking a long drink of the dark, malty beer. “Maybe more than sometimes.”

“I see. I’ll have what he’s having,” Sara said to Noboru, who had one uncapped and sitting before her in an instant.

We both drank in silence for a while. The jazz playing through the bar had a soothing effect on my nerves. Before Jim, the only bars I’d visited were rowdy Irish Pubs, filled with guys in t-shirts and jeans trying to impress high school girls with fake ID’s. Jim hated those places. He told me during a particularly boring chemistry class to get myself a nice button-down shirt and a pair of brown leather loafers, and that he was going to show me where “real people” go to have fun. That night was the first night I’d visited Himitsu. We’d gone there every Friday since.

“You remind me of him, you know?” Sara said, snapping my attention back to the present.

“I do?”

“Yeah. You kind of have the same aura.”

“Aura?” I laughed.

“See! Like that, for example. Jim would laugh whenever I mentioned auras, or souls or whatever. Your laugh even kind of sounds like his.”

I took another long drink.

“I’m sorry, is this making you uncomfortable?”

“No.” I said. “This is all just a little surreal, I guess.”

“I know what you mean.”

“How else do I remind you of him?”

Sara drank her beer slowly before answering. “Well, you kind of dress like him. You talk like him, too. And the way you get distracted sometimes, he did that too.” She took another drink and inclined her head towards the bottle. “You even drink the same beer.”

I nodded, and motioned to Noboru for another drink. “I see.”

“You have the same eyes.”

I raised an eyebrow. “Same eyes? My eyes are blue.”

“Not the same color.” Sara said, frowning. “The same look. You look at me the same way he did”

“Oh.”

“I miss the way he looked at me. He could see right through me.”

“I know what you mean.”

“He said he’d never leave me. He promised.”

The feeling of being watched hit me again, but I ignored it this time. I put my hand on Sara’s. She didn’t pull away. I could feel the phantom gaze boring into my back, but I focused on Sara, anchoring myself in her brown eyes.

“Let’s get out of here,” I said.

Sara nodded, “Yeah, okay.”

I offered her my hand, and she accepted it. As we walked out of the bar, I saw

silo

Jim standing at the black marble table, handsome and young, his expression unreadable. As I put my arm around Sara's waist, he smiled; then he was gone.

Kaitlin Manzanares



Sheila Daniels

Shadows of the Vietnam War

WAR can change a person's life forever; it can modify the direction one is headed and who that person becomes. It can transform an environment, and how one experiences life. It can affect a future and the decisions someone can make. The Vietnam War was a critical and stressful time in America's history, but it did not alter how my parents lived their lives or the freedoms that they enjoyed. If anything, it made them better adults with a deeper appreciation for patriotism, their country, and the political rights that our constitution upholds.

My parents were born in the year 1954, the same as the start of the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War took place from 1954-1975 in the country of Vietnam, with the United States being fully vested beginning in 1965. It was a long-drawn-out war with over twenty years of struggle and fighting. It was a "conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam, known as the Viet Cong, against the government of South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States" (Spector). During the twenty year process the war was passed to several different presidents including Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Gerald Ford ("Vietnam War Timeline"). During the beginning of the war, my parents and most of society had a positive state of mind

regarding the war and backed the decisions that each president made regarding their participation and support of the war.

In 1963, after President John F. Kennedy's assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson became president ("Vietnam War Timeline"). My parents were nine years old when Kennedy was assassinated, and they were devastated. My father, Kevin Davis, said "that he looked up to Kennedy and loved that he was their president." The assassination shook the foundation of America, the foundation for many people, and the direction of the war. After Johnson took office, most of the fighting and bombing started in 1965. By 1969, President Johnson had "more than 500,000 U.S. military personnel...stationed in Vietnam" (Spector). My parents were fifteen years old in 1969; they were affected by the issues that arose in the Vietnam War, but from a distance. They did not feel the full impact that war can have on a community and the environment.

My mother and father's distance from the war added protection and a feeling of safety, but their sense of normal was distorted by the news. The only source of information for the American people about the Vietnam War was the news. The biggest stories every day were about the casualties of war. My mother remembers her dad asking her to observe the news for updates on the war. My mother's brothers had both enlisted in the Vietnam War when they were eighteen. They were stationed in Vietnam and the surrounding area. My mother's parents did not support their decision to enlist, but still worried daily for the safety of their boys. Due to a lack of

silo

contact from her brothers and little or no information on the war, my mother and her family watched the news. Every day they would watch to stay informed on what was happening. The news gave updates on where the soldiers were fighting, how the death count was increasing, and the reporters that were reporting their own being killed. All this information gave my mother and her family a sense of high alert and impending doom.

One of the many horrible effects of war is death. In addition to soldiers losing their lives during the Vietnam War, America lost President Kennedy in 1963, the civil activist, Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and government official, Senator Robert Kennedy in 1968. In total, “more than 3 million people, including 58,000 Americans, were killed in the conflict” (Rohn, “Vietnam War Protests”). My mother, Reba Davis, said she felt “like the entire world was falling apart. They had seen so much death and destruction that she viewed things differently.” During this time, my parents heard constantly that this was all “Johnson’s fault.” President Johnson was blamed for the unnecessary deaths of these young men, the unnecessary presence of America in Vietnam, and the unnecessary financial crisis the war was causing on the United States.

Another casualty of the war was the economy. The economy took a hit on every aspect from food to gas to housing. Every American was affected by this economic crisis, including my parents. “The Vietnam War had a damaging impact on the economy. This was a twenty-year war and it was expensive to fund. Cost of food

increased, as well as fuel prices causing the government to put limitations on wages and prices for a time” (Rohn, “How Did the Vietnam War Affect America”). My mother remembers going to the gas station and waiting in long lines of vehicles. Some days the availability for gas would be plentiful, and on others they would leave with an empty tank, wondering how they were going to make it. My grandparents carried the heavy burden of worry and safety for their children at war and for sheltering the children at home in America. My parents were given a sense of normal, the best that could be had under these circumstances of a war that lingered longer than anyone expected.

Another concern that arose out of the Vietnam War was protesting. Prior to 1964, most people were supportive of the war; they trusted the government and the direction the country was headed in. The United States also had a small hand in the on goings in Vietnam, but President Johnson changed that course with increasing military presence in Vietnam. “The Vietnam conflict totally changed the attitudes of a generation. More and more American citizens became suspicious, skeptical and cynical about the government and public institutions in the wake of the Vietnam War” (Rohn, “How Did the Vietnam War Affect America”). To show their opinion, the people took to the streets. Protests took place at universities, political events, and government agencies.

The opportunity to protest gave the people the voice that they needed to let their government know they were displeased with the course that America was taking

silo

regarding the Vietnam War. “The first mass demonstration took place in December 1964 gathering more than 600 people in San Francisco” (Rohn, “Vietnam War Protests”). My parents were too young to participate in the protesting. Most of what they saw or were exposed to was on the news. My mother and father watched these demonstrations on the news with people protesting for governmental transformation. Protesters held posters and flags for change, written in bold lettering, angry people chanting for a revolution. The American flag and draft cards were being burned, and my parents wondered why this was occurring. My parents were both raised to be very patriotic, to support their government, and to show respect no matter their opinion. At the time, the violent protests didn’t make sense to my parents. They questioned why someone would be so unpatriotic and horrible to others. The American people protested and showed no support, even though the volunteers and drafted soldiers were doing their job.

Soldiers were the heart and blood of the Vietnam War, giving all they had, but also using their own voices and actions to show how they felt about the Vietnam War. American troops during the Vietnam War consisted of volunteers and individuals chosen from the draft. “Most of U.S. soldiers drafted during the Vietnam War were men from poor and working-class families” (Valentine). These were young men, just like my uncles, going to fight a war for people they didn’t know. Some of these young men started to question the direction of their chief and commander. Between 1960 and 1973, around 503,926 members of the US armed forces deserted” (Rohn,

“Vietnam War Protests”). In addition to deserters during the war, there were also draft dodgers or:

draft resisters [that] filed for conscientious objector status [and] didn't report for induction when called, or attempted to claim disability. By the later years of the war in the early 1970s, draft resistance reached its peak. In 1972, there were more conscientious objectors than actual draftees, all major cities faced backlogs of induction-refusal legal cases, and the Selective Service later reported that 206,000 persons were reported delinquent during the entire war period. (Kindig)

There were so many people dodging the draft and fleeing the country that there were too many citizens breaking the law to prosecute. Draft dodgers at the time fled to Canada, or filed for deferments for situation, student or health reasons to get out of serving. Citizens including Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and Donald Trump were among those that filed for deferments or dodged the draft (“10 Patriots”).

My father supported the draft and volunteering in the military. In 1971, my father received notification from the government that his lottery number would be coming up soon to be enlisted in the war. So, my father at the age of 18 volunteered and signed up to be a helicopter gunner. My father said he signed up because of advice from his Grandpa Davis. “You have to face your fears, and attack that fear head on or it will control you.” So, my dad enlisted to attack his fears. He was afraid

silo

of the war and afraid of the unknown over in Vietnam, but he was willing to give to his country where many others wouldn't. Fortunately for my father, God had other plans for him, and the upcoming draftees were never needed, and my father never went to war.

In 1975, my parents were twenty-one years old when President Gerald Ford announced that America was no longer an active participant in the Vietnam war; it was finally "finished" ("Vietnam War Timeline"). My parents were married that same year, and began their family, no longer focused on the war but on the direction their lives were headed. The Vietnam War impacted so many lives, including soldiers who fought and died, the U.S. Citizens who protested and felt like they were fighting for a cause, and the American people supporting their government and just wanting to serve their country and do right by it.

My parents were children in the middle of the war, but they lived the first twenty years of their lives living every day with this war. The Vietnam War could have made them angry political activists, or they could have raised their children completely different based on what they saw and lived through, but they did not. My parents are God fearing, peaceful people, who live their lives with a moral compass and healthy respect for their government. Their idea of protesting includes the right to vote, the right to bear arms, and to contact their state representative when an issue arises. My parents have a healthy respect for life and honor the fallen soldiers who gave their lives for them, and who fought for the Vietnamese people and their right for

2017

democracy. They raised their children with a love for God and country and standing for the American flag with pride.

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Heather Esplain

Ribbons

THE waiting room at the repair shop was quite large considering the volume of cars that came in to get fixed—about one every hour. Little Pennzoil flags with the glossy yellow color and limpness of fake Kraft cheese hung from the ceiling. The floors consisted of checkered red and gray tiles. There was a vacant snack bar that sold about five items and a seating area. Jaime sat in a worn black leather sofa chair, the arm rests peeling like dry, cracked mud. She was the only one in the room. Next to her stood a large fake tree bristling against a large windowpane. The natural light from the outside illuminated the room with a depressing gray hue. Various magazines with titles like, “The Genius of Snapchat” lay scattered on the coffee table. Fake smiles graced the tabloids. The standing fan whirred and creaked. The air was stale and lifeless, like the inside of a hospital waiting room. She felt restless, a sensation she hadn’t felt in a while.

Ever since she had settled into her new apartment, working at the temp agency with decent pay, she had learned how to numb herself from the day-to-day mundane. To combat it with sarcasm and pessimism, a skill mastered by her generation. She could lose herself in the succubus of internet memes and clickbait stories for hours if she wasn’t careful. Entertainment at the touch of a button. An escape from any uncomfortable questions lurking under the surface. She exchanged memes with her

friends every day and posted stories on Snapchat of random bits of her life. If it was superficial, she did not allow herself to think about it. But in that repair shop, with only the fake tree to keep her company, she didn't turn on her phone. Jaime sat in that room for an hour in silence.

And it was in this room that Jaime first felt it—a strange discomfort she hadn't felt in a long time. It demanded her to move, like when she was a young ballet dancer compelled to twirl a ribbon, chasing circles, snakes, and spirals in the air. Straining for the ribbon to fly, never letting the ribbon fall. It felt exhilarating the higher she went, the bigger she twirled.

These days the excitement in her life came from passing cars stuck behind a semi-truck, sneaking into Costco with her coworker's expired member card just for a slice of pizza, or taking three books at a time at the library when she only got around to reading one or a half of one before the due dates were up.

And yet none of these instances caused her to feel that same amount of enjoyment compared to twirling a figure eight.

It was these things that Jaime thought of when she sunk into that dingy sofa chair.

The mechanic pushed the swing door open, walking towards Jaime with a slight limp. He wiped the black grime from his hands on a dirty rag and stuffed it in the chest pocket of his overalls. "So the good news is that your transmission is flushed and looking just fine. The bad news is, your struts are about shot," he said in a

silo

Southern accent. “I’d recommend getting them fixed in this week or next if you have to, but no later.”

She sighed. “And how much would that be?”

“Not gonna lie to ya; it’ll be upwards of about \$300.”

She had about \$200 in savings after the transmission flush, not enough to cover the full cost of repairing the struts. She paid the mechanic with her debit card and decided not to look at her account afterwards.

She would buy a cheap dinner somewhere and drink a glass of wine before bed. Maybe watch a movie and sprawl out on the new used couch she bought. Maybe find a new series to binge watch on Netflix. Maybe even read a book.

But she didn’t do any of these things. Something was stirring in her now and it couldn’t be avoided. It was as fundamental as the weather, at the core of her being, as necessary as breathing. But she didn’t know what it was. An awareness of some kind.

*

Jaime can vividly recall every detail from that day, even now, five years later. She drove out of the repair shop, and put her car up for sale in a newspaper ad the next day. She sold most of her belongings, to the point where she could fit most everything into her two-piece luggage. Her boss at the agency gave her a new employee assignment that she would never complete. Jaime bought her passport and prepared to go abroad to Turkey. She left the country within two months. And that

thing that compelled her was still within her, begging for new experiences, new thrills, new connections. She was now thirty and had been to forty-five different countries.

She was accustomed to the fleeting feeling of travel, meeting new people all over the world and forging bonds as close as immediate family. Every once in a while, something would remind her of her father—a man with stubble on his face and curly dark hair, Bollywood songs (her father hated Bollywood), toothpicks at restaurants. Little things. She had only been to the States twice, for brief visits with friends, and she saw him briefly before she left from the Chicago airport on her first trip back. It was cordial at best, and they avoided confrontation.

*

She was sitting in a barren internet café in the lush Peruvian rainforest. The cement building was crumbly and dilapidated. The two computer monitors were outdated, and the internet only worked some of the time. She had been disconnected from the world for three weeks, volunteering at a reserve in Manu National Rainforest.

Every day except for when it rained, the heat wrapped blankets around her skin, and she lagged when she made any physical effort. She felt like wax slowly melting from a candlestick. The thirty-minute walk on the one lane bumpy road left her drenched in a thick film of sweat all over her body, suctioning her clothes to her skin.

silo

But she was determined to make it to the internet café, knowing there was a 50/50 chance that the internet might not be working.

Her father had messaged her in an email a month ago, asking how she was and that he would like her to visit. He had a new job at some consulting firm in Chicago. She immediately disregarded the message, instead opting to reply to friends and research where she was going next.

But in the days that followed, she considered visiting him. At the reserve in Peru, she cut down invasive bamboo like she cut down the parts of her that were influenced by him, slicing the root as close to the ground as possible. But bamboo is strong and unyielding. And it was always there, beneath the surface. Once implanted, it is extremely difficult to get rid of. She considered her home to be the world, but she could not deny the little things. She was tied to her home in Spokane, by the cloudy days and pine trees, friendly but distant Northwestern people, and the taste of expensive coffee. And her father was still family, no matter how close her new family was and the family she would come to know in other parts of the world.

She would visit him in Chicago and go to Spokane, for an indefinite amount of time. She sent the email three times before it finally went through and prepared to trudge back to the reserve in the festering heat. The day was clear and cloudless, and the exotic birds made calls she had never heard before. The Amazon River roared in the background, carrying her doubts downstream.

*

Jaime arrived at the Chicago airport after a long twenty-seven-hour flight. She could normally fall asleep on plane rides, even through turbulence. But she managed to sleep for all of four hours. Little raindrops raced outside the window in little streams, and she guessed which raindrop would make it to the other side of the window first: a boring game, but it preoccupied her mind during the flight.

Jaime stumbled out of the cramped airplane, along with other winded passengers, most of whom were dressed in business attire. She entered the airport and felt a sense of peace that comes with the familiar. Jamba juice, Starbucks, and a vast array of selections at the mini markets. Everything was so accessible, so convenient. She was in America.

*

Her father called Jaime when she made it to the entrance at the airport. The cheap, prepaid flip phone rang out a shrill, happy tune.

“Jaime! How was the flight? Did you make it okay?”

“It was a little bumpy, but I’m here outside. Glad to be back! Where are you? What are you driving?”

“That’s good. Glad to hear it. I had a driver come and get you. Sorry, it’s been crazy here at work. I also have a dinner meeting here in about an hour with my boss. I was wondering if you could meet me there?”

silo

The anger was starting to swell from a place that was once dormant somewhere inside of her. She had been in America for less than an hour. She pushed it down with a deep breath, determined not to be offended.

“Okay, that’s fine.”

“Great, the driver is out front and should be holding a sign that has your name on it. I gotta go Hon’. Glad you made it okay. Love you.”

He hung up, a little too hastily. But everything was faster paced here, especially in Chicago. Time seemed to speed up in America every time she visited.

She found the sign with her name on it, held up by a short, pudgy man with an Italian nose and a look of severe disinterest. She knew that look. A face she made often when she first arrived to work at the temp agency and saw the day’s tasks in front of her. A face that severed lines deeper into her skin, accelerating the aging process.

“I’m Jaime Flinn. Hi, nice to meet you,” she said, not entirely sure how to read his unchanging face at her warm greeting.

“Hi Jaime, let me get the door for you,” he said, still dissatisfied.

The driver wedged into the clogged arteries of the airport traffic. People paced on their cell phones out front. The phones seemed sleeker, fancier. Kids tried to keep up with their parents hustling to their rental cars. A businesswoman was aggressively waving her hand for a taxi. Jaime looked to the sky for room to breathe.

*

They arrived at the *Alinea*, a fancy downtown establishment with chauffeurs guarding the large glass doors. The place occupied an entire block, and inside there were people dressed in classy designer business suits and dresses. Women wore glossy high heels and the men displayed silky, darker toned ties. All of them bore an air of seriousness. Smiles were infrequent, laughs were rare. Chandeliers glowered over the dining area, exposing the polished mahogany wood and fancy tableware.

She stood out front on the grimy street, trying to peer inside for her father so she could walk inside and avoid the eyes of affluent patrons tearing apart her homely outfit. And she tried to avoid her reflection staring back at her, a woman in blue jeans with a small rip in the knee, a blue hoodie, and messy bun. She wasn't intimidated, but it was strange to see the self she knew so well standing in front of a posh Chicago restaurant. More than anything, she was annoyed, but she wanted to meet her father on good terms for once.

And then there he was. A man of average height and fading curly hair line. He wore a very bland brown suit, with a black tie. He flashed her a genuine smile, and for that moment, she forgot about the circumstances. He was definitely older, with puffier eyes and a slower gait. He stood up, preparing to meet her at the door. There was a small pudge for his stomach, which used to be much bigger.

Jaime went inside, thanking the Italian taxi driver, his expression still unchanged. The driver was taking her luggage to her father's apartment apparently. At least she'd hoped.

silo

“Jaime! So good to see you! I’m so glad you could make it! You’ll love the food here,” her father said, a little too artificially.

He seemed to be using his professional persona, or maybe he was just unsure of how to interact with Jaime after so long.

“Great to see you. You’re looking well!” she said, and she meant it.

“Thank you. You look great. We’ll catch up more tonight on...all there is to catch up on! But for now, let me introduce you to my boss and then we can eat.”

*

“Jaime, this is Frank. He’s the head of the consulting firm. A brilliant mind if I may say so.”

The way her father said those words, turned her stomach a little. Like a bad remake of her favorite song that she wanted to immediately switch off.

“Hi Jaime, pleasure meeting you,” Frank said, in a rather serious tone.

“Hi there, nice to meet you as well.”

The puffy, silken wave in the front of Frank’s thick hair was scattered with grey speckles. His eyes seemed to sink further into his skull the more she looked at him. They bulged and pierced until they burned. His head grew larger and his smile dug a large crevice across his face. A caricature come to life. Hideous and clown-like. He was a mockery of himself. His features exaggerated. It made her uncomfortable, like old children’s toys that look frightening and grimacing.

It reminded Jaime of that rainy afternoon in Singapore when she learned how to make wooden masks for the street market. The vendor, a staunch old woman, gave her free meals in exchange for making masks for her to sell. Jaime held the first, fully finished mask she made up to the gray sky and watched the rain barrage the earth through the two eye slits. She put it to her face and walked out from under the awning to feel the rain thump the hollow wood. That wooden mask was disposable, but his was glued to his face.

“So, I hear you’ve been traveling abroad for quite some time,” Frank said, in a tone that was both impressed and somehow disapproving.

“Yes, I have actually. So far, I’ve been to forty-five different countries. Still ongoing. I’ve had so many incredible experiences. It’s been amazing.”

“I’m sure she’ll want to settle down eventually. She has a degree in political science. She was always really good at science throughout school,” her father said, and Jaime almost felt that he was apologizing for her, as if her accomplishments were a reflection of his own.

*

Jaime and her father never got along. The absence of her mother allowed the flames of their bickering to burn endlessly after every fight. When her mother left inexplicably, they had only each other to make sense of it all. She was nine.

He would come to her ballet recitals, and criticize her performance, as if he knew anything about ballet. Her ribbon twirling soon became a show for him, and the

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joy was gone. He expected so much from her, and when he found out she was gay, he slowly began to detach his life from hers.

An old man Jaime met at a gallery bar in Norway listened to her stories about her father. When she was finished, he grinned and said, “Like many parents, he is an amateur artist, trying to shape you into the version of you that he envisioned you to be. And like an amateur artist, he is unable to appreciate the ways in which you are different than he imagined.”

*

“Well, that’s excellent. And also, Jaime, when you’re ready to come back to America, if ever, I have connections to get you a job,” Frank said.

“Thank you, I appreciate that. Probably won’t be ready for some time now, if ever,” she said ironically, trying to shut her father down from that conversation.

“Well, Nathan, how did the meeting go with Minton?” Frank leaned in, setting the heat on Jaime’s father. Jaime could feel it radiating off of him.

“It went really well,” he said a bit nervously. “Everything worked out. Um, we didn’t manage to get the full three million for the building, because of issues with the community. There was backlash.”

Frank stared at Nathan stone faced, obviously displeased.

“What issues? That we’re tearing down a rundown community center? That part of town should be grateful. It’s a renovation for those people,” Frank scoffed, lifting his glass of wine to his beefy lips.

Jaime was infuriated at the way Frank talked about “those people.” She had hoped her father, in his unfiltered way, might confront him.

“Yes, well, unfortunately they had enough support and our earnings were cut. But I know this is a big project, and I assumed it was better to complete it with about a million less than to back down. That way, our presence is affirmed, so to speak. The minorities in the community will know what they’re up against for future projects.”

Jaime was disgusted. Her father was in the business of corporate power, drowning out the voices of minorities. She had seen this kind of imbalance of power in different parts of the world. And she was seeing firsthand the kind of corruption that her own father was capable of. It was an entirely new side of him.

“That’s a good tactic, Nathan,” Frank said after some reflection. “Very good. You’re a good man to have around,” he smiled and patted Nathan’s shoulder.

Jaime’s father laughed and thanked Frank.

Jaime had the same eyes as her father, with crow’s feet stretching at the temples. How much of him was in her that she couldn’t see?

*

She could be irritable like him. And in her frustration, she would make the same gestures with her hands. Her mannerisms were much like his when she walked away from their fighting and into the school in the morning.

At a grocery store in Tokyo, a man rushed to the front of the register just as she was buying her essentials and shoved her items back on the conveyor belt. She

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asserted herself and confronted the man. Her arms flailed up and she let out an exaggerated sigh of frustration, a reaction she had seen her father enact many times. Another little thing that she tried to brush away and forget about.

She would take this similarity over the puppeteer personage her father revealed himself as at that table.

*

“So you’re tearing down the community center and putting in a new building, against the wishes of the community that actually lives there?”

Jaime’s father turned a bright red, and his pupils enlarged.

“Well, Jaime, this community will be better without it. And once this building goes in, they’ll prefer it; I’m sure of it,” Frank said, his caricature face daring her to challenge him again.

“But why is it up to you to decide what is best for the community, without the permission of the community that you seem to regard with so much respect?” Jaime said lightly, with that hint of sarcasm.

“Jaime, those people don’t know what makes a good community. They’re not experienced enough to know what’s right for them,” her father piped in, teeth clenching. He was imploding, about to combust.

Was she just as blind in her anger? Maybe, but she was not this blind. She was not him, and whatever little things remained have evolved. She began evolving ever since she sat in that repair room, listening to the standing fan chirr in the background.

She cut down her roots for something new to grow, even if the same things would grow. The new growth still belonged to her, not him.

That thing inside her, at the core of her being was different from him. It was hers. And she could twirl her ribbon because she enjoyed the feeling of being free, with or without him.

*

“Thank you for dinner, Frank,” Jaime said quietly. She breathed in, took a last sip of the full-bodied, delicious wine and wedged out of her chair, facing her father. “I have the address to the apartment. I’m leaving.”

“Jaime, why don’t we talk more when I get back, yeah? I’m sorry I...think I got a little carried away,” her father said, looking to her feet as he said it.

“It’s okay,” Jaime said. She raised her arms to hug him, and slowly made his way into her embrace. Maybe he sensed that she was leaving for good.

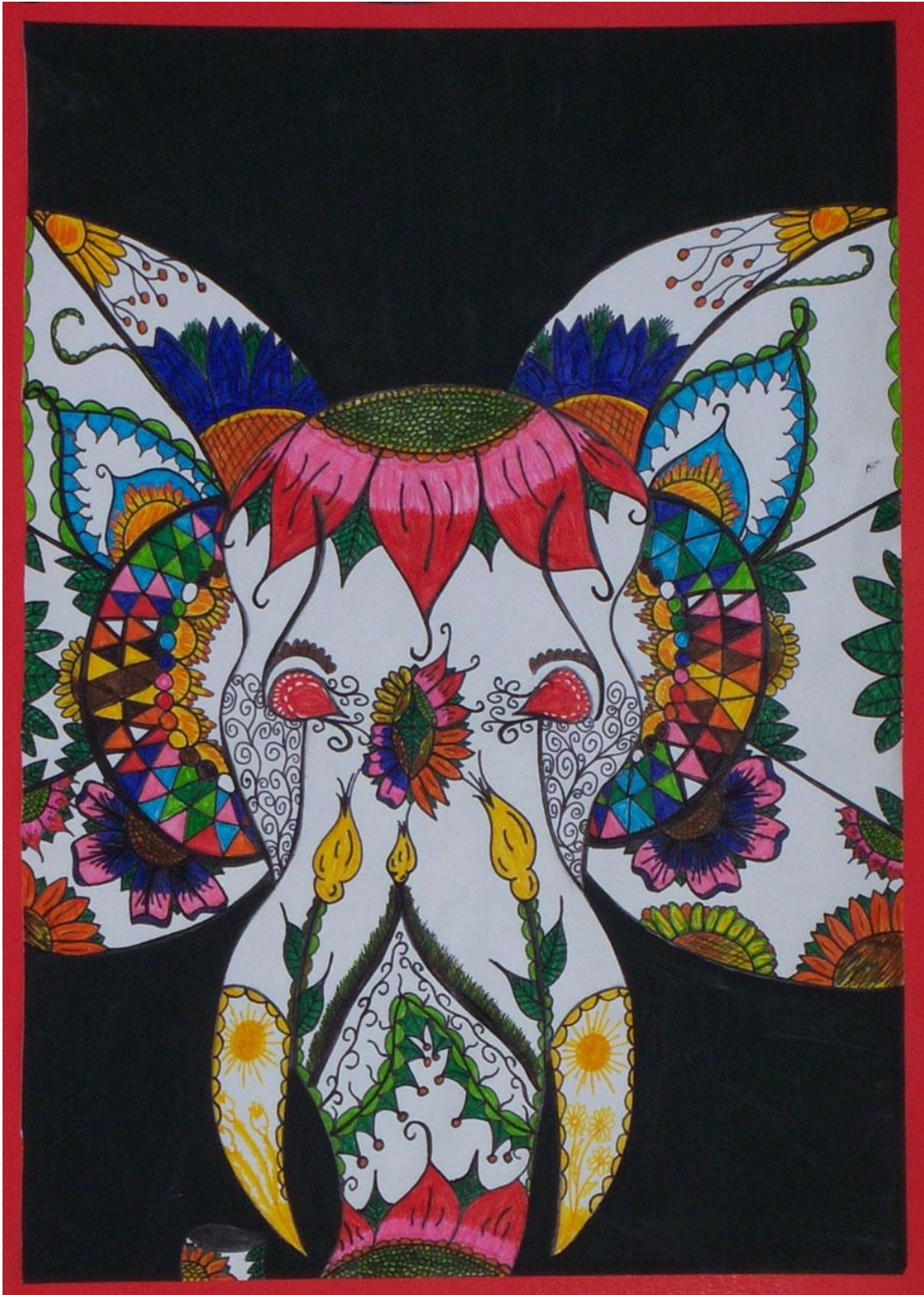
“I love you,” she said. And she meant it. She wanted him to know that she loved him, but she would not see him again for some time.

“I love you too,” her father said, trying to maintain his composure.

*

Jaime felt the cool wind tunneling through the streets of Chicago, and felt the stirring in her veins again. A real live tree rustled its leaves in the wind. She was being beckoned elsewhere, and she was ready to begin.

Sierra Barker



Adrienne Stansel

Lasting Effects

LEARNING about things like World War I and the Great Depression have always been intriguing to me because of just how dramatic the circumstances were at those times, but I have a habit of thinking of them as extremely far off events, things that happened years and years before I was born. But these events in history did not just affect random people who are no longer alive. Some of these things that happened, the Great Depression in particular, directly affected my family members and because of that, indirectly affected me.

I was taught in school that the stock market crashed on October 29, 1929. I was taught that soon after that the Great Depression began, and everything started spinning out of control. Consumer spending declined sharply. People could not afford to buy luxuries any longer and as a result, many companies were forced to lay off a substantial amount of their workers. President Herbert Hoover was president at the time the Depression began. He believed that it would eventually run its course, and the best thing the government could do was to stay out of it. But, the Depression lasted longer than most people anticipated, and things only got worse. When President Franklin Roosevelt took office, he implemented many new relief and reform programs. Personally, I'm not sure which philosophy was the better one, but America finally pulled out of the Depression when World War II began and revved up the

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economy. At the worst point of the Depression, in 1933, somewhere between thirteen to fifteen million Americans were unemployed and nearly half of the country's banks had failed ("The Great Depression"). That is absolutely astounding to me. It is incredibly interesting and mind blowing to register all of those statistics. But in the past, when I would think of all those crazy statistics, I never gave much thought to the individuals who compiled those statistics. That changed when I read my own great grandfather, Harold Erastus Peterson's, words. He wrote a little of his experiences throughout the Depression. He writes,

The depression times were very hard on us, and as I look back on them I can only say I hope I never see such times again. To give you an idea of how they affected us, I shall give you three experiences. My shoes wore out and I could get no more, so I cut the toes out of some that Edna's brother in-law, Tom Stubbs, had sent down. His feet were much smaller than mine, and because it was in the winter time, I had to wrap my toes in pieces of old overalls and then put the shoes on.

He goes on to give two more examples. He talks about how his food supply was extremely scarce. It was so scarce, he says, that for months all he ever ate was tomato sandwiches. He tells how he only had one pair of underwear during the Depression years. Because of that, he actually had to go to bed whenever they were being washed. He ends his story by reminiscing about the past and about his wife and the difficult times she had to endure alongside him. On the day my great grandpa married my

great grandma, her father allegedly told him, “You stole her from me, now be good to her.” He says he wishes he could have done a lot more. In school, I was shown pictures of Depression-era times that portrayed the complete poverty, but knowing that my own great grandpa had to wrap his feet in rags throughout a Utah winter, really helps put things into perspective.

Even though history teaches that the Great Depression spanned from 1929 to 1939, I believe the effects of it were far more lasting. I have a few examples. My great grandparents on my dad’s side would never buy anything unless they could afford to buy it with cash. This was because years and years after the Depression ended, they still did not trust the banks. My great grandparents were not the only Americans who never regained much trust in the banking system. I heard a story about a woman named Marcelle Uptain. Uptain grew up during the depression, so when the latest recession set in and the stock market began to drop, she decided she should pull all her money out of the bank and hide it in a little steel box at home (“Great Depression Colors”). A lot of people would probably judge that behavior as irrational, but looking at her life experiences, I think she simply must have learned from the past. My mother described her grandparents, Harold and Edna Peterson, as hoarders. She said they would throw nothing away. I imagine that could have resulted from having to do without for so long. When my grandma was little, Harold and Edna were so frugal because of the hard times they had been through that they only bathed their three children once a week, and my grandma had to share bathwater with her brother and

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sister. My mother and my grandmother constantly tell me that I am crazy because I enjoy taking multiple baths a day. I think, after hearing that story, I understand why they think that.

Even though unemployment levels began to decline and the economy began to turn around when America became involved in World War II, my family was never wealthy. My grandma and my great aunt, who were children throughout the Depression years, slept in their parents' living room until their late teenage years because their house was so small. Likewise, growing up, my grandpa and his older brother slept out on the porch because their parents had a lot of children and there simply were not enough rooms.

I believe the Great Depression has indirectly impacted all the generations of my family. We have learned to be frugal. But more than that, the Depression taught my ancestors to be completely self-sufficient. Then they taught their kids to be. My grandpa can fix just about anything. He amazes me with how capable he is. I believe that he learned that skill because of how poor his family always was growing up. If something broke, he had to fix it because buying a replacement was never an option for him. I remember when I was younger, my cousins and I were always cautious around my grandpa. He would scold us rather harshly if we mistreated any of his things. He definitely has never been wasteful. That frugality has carried on in a lesser extent to my mother.

My parents have never been wealthy, but they have never been anywhere close to destitute either. Even so, my mother has always been careful about seemingly ridiculous things. She will get really angry if anyone in the family leaves the refrigerator door open for longer than a couple seconds. Over the years, my sisters and I learned to snatch whatever we wanted out of the refrigerator and shut the door quickly. We were taught to turn out the lights in the house whenever we left a room. I have a friend who is always paranoid that she will get acne, and because of that, she washes her face very thoroughly every morning and night. It takes her a good ten minutes or so to wash her face, and all the while, even when she isn't using it, she leaves the water running. Growing up, I would have been punished for that. I know that the only reason I notice little things like that is because of my mother. I guess some of my mother's inherited frugality must have rubbed off on me. The most important lesson my great grandparents learned from the Depression was to not rely on the government for anything, but to take care of themselves and to take care of their families. They were taught to work hard and to make do with what they had.

During the 1920's, the level of trust Americans had in the government and the banking system was high. Americans bought on credit because they did not foresee the great crash. None of us know what the future will bring. The system failed before. It could fail again. It is better to be prepared. I think this is the lesson that my family learned from the depression. I was always taught to work hard, to go to school, and to develop useful skills that would enable me to be self-reliant. I was taught to not throw

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money away on too many unneeded luxuries and to attempt to always have at least a little money in savings. I have taken all of these lessons that have been taught to me for so many years to heart. I cannot spend money on something I do not need without first having to justify convincing reasons to myself and without later feeling just a little bit guilty. I also have become extremely determined to be independent and to make it on my own. These are the insights that I believe were reinforced by the hardships of the Great Depression. These are the insights that have been taught to all the generations of my family, on both sides, and they are insights that I will teach to my children.

Even though the Depression years seem, to me, like the far distant past, after thinking about it, I can see now that those years and those times have directly impacted my family and my way of life. Society changed because of the Depression and many people, including my family, learned some life lessons throughout the difficult times. Those lessons, those survival lessons, have been passed down from generation to generation, and I'm very glad that they have been. I think I have been taught some very important things that will help me for years to come.

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Ryan Thornton



Latifeh Mirzai

Glimpse of My World

I hide behind my mama, holding onto her thick, black skirt tightly as I watch the men forcefully breaking through the wooden door, the only thing that separated our home from the chaos of our world. They enter inside, with their heavy boots making a hollow sound on the cold, cement ground. There are five of them, all carrying big black guns with sharp points at each end. Two of these men have covered their faces with a black and white patterned cloth and the other three have long dark beards, and something about their eyes runs a shiver through my spine as if I've just seen five monsters. I look one of these scary men in the eye, and I find him looking for something or maybe someone. One of the covered faced ones with a scar in the corner of his left eye looks at the other four and tells them to search every corner of our house for the girl. But what do they mean by "girl"?

One of the heavier, bearded men, whose teeth are yellow and crooked, grabs me by my shoulders, forces me to kneel as the rest of them do. He does the same to my mama and Baba. My mama glances at my direction with her hazel eyes, drowned in terror, and worriedly tells me to put my hands up, stand still and obey the men. I do as she says.

I stand motionless with my hands up. I watch my baba secretly looking at my mama after making sure no one is looking at him. Mama then slowly nods her head in

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response to baba's gesture after making sure that the men are not looking their direction. Baba shuts his eyes and gives out a relieved sigh that is too faint for the men to hear. His five o'clock shadow looks grayer today, grayer than ever. His wrinkled hands are joined together behind his neck, and he mumbles the short prayer he always recites. He says this prayer keeps him and us safe from anything dreadful that might happen to us in this world. But would it? Would it save us from the monsters? Would it save us from these men?

One of the men, who is shorter than the other four, walks into our living room and stands in front of Baba and Mama with his gun pointing at their faces. He looks down at them as if they are something worthless and dirty. He switches to put his balance on his right leg and scratches his left ear. He has a small beard and looks younger than the others. He seems as if he has been trying too hard to be considered part of the group. He has a young face, looks almost my brother's age, whom we lost two years ago in our previous, destroyed home. Sometimes I have difficulty remembering my brother's face, who he was, how he talked, what he liked of this world. The only thing I remember of him is his face under the fallen roof and walls, with his eyes closed, and lips sealed, shut forever.

The shorter man is keeping his head high as a sign of pride for his ignorance and evilness. It is neither his face nor his blood-curdling eyes that are turning my gut, but it's his smell. He smells rotten, and sweaty like other men like him, like how they are on the inside, like how they will always be rotten on the inside.

I jerk my head in response to the sound that is coming from the kitchen. Old dishes are falling out of the cupboards, the only dishes on those iron shelves. I hear things getting thrown, and the only room with the only door getting opened fiercely. I hear some of them laughing as they search for whatever they are searching for, but what exactly are they searching for? I look behind and all around the living room, my eyes searching for my sister Amira, but she isn't there. I look at my mama and baba but am unable to force a word out of my dry and quivering lips.

My left knee starts giving me a bitter pain, and I try to sit down, but the man in front of mama and baba walks to me and slaps me hard on the face, yells that I must obey him or he will kill me. My left cheek starts burning like a tree in a wildfire in reaction to the hard slap I just received. I tremble and fall on my side, placing my cold palm on my hot fiery cheek, thinking that this is not a pain I cannot endure; I've had pains worse than this.

I hear Mama crying, telling the man that my left knee was awfully injured from the last month's strike. The man holds his gun up high and hits my mama with the butt of his gun. Mama falls onto the floor, and her temple starts bleeding. The side of her creamy scarf with flower prints gets soaked red, but she gets up and kneels with her trembling hands behind her head, ignoring her injured temple, and her soaked favorite scarf. I've seen too much blood in my life, every day, everywhere, every corner of my fallen city. I don't flinch; instead, I raise my hand up and kneel on both my knees, ignoring the bitter pain in my left knee.

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Minutes pass by, and they are still searching. I look out the window to Mr. Mahmood's home, or what's left of it. The building is trembling, and so is Mr. Mahmood's weeping voice. He's the middle-aged man who patched up my knee last month. He is a short elderly man, with a scalp that is going to be almost bald. He once told me he was a nurse back then, before whatever our world is now. Today, I'm hearing his begging voice fill the ill-fated neighborhood. I look at Mr. Mahmood as he kneels and begs for the men to let his daughter go. The men kick him hard in the stomach, and he falls on his knees, gasping for air. Then I see Fatimah getting dragged by the men toward a black and dusty van parked on the opposite side of the house. I don't know why they are taking her, where they are taking her. She always wears an abaya, and she has never disobeyed the rule of this land. Still, with my knees pressed down on the ground, I see Fatimah kicking the men and trying to run away, but she can't because there are too many men with guns, and they keep pulling her toward the van, yelling at her to shut up and quit struggling or her baba will soon be killed.

Fatimah's hands helplessly fall numb. She smiles at her dad, a smile filled with sadness and sorrow. Tears stream down her face, she mouths goodbye, and a man approaches her with a small brown sack. I watch the men take the sack and put it on Fatimah's head as her Hijab falls on the ground. I see Mr. Mahmood running toward the van, as he tries to get onto it too, but one of the men point the gun at him and Mr. Mahmood falls. Once again the guns show their power in this city.

My eyes get blurry from the liquid rushing out of them, and I find myself trembling, my legs shaking, and my brain taking me to last year when my sister Amira was tending to my wounds from the strike that fell on our old shelter. Her cold finger tips were on my back, and with a wet cloth, she cleaned my wounds gently. My knee was wrapped with something hard and white, and it was too hard to walk on it.

It was a bitter winter last year, and our home that had windows with no glass, just plastics bags taped around their edges, was always freezing my family and me. I still remember the bitterness of the blizzards I felt in every inch of my bones every night. Amira carefully helped me dress in my torn sweater and my blue jacket when she was done patching me up. She told me when I was first born that she was jealous of me. I remember asking, “Why?”

“Because Mama and Baba would pay more attention to you than me.” She replied and pinched the corner of my cheek as she wrinkled her nose and laughed. I laughed too. And then I remember I told her about a little book I found with my friends from the ruined building two blocks away from our home. I asked her about a picture of a big gigantic wheel on the cover and what it was. She thought for a moment before answering me. She tied her hair up in a ponytail and ran her hands through her brown bangs; she tapped on her lap and said, “It’s time for a story.” I grinned in delight and jumped on her lap, making sure not to bend my injured knee. Then she went on about a life I can only imagine, a life I have never known.

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She told me about a big ferris wheel that she, Mama, Baba and Fatin, my older brother, often used to go to. She went on about her elementary school experience and how big it was. She said there were thousands of girls in one huge school, and she didn't have to cover her hair at that time. She told me about our nanny who was an old sweet lady whose name was Khadija. Khadija took care of me when I was a chubby newborn. Amirah told about different delicious foods Khadija used to make us. She told me about her birthday parties and my only birthday party that I can never remember, my birthday when I turned one. She explained to me the taste of Kibbeh and Kebab Halabi. She described our house before this life, before everything fell apart and broke into pieces. I put my hands under my chin, and smiled, imagining a big house with four rooms. One where my mama and baba sleep, one where it's Amirah's, one for Fatin and one of my very own, where I would place my favorite toys that I've never had. I would have a soft comfy bed with a warm blanket. I would put the posters of my favorite soccer players on my walls. I smiled, thinking about a room I could have had, and Amira smiled back, but a flicker of sadness fell in her eyes. She looked away from me to the little carpet her and I were sitting on, on the stone-cold ground. She stared at the ground for minutes before I touched her face with my thin, bony fingers. She immediately turned her head toward me and asked, "Sorry Eisa. Where were we?"

I smiled and said, "You were talking about the amusement park."

“Oh, yeah I was. Umm...so as I was saying, there were these really huge wheels that had seats where we used to sit and look at the city.”

“Wouldn’t it fall? The seat I mean?”

“No, it was super safe,” she replied, laughing.

“I would want to ride that one day,” I said with enthusiasm. She didn’t say anything, but I asked her another question. “So how did the city look?” I would ask, grinning, showing my missing front teeth.

“Well, it was great. It was magical thinking about it now,” she replied and gave a low chuckle.

“Magic?” I asked.

“Ahm, magic. The city was bright with lights at night, and during the day people were in the bazar, buying stuff, laughing, gossiping,” she replied, dropping her head and playing with her fingers.

“I wish we were there,” I said, looking down, hiding my hands in my tiny pockets.

“Yeah, I wish we were there too,” she sighed.

I remember when she told me about how the life I’ve never known was. This life always had a clear sky, and how everything wasn’t on fire or in destruction every moment, and then I would picture the world in my head. The world where people were smiling and families visited amusements parks, eating ice cream and foods that I’ve never tasted.

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I come back to the present, when I notice a silence has fallen in the room, and I see the men with guns dragging my sister to the living room in front of Mama and Baba. The silence breaks with Mama shrieking as she bursts into tears, falling in front of the men's boots, begging. My ears are blocked now. I hear nothing; I just see. I see two men hold my sister tightly as she tries to kick and pull away, but her thin shoulders are in the grip of these monsters. The other three are keeping my parents at gunpoint, and I'm just there feeling the wetness of my face, with tears falling like a waterfall.

The man with the scar lowers himself to my mama and baba and punches my baba. He yells, "Thought you could keep her hidden away from us?"

I hear my baba speak, "I beg of you, please for God's sake don't take my daughter away from me. You call yourselves humans?"

The man grabs my baba by his collar and says, "How dare you to speak to us this way? We are the protectors. You are a pest; you're nothing."

"No, you are protectors of nothing. You are just monsters under a man's skin. Protecting? By killing and raping? God will burn you in hell for what you're doing," my dad says and spits onto the man's face.

The man wipes his forehead and pulls down the cloth that is covering his face. His facial hair is perfectly shaved, and the scars around his cheeks are visible. Maybe he doesn't want to grow a beard like the others because he believes his scars might frighten someone. I am frightened, and I can tell my baba is too.

The scar-faced man stares at my baba before getting up without saying a word. He walks toward his men and orders them to finish their duties. I look away from them to see my mama, who is now trying to get to Amira but getting blocked by the man with the gun. With my hands still up, and my injured knee pressed onto the floor and my eyes blurry from the tears, I look at Amira whose face is almost unrecognizable because of her swollen eyes and red face. Her legs are trying to reach the floor, but her light weight is too easily lifted by the two men holding her tightly by her arms. Her sorry and terrified eyes meet mine as she lets out even more tears. Her lips are moving, she's saying my name, but it is too faint for my blocked ears. I want to call her name too, but my lips are stuck together, like they've been glued.

Pushing and pulling, trying to get away from their grip, my sister uses her best strength and effort, but it's useless and nothing can help her now; no one can help her now. My sister's red shirt is torn, and her white scarf falls on the ground, and it's stepped on by the dirty boots of the scary men, who are dragging my sister now. The other three follow the ones who are dragging my sister, but my father jumps on his feet and tries his best to fight the men in dirty black clothes.

I'm still crying. I see, I feel everything, but I can't move anymore. I'm paralyzed in this moment, in this very nightmare-like moment. My mama walks to me; she kisses my forehead, and the blood that is running down her face touches my skin. She is crying as she cups my face and says, "Do not move. Stay. I will be back with your sister. Just stay." She gives me another kiss before she leaves and starts beating the

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man in the head as she screams. My baba is struggling with the man who has scars. My mama is running after the others, trying to get to my sister, but I can't see her anymore, as she steps out of the broken door following my sister. Baba is trying to get the gun out of the man's hand, but the shorter man walks back in and the room becomes silent for a moment after a big, loud sound. My father falls on his knees, then onto the ground with his forehead bleeding. I want to scream and run and fight the bad men, but I cry and cry without making any noise, unable to move a limb.

I look at my baba's motionless face, a face that used to smile every time I jumped on his lap and made him tell me a story, a story of his childhood when he was my age. A story when he used to play soccer with his friends on a large green field. A story of the time when people had smiles on their faces. A story when the streets had dead leaves instead of dead bodies. A story when the sky was blue with flying birds instead of being gray with missiles. A story of his time when the street was filled with laughing children instead of crying children. No matter how many times he used to tell me these stories, I would never get tired of them. Those stories sounded like a fairytale to me. But I look at my baba now. He doesn't have a smile on his face anymore. He's not moving; he's not calling my name anymore. He is just lying on the cold ground, with blood flowing out of his forehead, and I'm just staring and crying. I do nothing; I can do nothing.

Once again, I retreat to my memories. I remember when my baba took me to a small place on the other side of the street, where there was a little shop, too small for

two people, and a building that was almost fallen. It was a small house with no roof, just a big plastic covering the roof, providing a temporary shelter. It had a little old carpet where my dad and other men sat. I was sitting by his side all the time when an old man with a cane entered the place. Everyone including my dad stood on their feet and lowered their heads. I did too. The old man reminded me of a wise looking wizard from an unknown world. The old man had a white fabric wrapped around his head, his white beard was clean, and his fair face was clean too. But his clothes were torn like the rest of us, and he had one leg missing. If he was a wizard, he would have worn better clothes and probably grown a leg for himself.

My baba helped the old man sit in front of everyone. He put the cane by his side, and the elderly man started speaking. He told us about a place which I listened to carefully. The place he told us about was a place where people would suffer for eternity. Why would he tell us about a place like that? It didn't sound wonderful. He looked at me and asked, "Do you lie little one?"

I looked at my baba, and hid behind him. The old man smiled, and continued, "Of course you don't. You are good. All children are good."

He kept speaking about that place. He said that this place was made of fire. He said that it's a place where people cry for eternity, a place where people suffer for eternity, a place of never ending pain.

Remembering that moment now made me look outside. I can see my mom nowhere, but I do hear another gunshot, and I'm smart enough to know what that

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shot means. I look at my sister through the window. She is now unconscious. The bigger man carries her and throws her into the van as if she is a bag of rubbish.

I can see the men looking at the sky and getting nervous; they get into the van immediately, and quickly disappear. I look at the gray sky too. Another missile is getting closer, and about to fall on me any minute now. I look at my father's bloodied body, then into the sky; I look toward my unseen mama's body, and remembering my sister's bruised cheek when the men carried her and threw her into the van as if she was no one. I think, and I remember about the place the old man with the cane mentioned, a place where people suffer, a place of never ending pain, a place for sinners he called "hell," and I realize I am living in hell, but what has ever been my sin?

Samantha Klimes



Biographies

Dan Guthrie grew up in Twin Falls and earned a Bachelor degree in Business Administration from Sierra Nevada College, Lake Tahoe. He has a wife and two daughters, one yellow dog and two pugs in his household.

Mary Nida Smith once lived in Twin Falls where she was the president of the group, Twin Falls Writers, and started as a freelance writer. She now lives in Arkansas, keeping busy as an author, poet, photographer and artist. She loves her peaceful life surrounded by nature, but still misses Idaho, where many family members still live.

Laura Reitz is a 61 year old retired semi-crusty paramedic who is trading paramedicine for writing and photography. She is attempting to see the world through a broader scope at a slower nomadic pace. She is finding that writing and photography provides a passionate platform for advocating change in our world particularly with critical health issues such as HIV. Her human family is absent, so the house is filled with cats, most of whom still have close to nine lives.

Dale Mallovs has lived in Filer, ID since fall 2015. Before moving to Idaho, he lived in Melbourne, Australia where he was born and raised. He is currently enrolled at CSI in order to earn a degree in secondary education, and to further his own general education.

Sheila Daniels was born and raised in Idaho. She currently resides in Kimberly with her husband and three children. She is enrolled at CSI with plans of pursuing her bachelor's degree in Social Work at Boise State University.

2017

Heather Esplain is a recent graduate from the College of Southern Idaho. She will be attending the University of Alabama at Birmingham to pursue her Bachelor in English with an emphasis in literature. Afterwards, she plans to teach English abroad.

Latifeh Mirzai is a twenty-year-old immigrant who sometimes finds herself drowned in pages filled with words. She is currently studying at the College of Southern Idaho to get her associate in Psychology. She traveled a long distance from a tropical country to Twin Falls four years ago, on a night where the ground was white and the weather thrilling.

Submissions

Silo is seeking works of creative writing (including poetry, short fiction, personal essays, and creative non-fiction) and works of creative visual art (interpret as you will). We are currently accepting submissions for our fall 2018 issue. You may send fiction, creative non-fiction, and/or essays of no more than five thousand words and/or up to five poems. At this time there is no limit to the number of images that an artist can submit, but please submit visual art in JPG format. We accept submissions year-round, but to be included in next year's issue, please submit by May 30, 2018.

Please send your work as a file attachment along with the following:

A cover letter with name, address, phone number, and email address.

A short (50 words or less) biographical statement.

Please email your submissions or questions to klloyd@csi.edu.