

LOCH NORSE MAGAZINE

Loch Norse Magazine accepts submissions of poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, playscripts, and artwork annually November through February.

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

“Out of this same light out of the central mind, / We make a dwelling in the evening air, / In which being there together is enough.”

—Wallace Stevens, “Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour”

When I accepted the Loch Norse Magazine editor-in-chief position last spring, I wanted to make sure community continued to be the main focus of the magazine. I wanted the 2013-2014 staff to build upon all of the amazing efforts and hard work that had come before us.

The students and faculty and staff at NKU, and not to mention people from the Greater Cincinnati area who wandered into our open mics by accident, made that task so much easier this year. We would not be where we are without your countless support.

I think I speak for everyone on staff in expressing how thrilled we are to present the poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, play script, and artwork in this issue. As I read through our accepted pieces, trying to locate a common thread they all share, I stumbled upon the very things I'd set out to focus on this year.

The forming of relationships. The necessity of connection. All of the pieces in Issue III explore these themes, and more.

Thank you so much for picking up this copy and for your support.

This one's for you.

Caitlin Neely
Editor-in-Chief

Jordan Padgett

Here's To Taking Me from This Stained Earth

He said, "Let me make water."

(Playing God always sounds sweet.)

But from the water came fire — out of the grape
came temptation. He asked me to stay
and I did.

Evening creeps in between his teeth.

"How long have I been here?"

I fight to stay awake — watch
shadows crawl across the floorboards
as they wait for the light to leave us.

Abby Walker

How Many Heads Does Pearl Bryan Have? A Ten Minute Play

"1896,

Pearl Bryan killed (Fort Thomas).

Decapitation"

*Lights up on a black and empty stage, with a couch
sitting upstage center. PEARL and ANDREW are
standing downstage center.*

PEARL: I was picking up shells by the beach, I remember—

ANDREW: You don't live by the beach.

PEARL: — And I looked out into the river—

ANDREW: Right by the beach

PEARL: — No, no...it was a river—

ANDREW: And you were picking up shells...

PEARL: I was looking at my reflection...

ANDREW: And the shells?

PEARL: I looked so pretty.

ANDREW: By the river.

PEARL: No, in the river.

ANDREW: Have you been to the beach?

PEARL: No. But I wanted so badly to go.

ANDREW: I did promise...

PEARL: Yes, I remember!

ANDREW: But we only made it here.

PEARL: To this river.

ANDREW: Is that why you couldn't find any?

PEARL: Find any what?

ANDREW: Shells?

PEARL: No.

ANDREW: Because it was...

PEARL: A river.

ANDREW: I never really liked the beach.

PEARL: I was so pretty.

ANDREW: You were.

PEARL: I could feel the water all over my face...my body.

ANDREW: You were so pretty.

PEARL: You always thought so.

ANDREW: And your body?

PEARL: I was floating—

ANDREW: You were probably cold.

PEARL: I was trying to reach the shore.

ANDREW: The bank.

PEARL: And I was yelling.

ANDREW: I don't hear anything.

PEARL: But I couldn't hear anything.

ANDREW: You were so pretty.

PEARL: My mother's words.

ANDREW: "Pearl don't you go far."

PEARL: (*Laughs*) She always worries.

ANDREW: But you were with me.

PEARL: An old friend.

ANDREW: Very old.

PEARL: You brought me to the shore.

ANDREW: But not this one.

PEARL: But you promised!

ANDREW: Did I?

PEARL: Because it was my birthday.

ANDREW: Yes!

PEARL: I knew you wouldn't forget. You never do.

ANDREW: (*Laughs*) I never do.

PEARL: I was 19—

ANDREW: Am I so old?

PEARL: — and I was in love.

ANDREW: I know.

PEARL: And that's why we went.

ANDREW: We did.

PEARL: But we haven't left?

ANDREW: "Pearl I don't want you going anywhere."

PEARL: Mother!

ANDREW: "I won't have my youngest leaving me."

PEARL: Well I won't have you keeping me here.

ANDREW: "Don't talk to your mother that way."

PEARL: Father will let me go.

ANDREW: "Do you not trust me?"

PEARL: But she let me go eventually.

ANDREW: Because she was your mother.

PEARL: She *is* my mother.

ANDREW: And your father?

PEARL: "I'll talk to her." He says.

ANDREW: Because he loves you.

PEARL: So does she.

ANDREW: She did.

PEARL: But she cuddled me.

ANDREW: Out of love.

PEARL: "Out of love." "*Out of love.*"

ANDREW: Pearl—

PEARL: I just wanted to go.

ANDREW: You did.

PEARL: Because father let me.

ANDREW: He was always kinder.

PEARL: He understood.

ANDREW: About what?

PEARL: Because I was so in love.

ANDREW: And?

PEARL: Scott was waiting for me.

ANDREW: And you didn't want to keep him waiting?

PEARL: And you were so supportive.

ANDREW: I still am.

PEARL: You still are.

ANDREW: And your father?

PEARL: "You're mother has agreed to let you go."

ANDREW: "I have done no such thing."

PEARL: "She loves the boy."

ANDREW: "It's not very lady-like."

PEARL: "Well, she takes after her mother in more ways than one."

ANDREW: "Bite your tongue."

PEARL: And on and on and on.

Patti Bray

Lay This Burden Down

Edge of morning in skies tinted blush,
cows come in for milking.

Leave their burden in buckets and bawl
with relief.

This land nourished them—
they nourish us.

Simple gratitude is not enough.
Who will feed the cows in winter?

Some birds leave for southern realms
flying over emerald earth, never noticing
grass concealed beneath snowy splendor.
Dairy farms everywhere—

everyone awaits a thaw.
Footprints left in whiteness
melts mixing with muddy happiness
of approaching warmth

as coldness has come and gone.
Animals trod over paths worn by years—
content in echoes, soothed by a milking.
And I will feed the cows.

Joe Schutzman

The Hardest Part

“LET ME BUM ONE of them cancer sticks off you, man.” I tossed Chris the pack of Turkish Royals, and he fished out a cigarette, holding it between his pointer and middle fingers. “You got a light?” he said, “I left mine in my bunker gear.”

He took the lighter from my hand and gave me a nod of appreciation. He bent his head down so that his chin touched his chest and the cigarette was parallel with the rest of his body, cupping his hand in order to produce a flame that would stand up against the brisk winter winds. His head tilted back and a large cloud of smoke poured from his mouth. I reached for the lighter and cigarettes and performed the same ritual. The smoke mixed with the frigid February air was harsh on my throat, but it brought the first moment of calm I had that morning.

He moved into the bay and sat down on the large, protruding bumper on the front of our ladder truck and stared down at his black station boots dangling just above the concrete floor. I leaned my left shoulder against the brick supports that divided the three enormous glass-panel garage doors and looked out towards the street our firehouse faced.

The church down the street was letting out from the late morning service. I watched the church traffic file home while steadily puffing on my cigarette letting the smoke and oxygen compete with each breath. I paid attention to the people in the cars. Some had peaceful expressions from a fulfilling service. Others were giddy with the excitement that comes with the freedom after an entire quiet hour of constant sitting and kneeling. As they headed to family brunches or football parties, I wondered if any of them bothered to notice my partner and me smoking by the ladder truck. I knew where they had been all morning, and I wondered if they had any idea of where we had been.

“You doing all right?” he asked.

"Yeah," I said mumbling as I lit another cigarette to avoid having to expand my answer.

"Your first one is always the hardest," he said. "Throw me another lung dart, will ya?" I tossed him the pack again and then the lighter. "You want to talk about it? Don't buy into all the firehouse bullshit. It's okay if you're shook up. It happens, man."

"I'm okay. It just sucks," I said. I wasn't okay. It took every ounce of energy to dam the tears welling in my eyes. At nineteen years old I had never seen a dead body before, and I had certainly never seen one that I was responsible for saving. I stood up and took a long, contemplative drag on my cigarette giving myself enough time to figure out what was really going through my head. "I just wish we could have done more. I wish things could have ended differently."

"You can't look at it like that," said Chris. "This job is not very complicated. If something is on fire, put it out. If someone isn't breathing, breathe for them. If someone's heart stops beating, beat on their chest and beat it for them. What is hard is sometimes you lose. Even before that pager goes off and we hop on the rig and go screaming out of here, sometimes you're just fucked from the get-go. Those are the bad days. Today was a bad day. They happen."

"Yeah, no shit," I said. Chris had been in the fire service for over ten years.

"But you can't let it get to you. We lost that one. No matter how much CPR you performed, he wasn't coming back. It was just his time or however you want to see it. We did everything we could." He sucked the last bit of calming nicotine out his cigarette before flicking it onto the concrete. He let out a deep, prolonged sigh and said, "That's all we really can do."

I tossed my spent cigarette butt alongside Chris', and we headed into the living quarters of the firehouse. It was a large open space, where we spent most of the day. The walls had old black and white pictures of past department members and retired apparatus as well as a flat screen television. On slow days, that was often the most useful tool in the entire firehouse. There was a long sectional couch on the wall opposite of the television. Near that was the dinner table, and near that was the kitchen area.

John and Roger sat together on the couch huddled around a laptop. "Hey man," John said enthusiastically, "come here and check this out." I walked over and was greeted by a larger-than-life vagina that encompassed the entire screen. Roger and John began giggling like school boys at the look of shock that ran across my face. It was funny when they were fourteen, and it was funny to them now as grown adults.

Roger looked towards me and said, "See, that's what a vagina looks like."

"How do you even bend over that far?" John critiqued.

"I'm not really sure, but somewhere out there, there is a terrible father whose hand I would like to shake," said Roger.

After only eight months at the firehouse, things were beginning to surprise me a whole lot less. It certainly wasn't your typical work environment. It was like an immature and dysfunctional family. We didn't have the same type of professional coworker relationship people in office buildings had, but we also didn't have the same type of work days either. I literally trusted those guys with my life, so if porn and practical jokes took their minds off this morning, I really couldn't blame them.

Chris and I grabbed our share of lunch, a grilled hot ham and cheese sandwich with potato chips and coleslaw and sat down at the dinner table. Sean, Matt, and Karen were already sitting at the table eating and playing cards.

Matt turned to me and said, "Know how to play euchre?"

I shook my head with the same type of shameful look that school children wear when they haven't finished their homework on time.

"God damn it, Rookie, you spend all this time at the firehouse, and you haven't even bothered to learn euchre. We have to do something to pass the time around here."

Chris decided he would be the fourth for the game, so I took my food and went over to the couch. John and Roger, who evidently were now bored with pornography, turned on the Xbox. John tossed me a controller, and we spent most of the afternoon playing Call of Duty. We were all just trying to kill time. It didn't make the images of that morning go away, but it certainly made them easier. Everyone had their own way to cope, and I was slowly trying to learn mine.

Chris came over at one point and asked again if I was doing all right. "I just can't stop thinking about this morning," I said. "I keep playing it over and over again in my mind. I can hear his family shouting and crying. His face is just stuck in my head, man."

"Look, as insensitive as it may sound to someone just starting out, that call is over. That guy is dead, and he ain't coming back. We did the best we could, and there is nothing more to be done."

It was hard to reconcile the wish that I could have done more to help someone and the knowledge that I couldn't have. They called 911 for professionally trained people to be at their best moments when they were experiencing their worst. That man and his family didn't need us to be sad for them. The fire service taught me that sometimes you lose. Sometimes you can do everything exactly right, and your best still won't be good enough.

"You have to keep your head clear," Chris said, "because any minute those tones are going to go off, and we are going to need to hop back on that rig and try and help someone else."

As I opened up my mouth to respond, a loud bell began to rapidly ring out over the intercom. The pager on my hip began to vibrate, and everyone in the room put whatever they were doing down and listened.

Over the intercom a voice said, "Engine One and Ambulance One this is your run. Respond to the intersection of Main Street and High Street, the intersection of Main Street and High Street for a traffic accident with injuries, unknown on the extent of injuries at this time. Time out is 16:37."

Eric looked at me with a smile as we hustled out to the truck and said, "Here we go."

Hanna Shaw Firstenberger

In My Hand

On nights like this one
the sky becomes a
toasted plum between
my fingers.

Glistens as I squeeze.
I stir the trees,
dampen the grass,
ripple the lake.

The dew returns
to the clouds above
with all that was clear.
I cannot figure the passing of time.

Brittney Blystone

A Fairytale for the Kids of Bethnal Green

Midnight in the Underground,
wait men made of pearl.

Salmon hung from their fingers.

Fifteen quid, smelled of snails and sand.

Slipped between lips pink like lotuses,

puckered like cooling

to us:

our saris, plastic bags,

rough, brown palms.

200 feet below

sounds like a conch shell.

There I saw them,

men who dream like fish:

eyes open.

Caitlin Fletcher

Jury and the Groundskeeper

“MISTER.” HER VOICE PULLED HIM from his reverie. “I said, do you have any kings?” He huffed at her impatience, though he didn’t have much himself. He glanced down at the cards grasped firmly in his hands. “Well?” she asked, with the kind of edge only a young child could possess, “do you have anything or not?”

“Go fish,” he finally grumbled.

Jury rolled her eyes at him and grabbed a card from the top of the deck. They were settled on the hardwood floor of his shack. It wasn’t comfortably warm, but it was warmer than outside. The shack was dimly lit and sparsely decorated with an old desk and chair, a single lamp in the corner, and a small space heater set to the right of the two occupants. He fit right in with his muted blue shirt, faded jeans, and constantly grouchy looking face.

Jury, on the other hand, looked like she belonged somewhere full of light and music. Her hair was a honey kind of brown that fell in waves around her shoulders. Her hazel eyes were almost always wide with the wonders and innocence of childhood despite the obvious hardships she’d been through or was still going through. She was thin and there were tell-tale signs of rough playground adventures on her knees and elbows. If she wasn’t so happy all the time, Elmer might have questioned her living situation. Then again, he probably wouldn’t either way—he didn’t like getting involved in business that wasn’t his own.

The first time Jury had been by to visit, Elmer did everything but literally throw her out through the gates. A cemetery was no place for a child—*ever*—and he didn’t appreciate his peace being disturbed. “Please, Mister,” she’d begged, “*I won’t be too much of a bother, I promise. I just want to visit.*” He couldn’t really argue with that kind of request. All sorts of people had all sorts of family members in his cemetery. It soon became clear, though, that she wasn’t visiting anyone in particular, and she definitely wasn’t visiting anyone she was related to.

By then, however, she'd weaseled her way into his heart somehow; that little rascal of a girl. She even started to bring him coffee and a sandwich every Tuesday. Some sort of payment for letting her hang around in the cemetery for as long as she wanted. Most days she would just drop the sandwich and coffee off and go to visit whomever she'd chosen for that week, but then there were other days where she would ask him to play a game with her. On those particular days, she didn't look like herself nearly as much. It was almost like she lost her glow a little.

"Mister," Jury tossed the cards on the floor with a petulant *harrumph!* "If you aren't going to play, then I'm going to go and talk to people and go back home."

Where was home? Elmer wondered every now and then, but he never asked. He wasn't sure he wanted to know the answer. He began to pick up her cards, not saying anything, and she pushed herself off the hard floor and onto her feet. It took him more effort to get up off the floor and, by the time he was standing to full his height, she was wrapping her red scarf around her neck.

"Who ya visiting today, Jury?"

"Um," she let out a huff as she tried to wrap her scarf more precisely around her neck, "Richard and Renee O'Reilly. Where might I find them?"

"Over by the Michaelsons. Last column to your right, fifth row. Big cross with a creepy angel on top. Can't miss it." Elmer slumped into the chair in front of the desk and looked down at the newspaper set in front of him. He didn't know why he bothered to keep up with current events. He didn't really care. He was a solitary man and he preferred his quiet life in his shack and his cemetery and his home in the middle of nowhere. Elmer got along just fine with the silence of the deceased.

He fixed the blue baseball cap atop his head—a gift from Jury on her seventh visit—in a futile attempt to get it to cover his ears and protect them from the cold that was about to come from the opening of the door. Jury stood in the middle of the doorway, the cold air leaking into the otherwise somewhat warm shack, and she looked as if she were going to say something but there came nothing.

Elmer grew impatient. "Close the door, girl, you'll let my death in."

"Oh, please," Jury retorted with a sad smile, "you're never going to die. You work in a cemetery. You've done your time in this place."

Elmer snorted just as Jury closed the door and disappeared into the cold winter day. Truth be told, Elmer wasn't sure when he was going to meet his maker. He figured it couldn't be too far off. He spent too much time smoking cigarettes and eating cheeseburgers, and not enough time working out and eating salads. If he didn't die from lung cancer or heart disease, he was bound to die from old age eventually. There were nights that he spent awake, begging for Death to embrace him, but it never came. Maybe Jury was right. Maybe he was destined to live forever so long as he spent his days in the cemetery.

#

The air was bitter. Probably more bitter than the coffee she brought Elmer every Tuesday. Jury wouldn't really *know*. She didn't drink coffee. Nonetheless, the air bit at her nose and turned her cheeks red, and whenever she took a deep breath, it felt like she was swallowing ice cubes. She was used to it, though. Really. She was. Or maybe she told herself she was so she wouldn't focus on it. *Don't focus on it. Don't focus on it. Don't focus on it. Last column, fifth row, big cross. Don't focus on it.* It was a mantra. She missed the summer months.

Her small feet carried her through the snow covered cemetery. The canvas of her shoes soaked already from the walk from the children's home and her toes numb as a result. Jury never minded the cold until the snow made her shoes and socks wet. Someone smarter than she might have decided to stay in on a day like this, but Jury hadn't missed a Tuesday since she began visiting a year and a half ago. Besides, it was too loud and crowded at the children's home. She couldn't stand another minute in that place.

Part of the reason Jury spent so much time at the cemetery was because of the silence it brought along with it. There was something to be said about not having anything to say. One time,

Jury had asked Elmer why he liked his job. Even before he had answered, she had known the reason. *"It's quiet,"* he had said with a mild shrug, *"I don't like loud."* It was so simple, really. Jury didn't like loud, either. She realized that what drew Elmer to the cemetery was what drew her to the cemetery. They were kindred spirits.

Jury giggled. *Kindred spirits in the land of spirits.* She giggled again.

The O'Reillys' headstone appeared before her. Elmer was right. The angel on top was creepy. The names were barely visible beneath the snow and Jury reached over to brush it away with a mittened hand. The snow tumbled away to the ground to join the rest.

Richard Collin O'Reilly

June 15 1955 - December 27 2012

Renee Stephanie O'Reilly

March 22 1960 - December 27 2012

Beloved parents and friends.

It was, undoubtedly, an odd hobby of hers. Jury began visiting the cemetery on a whim. Or perhaps a higher being—maybe God?—whispered in her ear that this was something she was meant to do. Then again, Jury *did* have the overactive imagination of an eleven year old, so it probably wasn't that. Deep down, she knew it was because she was lonely. She would never admit to that, though. Loneliness was something she felt she had no right to experience. Despite—or, perhaps, *in spite of*—not having family, Jury didn't consider herself to be alone.

No. She wasn't alone. These people were alone. The O'Reillys, or the Michaelsons, or Mr. Donahughe, or Ms. Greene. They were alone. During life they were surrounded by loved ones, by people who cared about them, but in death...where were they? Buried beneath eight inches of snow in a cemetery that no one visited. They had left a legacy behind, memories for their children to cherish and pass down to their children and their children's children, but in the end, they continued to decay in a wooden box six feet under without anyone else.

Sure, there were the lucky few who were visited regularly by family and friends. Jury wasn't always alone in the cemetery on Tuesdays. Sometimes she ran into a spouse or a nephew, but that was a rarity. Most Tuesdays, she sat alone for hours with those who were, perhaps, not *forgotten* but definitely not *remembered*.

"Good afternoon," Jury finally greeted the headstone, "I'm Jury. Pleased to meet you." This was when, usually, Jury would sit on the grass in front of the grave, but there was no way she was going to sit in the snow. She stayed standing, her hands shoved into the pockets of her thin jacket. "You don't know me. I mean, not really. You've probably seen me around here, you know. I talk to a lot of others."

She inhaled slowly, tasting ice in her throat from the cold, and hunched her shoulders in an attempt to sustain some warmth.

"Usually, I'd stick around for an hour or so. But it's colder than Pluto out here. I hope you can forgive me. I'll try to make a second visit before..." Her voice caught in her throat and she couldn't finish her thought. It was getting closer to the time where that "before" would become an "after" and Jury wasn't ready for it. But was anyone really ready for that? Were the O'Reillys ready for that? No. She couldn't imagine they were. With how young they both were and the day they died being the same, she figured it was a car accident or something similar.

They definitely weren't ready for it.

"I really only have one question. I don't expect you to answer, because... well, you can't... but it's just a question I've been meaning to ask someone for a while and I can't ask anyone alive because they definitely don't know the answer."

Jury nibbled on her bottom lip in hesitation. Out of all the weeks she had visited the cemetery, out of all the times she'd spoken to headstones, Jury hadn't once felt bizarre or uncomfortable. But this go-around, it was different.

After three long minutes where she couldn't feel her nose or ears and her eyes watered from the sting of the wind, Jury finally asked, "What's it like to be dead? Not die. Not the actual act of dying. But to be *dead*? I imagine it's much like this...standing in a cemetery in the middle of winter with snow around you...or maybe I hope it's much like this... I don't know."

Jury knew it was ridiculous to stand around as if she were really waiting for an answer, but she did anyway. She lingered, as if hoping one of them would appear before her and tell her what it was like, for five or so more minutes before logic and rationality returned to her and she figured it was best to head back to the children's home. She didn't stop by the shack to say goodbye to Elmer.

Jury didn't like goodbyes.

#

It was for a child. Elmer could always tell when they were for children. The size requirement for the hole was a dead giveaway. He didn't like getting involved in the fine details of who he was digging a new home for, but whenever it was a child, his heart went out to them and their family. No life should be taken at such a young age. There were, unfortunately, quite a few children buried in his cemetery and all of them but one he had dug homes for. Elmer was used to death in a way that no one should be, but he would never be accustomed to the death of a child.

Especially not when he was digging their hole on such a beautiful Tuesday.

Tuesday.

Elmer paused in his work, his gloved hands gripping the wooden handle of the shovel that was firmly planted in the ground. He lifted his left wrist and checked the watch that adorned it. Three in the afternoon. He couldn't help the worry that settled in the pit of his stomach. Jury hadn't been by to visit for three weeks. It was unlike her to miss any Tuesday, let alone three—now four, counting today.

If he was the type of person who pushed himself into other peoples' business, he would probably try to track her down and see if she was okay. But he wasn't that type of person; he hadn't ever been that type of person, and he wasn't about to start now.

Elmer huffed, a cloud of breath leaving his parted lips, and resumed his digging. It was nearing six by the time he finished. The process was slower than usual. Elmer could feel the "old" seeping into his bones more profoundly nowadays. He hung up his shovel in the shack and grabbed his belongings before

heading home for the night. Jury was still on his mind.

#

Wednesday morning crept in slowly through his curtained bedroom window and Elmer forced himself out of his bed. There was a funeral today for the kid whose home he'd dug the day before. It seemed like the sun was shining for them, too. *That's nice*, Elmer thought as he dressed, *nothin' worse than rain during a kid's funeral.*

It was still cold, though. Colder than it was all month.

Maybe that was why the funeral was so small. Small was actually an understatement. Usually funerals were full of people. They weren't necessarily loud, but they were louder than Elmer preferred. He stayed in his shack, out of their way, and sometimes watched from the window but most times he did his own thing. Sometimes funerals could be entertaining in a morbid kind of way.

There weren't enough people at this funeral for it to be anywhere close to entertaining. There were two women and another child. They weren't holding hands. They weren't really even talking to each other and from what he could see, they weren't very upset either. It was almost as if they were there because they *had* to be there. Odd. But Elmer had seen much odder in his time working at the cemetery.

He opened his newspaper and waited for the funeral to end.

#

It was much like standing in the cemetery in the middle of winter with snow around her. Jury was content with that. *Maybe, she mused while staring down at her gravestone, where you go when you die is where you were happiest or where you spent the most time. That would make sense.* It was a nice thought. People often spoke of heaven or hell, but the idea that after you died, you spent eternity in the place that made you happiest was more alluring to Jury. It was only a little amusing that she was spending her time in the afterlife in the cemetery with her remains. Okay, maybe more than a little amusing.

The sound of the gate being unlocked drew Jury's attention

to the entrance. The heavy iron gate swung open and Elmer shuffled in, the sleep still in his eyes. Jury tilted her head and gave him a sympathetic look. Her heart ached for him. He was just as lonely as she was, but he was even more stubborn than she and would never admit it. He “preferred” his solitude, he said. But Jury could always see right through that, even when she was living.

Elmer pulled a key from his pocket and unlocked the shack before disappearing inside to the warmth. There wasn't much about life that Jury missed, but being unable to bring him a sandwich and coffee every Tuesday left a giant hole in her heart. It had become a part of her life and, although it seemed small at the time, Jury now realized just how big of a part. Her life would have been inconsistent without that routine visit. Not only that, but Jury had grown attached to Elmer.

She didn't know anything about him except that he always wore that baseball cap, he liked his coffee black, and he was almost always bothered by something. She didn't know what his favorite color was, or if he had family, or if he even had a pet. But despite all of the uncertainties, Jury loved him like she might a father or a grandfather. If she ever got into trouble or needed help of some kind, he would have been the first person she went to, even if he wouldn't be interested in getting involved.

So she missed him, and she missed her Tuesdays, and as she sat in the corner of his shack and watched him read the newspaper as he always did, Jury realized she missed this part of life, as well. She wondered if he missed her or if he'd noticed she wasn't around anymore. She wondered if he could feel her presence or if, to him, she'd just disappeared off the face of the planet. He had to have noticed she was gone, and not just missing, but *gone*. After all, he had dug her grave.

#

They had set up the headstone without his knowledge and that alone was enough to put Elmer into a foul mood. He could see it from the window. It was small and almost nondescript. He wouldn't have noticed it, probably, if he didn't spend every waking moment of his life in the cemetery. There was nothing

special to it and it probably didn't take much work to place, which was probably why they didn't bother him with it.

Probably placed it wrong, though. Elmer stared at it through the window, his limbs telling him not to go back out into the cold, but his mind compelling him to make sure it was placed properly and not sinking into the ground at an odd angle. *They never do anything right anyway. I always have to fix them whenever someone else puts them in. Better go check, just in case.* He heaved himself up from the chair and braced himself for the cold.

#

Jury followed him across the cemetery to where her body rested six feet under. They had dressed her in a simple blue cotton dress. She was probably an iced by now. She didn't expect much else from the children's home. She was less of a problem now that she was gone. Jury knew *they* didn't miss her all that much.

Elmer's footsteps were heavy and loud in the slowly melting snow. He kept his head bent down as he navigated around various headstones and statues. As they grew closer, Jury felt like her heartbeat was speeding up even though it was impossible. *You don't have a heartbeat, Jury,* she reminded herself just as Elmer bent down to inspect the placement of her headstone. Still, she felt like her breath was getting caught in her throat and adrenaline was pumping through her body as she waited for him to read the name on the stone.

#

For once they did their jobs properly. Elmer stood up and shook his head to himself. People weren't always complete idiots, but those times were few and far between. There was one time in particular that they had put the headstone in backwards and it was harder than all hell to turn it around. This time, thankfully, the inscription was facing the right direction.

Jury Marie Thompson

August 15 2002 - February 24 2013

Elmer felt like the world was about to open up and swallow him whole. Four weeks and she hadn't been to visit. He had figured she had grown bored of talking to dead people or that she didn't want to put up with his grouchy self anymore. He didn't think, for the life of him, that she wasn't around anymore because she wasn't *around* anymore. His chest hurt as he heaved and tried to suck in air, but he couldn't get enough. He began to hyperventilate.

Memories of her flashed at hyper speeds in his mind. Moments of her sitting on the table, chatting away at him as he tried to read his newspaper. That annoying giggle she gave whenever he made a comment about her leaving him alone. That one day she couldn't bring him a sandwich and coffee and so she burst into tears because she had "ruined their routine." The only way he got her to stop crying was by offering to play a round of checkers.

Tears pricked his eyes and he wiped at them furiously, still having trouble breathing.

#

She hated seeing him so distraught. Of all the time she'd spent with Elmer, not once had she ever seen him cry. It hurt knowing that she was the reason he was so sad.

"Please don't cry. I know you can't hear me, but please, please, please don't cry... Oh, this being dead thing really sucks when it comes to talking to people. No wonder ghosts go crazy and start terrorizing the living." Jury moved and sat down on her headstone, her face crumpled in frustration. She watched the toes of her feet sink into the snow on the ground, digging little holes into the pristine white.

"Jury?"

"Oh, now you're going to start talking to dead people, too, huh? After all the times you made fun of me for it. How rude." She kicked at the snow, sending tufts of it flying into the air. She found some solace in the fact that throughout the year she'd sat and talked to the dead, they were probably around to listen. It gave her a warm feeling in the pit of her stomach.

"I don't know...you're sitting in front of me. How can you be..."

be dead if you're...right there in front of me?" His voice trembled, but he managed to speak without a stutter. Jury quickly glanced up at him, her brown eyes locking with his aged blue ones and then widening in surprise.

"You...you...you can see me?" Before he could respond, Jury launched herself off the headstone and threw herself into him, wrapping her small arms around his waist and hugging him tight. She could feel the hesitation that was mingling with the shock inside of him, but after a brief pause, Elmer hugged her back. Jury had never felt safer than right at that moment.

#

Elmer had never truly believed in ghosts or spirits or heaven or hell. He didn't believe in an afterlife. When you were dead, you were dead, and that was all there was to it. He spent too much time around death to believe that something happened after it. But if Jury truly died, if she truly no longer existed in this world, and she was right there in front of him...there was something that Elmer couldn't just explain away with a "what is just is."

She felt real in his arms and the way she shook in the embrace was enough to convince him she was just as confused and shocked and terrified as he was. He hugged her tight to him, holding her with comfort and love. It was the first time they had ever hugged. Elmer found himself upset that it had to be when she was...*dead*, he forced himself to think it. No more sandwiches. No more coffee.

She broke the embrace first and looked down at her feet in shame, wiping her eyes as surreptitiously as she possibly could. When she spoke, her voice was barely above a mumbled whisper. "I don't think I can stay long. I don't think you'll be able to see me forever."

"Then why are you here now?"

"To say goodbye? I don't know. It's confusing over here. Everything's the same but it's *different*, too." Her face crumpled in frustration again and she rubbed at her eyes with her fist. She had never looked so small, or so young, as she did right that moment. To believe that she'd actually died and was now in front of him as a spirit, or a ghost, was inconceivable. There was

no possible way she was actually dead if she was so corporeal and real, was there? "I'm sorry," Jury suddenly mumbled, her voice barely audible.

Elmer tilted his head in question.

"I'm sorry for not being able to continue our Tuesdays and that I didn't say goodbye in the first place. I'm sorry I'm dead." Her voice hitched and she fought a hiccup within a sob. "I'm sorry I didn't let you know I was dying. I didn't want to let you know. You deal with so much death as it is and why would you care about me dying? I was just some annoying kid, right? But you're not just some grouchy old man to me. You're like a grandfather that I've never had. I didn't want to go. I didn't want to leave you because you felt like family, but..."

His heart broke again and he felt hot tears rolling down his cheeks as she failed to continue with her train of thought. The words had rolled off quickly from her tongue, a rambling attempt at making things good again, at smoothing things over, even though there was nothing for her to make amends for. Elmer's hands shook violently and, if he had any luck in the world, the pain in his chest would be a heart attack and not heart break.

#

Jury could feel something tugging at her. It was like a hand was grasping her soul and yanking on it violently, trying to get her to go where it wanted her to go, even though she desperately clung to the reality she'd known for so long. Tears streaked her red, frost nibbled, cheeks and she reached out a hand for Elmer as the tugging became more prominent and her image began to disappear.

"You've gotta do something else with your life, okay, Mister? You can't just sit in that shack all the time and wait for Death to take you because Death does what it wants when it wants and there's nothing you can do about it, except live while it's being lazy." She spoke so firmly but her eyes swam with tears and she took one of his hands in both of her smaller ones. "I know you think life isn't worth living and that in the end everything just explodes into nothingness, but it's only that way if you let it be and

you can't let it be." She took a deep breath and exhaled shakily, her breath showing up in the cold of the day as if she weren't a ghost at all but really there in front of him, her feet planted firmly on the earth without any chance of leaving it.

"I don't want you to be lonely anymore, either!" Jury's voice shot up an octave at the sudden, seemingly random statement, and she squeezed his hand, "I know you're lonely because I was lonely and lonely people are drawn together like magnets. I want you to go out and meet people, make friends, do something in the world while you still can. I didn't get that chance. Promise me you won't be lonely anymore."

"Jury..."

"Promise!"

"I promise..." And she could tell he meant it. Jury squeezed his hand once more, but this time it was fainter than before. She was almost transparent now, her voice sounded as if it was under water.

"I love you, Mister. Even if you are grouchy."

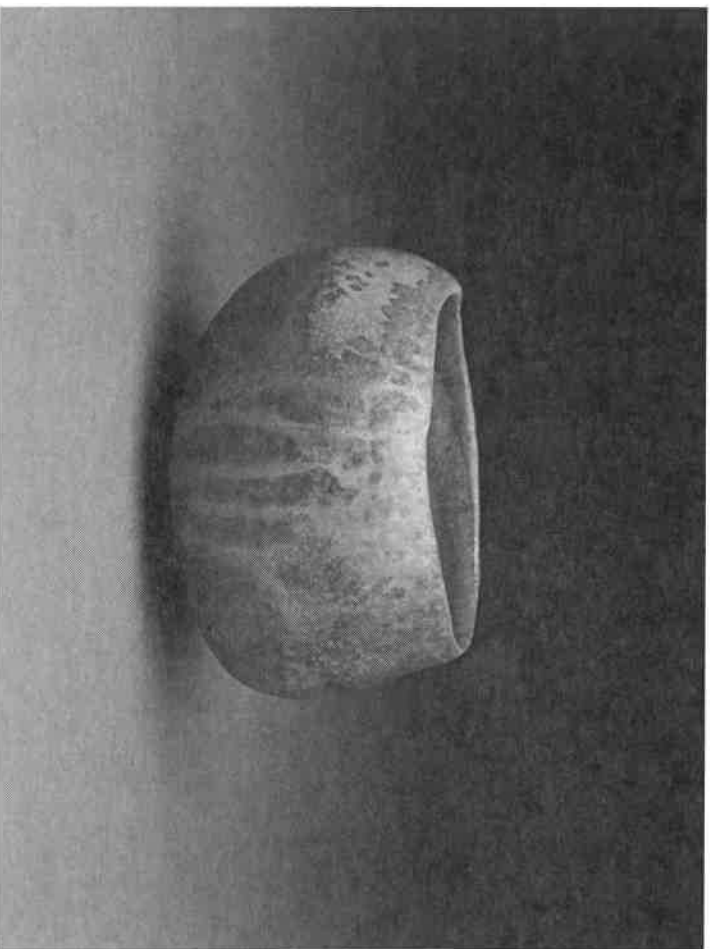
#

She disappeared in front of him, her small and sad, watery, smile haunting his vision even moments after she'd gone. Elmer stared at where she'd been, waiting and hoping for her to come back to him, or for someone else to jump out and say it was all a sick joke. At least then he could blame someone else for his pain.

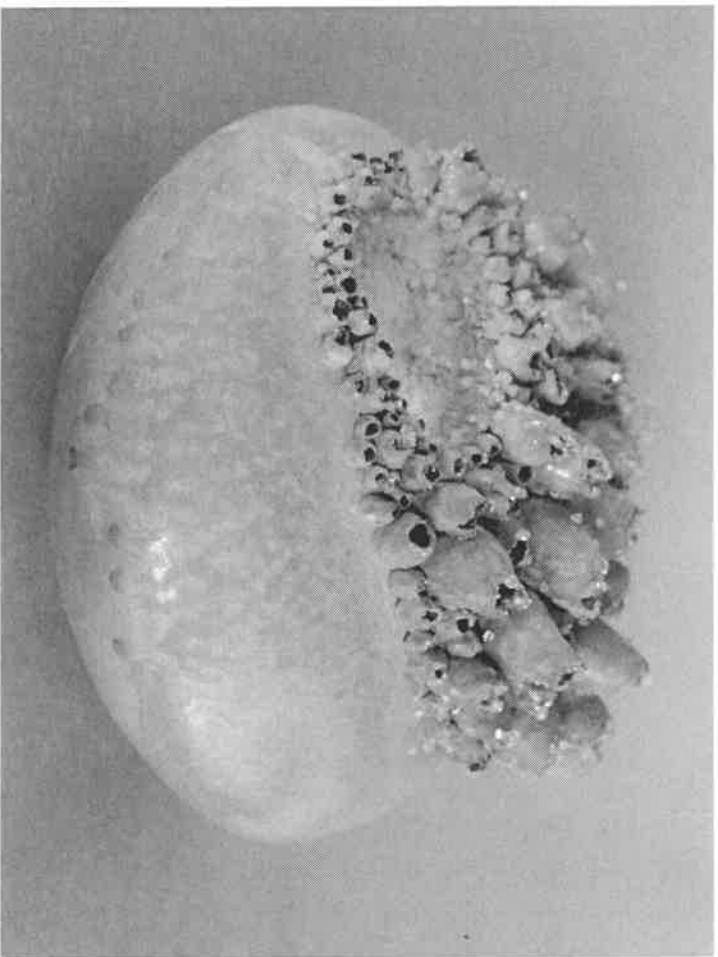
But as it stood, he had no one to blame, except Death; and if it was one thing about Death that Elmer knew, it was that Death didn't consider it blame... so much as credit.



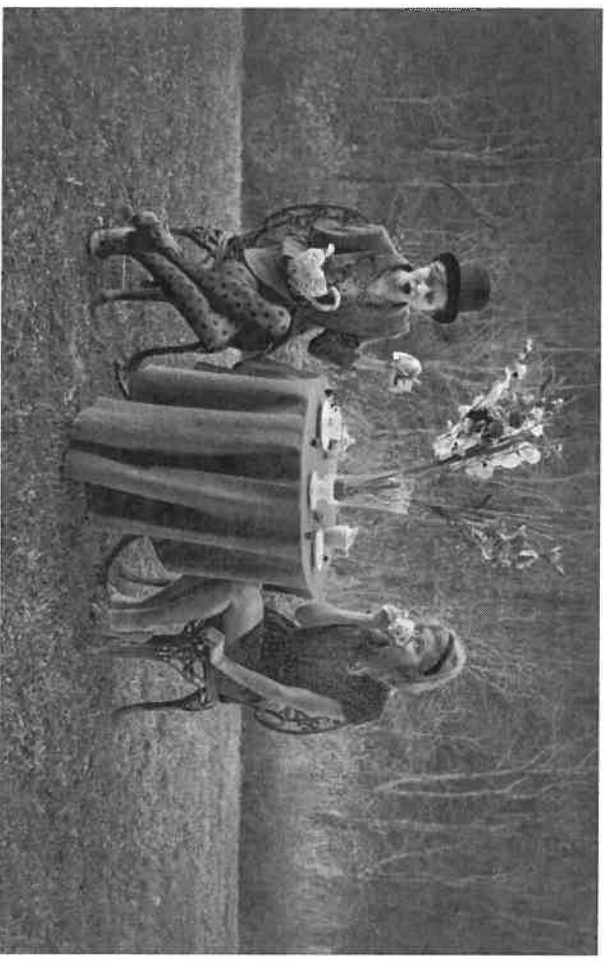
Tyler Griese - "One In Four"
Oil on canvas



Didem Mert - "Sap"
4.5" x 4.5" x 4"
Wood fired porcelain



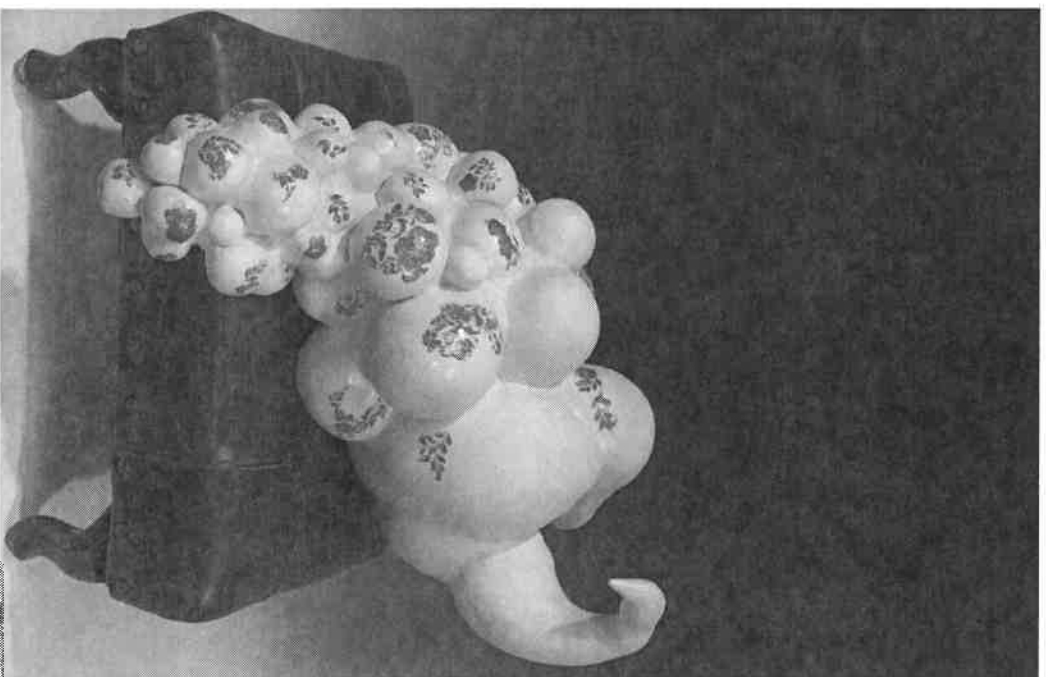
Didem Mert - "Swell"
12" x 12" x 9"
Wood fired porcelain, luster and borax



Taylor Daniels - "Alice in Wonderland"
Photography



Tyler Gray - "Aruk Skull"
Ceramic



Jenny Reed - "Pillow Princess"
12" x 18" x 8"
Ceramic and found object

Nikki Moore

Panning

Her veins are maps of fictions,
mountains of blue gold
covered by sleeves because
her mother said so.
Tell me,
have you ever met a girl who
couldn't bleed?

Audrey Childress

Sigh

Your voice is steam rising
on the ocean's surface.
A grain of salt on your lip.
You place it in my palm.
I lick it up,
savoring a small piece of you.

Brody Kenny

Goodbye, Tiger Eye

JENNIFER AND I ARRIVED to the Wizard Saloon, stomping and smearing snow off our shoes on the tattered welcome mat. As we entered, I forgot once again that anyone over six feet tall would have to duck going through the doorway, unless they wanted a bumped and bruised head. Jennifer always reminded me to watch out, but it was right when my skull made impact.

We picked the seats at the end of the bar. A few months after we started dating, she carved our initials into that section and encircled it with a lopsided heart. It was neither the only heart, nor the crudest one carved. She sat in front of me, as always. I mouthed the words “testing” at the exact time the man with the salmon-orange flannel shirt spoke those words into the microphone on the stage across from us.

Around us was a modestly-sized crowd. It was below zero and mid-February, a time when all but the most modest of New Year’s resolutions are meant to dissipate. I couldn’t remember the last resolution I made with serious intent.

That night, Tiger Eye Geoffrey and the Landers were performing for the last time at the Wizard Saloon. “Tiger Eye Thursday” would be no more. At the end of the previous week’s show, Tiger Eye leaned into the mic and said, “We’re done next week.”

We had never spoken to Tiger Eye or seen him at any closer range than where we sat at the bar. He had a neatly trimmed beard, which nicely contrasted the beer-stained baggy white t-shirt he wore every night he played. He seemed rather slim, or at least slim enough to wear a shirt one or two sizes smaller.

For the first couple months we came, Jennifer would mention how she “would ask him about that one song” before she realized the question might not be futile, but asking him was. He wasn’t standoffish, per se. He was just not one to appear outside of a performance setting. Right next to the stage was a door to a room, which I believe was reserved for employees and performers.

He would immediately enter it after the show and then assumedly make his exit. So common, yet so elusive, he was.

It was exactly 10:00 P.M. Tiger Eye Geoffrey and the Landers, emerging from the private room, shuffled on stage in a single-file line with him in the back. The barjoiist thanked all of us “for coming out in support of the band.” Tiger Eye and the backup guitarist nodded. Jennifer, myself, and about a dozen other loyalists clapped.

The show began with the song about the well. That song strongly suggested that Tiger Eye was a recovering alcoholic. Jennifer, if she was drinking, would always be mindful about moving her glass out of plain sight. She said she knew Tiger Eye would notice mine and everyone else’s, but just one less temptation could make all the difference.

As soon as Tiger Eye began singing, I winced. The imperfect but rich twang from a not-quite-placeable region that emerged from his throat used to act as the most alluring of all instruments on that stage. Now, it was just limping out. Each verse was attempted, but he might as well have learned the words earlier that night. I sat impatiently waiting for the grace that I’m certain doesn’t exist, to momentarily prove me wrong. Jennifer’s tender hand added delicacy to my brittle knees.

“We don’t have to stray,” she said as I took her hand off my knee. I sighed and silently thumbed through the cashew bowl/ash-tray. Jennifer attempted to steadily hit her knuckles on the bar in time with the band. Either she couldn’t keep up, or they couldn’t. I laid my hands flat in hopes she would take a hint. She did.

The conversations of the adjoining groups had gradually increased in volume the further the set went on. This was coupled with the thuds and echoes of billiard balls in pool table pockets and loud profanities accompanying them. Despite all his strained vocals and missed notes on his guitar, Tiger Eye seemed unfazed by any of it.

The show ended. The band thanked us once more. We clapped once more. I wasn’t sure if the last couple songs were actually performed well or if I was just swelled with desire for them to be. It was the last impression that they would ever make on me, so I didn’t want it to be the latter.

So strange, it was. The show ended. It was 11 PM. This was when Tiger Eye's shows always ended, several hours before last call. But it felt different now. It felt like there should have been literally nothing else. It was as if I was expecting a test pattern to engulf every dimension around me. It would inform me that the regular scheduled programming of my existence would begin later.

"He's got to come out tonight," said Jennifer right after it ended. Despite her assurance, it wasn't to be. Tiger Eye had disappeared into the ethos of the Wizard Saloon once again.

We stepped out to smoke. There was no ordinance prohibiting indoor smoking, nor did I particularly care if the guy sitting next to me, who would sneeze like a mule inhaling ragweed and not cover his mouth, minded our smoke pollution. Jennifer felt differently and would always ask the nearby patrons, even those who were smoking. Apparently, the Ragweed Mule minded.

As we navigated through the crowd to get to the door, I was thinking. For eight years, Tiger Eye Geoffrey and the Landers had been the house band at the Wizard Saloon, and for eight years, Jennifer and I had been together. This was not the worst show Tiger Eye had ever performed, but it was going to be his last. The Wizard Saloon, with its sign reading "*Established 1978 or 1982, depending on who you ask,*" had been changing owners constantly during this last year, and with each change, the worse it got. It was never a "good bar" but it used to feel different, like it was dilapidated with care. Now every face looked sunken and every beer tasted bitter. Or maybe I just saw things that way now. It was "that bar near my house" and, once I met Jennifer there, it became our weekly routine, and either we both were too stubborn to speak up, or just I was. Either way, the Wizard Saloon was too important for us to abandon, but too depressing to cherish.

The two-step staircase is where we smoked. Jennifer on the lower one, myself on the higher one. There was decidedly more room on her step, and I was a good foot taller than her. She motioned for me to come down. I came down.

It was freezing. No winter blanket nonsense could be used to dignify the sensation of dragging on a cigarette for ten seconds at a time, or the throat-scorching cough that followed, only

because I was stuffing my hands into my coat pockets. I wished I could've been Jennifer right then. I don't think she minded any weather, be it that night's frigid nonsense, or sweltering heat.

She extinguished her first cigarette of the week ever so delicately and carefully disposed of it in the adjoining waste bin. My seventh one of the day was properly disposed, too, but my previous six had landed wherever gravity saw fit for them to land when I flicked the butt.

Our surroundings were rather unappealing, so we looked skyward. The wind chill felt just as piercingly awful, but at least it wasn't accompanied by aesthetic waste, both natural and manmade.

I started to feel better. If I couldn't be content with Tiger Eye, The Wizard, the weather, Jennifer, and myself, I could at least resent them less. Jennifer's hand was affixed to my shoulder. I didn't mind it.

I sat there, silently gawking at nothing. Why, I don't know. We would've been home by now if we left when Tiger Eye was done. The colder and darker it became, the better I felt. Jennifer, my unflappable inclement weather girl, had stopped looking up after about five minutes. In my peripheral vision, I could see her gently wave to a mother and her child, who for some reason were out near this kind of place, at this time of night, in this kind of weather. I was still looking upward as I heard Jennifer move aside to let departing patrons through and help guide them down the steps. She was a good person and always meant well.

After realizing I could not tolerate the cold much longer, I advanced downward to the bottom step, hoping Jennifer would take my hint that we should go. I figured after eight years together, we would have a way of communicating that was stronger than silent passive-aggression on my end. Still, I reasoned that Jennifer was the one who decided we should be out here in the first place, so she could be the one who decided when we would leave.

I scooted closer to her the more the wind blew. I was never one for silent contemplation, only silence. Silence, or familiar noise, like the sound of Jennifer's toenail clippings falling into the bathroom wastebasket bag, or my own toenail clippings falling

onto our bathroom floor. Immediately afterwards, I would always dispose of them properly and immediately wash my hands. Toenails on tile was just a more satisfying sound.

Or like the familiar noise of Tiger Eye Geoffrey and his band, playing the same set of songs every Thursday night at the Wizard Saloon. We always knew what was coming. For the first several years, there might be some variety. Banter, if not necessarily Tiger Eye's strong suit, was at least attempted. It was the same couple guys with him through those eight years. They never seemed disgruntled about their status. Their eyes would gaze steadily as they would strum and lean in for occasional vocal harmonies. Tiger Eye must have been at least sixty-five, and those guys, about twenty years younger, might have peaked. I was about ten years behind them and felt like I was at least on a better track.

Jennifer pulled a second cigarette out of the pack.

"You never smoke twice in one night," I said.

She shrugged and blushed as she lit it. It was always impressive how she could pull off two diametrically different expressions so gracefully. If it wasn't so horribly cold outside, I believe I could've pulled off a sincere smile. Instead, I traced over hers with my numb left index finger. From dimple to dimple, she had a great smile.

The electric sign for the Wizard Saloon, shaped like Merlin's hat, went out. Last call wasn't for another three hours, but the wires that lit up the sign didn't know that. Jennifer went from giggling to guffawing as the sign buzzed, chirped, flashed before finally giving out.

That sign was a meager source of minor light, and now it was out. Immediately afterwards, I realized I had my left hand clutching Jennifer's right shoulder, unsure if it was for my sense of security or hers. She began massaging my hand, and I didn't really care. Looking away for a moment, down the street to our home, I saw no indication of needing to be away from the moment.

"I'm glad I met you here," said Jennifer. She spoke each word with equal emphasis, which always bothered me. She meant nothing by it; it's just how she happened to be.

"Do you mean, you are glad that you met me 'here' specifically," I asked. "Or that you met 'me' here specifically?" It was the longest string of words I had spoken to Jennifer at once in maybe three months.

"You decide," she said.

"I'm glad I met you here too," I said.

"I wonder who the new house band will be," she said.

I never wanted to set foot in the Wizard Saloon again. I figured our patronage of it would end as soon as Tiger Eye Geoffrey's residency there ended.

"Maybe we should try a few different places," she said, and I hated her for once again, saying the things I did not have the willpower to say.

"Who else is there?" I asked.

"Who else?" was Jennifer's response.

"I misspoke," I said. "I didn't mean it like that." I had never been a good liar and couldn't hold eye contact. Jennifer's eyes were watery, too watery for her to realize this.

Ashamed, I inhaled slightly and exhaled a sustained moan. So graceless it was. I could not find a way to make it fade, so it became a hum. It was a tuneless hum. I hated it. It was only one note. But I chose the note, so I was going to stick with the note.

Jennifer, too good of a person to hold onto emotional grudges, joined me. Her tone was just as poor as mine, but she could give it life, or at least more life than I could. We were harmonizing in completely different keys, with songs that we didn't even know we had written.

She continued humming, she looked so pleased. Her eyes were still dampened from tears, but they were no longer harbingers of grief. Each shift in pitch from her pursed lips only lent to her ease.

I had stopped humming. I lowered my jaw and opened my mouth. Mumbled half-syllables came out at a sluggish pace. I wished I could think of words of my own. All I could think of was the words of Tiger Eye Geoffrey.

You brought me down to the well

And the well brought us down too

So let's keep it dry, for a while

At least 'til I know I still love you

My voice was hushed and quavering. With each line, I felt a little more hurt. With each line, I felt a little more burdened. With each line, I further noticed Jennifer's seamless transition into the new context. Her humming had now become a soothing harmonic backdrop against my half-hearted performance of Tiger Eye Geoffrey's words. In all the years I had seen Tiger Eye, I had never liked that song very much. Maybe I liked it a little more now.

I repeated that same chorus for a few more cycles and Jennifer kept on humming along. I didn't want to hear the words from her, but I felt I should.

As another cycle concluded, I elongated a pause. Guiding my hand outward, I wished for Jennifer to realize the invitation I was extending to her vocals. After a smile and a gasp, she began. I anticipated jumping in.

But I couldn't. My throat and mouth dried and my tongue seemed non-existent. I paid those factors no heed as I heard these words from Jennifer, with more care than the man who had penned and performed them for eight years had maybe ever given them.

Her eyes were shut and for about another five minutes, she continued singing the same verse. She had the freedom to sing whatever she wanted, but she kept on with those four lines.

When you sit out in the freezing cold in front of a worn-out saloon past midnight, you forget a lot of things. At that instance, I had forgotten why we were out there in the first place.

As I was trying to remember, I realized Jennifer had fallen asleep, stretching across the two steps, with her arms to her chest like Sleeping Beauty. She could stand any weather and fall asleep anywhere. I just looked forward.

Coming around the corner was a man, in a fully-zipped parka with the hood pulled up. As he slowly advanced, his visage became gradually apparent.

It was Tiger Eye Geoffrey.

He had evidently nothing on his person, aside from perhaps keys and wallets in his pockets. Jennifer lay beside me, breathing deeply and snoring softly. As he approached, my heart raced and my mind filled with thoughts. What was I supposed to say?

Should I wake Jennifer? Where was he going?

Jennifer. So still and delicate, she was like an antique vase.

Tiger Eye. Known to me but now seeming so luminous and breathtaking, he was like the moon in lunar eclipse. I wanted this to be a shared moment between Jennifer and me.

So I sunk down, and I lay beside her. I shut my eyes and, as I hadn't done since I was a child, I pretended to be asleep.

I heard the steps of Tiger Eye's heavy boots cautiously crunching the snow before coming to a momentary halt right next to us. I kept my eyes shut and burrowed my face into the arms of my jacket as I inhaled and exhaled.

The sound of his boots gradually faded away, and when I was sure he would be out of view, I opened my eyes.

I tapped Jennifer on the shoulder.

"Let's go home," I said.

Opening her eyes, she yawned and nodded in approval. We dusted the snow off each other's jackets. As we walked, she put her hand around my waist. I put mine on her back.

"I always loved that song," she said.

"Me too," I said.

Audrey Childress

Moth Messenger

I tried to call you. A moth came instead.
 Little Hermes crawling into my mouth,
 settling on my tongue, and feeding
 on the words I never said to you.

Confessions crystallized among my teeth.
 I wanted to feed them to you.
 Place each one between your lips,
 and watch you eat them.

My fingers were too weak to pull
 them from my mouth. The moth takes
 them and stores them in her god - vessel,
 then carries them into the night.

Brittney Blystone

My Ancestors Speak from a Fishbowl in My Canadian Home

Bowl of water
 beside the photo:

granddad leaving
 mango trees
 until he can walk
 across the ocean.

Beneath snow,
 his body is buried
 far from his mother's.

Earth splintered
 into islands.

I dream that
 I am a whale.
 I swim through
 cedar woods
 and deep into
 Lake Ontario.

CONTRIBUTORS

BRITNEY BLYSTONE is a recent graduate of NKU where she graduated with a BA in English. Originally from Ontario, Canada, Brittney has lived in Northern Kentucky since 2000. Her two poems are inspired by her Asian-Canadian heritage and the six months she lived in London, England.

PATTI BRAY is a senior majoring in creative writing. This is her first publication. Her poem was inspired by her growing up in the country near a pasture of cows and from her mother's stories living near a dairy farm.

AUDREY CHILDRESS is a senior majoring in English literature and minoring in studio art. The poets that inspire her most are Linda Gregg, Sylvia Plath, and Marge Piercy. She has had one previous publication in the 2011 issue of *NKU Express*.

TAYLOR DANIELS is a junior at Northern Kentucky University majoring in applied photography. She is the owner of TTD Photography. During her sophomore year, she created a fairy-tale themed photo series. She is continuing the series this year.

HANNA SHAW FIRSTENBERGER is finishing up her fourth year as a theatre major with an emphasis in acting at Northern Kentucky University. This is her first time submitting any of her work and she is very excited and proud to have been selected. She would like to thank the Academy.

CAITLIN FIETCHER is a creative writing major in her junior year. Although this is her first published piece, she is convinced it is her destiny to become a known author. She has an addiction to books and spends too much time talking to her cat, Java, about them.

CONTRIBUTORS

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BRODY KENNY is a junior journalism major who embraces the opportunity to make stories up. He thanks his fiction writing professor, Brooks Rexroat, for encouraging him to submit this story, and his pet rats, Marnie and Miggles, for their patience when he was too busy writing to play with them.

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CONTRIBUTORS

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NAYRB WASYLYYCIA was born in Ontario, Canada and raised in Northern Kentucky. Nayrb is a senior graduating this spring at NKU with a BFA in visual communication. He had his Senior Thesis Exhibition last fall, titled Archetype, which was an installation of a page of a novel he is currently writing. Nayrb was recently awarded a National AIGA (Re)Design Award for his *STEM to STEAM Initiative* project, a poster series and app that promotes the idea of adding Art and Design into the STEM subjects.