DIGRESSIONS

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Editor’s Note and Acknowledgments

What am I doing here, and how did this happen? Having done nothing until last winter, I nervously sent in a few submissions. I ended up slated to replace the editor who so determinedly led it for three years, and so generously laid down every foundation imaginable so that it could continue its steadily growing success. This magazine lives because of people less quiet than I usually am, whether they are the ones contributing, or getting the quiet people to submit their material.

*Digressions* has always focused itself on two goals: inspiration and challenge. Every contributor to this magazine hopes to challenge or inspire an audience with their ideas. *Digressions* also challenges its contributors to explore questions and ideas, to reach deep, come back out, and to put their findings on paper, canvas, film—whatever—before they are ready to reach out to you, and show you the news.

To Dr. Suzanne Ferriss: thank you for helping us once again through this year’s edition. The process would not be as smooth without your guidance.

Thanks to Dr. Marlisa Santos and the general faculty of the Humanities Department for supporting us.

To Greg Kyriakakis and Anthony Labson: thank you for staying. Your time and friendship have made this year an easy and fun one. To Mike Bergbauer, Bridget Haley, and Mike Lowry: thanks for joining. I hope each of you who will still be around next year will come back for another good year. To Earl Tinsley: Thank you so much for helping with the layout this year—we needed the techno-help, and you came through for us!

My special appreciation for Liz Harbaugh, who offered any support we might have needed, and for Omar Lopez, who aided us from across state lines.

The most thanks are due to the authors and artists without whom this magazine would serve little purpose.

Ryan Frabizio
Editor-in-Chief
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Untitled
Elizabeth Steiner
Part II
Karysabell Murgas

Lost in a quiet storm, silently immune to it; what lies ahead only matters now. Haunting wails overcome the beauty of pure innocence and enter a sullen echo. Broken lockets and two rings are the remains of yesterday; the third ring may follow...

Or perhaps it won’t.... The wicked justification of the past has finally found its counterpart; and it is here that her heart must stop beating. It is here that she must stop breathing.... No sooner can I yield than she can rise again to find an eerie sense of pleasure in the eyes of vulgarity.

And yet, a shadow still shimmers in the distance, as if longing for a kiss of purity....
You Forgot To Close The Door
Lorena Cabrera

How could you? She was weak and defenseless. She was passed out and her brain was senseless, But so was yours.
I can’t forget it.
I didn’t react and I regret it.
I saw you rub her against her will.
You took advantage,
Went in for the kill.
She mentioned that she was on the pill,
But that didn’t signify she was down with sex
For real!
The mood was...chill.
The scene was...ill.
We were at a “Getty” with friends.
It was the real deal.
I stepped inside for a glass of juice,
Then I hear her voice from the other room,
Saying...
“Please. Stop. Don’t!”
You took a deep breath and said you won’t,
But you went on to bother her,
Undressed and fondled her,
And I stood there in shock
When I should have shot,
But I acted invisible,
And you thought you got away with it?
What a miracle
I stopped to think...
“But maybe I should help her,”
But I didn’t want my body to be another one of your testers,
So I pulled out my camera phone and pressed record,
And there went the rest of your life crashing through the floor.
The news got out and you went in
To the slammer, the can, the state pen.

You’re a freaking punk.
How could you do it? She was drunk.
It looked like you could get away with it.
Your vision was impaired; you must have had too many beers.
Well I hope you get traumatized too and shed a bloody tear
When you become Bubba’s chick for a couple of years
You deserved it,
Trying to slide with treating a lady like a whore.
Well guess what, “pimp?” You forgot to close the door.
Questions for My Inside
Naida Lynn Alcime

I sit alone and I write.  
But even writing things don’t add up to all that’s going on inside. 
And then I ask myself…….. 
    How do I find peace? 
    How do I get relief? 
    Tell me how to stop this chaotic search to find the real me. 
I do not, not desire to live; I just can’t find my footing for my now being. 
I just can’t seem to find my footing, my grasp, my acceptance of who I am. 

...It’s like, 
...It’s like searching for something at the bottom of a pool. 
The search is exhausting; taking the next stroke is a miracle...

You know what I mean?
Wipeout
Jany Cabezas

I stand on a board of life
trying—at best—
to keep myself on top,
in control
in complete balance
but the currents are rough
and the waves unpredictable.
This random push and pull—
Rapid forward motions—
is only evenly matched
with equal speed—
simultaneously.
How can one afford
to fall when consequences
are so harsh
and rocks await bloodshed
at the bottom of the sea?
What can one really control
when the changes of daily tides
remain so unforgiving?
I slip,
I fall.
I try to grasp the sliding surface
but swift seas impede
and I fall deep.
Life’s leg rope severs
and silence overtakes
as I sink into the difficulties;
the thump of my body hits
the dark oceanic floor.
Air takes me back;
back to where I can live.
Air takes me up,
Up to where I can try
again,
if only once more
and once more past once.
Air strangles me—
catch and release—
only to stay above.
I fly
I float
I falter
but hold strong
firmly gripped—
a second, third time—
to a different tide,
a different moment.
Salt water floods my ears,
eyes open to a blurry view,
a bubble reveals the grand exhale
and then the slap,
the sting.
The tingling persists through
ripples like fingerprints—
now slightly different,
now slightly the same.
Here we go
through grasps of time;
say hello,
say goodbye,
say hello.
Drowned
Amy Harvey

Waters ebbed and flowed
And its coolness broke me down
    I found my weakness

    I fell underneath
Sank into its deep black well
    Darkness overtook light

    Crystals sparkled above
While arms of seaweed grabbed me
    Sea floor is my grave

    Cool has new meaning
My life has utterly washed out
    Lifeless body on the shore
The Enigma
Jany Cabezas
Tainted Fertilizer
Ryan Frabizio

I watched Hitler
sail into Boston Harbor.

I woke,
lay vacuuming my small living space.
That such sins should find sustenance even in sleep!
Rose,
and splashed my smoldering subconscious
like the charcoal I kicked into a canal
when it rolled and fell from the grill,
fearing it would set ablaze
the faded, eager blades.

I refused sitting for breakfast,
lest the idleness refresh
humanity’s private enemy.

I paced while dressing,
trying to snuff the thoughts with a shirt.

None can guard a village nor a pebble,
but to offer a garden
bathed in winewater overflowing low walls
may solace the coldest frown
in the darkest land under the sun.

Silhouettes of Himmler’s smirking gunslingers
squatting like kangaroos to fertilize our gardens
before a flourishing dawn.
Pale Moon Dim
T. Grant Harland

A front presses on an unforgiving land.
An iron fist with a broken hand.
Angels leave a trace.
Future’s history is erased.

Destiny falls from a cloud....

I will not give in!
I will not give in to you!
Say goodbye to the blue sky
And welcome in the pale moon dim.

Tears scream down in the rain.
Lives left to be arranged.
Walking crosses, take your leave.
Our heroes are now enemies.

Destiny falls from a cloud....

I will not give in!
I will not give in to you!
Say goodbye to the blue sky
And welcome in the pale moon dim.

Tears roll down my heart in memories.
Words are spoken softly in apologies.
Untold stories that are never heard.
All for greed and the unspoken word.
You have to come, dude. You’re the only one who knows where she lives. Don’t be a bitch,” said Willy.
“I don’t see how that concerns me,” I said.
“Dude, we’re all going, so get in the back of the Trooper before I kill you,” said Michael, half joking.
“What the fuck!” I said as I got in through the back door. “You’re gonna throw some eggs at her house and that’s supposed to pay her back for rejecting you when you asked her out?”
“I didn’t ask her out you shithole,” Michael said, driving off. “Willy just told her that I wanted to.”
“Dude, she’s hot,” Willy noted.
“Ha, ha! What is she like thirteen?” I asked.
“How the fuck should I know,” Michael said. “I didn’t know anything about it until her Dad came to where I work.”
“Ha, ha, ha! What did he say?” I asked.
“He’s like, ‘I don’t know if you GET OFF hittin’ on girls half your age, but you need to stay away from my daughter.’ So I told him he needed to get the fuck away from me,” Michael said. “But he kept screaming, ‘I don’t want my daughter hangin’ around some lowlife pervert who makes burritos and gets high all day! Dang ol’ diddley dang diddley … dang … diddley …’”
“What the fuck are you doing?” I said.
“He’s a redneck, dude,” Michael said. “I’m trying to paint a fuckin’ picture.”
“So when are you gonna hook me up with one of those burritos, dude?” asked Patrick.
“I’ll do it if you come in the store with a dildo on your head,” Michael said.
“A diddley dildo?” I said.
“All right, so I guess I’ll have to borrow one from your dad,” Patrick said sarcastically.
“Hoy, hoy, hoy,” Michael said. “My dad would never lend you
one of his dildos. Ask Willy to sell you one.”

“Yeah Willy, and I’m still waiting for that pipe you promised me,” remarked Patrick.

“Right. I’ll have that for you real soon, dude,” Willy said, while making a sarcastic face at Michael and pointing at Patrick with his thumb.

“I’m serious!” Patrick pleaded, but Willy laughed.

“Dude, this is the neighborhood,” I said. “She lives in the cul-de-sac at the end of the main road.”

Joe, Lars, and Phil were getting the eggs ready. “No, dude. Don’t get those out yet. Me and Willy have to do something first,” Michael said.

“What?” Joe asked.

“Don’t worry about it,” said Michael. “I’m gonna park a couple houses down. You just wait in the car until we get back.”

“That’s it...with the brick front,” I said.

Michael pulled the Trooper to the side of the road about three houses from the target. “We can’t just park HERE,” Lars said. “We’re the only car on the street.”

“We’re gonna be like two seconds. Just wait,” Michael retorted. “Willy, get the Zip Lock bags from the glove compartment.”

“Michael!” Lars yelled, but they were already gone. “Oh yeah, this is REAL inconspicuous. Phil, don’t turn the light on! Are you an idiot!”

“I can’t find my phone,” Phil said.

“What time is it?” someone said.

“2:45. Hey, they’re coming back.”

They both stumbled into the front seats breathing a sigh of satisfaction. “What the hell did you do?” Lars asked.

“Don’t worry about it, man,” Willy said.

Michael was sucking in air from one of the Zip Lock bags. He had the dumbest look on his face before handing it to Willy.

“What is that?” I asked.

“Freon,” Michael said.

“Freon?” I said.
“We stole it from their air conditioner,” Willy said. “You want some? It’ll get you high as fuck.”

“You stole their Freon?” Lars asked.

“Not all of it,” Willy said. “We filled this bag and let the rest leak out.”

“I thought we were supposed to egg their house,” Lars said.

“You IDIOTS. Now we have to sit here and watch you get high?”

“We’re still gonna egg their house,” Michael said. “This way we actually get them worse than just egging their house.”

“You’re a fucking evil genius, you know that,” Lars said. “I’m not driving with you while you’re high.”

“I’m not gonna BE high when I’m driving,” Michael said. “This stuff only gets you high for like thirty seconds.”

“Is that why Willy’s face has been blue since he got back in the car?” I asked.

Willy laughed.

“Are you done yet?” Lars asked. “Aww, it smells. Open a window.”

“It smells good, dude,” said Michael.

“It smells like my doctor’s office,” I said.

“You mean your gynecologist,” Lars said. “You’re right. It smells like a moldy pap smear in here.”

“All right, dude, shut up,” Michael said. “Get me some eggs.”

Michael started the Trooper and without turning on the lights eased around the cul-de-sac. He pulled up behind a tree so it could give the car at least some cover while we executed the attack. After setting the parking brake, we all poured out of the vehicle, Michael and Willy from the front, Lars, Joe, Phil, Patrick, and myself from the back. We hit the house from all sides, the perfect nighttime ambush. I’m telling you it was like a thousand shooting stars fired directly from heaven. Not one word was uttered. We were all too caught up in the mission. God dammit, it was a mission! It had to be. Don’t ask me why, but it just felt right. We had to get this bastard for everything he stood for.
I mean who the hell was he to walk into Michael’s work and start spewing self-righteousness? Sure it was probably hilarious, but I wasn’t there, none of us were, and frankly, that was reason enough. All we knew was that some redneck took a verbal shit all over our good buddy, and we missed it. Well…now was his time to pay.

We had already given the front of the house a well coated egg money shot. Michael was the first to turn his attention to the cars and pretty soon the sound of a rhythmic splatter echoed among the trees. I can only imagine how defenseless a military unit must feel when they’re taken completely by surprise. How would they react?

A light had come on from the back of the house, so we all ran back to the car feeling satisfied. We were hoping that he just shit the bed, but we thought it would be best to get out of there. Luckily the engine was running so we made a quick escape. No one was talking, but the sounds of heavy breathing said more than enough.

“Where are we going?” I asked.

“Stop at the QT,” Lars said. “I need something to drink.”

As we turned the corner out of the neighborhood, Michael nonchalantly flipped on the lights. With heavy eyes I stared out the back of the Trooper only to notice a truck barrel over the curb and onto the road behind us. After fishtailing out across two lanes, it started to pick up speed.

“Who the fuck is that?” I asked.

“That’s the guy,” Lars said.

Without any further motivation, Michael slammed on the gas and started frantically shifting gears in order to pick up speed. His efforts seemed futile at first when the guy actually got close enough to where we could see the windshield and his hasty attempt to counteract our handiwork. But since there were no cars on the road at this time of night, Michael somehow managed to maintain a fairly safe distance without much trouble. Our main obstacle would be the traffic lights, and one had just turned yellow about five hundred feet in front of us. Michael made a left, dropping only
one gear, just as the light turned red. The guy was too far behind us to make it without clearly running the red light. So I took a breath for the first time since I saw the guy come out of the neighborhood, but it jammed in my throat when the guy made no hesitation in his pursuit. I guess Michael slowed down for a second in relief because now the guy was right on our ass. It seemed like his rusty brush guards were about two inches from the back bumper. Then he hit us.

The guy gave the right rear end of the Trooper a nudge that sent us spinning completely around facing the other direction. Luckily we didn’t tip over; an SUV with seven people doesn’t usually react well to sixty mile an hour u-turns. Also, we were in a prime position to get away, but the guy clearly wouldn’t give up that easily. We were going around eighty by the time the guy managed to turn around. And the hilly roads of Georgia managed to give us decent cover.

“Get off this road, Michael!” Lars said.
“Where the fuck do you want me to go, dude?” said Michael.
“Pull into one of these neighborhoods,” Willy said. “There on the right, hurry!”

Michael thoughtlessly took Willy’s advice only to find out that the road was merely an entrance into some community pool. The road was a driveway that led to a parking lot, so we tried to lay low.

“Nice neighborhood, you idiot,” Michael said.
“Ha, ha, ha,” Willy laughed. Michael couldn’t help but smirk and say, “Don’t ever talk.”

We sat there trying to figure out whether the guy would be able to see us from the road. We were surrounded by woods on three sides and the pool house would hopefully conceal us from passing traffic. I don’t think we were there more than thirty seconds when the guy, naturally, came rumbling into the parking lot, fog lights blaring. He pulled up on our right with a light screech and rolled down his window. His straight black Yosemite Sam mustache and mesh hat made him look like an evil Jeff Foxworthy. After turning
off the loud drone apparently coming from his radio, he turned to face us.

“Are you fucking crazy?!” Michael yelled.

“You violated the proper ways,” the guy spat.

“What did he say?” Willy asked.

“Something about his properties,” I said.

“Fuck you! You tried to kill us!” Michael said.

“You’re going to jail,” said the guy.

Michael started the engine like he was putting up his dukes. The guy shook his head, but Michael made up his mind and peeled off. Willy threw something out of the window that smashed into pieces on the guy’s windshield.

“You don’t want that calculator do you?” Willy asked.

“Was that my phone?!” Phil cried. “Noooooooooo!”

Willy laughed and asked Phil why he put his phone on the floor of the front seat.

“I was looking for that,” Phil said. “What am I supposed to do now? Damn you!”

Willy laughed at Phil’s pathetic moans. The guy backed his truck to block the exit and started honking his horn. We were all terrified and pleaded with Michael to stop the car, but he wouldn’t listen. Michael drove the car around to the end of the fence that enclosed the pool trying to find a way out. The guy figured that much and drove directly at us. The guy stopped right before slamming into the side of the Trooper. The guy slowly began to nudge our front end so that we couldn’t move in either direction. We were trapped. We heard the sounds of sirens as Michael made one last attempt at freedom. Now we were in their hands.

“All right, you boys want to tell me what happened here,” the officer said.

“That guy chased us down the road and nearly killed us,” Michael said frantically. “He ran into the back of us while we were going sixty miles an hour. We couldn’t outrun him, so we pulled in here and tried to lose him.”
“He says you vandalized his property,” the officer said.
“I didn’t realize that gave him a fucking license to kill!” Michael said.
“Calm down, son,” said the officer. “You’re in a lot of trouble here and I suggest you do not make it worse. Did you vandalize his property?”
“Yes,” Michael said.
“How?” the officer asked.
“We egged his house,” Michael said.
“You egged his house?” said the officer. “Oh boy. You wait here so I can confirm what you just told me.”
The officer walked behind the Trooper and talked to the guy out of sight. “I swear to God that guy better get arrested,” Michael said.
“What does it matter?” Lars said. “We’re screwed anyway.”
“Look at my car, dude,” Michael said. “He totally fucked up my car AND he tried to kill us. Don’t you care?”
“Fuck him,” Lars said. “All I know is that I’m gonna get fucked in the ass for some BULLSHIT!”
“I didn’t force you to come, so don’t blame this shit on me,” Michael said.
“Why don’t you go huff some Freon,” Lars quipped.
“Fuck you,” Michael said.
Two more cop cars came rolling into the parking lot as the officer came strolling back. In the distance we could hear an engine start up and we got a fresh look at the guy’s taillights as he drove off.
“He’s leaving?!” Michael said.
“Son, I’m gonna need you to stand up and put your hands behind your back,” said the officer. “You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say…”
“He’s leaving and I’M under arrest!” Michael said hysterically.
“Son, I’m gonna need you to calm down,” the officer said. “The gentleman has decided to press charges for vandalism and …”
“I wanna press charges for attempted fucking murder!” Michael said.

The officer grabbed his radio and said, “I’m gonna need some assistance.” Afterwards, he looked back at Michael and said, “Son, one day you’re gonna learn there’s a proper way to do things.”

Two stout officers, one male and one female, of the exact same build came walking up in stride, each grabbing one of Michael’s arms. They jerked him away and up the driveway. After rounding a turn, they disappeared behind some trees.

“Where are they going?” I asked.

“That doesn’t concern you,” the officer snapped.
Sanctuary
Karysabell Murgas

There would be suction cups at the bottom of my feet every time I'd step into the artificial rain. Every smooth droplet penetrates my skin with searing heat as the vapor soars above me. The warmth unravels into a sudden anesthetic shield; a shield that is no longer there. Never again will I feel protected against my own inhibitions. Never again will I be able to entrust myself into a world where fire will not melt passion.
Christmas is a Time for Love and Fun

Anonymous

Christmas is a time for love and fun,
A time to reshape souls and roots and skies,
A time to give your heart to everyone

Freely, like a rich and lavish sun,
Like a burning star to those whose lonely sighs
Show need of such a time for love and fun.

For children first, whose pain is never done,
Whose bright white fire of anguish never dies,
It’s time to give your heart to everyone,

That not one angel fall, to hatred won
For lack of ears to listen to her cries,
Or arms to carry him towards love and fun,

Or friends to care what happens on the run
To adult life, where joy or sadness lies.
It’s time to give your heart to everyone,

For God loves all, and turns His back on none,
Good or twisted, ignorant or wise.
Christmas is a time for love and fun,
A time to give your heart to everyone.
Untitled
Elizabeth Steiner
Blend
Portia Jones

Caught between the teeth, of a stereotypical vice.
Is it the color of my skin, by which you judge my life?

And maybe you’re afraid, afraid of what you cannot understand.
Maybe someday we can all walk as one, the blending of man.

Tangled in the fabric, of a world that lives in sin.
Know you’ll never fall upon the truth, if you refuse to look within.

And maybe you’re afraid, afraid of what you cannot understand.
Maybe someday we can all walk as one, the blending of man.

Trapped within the rules, of an angry biased world.
Waiting for the war, the war that we all fear.

Divided we fall.
Color of Night
Peter Clayton

I am the color of night,
my heart is genuine as gold
and rare as pink diamonds,
I love all of me just as much as I love all of you.

I am of slaves, and would have it no other way.
My Gran Nana who was also of slaves read my soul
And said I was to be a pastor. I am sorry Nana to disappoint,
But my future is not to be predicted, for I and I alone will
Carve my destiny.

I am the color of night, I am of slaves, I am Rasta,
And Rasta is I, Africa I want to come home,
Zion I love you too...I am the color of night.
Free Falling
Jany Cabezas
Ode in D Major
Liz Harbaugh

Forsooth, I swear I know not what I do –
How cam’st I to fall in love with you?
What sprite, what Puck, what creature made so bold
To have you catch mine eye, to have you hold,
In me, this wild dream? Who e’er could have
This union seen afore?

And yet, to save
Mine heart from hurt, ought I retreat?
Ought I to run away that ne’er we meet?
I’faith, I think it best that I should stay,
That with you I should wake and meet the day.
That ev’nings should I spend within your arms
And daylights squander contemplating balms
That you apply, unknowingly, to me,
And thus you bring my days tranquility.

And so I tarry, fearing that you’ll leave,
That you will break my heart and I will grieve.
I linger here, am waiting for the day
When you are not enthralled with what I say,
When meagre wit a smile doth not make,
When, lost in lust, your breath I cannot take!

Anticipation, still, I hold for you:
I choke, in fact, each time we meet (’tis true!),
As if in passing, just by chance, per se,
Although, each time we meet, I find my day
Transformèd by your touch, by just your sight...

Love you, my dear? I think, perhaps, I might...
Davie Water

Bridget Haley

i baptized myself in the davie water
hallelujah!
the grass swirled in the putrid, already-yellow water
contaminated furthermore with my grime
(in the name of the father, son, and holy spirit)
my grease
is rinsed
i lay in the white room by myself
while the tunes wandered in through
the steamy hallway to join
my rebirth
(play that blues, baby, play that rock)
and in the solitude of the water, I am content,
soaking in the filthy, soapy water until the next song begins
drip drying and happy
i
rock
n’ roll
on
Untitled
Jany Cabezas
In a place of wooded lands and endless mountainous terrain, is a place where Marijuana is king, and is highly coveted by the people as a herb of healing and meditation. In a place where the people move to the beat and pace of a different drum, a drum that beats to Island time where there is never a rush and the fastest thing on four feet is a donkey, we find a small community called Jungle where poverty reins and poor people are the majority. Like so many other slums the streets are gloomy stinks of refuse and are littered by people going about the hustle and bustle of a poor man’s life. Except that is when it’s night and those of wise minds stay well inside with doors closed, here on such a night we find Tete standing under a tree and leaning on a nearby wall, awaiting someone.

Looking down at his newly lit ganja spliff rather longingly, he lifts it to his lips and inhales holding the smoke inside him, he removes the spliff from his lips and lets his hands fall to his side. “Marijuana, the magical healing plant,” he thinks while holding his breath, “heal my soul.” After a few seconds he slowly lets out the tainted air from within his lungs, he looks up reverently at the smoke as it climbs towards the stars. With the smoke went his thoughts and he remembered an incident with his mother when he was a child.

“Come on, Tete,” she said as she dragged him by the hand and led the way up the steep slope to the Police Station. He was about ten and if he was not already terrified he was by the time they rounded the corner and walked into the yard of the Police station.

“Morning, Miss P,” called one officer.

“Morning, Kevin. How you doing today,” his mother enquired after the officer.

“Not too bad, Miss P, not too bad ahtall.”

“OK then, sonny boy, walk good and keep up the good work,” she yelled over her shoulder as her fast-paced walk had progressed
slightly out of earshot of the officer, still dragging Teteh behind her in the same hasty fashion she had adopted ever since she picked him up from school a few moments before. Clearly she was very upset after speaking with his teacher and was told about the fight he had with another little boy earlier that day. After making a mysterious phone call at a phone booth outside of the school yard she had proceeded to drag him to their current location. On reaching the front door of the station a tall and rather tough looking officer stepped out with baton in hand. He slapped it repeatedly in the palm of the other hand (slap, slap, slap). He looked down at Teteh with a menacing look.

To Teteh’s surprise, his mother stretched his hand that she was holding towards the officer and said, “Tek ‘im officah Brown. ‘Im all yours.”

With these words Teteh fell to the ground with his arm still hanging in his mother’s hand and started to cry. His mother looked at him and yelled, “Tan up, boye. Uh nuh bad man? Eh! A fight people pickney a school? Well this is where bad man go, JAIL,. Hear?”

Spinning around on the ground still dangling from his mother’s hand Teteh cried and bawled with all his might. “Please, mammy! Mi wont dweet again!”

No one said growing up a child would be easy. Teteh smiled and shook his head at this memory as he retracted from the ganja smoke. He realized the car he was waiting for had arrived. A well dressed man in a white overcoat that people of the medical profession normally wore got out of the car and went to open the gate so that he could drive the car inside the yard. Teteh walked up to him and while the man’s back was turned took a gun that he had in his pocket out and placed it to the man’s back.

“Douh move, doctah boye. Gimmy yuh wallet an douh try nuhting funny.”

While he waited he took another draw of his weed, held it tight in his lungs, then quickly let go and again his thoughts followed the
smoke. He saw himself in the moments of the day before.

He was sitting on his bed of his house which was not much more than a wooden shack, with old zinc layered on top to serve as a roof. The wood was old and had been scavenged from other older houses and did not quite fit together. The result was that at night you could literally see through the seams of the wall to the outside world. Needless to say a safe haven this was not. Looking around to make sure there was no one around he reached up to his ceiling and took down a gun that he had sitting on top of a wooden beam. He then sat back down on the bed and got a piece of cloth and an old tooth brush and began to clean it. No sooner had he done that than his five year old son David ran into the room and dived head first onto his lap. As soon as he landed he saw the gun that his dad was trying to hide behind him.

David’s eyes lit up as he asked, “Daddy, a wan play, play gun? A fi mi birthday?”

“Yeah, mon, a yuh birthday present but yuh ceah get it till yuh birthday.”

With that Teteh got up off the bed with his son in his arms and walked out of the room leaving the gun on the bed. He took him to what passed as a living room and a kitchen where Sofia his girlfriend was standing over some carrots that she was cutting up for the night’s dinner. He handed her the boy and said, “Keep him wid yuh.”

She put the knife down and took her son all the while looking directly at Teteh with knowing and concerned eyes. “What are you up to in there,” she asked.

“Nuhting, mon. Mi juss a try fi ress.” He walked back to the room thinking at least these days they have food to eat.

The smoke disappeared and through the fading smoke came the doctor’s hand with his wallet.

“Please don’t kill me, I beg you. I have three children and a wife depending on me,” the doctor pleaded.

Teteh looked at him and asked, “Hold on. Didn’t I tell you not
to move or try anything?”

“Yes, but mi nuh move or nuhting. Mi juss a beg you for my children’s sake douh kill mi.”

The word kill triggered another memory in Tete’s mind. This time he was taken aback four months. The house was empty with nothing to eat. This was their third day on just sugar and water. The neighbors had helped them out by giving them some bread but that was quickly used up and they did not want to ask them again for more food. After all life was hard on everyone. The day before he had spent walking to every construction site and anywhere that he felt could possess a job. He found a few places that were looking for hard workers according to the signs. The employers seemed impressed with his enthusiasm until they saw his address (Jungle), then they quickly found an excuse to deny hiring him. This was the pattern for the last six months ever since his corner shop was broken into and burnt down.

Sofia came into the doorway of the room where he was sitting on the bed. She leaned on the door frame with her hands crossed and looked at him thoughtfully.

“Tete, David is getting sick. I think it’s the sugar and water. It’s not enough to sustain him.”

Despite their condition he could not help but marvel at her and her words. It seems, he thought, that she always chose to speak Plain English, a language that had no place among the poor. People who are starving and living in a slum should not have to worry about grammar and speech, especially when all those who you speak with are in the same slum and were never educated enough to reply in anything other than Patois. Sometimes he wondered if she did it just to remind him that she deserved better and that her parents were wealthy, and before getting pregnant with his child she was their favorite and it was pretty much his fault why she was disowned, but no, that was Sofia for you he concluded.

He replied, “Mi ago check Cut Throat tomorrow.”

He could see in her expression that her heart sank at those words.

“Tete, what would your mother say? You know how hard
she tried to raise you to be a good man. What if you end up killing someone?”

He was short with her. “We have already been over this. It nuh have nutting fi do wid mi muddah. Ah nuh shi a stave a we, an mi nah go kill nuh baddy but wi need food, an David ceah last another day wit out food.”

Her lips were ready to form another word but at the mention of her son’s name she stopped. After a while she started to cry and he said, “Come ere, baby.”

She lifted her skirt out of the way and put her knees on either side of him and sat down on her feet and his legs straddling him, then they embraced each other. She cried some more and he held her tight whispering, “Dough cry, baby. Jah wi mek a way.”

“God does not know us,” she replied in a whisper. “God does not care about poor people.”

The next day he went to see Cut Throat to borrow a gun. He placed the weed in his mouth and left it there to free up his hand. He took the doctor’s wallet then a deep breath of the marijuana. He started to choke and tried coughing, before he knew it the doctor had seized the moment and was reaching for a gun at his waist.

“Dough move,” Teteh screamed over a choking voice.

The doctor was reaching for his gun but froze at the words then saw that his robber was still choking and continued to reach. Pow!!!

The still of the night had been broken by the report of Teteh’s gun. The doctor was holding his waist. His white coat was now drenched red and the red was spreading to cover the enter right side. The doctor looked at Teteh with a look of disbelief. Time seemed to have stopped. Then he fell to the ground with an empty thud.

No, Teteh thought screaming in his mind, this was not supposed to happen. The words “Blood Claatt” came out of his mouth with in a slow whisper. Then suddenly he heard a bag fall and a bottle break. There was a figure behind him. He swung the gun around and adjusted his eyes to see better. It was the figure of a woman.
She yelled out, “Kevin Teteh Morgan! Is that you?!”
He was so shocked that he dropped the gun and did not move or speak.

Walking around the corner she held her bag tight. She had come all the way from the country to see her boy and his baby’s mother. She stopped off to see an old friend and boy how the time had slipped away. Now she was walking at night through a bad neighborhood, so she picked up the pace thinking to herself, why did that boy leave the country to come and live in such a bad place in the town? She had heard from a friend that things were not going so well for them since his shop was broken into and then burnt down so she had taken the last of her savings out of the bank, bought them some food, and was on her way to give them both the food and the rest of the money. She knew her boy was good for it. He would rebuild his little corner store and when he had the money he would pay her back. He was just too proud to ask her. As she rounded the corner she chuckled to herself over the thought.

With those words Teteh was brought back to his first memory of the night, his mother trying to hand him over to the police. He remembered crying and screaming. He remembered telling, swearing in fact to his mother that he would never fight again or get in any trouble. He saw himself on the ground in a pile of dirt crying and begging. Then his mother thanked the officer and picked him up in her arms, and though he was covered in dirt including his face she hugged him tight and covered his dirty face with kisses.

“OK, mi boye, OK. Just make sure yuh membah yuh promise.”

He nodded and held her tight and she walked out of the Police station with him in her arms. She took out a lollypop and gave it to him but he was too stressed to enjoy it so he just hugged her some more and put his head on her shoulders and wrapped his legs around her.

She was startled out of her chuckle by a gun shot. She dropped her bag and looked ahead of her in the direction where the shot came from. She saw her son holding a gun and a man in a white coat lying on the ground. In a loud whisper she screamed, “Kevin Teteh Morgan! Is that you?!”
Purgatory Support
Ryan Frabizio

You lie supine, silent, sedate, while I debate what you would will I do—such fruitless misery to possess power to prolong your life in state or give you leave to the eternal mystery. Weakened, with no will, your keepers have called upon me to rescue you from the sapping tentacles of an implacable, mechanical beast, feasting on your essence; your body fed, running in trickles. They say they have saved you, but no victory shows in your blotched blue and purple chest heaving without signal from your eyes, numb, the blurring snows of science draining the comfortable knowledge of: this is life, this is death, out of our consciousness which enables us to recognize a rising ghost. Instead, your blooming, lightest hour is dragged to decadent days, masters of disguise marinating you with magic potions that feed your stomach, starve your Host. Escape is criminal, “there shall be no other doctors before me, for my corrections encompass cockeyed cocktails.” Yes, after pausing long on your behalf, I find flat, whining lines preferable to false-pulse doom. You will be untied. Forms, laws: no longer binding. “Doctor—are you sure we’re not doing this too soon?”
i wonder sometimes if angels and demons take notes on our lives 
with the deceased as guest speakers to explain why humans are 
the way they are 
or at least attempt to 
angels scribble thesis ideas furiously on heavenly scrolls 
their quills ablaze! 
with the brainstorming power of twenty thousand miracles! 
the demons pretend to command the back row but secretly take 
detailed notes with an all-too-perfect understanding 

and i wonder if god sends the meanest nun with her hardest ruler 
if the class begins to disregard the complications of our seemingly 
simple lives
Colleen watched the dark drops fall into the sink, spattering into tiny puddles. The blood tickled her as it rolled from the fresh cut along the flesh of her palm. After letting it flow a little while longer, she washed away the blood and washed the blade, then returned it to the back of the bottom drawer of her dresser, tucked under an old gray sweatshirt. She looked again at her palm, and felt the sting as she tried to close it even the slightest. Her hand felt limp. The whole arm felt limp. She felt limp. From the top of the dresser she took the few paper towels that she had brought from the kitchen to use to stop the flow, but they could do nothing for her pain, and she soaked the bandage with tears after the blood had dried.

The phone on her nightstand rang. She listened intently as the answering machine took a message that never came, then settled on the edge of her bed, wiping a few still welling tears from her eyes with the back of her hand. The phone rang again. Her chest tightened as she stared at it. She reached for it slowly, biting her bottom lip, and paused an instant before her uncut hand pushed itself to grab and lift the receiver, taking a breath as she raised it to her face.

“Hello?”
“Hi, Colleen?”
“Yeah.”
“Hey. It's Chris. Are you okay?”
“Yeah.”
“You sure? I mean, I know about what happened and all, and... y'know, I just wanted to make sure you were okay. I wanted to let you know that I'm real sorry about Joe, I know it's a hard thing to have happen and all....”

She choked back a short sob and re-gathered her thoughts from the impulse to ask him to not talk about it, and to say that she
just wanted to be left alone. “It’s okay, Chris, I’m fine. Just a little upset.”

“You sure? I mean I understand if you don’t really wanna talk much about it, but...y’know, if you ever do want to talk about it or anything, I’m here, okay? Just give me a call or say something to me in the hall before class or something, all right?”

She stared blankly at her foot for a moment then blinked. “Okay.” She knew he was not convinced, but she did not care as long as she could get rid of him.

“Well...okay, then. I ah...I guess I’ll see you later, all right?”

“Yeah. Sure. See you. Bye,” forcing a small smile to make herself sound a little cheery before hanging up quickly, lest he might break the short silence again. She sat still for a moment, then shut her eyes as she felt another onrush of tears behind the lids, and lay back across the bed, thinking of nothing while staring up at the ceiling. She got up after a few minutes to walk back into the bathroom, wiping the back of her hand under her nose and her palm over her eyes, and blinked a few times as she leaned forward to examine herself in the mirror. The whites of her eyes had turned completely red around their sea green irises. She washed her face with cool water and felt the stiffness in her cheeks caused by the salt of her tears vanish.

She retreated back to her bed, flopping down across it on her front, legs bobbing in the air behind her, and burying her face in folded arms. She knew it was childish to be acting this way to everybody, but what did they care, she thought. Nobody understood how she felt, nobody ever could and nobody ever would, but it was still nice of them to try to look like they did. Her brother Michael was just too young and her parents were just not in touch with what she thought and felt. They were too busy pushing her about school and chores and other responsibilities. Joe had meant everything to her. He was her best friend, like an older brother to her, someone she found who she could look up to.

“He was my fucking angel,” she shouted into her muffling arms and quilt. She thought of the day she had met him at a summer
Christian camp. She knew nobody, and it seemed as if nobody really wanted to know her either, until she met him. He was one of the camp leaders. She had found a basketball and was playing at one of the hoops by herself when he walked over, and when she told him she did not know anybody he asked if he could play with her. They played “twenty-one,” and she was sure he let her win, which was sweet of him. Since that summer, she still saw him often since he lived two blocks away from her house. The few friends she did have liked to tease her about how often she was with him, but she never actually felt attracted to him in that way: he was twenty-four while she was fifteen, but she liked to tell herself maybe she would try her luck in a few years if he was still available. A little longer than a year had passed since then and she was only one year older, but now he was more than unavailable: he was dead, blown away by a drunk driver like a leaf in the wind. He had not even been on the road, but was on the sidewalk.

Colleen had just come home after school, but first visited the spot where his body had its last experience of life only last evening. The estimation of the distance from impact to the body’s landing spot was thirty-five to forty feet, and she could still see the tire-tracks on the pavement and spots of blackened blood. Looking around she imagined what would have happened had Joe only been a few feet away from where he was then. The driver would have hit that big tree instead, taking one more sinner out of the world instead of someone who deserved to live. It was unfair that the murderer was only going to get prison-time for his fifth DUI and killing a pedestrian. Joe had made her believe in the good of people, to believe in the rightness of things. He was her cooling stone when she would get heated and angry, the safety on her mouth when she felt like unloading whether on one person or the entire world. He made her believe that things were as they should be, and that it was better to look forward to relief than to focus on frustrations and pain.

Above all he had made her stop cutting, and he never even knew it. For months she had confided in the dagger she had bought
at a Renaissance Fair, through failed relationships, failed classes, and heated arguments with her parents over her grades. Pints of blood had run from her scarred palms into her bathroom sink. She had watched the scars on her palms fade away, and now they were reopened. There was no reason they should stay closed now. There was no right anymore. What little right that was left went with him, and she would give anything to have that back. Exhausted, she closed her eyes and drew her body up into a curling position.

In a moment she opened her eyes and found herself lying in a patch of grass. She started up into a sitting position and looked around. She found nothing but rolling grassland stretching toward the horizon in every direction, with the exception of a clay dirt road a short distance away from where she sat. She stood and brushed at her blue jeans, then walked toward the road and, deciding to go left, followed it. After several minutes she saw in the distance that the road met with another, but still saw nothing but the same dusky landscape. The wind had risen to a hollow howl and was lifting and swirling dust from the road about her, and as she reaching the crossing, she found there was not even a sign to follow. She stood in the intersection squinting to try to see as far as possible for any sign of anything. She could not decide whether to keep following one of the roads or to turn back.

“Hello, Colleen.”

She whirled around. Her eyes widened and her mouth opened as she stared.

“Joe!”

He nodded, holding a gaze down on her from his six-foot high view. His short black hair whipped about. She looked up at him in confusion.

“Joe. You’re...but you’re...dead. Aren’t you?”

“Of course I am. You saw it yourself.”

“Then what...”

“What am I doing here? I’m here to save you.”

“S...Save me...?”

“Yes, save you, save you from what you’re doing to yourself.
It’s not right, it’s too soon for you to give up on life before it gives in on you.”

She shook her head violently and felt her throat clench. “There is no right anymore. You always told me about things getting better, things getting taken care of in time enough, that there’s good in everybody. But I know now that there’s nothing at all, nothing!”

She felt her knees giving way as she shook with rage, and fell on them and looked up to see those eyes still gazing down at her. She shut hers tightly and bowed her head. She gritted her teeth to hold back a sob, which escaped her as she started to weep, and brought her hands up to her face. She felt something creeping into her brown curled hair and slipping through to her face: Joe’s hand. She shut her eyes and turned her cheek to his palm.

“Colleen,” he began, in the low and consoling voice she had listened to so many times before. “I’m already dead. There’s nothing right or wrong in it, it’s just kind of...there. The guy who hit me is gonna die someday no matter what. But you still have life, and you shouldn’t give up on it, not for anything. And I know you won’t, because you cried out. That’s why I’m here.”

The wind screamed louder, sending her hair flapping across and around her face. The ground beneath her rumbled. For the first time not only now but ever, she reached out and held Joe around the knees. He reached down to her and helped her to stand. He looked around him and then back to her with an alarmed expression.

“Colleen, you have to get out of here. He’s coming.”

“Go away...? What? Why? Who’s coming?”

“Look, I can’t explain it to you, okay? Just listen to me, Colleen. You said you would give anything to bring me back, and that’s why you’re here, but you can’t. Just go, and don’t worry about me: I’m dead, and just remember the things you’ve been able to do for yourself. Maybe you think I caused them, but you did it. It was all you. God wants you to live. Go! Now!”

Colleen heard him, but she felt planted into the ground. She turned her head to look behind her, looking for something to come, but there was still nothing, just the grass and the horizon. She did
not know what to do, and turned to ask Joe at least one more thing before she would go only to discover nothing, not even a sign of footprints, where he had been standing. She looked straight ahead, thinking she might see him in the distance. No. She turned and took the closest branch from the intersection, only to dig her toes into the ground after a few steps before she walked straight into the mass blocking her path.

“Oh! Joe!”

He raised a finger to his lips to hush her. “Come on,” he whispered sharply as he reached out and took her by the shoulder firmly.

“Joe, I don’t understand. What the hell is going on? Who’s coming? Where am I going? Tell me!”

“Colleen, we can’t do this right now. You have to listen to me. You’re in danger here.”

“In danger of what?”

“Of losing your soul.”

Her eyebrows shot up, and then she narrowed her eyes. “My what?”

“Your soul, Colleen. Come on, we’ve got to get going.”

“But why?”

“Because this is where it’s done, the crossroads. You come here when you’re going to lose your soul. Come on now, let’s go!” He let go of her shoulder and snatched her hand and began walking, dragging her clumsily behind.

Colleen wriggled and tried to resist being pulled. “Joe! You’re hurting me!” She thought she felt her hand beginning to come loose in his, and so she put all her energy into one violent yank as she pleaded with him, and was both surprised but relieved that she had finally escaped his grip though it did jar the joints of her shoulder and elbow.

“Joe, stop!”

He whirled around and glared down at her, his brown eyes like two hot cattle brands, and growled in his throat. “You fool! I don’t
have time for this anymore!” He shot his arms out and grabbed her around the waist, lifted her up and over his shoulder, and began walking closer to the crossroads.

“Joe, where are you going? You said this place was bad. I don’t understand. Just tell me wh—”

He brought her down to her feet again at the middle of the crossroads, still holding her in place firmly by the shoulders, then released one hand and raised one of hers with its palm turned up.

“I can wait no longer,” he said, and brought his index finger to her palm. Colleen saw a long nail extending from the finger, coming to a sharp point at the tip. She screamed as he dug it into the cut she had freshly made and dragged it along the length from below her little finger to her index.

The nerves throughout her arm were on fire, spreading into her chest and she shut her eyes as her head began to swim while she struggled weakly, feeling drained of all energy but still screaming. “Joe, what are you dooiiiiiiing??!!”

She heard nothing but her own screaming, which did not even echo but was lost to the endless horizons, betraying her hope that someone would hear her. She heard a low hissing voice pierce through her screams.

“Your soul....”

“No! No!”

Her limbs shot out as the shriek died into the vast and empty bed. She lay motionless as she allowed her heart to gradually slow itself and for the film of sweat on her face to fade. She rolled over onto her rear on the bed, propping herself up with both hands, and shook her head slowly to the sides and rubbed her eyes to chase away the images still imprinted behind her eyes. She turned up her palms and looked at them. Nothing but the cut she had made a little while ago. She dropped them and rose from the bed, and began pacing aimlessly around her room, trying to gather herself.

What was all that? Am I going completely crazy? My soul? I know he’s dead, but...what if all that was really some kind of warning? Every time I have a
dream about something, it happens, even stupid things like that time Mr. Fielder dropped that eraser on the floor and tripped picking it up. Am I... am I going to go to Hell if I....

She turned and went to her dresser, opened the bottom drawer and pulled out the dagger from beneath the old sweatshirt. She brushed a fingertip along the edge of the blade.

I don’t understand.... I don’t understand!! ...But what is there really left anyway? Joe is gone, and there can’t be a God then, and there’s no heaven, and there’s no souls. Everything is hell, even here... or there’s not even a hell, it’s just something that maybe is real but why is it if it’s like this? All miserable. Stupid. But wh—... no. No. There’s nothing.

She lightly pressed her fingertip against the edge. She gnawed at her bottom lip, and turned her opened palm upwards. She bit down on her lip and closed her eyes, and flashed the edge across, feeling her fresh warm blood heating the metal.

She looked down to her palm, and saw grass beyond it beneath her feet. She looked around, and found herself back at the crossroads. The dusky sky grew black and the earth rumbled. She fell down to her knees.

“No! No! Save me! Please!”

Nothing.

“I’m sorry!”

Nobody. She took a slow, broken breath and stretched her arms out in front of her, the unity of palms and blade turned inward.

“I’m...sorry....”

She thrust her hands to her chest and shuddered violently. Everything went black. Her eyes rolled up to the back as she fell forward onto her face. On the beige carpet in her room, two black pools expanded from where her hand rested and from her chest.
Lady with the Golden Hair
Anthony Labson

Hair as golden as the sun
And lips as soft as pillows.
Eyes that are windows
To the gates of Heaven.

I would love to be lost
In your paradise.
I wish I could taste your cherry lips
And drink the juices within them.

Whenever you walk into a room
The sunlight seems to dim.
When you open your mouth and sing
You can make an opera slient.

With a simple touch of kindness
You made a statue break out of his shell.
His blood raced through his veins again
And his eyes filled with salty tears
At the sight of your smile.

I live today because of you then
I go on now with the thought of seeing you again.
To hear your sweet voice call my name
And send chills through my body.
To feel the embrace
That can only be described as love.

Till I see you again
My lady with the golden hair.
Love
Your Statue
It’s really a shame that you missed out
On the free fireworks last Thursday night.
We watched the gold, and pinks, and oranges burst
And fall towards the very tips of the waves,
Then fall again as the waves smashed
Against the sand.
During the finale we bought ice cream-
None other than Kohr’s orange and vanilla swirl,
And drove back to my house with the windows halfway down.
The air was thickened with smoke.
But as we drove down past 16th Ave,
We could smell and taste the fresh salt.
The midnight breeze always makes its way through my window.

You were pacing back and forth in your room
Surrounded by reminders of the future.
One day
You see it, yourself with a stethoscope around your neck.
But you can no longer remember what the ocean tastes like.
You want to sleep because what you see when you’re awake
Is a white wall-
Empty and blank, with no picture frames-
No meaning.
What’s behind it is even worse-
A city that never sleeps.
What will happen to your dreams, the ones that really mattered?
Remind me why you’re traveling to this place,
Staying up late into the night.
Because the lights are so bright,
Your eyes are brought back to the empty house that you live in.
The walls scream,
Hey, you chose this life baby.
The mirror yells,
You cannot look away.
So stand there and cry
Realize you still have time
And
Wipe those pathetic stares, swollen eyes,
Before your tears spill into your “I <3 NY” coffee cup.
Even the smallest waves still crash for you.
Untitled
Elizabeth Steiner