

WORDS 88

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PERSONAL ESSAY

AMBER SUZOR-- IMPRESSIONS

July 5, 2009— My feet shift swiftly across the airport floors, as I'm moved along by a sea of people. The towering figures loom over me, and I try to wiggle myself through the crowd, desperate to reach the finish line. The sea finally parts, and I'm there, at the arrival gate. I scan the masses of people in search of her. The first tinges of nervousness strum the pit of my stomach. I spot her sitting quietly on the airport terminal benches. Her eyes land on me, and her face lights up. I feel the nervousness slip out from under me, and instead I'm taken by the overwhelming excitement of seeing her, my godmother, Tori.

Her tightly-wound ebony curls bounce up and down as she giddily runs towards me. I'm thirteen years old, and it's my first trip alone. I open my arms wide, ready for her embrace. She picks me up, hugging me tightly. It's been almost a year since we last saw one another and we both squeal with excitement. She puts me down, and we take in one another. Her pale green eyes are full of life. "How are you, my dear?" The familiar voice soothes me.

"I'm good," I respond chirpily, beaming with admiration.

"Good." She smiles and her perfectly straight teeth shine back at me, appearing divine in comparison to my dense metal braces. Taking my bag in one hand and my hand in the other, she leads me through the sea.

August 24, 2010—I'm in my first year of middle school and I'm walking to ballet recital with my friend, Rachel. It's August and the heat is palpable. The weight of my backpack digs sharply into my shoulders, but our conversation keeps me distracted. We're gossiping about a girl in our ballet class, who we believe has unjustly gotten cast as Sugar Plum for our annual showcase of *The Nutcracker*. The muffled sound of my pink Razor flip phone pulls me

out of our conversation, and I take my backpack off, beginning to sift through the overpacked zipper compartment. Finally, I pull out my phone. It's my dad. "Hey," I answer.

"Amber?" His voice sounds frail.

"Hey, what's wrong?" I ask him. "It's Tori."

July 6, 2009— We eat fish tacos messily outside a food truck. I'm wearing the bright yellow bikini Tori bought for me at Old Navy earlier that day. "Do you have a boyfriend?" I ask her.

"Yes, in fact, you're going to get to meet him."

I ask what he's like. She tells me Rusty is a musician she met on match.com, and he might take us to the movies tomorrow. She asks me if I have any crushes. I tell her about a boy named Griffin, who has beach-blond hair, and likes to surf. She says it sounds like we'd be cute together. We drive through the rolling hills of Coronado; the suburban houses whisk past me. The wind is warm and sifts through my salty, wet hair. We listen to The Beach Boys and Tori sings along. Her house looks like all the others, a light beige concrete, with a perfectly manicured lawn. It doesn't fit her really, I tell her, and she agrees.

August 24, 2010— I wait outside the ballet studio for my Dad. I hear the sound of the loud diesel engine before I see his car, seconds later the black beetle appears in front of me, and I walk around and climb in. "Dad, what's happening?" We had known Tori had cancer for a year now, and she seemed to only be getting worse.

"Tori's here, she wants to see us."

July 7, 2009— That night, we go to see *Mamma Mia* with Tori's boyfriend, Rusty. We both get Cherry Cola's and a large bag of popcorn to share. We gleefully sing along, and Rusty laughs at us, embarrassed. Tori knows every word to every song, and I mentally make a note to myself to memorize the lyrics when I get home. We walk through the streets of Downtown San Diego. She tells me stories of growing up in Montana, riding horses. Rusty tells me about their first date. I tell them about writing a love letter to a boy in my grade, and how everyone found out. Tori laughs, and it's contagious, full of

joy. Although we are years apart, I feel as though she is my friend, and I, a friend to her.

July 8, 2009— Our bodies sway in the calm, cool ocean water. I can see the beginning of a wave rising in the distance. I saddle myself on the stiff boogie board we bought from CVS. The wave begins to curl and I look at Tori for confirmation. “Go, go!” she yells. The sunshine gleams off her silky wet hair, and her skin is glowing. I start to paddle my arms against the thick ocean current. We’re both riding the wave now, and as I look over at Tori our eyes lock. The San Diego beach scenery passes behind her in slow motion. We’re both smiling from ear to ear, the wind brushes against my face as we ride the last of the wave, until our bodies are washed up on the wet sand.

August 24, 2010— We pull into the Samuel P. Taylor campgrounds, where Tori and Rusty are waiting for us. The two are taking a road trip all the way to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. We park next to my mom’s car in front, a small RV that says *Cruise America* in big green letters along the sides of it. I can feel the heaviness of the room the moment I step in. There, around a small folding kitchen table, my mom and my younger brother sit across from Tori. My mom and Tori hold hands across the table. I haven’t seen her since that summer in San Diego. She appears weak and drained of energy, although she manages to get up to hug me. I can feel her bones, and the memory of her picking my small body up in the San Diego Airport seems, now, almost impossible. Her curly brown hair is nowhere to be seen. Instead she wears a burgundy beanie in its place. “How are you, sweetie?”

I force a smile, although I’m slightly frightened by how different she looks. I feel bad for her, and she can tell. She brings me back towards her, holding me closely. She doesn’t seem scared, but instead, there’s a sadness I can see in her eyes. I feel it too. She asks the others if we can talk alone for a little. We walk outside. I look up at the redwood trees towering above us. Light beams through them, casting a heavenly glow upon the campground. She takes my hand in hers and we sit down. I can hear the sound of children playing, their voices echoing through the forest. Water rushes down the nearby creek, a dog barks. I feel a sense of calm coming over me as we both take in our surroundings. I look towards her, and I see tears trickling down her cheeks. I want to comfort her, but at the same time, I don’t feel she needs me to. She knows she’s going to die, I can tell. She takes my hand in hers, and looks back at me. “I’m going to miss you so much.” The words feel as if they physically touch me, and warm tears fall down my cheeks.

Twelve days later, Tori died. My dad tells me and my family. I don't cry, but instead I go outside. Walking through the neighborhood, I make my way towards the forest. I walk up the mountain, the wind blowing gently through my hair. Sunlight kisses my face, basking me in warmth. Rocks crackle underneath my sneakers. I feel her there with me, and instead of feeling sad, I feel happy. Inexplicably happy. I stop walking and close my eyes, taking in the aliveness of the moment. It feels like yesterday that I was in San Diego and I realize how fragile it is, how my life didn't really seem to belong to me, or anyone, for that matter. I feel a deep desire to understand this, and at the same time, an uncertainty as to if I ever will. Thoughts and feelings all seem to be swirling inside me, each one pining for the other's attention. For a second, I'm able to simply watch it all take place within me and I can feel, for a second, as life becomes tangible, and for the first time, real. I open my eyes.

Amber Suzor's personal essay "Impressions" won first prize in the Sixth Annual School of Visual Arts Writing Program Contest.

FLASH FICTION

Ellen Dubreuil --Familiar

I am a cab driver. One day I was in a grocery store when I saw him. I was buying milk and toilet paper and eggs—lots of each, since we go through a lot as a family of six. I saw the young man down the aisle from me and immediately had a feeling of unease. He was pale and disheveled, with nothing but one lonely can of soup in his basket. He looked at me once, then looked away, then at me again, like a slow motion double-take. I have come to expect this. I'm Sikh, and wear the beard and turban, and people look at me. It's part of my every day, and I always have to assess if it's harmless or not. I couldn't tell with this man. He was dressed like a college student who'd woken up ten years older one morning. He looked at me again, then at the rows of cereal boxes. I moved

past him with my loaded cart to grab three boxes of sweet cereal. This gets tiresome, the look, look away, look. I continued my shopping and tried not to think about it. In the produce section I saw the man again. He looked at me over the avocados, and smiled a close-lipped half-smile. I looked down at the oranges. Then in line to pay I saw him again. This time he was clearly making an effort not to look at me. Outside I unlocked my car, popped the trunk, and loaded the groceries in.

“Hey!” I heard a man shout.

The muscles in my arms and legs tensed and I slowly shut the trunk before looking up to see who had spoken. It was the pale young man. He was holding his yellow plastic grocery bag and smiling, or trying to.

“I didn’t mean to stare earlier, but I think you’ve driven me before! I wasn’t sure until I saw you with your cab. How are you?”

I looked at him and said,

“Alright.”

“Great,” he said, nodding rather emphatically. We looked at each other awkwardly.

“Have a good day!” he said, and moved on.

Christina Rycz-==-Oriole

Carol’s mind was vast and open-ended, even as the tumor crowded her skull. She slipped between moments of lucidity, euphoria, melancholy, rage—but always steadied herself in Greg’s eyes. She trusted his hands as he drew circles around the blooming IV bruises.

It being spring was devastating. Being in the facility meant that Carol couldn’t see her garden sprout. Gregory, to his credit, had diligently tried to keep up with it. When it became clear that she wouldn’t go home, he wasn’t brave enough to tell her that the morning glories had choked her daylilies and phlox.

In the hospital, their silences were occupied by watching the mirages of movement in the linoleum floor. It stretched to the edges of the room and reminded Carol of the surface of a lake where they had spent a summer. She asked Greg with increasing frequency if he saw it too.

At home, their life together had been a comfort. A nest of memories inhabited each room. Gregory felt the sorrow of their collective experiences, and each moment that he spent alone added to a slow asphyxiation. As summer reached its peak, he escaped back to the garden. It was engulfed in weedy tendrils, a jungle canopy of vines. He searched desperately for Carol's favorite burgundy iris, a gift from her mother's own garden that had followed her to every new start. He finally found it, reduced to a thin fan, pock-marked by the appetite of slugs.

Then it was autumn. It took the crack of a bird's skull on the patio doors to bring him back to his loneliness. The little mass of yellow and black lay dead, its feathers fanned dully in the breeze. Gregory watched its partner descend from the tree above, loudly calling. It beat its wings, as though trying to carry the tiny body to safety.

Putting its body in a box reminded him of all the baby birds he had tried to help as a child: partially feathered, their thin red skin warm where it showed on their throats. They always lingered for a few days on sugar water and soaked cereal, succumbing in the night or the middle of the day while he was at school.

Gregory buried the bird next to the dead iris, his flashlight creating sharp angles on the shovel. He could still hear the partner calling, alone in the night. He wept into his raw hands,

reminded of the hours that Carol and he had spent watching the pair in the yard. “You can tell they are mates,” she had always laughed. “He follows her around everywhere.”

Yihui Yuan --Out-of-tune

Sakamoto felt too guilty to live in his country—the country of the piano. He thought he was a criminal. All the other pianists thought the same because their government had declared a ban on playing the piano. That makes no sense, they muttered and grumbled. However, the government had its own reason--that was to reduce the influence of the out-of-tune-virus.

But is it all my fault? Sakamoto wondered. All I did was play the piano as usual. It's my job, it's in my nature. He realized that all pianos in his country went out of tune on the same night, and the first piano that went out of tune was his.

His world changed. At first, people started complaining about their out-of-tune pianos. Tuners went to work, but not even one

piano was repaired successfully. When the government noticed how serious the situation was, it was too late. Research scientists announced it was also the pianists who were infected by the out-of-tune virus.

Maybe we should play the piano where nobody cares about the tuning, Sakamoto thought. He was up for a new adventure. Granted, it would be hard for him to drag a heavy piano to another country. Instead, he sat on the piano and slid down a hill, away from the sick country.

Sakamoto went to the East. It took him one month to arrive at a remote country across the sea. When he talked to people, he was surprised that this country had never heard music before. He used his out-of-tune hands to play out-of-tune music, and none of them knew anything was wrong. In fact, they thought the melody was beautiful and wanted to hear more. It seems that I made the right decision, Sakamoto thought. He decided to live there forever.

MOJO --THE TRIP TO PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Standing on the subway platform, Claire was weary. The trip to Planned Parenthood had not been pleasant. The painkiller was still working, but her lower abdomen was feeling sore. I should call Julie to pick me up, Claire thought.

As usual, the train was delayed. Claire had never cared for the layout of the platform. Worn-out wooden chairs sat on the filthy ground between two rows of red painted steel pillars—silently holding up the station.

Suddenly, Claire felt a breeze and turned her head. She saw the oncoming train lighting up the tunnel and found herself standing on the edge of the platform—with fists clenched tightly.

“Miss?” A man pulled Claire back. She turned and stared into his brown eyes. The man looked at Claire with sorrow. The train rushed in.

“May I ask if this train goes to Queens?” the man asked. The doors opened.

“Yes, it does,” Claire said. The door closed.

They turned and walked back to the wooden chairs. The man sat beside Claire, and he introduced himself in a soft tone. “I’m Edward, Edward Goodman.”

“Claire,” she said and lowered her eyes.

“You know, I usually drive home.” Edward looked at Claire and spoke softly. “But my car crashed last night. I was driving back from my mother’s house when I took my eyes off the road, and a deer came out of nowhere to meet the path of my speeding car.” Edward ignored Claire’s silence. “I was astonished,” he

continued. “ I staggered out of the car. The deer was lying on the road a few feet away, making faint sounds, its twitching legs scratching the pavement. I leaned over its limp body to scrutinize this unfortunate creature, whose time had come.”

Claire raised her eyes and turned to look at Edward. “I lay down beside the deer and put my hand on its body to feel it moving slightly up and down in pace with its feeble breath. Its legs were twitching violently, and then it died. It was a female, a doe. I caught a glimpse of life fading in her’s eyes.”

Edward paused his words and looked at Claire. “You see, there was nothing I could do to save her, there was nothing I could do at all.” Claire stared at Edward. No words came out of her mouth, and only silence lingered between them.

Another train arrived, and Claire wiped away her tears. The doors opened. Claire stood up and walked into the train. She turned back and smiled at Edward as the doors closed. Edward smiled and watched the train leaving the station, taking Claire home.

SHORT STORIES

MEITAR ALMOG --TICKET

By the funniest chance, on the way down to her seat in the packed movie theater, she ran into two old friends. They were sitting in the corner, drinking secret dark beers and giggling in a language she had trouble understanding. They were nice and polite, but she wasn't comfortable around them, so she stuttered and simply joined their giggles.

After the movie ended, and the tiny streets around the theater filled with wandering people, she stepped out to the Cinematheque square and sat on one of the thin benches. All around her were flying kids, hovering above the warm, grainy sound of skateboard wheels, gently scraping the rugged ground. The old friends she met by chance complained about the heat and about the movie, and then majestically climbed onto their bikes and rode back into their own lives. She decided to stay. The kids kept flying and crushing, squeaking faintly and seemed very used to the warm pavement. They were all wrapped together under the giant blanket of Tel Aviv's early summer.

From the restaurant across the street, she could smell a heavy scent of coffee and wine. She lifted her square bag off the ground, wore it on her back, and unbuttoned her black jacket. It was decorated with tiny flowers that reminded her of the time she and another old friend went to the market and bought two meters of light, flowered pink fabric. When they carried it home, along with large bags of fruits and drinks, they couldn't stop thinking about what they could make from it, but once they got home, they were so tired from their trip that they just passed out together on the bed and watched silly cartoons until they fell asleep. Now, she couldn't seem to remember what they ended up doing with the fabric.

She strolled towards the restaurant, but then, like a sleepwalker waking up in the middle of a forest, she sobered up and took a sharp left turn towards the next-door small liquor shop. The place was too dim, and most of what she could see was thin lights from outside reflected on the colorful glass bottles. Every time a car passed by, a stroke of light would fill the place, and for a moment she could see herself reflected in the glass too.

She walked out of the store, sniffing the open bottle of heavy purple wine she now had in her hands, and sat across from the restaurant on a wide white brick fence, drinking with strange joy. She looked at the people sitting out on the restaurant porch, on low delicate chairs. They were all vibrant and glowed in the dark with their soft clothes and hair. She imagined herself eating a huge, fat meal next to her drink.

When she turned away to go home, the red pavement felt like thick liquid, and the ancient trees that spread along the streets seemed to her like slightly scarier old friends. She passed by rows of low buildings and gardens with a deep green shade of grass. On the front yard of her building lay street cats, drunk on the still night. She couldn't find the key to the building door in her bag, and when she checked her pockets, all she found was a stabbed movie ticket and a receipt. She had to wait for someone to walk in or out.

She leaned on the locked door and split the ticket into a hundred small pieces that floated in her hand like pink dust. A few minutes later a downstairs neighbor passed by the building. The neighbor let her in and told her she didn't even plan on getting in, she just happened to pass by on her way from some friends to the supermarket. The neighbor didn't leave even after the door to the building was open. They both walked up, and the neighbor told the funniest story about her last trip to the north. By the time they were upstairs, she couldn't help but invite the neighbor in for tea and apples. Her apartment was filled with plants that spread around like tangled strings and covered up the walls densely. She half-opened the window, and a hint of clean air snuck in.

“Did you ever think of leaving Tel Aviv?” the neighbor asked after finishing a second cup of tea, sitting with her bare feet tucked on the chair endearingly. Her voice resonated through the walls of the room.

“No,” she said, “not really,” and watched the long leaves dance in the dark blend she held in her hands.

When she fell asleep, she dreamed she gave birth to a street cat. It didn't feel too unusual to her, just not very pleasant. Its fur was such concentrated shade of black and made it seem like a blob with no consistent outlines. When she walked, it followed her. When she rode her bike, it ran behind her

like a shapeshifting paint splash, swallowing the world around it like a black hole. She raised it for years.

Meitar Almog's short story "Ticket" won first prize in the Sixth Annual School of Visual Arts Writing Program Contest

JANE GROGAN—THE PINES

She always felt so small when she looked up here, searching through the gaps in the pine tree canopy. No matter what age she was, whenever she came to The Pines and tilted her head towards the sky, she was reminded of just how little she was. She grew up in these woods; every time she came here, something changed her and made her see the world a bit differently. This place was the haven for all things ugly in this town, but that was its allure. It beckoned people into its shield from the outside world, from the ever-present eyes of the gossiping housewives and nosy do-gooders that sought to fix up this town. The Pines was the place people went to do things they would never even think of outside the safety of the trees. She did not understand its true purpose until she was older and had her own secrets she wanted kept safe.

When she was five, her ladybug rain boots trod softly on the pine needle carpeted floor. She examined the ground with her face pinched in determination; she only needed one more to complete the family. She had spent two hours collecting, scrutinizing, and discarding pinecones of all shapes and sizes, her father in tow making sure she didn't stray toward the roads that confined this limited greenery. Her face still trained on the ground, she trudged forward searching for more fallen pine cones. She spotted the perfect mommy-sized pinecone to complete the family; as she knelt down to grab it, she noticed a shiny pine needle next to it. "Daddy, what kind of tree makes silver pine needles?" she asked. Confused, her father walked to where she sat, staring at this fascinating silver pine needle. He stood beside her for barely a second before he snatched her off the ground, carrying her far away from the silver pine needle and empty syringe that lay a few inches away.

When she was seven, her breath whooshed in and out of her chest as she gulped air like fuel that would propel her faster and faster. Sophia was catching up; she could hear her shoes slapping hard against the pavement path right behind her. She knew her only escape was to get away from the open expanse of the park and lead her assailant into The Pines, where she could outmaneuver Sophia. She refused to be "it" again; every time she was "it" she could never tag anyone because she was the slowest, but not being

“it” just made her the target. She wouldn’t lose this time, though. Usually, she was not allowed to go in The Pines, but Casey’s mom was watching her today, and Casey’s mom didn’t have any rules against The Pines. She felt a rush of confidence as she took a sharp turn and booked it towards the bridge that led into the tree line. Her feet smacked the rotting wood with speed that surprised her, and there was a several second gap before she heard Sophia’s footsteps echo hers on the bridge. Now she ran between trees and took confusing twists and turns that gave her the advantage. She was finally losing her pursuer, and now there was enough distance between them that she could hide behind the risen gazebo without being followed. She sprinted towards it as fast as her tiny legs would allow. She ran around the side, hurtling towards the back. She came to a screeching halt when she saw that there were two people already occupying her hiding spot. She looked at their faces, their bare chests, and then looked at what the boy on the left was holding. He was holding a part of the boy on the right, a part she knew she was not supposed to see. She began to scream as they scrambled to their feet, clumsily throwing on shirts, buttoning buttons and zipping zippers. They ran as she screamed, and she ran away while she continued to scream. She rounded to the front of the gazebo and collided with Sophia, who merely stood and shouted “Ha! You’re it!” while she stayed there on the ground.

When she was thirteen, she was shaken from her daydream about Conner by the shrill voice of the crossing guard, “Hey! Come on kid, you’re holding up traffic”. The harsh words along with the sharp, annoyed hand gesture snapped her from her distraction and sent her awkwardly scurrying across the road. She mustered a quiet “Sorry, thanks” on her way past the crossing guard. She joined the herd of students that made their daily trek home from middle school, cutting through The Pines to avoid walking in the sidewalk-less streets. She timidly broke from the pack as they all entered the small dense forest. She remained closer to the edge of the tree line as she fished her headphones from her pocket and set to work on untangling them. She was about to secure them in her ears when a frisbee skidded across the grass and into her path a few feet in front of her. Without hesitation she knelt to her knees to pick it up; several pairs of footsteps sounded from behind her. As she rose from the ground, a voice called “Hey, why don’t ya stay on your knees for a bit, we’re almost there!” This received snickers from the others. She stood there taking in the three young men walking towards her. “Toss it here!” the one on the left yelled to her as he raised his lanky arm to catch it. Ignoring his directions, she began walking towards

him with the frisbee in her outstretched hand. She hesitantly went to give it to him. "Um, I...I can't really aim." The short one in the middle piped up. "We could teach you," he drawled in a flirtatious voice. The one on the right turned to the other two and intentionally loudly whispered, "Oh I could teach her lots of things." They laughed under their breaths in unison. She handed the frisbee to the one on the left, the one who gave her the least pervy vibes out of all of them. She quickly turned and started walking again after returning the frisbee. "Hey, why don't you play disc golf with us?" said the middle one, still attempting a seductive voice. "No, thanks, I've got to head home," she answered as confidently as possible. "Oh com-", he began. "No, thanks", she repeated quickly. "What's with all the bitches in this town treating guys like shit?" one of them posed to the group, and she wondered just the opposite as she hurried away.

When she was sixteen, she lay on the musty blanket he'd taken out of his trunk, her hair splaying out messily around her head like a shattered halo. She peered down at her disheveled shirt, which turned to a pale pink in the moonlight, and absentmindedly corrected the bunched mess that sat above her breasts, wiping away his sweat from the crook of her neck while she was at it. She sat up and swatted away a mosquito as she reached for her pants and underwear, which lay unceremoniously strewn in the dirt. He wasn't careful; he had been rough with her, even though he said he'd be gentle. She didn't think he'd intended to; it seemed like he got caught up in the moment and maybe got carried away. He was still panting beside her. He removed and balled up the sad-looking condom, and wound up his arm to toss it deeper into The Pines. She grabbed his arm. "Stop! What are you doing?" she said harshly. He stared at her as if she'd suddenly gone crazy. "Um...I'm getting rid of it?" he stated, implying the question of why she cared what he did with it. Embarrassed by her overzealous reaction, she shyly explained, "I won't leave it here for someone else to find, that's disgusting. And it's littering." He shrugged. "Okay, fine, then you take it." He placed the limp, crumpled balloon in her hand as he stood to get dressed.

This seemed fitting to her. The Pines was where just about every childhood-shattering event had happened to her. And now she lost it here; she finally contributed to the perverted nature of this place. She was grown up now; there was nothing left for her to discover here. This virulent place had gotten to her, just like it would get to everyone.

Jane Grogan's short story "The Pines" won second prize in the Sixth Annual School of Visual Arts Writing Program Contest.

FILM SCRIPT

TOM YOANNIDIS -- SUMMERLONG (EXCERPT)

EXT. BAR PARKING LOT - DUSK

Hank and Jack pull up in their pickup truck. They make their way over to the bar entrance.

It's a classic American roadside bar. Gravel parking lot, neon signage, a couple of old trucks and muscle cars parked about.

JACK

Am I allowed in there?

HANK

What? Uh... Don't worry. It won't be a problem.

They head inside.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

It's a no-frills dive. Dusty wood paneling. Neon beer signs. Colored Christmas lights strung around the place in no particular fashion. A pool table. Darts. A neglected Bally pinball machine.

A mellow COUNTRY SONG plays from a JUKEBOX.

There are a couple of resident DRUNKS sitting silently on bar stools after a long day of drinking.

Jack goes straight for the pinball machine.

JACK

Dad, you got a quarter?

Hank sits at the bar.

HANK

Sure.

He takes a quarter from his wallet.

HANK (CONT'D)

Catch.

Hank flicks it across the room. Jack catches. He puts the quarter in the slot. The pinball machine comes to life. He shoots the ball and begins rapidly tapping on the triggers.

Hank sits at the bar, staring ahead at the liquor bottles on the shelf. The bartender, KIM, a beautiful woman in her early 30s, notices Hank and Jack.

KIM

That your kid?

HANK

(pointing to Jack)

Who, that guy?

Jack continues bashing on the pinball triggers.

HANK (CONT'D)

He's no kid. He's thirty-five years old. He was born with a rare condition where he looks ten his whole life. He's strong, though. He'd beat the shit outta me.

Charmed, Kim smirks.

KIM

We don't usually allow kids in here... But he is pretty cute. I guess he can stay.

Hank leans back on the stool.

HANK

You hear that, Jack? This young lady thinks you're cute. Maybe you could ask her on a date.

Jack glares at his dad and rolls his eyes.

HANK (CONT'D)

Don't take it personally. He plays hard to get.

Kim chuckles under her breath.

KIM

So, you must be a ten-year-old boy in an old man's body, huh?

HANK

Ouch. That stung. Does it really show?

KIM

(smirking)
You hide it well.

HANK

Why, thank you.
(offering his hand)
I'm Hank.

KIM

(she accepts)
Kim. What's your poison, Hank?

HANK

Johnny Black, on the rocks...
Jack'll take his neat.

KIM

I'll start him on the soft stuff.
One of you has to drive.

HANK

Wise girl.

She pours a glass of Coca-Cola on ice. Sets it on the counter.

KIM

Here you go, Jack.

JACK

Thanks.

Jack races over to collect his drink, takes a sip, then gets right back to his game.

Kim scoops some ice into two glasses and pours a generous amount of whiskey over each. She sets one in front of Hank and the other in front of herself.

KIM
(still flirting, playing
along)
So, I take it Jack's your father.

HANK
You guessed it.

KIM
And what does Jack do for work?

HANK
He's a hunter... of fish.

KIM
A fisherman? I like a man who works
with his hands.

HANK
Things are looking up for ol' Jack.

Kim smirks. They share a moment, looking into each other's eyes, taking one another in.

HANK (CONT'D)
Where are you from?

KIM
Utah. A little city called Sandy,
about a half hour from Salt Lake.

HANK
Ahh... Are you a Saint of the
Latter-Day?

KIM
Used to be. As a teenager... It

passed when I grew up a little. How about you? You don't seem the faithful type.

HANK

Who, me? I'm the most faithful man child you'll ever have the good fortune of meeting.

KIM

(smirking)

Well, isn't it my lucky day.

The tone of the conversation shifts slightly. More serious.

KIM (CONT'D)

You got a girlfriend, Hank? A wife?

HANK

I did... Once upon a midnight dreary.

KIM

A wife?

(off Hank's nod)

What happened?

HANK

The usual thing.

KIM

So, you're not faithful, then.

HANK

Now, now, barkeep. There are two sides to every tale.

KIM

I guess there are.

A brief pause. They continue to take each other in.

HANK

And you?

KIM

What about me?

HANK

Someone special in your life?

KIM

There's nothing special about my
life.

Hank lifts his glass.

HANK

Well, here's to that... To nothing
special.

Kim lifts her glass with a wry smile.

KIM

To nothing special.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

HOURS HAVE PASSED. The place is full.

A THREE-PIECE BAND is playing a lively BLUES SONG. We hear
the COMMOTION of people drinking and having a good time.

Hank is holding Jack over the pool table, assisting him with
a difficult shot.

HANK

Easy, now... Easy...

Jack lines up the pool cue with the cue ball. He shoots,
knocking the eight ball into the corner pocket.

They CHEER. Hank holds Jack up in the air. Both ecstatic.

JACK

I did it! I did it!

HANK

You did it, buddy! Drinks are on

you!

The surrounding patrons clap. Kim cheers from behind the bar.

KIM

Go, Jack!

Hank puts Jack down.

HANK

Now shake their hands. Be a
gracious winner.

They shake hands with the two POOL PLAYERS.

HANK AND JACK

Good game.

POOL PLAYERS

(together, good sports)
Good game.

Hank and Jack sit up at the bar.

KIM

The victors. Well done, boys.

HANK

I barely did a thing. It was all
this guy.

He scruffs Jacks' hair.

KIM

Can I get you anything?

HANK

I'll take a beer.

He looks at Jack.

HANK (CONT'D)

Actually, make it two.

Jack's face lights up. Kim eyeballs Hank, disapprovingly.

HANK (CONT'D)

What? He's a growing boy. Needs his vitamins. Plus, he just played a fine game.

Kim smirks. Consenting, she takes two bottles, opens them on the counter, and hands them to the boys. Hank raises his drink.

HANK (CONT'D)

Now. Hold up your drink, like you mean it.

Jack raises the bottle high.

HANK (CONT'D)

Look me in the eye. Repeat after me. To a fine game--

Kim raises her own drink.

KIM

--And, to new friends.

HANK, JACK, AND KIM

To a fine game, and to new friends.

They CLINK their drinks.

HANK

Now, son. Take a swig of your first beer.

They each take a swig. Jack gulps like a fish. Hank pushes the bottle away from Jack's face.

HANK (CONT'D)

Easy, tiger. It isn't a sprint.

Jack burps.

KIM

Thirsty, Jack?

JACK

Beer tastes like fizzy bath-water.

HANK

Good, huh?

JACK

I guess...

They sit for a moment.

JACK (CONT'D)

I need to use the bathroom.

HANK

Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

Jack heads for the bathroom, a little wobbly.

KIM

Will he be okay?

HANK

He's got it under control.

Hank takes a swig. Kim studies him for a moment.

KIM

You've raised a good kid, Hank...
He adores you.

HANK

He got it from his mother... I've
been out of the picture most of his
life.

He takes another swig.

HANK (CONT'D)

The truth is, I've been a pretty
shitty father. Too preoccupied with
things that don't even matter. I
missed years of seeing him grow
up... It's my greatest regret in
life.

He goes for another swig. Kim puts her hand on his hand. She
looks him in the eye.

KIM

You're a good father, Hank...
Life isn't easy.

She keeps her hand on his. He lightly holds hers. They share a silent moment together, listening to the music. They let go of each other's hands.

HANK

So, what does the future have in store for you?

KIM

Damned if I know. I'm just trying to keep one foot in front of the other.

HANK

Sometimes that's all you can do.

KIM

Does it get any easier?

Hank takes a moment to answer.

HANK

It does. You learn to handle it better.

(then)

It takes a few beatings to get There, though.

Kim nods gently. They listen to the music. Hank stares ahead sipping his beer. Kim looks over the room.

KIM

Speaking of a beating...

She signals to Jack lying on a tattered velvet sofa, passed out.

KIM (CONT'D)

Looks like someone could use a good night's rest.

CUT TO:

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Kim unlocks the front door, flicks on the lights, and comes inside. Hank follows carrying Jack, passed out in his arms.

It's a one-bedroom house. Humble. Cozy. Hank lays Jack down on the sofa. He's out for the night. Kim puts a pillow under his head and covers him with a blanket.

KIM

You want some water?

Hank nods. She leads him into the Kitchen, takes a water jug from the fridge and pours them both a glass. They drink.

As they finish, Kim puts her hand on Hanks upper arm, leans in, and kisses his lips softly. He holds her by the waist. They kiss tenderly. She takes him by the hand and leads him into the bedroom.

FADE TO BLACK.

Tom Yoannidis's script Summerlong won first prize in the Sixth Annual School of Visual Arts Writing Contest

POEMS

Marc Aquino-Michaels —Central Park Gods

Clouds butt heads like mountain goats
people stop and stare, soaked through
 lightning strikes
take shelter, darting between droplets
diving into petals.

Miiranda Bruce-- Gallop

Silence fell on top of me, and

loud noises filled my chest

terrified, I saw the animal gallop away

Mother screamed, father was confused

I was in shock

Phones rang, the doctor would be waiting

on this holy Sunday

MIRANDA BRUCE -- MEMORY

Wind gusts rattled the trees
and the garden turned black

I was told to go to bed
my bed, cold, tossing and turning

I saw her return, holding
a child in her arms

Confused and frightened
I looked at her and realized

That it was me she was holding
keeping me safe

Nan Cao--Sunlight

Sunlight touches the corner of my table
my paper glows, my writing fades, and
I melt into a pond of radiant blue.

Mark Curley --Bicycle Haiku

A trip to the store
On an old green bicycle
Begins the day well.

Perfect June morning
Tiger Lilies in full bloom
Smiling, I speed by.

Left are lush meadows
Enjoy it for a little while
Ahead are steep hills.

Hiding from the world
In plain view. My bicycle
Is my camouflage

On bleak wintry days
The Cycling in Central Park
Is cold and lonely.

Mark Curley --Quotidian

I ride my bike and write haiku
Not much else I care to do.
I read the paper. It's depressing.
The World gets more and more distressing.
All the news that's fit to print
Proves a daily irritant.
Take a walk, peruse the land.
Around the house I lend a hand.
Do the shopping; cook and dine
Wash it down with decent wine.
So the day passes by
And the years begin to fly.
So I guess what I'll do
Is ride my bike and write haiku.

Mark Curley--Adverbial Haiku

The last of the light
Leaves quietly, so slowly
Peacefully; nicely.

Ellen Dubreuil--The Hallway at the End of the Road

In the mirror

the old lizard sighs

a song of fig trees

of Mozart and hospitals.

Gone in a flash of white

the blazing light of closed eyelids

mad with expanse

the mask of eternity

Ellen Dubreuil--The Hallway at the End of the Road

In the mirror

the old lizard sighs

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of Mozart and hospitals.

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the mask of eternity

Sakshi Jain—IT WAS FUN

1.

It was fun
shaping you
forming you
into something
how my eyes
saw you.

It was really fun,
until I thought
you were ready.

But for me,
I wanted you
to be something
that my eyes
never saw.

2.

I'm fragile
So, I'm protective.
I'm strange
So, I'm insecure.
So, cover me up and
throw me away
So, I'd shatter
like your
dreams of glass.

3.

How can you tell
what I've told you
is a lie?
How will you know
if I've also lied
to myself.

4.

You said you'd eat me,
I waited, for the pleasure,
for the pain and suffering you'd give.
But I didn't even know
when you pulled out my soul
and slurped it in a go.

5.

Do not unwind what is concealed.
For you may never know, how to react
to the naked truth. For you can never
wind it back again, leaving it exposed.
Ready to rot.

6.

You're too sweet.
Stay no longer.
Here's no good for you.
Fly away,
before I take all the sugar
you have.

7.

Important to me today,
Important to her the other day.
Useless to him the next day.
Useless to me someday.

Vidhya Nagarajan--Bite

An animal lover, I was delighted

Reached out my hand
a snarl, a flash of razor sharp teeth
my flesh broke
warm blood ran down my hand
Then the sting
a moment of silenced shock
a wail of distress
I was shuffled back home
clutching my hand to my chest
my yellow shirt stained crimson
my love for dogs dimmed.

Donald Ranard -- DEAR MR. PRESIDENT

“Why do we want all these people from Africa here? They’re shithole countries ... We should have more people from Norway.”

—President Trump

Dear Mr. President,

As a denizen of Norway,
and an Oslo resident,
thanks for your unprecedented
(note the spelling)
immigration invitation.
But there’s no way I could leave.
You’ve got your way, we’ve got Norway:
health care, child care—
even college here is free.
Guns? We got ‘em, and we shoot ‘em,
but only rarely at each other.
As for mothers who are working,
they get one year of paid leave.
I’m not saying things are perfect.
Ja, we’ve got our fools and fruitcakes.
But we don’t make them head of state.
So thanks, but no thanks, for the invite,
though I’d someday love to visit.
Maybe after 2020—we’ll just have to wait and see.
In the meantime, you will find me,
here in Oslo by the sea,
where life is sane and also wholesome.

Yours sincerely,

Erik Olsen

GABRIELLE L. RANDALL-- Ai

can I be a prayer beneath
blood orange mornings in bhutan
the tara river before tourists
the red sea before it swallowed pharaohs
what the ganges river meant to be?

or
if you can't turn me into a river
can I be a pair of eyes?
my conscience is too heavy
I'll keep my spirit
but
basically

I want to die
just promise me I won't return to dust
I hate dirt.

Judith Wolfe--Geese

I am indoors watching
as the geese land on the lake

splashing, boisterous and disorderly

these water fowl
are distant relatives
of swans, though
one cannot tell by their behavior

they are raucous
feathers flying
bodies bumping

disrupting the silence and tranquility
of the lake

Either hungry, or more cautious
some land first on the grass
dipping their beaks
into the earth
testing the soil

Then gingerly
almost as if tiptoeing
they flop into the water

lifting their wings

reminiscent of a woman
lifting her long skirt.

It is the first night
where the temperature
will fall below freezing

and in the morning
the geese will still be here
gliding through the water

the iridescent green
of their long necks
glistening in the sun.

On land, the male
stands taller than my knees

he will run from me,
but will not fly away,
or he will run at me
to distract me from his nest

where his mate
is busy
hatching eggs.

Soon they will head south
in search of warmer climes
and I will watch the sky
searching for the unexplainable beauty
of their

Judith Wolfe --Frogs

My heart is a tightrope walker
taking uneven and arrhythmic steps
across an abyss

Until the evening song of frogs
performing vespers
soothes me
and I listen quietly to their concert.

Frogs are unnecessarily skittish
behaving like mishandled puppies.
They jump away at my nearing footfall.

I am happy to coexist
glad to be their wingman
warding off predators
who wish only to gorge on them.
I do not think their legs a delicacy
nor am I a hunter

I throw pebbles at the herons
who can swallow a frog whole
but refrain
from attacking the snowy white ibis
who is as beautifully awkward as I am
on land. My white shirt and trousers billowing
in the wind like clean laundry.

I've considered naming the frogs;

those half-green, half-mud colored
with bulging blinking eyes,
and those gray-green land frogs
smaller than a half-dollar,
that happily sit in the palm of my hand, or
the iridescent-green tree frogs
with their large toes that grip the trees

Only, they are too numerous, too rapidly
reproducing. Inhabiting the earth
for over two hundred million years
where I am barely a trespasser

imitating their low frequency calls
to find a mate
orchestrating my own concert
in this valley where nature commands
and I transform
a life governed by myth

to ensure against plagues
and a rain of frogs.

Judith Wolfe --Salvage

On any given Thursday
an overabundance of salvageable garbage
can be found on the streets of Manhattan

Thursday is bulk-day.

On an almost spring-like evening
in early March on the upper east side
while out gathering provisions for dinner

A beautifully upholstered
caramel colored
leather wing chair with nail-heads
running along its arms and legs
as well as
along the arched shape of its back
sits abandoned
adjacent to a small chocolate colored
settee with tufted seat cushions
missing several buttons

A perfect place to sit and converse
surrounded by a half-dozen over-stuffed
black garbage bags.

These two pieces of furniture
appear as though they have been
cast out by a University Library
where small green glass lamps illuminate
in lieu of florescent bulbs.

I carefully sit down
to test the comfort of the chair
and discover it would need a cushion
for the small of my back
to adjust my body
to its exact dimensions.

Seated, I contemplate its rescue

Do I carry it on my back?
Or rush to get my car and risk its loss? Or
do I enlist the aid of a stranger?

Glancing around
I find the street empty.
I put my groceries
on the lap of the chair
and begin dragging it toward my apartment.

Crossing Third Avenue
will present a problem;
a cavernous hole
the equivalent of the Grand Canyon
left by recent Con-Ed workers

A chasm in the earth
surrounded by bright orange cones
that I cannot possibly
drag or push my way through

Waiting for the light to turn green
I crouch beneath the chair

and stagger across the avenue
with my prize tottering precariously on my back

Safely across
I realize I've left a trail
of onions that have fallen
from my bag of groceries

Whitish-yellow spheres are now
being crushed by the onslaught
of unending traffic
their pungent fragrance
bringing tears to my eyes

Their aroma
will linger until
the next rain

And I will smile
and think of onions
in the living room of my home
each time I sit on my rescued chair.

Lily Wolf --Awaken, My Love!

shock the body electric
 parasitic paroxysms penetrate you to your core
 polymorphic transmutations
 convulsive then catatonic
 iced white rose petals on my nose
 you are a master of major chords + tea cups
 and your words all fall in eerie shades of icy blue
 stir musings inspire hunger
 all for the haunting croon of your golden swan song
 your heavy horn
 no wonder garden goddesses fall for you
 traipse barefoot thru the gnarled nation of small-town streets
 shower strangers with symphonies
 throw caution and causation to the wind
 there is powder in the wind delicate debris
 there are chimes far-off ringing in the wind
 and here i dance in the wind
 in the crepuscular blue in the night air
 here i dance thru galaxies and millennia
 all while stars mutate and explode around me
 all while your music breathes into my porcelain lungs
 fills me with the effervescent oxygen of jazz
 even just that word
jazz
 is ever just as vital ever just as encompassing
 as the names of sordid street corners at midnight
 that the perfect tiny music notes blooming from your instrument
 drifting up to the moon
 will remember as the origin of their birth
 and journey back to some shrouded night
 to kiss, and die.

Where is the love?

Where are our presidents and rock stars?

Where are you (where am i) in this thrall of human phenomena?

Where did Walt Whitman go,

When did Gwendolyn Brooks fall asleep,

What the hell happened to Ferlinghetti?

While Kerouac and Charles Bukowski danced the horizontal jitterbug,

Joni Mitchell cross-bred honeybees and turned tumbleweeds into

crystallized ginger.

Andy Warhol was tossing bright primary color acrylics into tornadoes

the day Kurt Cobain blew his brains out.

Maya Angelou was making blueberry pancakes in her yellow

wallpapered kitchen.

Where are the journalists, the ballerinas,

The gloom-n-doom teenagers with lethal lead levels in their blood,

The dog breeders with disposable cameras,

The mountain climbers with dreams of owning boats?

What ever came of the hairline crack in the Liberty Bell?

When did Mona Lisa grow laughter lines?

Where are you (where am i) in this moshpit of emotional frenzy?

The saccharine sweet aroma of hydrangea bushes was in the air the day

Carrie Fisher drifted to the cosmos.

Saturn was doing the dosie-do on a beer-stained stage.

Where is that bagpipe tuning rising from?

Where did Ginsberg leave his favorite fountain pen?

Where can i get some good avocado toast in this sleepy small town?

Where are you (where am i)?

Where are all the orphan lyrics?

Where is the love?

Lily Wolf --ANTEBELLUM

and the flowers grew from the frayed ends of her brunette tendrils, and the dolphins leapt through the ten-ten-Celsius air, and every banjo string snapped at once.

the women cried until mascara stained Broadway. dogs howled in perfect e-minor. all the lotus-eaters went on cute lil coffee dates, and *you* – you fell in love too, didn't you?

the skyscrapers were collapsing into crimson fairy dust and bombs went off in every discount shoe store, but none of it mattered so long as Their hand was small + soft in yours. They blew kisses from the bedbug-ridden bakery where you first met Them, breathed words of love, words like Melancholy and Fabrication, Pixilation, the broken-bone media has it out for you and is downright dying to tattoo a list of rules onto your diseased gums.

this poem lives in bloodred ink.

cast magic spells with ballpoint pens –
quickly, children, the world is ending.

They breathe words of love:

*come closer,
my apocalyptic lungs
can't take your chasmic absence.*

Mejiia Xu – I AM IN BED

I am in bed

the wind is blowing

in the perfume of the moon.

It's so quiet

I take a book, and

Put it back.

Tick

tock

Tick

tock

Ben Yu --Afghanistan

The hot sun beats against your skin,
 A fragrance of gun smoke and hot metal.
Encounters with many,
 From the conqueror to the peasant.
The earth swallows the blood of fallen men,
 And the tears of their widows.
You have been refuge to some,
 And a battlefield for more.
Sandy graves are the bricks for your roads,
 Every step pierces a soul.
The wailing of orphans sing from within the walls,
 Accompanied by the gunshots that echo down the halls.
The Land of Afghans are no strangers to war,
 The are old friends.
A bridge that supports the heaviest of tolls,
 The thoughts and hopes of men
When thoughts and hopes disagree,
 Fire and earth embrace.

***index* by LIOR ZAYAT**

Ambrosia. 5

Becoming an aspect of heat. 3

Black onyx cup. 1

Bleeding like any other injury. 4

Breathing in magma, *and*. 3

Carmine. 1

Clean Steel. 4

Drawn out. 5

Dying to the surface world. 3

Fat petals dropping off the stem. 5

Flint scraping mouth edges. 1

Flower is plucked from its grave, *a*. 2

For there is no greater love than this. 2;

 For sex is agonizing, *as it was explained to me*. 3

Full veins. 5

Gash between legs. 6

Gash of a scalpel. 6

Golden vial. 5

Hand that rips through the water. 2

Iron oxide. 1

Justice. 1

Kissing the mirror. 2

Knife dreams. 1

Knife in a wound. 3

Lowering into the earth's belly. 3

Love of yourself. 2

Medicine. 5

Men with cunts. 4

Metal tears. 1

Mother of fate.

Narcissus was right. 2

Nothing grows again. 2

Phallic devices. 3

Properties of blood, *cleansing*. 6;
violating. 6

Pulled into the reflecting pool. 2

Punctured. 5

Purified, *finally*. 1

Rot that can't be cleansed with salt. 4

Salt. 1; Salt-water, *drinking*. 1; Salt in the
wound. 1; Salted earth. 2; Price of salt. 1

Shedding tears onto flowers. 2

Shimmering liquid. 5

Surely it was not my own. 4

Virtue. 1

Whose body is this. 4

Wound, *a.* 3

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Poetry, short stories, short film and theater scripts, and personal essays will be considered. Please attach your work as a document (RTF format preferred; please no PDFs)) and send to Lphillips@sva.edu with the subject "Submission to WORDS." Please include an e-mail address and phone number where you can be reached.

