

Three Peaks Review

Black Hills State University's
student-run literary magazine



Three Peaks Review



Black Hills State University's
undergraduate literary magazine
featuring a collection of students'
poetry, fiction, and visual art

Letter from the Editor

It seems as if only yesterday it was fall and we were all gathered in a circle in Jonas 302, laughing as we discussed the ridiculous names we had come up with for this literary magazine, unaware of the challenging but monumental changes that we would encounter over the course of this year. In truth, this inaugural issue of *Three Peaks Review* was only made possible by the countless people who supported us along the way. I would first like to say thank you to the 3PR members themselves. Your commitment to weekly meetings, endless feedback, and much-needed humor never goes unappreciated. To our advisors, Nick Heeb, and especially, Matt Bauman, I am so lucky to have had such talented advisors who are not only dedicated to creating this magazine, but also are passionate about establishing a larger literary community here at BHSU. For your ceaseless patience and honesty, thank you.

I'd like to give another huge thank you to the dozens of students who were brave enough to submit their words and artwork to us that made this magazine what it is. Picking which pieces to publish was not at all easy and we are so grateful to have had such a large pool of submissions to choose from. An additional thank you goes out to every professor and community member who encouraged students to write and submit their work.

Lastly, I'd like to thank everyone at the Student Engagement and Leadership Center who were more than willing to answer endless questions, promote literary events throughout the year, and help us re-establish ourselves as a club. A special thank you also goes to the College of Liberal Arts and the School of Arts and Humanities, as well as the BHSU Print Center, for making this first edition come to life.

With all that said, I hope you enjoy your read.

Sincerely,

Jo

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I'll Be Seeing You

By *Clara MacIlravie Cañas*

I wake up dead
in a pool of warm peach tea
to a startling realization
that I'd forgotten to water the houseplants.

I wonder what will happen
maybe they will wilt, or perhaps I can water it
with the tea that bubbles in my lungs.
Or perhaps it will shrivel and die, like me.

I should hope that mom comes to water it
with the tin watering can stowed away behind the fridge
or maybe with the tears she casts at the sight of
my unmade bed and empty humidifier.

Mom walks through my apartment
hoping to hear the echo of my pulse, and
she dots her eyes with the auburn blanket
that I slept with every night since I was five
with distant scents of cheap zinfandel
woven into the threads.

I blink away the cooling peach tea that
pools at the corner of my eyes
because my mother knows that her daughter
would never leave home with an unmade bed

I wish I could be there and swim in the tears
my mother sheds while packing my books away.
But I swallow my breath before I

Swim a
 w
 a
 y.



DARK REFLECTION

Austin Kusler

Sunrise

By Andrew Toft

The first thing Lieutenant James Doyle noticed when he awakened was the cold. Being from the frigid state of Wyoming, he was used to below zero temperatures, but the Hurtgen forest of Germany was a whole new experience. He had been shot. He knew that much. He raised his head as high as his battered muscles would allow and examined his hands. His normally tan skin was drawn and pale, like a sheet. *Like a corpse*, he thought with a grim smile. That smile, normally a sign of laughter, was now a lonely curved line rather than anything good or happy. The only thing he could see was dark, frozen earth. Bits and pieces of time began to come together. The dirt hole he was in would be a German shell crater. *Damned artillery*. He remembered flying through the air as the branches of dead trees slammed into his body. The cold ached and began to seep into the very marrow of his bones.

The chill was breathtaking. The twinges of upcoming frostbite were eventually overshadowed by the feeling of burning wire wrapped around his leg. Well, at least that answered where the shrapnel had hit. He considered pulling his boot off and examining where the jagged Hun metal must have torn through his leg. The idea almost caused him to pass out. He sat up. The blood sprayed around his leg caused his heart to sink a few inches lower than he thought possible. The shrapnel had cut a three-dimensional piece of art through his right leg. The blood had turned an evil shade of black, and there was one part where he could see clear through the wound. There were long strands of tendon and small clumps of cartilage stuck to the remnants of his uniform. His heart rate jumped at a sharp CRACK. He became acutely aware of every atom in his body. He waited, his breath short and ragged. The little puffs of air materializing in the air helped him to focus.

He reached a hand to his chin and felt the stubble; this tiny action always calmed his nerves. When he was home, Lizzy insisted he shave at least once every few days. Right now, he wished more than anything to hear her soft voice gently nagging at him to brush up the sandpaper-like hairs below his mouth. There was another crack. This time nearer. The puffs of air came faster and faster, like little smoke signals that no one could translate. Suddenly a crack happened directly over the lieutenant. He looked up, and his green eyes barely had time to register the mass of snow and kindling sized branches heading straight towards his face. The artillery barrage from earlier in the day had

weakened the tree branches surroundings James's company. This, combined with the frozen sap in the twigs had caused the trees to simply snap under the strain. He pushed the fallen snow away as best as he could. The sun was beginning to set. Each minute of light seemed like a clock ticking away towards an uncertain future. Finally, the yellow ball of fading hope disappeared over the edges of his shell crater. "My shell crater," he thought aloud. Perhaps the idea of possessing one thing in his presently tangled life helped ease the pain.

His thoughts wandered to scattered lines of his favorite poems. "If you can keep your head when all about you/ Are losing theirs and blaming it on you." He briefly wondered what that old poet was doing now. Was he in Heaven or Hell? "And our hearts, though stout and brave, / Still, like muffled drums are beating / Funeral marches to the grave."

Funeral marches to the grave. Who, he wondered, had decided that James Doyle should be appointed to walk that funeral march. As he sat there in that humble shell crater on the border between Belgium and the Rhineland, his life flashed in front of him in short, random bursts. He propped his canteen of frozen water to serve as a prisoner's pillow. Stars were beginning to appear, and these sparked memories of his childhood. Long, long evenings were spent behind his father's house staring at the wide world that existed above the Earth. Each star became a symbol of a dream-filled boy. The story he weaved always involved a girl; her face was never clear, but that was of no matter. She was kind, and lovely, and soft. She had the most wonderful laugh, and the deepest eyes he could imagine. He lived with the girl in a house that he built with his own hands. He imagined sitting by the fire and just talking. Talking with the one person he was sure he would love most. It was a nice house, a warm house. But the boy grew up, as all boys do, and the story started to change. His face twisted as his leg began to ache. He removed his helmet to prop the mangled leg up and relieve some of the pain. The freezing air had slowed his blood flow, but the pain was in no way dampened. That story became less of a dream, and more of an idea. Most visions of the girl with the deep gray eyes were replaced with more "realistic" thoughts. As he grew up he was indoctrinated with the idea that happiness was found in success, and success came from being wealthy and respected. His father had always believed in strength and power. The stars were starting to be covered by thick, heavy clouds.

The plan was to become a prominent and famous businessman, but the universe had other plans. He had met Elizabeth in college. He smiled for a second time. The way her hair framed her face still caused his heart rate to speed up. The first time he saw her he was sure he

stopped breathing for at least a minute. Mr. Robinson and Contemporary American Poetry were forgotten. Without really knowing what was happening, he found himself walking across the classroom and stumbling out some silly words that she somehow understood. Awkwardness turned to friendship, and friendship into love. But that day marked the moment when James Doyle's life changed for the better. He learned to find joy in the smallest things. The red tulips Liz planted in their garden. The robins flying home for the first time. Building a room for their child. He grew to understand that people are truly the essence of happiness, and that Elizabeth meant everything to him. The story he had written in the stars all those years ago was finally being lived out.

Who called you here? He could almost imagine the wind to be whistling. *Who called you here?* The barren, war torn ground seemed as alone and tired as James himself. The drums of war had been steadily growing louder for the years leading up to the Second Great War. Mountain Heights Elementary had been happy to hire such a fine school teacher as himself, and with a very pretty young wife no less. His life was as normal as could be. He had always assumed everything would work out just fine without needing to get involved. The Army and the draft were not under the same impression. He remembered Elizabeth as the train pulled away from the station. The gray in her eyes had faded to a light blue, and the worriedness was equally matched with pride. The throbbing was spreading up the entire right half of his body. He knew that soon, he wouldn't even be able to move his legs. The puffs of air were fewer and far between in the fading moonlight. The night sky blended with the insides of his shell crater.

Very slowly, the faintest slivers of a light appeared. There was a darkness on either side, but he focused on the pale, yellow warm light. His eyes, dull and dumb, registered a bright glow. He couldn't remember seeing a light like this before. It spread into his skull, his chest, and even his legs. He almost felt warm.

Stars. Gray Eyes. Tulips. Uniforms. Explosion.

Stars. Gray Eyes. Tulips. Uniforms. Explosion.

He reached out to the light and felt the warmth surround him like a blanket. He heard voices coming towards him. The breaths of air came faster and faster.

The Sun was slowly finishing its nocturnal journey. It had ambled past China, California, and the English Channel, shedding its life-giving rays wherever needed. Fifteen minutes after James Doyle slipped into his light, cold sunbeams filtered over the dark, frozen dirt of the shell crater. But there was nothing left to warm.



INTO THE MYSTIC

Katie Jones

Pathways

By *Austin Kusler*

I walk alone
beneath the stars in the soft snow.
Last night I walked here too,
leaving my footprints
where only we go.
Tonight, I see your tracks from today;
I see where his leash dragged between his paws,
knowing only you let your dog run like that.
I imagine we are walking together
like we used to every night,
climbing up our hill,
watching the sunset in silence.
And I wonder if you knew my footprints,
the same way I know yours?

Then the path splits into two.
I go forward,
and you left.

Sonora

By *Hayley Bowen*

There are no blizzard forecasts
In the place it does not snow,
In my mind it is always warm here,
But the sun shines cold and bleak,
And Tasmanian devil clouds blossom
From the ground up—
Whipping winds of crushed glass and bones;
A blizzard of biting earth.
What's the opposite of snowfall?
Sandrise?
It's a supernova of suffocation:
Are those stars, or light refractions, or just oxygen deprivation?
Don't panic. This chaos will pass.
And what remains is a gunpowder sky,
Violet bruises blooming on clementine horizon,
And hair and lips and skin covered
In sand and sweat and secrets.
No avalanche, no downed powerlines, no felled trees.
It has gone as quickly as it came.
The only evidence of the violence
Is tucked away behind sand-scratched eyelids.
This desert's only permanence is that
In this place it does not snow.



DANU

Hope Christofferson

10

Losing Your Religion

By *Jo Mitchell*

You said I made you believe in God.
That the first time you saw me
my white locks of hair looked like clouds
parting to heaven, my face a light
guiding you from darkness. You said
my blue eyes matched the stained glass
you used to stare at instead of the preacher
and now you know why.

You said my name sounded like the answer
to a prayer you didn't deserve.
That my sweet voice was like a sprinkle
of holy water on your searing skin,
and when I sang it felt like being baptized.
You drowned in the hymns from my lips
as they helped you forget your own silence,
and as you mouthed the words with me,
I began to believe in your revelation:
I was put on this earth to save you.

So, I ripped the bread from my skin
to feed your demons who only came back
for more. I drained my blood to give you life
while you downed it like wine, without a breath.
My absence hit you like a hangover
the next morning as you began to realize
you still weren't saved
from your original sin.

I returned from the dead months later
without my gospel tongue
and began writing poems about atheism,
filled the holes left over from my crucifixion
with piercings, and cut six inches off
of my heavenly locks to ensure
I will never be mistaken
for a saint again.

Pour Choices

By Haylee Strouf

He was what, thirty, forty minutes late? I honestly couldn't judge too much because I was fifteen minutes late. I couldn't complain because at least Stephanie the bartender was keeping me company. She was barely tall enough to reach the keg which made her pours kind of shitty but she was nice so that made up for it. The pub was depressingly empty for six o'clock on a Friday, my idea, and I thought the bars would be buzzing at six on Fridays. I don't get out much.

"You gonna want another one?" Stephanie said nodding towards my Apple Ale and Guinness love child. She called it a Black Velvet, I called it a Snakebite.

"Well, I'm supposed to be meeting someone here, so I'd better make this one last. If he doesn't show up in ten, I'll just switch to Jameson."

Stephanie laughed, "Girl true!"

Stephanie was cute and little, like she could just blow away with a gust of wind, like a plastic bag. I used to try to tell myself that that made girls like her weak, and I was better because I was built like a house. I stopped telling myself that when Beyoncé told me that we need to stop competing against other women. I got tired of being a jealous house, so I decided to be a tree, and when it was windy I would stretch out my branches to catch any plastic bags who were tired of being blown around or blown off.

Stephanie began a conversation from behind the bar to my corner table.

"You in college?"

"Yeah, it's my third year here."

"See, I tried college for a bit, then dropped it, now I'm back in it. What are you studying?"

"English Education."

"Oh, so you'll be a teacher?"

No, a taxidermist.

"Yeah I'll be a teacher."

"That sucks, I hate kids."

I'd bet money kids hate you too.

"It's a good thing I'm going into secondary ed, huh?"

"I guess, but teachers don't get paid shit."

I'm going to answer like I haven't heard that before.

“I want a job I’m excited about.”

“And teaching is that job?”

Stephanie, you’re killing me.

“Yep.”

“Huh, good for you. I’m going into business.”

Over the summer I work with a bunch of people who got their degrees in business. They all drink a lot and cheat on their wives. It’s like the “Wolf of Wallstreet” but less cocaine and money.

“That’s neat. What do you want to do with that?”

“I’m not sure yet. Maybe work at some company,” she said waving her arm as she disappeared through a door behind the bar. Stephanie dreams big.

This bar is so dark, I had to squint to see the empty tables around me. I chose a table right by the door, not out of convenience for him to find me, but because when I walked into the empty bar I panicked and picked the table closest to me. Walking into an empty bar feels like trespassing on private property, your unwelcome, looks like you have nothing better to do, and in the state of Montana you could get shot at any moment.

There is a bell on the door that rings when someone walks in, the bell made its music and Stephanie reappeared behind the bar and I darted my eyes away from the door and onto my phone, as if I was way more engrossed in Facebook than waiting for him. In the depths of my second cousin’s third Ellen DeGeneres Facebook rant of the week, an apology called for my attention.

“Sorry I’m late, I had a paper to write.”

“You’re totally fine. I’ve had that happen to me too!”

No, you haven’t.

Stephanie came from behind her bar to our table.

“What can I get for you?” she asked him, even though my drink was perfectly empty.

“Um, what are you drinking?” he asked turning to me.

“A Snakebite, it’s apple ale and Guinness. You should try it!”

“Although it’s really called a Black Velvet,” Stephanie chimed in.

“I’ll just have a Guinness.”

“Oh really? Don’t want to take a trip on the wild side?”

It’s hard cider and beer, Stephanie. Calm the fuck down.

“No thank you, just a Guinness.”

“*Just a Guinness?* This is an Irish Pub it’s *the Guinness.*”

Is she serious?

“...I’ll just have a Guinness, please.”

“Okay, you’re funny,” Stephanie said as she went to go commit the crime of being a shitty Guinness pourer.

All he did was order a fucking beer? Yeah, he’s a real Jerry Seinfeld. What the hell Stephanie? I thought we were friends?! I mean this isn’t a date or anything, but Stephanie doesn’t know that, and now my pride is hurt, and now I have to fight her.

“Oh, do you want anything?” Stephanie called to me from behind the bar.

“I’ll just get another Snakebite.”

Don’t you dare correct me, bitch.

Stephanie brought us our drinks.

“You’re my first pour of the night, so don’t judge me if it’s too bad!” Stephanie said to him and then returned to tending bar.

Why is she flirting with him? Did she not see me waiting here for an hour? How the hell is she like, “Yeah, this guy did make her wait for an hour, but he sure does seem swell!” To be honest I’m not even sure why I even waited that long.

“Wow, this is a bad pour. You’re supposed to have a three leaf, or maybe it’s a four leaf, clover at the top and it doesn’t have that.”

I shrugged, “It’s her first pour, maybe her next one will be better.”

Wine

By *Aisha Baum*

Pop the
cork off.

The way this night will go, really depends on if I keep this bottle to myself, swirling in thoughts of these chardonnay aromas. But walled in with company, my voice will ring through the dim-lit dining room, a tender moscato vibrato. Though down inside spins my deeper red mind squeezed straight from the vine and grapes are that pruned under the intensifying sun light. Now they picked too many so my spinal cord is shaking and withering—a desert bush. But yet, we can have our fill, and fill the glass we must. Shared bottles and solo ones are no different at the very bottom. So I'm left to pour and chug, sip, sip, drip, until the bottle is empty, just like me.

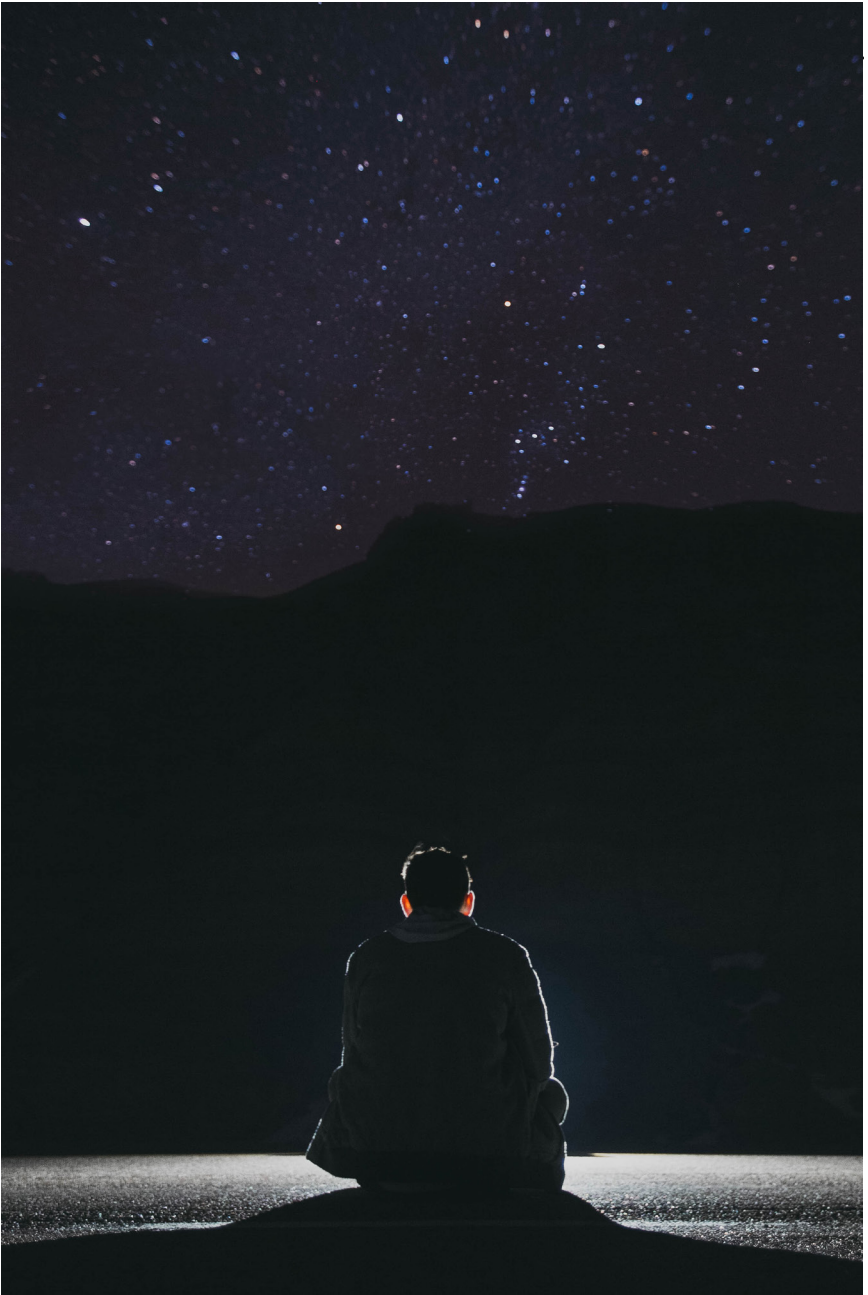
Green and White

By *Emma Zimmer*

Birds perched on apple trees let out calls; piercing, frigidness of the land.
They were bitter calls, as though they too would've favored any land but this.
Rain never washed away sins here. Snow only masked it.
Icicles hung from the vines, adoring the clenched swampland in sparkling gems.
The abbey of frozen foliage was filled with sour stench, paused by cold as it brewed.
The snow gave way under the suffocated trees whose roots and fingers grasped childishly,
greedily at its neighbors.
No.
The Ten Commandments are not common sense in such a green world.
No.
Nor in the white palace it longed to be.
It was purely uncomfortable, for me, not due to the jungles that grew but rather the cold
indifference of the pale tundras, for they truly had no regard for the law all living things,
including those greedy tress, must obey.
No.
Yet, as the greedy trees shows, defies as many laws within its statues, away, away from man.
For one day, he hopes, he may transform into the ice.
Trade his arms for soil for snow to rest
And his body for icicles where sunlight may feverish glisten.
Perhaps, one day, he will grow to become as richly indifferent as they.



CREEPING
Katie Jones



STARRY BADLANDS

Keegan Baatz

Ode to MB

By *Elizabeth Harms*

She, with citrus tendril fingers and nebulas for eyes,
braids her sanguine pigtails in hopes of sea-salted tomorrows.
Some nights, you'd swear to God or Neptune that you
are in the presence of a mermaid with
plastic-rimmed glasses made from the world's destruction,
held together by sea glass and sun beams
and hope for revolution. Patient, she breathes songs
that remind you of home into the air surrounding,
filling ear drums and pockets with material for Sunday morning
preachers or talk show hosts. She thinks
that she is dull, despite her laugh that resurrects the dead
with its Heaven-like promise.
She embodies love like a chrysalis.
The rings on her digits belong to
Saturn, reminding you that true kindness exists in even the coldest of
places. She does not belong to anyone. Rather, she is betrothed to
cardigans and coconut flour cookies, the echo of sunflowers, and
the quiet purr at her feet.
When you are near her, you find peace.
And you wonder,
how did birds ever learn to fly without her?

Static Signals

By Erin Broberg

His voice, as I have mentioned, left a question in my mind. Like riding your bike across cobblestones, it wasn't bumpy or warbled, but you *felt* his voice rumbling beneath you. While he stood at the counter to order a drink, I noticed the black mechanics cupped against his head, behind his ears, and wondered what my voice might sound like to him.

I tip-toed around it at first. He didn't.

He was only a few months old when his mother realized what was missing, he said. Since the couple crossed their newlywed threshold—mother shifting her weight to balance the carrier in her left arm, father lugging the overnight suitcase behind—their child's tears had not stopped. Old hymns were sung at ungodly hours, and afternoon drives hummed behind tinted windows. He was laid on his back, then his belly, picked up, pacifier stuck in, then tipped out. Still, the minutes twisted by on strangled, tear-stained cries. Visits to a doctor rewarded them with only creased waiting-room pamphlets. Magazine articles and motherhood books flashed through his mother's hands as she rocked his carrier with her foot. The words *Autism spectrum* had wavered in the back of her mind for weeks. Dog-eared pages marked the symptoms that aligned with their baby's unresponsive behavior. Still, hot tears and scrunched cheeks marred his gentle face.

At three months, she set his carrier on the smooth kitchen tiles, winced at his sobs and turned to the counter. His mother knotted her hair above her head, emptied a cupboard she hadn't opened in months and began measuring, stirring, kneading. Once her masterpiece was in the oven, she rolled up her sweatshirt sleeves and began washing dishes. She leaned over the hot, bubbly water in the sink and breathed in the smell of wet fall, warm bread, and dish soap. Her breath caught. For the moment, he had stopped crying.

She turned to see his sweet, pudgy body cradled in the carrier, drool slinking into the folds of his neck. His eyes were wide and roving across the tiles. Awake and silent. She breathed deeply and turned back toward the sink. Her hands found a cereal bowl, and began twisting a washcloth inside its frame, slowly dunking, sudsing, wiping, and gently placing the clean dish on a towel to dry. She worked slowly, trying not to disturb the thin lining that had encased their quiet kitchen.

The last dish perched beside the sink was a wine bottle, laced with a ringlet of last night's merlot. She dunked its long neck, letting the wine mix with soap bubbles. She imagined the decadence of placing a rose stem down its neck, setting it on the kitchen table. Perhaps she would even read a book beside its tall frame. Just then, the doorbell rang.

She let the sudsy bottle slip, and it ricocheted off the countertop and plummeted toward the floor. She braced herself—two sippy hands gripping the counter, glimpsing the UPS man through the window, strutting back towards his truck, as if he had only done his job—as the glass fell. Anticipating shatter. Shrieks. Tears. From them both.

The shatter came. A shard nicked her heel as the glass shot across the floor. She gasped, waited. But there was no scream. No tears.

She turned to see her baby's face. His fist was stuffed into his mouth, drool spilling down his arm. His eyes gazed back at her, through her, unbothered.

She allowed herself a relieved laugh. A trace of blood caught her eye, spilling from her foot onto the tile. Hopping over the visible shards, she started for a tissue. Her big toe landed on a small chip, and she gasped. *He should be crying*, the thought sliced.

She looked back at her boy, eyes locked on his face, and reached up to the open cupboard door. She slammed it, hard. He didn't even flinch.

In a fury, a ladle was thrown to the floor, shards of a dinner plate skidded, a frying pan jarred the tiles. But his eyes lost interest, and soon found his toes more entertaining. His mother threw another pan down at her feet, *please just cry*, but he didn't—he wouldn't.

That was the night Nick's father found his mother, tears leaking from red eyes, surrounded by kitchen utensils and an overturned drawer on the tile near her bleeding toes. She gestured toward their baby boy, who was, for once, smiling.

"He can't hear," she shrugged. And burst into tears.

That night, after hearing his second-hand account, I filled my bathtub with scalding water. I let it fill beyond the usual water stains, waiting until the waterline was just an inch from the brim before shutting off the flow. I eased my body in, displacing more water than I imagined. Hot water overflowed onto the bathroom floor, soaking my discarded clothes and sending my cat running out the door. I laid my head back. My cold knees protruded, uncovered, but the water drew a fluttering line from my chin to my forehead. I closed my eyes.

I laid there in wet silence until the water cooled and goosebumps

grew across my skin. After nearly an hour, I heard an echoing *meow* slice through the water. I opened my eyes to see a purring face peeking over the edge of the tub. I stepped naked from the tub and, shivering, went to pour kibble in a dish on the kitchen floor.

On his seventh visit to the hospital, the doctor tucked hearing aids into Nick's small, pink ears. The doctor grinned at his mother and nodded. Here it was. Nick would hear his mother's voice for the first time, and his father sat perched on the stool, video camera recording. His mother cradled their baby, ten months old, in her arms and said, *hello lovely, can you hear me?* The baby's face contorted, squeezed like a lemon-taste, and he began screaming. His father clicked the video camera off.

A month after that first date, Nick drove me to the beach. We were going surfing. He gestured to the rolling hills, almost comically green in the February sunshine. He joked that I had brought the season's rain with me, dragging it behind my car from my hometown in the snow-laden Midwest. He guessed the obstinate clouds had melted somewhere across Arizona and came spilling across the cracked, jagged California state line.

"You're welcome," I smarted.

"Yeah, okay," he replied, dragging his free hand through messy hair. Responses like these—short, ambiguous—made me wonder if he had heard me right, if I was clear enough, if I should repeat myself. I bit my lip.

He set his hand on my knee, "I'm glad, you came, you know. And not because of the rain."

His parents requested more tests. After they were complete, it was decided that Nick's hearing loss was more advanced than they had thought. The only way he could hear an organic sound was if they parked his ears between the revving engines of two fighter jets. With absence of a stronger baseline, all their baby would've heard through those simple hearing aids was intense static, with no one to adjust the bunny ears.

Surgery, cochlear implants, and behind the ear aids were suggested. Finally, at age four, came distinct sounds, then meaning, then understanding. Around then is when he stopped signing.

He assured me, one evening, that he could still read lips.

I turned to face him, “Really? How well?”

“Pretty well.”

I smiled and mouthed, *I like Sue very much.*

“Rude,” he said and shoved me off the couch.

He showed me a video of what it sounded like to hear with cochlear implants. I don’t know what I imagined, that somehow the implants would flip a switch, channeling perfect pitches through his ear. I suppose I thought it was like putting in contacts or replacing a flat tire. In the video, a woman was repeating a phrase about catching salmon. She sounded like she was gurgling water with a fish fluttering between her teeth as she spoke the words. With horror I realized that my voice might sound like that to him, swimming through the air between us, gurgling down his ear canal.

My voice caught in my throat, fins stuck between front teeth. After he left my apartment that night, I couldn’t help running a white line of floss between each tooth before crawling into bed.

In August, as if an afterthought, he told me about the first time he had heard sound—real sound—not buzzing static signals.

“I know this is odd, but—” he tilted his head back on the sofa and closed his eyes. “I felt like I was hearing in color.” He peeked one eye open at me, as if checking to see if I thought he was crazy. “My brain felt like it was searching for a way to connect this new stimulus with something I knew. It was like, noise just burst into my mind, each matching a different color.” He chuckled. “A sort of Pantone guide to help me get oriented... I don’t know... Colors and sounds have blended together once I started hearing,” he looked around the dimly lit room, “and absolutely nothing has looked quite the same since.”



UNTITLED

Tiffany Light

March 1, 1999

By Sarah Schaeffer

You were secretly with me when I stopped
at the East-side Family Thrift Center
at two in the morning after work.
Back then, it was the only place open that late.

It was empty,
except for some guy
wearing headphones and
waxing the floor,

and a towering black man
whose eyes were chocolate pools
of wisdom and sympathy;
who scanned the twin-pack pregnancy test,
and the Mint Chocolate Cookie Ben and Jerry's;
who could have said nothing,
or the wrong thing;
who, instead, gave back change, and
as our hands gently brushed,
a blessing,
a benediction,
deep and low.

Good Luck Miss.

And I knew then
that I didn't really need the two tests,
but we would need all the luck he could grant us.

Fast Food

By *Bethany Kindsvogel*

I hope the lyrics that write themselves
In the delicate mind of a fast food worker
Stay alive tonight.

When a reverie bursts through
The intermission of customer service
And scatter fragments of melody
Onto their brain, I hope they remember
Each word as the week grows long.

When they have grown old and soaked their
Rhymes and rhythms in the bottom of a
Glass of brandy, I hope they fall asleep
Replaying the imagined sound of drums in their head.

I know that they keep searching for something,
Some sign to assure them they have made
The right decision.
Because,

What else could they do?
They got married,
Had children,
Moved states,
Settled down.
How could there be time to chase those personal pursuits?

And someday when their dad dies.

Or

When they have to bury their dog.

I know they will sit in the back office.
And stare into the glow of a computer screen and listen
To the eclectic sounds of a progressive rock band.
And remember how long their hair used to be.
And I hope they scribble those words
On the back of receipt paper
And sing them aloud on their drive home.

