

# Harbinger

2014



Shadow box

# Harbinger

2014

n. har•bin•ger [här•bin•jər]

a person or thing that comes before to announce  
or to give indication of what will follow

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# Foreword

## Shadow box: Stories as Mementos

*“Shadow boxes become poetic theaters or settings wherein are metamorphosed the element of a childhood pastime.”*

*- Joseph Cornell*

As co-editors of *Harbinger 2014 Shadow box*, we are pleased to present a vivid collection of short stories, poems and essays—mementos, we like to call them—that connect writer and reader as our authors depict the adventures, conflicts, successes, regrets, and fond memories common to us all. Contributors share interesting and often intimate parts of their lives, making this one of *Harbinger’s* most personal editions yet. Publishing our nonfiction along with the talented prose and poetry of our peers made the experience and theme, shadow box, all the more cherished and meaningful. It’s a wonderful collection of rare treasures as so often showcased in the work of Joseph Cornell.

*Harbinger 2014’s* theme became clear right away. We noticed early that much of the work in the issue consists of nostalgic memories told from unique perspectives. Each piece felt as though it had been recovered from a personal diary or perhaps snatched from an overheard conversation as the authors confide in their readers. In her essay “Kiss and Tell,” Chelsea Wherry recalls the boys of her youth whom she kissed, but strangely, she can’t remember her first. Our works of nonfiction also come from real-life events. “Making WAVES” tells the story of Emily Marchant’s grandmother, who recently celebrated her 90th birthday, as a young woman who served in the Navy during World War II. “Renz,” a former prison a short drive from Columbia, Missouri, holds a rich history and a fascination for Emily Collette and is the subject of her senior film.

The poetry is equally evocative of the past. In Margaret Myers’

“A Death Poem,” she yearns for a metaphorical relic and a place to call home, while Kitiara McGuire takes a more absurdist approach in the reminiscence of a former roommate who brings home a hairless cat. Amber Surdam’s poem “Forgotten in the City” is a child’s open lament for the remembered warmth and safety of her mother.

Coral Hoelscher’s short story “Sticks” evokes a beloved story of the past, Franz Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis.” A young mother must deal for the second time with the sudden buggy transformation of a loved one. In “Cassie and Nobody,” Shelly Romero captures an imaginative child’s way of coping with the stress of the first day of school.

We had many wonderful conversations in our class about the literature showcased here, and some days it even felt like a small book club meeting with friends. It was a joyful collaboration from selecting the pieces for publication to choosing a final cover image. And now, after many early morning meetings and late night editing sessions, we are proud to see the end result, one full of memories and anecdotes.

*Harbinger 2014 Shadow box* is something we will one day reminisce about and remember fondly as we stumble across a copy in our own memory box.

Congratulations to Chelsea Wherry, Jamie Warren and Coral Hoelscher, winners of the 2014 Donald Pittman Prize.

Enjoy!

E.C. & E.M.







# Kiss and Tell

By Chelsea Wherry

*"How far away the stars seem, and how far is our first kiss, and ah, how old my heart,"*  
-William Butler Yeats' "Ephemera"


Poets meditate on it, big band singers croon about it, starry-eyed children dream about it, yet I cannot recall mine. Mind you, I do remember my *first* kiss, or at least the countless times family members have recounted the story for me. I was four-years-old in a lacy dress that made me more poof than child. I was a miniature version of the bride, my sister, and also a flower girl with a basket of burgundy flower petals.

It was one of the happiest days of my sister's life, but from the pictures,

it was one of my most miserable. I remember sitting in the tiny bathroom in a tinier apartment getting my hair curled in an unflattering style and being burnt on the ear with a hot iron. If there is a miniature flower girl, there's also a miniature ring bearer, both of whom are pressured to reenact the wedding with a kiss. I'm sure regret and disdain swam through my head as it all unfolded. We may have even gotten a quickie divorce.

Some 18 years later, I have lost full memory of my "real" first kiss. There are so many kisses that I do remember that it seems silly to forget the first one. The person, the location, the circumstances: all the ridiculous details of such a life-changing event have been lost among the ephemera of life. There have been good kisses and bad kisses; kisses I never want to forget and kisses I almost regret; wet kisses, dry kisses, sloppy drunk kisses, kisses in abandoned buildings and grandparents' houses, kisses in parks and closets; still that first kiss is missing.

**"The person, the location, the circumstances: all the ridiculous details of such a life-changing event have been lost in the ephemera among life."**



In junior high my sex life was essentially non-existent, which seems strange considering that my friends fell in and out of love almost weekly. Sure, I had my fair share of crushes, but I was more concerned with losing baby fat than my virginity. Young kids in the throes of romance were off-putting. I could not comprehend the fact that one of my dear friends had told her long-term boyfriend that she was pregnant, all to prevent him from dumping her. She wasn't even sixteen. And three girls did get knocked up before we moved on to high school. I had gone to school with one of the expecting mothers, also named Chelsea, since kindergarten. In second grade our pictures got flipped in the year book. I haven't seen her since.

High school proved to be vastly different, though the prominence of teen pregnancy was still the same. A friend of mine ran around with an older crowd because she was more "adventurous" in her virtue than I had chosen to be. My first boyfriend was incredibly handsome, but quiet and ridiculously nerdy to the point that he looked like a generic anime character in cargo pants, mullet hair, and a graphic T-shirt. He was a senior with a nonchalant demeanor. I had no idea what I was doing in a relationship, but I figured he would show me the ropes. It took two weeks and three friends to convince him to hold my hand at the mall on weekends. I figured that our first kiss would come shortly after that. My birthday came and went without a kiss, though he did give me a Killers T-shirt. I even tried to learn to play hacky sack so I could spend the lunch hour with him in a crude circle of boys. He tried to pay for my dinner after a school formal once, I like to think as consolation for the most awkward dance of my life, and I wouldn't let him. I broke up with him over instant messenger a week later.

Iheartkaiserchiefs: "Hey."

blackhokage: "hey how're you :)"

Iheartkaiserchiefs: "I think we should break up."

blackhokage: “yeah figured this was coming”

Iheartkaiserchiefs: “Sorry, I’ll see you at lunch.”

He gave me a mix CD a few months later full of lame ‘90s love songs like “Inside Out” with a note saying that he had been too shy to give it to me while we were “dating”.

Looking back on it, I wish my next boyfriend would have been only half as shy as the first one. They were polar opposites. Kenneth was obnoxious and loud with a mop of curly hair and pants tighter than mine. He was also a senior. I’d like to say my boyfriends have always been older because I am mature for my age, but considering these kisses as one string of events, I know that can’t be true. Kenneth was experienced, and I played catch up to his whims and desires. I knew I wasn’t ready for *that* sort of relationship, but damn, he was never afraid to hold my hand in the mall.

Like Matt before him, we never kissed, though. The closest we ever came was on a Friday night in February while I was waiting with a friend for my mom to pick me up outside of the mall. All of a sudden Jeff Wacker’s Grandma’s Crown Victoria pulled up blasting hardcore music. In what seemed to last only seconds, Kenneth jumped out, kissed me, and jumped back in yelling, “Drive-by kisses!” I never had the chance to kiss him back; we broke up a few weeks later. For over a year following our one brief kiss we strung each other along through broken promises of still burning desires. Somewhere between my first kiss and his eventual marriage, we found ourselves alone together. His family was out of town, and he had some booze. I went over there after school, and we kissed, a lot. We fell asleep kissing and woke up kissing. Less than a year later he was married. We would see each other and couldn’t bring ourselves to converse. He has a couple of kids now.

Not all of my kisses during my high school years were depressing. Some were downright dangerous. Max, the first boy I had a crush on in junior high, had an affinity for hair metal and the most

gorgeous thighs I had ever seen. It didn't even matter that he was shorter than I was or that he teased his hair to hide early balding. We met by chance at the mall during my 11th-grade year and made plans to hang out that weekend. The mall was essentially the eHarmony of high school relationships. He picked me up and we drove around while smoking cigarettes and talking about old times. We stopped at a park to enjoy the clear night and cooling weather. Sitting in his car, he leaned in and kissed me. My seventh grade dream was coming true. We soon found ourselves in the backseat, losing track of the time. Too soon he pushed me off of him and hurried me to put back on my shirt. Through my confusion I realized that headlights were coming toward us. A police officer rapped on the fogged-over window and told him to step out of the car.

"How old are you?" the police officer asked us.

"18," Max said. "16," I replied.

"You know that's illegal, right?"

"Actually, as long as the girl is 16 or over, it's consensual if there is an age difference of four years or less," I retorted, pleased that I had looked up this information. He questioned us for an hour about everything from how we knew each other to whether or not we knew we could be charged for public indecency. Eventually he let us off the hook because we looked like "nice kids." As my mother pulled into the parking lot to pick me up, she yelled to Max, "You'll never see my daughter again." We saw each other in much the same way over the next few years – a biannual coffee and rendezvous.

Of course, not all of my adventures had deep feeling behind them. Nathan was a friend of a friend who I would later kiss. He was the pre-hipster dream I had fantasized of meeting since I had been introduced to the likes of the Killers and the Strokes. He was tall and gaunt with coiffed, I-don't-give-a-fuck hair that probably took hours to master. He had total disdain for everything except literature and music. As we drank too many shots, our arguments

over whether “The Whoeverthefucks” had sold out after their first album became heated. By the time we moved on to Camus we were practically yelling. When the conversation turned to transcendentalism, I knew there was no going back. By the time he had finished quoting

Thoreau, our cigarettes were left burning in the ashtray.

There have also been kisses that lacked

feeling behind them. I drank 40s with Andrew while singing along to Vampire Weekend. I only kissed him because he leaned in first, and I didn't want to be mean. After all, he bought the 40s. We ended up being best friends, and he was even my date to prom. Or Tate, Adam, and Marshall whom I kissed one after the other in a game of spin the bottle. There was Joe, the ex-boyfriend of one of my friends'. I kissed him on the balcony of an abandoned mansion. It meant nothing. Maybe that's why it was so much fun.

There were also a couple of guys I led on. Joseph took a liking to me during my first week of college. English majors always want to meet other English majors. One night he invited me out and we went down a never ending path to a little bridge on the edge of campus where a stagnant creek ran underneath. We smoked a few bowls and he lied to me about who I should hang out with and who I should avoid. It was a sort of strange counter-culture induction. Once at a party he told me he liked my dress; I told him I liked his, too. We hooked up a couple of times while I was at Westminster, but it never meant much to me. Sam was the same way. We had drunkenly met at a party during summer break. The next day he messaged me on Facebook, telling me that I was interesting and cute.

I hardly remembered him, but he seemed harmless. What could the harm be?

Tyler was the last boy I truly cared about in high school. I come

**“When the conversation turned to transcendentalism, I knew there was no going back.”**

back to him because we had toiled off-and-on again for two-and-a-half years. We met on a debate trip my freshman year and hung out a few times with innocent intentions. By the end of that summer, we talked non-stop, even though I knew he had a girlfriend. He put me in his Top 8 on Myspace. That Halloween we were at a party in an apartment with too many underage drinkers and too little room. His frat boy costume of a pastel button-down, jeans, and trainers was text book. Turns out it wasn't a costume. Somehow we found ourselves in a closet in order to hear each other over the bad rave music. I had drunk too much coconut rum, so when he leaned in to kiss me for the first time and asked, "So, is this what naughty librarians do?" I shushed him. It was silly to carry on a quasi-relationship with a newly turned frat boy with a less than spotless dating record who lived over an hour away. Still, we kind of made it work. He took me to parties full of people I didn't know, and I would bring him around my friends and he would laugh in their faces. The day before I left for college he came to my going-away party. He took me to the front yard before he left, and we shared a kiss full of ridiculous emotions under the Fort Smith stars. He said, "No matter where life takes us, we'll always find each other." What a terrible line. Two months later while I was studying for my first philosophy test, he texted me and said he had been sleeping with the girl who had been my best friend since kindergarten.

After that, there was a string of bad decisions and one-night kisses fueled by resentment. In the three years of high school, my heart begged for attention, but when it finally got it, it was teased, poked, prodded, hidden away, found, and finally ripped out of my chest and drop-kicked. All of that landed me in the lap of Brian, a college senior and the social chair of his fraternity. One would

**"It's up to you, though.  
It's not really being alive  
unless it's your choice."**

think I had learned my lesson, but I guess I'm a creature of habit. We met in a drunken haze. A few weeks later he asked me and my best friend to attend the fraternity formal. "I mean, I don't know if you guys are into that kind of thing, but by the end of the night it just ends up a drunken-shit show." It most certainly was a drunken-shit show. Ember walked her wasted-self back to our room while I stayed around the dank frat basement full of beat-up couches and the reek of stale beer and shame. After too many shots and cups of cheap beer, I found myself in the safety of Brian's bed.

"I really shouldn't be here," I slurred.

"I invited you," he reassured.

"Ember likes you and she just got out of a terrible relationship."

"But I like you."

We shared drunk sloppy kisses, and I blacked out shortly after. Ember only found out two weeks later when she blatantly asked if something was going on between us. Who were we to lie? We had seen each other nearly every night since the formal. That wouldn't be the last time she would storm out on me after I'd told her of my romantic endeavors. After Brian got a real girlfriend, he tried to kiss me once in the men's bathroom. My instinct was to bite his lip.

My sophomore year started off strangely the same way: same fraternity, same drunken haze, same room even. But there was nothing the same about Zach. He was a dream of pretentious beauty, looking like a young, too skinny Sartre minus the lazy eye. Enviously shiny black hair somehow made his pale Cajun face even paler. During my long line of one night kisses, I had learned a thing or two about the art of the conquest. By the end of the night it was going so well he had stolen my shoes and as I chased him through the house in his slightly too big purple Converse I realized I had forgotten my door key.

"I'm staying with you tonight," I told him.

"Okay," he said and shrugged.

I thought, "This was too easy. It's not going to go like I thought."

At first, it did go exactly like I thought. We got to his room, which was unorganized and messy. As we sat on his bed he recounted his love of the band Of Montreal. He had seen them in concert eight times. He could play their music on his acoustic guitar. By the time he had finished, I felt like the Of Montreal academic. I couldn't take it anymore.

"Wanna make out," I asked recklessly.

"Sure." He shrugged again. He always seemed to shrug.

Six months after our month of confusion and bitterness ensued, I was playing the lead in *Annie*. Zach came to both of my performances, which I didn't notice until he had said something at the after party.

"You didn't have to do much character study, did you?" he asked flatly.

"I guess not."

"You were better the first night."

"Remember the night I stole the shoes you're wearing?"

That memory and a dozen more flowed through me.

"Yes."

As his fingers intertwined in mine, I realized how out of character this was for him, yet all I could muster up was, "I'm staying with you tonight."

Dressed to leave the next day, I told him, "It's been fun." I never saw him again. The next week someone told me he had gone back home to Louisiana.

My life was more or less celibate for the next few years. Moving to Kansas not only allowed me to escape my hometown, but also the sordid memories that remained in Fulton. For six months my only relationship was with books. The only kissing I did was kissing up to the teachers of my online classes. My goal was to get my shit together so I could transfer colleges. It was time for me to grow up, to cast away



the silly childish games. I wanted to become the serious student that I had once been. Though Stephens was only half an hour away from Westminster, there was absolutely no way I would run into anyone I knew. It wasn't out of shame that I didn't want to see anyone; after all, it was my choice not to go back.

The weekend before classes started, I found myself in Fulton with old friends from Westminster. One of them, James, had spent the last three months in Costa Rica becoming a diving instructor. He had also cut off his dreads and started wearing glasses, a gentlemanly transformation. The next weekend we hung out, drank an entire box of wine, and fell asleep on opposite ends of the couch. The next weekend was spent in Columbia with people I had not seen since my early days at Westminster. When they decided to hit the town, James felt obliged to babysit me, not because I couldn't handle my liquor, but because I still had nine months before I turned 21. We ended up at a crowded pizza place with strong drinks where the two of us went virtually undetected. We climbed over the crowd to get outside to enjoy a cigarette in the late January night. Freezing, I moved into his thick, warm parka. In the strange whirlwinds of life, we found ourselves kissing.

"I should have done this last weekend," I chattered.

"I should have done this last year," he responded.

If my love life were a rolodex, the index card which gave me all of the important information of my first kiss would be missing, crudely ripped out with only a blank corner remaining just to remind me that it did happen.





# Cassie and Nobody

By Shelly Romero

“Cassie?”

A small cloaked figure called to the girl. He moved swiftly, almost floating, his black cloak dragging along the sidewalk.

“Huh?” Cassie asked. She was waiting on a bench for the school bus. She played with the green bow in her hair, fixing what her father had messed up.

“Cassie?”

“Yes?” Her voice was calm and toneless. She looked at her companion, wide brown eyes, wondering why he kept repeating her name.

“Aren’t you scared?”

Cassie shook her head, no. No she wasn’t. She was never scared, never angry, nor sad, nor happy. Emotions weren’t a thing for Cassie.

“But it’s the first grade,” he said.

“So?”

The cloaked-figure sighed as he sat on the bench beside Cassie. He bit his nails, bounced his legs, and turned his head left then right, searching for the bus. Cars sped by, filled with busy men and women, their children mostly asleep in the back seats. He counted the cars that passed: twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two.

“There’s one,” Cassie said, interrupting his counting. She pointed across the street at the abandoned firehouse. A strange specter seemed to peer out from the second-floor window.

“He’s happy,” Cassie said.

“What’s his color? Can you see?” He stood to get a better look, excited by the discovery of the Emote, as he liked to call them.

“Yellowish. Like the sun.”

“That’s great.” He smiled. “Maybe I can . . .”

“Who are you talking to, Cassie?” a high-pitched voice interrupted. It was David, her classmate.

“Emotions weren’t a  
thing for Cassie.”

“Nobody.”

“But you were just talking to somebody. Who was it?”

“It was Nobody, David,” she repeated more clearly.

David gave her a funny look and took a step back.

“Cassie, you’re weird.”

“I’m talking to Nobody.”

Nobody looked angrily at the boy. “She’s talking to me,” he yelled but his words went unheard. “I’m right here.” He jumped up and down to get the boy’s attention. Nothing.

“Whatever, Cassie.” David walked away down the sidewalk.

Nobody sighed. This sucks, he thought. Why is she the only one who can see me?

“I’m special.” Cassie looked at Nobody, her lips twisted in a half-smile.

Nobody returned her smile. He reached over and held Cassie’s hand.

They sat in silence, looking straight ahead but at nothing in particular. They both enjoyed being alone, in silence, observing the world as it passed by.

Nobody once told Cassie that life was a strange, crazy, turbulent ride. She had giggled at his words. She was young back then in pigtails and oversized overalls.

“Do you remember?” Nobody asked.

“What?”

“When you first saw me? You weren’t scared of me.” He peeled paint flecks from the bench.

Cassie nodded. She remembered.

Across the street a man screamed at a woman. “You cheated on me. How could you?”

“How could I?” she screamed back. “You cheated too. I hate you.”

Nobody looked at Cassie who was biting her lip. He worried about the monster Emote that was evolving from the couple.

**“They both enjoyed being alone, in silence, observing the world as it passed by.”**

“Cassie? You okay?” he asked. He slid in closer beside her.

“Yes, but this one isn’t going to be pretty.”

Cassie and Nobody watched as horrible monsters erupted from the bodies of the couple. The woman’s Emote had sharply pointed teeth and sharp claws that swiped at the man’s Emote, which spat thick green liquid. Still spitting and biting at each other, they drifted upwards and floated away.

“So angry,” Cassie said. She looked down the street; her school bus was on-time.

“Saved by the bell,” Nobody said softly still wearing a look of worry. Emotes were dangerous, much like poltergeists that existed to wreak havoc. “Lets go.”

Nobody followed Cassie up the black steps of the school bus. They were safe. The only worry that remained was the first day of first grade.



## control issues making themselves evident in my unconsciousness

By Jamie Warren

Poetry

22

Warren

when i dream i don't dream of you  
(i wish i did)  
instead i dream of drowning  
siren hands on my ankles  
a deadly kindness in their familiar smiles  
"down here" they sing  
dragging me deeper

when i dream i don't dream of you  
instead i dream of a girl with long hair  
like rapunzel  
who cries when i cut it with scissors unexplainably in my hand  
shorter and shorter  
until there's nothing left on her head  
i try to apologize  
but she interrupts me to say it's fine  
and stumbles away with red eyes

i wish i dreamt of you  
instead of being locked in a room  
that shrinks so slowly  
i think i'm losing my mind.



if i dreamt of you  
this loss of control wouldn't be so hard  
i think i'd let you grab me by the ankles  
and drag me into the dark water  
as long as you smiled at me the way you do  
i might not mind it if you were the one  
who said you forgave me  
even if you cried  
as long as you meant it.  
and i think i could handle  
the world closing in around me  
as long as you were there  
holding my hand tightly  
assuring me you saw it too

# Graveyard of Cars

By Jessica Long

We've walked through the middle of my yard so many times we've worn a path in the grass. If you come over, you'll walk this path too. We'll show you that the ditch between the yard and the street is only a foot wide, but looks wider because the water is deep. The dogs will join us, their tails wagging as they lead the way.

It's a short ten minute walk. Blacktop turns to gravel and the stray cars next to my house become more abundant as we approach the junkyard. A friend asked once, "Where does the junkyard end?" I'm not sure anyone knows. The cars, vans, buses, trucks, even RVs surround our homes on the corner of Whiteman and Bowlen. You might think it's weird, but the husks of these vehicles are more like lawn ornaments that seem to fade into the background.

Please don't ask me if the Corvette's for sale. When we get closer you'll see that a family of coons have made its home in the back seat and a walnut tree has sprung up through the trunk. Fixing up old cars isn't as easy as it looks on TV.

From the road my sister, Haley, will point out everything for you.

"That's where we used to play like we were truckers," she'll say about an old mail truck sitting behind our man-made play house. "That house exploded! That's why there's only the floor left."

She might even take you over to that old foundation next to the mail truck. She'll tell you the story about the couple who left for a weekend with the gas oven on; luckily everyone was away.

When we pass our grandma's house, Haley will tell you that it's over a hundred years old, that the shed in the back used to be slave quarters, and the garage behind it used to be a chicken house.

We'll turn, the gravel will start thinning, and we'll have to watch for potholes. Cattails and blackberry bushes heavy with berries cover the ground. Unless you are willing to get your pants dirty, we won't show you how to pick the ripest fruit.

Most days our Uncle Jim will probably be sitting outside working on a car or cleaning fish that he caught from the creek. He might be





drinking a beer with our great Uncle Johnny from up the street. Depending on his mood, Uncle Jim might stop to talk to us either about the junkyard or his former life in Seattle and Vegas. He hates the cities, but when he was there he was good with women. When we pass his house, the dogs will take off into the woods, following the scent of some animal: coon, rabbit, deer, squirrel, opossum.

I'll point out the sign painted on an old red hood and stenciled in blue letters: "Long Autosalvage 660-542-1487". It hangs on a two-story garage of corrugated gray metal.

Turning into the junkyard, the gravel's littered with washers, screws, and chips of metal. There's a giant rack that sits eight or nine feet tall that holds mostly flat tires. Weeds grow between cars, tires, anywhere there's dirt.

Inside the two-story garage, it'll be nice, cool and smell of oil and grease. Tires are piled high, the good ones sheltered from the weather. Upstairs is used for storage, and there's no room for

**“Fixing up old cars isn’t as  
easy as it looks on TV.”**

walking around. There's only enough space for my grandpa's desk. In the dim light, you'll see his sense of humor displayed on the walls. My particular favorite is an old fashioned metal rectangle sign that reads in yellow on red, "This isn't Burger King. You don't get it your way. You get what I got or get out."

Once outside the garage, the house will be really close and you'll understand why we told you to wear pants. Thorns from high weeds cling to your ankles and pant legs and will prick your fingers when pulling them off later.

"This used to be a trailer," Haley will tell you. "It used to not even be on this street! Grandpa's brother helped them move it here when Grandpa started his wrecking business."

You don't need to nod or express any signs of amusement. She'll probably be looking up at the sky or down at the weeds carelessly.

“He built on an attic and three other rooms with Uncle Joe.”

When we get to the house and walk up the porch, she’ll point out our mother’s handprint in the cement next to Uncle Jim’s, Uncle Bill’s, Uncle Tom’s, and some sea shells. There’s a decomposing swing on the front porch.

“He made this porch and that chimney too,” she’ll tell you.

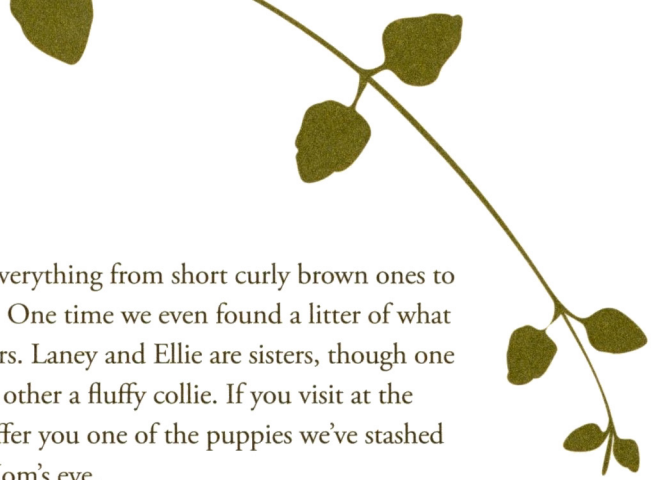
We’ll open the rusty screen door ignoring the “DO NOT TRESPASS;” after all, we own the place. We won’t go in because the floor has collapsed. Haley will point to the chimney that’s fallen through the floor to the basement. You’ll smell the rotting interior, the molding carpet, the soaked paneling. The ceiling caved

during the snow storm of 2007. You might recognize a few pieces of furniture or notice the decaying curtains on the floor next to the window. Grandma left the house completely furnished after Grandpa died.

We’ll go to the garage that used to house Grandpa’s truck. Grandma didn’t drive back then. The garage is empty of any vehicles, though it smells of oil and rubber. There are two yellowed refrigerators against the far wall, and an antique oven sits next to the door that we’ll walk through. The garage was handmade; the support beams are bare and built sloppy and the roof is a patchwork of scrap tin and steel. There’s also a contraption in the middle of the ceiling where a motor had once been suspended in the air, but the project is left forgotten on the cement floor.

On our way back my sister will tell you about our two dogs, Ellie and Laney. A stray dog had a litter in the junkyard, and we worked as a team to chase them out from under the cars by using whimpering sounds or calling to get them to whimper back. When we found one we found them all. Between me and my sister we have probably given

**“We could tell you anything you wanted to know about the land.”**



away over thirty puppies, everything from short curly brown ones to tall fluffy Rottweiler mixes. One time we even found a litter of what looked like pure bred Boxers. Laney and Ellie are sisters, though one looks like a tall lab and the other a fluffy collie. If you visit at the right time we'll probably offer you one of the puppies we've stashed in our rooms away from Mom's eye.

When we get home we'll sit outside in the lawn chairs and drink Dr. Thunder. Haley will tell of others that we've taken to the junkyard. She'll tell you about our cousin, Wayne, who insisted on going upstairs in the crinkled metal garage but came running back down screaming about bats. Or our friend Hanna, who decided that it would be fun to collect the keys from all the cars we looked in. We got a good screaming at for coming home with a bag of keys to unmarked cars.

We could tell you anything you wanted to know about the land. Where the stray dogs hide. Where our Uncle Tom takes his kids to hunt. Where Grandma stores stuff she should just throw away. Where Uncle Jim fishes and sets up his man-made fishing lines. We could even show you the graveyard at night if you thought it wouldn't be too spooky.

What is it about this neighborhood? What's so great about it? Even if I explained everything, I couldn't make you understand how proud we are of our world. We want to share our legacy and the stories of the characters it took to build these walls. That's why we want to show you this mysterious place where cars come to rest.



# Riveter Interview

A Conversation with co-editors Kaylen Ralph and Joanna Demkiewicz

By Arianne Kobler

**Arianne Kobler:** Let's start with the obvious question: Why did you start *The Riveter*, a magazine that celebrates long-form journalism written by women. When did you sit down and say, "Ok, we have to be the ones to do this?"

**Kaylen Ralph:** The short answer is this: Joanna and I went to J-school.

**Joanna Demkiewicz:** That's it. That's the answer.

**Ralph:** No, but seriously, we went to J-school at Mizzou (The University of Missouri) and the journalism classes there are made up primarily of women. So we were always surrounded by and working with these intelligent and inspiring journalists, who were also women, who had great work.

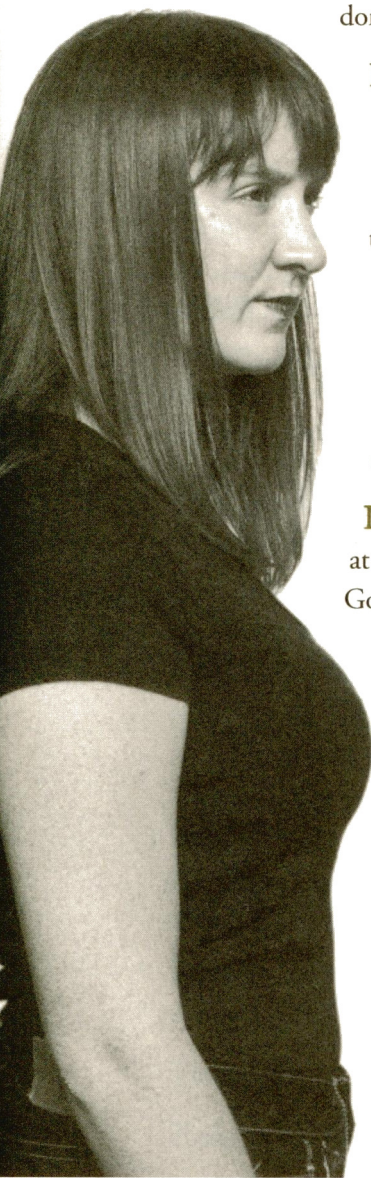
**Demkiewicz:** It was a very supportive environment.

**Ralph:** But out in the "real world", we noticed that female journalists were not being published often and the ones who were weren't being recognized for their work.

**Demkiewicz:** The breaking point came when we were at a workshop with Mike Sager, who primarily writes for *Esquire*.



Joanna Demkiewicz, co-editor of *The Riveter*



**Ralph:** Which is one of our favorite magazines. They seriously have some great work. Check out their long-form pieces if you don't believe us.

**Demkiewicz:** We were so mad, because just before that the Associate Press Media Editors (APME) had just announced their nominees for the Journalism Excellence Awards and not one of the nominees was a woman. We spent all of our time surrounded by women who wanted to be journalists and the women who had come before us weren't . . .

**Ralph:** They weren't having their work recognized at all.

**Demkiewicz:** It was really frustrating. We were at this workshop *with* Mike Sager, which is like if God popped down to say "Nice job!" and all the workshop attendees were women, but all of the guys leading the workshop, being praised, were men. So of course, people started asking about it.

**Ralph:** Everyone wanted to know where the women were. Journalism in a lot of ways is still a very male-centered environment. If you look at statistics to show how many women are published versus men in major magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *Esquire*, etc., the numbers are a little depressing.

**Demkiewicz:** So we asked Mike Sager about the gender gap in journalism and how there isn't really a place for women's voices to

be heard. Mike Sager responded with possibly the best piece of advice I've ever heard. He said "Just fucking do it ladies" and at that moment Kaylen and I texted each other . . .

**Ralph:** At the same time. It was a crazy coincidence.

**Demkiewicz:** And we were both just like we have to do this. So we did.

**Ralph:** So that's the long short story of how *The Riveter* was born.

**Kobler:** Were there any unexpected challenges in getting this first issue out?


**Ralph:** Getting the first issue out was a matter of functioning on adrenaline. We had pinpointed our purpose, which was creating and working on *TR*, and getting the first issue was boom-boom-boom. We "crowd funded" the money to make the first issue possible, worked with our Creative Director Theresa Berens on the visual aspects of the stories, set a print date and then held the launch party. Moving forward from that point has provided us with challenges, mostly financial.

**Demkiewicz:** The second issue will be out the end of November, but in the meantime, we are pursuing strategies to eliminate financial woes. We see *TR* as a legitimate element in the magazine industry, but in order to continue reaching a wider audience, we need to become financially stable.

**Kobler:** What is the tone of the magazine?

**Demkiewicz:** *The Riveter's* tone is that of a space that promotes engagement, progression, literature and imagination.

**Ralph:** You could say reading *TR* is like sitting on a patio with a motley crew of friends, drinking hard cider and waxing literary. As



we continue to grow our online and print presences, we hope that the tone becomes more established with the creation of new departments and additional voices to *TR* staff.

**Kobler:** A lot of magazines find it easier to publish online. Why did you decide to publish a physical copy?

**Ralph:** Because print will never die. And because we appreciate the reading experience of a long-form piece that can be held in a person's hand, marked up with pen and dog-eared for continued reading. *The Riveter* in print is also a slightly different entity to our online product. We want to show that *TR* is multi-faceted and able to cover a variety of topics in different ways.

**Kobler:** What have you learned about writing from working on *The Riveter*?

**Demkiewicz:** We read so many submissions and pitches from a variety of women on different topics that we've been exposed to numerous writing styles. We have been reminded that establishing a voice in writing is perhaps one of the most difficult but valuable parts of the writing process. We have been reminded of the power of a simple sentence. We have been reminded of the power of anecdotal writing and visual storytelling. And we have been reminded that coupling a voice with hard fact and research is perhaps one of the most intriguing and universal ways to write.

**Kobler:** What's been the reaction when you tell people about *The Riveter*?

**Demkiewicz:** It's usually men asking us if they would like it.

**Ralph:** To which the answer is "Yes, of course!"

**Demkiewicz:** Women in journalism are really still considered

a niche market, which is crazy because women have stories that are applicable to everyone's lives.

**Ralph:** Yes, *The Riveter* is a magazine written by women, for everyone.

**Kobler:** What's in the future for "*The Riveter*"?

**Ralph:** Keep printing, keep supporting women in journalism and keep working.

**Demkiewicz:** We've just moved to Minneapolis, but we want *The Riveter* to have readership from everywhere.

**Kobler:** Any advice you could give to recent grads wanting to start their own magazine?

**Demkiewicz:** I'm going to have to go with Mike Sager and say "Just fucking do it."

**Kobler:** One more question. Just a little *Harbinger* tradition I'm trying to keep alive. What's your favorite color?

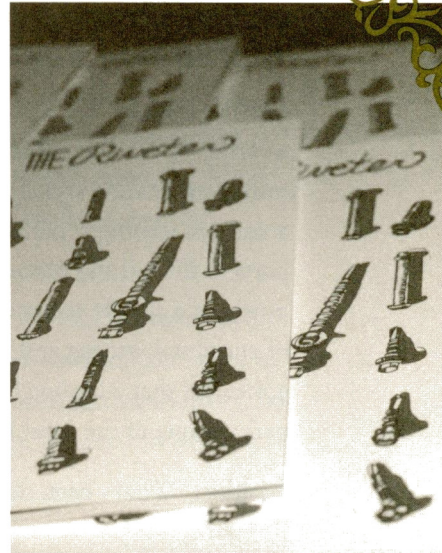
**Demkiewicz and Ralph:**

Turquoise.

**Ralph:** You should see our apartment.

**Demkiewicz:** It's all turquoise.

**Ralph:** With hints of mustard yellow.



# The Third Roommate

By Kitiara McGuire

My roommate came home one day,  
carrying my box.

This was odd, but then again,  
my roommate also wears my sweaters  
and sleeps in my bed.

What I found remarkable  
was that inside my box  
a thing was mewling pitifully  
and when my roommate opened the box,  
she introduced the mewling thing as Cleo.

Cleo looks like a cat  
that has lost her fur.  
I am greatly vexed  
by Cleo's presence in my box  
and her apparent lack of fur.  
I am torn between anger  
and growing concern.

"Cleo is a Sphynx,"  
my roommate says,  
to clear up my confusion.  
I take it that a Sphynx isn't a cat,  
and I am relieved.

I will not share my home with another cat,  
but I can accept a poor hairless Sphynx.  
I do hope that she can hunt.  
My roommate is awful at that.

# Food Is Love



By Alexi Scharbach

Non-Fiction

34

Scharbach

Dishes in the sink, food being made, messes cleaned up. The cabinets are a pale oak; the dishwasher, microwave, and stove are glossy black. The green granite countertops reflect the butcher block and white KitchenAid mixer. I press my feet into the floor; cold hardwood presses back. I'm drawn to this room and the memories that fill it, good and bad.

More quality time with my family has been spent in this room than any other in

our house. I've laughed and loved with family and fought and cried about the most distressing teenage moments in this room.

**“Food is love, or at least that’s how my mother’s mantra goes.”**

I baked fudge bars with my brother when he was still alive; mixed together marshmallow fluff and melted chocolate to create a gooey sweet dessert with my older sister. I made Jell-O with my little sister and stirred marinades for the meats my dad grilled. With Mom I picked out the season's freshest vegetables and fruits.

Food is love, or at least that's how my mother's mantra goes. She believes that no matter what is wrong, food can connect us as a family. In our best and worse times, we always have the only two things we need: each other and delicious hand-prepared meals. She took the traditional role of feeding and nurturing me and my three siblings, a task she didn't take lightly.

Mom always made sure we ate a variety of foods; “You have to try everything!” or “You better eat everything on your plate” were refrains during family meals. Hearing that I had to eat that strange green, squishy blob that I thought resembled ‘Jabba the Hutt’ from *Star Wars* never made me particularly happy. And I never did learn to appreciate the “deliciousness” of asparagus, though I did eventually learn to try everything without being told. I learned to appreciate other cultures and people through food, and I've learned how to make many of the dishes she forced me to sample.

Mom allowed us to have one or two foods that we absolutely did


not have to eat, everything else we had to give a fair chance. She understood extreme dislike for a food. My granny had forced her to eat a peanut-butter-and-banana sandwich every day for her lunch in middle school. Now, if Mom even smells a banana she's repulsed. It was our favorite game as children to say, "Open your mouth and close your eyes, here comes a BIG surprise," and then pop a banana-flavored candy or food into Mom's mouth. We loved to watch her spit it out.

I remember watching her stand in the kitchen, her curly red hair free, her strong fingers curled around a bundle of whatever she was slicing, chopping, or dicing, and her large knife moving with such incredible speed and precision that I wondered how she could keep from cutting herself. She always involved me; teaching me how to dice an onion, how to measure a cup of flour correctly, and how to add a teaspoon of vinegar to milk to make buttermilk.

I remember sampling at least fifteen different kinds of pizza crust as Mom searched for a variation that could live up to Chicago-pizza standards or pulling meat off chicken bones for a new soup she was trying during winter. I loved helping her in any way I could, even if I thought what she was doing was kind of strange. I loved helping her stuff shell noodles with a mixture of taco meat and cheese to make an oddly delicious Italian-Mexican dish. She can always figure out how to make a recipe more authentic or flavorful. She's a self-described "dump cook," pouring a fresh bit of this and a pinch of that in a soup, stir-fry, or sauce until it tastes just right.

Our eating habits went in phases based on nationalities, seasons, and heat. In our Chinese food stage, I ate so many fresh vegetable and meat stir-fries that I thought I'd never look at Chinese food again. During a time of Italian food, I thought I was in pasta heaven: lasagna, stuffed shells, tortellini, fresh antipasto, salads and many other favorites graced our plates.





Seasons inspired other culinary phases. Spring brought asparagus and everything strawberry. Strawberry shortcake had many variations, depending on Mom's mood. Sometimes she used angel-food cake, other times "authentic" southern biscuits, and occasionally a fresh pound cake. When we lived on a farm in Wisconsin, we picked the berries with our Amish neighbors and made whipped cream from the cow's milk that we milked that morning.

Summer was a blur of heat. We picked green beans from our garden—"the fresher the better"—and ate them Sichuan style: flash fried, pulled out, mixed with soy and spices, and then flash fried again, and served over rice with a spicy ground meat mixture. When we were sick of eating them fresh, Mom canned them for the winter months. Then there were blueberries, used in all manners, including pancakes. She also froze the surplus for winter. Tomatoes were sliced fresh with mozzarella, made into sauces and soup base, and canned too.

As summer wore down, we had fresh sweet corn picked from a neighbor's field; it was so sweet that we sometimes ate it raw. For dinner, Mom boiled and served the corn with butter and salt, sides of pink ham, and corn bread thick with golden honey. After eating more than a fair share fresh, we cut it off the cob and canned it, steaming up the house on hot summer nights. Then we'd make salsa with the peppers and the rest of the tomatoes. That was until the fruit started. Fruit piled high in mounds ready to avalanche off the counter; we canned peaches, ate peach shortbread, peach pie, peach bread, peach pancakes and we made peach sauce.

When fall came, the rest of the fruit came in. First there were pears to be cut and peeled. To make pear sauce Mom would run the fruit through the grinder, to jar and seal. Grapes were frozen and made into quarts of grape juice. Apples became pies, applesauce, apple butter, apple muffins, apple bread, and apple pancakes. And finally pumpkins were pureed and canned, and the winter squash

**“I learned to appreciate other cultures and people through their food. . .”**

was picked and stored in the basement.

In between these canning marathons were experiments. Mom would see a recipe

somewhere, taste something, or remember something she'd had as a child or read about in a book, and then set out to recreate it. If it didn't turn out the first time, we were guaranteed to have it every week until it was right. Or we'd get cravings for Chinese food and rather than buy it, she'd teach us how to make pot stickers, crab rangoon, or lo mein, all the while emphasizing that “Americanized” Chinese food was not eaten most places in China. She tried to teach us that both preparation and presentations were labors of love.

At Christmas and Easter, Mom made food for the neighbors and sent platters to friends. Easter brought hot cross buns, apricot, traditional, or chocolate chips and Craisins, all topped with white icing crosses. My siblings and I would trek through the neighborhood, delivering the plates with a card that said, “He is risen.” Mom believes that the traditions that surround food are as important as the food itself.


Christmas brought trays of cookies, biscotti, little alcoholic cakes, fudge, and various types of candy. Each year each family member picked their favorite cookie recipe and Mom would make it, along with her “newbies” for the year. Butterscotch fudge, rocky road, coconut buttons, rum balls, shortbread, and decorated sugar cookies were all on the menu. She even started making homemade marshmallows. The days before Christmas were spent in a blur of sugar, flour, eggs, butter and chocolate. And not just any chocolate. Only the *best* chocolate would do. At an early age, Mom taught us to be chocolate snobs.

After Christmas, things calmed down a bit. Soups and stews

were made, and we could expect home-made bread on a regular basis. One year Mom went all healthy and baked using whole grain flour. The loaves and cookies came out in various stages of success. Dad would thump them on the counter, and then jokingly check for cracks in the granite. She finally realized that only white flour would do for certain things. We were all relieved. She still prefers whole grains in as many things as possible and tends to like organic, hates corn syrup, modified food starches, MSG, margarine, and any other “fake” food.

Being Irish and Scottish, St Patrick’s Day came with a lesson about St Patrick, and my Mom’s famous “Irish mother” joke. We always knew we’d be having corned beef, cabbage, boiled red potatoes and Irish soda bread for dinner, but the high point of the day was watching the pancake batter turn green as mom mixed the milk into it. As she poured the milk for us to drink, it also turned green in our glasses. “Everything an Irish Mom pours on St Paddy’s day turns green,” she’d tell us. My little sister is 13, and it was only a few years ago that she caught onto Mom’s sneaky use of food coloring. After we started public school, Mom continued the tradition, but never being an early riser she’d bring us green pancakes to school for lunch, along with a jug of real maple syrup.

My parents wanted us to become well-rounded individuals. They wanted us to appreciate other people’s cultures and foods, which we definitely do. But they most wanted to show us that they loved us more than anything in the world and one of the best ways they knew how was to spend time teaching us how to prepare and enjoy food, even when they were exhausted and could have ordered pizza and relaxed. They saw the importance of food and the power it has to bond families through purchasing, preparation, but mostly through the time spent together over



**“Our eating habits went in phases based on nationalities, seasons, and heat.”**

something we could all agree on: “Food is love.” We quote this mantra as a sort of joke, but my parents have shown me through their actions the truth and power in this little sentence.



# Sticks

Inspired by Frank Kafka's "The Metamorphosis"

By Coral Hoelscher

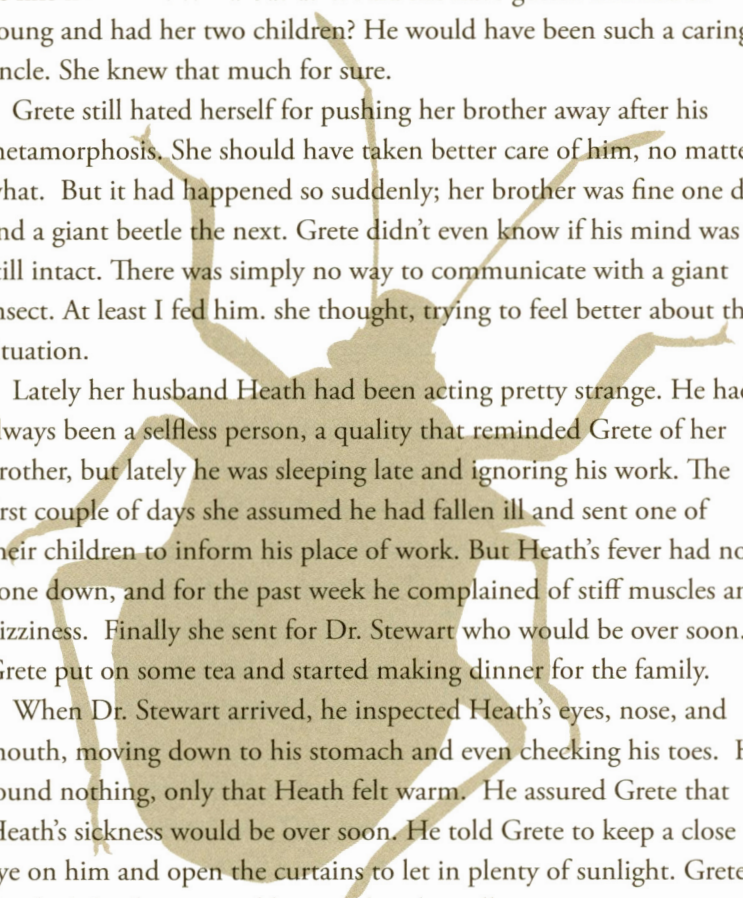
It had been ten years since her older brother's death. She found herself remembering the past more often these last few weeks. She looked around her small kitchen and wondered what her life would be like if he were still around. Would she have gotten married so young and had her two children? He would have been such a caring uncle. She knew that much for sure.

Grete still hated herself for pushing her brother away after his metamorphosis. She should have taken better care of him, no matter what. But it had happened so suddenly; her brother was fine one day and a giant beetle the next. Grete didn't even know if his mind was still intact. There was simply no way to communicate with a giant insect. At least I fed him. she thought, trying to feel better about the situation.

Lately her husband Heath had been acting pretty strange. He had always been a selfless person, a quality that reminded Grete of her brother, but lately he was sleeping late and ignoring his work. The first couple of days she assumed he had fallen ill and sent one of their children to inform his place of work. But Heath's fever had not gone down, and for the past week he complained of stiff muscles and dizziness. Finally she sent for Dr. Stewart who would be over soon. Grete put on some tea and started making dinner for the family.

When Dr. Stewart arrived, he inspected Heath's eyes, nose, and mouth, moving down to his stomach and even checking his toes. He found nothing, only that Heath felt warm. He assured Grete that Heath's sickness would be over soon. He told Grete to keep a close eye on him and open the curtains to let in plenty of sunlight. Grete thanked the doctor, paid him, and said goodbye.

The children were in their bedroom reading about Hansel and Gretel when Grete walked in. They looked up at their mother. Grete could see in their eyes that they were worried about their father. She wasn't sure what to tell them. Their father was usually lively and



loved to spend time with the boys. He would pretend the boys were knights protecting the queen of the castle. The boys would run around with sticks found in the woods, and their father would pretend to be a dragon trying to overtake their home. Grete knew

**“There was simply no way to communicate with a giant insect.”**

that the last thing she wanted to do was scare the boys, so she

said, “Your father is fine. He just needs to sleep.”

Grete was getting tired herself; she didn’t know what to do about her husband. The boys slid under the covers of their separate beds and closed their eyes. She kissed them both on the forehead, shut off the light, and closed the door behind her.

In her bedroom as she was about to lie down, she saw that Heath had sweated through the top sheet. His hair was matted down and his skin was awfully pale. As she replaced the blanket and wiped his face with a cold cloth, Grete cried quietly to herself. “Please let everything be back to normal by morning,” she whispered.

Grete woke early the next morning and rolled over to see if her husband was better. Her eyes were still foggy with sleep. All she could make out was a large brown figure in the bed beside her. She rubbed her eyes slowly, and the figure came into focus. A roach-looking creature, at least six feet long and four feet wide, took up almost the entire bed. Its antennas at the top of its head moved slowly back and forth.

No, not again, no, this can’t be. Bile rose up in Grete’s throat as she squeezed her eyes shut until they hurt. She cried for all the pain she knew was ahead. It was still her husband. It was still Heath in there somewhere.

Careful not to wake the repulsive insect, Grete crawled out of



bed and tiptoed as lightly as possible to the bedroom door, making sure to grab the large gold key off the dresser. She slipped into the hallway, placed the large key into the keyhole and locked the door behind her.

After triple checking the locked handle, she ran into the children's room, praying their fate was not the same as their father's. She had seen this same scenario a decade before with her older brother. Grete wondered how someone as glorious as God could make her go through this a second time. She drew a long, cold breath before opening the boys' door.

Perfect. They were perfect. Their faces still round with baby fat gave her relief. She took each of their faces in hand and kissed their chubby cheeks hard with love. They pushed her away still wanting to sleep.

When the boys woke, they found their door locked from the outside. Their mother was too preoccupied about her husband's new appearance to hear the doorknob rattling down the hall. Being smart boys, they pried open the bedroom window and went outside. The morning dew was cold on their little feet. Like most children, they wanted to pull a prank on their parents. They tapped on their parents' bedroom window and then ducked below the sill, giggling. When no one answered, they repeated the prank several times until they bored of the game and peered into the window.

Through the glass they saw what looked like an enormous bug with hundreds of little cockroach-like feet. Slime oozed from its brown body as it moved quickly to the window. Horrified, the older boy staggered back, reaching for the younger boy and accidentally pulling them both down to the dirt. They got up, dusted off their shirts and ran back to their bedroom window and climbed in as fast as their chubby bodies would let them. They scurried back into bed and stared at each other.

**“He was too kind a soul to go through such a horrible metamorphosis.”**

Since Grete had been through this before, she knew exactly what the bug ate, and that like her brother, it would probably die from being stuck indoors. Since this was her husband, the transformation worried her in a different way than it had with her brother. Her parents were dead, and her brother was dead, so there was no one to talk to about her next step or that she'd wished this had not happened to her husband. He was too kind a soul to go through such a horrible metamorphosis. He'd worked hard for the family to give her and the children a lovely home and life.

Grete cried to the point that there were no tears left, and her eyes and nose were bright red from her sorrow. She knew she had to take action, but she must be cautious. She could not tell the children. They would never find out what happened to their father.

After calming down, the two boys climbed back out the bedroom window and went to the outskirts of the woods. They searched for a while, finally found what they were looking for, and then took it back to their house. The older child looked into his parents' window and saw the giant brown roach. He opened the window, let his brother climb over the sill, and then followed after him.

Inside the room, they looked at each other in agreement and hopped on the bed, the quilt shifting under their feet. They stood still on the bed, even as the giant insect, their father, moved slowly toward them. The two boys didn't take a second to understand the creature writhing before them. With two long sticks in hand, they jumped from the bed onto the back of the monstrosity and stabbed at it. They stabbed repeatedly, knowing they were making their father proud.





## A Death Poem

By Margaret Myers

My grandmother says everyone goes home  
to die.

Our home, the family's, is  
Marked Tree, Arkansas,  
where grape-like flowers bloom in  
every patch of grass.

The wind smells like cut, dry cotton  
straight from the gin.

Everyone says, "How are ya'?" even the  
chubby orange squirrels, pecan blossoms,  
and the ruddy old porch dogs.

I don't want to die here, not in the South,  
where I sound like cotton is stuck in my mouth,  
where sentences are finished with "the lord says,"  
where laundry is hung from tattered clothes lines,  
where I am Willa's great-granddaughter.

I'll die in a place I feel I belong,  
a place that grips my heart until I about pass out  
in the warm wind that circles the orange and red mountains  
in New Mexico,  
mountains that look like a city.  
I want to die in those caverns.

I'll die in the adobe that once held my first steps,  
its brown clay made from an old world.  
I'll die eating fried squash blossoms, red and green chili  
and puffy, hollow Sopapias.  
I'll die in the creepy junk yard where only the best stars  
can be seen.  
I'll die in the Rio Grande, where animals drink and life is  
born.

I'll die in the home of my heart,  
where I belong.

## From MO to FL

By Margaret Myers


Poetry

46

Myers

The cicadas call me home  
    with their loud chimes and ticks  
I smell the pine tree musk  
    the pollen a marigold color  
I hear the ocean  
    swaying to and fro like lovers  
I can taste the salty shrimp  
    sliding down my throat  
I can feel my dog's fur  
    white and brown and a freckled belly

I miss home only to sleep under the moon  
    my moon  
It has watched over me from infant  
    to crying girl  
In the scariest of nights  
    it sheltered me in a cloak of white



When I'm home I am reminded  
    how much has not changed  
My father still drinks  
    my mother still angrily cleans  
My VCR covered in dust  
    with *Snow White* in the player  
The same neighbors  
    the same flowerbeds and dried up yards  
Even the wildlife is the same  
    Blue herons  
    Sandhill cranes  
    Snapping turtles

The cicadas remind me of home  
calling me back  
    wishing me back  
So far away and unable to feel the pines  
    and hear the ocean

# A Conversation with Screenwriter Guinevere Turner

By Emily Collette

**Emily Collette:** What is the process like adapting a book into a screenplay?

**Guinevere Turner:** It's extremely different than writing something completely original. A lot of people assume it's easier because the material is all there already. The plot, the characters, setting; everything is laid out for you. And while those things are provided, you have to do a lot of puzzle-work to try to make it make sense on a screen with only 90-105 minutes to do it. I'd almost say it's more difficult to adapt a book because there are all these special parameters you have to follow.

**Collette:** Was anything in Brent Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* particularly difficult to adapt? Were there things that couldn't be modified for screen?

**Turner:** It's been almost seventeen years since I've read the book, but I remember there were several scenes or side storylines that I made the decision to omit from the script, mostly because of time constraints, but also because some things were too graphic to show in theaters. People think that's funny because it is such a violent and sexual movie to begin with, and when they hear it could have been much worse they don't believe me. But as far as things that *did* make it into the script but were difficult to show was the way Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) starts hallucinating and can't tell fiction from reality. That was tricky. It probably wouldn't have worked as well, either, if we hadn't had such an amazing actor. Bale's acting really helped bring my point across.

**Collette:** What about *The Notorious Bettie Page*? You had to adapt a whole life story. Where do you start with something like that?



**Turner:** Well luckily I had a co-writer on that, Mary Harron, who also directed the movie. We'd been friends for a long time and collaborated on several projects before this one. It was actually Mary who had always wanted to write something about Bettie Page. When we first met she told me I

looked like Bettie Page, and I had no idea who that was! I started researching Page and the pin-up era and became obsessed with it, which made the work feel easy. But that initial research and pre-production phase is always my favorite. I get lost in it. That's not always a good thing, when you've got deadlines. Anyway, ultimately we decided to focus on how she initially got into the profession and tried to write it from a feminist point of view. She took such control of her own sexuality in a world that catered to men, especially in that era, and that inspired me.

**Collette:** Why do you think it's so hard for people to write dialogue?

**Turner:** You know, that's something that has never really been difficult for me. Dialogue just comes naturally. I think it's the opposite for a lot of writers because they try too hard. Just don't think about it so hard. Dialogue is something we are exposed to

all day, every day. We listen to people, hear different dialects, and speak naturally ourselves. Then we face something like having to write a conversation or a monologue and we become awkward. Really pay attention to how people talk to you in real life. On-the-nose dialogue really cuts my nerves. Nobody ever says what they really mean. And dialogue should never be too literal or self-knowing. Give the audience or reader a little credit. Oh, and when people start a sentence with “look” ask yourself if anybody really does this in real life.

**Collette:** How do you usually go about pitching a screenplay to sell?

**Turner:** Might not seem like it, but I’m actually an introvert. There is an idea of a writer being a solitary person, but a huge part of being a screenwriter, or any writer, is articulating and presenting your ideas. You need to have some sort of social presence to make people believe in your ideas as much as you do. You should be prepared to talk for 30 seconds or 30 minutes and make it seem like a natural conversation. Don’t treat it like a sales pitch because that will only make you more nervous and the people you’re talking to uncomfortable. That being said, I’m terrible at pitching. I’ve gotten most of my projects through other channels. Mostly my friends who know me well enough to trust me with what they need done.

**Collette:** When did you know you were a writer?

**Turner:** People always say, “I want to be a writer.” At which point do you become a writer? If you write anything that’s not for work or school but out of a personal urge to write, you’re a writer. I’ve been a writer since I was nine years old. Maybe not the most sophisticated writer, but a writer nonetheless. I honed my craft and wrote so consistently that I never thought of myself as anything but

a writer. There were times I was not working on what I wanted, though. When I'm writing for money I'm not that good because it's something I'm usually not passionate about. I get lazy and procrastinate and end up feeling bad about my work.

**Collette:** I heard you like to yarn-bomb. What is that?

**Turner:** Yarn-bombing is when someone knits something, can be anything, and puts it on a statue or monument. It's silly, but it really relieves my stress. If I'm worried about a deadline coming up or can't think of anything to write, I'll just start knitting. But of course I would have tons of scarves and hats and sweaters I don't need laying around if I kept it, and my friend told me about yarn-bombing. I'm kind of addicted to it now. It's this way of seeing solid, tangible work that I've accomplished. Even though it's just a hobby, and I'm obviously not getting paid for it, I love seeing something and being able to put my name on it. Like, "I did that. That was me."

**Collette:** Do you have any advice for young writers?

**Turner:** Be prepared to struggle. Depending on your life, you may not have the luxury to just write what you want to write. You have to pay rent. Life happens. You might not even be lucky enough to get a job writing at first. But if I had gotten down on myself and given up writing just because it's hard to make money at it, I'd probably be doing something else now. Sometimes I would consider quitting and getting a waitressing job because it would be easier to pay the bills. But if you know you're good at your craft, you have to keep trying.



# Making WAVES

By Emily Marchant

*"With confidence in our armed forces - with the unbounded determination of our people - we will gain the inevitable triumph - so help us God."*

*—Franklin Roosevelt, 1943*

## Union Station, Portland, Oregon

"Are you serving in the United States Naval Women's Reserve?"

"Yes, Sir. I'm Mary Barklow." The uniformed man handed me a stack of papers, uninterested in my name.

"Review these regulations on the trip. You can get the uniform in New York." He motioned me onto the train and handed a packet to the one of the dozens of girls behind me.

I stepped on the train and felt claustrophobic. There were so many women aboard that I did not see how the train could fit any more. I pushed my way past knee-length dresses and skirt suits until I saw a familiar face.

"Mary! I'm so glad to see you. I thought you chickened out," my friend Ruth called to me from a crowded bench.

"I didn't mean to be late; I had to touch up my hair. Can we color it in the Navy?" I asked, looking around for a place to sit. Ruth moved over and patted the small space next to her.

"Come on and sit. The train will be leaving soon."

We were in Portland, Oregon, and on our way to New York City, where we would be trained for the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, a unit of the Navy. It was established the year earlier, but I was only nineteen and had to wait until my next birthday to join. Ruth and I decided to go in together. Like most girls, we joined on a whim.

The train whistled and started to take off. Cheering erupted among the passengers and many started singing "WAVES of the Navy," their anthem. We all waved out the windows and smiled at the crowd. It was almost an hour before the girls quieted down.

Soon, we all started making conversation to help the trip go by faster. The girl sitting on the other side of Ruth turned to us.

“Why did you join WAVES?” she asked, lighting a cigarette.

“I joined with my friend,” Ruth said, gesturing to me.

“We thought it would be a swell thing to do,” I added. The girl nodded and exhaled smoke. “Plus, ‘Amos ‘n Andy’ was canceled, so there wouldn’t be anything to listen to on the radio,” I said, laughing. She turned around to face someone else.

Four days later, we were in the heart of New York. The first thing I did after I got off the train was stretch out my arms and legs. We had slept sitting up and leaning against one another. We had a day of free time before we had to report to base for training. I reached into my coat pocket and pulled out the papers the man at the train station had given me four days earlier. It listed the uniform requirements:

2 service jackets, navy blue

2 service skirts, navy blue

3 shirts, navy blue

4 pairs of hose, beige

2 pairs of shoes, black

Ruth and I shopped at designated stores for uniforms and additional pieces such as raincoats and gloves. Soon, we found ourselves gazing at the window displays at Chanel and Tiffany & Company. It was the first time either of us had been to New York. We wanted to experience the city before we became working women. After we got our uniforms and window-shopped at stores we had always wanted to see, we took a taxi to base camp.

Before we could move into our room, every woman had to get a medical examination to get cleared for the Navy. We sat in a waiting room with about two dozen others. I filed my nails until my name was called thirty minutes later. After being led to a small room bordered



*Posters like these inspired women to join WAVES.*

with a white curtain for privacy, I changed into a blue hospital gown and sat to wait for the doctor. I twirled the curls in my hair until the silhouette of a man appeared behind the curtain.

“Are you decent, Mary?” the doctor asked. He came in, pulling a fresh pair of gloves on his hands. He had a pencil and notepad with him. I stood up, and he measured and weighed me, writing the numbers down on his pad.

“So you are five feet and three inches at one-hundred and fifteen pounds.”

I nodded and blushed.

“Is your hair naturally red?”

“Well . . . I’ve been dying it so long it outta be.”

“How are you in times of stress?”

I thought for a moment, wanting to make myself seem impressive.

“In beauty school I was coloring a gal’s hair, and it turned out pink. I didn’t think twice before adding a little black to it and giving her a discount.”

He smirked and looked down at his notepad.

“Is that what you were doing before this? You were a student in beauty school?” he asked, looking up from his notepad.

“Yes, sir. I left so I could join the WAVES. I’m planning on going back after the war.”

“Good for you, Mary. Now please sit back and lift your legs.”

“Pardon me?” I asked, feeling slightly faint.

“I have to make sure that you aren’t expecting.”

“Expecting what?” I asked, lifting my shaking legs.

He examined me thoroughly. After I put my legs together, he kneaded my abdomen.

“If you feel anything, I just had a big lunch,” I told him. He finished up and wrote on his notepad.

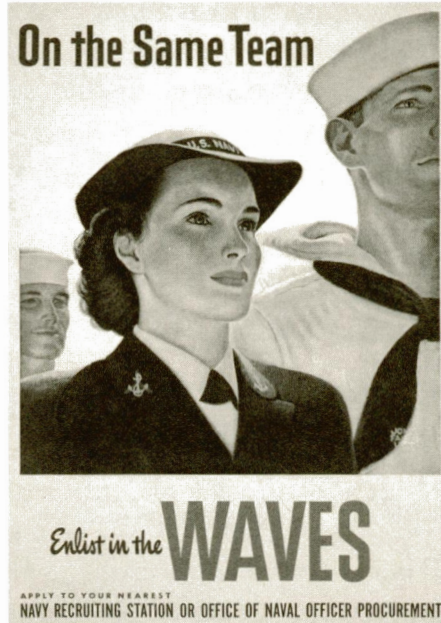
“You’re cleared, Mary,” he said. “You can report back to base and

check into your room. I'll let you change back into your clothes." He took off his gloves and turned to leave. "Make Uncle Sam proud."

Non-Fiction

56

Marchant



“WAVES of the Navy,  
There’s a ship sailing down the bay.  
And she won’t slip into port again  
Until that Victory Day.  
Carry on for that gallant ship  
And for every hero brave  
Who will find ashore, his man-sized chore  
Was done by a Navy WAVE.”

After several weeks of training, we were informed that a movie crew would be filming us.

We were going to be featured in the picture *Here Come the WAVES*. The Navy was giving us a couple of days off to shoot our scene. The WAVES women were going to be shown marching across the base. It was summertime in New York and marching for several hours a day was nearly unbearable. When a girl fainted, we were instructed to walk over her and not bat an eyelash.

A few Naval officers were staying on base to supervise the filming. On breaks, the girls entertained them, thankful to have men around. Once the film crew arrived, everyone acted professionally. Despite the fact that we were not permitted to wear makeup on duty, once the cameras showed up the lipsticks came out. When no one was looking, I would take my compact and lipstick out of my bra and freshen up. I kept my powder in Ruth's bra because there

was more room in hers.

**“Make Uncle Sam proud.”**

On the last day of filming, an officer named James asked

me for a date. I was surprised because we had not talked before that. I hesitated to say yes, but he was handsome and my roots were not yet showing, so I agreed. The Navy let us have nights off to explore the city. I spent hours getting ready, painting my nails, fixing my hair, and selecting an outfit. I wore a form-fitting gray sheath dress that I had gotten in Manhattan a couple of weeks before.

James waited for me outside the base. He looked so formal in his Naval officer's uniform that I almost felt obligated to salute him.

“Hello, Mary,” he greeted. “You look beautiful.”

“Thank you,” I said, looking around. “Are we taking a taxi?” We were going to have a late supper at a club downtown.

“No, the Stork Club is just a few blocks away. We can take our time strolling there.”

We started walking away from the base and into town. I let him lead me in the direction of the club, since it was getting dark, and

I didn't know where we were going. It was my first date in months, and I was excited. After weeks of training, it would be a relief to have a nice meal out and see an act at a club.

"Do you know who's playing at the Stork? I hope it's jazz. I adore Glenn Miller and his orchestra," I said.

James nodded.

"I'm afraid I won't be able to do much dancing. My legs are terribly sore from all of the marching we've been doing," I said, looking around the deserted street.

"Are we very close?" I asked. "Is this a shortcut?"

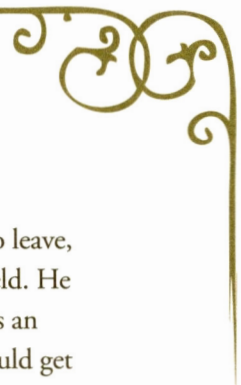
Out of the corner of my eye I saw movement, but I couldn't figure out what was happening until it already had. James stuck his foot out in front of my legs, and I tripped and fell on the ground. He immediately got on top of me and held me down. I couldn't yell because he had one hand pushing my face into the pavement, the other tugging at my dress.

I tried to fight his grasp, but James was too strong. He was half a foot taller than me and felt seventy pounds heavier. Tears of frustration and fear fell onto the cement beneath me. I struggled to get one of my hands free to push myself up. As his hold on me loosened, he knocked the back of my head, trying to get me to black out.

A bright flash lit up the street. A car had turned onto the road and stopped about fifteen feet away from where we were on the ground. James sat up, and I rolled out from underneath him and got up. Just as I was running away, somebody got out of the car and asked if everything was all right. I kept running until I reached the base.

When I got back to my quarters, I went to the bathroom for privacy, took off my dress and threw it away. I removed the red polish from my

**"He looked so formal in his Naval officer's uniform that I almost felt obligated to salute him."**



nails. We were not allowed to have them painted on duty.

The next day, while the Naval officers were getting ready to leave, I saw James standing alone outside near the target practice field. He smiled and waved me over. I had to go to him because he was an officer. If somebody saw me not obeying his commands, I could get in trouble. I reluctantly walked over to him, my uniform covering up the bruises on my legs and arms.

“Hello, Mary,” he said cheerfully. “How are you?”

“I’m going to tell them what you did,” I said quietly.

“If you say one word, I’ll see to it that they lock you up for insanity. We can’t have liars in the Navy.”

“I didn’t do anything wrong and you know it.”

“You’re not well, Mary. If you say anything more I’ll recommend shock treatment. That should keep you quiet.” I turned around and walked back inside. I went to the base’s clinic to go lay down.

“He had a boogie style that no one else could play  
He was the top man at his craft  
But then his number came up  
And he was gone with the draft  
He’s in the army now, a-blowin’ reveille  
He’s the boogie woogie bugle boy of Company B.”  
-The Andrew Sisters

After twelve weeks of training, we were done in New York. I was relieved to leave the city, but upset that Ruth and I were being stationed in different states. She was being sent back to Portland to help do repairs on ships. The thought of her being in Oregon made me feel homesick. The women were asked to fill out a form of Navy-related skills, so they could figure out assignments. I was one of the few women who knew how to drive. In high school, I would

take my dad's truck out at night and drive around the neighborhood. I didn't actually have my license, so my captain had me take a driver's test before assigning me to a location.

### 1944

#### Idaho WAVES Naval base

The freedom of no longer being in training was wonderful. There were no surprise inspections, women and men earned equal pay, and I liked the group I was working with. My quarters still had twelve women living together, but it wasn't so bad. I even got to practice my beautician skills on them. My job was to drive dignitaries around the base to their different positions. On the weekends I picked up and dropped off laundry. It was a good job, and one I could see myself doing for some time.

Uncertainty and fear about the war hung over the base, but most people were optimistic. The officers were cryptic when asked about the war. When I drove them from station to station, I would sometimes ask when they thought the war would end. I

**“I came to the conclusion that the war would never end.”**

never got a real answer. As I continued working in WAVES, I tried to learn more about the war so I could figure out the answer to my own question. I came to the conclusion that the war would never end.

One afternoon, a local reporter came to our base to interview officers and take pictures. I was dropping off one of the officers when the reporter called us over. He was standing next to a selection of artillery. I assumed he wanted the officer to pose with the weaponry, but he just asked him for directions.

“Hey, Red,” he said to me. “Can I get a snap of you and the guns?”

The officer showed me the correct way to hold the rifle, and I proudly smiled into the camera. When the picture came out in the local paper, I sent copies to my parents, sisters, and Ruth.

One evening I was rinsing my hair in the sink while another girl sat in the bathtub, relaxing from a stressful day. Bing Crosby played on the radio in the common area down the hall. After washing my hair, I started putting it up in rollers. I was about halfway finished when I heard a splash. The girl in the tub had fainted. I ran to her and pulled the plug to drain the water. I yelled for someone to come, but nobody was in the quarters. I ran out to the hall and got everyone's attention with my wet hair half-up and undone. The girls all went into the bathroom, and I ran to get a nurse. The woman who fainted was pregnant and sent home.

### 1945

I was taking a nap one evening when my bunkmate started shaking me.

"Wake up, Mary! Wake up." Her voice was frantic.

"What is it?"

"Franklin Roosevelt died."

"Tragic fate has thrust upon us grave responsibilities. We must carry on. Our departed leader never looked backward. He looked forward and moved forward. That is what he would want us to do. That is what America will do." —Harry Truman

The girls listened intently as the new president addressed his country. We all sat around the radio, quieting and comforting one another. Harry Truman's muffled words were hard to understand. I leaned my head against the wall and tried to focus on his speech. I felt sick and heartbroken, like the war would never end.

For the next several months, I carried on with my daily routine.

As girls left, new ones came in to replace them. Most of the time it didn't feel like I was contributing to my country, but I was always told that I was. It was hard to find my place. I didn't know what to expect going into the Navy, but it was different than what I had imagined. I often wrote to my parents for encouragement. Some days I thought about dropping everything and returning to them.

On September 2nd, the war ended. We still had to remain on site for a few weeks to finish our work and finalize everything. A base-wide celebration carried on for the few weeks after the war ended. Sometime during those alcohol-filled days, I became pregnant, but kept it to myself. I was going to face a new role and new responsibilities back home, and though I didn't feel prepared, I felt fortunate.

“We now move forward in a great and gallant company. For our record we have nothing to fear, we have no need to make excuses or apologies. Our record pleads for us, and will gain gratitude in the breasts of free men and women in every part of the world.”

-Winston Churchill



*Mary Barklow went on to marry eight times and have four children. She doesn't know the father of her first born child. She resumed beauty school and owned her own beauty shop for forty years. She is currently living on the Oregon coast and recently turned 90 years old.*

# I am a Snail

By Nicole Ihler



A snail-person is on the floor in a sleeping bag while another person walks into the room. Snail-person slinks over still in the sleeping bag to the new person.

“I am a snail,” says Snail-person.

“No you’re not”

“Yes, I am. Look at my shell.”

“That isn’t a shell. And you’re not a snail. You’re a person.”

”Prove it.”

The person yells out the door, “Hey you, in the hall. Come here.”

The hall people step into the room. “Yes?”

“Is that a snail or a person?”

They look down. “Person.”

“See. You are not a snail. Come out of your sleeping bag.”

“I am a snail. And this is my shell. And it is attached to me.”

“No it’s not. Come out of that sleeping bag. You’re acting like a weirdo.”

“And you are being a bully. I don’t have to take this.”

Snail-person hides in the sleeping bag.

“You are not a snail.” New person runs over to a desk, gets a salt shaker and shakes it onto Snail-person.

“Ohhhhh, noooooo.” Snail-person writhes in the bag and dies.

“Well, shit. It really was a snail.”

# Rebecca Nurse

By Alexi Scharbach

*Boston 1692*

Rope around her neck tied so tight  
veins bulge in her forehead  
as she strains to whisper the words,  
“I love you”  
to her grandmother standing  
in the crowd, holding a handkerchief  
laced with valerian to her wrinkled face.

In a line of eight she stands.  
Hathorne himself  
walks toward the first person.

*Bang*

She hears the last gasp  
for breath in the throat of the nearly  
deceased.

The man turns toward  
number two. It is only a matter  
of seconds.

*Bang*

The lifeless body hanging.

She is number three

# Sun Kissed and Water Logged

By Alexi Scharbach

Cold  
seems to be the place for death.  
But I want to die somewhere warm,  
tropical, naked.

Bora Bora, Guam, Tahiti.  
Where I can absorb the sun,  
kiss the ocean, let it  
absorb me.

Float away,  
seldom thought of,  
never found.

Poetry

65

Scharbach



# The Beger Way

By Heather Beger

Non-Fiction

66

Beger

There is never a good time to give bad news. So when my mother sits me down one morning before school and calmly says, “Heather, I need to talk with you a moment,” I begin to sweat, my mind going over possible offences: my Internet history or some adventure with friends. I drop my backpack and sit on the loveseat. My mother, still in her pajamas, sits on the armrest beside me.

Mornings like this, I notice the gray in her hair. Her face is somber and hand poised to comfort as she begins to recap the year I was in kindergarten—aka the year she had cancer.

It was an exhausting and stressful year for me: a new school with new classmates, new teachers, and new demands. On top of it all, Mom wasn’t there to help me fall asleep each night as she usually did by tracing my back with cool fingers that sent me into a deep haze. This was my biggest worry that my mother wasn’t there for me. I was too young and too selfish to understand how close I was to not having a mother at all. I can’t even begin to imagine what kind of hell it was for Mom.

My mom’s cancer remains a medical mystery to this day. At the time, the doctors did what all doctors love to do and predicted that she had only months left to live. But the Beger family wouldn’t hear of it. After being carted around to four different hospitals and going through chemo and radiation, my mother was able to return to those doctors after her expected death date passed and inform them that they could kindly shove it.

She definitely won the war, but her battles with cancer changed her life forever. Surgery left her with a scar that ran vertically up her tummy, splitting it in two. And every morning she had to pull on compression stockings to keep her legs from swelling. But she lived to share her story with those looking for hope, and I had my mother back.

Her former victory dissolves and my chest feels as though it’s caving in as my mother explains that she had her regular female exam in

March, which ended in the doctor finding something odd.

“Even after the blood tests and PET scan, the mass doesn’t show cancerous at all, but it’ll still need to be removed,” she says. In fact, she needs a hysterectomy.

I nod along as she explains that she begged for the doctors to

**“I have nothing to worry about.  
She’ll recover in no time.”**

put off the surgery until July. My sister was graduating from college and also getting married, I was

graduating from high school, and my mother was to perform in the local theatre’s rendition of the *Wizard of Oz* as Glinda. But because of my mother’s history, the doctors didn’t want to wait. Surgery was set for April 23rd, a date that would give her the most recovery time.

I can no longer keep up my bobble-headed façade and tremble into a heap of tears and snot. My mother wraps her arms around me. It’s a simple hysterectomy, certainly not cancer. I have nothing to worry about. She’ll recover in no time.

But how could this happen now? What if it’s not simple?

The day of my sister’s college graduation, May 5th, sneaks up on our family, and I still haven’t seen my mother since her surgery. While I’m driving up to Columbia, nervously picking at my nails, my mother is taking in fluids in St. Louis, enough to last her the next couple of days until she returns to the hospital. She wasn’t able to eat or drink anything yet because, as she puts it, “her guts hadn’t woken up yet.” This means getting pumped with fluids and wearing a plastic medical bag with a tube inserted into her stomach to collect bile.

We wait for her at a downtown restaurant. I make small chat with my future brother-in-law Tristan, and his brother, Todd, to

distract myself from the tingling anticipation of seeing my mother. My sister, Sarah, stops making goo-goo eyes at her fiancé long enough to look up and declare, “She’s coming!”

The moment I see Mom slowly making her way up the sidewalk holding onto my father’s arm, I’m out the door and sprinting in a skirt toward her. I cannot contain my excitement as tears stream down my face and I hug her too tightly. I take over my father’s job and help my mother into a seat at our table.

During lunch she says that she’s been trying to wake up her dang guts so she can go home. Having been through this kind of thing before, she knows she has to get up and walk around.

“And I walked all around the hospital with a vengeance,” she says. “I even walked to the park across the street with my IV pole. I was so frustrated until I saw this group of nurses gabbing at their desks. So I go up to them and ask what I could do to speed up this process. One of the nurses jokingly said, ‘You could try running a little.’ And I went, ‘Okay’, and started jogging down the hall. All the nurses about had a heart attack, rushing after me yelling ‘NO!’”

Our faces light up with the joy my mother radiates. It’s as if she’s sharing a day-at-the-office story instead of one about a battle with her body. And for a moment I even forget the trouble she’s had and the fear that we all feel. In this instant I see these past few weeks through her eyes, as an inconvenience, a bump in the road.

“I need to be at the auditorium soon to get into my gown and cap,” Sarah says, putting her napkin on her plate. “You have the tickets right, Mom?”

“What? I thought you had the tickets.”

“No, Mom, I gave them to you when I visited you at the hospital remember? I thought you put them in your purse.”

Mom unzipped the many pockets on her purse, taking out used tissues and Post-it notes and placing them on the table. “I don’t have them, Sweetie,” Mom says.



“Shit, well, okay new plan. Heather and I will go to the auditorium and see if we can get more tickets. You guys meet us in the church lot.” And with that, Sarah and I are off to pursue the game plan.

At the auditorium my sister explains our dilemma to a security guard and politely asks if we can get any more tickets. He’s not sure he can help. My sister pleads, “Please sir! Is there anything you can do? My mom literally escaped from the hospital today just so she could be here for my graduation!”

The security guard looks at me; we are both taken aback by my sister’s sudden crying. This is the first time I’ve seen her upset over my mother’s trials.

The security guard asks, “What’s your name again?”

“Sarah. Sarah Beger.”

“Is your mother Cindy Beger?”

“Yes.”

“No way!” The man falls into a fit of laughter while my sister and I exchange a confused look. “She sold me some property in Rolla years ago. You know what? Don’t worry about the tickets. When your family gets here just find me and I’ll let them in,” he said.

This was a common thing. People know my mother because she is a real estate agent and has probably sold a house to each and every citizen of Rolla, Missouri.

When my mother arrives we introduce her to the security guard and they fall into an easy conversation about the housing market. He then escorts us inside where we’re seated and ready to watch my sister walk across the flowered stage into the rest of her life.

When the music begins and we all rise looking over our shoulders at the lines of graduates in black robes, my mother grips my hand. She has an overly used tissue ready for the inevitable weeping of her first-born’s success. Sarah comes down the aisle and when I raise my camera to snap a picture, her hand reaches on top of her hat while

her mouth drops to a happily shocked face. This is a recreation of my mother's college graduation picture, one taken at the very same college years ago.

When the ceremony is over and the graduates have tossed their hats into the air, they all disperse to find their families. We decide to reconvene outside after a quick potty stop. As I walk my mother across the carpeted gym, she reveals that she doesn't really need to pee so much as empty her bile bag. She sneakily strapped the bag to her leg and hid it underneath a floor-length purple dress my aunt bought for the occasion. To anyone else watching, my mother is just holding onto her dress like a lady, so as not to trip over the hem, when in reality she's holding onto a very full, heavy bag of stomach juice.

Inside the handicap stall, I hold up my mother's left arm as she empties the bag into the toilet, a watered-down green colored liquid pouring out. Aside from being grossed out, I couldn't be happier to be standing there with my mother. The last time she needed my help, I was five years old and too young to understand what she was going through. I remember running into her bedroom as she was resting and asking to **"Such is the Beger way."** ride around the house in her wheelchair.

Back then I was oblivious to her needs, but now I understand. Now, I can help and have a second chance to make up for the ignorant child I had once been.

We leave the bathroom just as stealthily as we came in. After that everything is a bit rushed. We have no time for celebration because I have choir variety show that night back in Rolla. Such is the Beger way. We scurry home so that I can join the ranks of my mother and sister as an entertainer. After the show my mother delights in how I always surprise her with my talent. Her praise is eclipsed when my friends and other Rolla locals come over to see my mother. While the adults are glad to see her doing well, the kids are glad to see their 'second mommy'.

The next morning my father drives my mother back to St. Louis. At the hospital, her blood pressure is too high, and she is pumped with more fluids. But after fifteen days of hospitalization, my mother is finally free to come home and attend my graduation.

She arrives to find that my Aunt Sherri and Uncle Andy have practically moved in to help prepare the yard for my sister's 'simple' outdoor wedding. Much of the family's free time is spent waiting to move a number of sprinklers around the yard to quench the expensive sod we bought for the occasion. And this happened to be a drought summer.

Despite preparations, my sister's 'perfect day' is stressful. My aunt breaks two of the glass vases needed for a symbolic sand ceremony. My sister goes crazy trying to find her shoes. And I have to smile and laugh along while relatives remind me that I am next in line to wed. But to my sister and everyone else attending the wedding, it is a magical day.

Somehow everything comes together, and it's time to start. I make my way down the aisle as maid of honor. From my position, I take in the crowd gathered in our backyard. Music announces the start of the ceremony. Everyone rises and turn over their shoulders to look toward our house. My sister, the "blushing bride," links arms with our father, and on the other side, our mother. She's always wanted to be escorted down the aisle and given away by both of them.

My mother's face beams; she is beautiful in another floor-length purple dress and her hair swept up off her shoulders. Twelve years earlier doctors would have called my mother's presence at my sister's wedding impossible.





# The Metaphorical Ship

By Kelsey Looney

“That’s something.” Dallas Hunt runs a hand through his dark, ruffled hair.

His girlfriend, Bridget, raises her eyebrows. “You like it?”

“Not really.” Dallas leans in to inspect the abstract sculpture in the middle of the art gallery floor. The mass of stiff, multi-colored wires resembles a ball of string caught in a tornado, standing taller than both of them. “But it’s got to be something, right? Hey! Is this part supposed to move?”

“For the love of- Don’t touch it,” Bridget hisses, slapping his hand away.

“Come on, Bridge.”

“No.”

“But- “

“No.”

“Can we-”

“No!”

Dallas levels his gaze and says with exaggerated patience, “Can we go look at the paintings, Sweetheart?”

Bridget’s eyes narrow. “Sure. Let’s do that.” She spins on her heels and marches toward the opposite wall. Her emerald green dress swirls with the force of her turn.

Bridge may ice in cold weather, Dallas thinks and follows his girlfriend.

“So Art Goddess, what are we looking at here?” He regards the painting that Bridget is glaring at.

“I don’t know, Mr. Feigned Interest. Why don’t you tell me?” she challenges, tossing her strawberry blonde hair.

Dallas considers the painting. “Well, it looks like a landscape in the . . . post-modern style. I sense a foreign influence in the textures. Perhaps French or Moroccan.”

Bridget gives him a sideways look.

**“The ship is tough. . . It will float  
whether it has a crew or not.”**



"You just made all of that up."

"Yes I did. Sounded pretty good, didn't it?" Dallas grins, pleased with himself. When there's no reply, he looks around. "Bridge?"

She's walking along the far wall, her back to him. He hurries to catch up. "Bridge? Bridget? Bee? Bridge?"

"Dallas," she whispers tensely, grabbing his sleeve. "We're in public."

Dallas steps back, surprised.

"I was just having fun."

"Well, stop!"

"I'm sorry, but is someone holding a gun to your head and forcing you to be on a date with me? Perhaps a sniper in the building across the street with the red laser thing trained on your head? Because I'm really not the problem here!"

"I know! I know I'm overreacting, but just don't, okay? This was supposed to be a nice evening." She gives him a pleading look and turns back to the painting of an old fashioned ship sailing on a wintery sea.

Dallas shakes his head and replies, "Sure, no fun. Got it."

He stands beside Bridget and takes in the painting. Unable to help himself, he asks, "Is this boat a metaphor for our relationship?"

The look she gives him suggests he's lost his mind.

"I'm just saying, a dangerous sea voyage, treacherous waves, freakin' icebergs. We aren't exactly the world's most functional couple!"

Bridget's expression is half distaste, half genuine concern for his sanity. "Are you really sure that you want to dissect our relationship in an art gallery? And are we even looking at the same painting? 'Cause it's not the Titanic."

But then she pauses, squinting at the painting. "Actually you might have a point. Take a close look, Dallas. You see anyone on deck? No. No one is steering the ship. They're all below deck, playing cards, being lazy, not taking care of the ship."

"I don't see what this has to do with my metaphor," Dallas says carefully, not wanting to get her more upset.

"The ship is tough," she elaborates. "It will float whether it has a crew or not. But it wants one. The ship is very self-reliant but it would like the crew to put out some effort."

"For . . . whaling?"

"For nice evenings at art galleries!" Realizing that she's on the verge of shouting, Bridget ducks her head.

Dallas sighs. "So the ship is a metaphor?"

"The ship is a metaphor."

"And the ship wants to know whether or not the crew is serious about their . . . voyage?"

Bridget nods.

"Okay," Dallas says, slipping his arm around Bridget's waist. "This is me battening down the hatches."

"What?"

He grins crookedly. "I'm serious. I may not sound like I am, but I am."

"You're serious? We're serious?"

"Absolutely! You're my ship. No other fish in the sea. Anchors away, and all of that metaphorical stuff. Am I making a scene again?"

Bridget looks at him fondly. "Yep."

"You know, you're definitely the captain of this ship. Relationship, hey!"

"Dallas, enthusiasm appreciated, volume not."

"Sorry, Captain."

Bridget punches him in the shoulder before he can finish his salute.

# Forgotten in the City

By Amber Surdam

Poetry

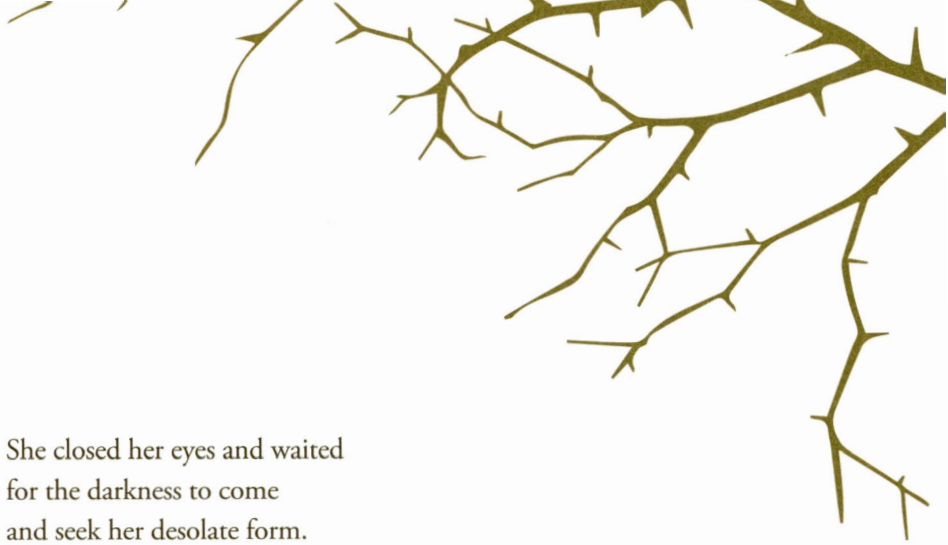
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Surdam

She sat with arms wrapped  
around her diminishing figure  
while alien sounds of the city flowed past.  
Her lips trembled like the earth  
when she quakes.  
Her hair, a deep brown,  
caked with the ground.  
Her fingers  
once long, fleshy, were pale bones,  
and her eyes, swirling tempests,  
verged on spilling from their clouds  
a drop falling downward,  
splattering her skin.

She quivered as the sun  
sunk below the hemisphere.  
She reached to halt  
the ball of light,  
her fingers like a wilted flower  
pleading for rain.  
Once the last light departed,  
leaving only moon and stars,  
she curled into a fetal position,  
wishing to return  
to her mother's womb.





She closed her eyes and waited  
for the darkness to come  
and seek her desolate form.  
As the snowflakes fell,  
she no longer felt cold, numb.  
Her spirit danced in warm light  
as her mother's arms  
smothered her in a hug.  
She never looked back  
to see her mortal form covered in snow.

Poetry

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Surdam



# Renz

By Emily Collette

My heart flew into my throat as the sound of shattering glass broke the silence behind me. I turned before I could think rationally that it probably wasn't a serial killer or a deformed creature of urban legend. A raccoon's tail was visible instead, slipping away through one of a dozen open doorways, a broken beer bottle crushed on the floor in its wake. Relief washed over me as I realized no one was waiting to turn my skin into a lampshade. I was, after all, alone and no one knew my whereabouts.

I had been driving to Jefferson City from my college dorm a half-hour north in Columbia, Missouri, on my way to visit an old friend. Just two miles before my exit, I glanced out the passenger side window and did a double-take. A large rectangular, stark-white building sat in the middle of a barren field. The windows were dark and mostly shattered. Pipe-thick vines seemed to be reclaiming the structure. I took the next exit, turned around, and drove back toward the building that seemed to be calling me.

After a few wrong turns, I pulled onto a frontage road that looked like it led toward the building. It brought me as far as the iron gate at the end of a long gravel road that led straight to the white structure. The gate was locked with a heavy looking chain and two padlocks; a sign threatened "NO TRESSPASSING". On either side of the gate were deep muddy trenches. I stopped the engine and stepped out of the car. Standing in the three feet between my car and the gate, I gazed across the field at the ghostly building. Behind me, the highway hummed with steady traffic. I was stuck here, the life of the living behind me and a dark silent scene spread out ahead.

Perhaps against my better judgment, I climbed over the waist-high gate. Even just standing on the other side of this man-made border, a few feet from where I had stood just moments before, I felt a mixture of fear and excitement. My logical thinking said, "You've gone this far, might as well go all the way." It was not a wise way to think, but I



figured it was trespassing either way. And the land and building looked completely abandoned.

As I walked down the straight half-mile gravel drive, the traffic behind me grew faint and my heartbeat replaced it, pounding in my ears. There were tall oak trees on one side of the road, which gave me a small feeling of security. The other side was completely

exposed; scenarios of cops spotting me from the highway and stopping me before reaching the end came to me. The thought of running was tempting, but I knew that would look more suspicious. So I continued my steady walk. It probably only took about ten minutes, but it felt much longer.

Finally coming to a stop in front of the open doorway located in the exact center of the building, I felt intimidated. The place looked much bigger than it had from the car. And with the sun getting closer to the horizon behind me, everything appeared darker. I started to rethink the whole situation but quickly pushed the fear out of my mind. I had my camera with me and had walked the length of the driveway, might as well explore a little. I looked behind me one last time before walking through the front door. My car was just a speck in the distance.



*First floor interior of present-day Renz Prison*

The first thing I noticed when I stepped foot inside the building was the smell, an overwhelming odor of decay. Dead plant life lay strewn around the floor, puddles of murky water attracted mosquitoes and water beetles, and half-empty brown glass bottles gave off a sickly sweet odor of old liquor. There were other signs of human life. The walls were covered in graffiti, ranging from harmless love notes to creepy threats. From the layers of paint, I guessed the place had been abandoned for several years, but I had no idea what it had been in its former life.

After pulling my scarf over my mouth and nose to block the smells, I continued on through a doorway to the left of the entry. There

**“I assumed everyone who saw the building became enamored with its derelict beauty.”**

were no doors, just rusty hinges that I was careful not to brush up against them. I didn't want to touch anything. With my hands firmly in my coat pockets, I walked down an empty hallway

lined with doorways to tiny square rooms. At the end of the hall I could see a stairway. I decided to go up rather than down.

Climbing the steps to the second floor, I was careful not to fall. The steps were wet and covered in leaves, but they felt stable and I didn't think there was any danger of them collapsing. My eyes stayed on my feet the entire climb up. When I didn't see any more stairs, I finally looked up to take in the second floor. There was yet another long hallway, but this one was different. Instead of empty doorways leading to empty rooms, there were doorways covered in iron bars. Until now, I had been trying to guess at what the building had been. Possibilities such as school and hospital had been my first guesses. But now it hit me . . . this place had been a prison.

After exploring another twenty minutes or so, I still hadn't seen much of the building and it was growing dark. The raccoon incident jolted me back into reality, and after realizing that nobody knew

where I was, I decided to leave the prison for now. I was late for meeting my friend, an engagement that had been forgotten the whole time I toured this irresistible place. But I knew I would be coming back soon. It was the beginning of a love affair. I have been back several times since then, but with more knowledge about the prison's eventful past.

Built in 1926 by Paul Renz, the building had originally operated as a prison farm. Less common now, prison farms were meant to give the inmate a sense of responsibility and provide rehabilitation therapy through work. Inmates were given duties like raising chickens and growing produce. It was seen as a win-win for all involved. The inmates got fresh air, physical activity, and a sense of independence while the prison got labor and free vegetables to feed the residents. It was not the largest prison in Missouri, but it held between 500 to 550 inmates at one time, which required a lot of money to run. The prison farm system helped offset the costs a little.

**“The world was changed and futures altered on that dirt road in 1967.”**

Perhaps the most famous story of the prison is about one inmate who escaped, an event that has lived in infamy. A young man convicted of his first crime, a burglary, was sentenced to a year in prison in 1949. He was sentenced another two years in 1952 for the armed robbery of a taxi driver in Illinois. In 1959, he was convicted of mail fraud after stealing money orders in Hannibal, Missouri, for which he served three years in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary. Finally, in 1959 he was caught stealing \$120 from a St. Louis Kroger grocery store. It was this act that sent him to prison in Missouri's capitol for a sentence of twenty years for repeat offenses, but he



*Present-day Renz Prison*

Non-Fiction

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*1930's photo of Renz Prison*

Collette

wouldn't last that long.

Eight years into his sentence, the inmate escaped by hiding in a bread truck making a delivery to the prison. The guards noticed his absence but finding him was not considered a high priority. The man travelled aimlessly over the next year, eventually landing in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1968. He had purchased a rifle and scope in Atlanta, Georgia, just a week before arriving in Memphis. It was on April 4th, 1968 that this escaped inmate, James Earl Ray, assassinated Martin Luther King, Jr.. If Ray had not escaped from Renz, King might have lived a much longer life. To the prison guards, Ray's escape was inconsequential. But the world was changed and futures altered on that dirt road in 1967.

A few years after Ray's escape, the prison was converted to a women's correctional facility. The agriculture program was ended, the reasons unclear. Always filled to maximum capacity, the women's prison held people who had committed misdemeanors all the way up to murderesses serving life sentences. The 1980s brought stricter wardens into the prison and security was tightened. The women, while some had committed serious crimes, were well behaved at Renz. By all accounts, the prison functioned smoothly for the two decades it held women inmates.

All this history lead up to the Great Flood of 1993, which affected most of the Midwest. The levels of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers rose dramatically between April and June, causing 30,000 square miles to flood and approximately \$15 billion in damages, the most costly and devastating flood in the history of the United States. Among the casualties was Renz Prison. Built right in the middle of the Missouri Floodplain, the prison was one of the first buildings to be evacuated.

As the river quickly rose, the Missouri Department of Corrections began moving critical equipment out of the prison, and then finally when the waters showed no sign of relenting, they conducted a

peaceful and injury-free two-day evacuation of the prisoners to other nearby facilities. Once the inmates were all safely relocated, staff went back to Renz with boats and moved as much furniture as possible to the second and third stories of the building, hoping that once the water level receded they could salvage what was left and restore the structure. The murky depths of the Missouri had other plans, and didn't stop rising until it crested at 38.8 feet, and then took 62 days to recede. By the time it was finished, it had flattened the 32-foot levy protecting the prison, rendering the building completely incapacitated. It also left a 15-foot deep, 15-acre wide lake as a parting gift.

After being abandoned for a dozen years, in 2005 the city auctioned off the fifty acres of land Renz is situated on to a family who owns an agriculture equipment company. The building was just part of the package, but the family never planned on keeping it standing. After purchasing the fertile farmland for \$500,000, the family decided to get started on the tear down. Much to their shock, however, demolition estimates exceeded \$11 million dollars. The structure is solid concrete and rebar, very difficult to deconstruct quickly and efficiently. But more importantly, the building is full of asbestos and lead paint. The proper disposal of these materials is what raises the price so drastically from a standard demolition.

I've been back to the former prison dozens of times since my first visit, and my fascination with it has only grown. The 70s avocado-colored walls of the empty cafeteria are covered in more spray paint every time I see them. The windows that still had glass are, for the most part, gone. A small tree has grown through the floor in one of the front entrance rooms. It thrives in this empty space and grows taller every visit. The only thing that hasn't changed since my first visit is the smell. Every time I walk the long gravel drive, which

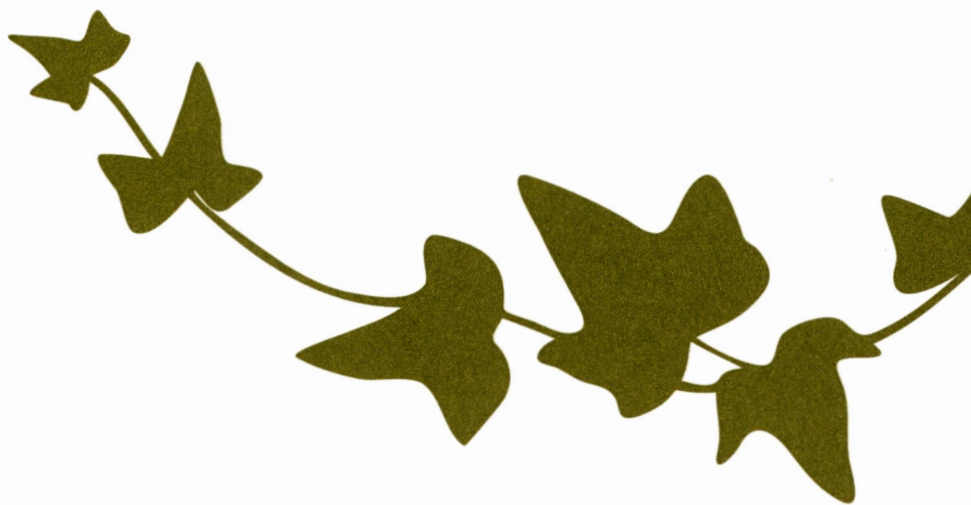
has since become a less stressful experience, I recognize the prison's scents emanating toward me. And while it is still not a pleasant smell, it has become one that provides the comfort of knowing I'm in one of my favorite places.

Every few months, when I can see visible signs of the seasons changing, I grab my camera and drive the very familiar route to the prison. The building can look so different depending on the season and the weather: lush and overgrown in summer, hauntingly deserted in winter, dark and mysterious on rainy days, and warm and welcoming on sunny afternoons. Every inch of the interior has been photographed now, and I know the building's layout like the back of my hand. I feel the building's rich history as I walk the halls and think about the thousands of people who have called it home. When I walk the gravel drive, I picture a bread truck carrying a hidden inmate making an escape. The empty field out front is full of inmates tending to their plants. I often wonder what impression the building left on all the people who lived and worked here. Being a place of imprisonment, there of course have to be stories of regret and despair, not just fond memories of a place long forgotten by time.

A freshman in college when I first saw the building, I am now a graduating senior in the digital film program. When prompted to choose a topic for my senior documentary project, there was no doubt in my mind I wanted to focus my lens on Renz. I contacted the prison's owners after doing a bit of investigative work in city records. When I explained my fascination with their property, they hardly seemed surprised. They told me dozens of people get caught trespassing every year. I didn't mention how many times I'd trespassed, but they didn't seem too concerned about it. The way they talked about the building made it obvious they do not admire

it as much as I do. They called it an eyesore a few times in our brief conversation. It feels silly to think about it now, but I remember my feelings being hurt at this title. The prison is meaningful to me, and the photographs I have of it frame my room. I assumed everyone who saw the building became enamored with its derelict beauty. To hear that someone else thought it would be better if it were gone was heartbreaking. They must have understood my passion, though, because after a short talk about the film's intentions, I got their permission to film the prison.

The project will be a love letter to something even I can't quite understand. I feel a connection to the building that surpasses the short time that I've known about it. And while it might be an eyesore for some, I will always find it a strangely beautiful, meaningful place.



# Artist's Statement

By Michelle Marcum

I was thrilled to accept the opportunity to design *Harbinger 2014*. I knew that the literary journal traditionally has a theme that comes out of the content selected for publication, and I was excited and curious about the process of selecting that theme. As it turns out the unifying concept was pretty apparent. Many of the pieces in *Harbinger 2014* are reminiscences of the past that we decided were best represented with assorted relics or trinkets. We took inspiration from the dark, yet often whimsical collections featured in Joseph Cornell's fascinating shadow boxes.

Found objects such as buttons, a key, insects, vegetation, a camera lens, and lipstick served as an interior design motif. The bird on the cover, a recurring motif in Cornell's work, represents the harbinger or messenger who announces what's to come.

The issue's theme not only stays true to the stories and poems within, but also the process it took to bring the publication to life. As a child, I grew up in a shadow box of my own. My mother is an avid collector of antiques and my father, an entomologist and Navy veteran, accumulates vintage cameras. My grandfather has several of Audubon's bird books, the source of the bird on the cover. With all these wonderful mementos of the past in my childhood home, it was easy for me to select relics and bring them together for the cover and interior images.

I don't believe in coincidences, yet strangely I see ties to my own life in these stories and poems. So great are the similarities that they overlap with my own memories as do the meaningful objects so often collected in shadow boxes.

I hope while reading this year's *Harbinger 2014 Shadow box* you will find your experience to be much the same.

M.M.



# Contributors' Notes



## Heather Beger

is a sophomore majoring in creative writing with an emphasis in scriptwriting and a minor in filmmaking. She is president of Women of the Earth and a member of Sigma Tau Delta. This is Heather's second publication in *Harbinger*.



## Emily Collette

is a senior digital film student. Originally from Minneapolis, she can do a perfect impression of the entire cast of *Fargo*. She enjoys volunteering for film festivals and at animal shelters. Her future plans include becoming a documentary filmmaker.



**Coral Hoelscher**, a junior English major, is from St. Louis, Missouri. She is Secretary of Sigma Tau Delta and an intern at *Harbinger*. When she is not busy hitting the books, she is crocheting until her hands hurt. Coral hopes to work at a publishing company and dreams of eventually owning a crochet magazine. This is her first publication in *Harbinger*.



**Nicole Ihler** is a freshman integrated marketing major. She is a member of CLU, The Dead Writers Society, and Sketchy Business. Her interests include reading, stand-up comedy, and swimming. This is Nicole's first publication in *Harbinger*.



### Arianne Kobler

graduated from Stephens College fall 2013 with nothing but guts, moxy, and a degree in creative writing. She was prose editor of *Harbinger 2013 Bombshell*. Now she splits her time between writing, advanced coffee making, and training her three-legged cat to hustle for extra dough. She hopes to pursue an MFA in creative writing in the fall. Her work was featured in *Harbingers 2013* and 2012.



### Emily Marchant

is a junior integrated media major from Coos Bay, Oregon. She is co-editor of *Harbinger 2014 Shadow box*, an account executive for Creative Ink, and is currently interning at the Missouri State Capitol. She was published in the 2013 issue of *Harbinger*.



**Michelle Marcum** is a senior graphic design major with an emphasis in illustration. She is a creative executive at Creative Ink Marketing Firm. Her design won the Fashion Illustration Contest for Stephens' 70th Anniversary Fashion Show. One of her photographs was a finalist in the 33rd Annual Spring 2013 Photography Contest for *Forum Magazine*.



**Kitiara McGuire**, a sophomore creative writing major and graphic design minor, would like to work in developmental editing in collaboration with Penguin Random House. She is a member of Stephens' Environmental Psychology Club and Queer-Straight Alliance. She runs a blog about literary criticism, intersectional feminism, and hairless cats.



### Maggie Myers,

a creative writing major, is vice president of Sigma Tau Delta. She read from her poetry collection, "A Year" at the 2014 Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Savannah, Georgia. Her Micro-Mini pig, Truffles, has inspired her to start her first novel/poetry collection. Truffles is currently featured on Maggie's blog.



### Shelly Romero

is a freshman English major who aspires to write novels, work with a publishing company, and ultimately teach. She is the Founder/President of the Dead Writers Society, a book discussion club. She is a member of Sigma Tau Delta and of Alpha Lambda Delta.



### Alexi Scharbach

is a December 2013 English graduate of Stephens College and an active member of Sigma Tau Delta. She is currently working on her Masters in Strategic Leadership and wants to one day run a small publishing company. This is her third publication in *Harbinger*.



### Amber Surdam,

a senior creative writing major, is from Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Her web series "The Scientist" won the 2012 Scriptwriting Competition and was performed in the New Play Showcase. She won the 2013 Critical Essay Award and attended the Sigma Tau Delta 2014 convention where she read her poem "Send Her My Love". This is Amber's second publication in *Harbinger*.



### Jamie Warren

is a freshman majoring in creative writing. She is an aspiring writer-director and hopes to make better short films than she did in middle school. This is her first publication in *Harbinger*.



### Chelsea Wherry

graduated from Stephens College with a BFA in creative writing in December 2013. She now resides in Dighton, Kansas. She looks forward to a future career in print journalism.



**Jessica Long**,  
from Carrollton, Missouri, is  
a junior creative writing major  
with an education minor. She  
is a participating member of  
Sigma Tau Delta. She hopes  
for a career in the helping  
professions.



**Kelsey Looney**  
is a third year costume design  
student who will be graduating  
in May. Her hobbies include  
traveling and crafting. She is  
a member of the Warehouse  
Theatre Company and a  
recipient of the Stephens  
College Scholars scholarship.



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