



SCAD DOCUMENT

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The Journal of the Graduate Writing Program

Introduction

At the Savannah College of Art and Design, creativity knows no bounds. Offering more than 100 degree programs, SCAD is uniquely positioned to prepare undergraduate and graduate students for careers in thriving, in-demand fields.

People from all over the world choose the SCAD writing program because of its widely published faculty, comprehensive curriculum, industry networks and high employment rate. SCAD offers uncommon access to industry leaders — agents, editors and publishers — and unmatched resources such as Ivy Hall, which is home to distinguished writers in residence and literary salons. Through the Ivy Hall Writers Series, *DOCUMENT* Reading Series and Art of the Mind Lecture Series, students on every campus receive coaching from acclaimed novelists, journalists, and essayists such as Walter Mosley, Jack Pendarvis, Karen Russell, Jamaica Kincaid, David Shields, Celeste Ng, and Jeannette Walls.

Our writing students are immersed in a curriculum that prepares them for creative careers across the writing spectrum. Courses in business writing, freelance magazine writing, travel writing, arts criticism, the book publishing process, creative nonfiction, fiction, fashion and design journalism, as well as courses in new media writing train graduate students in the art and craft of the written word while teaching them how to navigate its marketplace.

Students gain real-world experience through in-house writing and editorial positions at *DOCUMENT*, District and The Connector — the award-winning news sources — SCAD Radio, SCAD Atlanta Radio, SCAN Magazine, and District Quarterly. Our students master publishing and content management platforms, and even attend digital marketing boot camp, developing multimedia and new media skills that land jobs.

SCAD students often finish their degrees with publication credits to their names and are prepared to work as copywriters, freelance magazine writers, memoirists, ghost writers, speechwriters, editors, novelists, news writers, humorists, social media marketers, Web content writers and critics. Our students have been hired to write for such media outlets as Vanity Fair, TIME magazine, The Atlantic Monthly, The New York Times, The Huffington Post, Southern Living, Vice, Oxford American, Marie Claire and Paste Magazine. Some have found literary agents and sold books and book proposals even before graduation.

In the *DOCUMENT* series, you'll read the essays, stories, articles, profiles, travelogues and meditations that represent our M.F.A. writing students' best creative work. Much of it has been nominated for national awards or has been previously published in professional print and online magazines and journals. Each issue documents the diversity of voices, ideas and writing styles that our program fosters.

We invite you to experience the truly amazing work presented here and see for yourself why students come from across the globe to study writing at SCAD.

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YOU ARE HERE

A Meditation by Domenica Devine

I love airports. Those huge windows taking in both earth and sky, the counterpoints of white clouds and the black expanse of tarmac. Just beyond the glass, the planes line up neatly, shimmering exhaust, only hinting at their destinations.

When I lived in Los Angeles, I used to drive to a small street that lay directly in the flight path. There were no streetlights. I would lie on the hood of my car to feel the rumble, to smell the jet fuel as the planes headed out over the ocean, a roaring promise. New Orleans, Miami Beach, Africa, Vietnam. Before the troublesome restrictions of TSA, I would sometimes head inside just to sit in the orange molded chairs and watch the travelers. Some moving with purpose to their gate. Some, wild-eyed, laden with diaper bags and stuffed animals and the sticky hands of reluctant children. Ripples of people, going and coming. Smooth waves of movement, with dashes to the gate or sprints to grab a quick bite to eat. Some hopping with delight at the prospect of a plane ride, the visit to grandma's. Some just primed for the escape. Everyone had somewhere else to be; even the earthbound employees were moving.

LAX is pleasant no longer. You can't go up to the terminals anymore without a ticket in hand. No longer do we arrive at the airport carefully groomed in our Sunday best. Now we are encouraged to wear slip-on shoes, sweatpants, and no jewelry. Wearing a long skirt? I was subjected to a full-body pat-down. Full-body. If our personal space has not been invaded enough, Management has decided that we need CNN or Fox News blaring at us from inescapable televisions. Lest we find silence for a moment, the sounds of the Bee Gees' new elevator mix is quick to accompany us as we walk through the terminal, by the gates, in

the restrooms and the restaurants, combining discordantly with Don Lemon's grave tones if our eyes are drawn to the latest newscast. Every bit of real estate, a retail opportunity. There is nowhere for your eyes to rest, except inside a toilet stall. No, LAX is pleasant no longer.

Noi Bai Airport, however, is different. On the outskirts of Hanoi, it is calm and quiet, and walking through it is like walking through a movie set before the actors have appeared. There are queues laid out with portable rope stanchions in expectation of long lines. The extensive sweep of airline counters are like those we see in the U.S., but with soaring names like Cathay Pacific, AirAsia, Tiger Airways, and Thai Airways, each tempting us Westerners with its exotic promise. The flight attendants, chosen from a Hollywood casting agency, are all stunningly beautiful. Silk brown skin, smiling black eyes — they move silently through the terminal, most dressed in a modern version of their national costumes. Black shining hair arranged in artful sweeps, the agents from Vietnam Airlines are dressed impeccably in the graceful costume known as the Áo Dài. As they glide by, regal, their long, side-wrapped dresses float suggestively and their matching silk pants whisper, somehow silencing the raucous clatter of their Panjiva Rollaboards.

Not the largest of Vietnam's airports, Noi Bai International is the most modern. Ubiquitous blue steel trussing holds the distant ceiling aloft. Signs in Vietnamese and English are a hot yellow contrast to the blue cast of the room, making navigation easy. I once made the mistake of following the disembarking crowd through Heathrow all the way to the underground subway without finding my way to baggage claim. Now I no longer assume that I will be traveling in the same direction as anyone else. Now I take my time to get familiar with the place, always checking the status of my luggage first, then, finding the money changer.

Terminal One — a promising name, since it is the only terminal to date — is bright, spacious, and welcoming. About a third of the size of LAX airport, Noi Bai has reached its limit: 10 million passengers come through Hanoi each year. But today, there is no one in the queues. Well, maybe there are a few milling about. There are a cluster of tourists from Japan, moving as an amoeba, none confident enough to break away from the group. Another small knot of well-fed travelers, their too-large luggage tagged by Gecko Tours. They are looking wearily at each other, no doubt realizing that they should have chosen the shorter three-day packet. There are the two young backpackers dressed confidently in the

androgynous armor of blue jeans and T-shirts. There are several men and women dressed in crisp dark business suits, the only ones in this airport moving quickly to their destinations.

I walk up a sweeping staircase to find myself in a cathedral. Light coming in from the brown tinted windows bounces off the polished floors, blinding me for a moment. The stained-glass frames along the perimeter of the room emerge into noodle shops and tea shops, which sell scrumptious palm-wrapped treats. Their colorful lighted signs invite you in to buy trinkets and temptations for those remaining at home. Stacks of grass hats and cheap rayon Áo Dài entice you to take a bit of Vietnam with you wherever you go. Fruit vendors and duty-free shops add their hues. The gate kiosk at the far end is a pulpit, a ticketing communion where a few passengers stop on their way to Luang Prabang. *Luang Prabang*—I think that must be how they pronounce *heaven* in Lao.

As I work to make sense of the place, the smoke reshapes itself into the mesh gray chairs of twisting, waiting and imagining. The only sound is the whispered chatter of the passengers and the soft scratch of a woman in a grass hat sweeping dust with a handmade grass broom. Everyone moves slowly, deliberately. It is as if it has been agreed that this is a sacred space and time.

Sitting on the hard metal chair, I hear the call for Ho Chi Minh City.

Noi Bai was built for the Vietnam Air Force—our enemy—during the Vietnam War, when Ho Chi Minh City was known as Saigon. It makes me shudder a moment, recalling the faces of my friends, brothers, roofers, and teachers, all conscripts as they marched off on a journey not of their choosing. It brings to mind the faces of their parents when they received the news. The television coverage was brutal. With hundreds of happy, shining brass Buddhas in the shop next to me, I close my eyes in silent memory. There is no evidence of war here now.

*

Kuala Lumpur, Chongqing, Seoul, and Singapore. The announcement of their lyrical names in Vietnamese and English takes me out of my dark reverie and into the future. Sirens call. But those places will wait for now. Today, I am here in Hanoi, and I have adventures waiting beyond these walls.

I easily find my way downstairs to collect my suitcase from the baggage claim carousels, and stop by the money changer to receive the colorful dong notes I will be using for the next several days. Finally joining the last of my fellow passengers,

we ease through customs. The dozens of male agents dressed in brown military costumes vet us in quick, indifferent transactions. The Vietnam visa requires a photo—a booth is here for the traveler's convenience and \$25 cash U.S., which is odd since not all visitors carry U.S. currency; perhaps I am the only one who makes scant plans.

A car is waiting for me. My driver stands just beyond the customs counter with my name in childish script. I paid the extra \$10 for a car to be sent from my hotel, though I could easily take one of the dozens of pristine white taxis lined up. The drivers, in uniforms of white button-downs and black pants, are standing around, leaning languidly on metal stanchions, waiting for the next fare. Do they muse on where we have been or where we are going? The empty queues suggest a long wait, and plenty of time to think about such things.

My driver takes the customary loop around the airport, giving me a chance to see the airport as whole. It doesn't look like much. It is modern and efficient and fairly utilitarian. A contemporary orange roof cantilevers over the whole terminal, but it doesn't have the grandeur of Beijing airport, or JFK's jumble of traffic and people, or even the quaint feel of some small regional airports.

But, it is unique. I look back as we speed toward the city center and recede into the horizon, and it appears to be floating. The steel and glass building, a monument to the future, is sited in the middle of acres and acres of neatly planted fields. It is tended by the past. Water buffalo pulling harrows are gentled along by men and women wearing pajamas and conical bamboo hats. Laboring by hand, they trudge though the field to break the burnt orange clay for planting.

Eventually, swallowed by the history of the surrounding rice fields, I lose sight of the architecture. I look forward. I tuck away the ghosts of long-ago. I head into the city of Hanoi.





MOON ROCK WRANGLER

A Profile by Nancy Peck

Once upon a time, men walked on the moon. They ricocheted through space and landed pretty darn close to where they intended to land. Such an extreme environment — vacant, desolate. There they were. The astronauts bobbed and skipped around that ashen desert like tumbleweeds. They plucked, probed, and prodded rocks with a poker. They unfolded a moon buggy, drove it back and forth for a bit. They no sooner got to the moon than it was time to load up some rock samples and lift off. If the hard part had been getting man to the moon, the next hardest was getting parts of the moon back to man.

From 1969 to 1972, the United States sent six manned missions to collect rocks, and 2,415 samples came home, weighing a total of 842 pounds. The Soviet Union landed remote-control rovers with robotic arms to do the scooping, and brought back a total of 0.718 pounds.

Three decades later, Joseph Gutheinz, Jr. launched his own space mission. He hunts for moon rocks, not moon meteorites that have fallen to Earth, but the ones from the Apollo missions. Many of these have vanished. This doesn't sit well with Joe, who is an attorney and a retired Senior Special Agent most recently employed in NASA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Joe was in his teens when man set foot on the moon. Like others, he was dazzled. These were heroes who risked their lives. These were men who were brave. But when Apollo lunar missions stopped in 1972, Gutheinz didn't. Now the man is fifty-seven, still dazzled, and living on the outskirts of the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. Joe once exclaimed to a reporter from The Telegraph, "This is what the sacrifice of astronauts like Neil Armstrong and Gene Cernan was all about — they brought back the moon to the people of the earth. The moon!"

Space history geeks remember Joe for his arrest of Jerry Alan Whittredge, the “Great Astronaut Impersonator.” He also led a nine-agency “Omniplan” task force to get at a subcontractor’s web of bogus businesses and invoices. There were a number of issues around the collaborative space program with the Russians that Gutheinz took care of, including the fire on the Mir Space Station and its collision with a Soyuz Transport. And at NASA’s secure Orbiter Processing Facility for rehabbing space shuttles, there was an internal case: Who stashed the Tupperware container of white stuff in the corner? Cocaine? No, the lab test discerned it was ordinary talcum powder — but not until twelve interrogated personnel had already confessed to narcotics use.

Now as a private citizen, as Joe points out, he is free to form his own Moon Rock Project. In the decades following the Apollo missions, NASA loaned moon rocks out to researchers, educators, and exhibitors. Hundreds have gone missing. Some got lost in shipment. Some scientists passed samples on to others. Some researchers relocated, some retired, some died. And exhibitors stashed them away in back rooms. There was no system to alert NASA when rocks changed locations. The passage of a generation of time has hampered retrieval. The OIG’s own audit report of December 2011 admitted: “NASA’s controls over research loans of astromaterials are inadequate.” In 2012 Joe told Utah’s Standard-Examiner, “To me, NASA’s missions to the moon have been a tribute to the best of mankind, and NASA’s handling of the moon rocks recovered by our astronauts has been lacking.”

For now, Joe’s operation concentrates on the Goodwill rocks — President Nixon’s rock-fragment gifts to 135 foreign heads of state, plus those given to all fifty U.S. states and territories in 1972. As of this writing, ninety of these fragments are in unknown locations or have been lost, stolen, or destroyed. Some recipients gave them away, or they were put in the back rooms of state capitol buildings. State archivists and curators around the country have been responding, “Moon rocks? What moon rocks?” As for the ones that some U.S. governors felt entitled to take home, Joe told The New York Times in January 2012, “If someone hands a governor a moon rock and he keeps it or loses it, if you can’t protect something like that, maybe they’re not that vigilant. And if . . . they bring it home with them, what else have they brought home with them?”

No government entity asked Gutheinz to go to the trouble of finding these missing rocks. No institution asked him to do an inventory. No agency officially

oversees just how he goes about retrieving them. When you've been awarded an Exceptional Service Medal and a President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency Career Achievement Award, you run your operation whatever the hell way you want to run it. "I hate incompetence," he says.

As for the lunar rocks sold for monetary gain, Joe says in *The Telegraph*, "They stole the moon and it's time we got it back." In his efforts Joe Gutheinz, Jr. has brought moon expeditions back to the public's attention. And like a wild crocodile hunter, he quips, "When you do find a moon rock you must first wrestle it to the ground."

*

For someone who was once a federal agent, at times undercover, Joe Jr. doesn't seem to mind that a whole lot of information about him has gotten into cyberspace. Take alcohol. Joe never touches the stuff — even refusing it from his neighborhood Catholic priest — but Coke, fries, and dipping his hamburger into a 3-ounce concession cup full of ketchup shot from a spigot, that is something he will do. He likes a variety of sports including boxing; he follows Gary Stein — founder of the Armed Forces Tea Party — and admires John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Albert Einstein, and Mother Teresa. Joe's also inspired by a quotation most often attributed to Ben Franklin: "Those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Joe physically resembles our image of Ben Franklin, in his 5'8" stature and baldness — if only Ben had shaved his rim of hair like Joe does. Joe keeps his at exactly three-eighths of an inch long. Joe owns a variety of baseball caps, a camo-novelty cap, and a black "driving" cap. His round face is incised with near-black eyes, which are checked off by prominent, dark brown eyebrows. His right brow runs straight across his large forehead. His left brow has an upward kink in it, giving him an impish look. Joe's moustache is a thick, dark curve perfectly trimmed to follow the line of a scowl. His beard, when he chooses to grow it, is dense. In the office, Joe wears pinstriped suits with broad padded shoulders. And where others wear tiny American flags, the left lapel of Joe's jacket bears a round commemorative pin. Joe will often pose for photos with his legs spread, hands clasped like a fig leaf, or clasping a pair of eyeglasses under his gut.

Moon rock operation aside, Joe is a busy guy. Family is first: wife, six grown sons, grandchildren. He's an attorney, a Certified Fraud Examiner, board member, and professor at several local community colleges.

In order to talk moon rocks, the trick is to reach Joe by phone at 8:20 a.m. Central Time.

"Is this Joe Gutheinz? May I call you Joe?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Another telephone rings.

"Can I put you on hold for a minute?" he asks. "I'm the only one here."

He pushes a button.

"Joe Gutheinz."

"It's still me — " There's some fumbling. Then silence, an accidental disconnect.

*

Gutheinz's mission control is an air-conditioned office in Friendswood, Texas, where summer temperatures breeze in over the Gulf Coastal Plain and top out at ninety-three degrees. A pastoral stream winds through Friendswood. A suburb of Houston, it's a town large enough to boast ninety members in its local Chamber of Commerce — everything from Auto Tech Pro Service Center to Yoga 4 You. Nearby is a country club golf course, and to the west is the Meenakshi Devasthanam Hindu Temple.

Joe's office is a trim one-story, perfunctory, red brick building with a parking lot. Under-window shrubbery is contained and stunted behind white gravel. The charcoal grey longitudinal sign under the eaves reads: "Gutheinz Law Firm, LLP" — it's Joe and two of his sons — "Attorneys and Mediators, Aggressive Criminal Defense & Divorce Law."

Inside Gutheinz Law Firm, everything looks new: wall-to-wall industrial carpeting, ceiling tiles and fluorescents, telephones, PCs. It's Joe, his sons, and a female receptionist/paralegal, a blonde who somehow bears a family resemblance. Each sits behind a large solid, polished wooden desk devoid of papers. There's a card table in a closet for excess piles of moon rock paperwork. Nearly every cream-yellow wall is a plaque-maker's showcase: commendations, a mix of wood slabs with rectangular engraved brass labels (one piece of stained wood is in the shape of Louisiana), laminated newspaper articles and Joe's six college degrees, eight teaching credentials, and ten law licenses.

*

After five minutes pass, I redial, and Joe picks up the phone and says, “Sorry about that.” Now he’s as effervescent as a shaken-up Coke bottle. It’s still 8:30 in the morning his time. He shares his minute-old news.

“That was Governor Perry’s office that just called.” Joe fizzes.

“They’ve just appointed me commissioner on the Texas Board of Fire Protection.”

There’s an abundance of pride to share with someone, anyone, even if that anyone is a stranger, a writer he only just met on the phone. He shares details with a hospitality close to intimacy — not what I expect from an ex-OIG agent. But now he’s his own man, free to spit, to spew, to blast off. He soon composes himself, fizzes out, and gravitates to the subject of moon rocks and how he got started.

Joe clears his throat. “Con artists were the real big cases during the 1990s. In 1998,” he says, “I was a Senior Special Agent with NASA’s Office of Inspector General. I headed up an operation directed at con artists selling bogus rocks. It was an underground industry because it was just too easy to get paperwork to fake up an invoice or a document.

“So the bottom line is, in this Operation Lunar Eclipse, we never really expected to get a real moon rock. So we said, what we’ll do is buy a quarter-page ad in USA Today: ‘MOON ROCKS WANTED.’” Joe and a colleague set up a phony antique business as a cover.

“The conjecture” — he uses the talk of the trade — “is that nobody can legally sell or own a moon rock.” Any attempt to sell an Apollo moon sample — or debris from the Apollo 1 and Challenger explosions — is in violation of federal law and can be prosecuted as a Class A felony. “So if someone approached us claiming he had one, we knew he was either engaging in something illegal or conning for fraud.”

In a 2004 article that Joe authored for *Geotimes*, he wrote: “My challenge was to locate and stop the predators who feed on the elderly by selling them bogus moon rocks, often for the victim’s life savings. These sales often occurred in the shadows — at society functions and at rock collector or space-related conventions. My solution was to have the con men come to us.”

The ad ran in the newspaper and someone bit. “I’m not going to reveal his name because we were not able to convict him.”

The guy wanted five million dollars.

"It hit us cold," he said. "I had to find out if that amount was reasonable." If they jumped at that figure, the guy might get suspicious and pull out. "It's important, when you're undercover and need to negotiate, that you know the value. We needed to know what was reasonable." While Joe and his colleagues researched the rock's market value, they feared the seller would find somebody else to buy it.

"It took two months of negotiating with the guy at Tuna's [Bar & Grille]." Several times during the negotiations with the moon rock seller, Joe says he had to lie and deny he was an agent. But they finally recovered the moon rock. H. Ross Perot put up the five million dollars needed. In a staged exchange at a Bank of America vault, with a U.S. Customs agent posing as a bank employee, and the other agents posted in the bank parking lot, they stung the guy. This was Joe's first retrieved moon rock.

"I grabbed ahold of the rock and stuck it in the front pocket of my pants." (He led the operation after all.) What they had was a Goodwill moon rock fragment from Apollo 17's sample 70017, encased in a clear sphere of acrylic, that had been given by the U.S. delegation to the Honduran government as a gesture "that we can live in peace and harmony."

Joe's been looking for moon rocks since 1998. He's wrangled his college students into the search and uses the case of the missing Goodwill moon rocks as a device to teach investigation. Joe and his students have so far recovered seventy-six more rocks. Most of his students didn't know the gravity of their quest or that moon rocks even existed.

On the moon, rocks stood still and idle for billions of years. It wasn't until the rocks got to Earth that they had to be corralled. Joe Gutheinz, Jr. has a lasso, and he'll rope in anyone who wants to help, anyone who cares.





FISHING WITH BOB

A Double Portrait by Hally Joseph

The great blue heron and I have a strange relationship.

Both of us were named by my parents. Which, I guess, in some way makes us related. His name is Bob and mine is Hally. Mine is a lifelong commitment to correcting everyone's pronunciation. His is a little unromantic for a gigantic, blue-gray bird.

Bob. Bob sells crunchy, overpriced windbreakers at Bass Pro Shop. Bob has slick half-moons of nervous sweat on the underarms of his button-down. Bob broke his glasses by stepping on them when trying to find them.

Despite his simpleton's name, I expect plenty ill from Bob. Each morning he wings in unseen and sits by our pond, fishing for golden-scaled koi. He sits at the edge with his spear of a beak and slices into the surface, a shark in reverse. He leaves patterns of water on the concrete where he has been, and like a detective I analyze them: Did he catch one? Is this splatter here a sign of distress? Or just a dripping beak?

The lake next door must be a mall's greasy food court compared to our fine Japanese dining. Bring out the white tablecloth for Bob; he's dining solo and he'll want a glass of red wine with his butterfly koi.

When my mother cries, "Bob's here!" it is not an uncle coming to visit, or a friendly neighbor bringing over misplaced mail. We still all come running out of our bedrooms, me tripping over the Labrador tripping over the terrier.

"Get him!" I cry, a queen upon a deck on high. My wet-snouted minions do my bidding, tearing down the two flights of wooden stairs, one shrieking and the other bellowing as Bob floats off into the woods, nonchalant.

"All right, all right, I'll eat later."

Bob has a six-foot wingspan, like something out of *Jurassic Park*. When he flies, he holds his prehistoric feet beneath him like a plane's landing gear. He is blue origami, a folded work of art.

Like any queen, I feel more jealousy than power, watching from my red deck throne. I watch Bob as he flies away, as the dogs snort through the yard, chasing the Peter Pan of his shadow, which teases them even though he is high, high away. To drift like that between the trees, the largest bird for miles, a broken piece of sky blue set afloat forever.

*

Usually a wandering spring-breaker, here for warm-weather revelry, Bob took up permanent residence last week. Our koi have been ailing, hovering just beneath the surface of our pond, which serves as their unmade bed, Netflix queue and box of Kleenex.

That was sad enough, when they started the upward journey.

My favorite fish was the first to take sick: Picasso, the only one I named, a three-foot koi with red, black, and orange spots across his back — a koi of colored cubism. For days he floated on his side, then tucked under to swim, then floated again, as if already dying, as if trying to deny the reverse gravitational pull of the pond. Dead is up.

When the others began to do the same, Bob saw a breakfast opportunity. A colorful array unlike the mottled green bass and ruddy brown catfish in the lake, here was a citrus orange, a butter gold, a spicy red-and-white, a milky opal.

We established a routine, Bob and I. In the mornings, while I do homework or watch TV, he swoops in on a silent breeze. He moves with dinosaur footsteps to the edge of the pond, huddling his shoulders so that the deck blocks my view of him. As I approach the glass door, his elegant neck jerks upright and he watches me with one eye.

The dogs recognize his name now. Bob.

Whenever I walk into the guest bedroom, which has the clearest view of the pond, they run behind me. They look at me with amber eyes. "Is he here? Is he?"

Some of the time he is not, but most of the time he is. While writing this, I have chased him off twice, my hounds stumbling downstairs as he beats the blanket of his wings and lifts off.

Part of me feels triumphant to have saved the fishes' lives for now, to have discovered this new avenue of canine exercise. But the other part of me wishes I had my camera, wishes that he would stay for just a moment and let me be part of his long-necked *prehistoria*, let me study his feet, and comb the frilly feathers of his chest. To smooth his blue with my hands.

I have wild hair, too, Bob.

But he looks me in the eye as I stand at the glass door, his eye a liquid gold, and he knows that I will open it, that when the dogs get within fifteen feet he will leave me.

And I know he will soar through the woods, a flash of blue-gray between the leaves. And we both know he will land on a branch not too far away, waiting for me and the dogs to go inside, so he can return to the pond to fish again.





THE NEXT TRAIN TO GALLERY PLACE

A Short Story by Nikki Igbo

Tuesday, 5:24 p.m.

The first time you and I saw each other, I had just picked my nose. It itched and I didn't think anyone on the Metrorail noticed. But you did. My eyes caught yours, my pinky finger in midair, inches from my face. You nodded your head and kept nodding your head because you wore headphones — headphones that were the same red, green, and gold of the Jamaican flag. You listened to something that made you want to move. I slammed my hand down into my lap and looked away. Then I looked back. Your head nodded to a mysterious eight-count. Your eyes still on me, you shrugged your shoulders as if to say, "It happens." Then you put your right index finger in your nose, dug around a bit, and shrugged your shoulders again. I wanted to giggle but I decided to again look away. I don't know why I did that.

I fought the urge to look at you for the rest of the ride. You reminded me of someone I'd known whose name I'd forgotten, but whose face remained with me. Perhaps I'd known you on another planet. There was something about you that made me afraid and curious at the same time. I wanted to know what we had in common, but with the nose-picking incident between us, there was no way I could face you.

I arrived at my stop, relieved to exit at the station on H Street and go to work. For the rest of the day, I wondered about you.

Thursday

You stood on the platform about fifteen feet away from where I leaned on a pillar. I recognized your earbuds before I recognized you. I was struck by how short you were. Not that your height mattered. When I saw you before, you seemed larger than life. You appeared as a Technicolor feature in a black-and-white world. I know that sounds super sappy, like love at first sight or the stuff that only happens in romantic comedies starring Hugh Grant. That's why I prefer horror films.

On this day, you wore a Zoo York T-shirt, Lucky Brand jeans, and army green Converse. Has anyone ever told you that you look like military? Maybe you are military. The way you stood there with your legs shoulder-width apart and your arms crossed, I could see it. Either you were a Marine, or a superhero, or a spy. According to an exhibit at my job, there are more spies in D.C. than any other city in the world.

Your head nodded to a faster song this time. I imagined you on a dance floor. You moved like water, flowing from one groove into the next. And you smiled as you danced. I pictured myself moving next to you right there on the train's platform. A disco ball emerged from a billboard for Humanewatch.org, and Frank Sinatra's *Fly Me to the Moon* blared from hidden loudspeakers as you whisked me around. I had to stop my body from swaying in real life.

I wanted you to look my way, but I didn't want you to see me. I was without makeup. I wasn't dressed in some carefree summer frock. I still wanted you to look my way. I wanted some sign that you'd thought about me after you'd last gotten off the train. The train came and you got on another car. Something slumped inside of me as I found a seat and stared out the window.

Friday, 5:03 p.m.

A man in a yellow shirt sat in a wheelchair on his cell phone. He cursed. He was very upset that the person on the other end had not met him at the Silver Springs stop yesterday at 3:15 as promised. If he still had the use of his legs, he would have kicked that person's ass all the way down Colesville Road.

Caught in the paraplegic's tirade, I didn't notice when you sat down next to me. I noticed only when I checked the marquee to see there were eight minutes until the next train to Gallery Place. One of your headphones fed music to your

left ear as the other hung from the top of your shirt. You looked over at me and smiled.

You said, "I wouldn't meet that guy anywhere at 3:15."

I said, "Me neither."

I liked your voice. You had a voice for radio. I wanted to ask if you could do an impression of Al Pacino or DMX. I liked your lips. I wanted to watch your mouth form words beginning with w.

Seated beside you, I fantasized about a first date in which we sampled all the dim sum at Café Asia on I Street. I drank a lychee martini and you had Grand Marnier with pineapple juice as we enjoyed a view of the White House and exchanged theories on the midterm elections.

I said, "Do you like Grand Marnier?" Yes, that was a pretty random question at a Metrorail stop.

You said, "I don't like Grand Marnier, but I do like scotch or bourbon."

That was weird. I never knew a black guy who didn't like cognac. You didn't ask me what I liked to drink and I felt like that was rude until you asked my name.

I didn't feel comfortable telling you my name before you told me yours. If you were indeed a spy, then you could find out my address and other things easily.

You said, "I'm Nicholas." I suspected Nicholas was a code name since you didn't offer your last name.

I said, "I'm Chelle." This was only half true.

I extended my hand to shake, and you grasped it as if you were on a job interview. I would have much preferred you kiss the back of my hand, but I guess men don't do that anymore. Plus, there were mouth germs to consider.

You said, "You have a firm grasp."

I said, "I hate limp handshakes."

"I hate when people give half a hand to shake. I never trust those people," you said.

Still holding your hand, I gave it a squeeze because I felt we understood each other. Your hand was warm, not clammy. Smooth without calluses, but not too soft.

We faced the rails and fell silent. I wanted to ask you why you were on the train every day at this time, what music you were listening to, and if you thought it was odd that Vladimir Putin doesn't have a wife. I didn't say any of that because I didn't want to seem too . . . you know.

I said, "How's your day going?"

You said, "Eh. This Ebola outbreak in West Africa worries me."

I thought that was a good sign. You paid attention to news that had nothing to do with Beyoncé.

"I don't have Ebola," I said. Either you didn't feel like laughing or you didn't get the joke.

The train approached, the usual crowd huddled in front of the doors, and I walked onto the nearest car thinking you'd follow me to continue our conversation. Maybe you'd thought I'd follow you. You sat in a seat facing the back of the train — which I could not abide. I had to face in the direction we were going. I had to look ahead, to the future, my future. I set my bag in the seat beside me, the seat I would have given you. I pretended to ignore you. If you happened to look my way, I didn't notice.

Saturday

I rose early to get my monthly manicure and pedicure at Nails Nails Nails. I told my aesthetician to paint my toes green and put yellow and red flowers on my big toes. I walked over to the Westfield Wheaton where I purchased Zoo York T-shirts for my nephews at the JCPenney back-to-school sale. They were a steal at ten dollars each. I bought a blue-striped blazer at H&M and new black underwear at Victoria's Secret before I walked over to the San Salvador Festival. I didn't stay long. There were too many families in the park, too many animated couples with their broods of toothless children.

I saw a couple of my neighbors — the Ethiopian sisters who always wear their hair in the same ponytail and the young Mexican guy with his screaming three-year-old daughter. I didn't bother to stay for the Mariachi band or Mayan dancers. Outside of Safeway, a homeless man complimented my afro and warned me to keep the Sabbath holy by not making any more purchases after 6:00 p.m. Inside the grocery store I picked up everything I needed to make a casserole for Sunday dinner at my brother's house: bow tie pasta, artichoke hearts, dried tomatoes in oil, and parmesan cheese.

I had an urge for popcorn. I went over to the snack aisle and saw you there in front of the nut section. You wore cargo shorts and sneakers without socks. I admired the athletic curve of your calves. You didn't have your headphones, and I wanted to make some witty remark about how a world without music isn't worthwhile, but the words got caught in my back teeth. I watched you select a bag of unsalted almonds and turn in the other direction without a glance my

way. Before I could let out a weak, “Nicholas,” or tell you that macadamias are the king of nuts, you left the aisle.

I stood there holding my red basket.

Sunday

My brother’s wife managed not to gain any weight after birthing two ten-pound sons. She didn’t work like I did. I spent my days supplementing my freelance writing gigs by giving interactive tours at the Spy Museum to wrinkled, red-faced tourists. She frolicked from estate sale to estate sale buying and selling antique furnishings. My brother lived in a storybook home with hardwood floors, a big screen, and a Stack-o-Matic turntable. He had Nat King Cole albums and a chaise lounge. His two sons looked as if Adonis had spat them out.

Each Sunday dinner, my parents gushed at the latest thing my brother and his wife had done to their house. My parents loved the new peonies planted in the front yard and the new area rug in the basement. Oh, look at the sleek new wine cooler. How lovely it is with that new baker’s rack in the dining room.

No matter how much love or care I’d put into cooking a casserole or lemon cake, they had only one comment for me: It’s time you get married and settle down, Michelle. As if I was taking my sweet time finding a husband, buying a house, and getting knocked up. In their minds, I held all of the control. I was the one in charge of how and where I would meet someone and how we would fall in love and have a traditional Catholic wedding in the banquet hall at Resurrection Church in Burtonsville.

It was totally up to me to bump into some graduate-degreed man with a Christian upbringing who didn’t rape or molest or perv out in any way. One who loved children and jazz on Sundays and seasoned his scrambled eggs with Zatarain’s. One who loved rainy-day picnics and impromptu pillow fights. One who noticed home décor in Swedish films and knew how to replace a faulty toilet flush valve. As if that kind of guy advertised in the Washington Informer or just happened to walk his black Labrador past the Spy Museum every day.

I gave my usual non-confrontational answer: a shrug of the shoulders paired with an earnest, “I’m working on it.”

There was a big possibility you lived somewhere on the Maryland side, perhaps right here in Wheaton. Maybe you lived close enough for us to walk to each other’s homes. I thought of us drinking a couple of Red Stripes while

listening for the bass line in Curtis Mayfield songs. We could discuss how the drug cartels in Mexico kept killing villagers and stealing oil fields. We could debate the merits of an American military presence in the Middle East. You might argue that our troubles in Iraq would turn into another Korean situation, while I tried to change the subject with a cup of Ben and Jerry's ice cream. I thought of us falling asleep to a George Romero zombie flick before waking up and deciding that we would make the kind of slow, cleansing love that ends all conflict.

I would make a move tomorrow if I saw you.

If you sat anywhere with an open seat beside you, I would pop an Altoid and smile at you. I would tell you that I dug you. I would ask you what your last name is and whether or not you drink tea. I would ask you about the last movie you saw, the last time you'd been surprised. I'd ask you about the music you love and if you'd been to any good concerts lately. I would invite you to meet CIA Counterintelligence Officer Christopher Lynch at the Spy Museum. And I'd wear a sexy outfit that day and put a lily in my hair.

Monday

I sang Sade's "Stronger Than Pride" in the shower at the top of my lungs. I used my shea butter soap and dotted Musk of Atlantis all over. I wore tight boot-cut jeans and brown sandals to show off my toenails. I wore lip gloss, eye shadow, and Grandmother's rosary beads around my wrist. I practiced smiling in the mirror after brushing and flossing. I danced to a couple of Beatles songs. I checked both of my nostrils for debris and applied extra antiperspirant.

I completed all of that around 10:00 a.m. I sat and waited until 4:30 p.m. to walk over to the Kiss & Ride to catch the 5:10 p.m. train to work. As I waited, I resisted the urge to drink coffee or anything that could give me gas on the train. I watched my fluid intake as well. I didn't want to miss the train or you because I had to pee. I also didn't want to risk peeing on the back of my jeans or getting toilet paper stuck to my shoe.

To cope with the clock's hand, I made myself reread *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. After working up a good contempt for all things French, I made myself watch two hours of *Property Brothers* reruns while I crocheted the final twenty-five rows of a scarf for my father. I thought of crocheting a Jamaican flag-inspired scarf for you. I wondered if you preferred turtlenecks, sweaters, or hoodies. I imagined you letting me throw snowballs at you and making snow angels in

the street. I turned off the television and stared at myself in the bathroom mirror. First, I had to find out your last name.

I changed my clothes twice only to put back on what I'd originally chosen. I went to the bathroom one last time before grabbing my purse and heading out the door. I couldn't feel my feet as I walked down Georgia Avenue.

As I slid my fare card into the turnstile slot, I looked around for you. You weren't over at the fare machines or chatting up the information officer. You weren't seated on any one of the benches or leaned against any of the pillars. You didn't float down the escalator. I didn't see your headphones, your nodding head, or your tapping feet. I didn't see you anywhere. Maybe you didn't even live in Wheaton.

Perhaps you'd been at the Safeway on Georgia because you were a spy and you were buying nuts for your big-breasted girlfriend who worked for a lobbyist firm whose offices you wanted to break into to acquire covert information on the campaign against Obamacare. Maybe the only reason why I'd seen you on the train was because your car was in the shop getting a new paint job.

The train pulled to a stop in front of me. I slouched onto the car and lowered into the seats reserved for the elderly. That yellow-shirted man in the wheelchair — now in a tan shirt — rolled near me. He yelled into his cellphone about how the best cornbread he ever had was at Oohh's & Aahh's on U Street.

I decided to move seats when he pulled out a big wad of dollar bills and began to count it. I stood up and turned to my right where I saw you seated three rows back. The seat next to you was empty. You made eye contact with me and waved. I waved back and made my way over to you. I ignored all of the handrails. I fell right in the middle of the train.

I've fallen many times in public. Down a spiral staircase in the park. Up the escalator at a mall. On the way to the bathroom at the movie theater. At a wedding. This time I was on the Red Line traveling to work, surrounded by several unknown DCers and you. The longer I remained face-down and spread-eagle on the floor, the more I realized that I might never marry you or birth two children. We'd never have family game nights on Thursdays, or Saturday morning house cleanings. There'd be only me, two tabby cats named Berenstein and Buttercup, and a half-eaten Texas sheet cake in the refrigerator. I'd probably be forced to go on singles cruises with Mom's church group. All of the plaid shorts and crushed velvet athletic suits I'd have to witness.

I rolled over on my back, closed my eyes and laughed.

I don't know how long I stayed there. I opened my eyes to find you standing over me with your hand out. I took it and you pulled me to my feet. You guided me to the nearest seat. I felt your hand on the small of my back. You sat next to me and our knees touched. I was still laughing and you laughed with me, which made others laugh. By the time we moved through the Forest Glen stop, everyone on the car was doubled over.

We turned our faces toward each other and I saw no judgment in your eyes. Around us the world moved by in a swoosh of brick tops, brownstones, and oak trees. The car made a clack, clack sound as it rocked in a gentle sway along the rail.

You said, "We should get sushi some time. I know a good place near Capitol Hill."

I said, "On I Street, right?"

"No," you said.

"What kind of music do you listen to?" I'd convert you to Café Asia later.

"A mix of things," you said.

"Like what?"

"Today I'm listening to Katy Perry's 'Roar' on repeat." I stifled an urge to gag.

I said, "What else?"

You said, "I like Jay Electronica and Pink Floyd. I like a lot of different artists."

I decided to give you my number.

It may have been too soon, but I wanted to hold your hand so I grabbed it. You squeezed back. We rode the rest of the way past Howard University and the murals near Rhode Island Avenue. Your last name was Abadom. You were single and liked pirate jokes. You'd just moved to Wheaton and you were a pharmacist at a CVS near the Lincoln Memorial. You were saving to buy a house with a finished basement.

I wondered if the CVS job was a cover.

By the time we got to Judiciary Square, I had decided that I would create a Pinterest page after I saw how our first date went. I would call the page, "Get Me to the Church on Time." When the train stopped at Gallery Place, we exited together.

You still held my hand.





WHY I DON'T COME TO PICKNEY HILLS ANYMORE

A Short Story by Christen Gresham

I wish I never came to Chuck's birthday party. It's hot as Hades on this glass porch. I want to tear my sleeves clear off this stupid damn itchy sports jacket. My face is sweating like butter on toast and my shoes are too tight.

I want Debbie, Chuck's girl, to stop sniveling in that stick-straight ugly plaid suit. It's pink and orange. It doesn't look right on her. She looks like a damn sherbet cone standing over by the buffet table. I want her to get the hell away from Chuck's Uncle Walt. He's patting her arm and offering her a Virginia Slim. It's not okay to smoke on Chuck's mom's glass porch. It's too hot and Chuck's mom thinks it stinks up the furniture.

Fifteen of Chuck's closest friends and relatives are squeezed into this shoebox of a glass porch. Plus the ones who are in the sitting room, where it's air-conditioned and there's a nice floral couch to sit on. Must be thirty people here for Chuck's birthday. And I want them to all stop pretending like the pimento cheese sandwiches and glasses of sweet tea laid out on Chuck's mom's antique buffet table are going to bring Chuck back. Like all this remembering and reflecting is going to bring him back.

Chuck was aggravating when he was alive. But you have to feel bad about what happened. I told myself I should. That's how I talked myself into coming all the way to Pickney Hills for this damn birthday party. It takes fifteen minutes to get here in my dad's truck. Since Chuck's gone, I don't come anymore. But his mom called me up last week. Said she missed seeing me. Didn't have to go and be a stranger just because Chuck was gone. They were having a memorial birthday party for Chuck. She kind of laughed to herself. I pictured her blushing over the phone, embarrassed, a flash of pink rising up to her pearl

earrings. Did I want to drive out to Pickney Hills? They were having a memorial, she repeated, a party on Chuck's birthday.

Party didn't seem like the right word.

Chuck died in the kitchen. He died eating a brownie sometime around 3:00 a.m. on a Wednesday, one year ago. Right before he turned eighteen. Chuck's mom found him dead in the kitchen, sprawled out on the yellow floral linoleum.

That must have been a sight, too. He was a big guy. Shirts always bulging about the middle. Usually went without a sports jacket at church. Said he was always one handshake away from splitting an armpit. Could have been a football player if he hadn't liked rock music so much.

We didn't know at the time what'd killed him. Just the empty pan of brownies on the counter. The knife balanced diagonally on the edge of the pan. That's what Chuck's mom saw when she came into the kitchen to make him some eggs for breakfast the next morning. Later they found the bloated mass of fudge lodged in the back of his throat. Caught up in his esophagus like a dead thing in a storm drain.

I need to be plain about it because it is sort of funny how he went. Chuck would have laughed his ass off if I'd told him he was going to die from one of his mom's brownies. Dead, all from a recipe his mom tore out of a magazine at the dentist's office.

They weren't good brownies. Chuck's mom isn't much of a cook, but she sure likes cooking and baking up things. Chuck said he ate the things she made only because someone had to make his mom feel special, like she was doing a good job being a mom or something. Like he owed her. Eating the brownies was a solidarity thing. But Lord, I'd never tell Chuck's mom that. She needs to keep believing he was enjoying the brownie when he died. If you think that, his death isn't really anything to be sorry about. There are worse ways to go.

When I got here I figured I'd stay at the party until Chuck's mom brought out the cake. She ran up to Patton's Grocery to get more ice. I know it's rude to leave a party before they've sung *Happy Birthday* and blown out the candles, but I've been here for almost an hour and no one's made any kind of move for the kitchen. No one's even eaten anything. The glasses of sweet tea lined up on the buffet are all beaded up with condensation. Chuck's mom has everything set out nice, though. Congealed salad. The orange kind with fruit cocktail mixed in. Chuck's favorite. Pimento cheese sandwiches. And chicken salad smeared on

Ritz crackers. Deviled eggs. Chuck's mom likes mayonnaise. There's a ham loaf with pickles, too. She did everything up real nice.

I don't like Chuck's friends and family. His mom went to an awful lot of trouble and no one can be bothered to eat a damn deviled egg. Because everyone's too busy standing around the buffet or hogging the couch, making showy announcements like, "Chuck lived a really full life." Or whispering, "It's a real shame about what happened," and shit like that. If this goes on, I might have to eat a slice of the ham loaf. Something, so Chuck's mom's cooking doesn't go to waste.

If Chuck were here, he would've made up some excuse to leave this stupid party. Then I wouldn't be stuffed on this porch all hot and miserable. We would've been miles down the freeway by now, eating hamburgers and listening to Elvis in Chuck's car. And now I'm starting to think that maybe they aren't going to sing *Happy Birthday* after all. It's not like Chuck is here to blow out the candles. I'm thinking this when Debbie lets out a whimper that sounds like a dog being walloped.

My eyes dart over to the buffet where she's hunched over. Her knuckles turn white as she steadies herself with the oak edge of the buffet. At first I think she's got a stomach cramp or something. Then I realize it. Her gaze is fixed on the back corner of the buffet, just behind the platter of deviled eggs.

I recognize the cornflower blue serving tray right off the bat. Guys like me and Chuck learned to pay attention to stuff like that. You remember who brings the good food. And I've seen this tray a hundred times before at all the church potlucks and school cakewalks. It's Mabel Patterson's tray. And it's piled high with thick, perfectly sliced squares of fudge brownie.

In the corner of the porch, Uncle Walt lights a cigarette. Mabel appears out of nowhere and she tries to pull Debbie away from the buffet table, and she and Debbie clutch each other. Mabel's periwinkle wash-in hair falls into her face like strings of yarn. Then Debbie sinks to the floor like an ice cream left in the sun.

Debbie's whispers, "Chuck." And Mabel hollers at the top of her lungs, "I forgot, honey, I forgot. Besides, Chuck loved these brownies.

"Chuck loved these brownies," Mabel repeats.

These two are ridiculous. It's like they need more consoling than Chuck's mom. *Chuck's mom*. The tray needs to go.

I guess I'm the one to get rid of it too, seeing as I'm the only level-headed person at this damn party. Everyone's too emotional. Chuck was emotional too, son of a bitch.

Listen to this. Before Chuck died, we used to cashier together over at Patton's Grocery. Our lines were side by side, usually. I was ringing up a lady for some pantyhose. And Chuck's in the next lane over when Mrs. Johnson comes through his line. She slaps a newspaper on the counter and gets out her wallet. She's buying a bushel of apples and Chuck starts weighing them one at a time. "Terrible about what happened yesterday," Mrs. Johnson says, pointing at the headline.

"What's that, Mrs. Johnson?" Chucks says, picking up a Granny Smith.

She tosses the paper at Chuck, "Elvis Presley died yesterday."

The apple falls from Chuck's hand and rolls across the counter. He doesn't even look at the headline too close. He just unties his apron.

"What's wrong, son?" Mrs. Johnson raises a penciled-in eyebrow.

Chuck folds up his apron and shoves it under the counter.

By this time, Mr. Patton's wandered out of his office to see what the fuss is about. "Son? What are you doing? Break's not till five thirty."

Chuck doesn't look at Mr. Patton. He just turns to me with this expression on his face. Like he's crying, but his eyes are dry. "Come on, Pete," he says to me, then to Mrs. Johnson, "I'm sorry, me and Pete have to go."

For a split second, I wondered if I was going to be fired for walking out with Chuck. But I knew Chuck. He'd never forgive me if I let him leave alone. So I walked out with my green Patton's apron still tied around my waist.

When we left Patton's I thought we might go somewhere solemn like a church or a graveyard. But Chuck turned off at Pal's Sudden Service. Ordered us burgers and Cokes at the window and we just sat in his car awhile. Chuck paid, because he said I always had nothing but straw wrappers in my pants pockets. Which was true. And we didn't talk about Elvis. I didn't feel quite as moved about Elvis as I thought I should. But I went home that night and copied the words to *Don't Be Cruel* into my composition book, so I guess that's something.

"Can you fault the boy for feeling so much?" Mrs. Johnson told Mr. Patton later. And I guess you couldn't really. So Mr. Patton didn't fire us. Chuck was always getting away with shit like that. Chuck got away with murder. He even kept a big glass pickle jar hidden under the counter. Full of nickels, pennies, and dimes for whenever his drawer was short. And he never got caught.

One time, when me and Chuck were closing up at Patton's, I was counting out my drawer and I came up fifty dollars short. I counted it five times. Still short. And I knew Mr. Patton was coming over to make the deposit in five minutes. My

throat tightened up. "The first thing we value here at Patton's is honesty," is what Mr. Patton said the day he hired me. And I pictured Mr. Patton grabbing me by the ear, telling me my ass was fired and he was calling the police.

I thought about all the money I owed Chuck for burgers and Cokes. I was still paying off a bicycle from Sears. I owed my Dad some money, too. Chuck was always calling me a "nickel and dimer." Borrowing a dime for a phone call here. A dollar for a movie there. I couldn't lose my job. I never had enough money in the first place.

"Shit," I whispered to Chuck. "My drawer's short fifty dollars."

"Jesus, Pete. How'd you manage that?" Chuck closed his drawer and swung out of his lane so he's standing right behind me, peering over my shoulder at the rows of ones and fives, the mounds of nickels, pennies, and dimes in the drawer before me.

"I—I don't know." I thought I must have given someone the wrong change a couple or five times.

My ears were burning. And my palms were sweating. Chuck counted my drawer, dollar by dollar. Dime by dime.

"Huh," he said when the last dime hit the bottom of the drawer, solid, metallic, and final. Then he left me there with my drawer hanging open like a jaw. Seconds later he returned, hoisting the pickle jar onto my counter.

"How much do you think's in there?" I asked.

"I'm not sure. I think at least sixty, last time I counted."

He unscrewed the lid and we grabbed fistfuls of pennies, nickels, and dimes. We counted it out by ones, fives, and tens, until we got to fifty. When we were done, my hands felt chalky and they smelled like coins, like dried blood.

"If Mr. Patton asks about all the change, say someone came in and paid for a big order with a coffee can full of coins again," Chuck said, wiping his hands on his apron.

"I'll pay you back," I told him. "When I get my paycheck next week, I'll give you the whole thing."

He said, "Nah, Pete. Don't sweat it. One day you'll treat me for the whole day. Phone calls. Burgers. Milkshakes. Movies. One day when you've struck it rich."

After that sometimes I'd stay up real late at night, plotting ways I could pay Chuck back. I'd picture those dimes and nickels hitting the bottom of that jar as he counted them out one by one.

At Ace Hardware they let me buy a lawn mower on credit one summer. Planned to pay it off with lawn money. By the time summer was over the cheap piece of shit was busted. Burned up when I was doing Mrs. Johnson's patio. She's got these orange tulips lining her walkway. Damn flowers got gummed up in the blades. Smoked to high heaven whenever I tried to run it again after that. But I still owed for it. Paying that thing off smarted, especially after I threw it out. It was weird owing for something that didn't exist anymore.

I don't tell people this, but I felt a little relieved when Chuck died. I don't owe Chuck a damn thing now. I don't think about that jar anymore. I don't even work at Patton's nowadays. And I don't come to Pickney Hills anymore. Except when Chuck's mom calls me up and asks me to visit.

Chuck's mom still hasn't come back with the ice. And I feel like this glass porch is going to cook me alive. A long strand of yellow crepe paper comes unpasted from the ceiling and floats to the ground. I swear this room is melting. My shirt's bubbling with sweat like battered chicken skin in the fryer. I look over at Mabel's platter of brownies. Sitting there like a smoking gun. If Chuck's going to have a nice birthday party, someone needs to get those killing things out of here before Chuck's mom gets back.

I push past Uncle Walt, who's leaning over the liquor cabinet, fixing Debbie a drink. "I'll have to make something without ice," he says over his shoulder at Debbie and Mabel. They're huddled together on a wicker chair. Debbie lifts a party napkin to her nose and dabs it absently. No one's even looking at me. Everyone's too busy crying over Chuck to notice me saving the party. I grab up the blue enameled tray and hug it to my chest. We're still crammed in here like sardines. I could cut through the sitting room, but I don't want to make a scene.

So I push through the swinging door to the kitchen. My shoes stick to the linoleum like I've got chewed gum stuck on the soles. Each step feels like peeling up a price sticker. On the counter there's a three-layer chocolate cake. In loops of yellow frosting, the words: "Happy Birthday Chuck."

I think I hear an engine idling at the stop sign at the corner. Chuck's mom with the ice. Maybe, but I can't be sure. It's Thursday so the trash cans are at the end of the driveway. All silvery and hazy in the distance. Whatever happens, Chuck's mom can't see the brownies.

The only thing I know to do is to open the screen door and walk straight to my dad's Chevy truck parked at the curb. I borrowed it for the party. I dump the

brownies in the passenger seat and back straight out. I turn right on Pickney Hills Drive. In the rearview mirror, I see Chuck's mom pull into the carport. She gets out of the car. I watch as she removes a red ice chest from the trunk, pausing a moment to straighten the pearl on her left ear before disappearing inside the house.

Pickney Hills is three exits down the freeway from my house. A fifteen-minute drive home on an afternoon like today. Sometimes it's a nice drive. My dad's truck isn't too bad either. The windows roll down but the radio's busted. It just kind of leaves you with your thoughts. All that warm air blowing around your face like a plane propeller.

Between Pickney Hills and home, there's this diner Chuck and I liked to stop at sometimes. They've got chocolate milk. And real good hamburgers with pickles. And an old-timey jukebox. It only costs a dime. You can pick any old song you want. Hank Williams or Elvis Presley. You can sit there all night in those old red booths. Just as long as you don't run out of dimes.





LISTEN IN THE SILENCE[†]

An Essay by Shelley Danzy

My mother's final silence speaks loudly. She passed away at age fifty-eight. The brain aneurysm, strokes, heart disease, and high blood pressure stemmed from high stress levels — much of it self-imposed so that she might have a successful career as a psychiatric nurse.

Her occasional overtime became full time. Evenings at the hospital turned into overnights that turned into double shifts and what I call triple shifts, since she accepted lengthy phone calls at home from those who were supposed to have relieved her. Then there were stacks of folders and paperwork that just had to have her attention and expertise in the hours before she was scheduled to return to the hospital.

Looking back, it must have been difficult for her to “turn off” work since she was often in charge and admired. After college, I followed suit. I eagerly accepted the baton and ran the race, often staying up all night to finish something that wasn't my responsibility; exchanging phone calls with coworkers to follow up on projects for the umpteenth time; and accepting more work because “it just had to get done.” Year after year, promotions, travel, and money came to me, but I lost rest and peace of mind. I set multiple alarms at half-hour intervals in hopes of completing or tweaking work in the dead of night. You never know who may need a response to a memo at 2:00 a.m., right?

[†] In Fall 2014, Arianna Huffington visited SCAD and encouraged students to write for *The Huffington Post*. Shelley Danzy accepted this challenge, and a version of this piece was first published in The Third Metric section of *HuffPost*.

I was consumed with a climb-the-corporate-ladder-and-break-the-glass-ceiling mentality. I thought that letting go of the generational and societal mantra, “no pain, no gain,” would surely mean an insignificant career. Much time passed, and I was overwhelmed.

Others who capitalize on career clichés didn’t think I had an issue. Many proclaimed that if I wanted to be on top, I needed to “grab the bull by the horns and work my fingers to the bone.” “There’d be plenty of time to rest later.” I convinced myself that there was nothing wrong with stress. People called me to work on projects late at night and on weekends since I immediately exclaimed, “I’ll help you,” even when I knew I really couldn’t handle more. I’d answer the calls, the emails, the texts, trying to handle “emergencies.” I had adopted a mindset of success that outweighed rest and sleep. It’s taken me over twenty-five years to realize that there is a breaking point, and that I am not responsible for all of life’s activity — to understand that being on the road to success, in a state of overload, can mean death.

I’m not a health-care specialist or a life coach. I’m a woman on a journey, a woman discovering that there’s more to life than titles and money. Yes, there are economic woes. But where’s the life in living tired? There’s a perception that we must be busy doing something constantly; there’s a misguided sense of multitasking. We’ve come to equate being still, being alone and relishing quiet time, with being slothful. I believe it is quite the opposite. When I simply turn off the gadgets, when I leave work at work, I’m more productive to think, communicate, create, and pursue all that I am called to do.

Perhaps the numbers are in the thousands or millions, I don’t know, but many of us are living on the edge of life, thinking that we have the perfect balance. Thinking that there’s never a risk of falling off. Maybe you’re experiencing the busyness of being too busy. Or maybe it’s someone close to you who is in a perpetual state of “on.”

I became proficient in giving — but not heeding — advice: get rest, eat right, don’t work every waking hour, take a vacation, enjoy your family, etc. I offered quotes, scriptures, articles, and books about the benefits of taking care of oneself. Many of us wear several hats in life — from taking care of our families to working and studying, to serving as caregivers or volunteers — but there are consequences when we try to make a day last more than twenty-four hours.

Look around. Some parents disregard their children, and some marriages dissolve. Some once-in-a-lifetime events are missed. Some overworked workers are fatigued and unhealthy and even lack compassion for others.

In recent months, I was a patient in an emergency room, listening to a nurse's admonitions. I was pre- this and borderline that. It was then that I realized I had become a poster child of pride — a pride that disguised itself as confidence and concerned itself with career and “getting ahead.” Would I change my life and reflect upon things that are really meaningful, or would I go back to the old ways?

I believe that the power of rest has been weakened by a societal insecurity. When we rest, we fear we're missing out on something. We fear we're being lazy. But the thought that we have to abandon our personal lives, our well-being, just to fulfill our career dreams, is a falsehood. We each have gifts and talents and we must work diligently. Responsibilities and trials are a given. But we won't be able to do anything effectively if we're exhausted and worn down. Tomorrow's not promised. Nothing in life is worth having if we compromise our health and well-being.

I can't change what happened in my mother's life, but I can make changes in my own — and hopefully help you to seek to listen in the silence. I believe that when we are willing to be still and silent (no distractions, no attempts to multitask), then we will begin to listen; when we truly listen, we will begin to uncover the truth within our hearts.





THE MORNING AFTER

A Short Story by Joanna Kauffmann

There is nothing familiar here except what I brought with me last night. A black dress on the floor, heels I kicked off somewhere between the door and bed.

And the boy, I guess. I know him in ways. I know his first name, his preferred Saturday night cocktail. I know he keeps a neat apartment and favors beige furniture. I know what he looks like naked, the shudder of his body before he lets go. He is a heavy sleeper too, apparently. He doesn't wake when my sister calls me.

There was a time when an early-hour phone call from Margot would be no cause for alarm, when it meant little more than a too-late night and a too-strong drink. I would drive into the city at dawn to pick her up. When I arrived at the address she had sent me, she'd be sitting on the side of the road, tear-streaked and trembling, knees pulled into her chest waiting for my approaching headlights. Waiting for me like I was riding a white horse.

It has been a while since one of those calls came in though, and my stomach tightens as I answer the phone with her name. "Margot?"

"Where are you?" she asks, because I have whispered. "Are you not at your apartment?" She sounds panicked. It is three in the morning.

"It doesn't matter," I say. "What's wrong?"

"Jesus, Lindsay." A change in her voice then, like of course I'm not at home for this. But how was I supposed to know it would be now? "Where are you?" she asks.

"It doesn't matter," I repeat. "Just tell me what's wrong."

"Lindsay. It's Tallie."

I swing my legs over the boy's bed then. Sit upright on the edge. I repeat the name in my head — *Tallie* — but don't say anything out loud.

It has been Tallie only once before. Only once, in seventeen years, has my younger sister been a reason to call. I was in college still, and Margot had graduated and moved to the city that we grew up claiming as our hometown even though we are really from the suburbs just outside. She was the one to call me then, too, to tell me she had just gotten off the phone with our parents and they had just come from a doctor's appointment with Tallie, and Tallie as it turns out, wasn't just having growing pains. Her joints weren't swollen and tender simply because of typical, teenage activity. Her weight loss wasn't a symptom of all the new sports she'd picked up since starting high school, but instead a symptom of something much worse. A cancer that would live in her bones alone but grow to threaten us all.

I finally say her name into the emptiness of this strange bedroom and also to my sister listening on the other end of the phone. "Tallie." As if it's a prayer.

Margot sighs, which I've heard before — lately it seems that we are always at odds with each other — but there is something new in her voice too. "Look, Linds, wherever you are, just get out of there, okay? Right now. Call me when you're home."

I slide out of the boy's bed and sit on the floor, leaning back against his mattress. "Margot, just tell me." I know what's coming and I am casting around for any article of clothing I can find. Mine, his, something left behind by a girl who was there before me. At this point all that seems to matter is that I not be naked.

My bare feet on the floor, my bare knees hugged into my bare chest with my bare arms wrapped around myself, and the phone pressed between my bare shoulder and my hot cheek. I'm wearing nothing when my older sister tells me that my younger sister is dead.

"I'm so sorry," Margot says as if it is her fault, or as if it's somehow worse for me than it is for her. She is crying now, I notice, but I am not. I am biting so hard on my lip that I taste blood.

"Are you at your apartment?" I ask. "Where are Mom and Dad?" It seems most pressing to secure the rest of the troops, to ensure that we lose no more tonight.

"Mom and Dad are at home," she says. "They called me about ten minutes ago. We didn't talk long. I told them I'd call you."

"Where are you?" I ask again, because she still has not answered.

"I'm at my apartment. I'm going to take the first train out to the house in the morning. Come over here. You can shower. I'll give you clothes. We can go out together."

"No, that's okay. I mean, yes, I'll go to the house with you, but I'll meet you at the station. I just, I need to be alone for a little bit, and in my own space. I'm going to go back to my apartment, shower there. Maybe try to get a little more sleep. I want my own clothes. I need a little time."

It's not entirely untrue. I do need time before seeing her. I can't stand the thought of having her take solid form in front of me, of being able to reach out and touch someone who knows that Tallie is dead and will be forever. Margot will make everything permanent. In this boy's bedroom, a place I will never return to once I leave it, I am able to feel temporary.

"Sure. Of course. I understand." She takes a deep breath. "I'm glad you're getting out of there," she says, as if I'm in prison. "The metro starts running at six. I'll meet you at the top of the escalator at ten of. Yeah?"

"Yeah," I say. "Perfect." It's an insane word to use.

"Linds, do me a favor? Let me know when you get back to your place?"

I swallow hard. "Of course," I say. "Of course I will." She's never once asked that of me, but I let it slide. I know where it's coming from. I asked where she is, where our parents are. I never do that.

I peel myself off the floor, climb back into the boy's bed and, fifteen minutes later, from the exact spot where I was when she called me, I send Margot a message and tell her I've arrived safely home. The boy's heat is everywhere around me and I press my chest into his back and arrange my legs into the space he has left. I stay there for another hour, trying to will myself back into the girl I was when he first saw me. Red hair spilling over my shoulders, down my back, and my little sister still very much alive. It was early enough in the night, my lipstick had barely faded. Maybe I was laughing. He must have charmed me somehow. I do this often enough, but not without reason. There must have been something about him, although I can no longer remember what it was.

*

I get to the station before Margot. I did finally make it back to my apartment, where I showered and changed. I got no more sleep.

Two weeks ago, Tallie decided to leave the hospital and go home, and everyone we told — the relatives, the family friends, the grade school teachers — misunderstood us at first. They thought it meant she was improving, and if we were a kinder family of better people, we would have let them hold on to that.

"It means it's over," we told them. "It won't be long now."

For the first few days, Margot and I slept at the house but we did more harm than good. It was crowded and we hovered and Tallie couldn't take it anymore. She told us to go back to the city and to our own apartments and the lives we would have to keep living regardless of what happened to her. We last visited the day before yesterday.

My parents have not called, and I notice I'm annoyed at them about it, which is a horrible thing to feel on top of everything. I try to remind myself that Margot could have told them not to bother, assuring them she would handle it. That she would take care of me. That's been her way for a while now, though I still remember when she could barely take care of herself.

We used to be so alike. Closing down bars and going home with strangers and buying cheap sunglasses from convenience stores for the morning walk back to our own apartments. It was like that even before Tallie was diagnosed, so I've never connected the two things in my mind, though I doubt Margot was able to do the same. Our parents called us wild as a catchall for all the things they didn't have words for, and I thought it was quaint. I never minded the comparison between us — we could use each other as a mirror — but at some point she came to. I have tried not to take it personally; the only reason she got her act together was to distance herself from me.

"I'm sorry you beat me here," she says, when she finally joins me. We hug tight, dig into one another's flesh. It hurts, slightly, but I'm glad for it. "It's like all of a sudden I can't force myself to move with any sense of purpose."

We let go of each other, but wordlessly clasp hands as we make our way down the escalator. I'm glad we never outgrew this.

"How did Mom and Dad sound when you spoke to them?"

She thinks for a moment. "War torn," she finally says. "As if the tanks had rolled through and the machine guns had leveled the place."

There is no one on the platform except us, and as we wait for our train, I drop my head into the hollow of her shoulder. Nothing seems quite real, though we are surrounded on all sides by metal and concrete and infinite solidness.

"Who was the boy?" she asks, and it takes me a moment to place the question. He already seems so far away from me, but I wonder if he's woken up yet to notice I'm gone.

"Just some boy," I tell her, which if it wasn't true before is certainly true now. Sometimes I wonder if these boys who catch my eye and live near the bar and

seem so insignificant in the boozy haze of evening could ever turn out to be more in the hurt of our morning hangovers. They usually disappoint me — as I'm sure I do them — but last night's boy with his too-dark hair and hardwood floors won't have the chance.

"Just some boy," Margot repeats. "Aren't they all?"

She seems to be talking mostly to herself and so I decide that the question is rhetorical, and not a comment on me. It is possible; she knows as well as I do that the boys who buy you drinks and pay you Hallmark compliments are not likely to transform overnight.

"What are we going to do without her?" I ask to change the subject.

"I don't know. She always made such a difference."

"She wasn't much like us. That's why. She never tortured herself." Margot and I did. There was a wall around us our whole lives protecting us from the dangers of the outside world, and we made a game of finding weapons inside ourselves and threatening our lives so as to better justify the celebration of our survival. "She never seemed to feel like she deserved a reward for just making it through." That's what it all came down to really; last night and last night's boy and all the nights before that and all the boys before him. I had carried on being a person despite the thousands of things that could have stopped me and I felt I was due compensation.

"I don't feel that way anymore," Margot says.

"I still do."

"I know."

"Do you think I'll grow out of it like you did?"

"Do you think you'll grow out of it like I did?"

"Sometimes. Although this won't help."

Margot sighs and squeezes my hand. "It's a setback for sure," she agrees. And then she laughs, a short staccato like a cough that soon takes on a life of its own and comes out loud and steady. It overwhelms the deserted platform. I can't do anything but stare. I'm angry and jealous. How dare she laugh? But at the same time I wish I could.

"I'm sorry," she finally says, calming down. "I'm sorry, it's not funny at all. A setback? As if that's all this were. It's just so ridiculous." She drops her head into her hands and murmurs something that's not meant for me.

I am about to say something — to pull her back — when my cell phone vibrates in my pocket. I assume it must be our parents because who else would be up and trying to get in touch with me at this hour, but when I look the message is

from the boy I left behind. I don't remember that we exchanged information, but the number couldn't belong to anyone but him. *You're gone*, he has written.

And suddenly, that's all I want — for it to be true. For the girl who climbed into bed with him so easily and so quickly to have disappeared forever. I want that girl to have died when Tallie did, perhaps to accompany her to wherever it is she's going. The version of me that she knew in life by her side in death. That's what I want losing Tallie to do to me, to alter and fix in me. I want to believe that the point of death is to change the living.

I show Margot the message. "It's from the boy," I tell her. "From last night."

"You didn't wake him up before you left?"

"God, no. Why would I?"

"I don't know. To explain why you were leaving."

"Explain! What would I have said? Sorry to leave like this, but my little sister died and I have to go home. Thanks for last night, the sex was fine, have a great life." I shake my head. "He is a stranger, Margot. He is no one."

She drops her head into the palm of her hands again. "He's enough of someone that you went home with him. You knew him well enough for that." The sound is muffled by her fingertips, but not so much that I can't make out every word. I'm not surprised she's said it, but I can't respond to it. I won't be able to say anything to her until she's apologized, but I don't suspect it will take long.

We sit in silence for only a few moments. "I'm sorry," she says, sitting up straight again. "I'm sorry I said that." She turns and meets my eyes, afraid suddenly as if she's just now realizing how helpless she is. "I hate absolutely everything about what's happening right now. Do you hate it? I hate it."

I take up her hands again in mine. "Of course I hate it. What's to like?"

This seems to calm her down. "Nothing. There's nothing to like." She squeezes my hands and we let go of each other again. "Are you going to at least reply to him?"

I want to. In the few hours since leaving his apartment I've managed to convince myself that there was something different about him. That if I'd been able to sleep through the night he would have woken me up in the morning by tossing an arm over my rib cage, splaying his fingers out on my stomach, pulling me a little closer into his space. He would have made coffee and served it to me black without asking if I preferred it any other way. We would have kissed goodbye in his doorway, met for a drink in the middle of the next week. Because there's no way for him to ever be anything but the last boy I slept with before my sister

died, I want to let myself believe that he could have been everything if she'd only managed to stay alive one more night.

"Yes," I tell Margot. "I'll tell him something." Instead, I pretend to type and then tuck the phone back into my pocket.

A few minutes later the train finally comes and it is as empty as we are.





LE VILLAGE DES CRÉATEURS[†]

A Fashion Feature by Alex Keith

The crowds of tourists grappling for tables in Lyon's beloved *bouchons* thin with each step I take up the cobblestone stairs leading to the neighborhood La Croix Rousse. Funkified murals and quirky cartoons are sprawled across the area's passageways, which are lined with design shops and independent art galleries. Up here, the low hum of local life replaces the city center's rustle of shopping bags. Up here, there is vintage shop after vintage shop, terraced cafés buzzing with university students, and record stores spinning everything from The Velvet Underground to Regina Spektor. There's a decidedly young vibe at the top of *la colline qui travaille*, "the hill that works."

Centuries before France's second-largest metropolis became an Eden for French foodies — Lyon boasts fourteen Michelin-starred restaurants — the city held a very different title as the silk-manufacturing capital of France. Following this silk road of sorts, I'm looking for something different, something that Lyon's famed chefs can't offer. A few city levels above the restaurant strip Rue Mercière, I find what I'm looking for: le Village des Créateurs.

The entrance, Passage Thiaffait, is a quiet, unassuming alley tucked behind twin columns. François-Félix Thiaffait, a board member of the Benevolent Society of Agriculture of Lyon, purchased the vast building fronting Rue René Leynaud in 1826 before transforming the space into a site for silk production. The original structure was divided into dwellings and workspaces for 132 workers, merchants, and manufacturers. A bookbinder, a mechanic, a doctor, a hairdresser, a language teacher, a painter — it was a community bound by silk. Today, a

[†] A version of this article originally appeared in *le NAVIGATEUR: the online travel magazine for college students*.

hodgepodge of designers work in tandem behind the doors of the alley's twelve separate storefronts.

"I've only been here three weeks," says designer Caroline Takvorian, turning a full circle in her jewel box of a space in le Village des Créateurs. In the past, her eponymous ready-to-wear label reimagined the little black dress, a staple of Parisian chic, with innovative leather, silk, and corset silhouettes. "It was very dark. Different. Graphic," she says. A petite, cheery blonde in a magenta blazer and a smear of matching lipstick, Takvorian herself is anything but dark. And neither is the line of demure cream wedding gowns that surround her in her bridal boutique, *Caroline Takvorian: Mariée*. This line of lace and frills is something new for Takvorian, almost as new as the boutique itself. Teetering back and forth on high heels, she asks excitedly, "Are you getting married?" She's so earnest I almost lie, say yes, if only as an excuse to try on one of her candy-white confections decorated in swan feathers, beads, and lace from Calais.

Takvorian is just three weeks into a twenty-three-month workshop in residence at the Village. Much like Takvorian's clothing lines, the Village constantly transforms; artists come and go, create and collaborate — but never for more than a two-year period. Aided throughout their residency by a team of fashion industry professionals, each designer honors a monthly appointment with a consultant to discuss the evolution of her young company. Established in 2001, the Village has played host to more than seventy artisans, from jewelry makers to furniture designers.

Across the alley, in an even smaller space, there is Andrea Vaggione: Bijoux Contemporains. I find Vaggione, a veteran of the Village who has been producing nature-inspired jewelry from delicate silver for the past year and a half, hidden behind the crushed velvet curtain that separates her workspace from her display cases. Pliers are bent between her nimble fingers, working a coral flower into its setting. She looks up, squinting at me from behind red cat-eye glasses, and I feel as though I've interrupted something important. But then she smiles, standing from her workspace to reveal herself, a petite Argentinian with cropped dark hair, decidedly un-French-looking. It is only by catching her in the act that I peg her as the artist; she humbly fails to point out the numerous awards that dot the walls of her small showroom, most notably her laureate award from the contest Talents de Mode, which she won her first month in the Village.

The Talents de Mode embodies the ideals of the Village des Créateurs; open to any designer, regardless of nationality or employment status, it rewards imagination

and sensitivity. Chaired by different designers each year, the jury seeks to discover the fashion talents of tomorrow and to nurture their careers. Seducing the jury in September of 2012 with her jewelry collection, *À Fleur de Peau*, Vaggione garnered a check for €5,000, the commercial and administrative support to expand her business, as well as an appearance on *Who's Next*, the paramount fashion trade show of France.

Vaggione has lived in Lyon for the past three years, spending the previous five in Barcelona. Sourcing all of her materials from Lyon, she finds the city to be worlds away from the struggles of her home in Córdoba, Argentina. "Business is much better here. The Argentinian peso is so devalued. To make and sell a ring at home you would have to sell it for €600 to make any money. I could not make a profit in Argentina." The ring I admire on my finger fetches €80. It's a much easier number to swallow, for both Vaggione and me. "It's beautiful on you," she says. "A forever flower for your finger."

"It's a play on words," she says of *À Fleur de Peau*, her winning collection of rings, necklaces and pendants. "It means close to the surface of the skin, but it literally means flower for the skin." She slips onto my finger another dainty silver band beset with two miniature lotus flowers. The impossibly thin silver petals rest just above my knuckles. Vaggione is inspired by nature, the world of plants, and organic language. "It is the notion of ongoing transformation, constant motion, birth and rebirth," she says.

The Village is always in flux. There is always something new to create, an old ideal to counter. Ceramics designer Sabine Orlandini has been challenging perspectives by combining seemingly unrelated elements since she was a young girl in Montréal-la-Cluse. "I started with mosaics. I was always doing something with my hands. I realized I wanted to make my own tiles. So I got into ceramics, and my tiles became objects that came to life," explains the dark-haired, doe-eyed Orlandini, who runs her roughened hand over the lip of what I assume to be a coffee mug. It has a looped handle that stretches far and away from the side of the mug, like Pinocchio's nose. "I like when my objects are used for a function I hadn't thought of. It's up to you what it is," she tells me. Her hands are artist's hands, unadorned by rings or bracelets, anything that might get in the way as she works her potter's wheel. Orlandini's ceramics spread out across the store's center table: a trio of "octopus" bowls, stacked trays in octahedrons and hexagons, all glazed to a sheen in deep, primary colors.

Orlandini is just one of five designers occupying the alley-like showroom of Label.s, a kind of microcosm of the Village. The space combines Orlandini ceramics with BettyJanis hand-dyed silk tunics, Caobé's covetable, buttery-soft lambskin bags, Milleneufcentquatrevingtquatre's whimsical silk scarves, and Sophie Mouleyre's eponymous line of silver jewelry. A scarf designed by Amélie Charroin and Marie Colin-Madan is knotted around the chain handle of a Caobé bag. Another is wrapped around the neck of a mannequin dressed in a BettyJanis blouse, their pastel colors blending together.

Orlandini follows me to the back of the boutique where an enormous burlap curtain hangs. "There's nothing back there. It's just where we work," she explains. I sneak a peek anyways, knowing that this, maybe more than the art, is what I have come to see. A large workroom with a giant drafting table is surrounded on all sides by cluttered workspaces. A sewing machine sits atop a pile of ombre-dyed silks. Small pliers and a tangle of thin wire have been left on another. Strips of tanned leather, leftovers or the beginnings of a future creation, lie in a tangle. Orlandini's kiln is noticeably missing. She fires her ceramics elsewhere, but she too has a space here among the clutter of creativity.

Departing between the double columns of Passage Thiaffait, I leave the Village, the calm of Croix Rousse, and descend into the crowded thoroughfare of Rue de la Republique. Much like the Village, the famed shopping area is for pedestrians only. And that's where their similarities end. I stare up at the massive storefronts of international chains such as H&M and Zara, trying to imagine the dime-a-dozen dresses and trench coats of the chain's storefronts being crafted in a small backroom by a local Lyonnais woman. I have left a village of creators for a city of retailers selling mass-manufactured products. I make my way through the dense crowd, strangers' shopping bags bearing the labels Louis Vuitton, Cartier, Levi's, and Diesel bumping against my elbows and knocking my knees. I clutch my own hand-printed, drawstring shopping bag a little bit closer, knowing it contains something different.

Le Village des Créateurs
19 Rue René Leynaud Lyon 69001
Wednesday-Saturday 14h to 19h
T: 04 78 27 37 21





AND BACK AGAIN

A Travel Essay by Glennis Lofland

Around 10:40 on an end-of-July night, my mother and I took the final ramp off the highway onto the country roads, and headed toward where we began our road trip almost three weeks earlier: home. We had driven 6,312 miles and had only sixteen left to go; this was the home stretch. Trees pulsed in the dark as the pavement twisted past cow pastures and patches of forest, and a black canopy stretched overhead, blotting the night from the road. Even at the brightest setting, our headlights barely pierced the darkness.

"It is so dark here," I remarked, and my mother murmured in agreement.

The roads were more winding, too, than I remembered. But nearly three weeks of driving across the United States has a way of making one notice things about even the most familiar surroundings. Three weeks earlier, my mother and I got in the car and drove from Virginia to Montana to visit her family. We drove across the Appalachians on roads cut into the soft, green mountains, winding our way up and then down into the fertile fields of the Ohio Valley. We traversed the Mississippi River, its vast muddiness swift and lazy at the same time. We drove through miles of Iowa cornfields undulating softly up to the flat plateau of Nebraska, where the road stretches out and the horizon seems so far away. We crossed the plains of South Dakota, where farming shifts to cattle grazing, and signs warn of open range. We drove into Montana along miles of prairie grasses waving atop the rolling hills of the highland plains, toward the Rockies that rise swiftly, suddenly, and fiercely in a jagged spine out of the horizon.

And then we drove home.

Home is not typically a subject of travel writing. Travel is about other places. Before my mother and I left for Montana, I said I was going on a Montana road trip: Montana was my Point B, my destination. But as we began our journey home, I started to wonder if maybe Point B is not really what a trip is all about. (And believe me, thousands of miles of road has a way of making one ruminate, even if there's another person in the car. There's only so much you can actually talk about with one person for six thousand miles.) When it comes to travel, the coming back is never really considered or discussed, though that is exactly when the emotions and experiences begin to be digested. It is when what happened begins to be understood, or rather, when you begin to understand that something might have happened. When we turned the car around and began our long drive back east, I started making mental notes about what I would have to do when I got back—bills I needed to pay, writing I needed to do. It was time to go home. But knowing it is time to go home is not the same as the realization that the past three weeks of cruising the open road—and the expectations of seeing new and exciting things, and actually seeing new and exciting things—were about to be over. Home was the place where my previous reality—now suspended for three weeks—would have to be resumed, and I did not want that to happen.

When astronauts return to Earth, there is a period of re-acclimation to gravity. As a sailor reclaims his sea legs, astronauts go through an intensive medical recovery to get back what they call their "Earth legs." Those who thru-hike the entire Appalachian Trail solo—spending months walking from Georgia to Maine alone, save for their own minds and the people they pass along the way—experience a rough transition when they return to mainstream society. In college, I was required to go through a pre-departure orientation before studying abroad for six months. Culture shock was on the list of topics covered, but the advisors also warned us of reverse culture shock when we came home. At first, it would be the noticeable differences—language and accents, portion sizes and driving on the right side of the road. Then it would be the little things, like the shampoo we fell in love with abroad and the habits of the host nation we had settled into. In Italy, I got used to the local air conditioner: you open windows at night and shut them in the morning to keep in the cool air. I had a friend who completely acclimated to the culture of water conservation in her host country of Australia, only to come

back home and be horrified with her own water usage, something she had never noticed before she left. What the advisors emphasized, and even what thru-hikers point out, is that sometimes it's not the journey that is the hardest part. It's the coming back. They told us to be aware that we would need a period of "re-acclimation" (getting our "U.S. legs" back?), but is re-acclimation really the right term? Home is not typically something that you have to acclimate to in the first place—how do you re-acclimate to something you never had to acclimate to? Home is something that just is, if you are a child. It's something you're trying to find, if you are a young adult. It's something that you build, if you are starting a family, and it's something you can always return to. But it is not something you acclimate to.

When we're children, home is where our parents are. But when we become adults, things change. When we move out of our parents' house, we change our "home" address on our bank statements, our driver's license and car registration, on our subscriptions and our insurance policies, on our taxes and in our family members' address books. It is our declaration to the world that you can now find me here: Street A, Apartment B, City C. It is a declaration of a new life on your own: *See, world, I am doing all right*. But that new address is not home—not really, not yet.

I recently visited a childhood friend who had moved back to our home city of Richmond. She lives in an apartment downtown, but on the weekends she and her fiancé will go to her parents' house in the suburbs for supper.

"Oh, Steven loves it," my friend says, speaking of her fiancé. "He thinks it's great that we are so close to my parents. But for me, it's weird."

My friend is a counselor trained in the art of describing feelings. But when I ask her why it's weird, she struggles to find the exact words.

"Well, after dinner, when Steven says, 'Let's go home,' he means, 'Let's go back to our apartment.' And I'm like, 'Wait, what? I am at home.' But really, I'm not. It's just my parents' house."

For some, it takes a bit longer to fully let go of what has always been home. I have yet to change my license plates to my new state, Georgia, or to completely switch my mailing address. As a student, I tell myself it is because Georgia is only temporary, to get my master's degree. *I don't know where I will be once I graduate so . . .* But I know that it's just my excuse. Leaving is uncomfortable, and with a driver's license, plates, and a home mailing address from Virginia, I

am still, sort of, there. When people ask where I am from, I can still say Virginia. Still, details like mailing addresses or license plates don't necessarily have to change that: I have a professor who says he is from California, though he has not lived there in nearly twelve years. And a middle-aged woman I met once in Texas told me she was from Virginia.

"Well, I've lived in Dallas for the past twenty-five years," she corrected herself. "But Virginia will always be home for me."

Still, there are those who have emerged from this limbo. A college friend I visited in December proudly showed me his new apartment. Like many of our generation who struggled when the economy collapsed in 2008, he had to move back with his parents after our college graduation.

"When I was living at home, it was weird," he said as he pointed out his new sofa. "It was technically home, and I still called it that, but something was different."

He explained the backstory of how he got each picture, each bauble, each book and piece of furniture. The entire room was a testament of my friend and his passions, and he proudly pointed out each piece. *See, world, I am doing all right.*

"Like at my parents' house," he continued. "I slept in the bed I'd slept in my whole life, but somehow, it didn't feel like it was mine anymore."

It's a strange period of time, when the young adult moves out. Pop culture likes to lampoon this transition: the young adult comes home only to find his room turned into the guest bedroom or the craft room Mom always wanted. In a television ad for Swedish furniture company IKEA, a son returns from college to find his parents had used most of his bedroom to expand the kitchen. It's difficult to believe anyone has a bedroom essentially in the kitchen, but realism aside, the ad represents what pop culture likes to promote as the proper course for coming of age: kids move out and parents reclaim their home, and their lives, once again. But the societal landscape is changing. In 2012, 21.6 million young adults — or thirty-six percent of all 18- to 31-year-olds — were living at home, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of census data. This is the highest rate since 1969. Young adults moving home is the reality for millions of families, but it continues to bear a mark of shame or failure. Also in 2012, *Forbes* published an article on the so-called "boomerang children," titled *Failure to Launch*, which also happens to be the title of a 2006 romantic comedy in which Matthew McConaughey plays a thirty-something "slacker" living at home with his parents.

Most attribute the increase in the number of boomerang children to the 2008 recession, and while we have yet to see if the trend becomes the norm, what is considered the transitional period from childhood to adulthood is stretching. Psychology now has a new age classification called “emerging adults” to describe people in their 20s who go through a developmental period distinct from other stages of adulthood. For millions of Americans, moving home is part of that stage of development, at least for now.

After the apartment tour, my friend and I sat on his new sofa and listened to his vinyl collection while catching up on our lives post-college. I told him I was so happy to see him doing so well.

“You know,” he said, “I am doing well, finally. This is the first place that I can call mine. It’s my own. My parents’ house? That’s just my parents’ house. This is my home now. *This* is what I call home.”

Though there are differences between moving home and coming home from a vacation or journey, one thing is certain: home is never quite the same as when you left, no matter how long you were away. As my mother and I drove into her hometown in Montana, she was shocked that the pencil factory where she worked in college was closed, that the train depot was now a housing development, and that there was a new addition to the hospital where she worked as a nurse. She had not been there in nearly seventeen years, so it’s almost silly to not expect drastic changes. But changes at home are unsettling. They stand in stark contrast to the memories we built over the years, retained when we move away, and visited whenever we think about home. Home changes, and we don’t want it to because then we have to change too. Acclimate. When I visited my high school for the first time nearly five years after my graduation, I was shocked by the renovations, even though I had received annual updates on the extensive remodeling that had occurred since I left. None of my classrooms remained, save for a single French classroom next to what used to be the computer lab, a room rendered obsolete. Now all the students have laptops. (Talk about premature aging. I can just hear the “back in my day” statements for my generation: “Back in my day, we went to the computer lab,” or, “Back in my day, we played Oregon Trail on a floppy disk.”) I don’t have too many nostalgic memories of the computer lab—it was a pretty dead space even back in my day, used only to check Facebook before class or to print an essay. But standing there, staring at the empty desks gathering a thin film of dust, I felt the same feeling I felt when

I found my first gray hair: *Oh my God. I'm aging. This is real.*

Travel, at its most fundamental, is about home. You are either leaving home, or returning to it, and there is a very fine line dividing the two. The return is the same for anyone who has gone anywhere, whether for a weekend trip just down the road, or for a year around the world. Suitcase unpacked, dirty laundry clean, the requisite, “How was it?” from friends and family answered, and soon the suspended daily rhythms are resumed. Work has to be done. Bills have to be paid. But after you step inside your home and before life’s rhythm resumes, something feels different. You’re getting your “home legs” back. What travel does is make you aware that home is not the same every time you return because, rather than coming home from work or walking the dog, you have been gone long enough to notice a difference. The air is a bit different, or maybe it is the light. After my three-week road trip, it was as if we had been driving just ahead of the journey. For the next few days, the miles and miles washed over me like a wave smacking the sand.

*

As we rounded the tight turns of the backcountry roads, I knew I was nearly home. But I saw a different place. “With fresh eyes” would be the phrase, but that’s not quite right because my eyes were tired from traveling. What ordinarily would have been a comfort, “a sight for sore eyes,” an ease to the end of a long and exciting journey, was actually not. It was strange. Not in the negative sense, but in the way that new places are strange — exciting and unsettling at the same time. I could hear the cicadas singing outside, louder and more abrasive than I remembered. I had grown accustomed to nights along the highland plains, where the night air dips so cold you need a fleece, where the lights carry far into open plains silvery with moonlight. The air seeping through our open windows in Virginia was balmy and thick with humidity. The night around us was black. But there were fireflies bobbing around in the fields, a hallmark of summer I hadn’t noticed that Montana did not have until I saw them again at home. We passed the old gas station at the fork in the road — a landmark I had never really looked at before, whenever I automatically turned left. Its white paint was yellow with age, and the glow of a single street lamp cast its light in a tent around the building and its pumps. We veered to the left down the dark country road.

And then we were home.



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