



The Labyrinth

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2018

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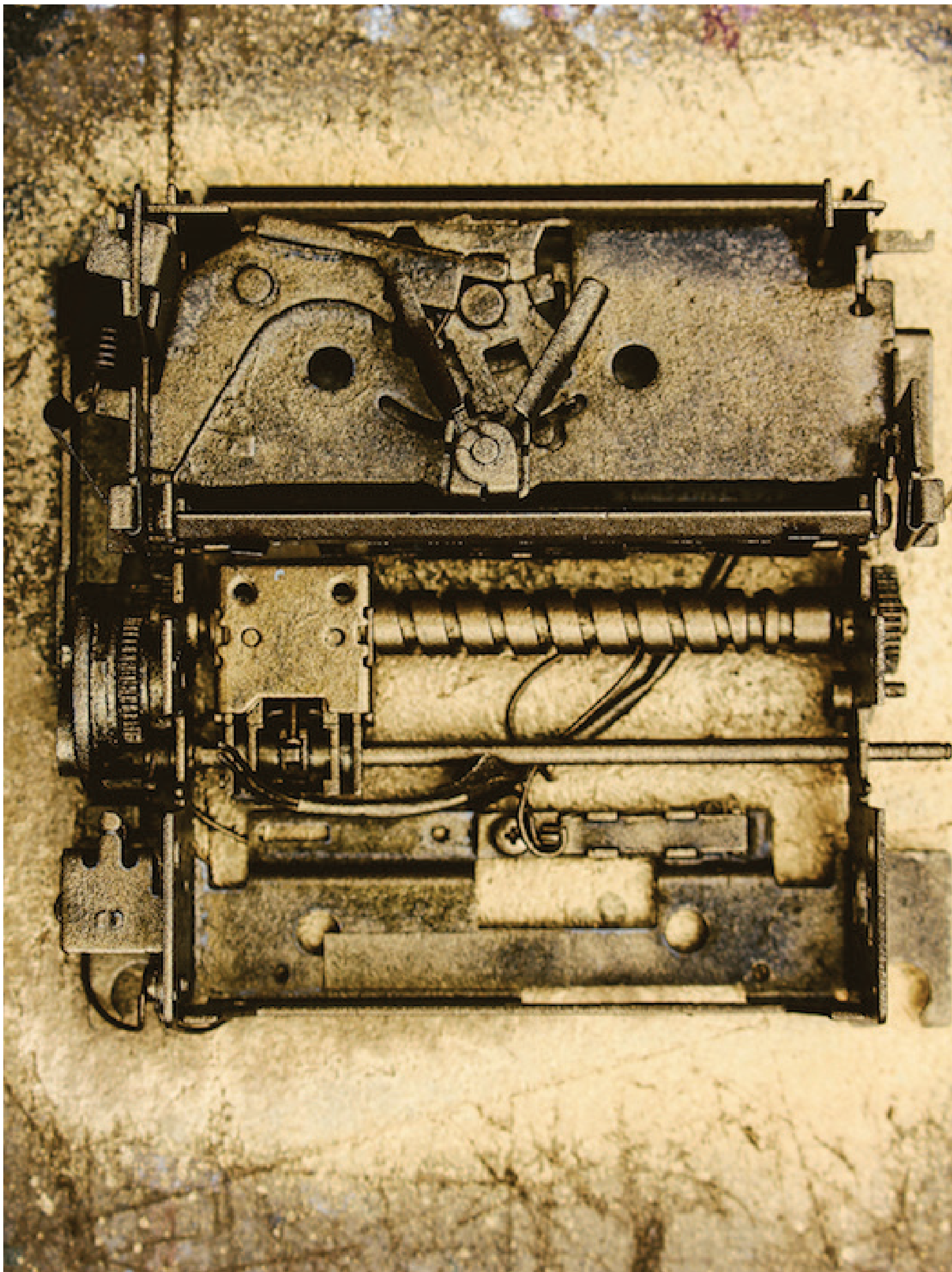
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when we kiss
the taste of coffee lingers
it mixes itself with the taste of depression
and desperation
after a Saturday night
of lies
bloodshot eyes
and the faint smell of weed
a night of occupied hotel rooms
a block away
broken ceiling fans
open windows
sweaty bodies pressed together
fingers interlocked
with other hands and cigaret buds
sheets clinging to skin
beer bottles
cans
stains
cover the floor
of an apartment
that hosted the party of a century
and countless one night stands
cars speeding by
drunken slurs
running
stumbling teens falling into doors
flashing lights from cop cars illuminating rooms
this is what it means to be alive



When you see me standing,
know I am not fully there
I may be gone, far away
far enough so I can bare
It's not something I'm avoiding,
and it's not that I don't care
too much to explain at once
so please, pull up a chair
Some chapters I would skip
and some pages I would tear
Those lines that I have crossed
are details I would spare
I have fought and died
in many battles
simply to stand
right here.



Maria Brown

In the Opinion of Love

The opinion of love is poetry and she is my stanza.
I write with her and hold her in my mind,
She rhythms with me and reminds me of my human element.
When I embrace words I see her,
In my opinion she is poetry,
But someone else is the writer.

Isolating My Priorities

Energies of thought—the possibilities of eternity are seen in everything I do. I often wrestle to isolate priorities from the unimportant, insignificant, and trivial. Everything to me is art—and worthy to be explored. I love, I love, I love too many things and I finish almost nothing. The one thing in front of me is what I need. But God’s creation is too beautiful to gaze at one cloud. They are all unique to me. I’ve caught myself counting the leaves on a tree, once or twice, maybe. How stupid? I watched their colors change. I wondered how wonderful—their symphony sounded. Between the wind and the trees, they make music. To the lonesome listener, I listen. Each leaf plays a different instrument and dozens of trees on my block play together. The wind is their conductor, and I am their only audience member. Irrational and stupid—is this creativity? What good is one listener—if this tree produces no fruit in my life? My unfruitful mind finds its start in freedom. It’s only in slavery where my potential shines. Are habits really my only hope?

Endlessly I push for the one thing in front of me! It’s such a lonesome task, but I did ask for reasonability. I ask for productivity. I need efficiency. And I desperately need this structure. Any building will suffice. Any intuition will do. Any slave camp—warden or dictator will do the job for me—what in me—I couldn’t do. For there are so few things I can bring to bear, but I really need to care. I do care deeply. I need to finish. School work is both a pain and a great joy. I become, sickly joyful in all my assignments—and they bind me to promises I can’t keep. I start and envision some completed product. It’s all nice in my mind, but yet my desires pull from every neuron in my brain. I’m neurotic and these are my confessions. Feckless and lackadaisical are fun words to say and they are also me. There all habits form the start. It is not about nature vs nurture in determining who I am, it’s both. My genetics gave me my mind in all its creativity, and I was nurtured from idle hands. Thank God for friends who act like family—who are the nurturing examples I need. They cut me with their words revealing my faults. I love them for it. They truly love me. “Faithful are wounds of a friend” and “honesty is better than a kiss on the lips”. How true and magnificently painful are those proverbs. It’s time to Isolate my priorities.

Jared DelGado



Maria Brown

From the morning when it is shaded like a pink rose without thorns,
To the evening when its darkness leaves people feeling forlorn,
Under the sky some people feel trapped, yet I rather feel quite enwrapped.
In puzzling awe regarding the potential so far untapped;
As I gaze towards the rest of the universe with more than a glance,
I wonder what are the possibilities that are left to be had.

The thick feeling of wet grass swallows my feet
But not before I realize that my toes are green
And undeniably I am only in a dream.
For dryer weather I can and will just shout,
And away will go all of those gray gloomy clouds.
I'm not even in disbelief as the sun comes out,
Radiating that formerly murky field.
I am enraptured by my newly found power;
I can work wonders if I so desire.
I can close my eyes and quietly wish for home,
And then in my bedroom I will appear all alone.
Out my picture-window I can leap with glee
and not fall but be rescued by the gentle breeze.
Few things are as freeing as knowing you're in a dream.



Hop inside you blockhead, and give that glossy boot to the pedal, then mash in the button. It starts up nicely, but of course, you mustn't forget safety, so please buckle up before you proceed. No doubt it's amazing, and with ease, you can now be on your way to any number of distant locations, if you choose the journey. It is indeed stupendous, in fact, for about what you lay down for that nice, hot cup of java every morning, your ride will offer you the intense labor of a huge team of wild horses. In short time, you and your cargo, can be delivered to wherever you may want to roam; about twenty or more miles away, and all in under half an hour. Do you find this breathtaking, just as the others do, when exhilaration overtakes the spirit and the mind? Yes.

While you don't speculate for a second, as to how phenomenal this really is, you certainly enjoy the freedom and convenience of your flight, but at the same time, you ought to realize the sad reality of your expedition. You're guilty! Yes, you are guilty; she is crying, and for some inexplicable reason, the collegial wisdom bestowed upon you has been lost. Where is your consciousness for the ecological impact of your nefarious conduct; what are you doing; why must you choose that gas-guzzling, hooptie for your transportation; who do you think you are – a senator or something, and when will you finally wake up friend? Some day the world will laugh at your silliness, for ever having burned the gasoline to move about, or maybe that day will never come because there will not remain enough days, for the matter to be seen in such a jocular way. Damn.

With so many vehicles on the road, you believe that yours is not a problem, and it is a birthright, so no hassles, right? The self-serving attitude you employ is not part of the problem, it is the problem. It's getting in the way of re-shaping a proper view, that being a citizen means something, and being a better steward to Mother Earth is your obligation. The ramifications of the chosen one, the one you call Jeep, is in no way a noble gesture, just so you know friend. So, you say, "it's an unruly beast; quite capable of giving most others on the road a run for their money." Did you mean to suggest, your ride can out-pollute anything on the road? At best you have formulated a flawed reasoning, that any smell test will affirm, stinks to high heaven. When old and gray, if you get there, your title will be a well-earned one. Arrogant clown.

If truth be told, what you should reply when asked about your preferred chariot, is: it will not win you any awards for sustainability or pride; the hog is

a real gas sucker in every sense of the word, and it can pollute with the best of them, thank you very much. On a few occasions, you have shown your compact conscience, and defended the indefensible, which only makes you a hypocrite, just like the other folks. It is muscle memory now, when the topic arises; you have just the right retorts, as if they were rehearsed, when you utter your pop-culture rhetoric, like: “that whole climate debate thing, is a full-blown, bunch of malarkey (or however you really say it); it’s highly politicized; my waste out-put is rather minimal, and only a few drops in the overall bucket, when compared to the evil empire.” Ridiculous is your name, and stomachs will turn at your faces.

When all else fails, don’t forget your savior, as you place the cherry on top, with, “I’m a good person – I recycle!” If you’ve heard it, you will recognize and own a rather unique expression. Its origin is unknown, though sometimes mistakenly credited to Twain (Mark not Shania), and is a phrase often thrown about in the houses of self-help and addiction counseling, which certainly fits your contradictions to a tee. “Denial ain’t just a river in Egypt.” If you seek, you shall find, an abundance of knowledge, that will provide you with the light. That do what I can – when I can, to help Mother Earth sentiment, will no longer suffice; you’re going to need to do better, for the sake of future humanity. Do you hear it, or are you ignoring the voice; pretending not to listen? Idiot.

If you don’t, you should already know now, that the writing is on the wall, and that you all are driving the earth to its’ death. But go on ahead with your wicked sense of entitlement, and let her know it’s not her, rather it’s more about you and your wants and needs. Please tell the others it’s not you, but them – or maybe someone else’s fault, as you know you will, when taken to the task. They will hear you; perhaps even listen, when you tell it like it is, with your shrewd veracity, in saying, “I alone will make no difference, as what we suffer from is not my own inaction, but instead, it’s poor leadership by those who have no soul. Our statesmen have long sense hung us out to dry and – IT IS AS IT IS!” Will they buy what you are selling? Go ahead, tell your side.

Moreover, you continue because you cannot help yourself, as you’re so compelled to justify your lack of blame or ownership. “It’s the establishment,” you’ll bellow, adding “this is why change can’t happen; not me, it’s our so-called leaders caught up in their own ring of self-serving calamity! They have to

kick up to the puppet masters, or face the loss of that sell-out gig, which affords them with much of their wealth and prestige!” The theory you share with your self-concocted worldly persona, is one you believe will hold water, but you’ve been wrong before, so you know this rationale is not truth. But you’ll drone on with more, in suggesting: “getting re-elected is key, which will not happen for them without the wealthy donors, who control the strings, and they will not tolerate any more do-gooder laws, that eat at the precious bottom-line.” Hopeless. While what you spew is not all fiction, it’s merely a cop-out, as grassroots grow from what was once a single seed, and you could be that one. Take your first step, provide the example for others to follow, and nurture that first patch. Toss out your ill-fated ideology, and move toward being a part of the solution, rather than continue to be one of the sheep fleeced by the status quo. Stop waiting for a righteousness, to be born without you, as the wait could be a long one. With you and your mouthpiece; constituency, and determination, one day you might see a better mousetrap, or perhaps be part of the team that builds one. Will you sit by while Mother Earth dies from all the smoke inhalation, or fight for her until the last breath? Get your head into the game. Be excellent.



A dying star radiates the holy trinity through me.
Where do angels go to reconcile an eternity of peace?
Somehow, an awakened lover has resurrected me;
I've tossed and turned at the atmosphere's indifference—
Wavy geometry dances around my exhausted ankles
like a dream fueled by DMT.
Paradise is an ego aware of its own illusion.
My love's dragon tattoo is a white-hot flame amidst my existence,
it travels through the burden of space like a broken bone
being burnt for our ceremonial taboos.
His dirty needles are proof we are the others Leary preached about;
My love is my religion and my religion is a hallucination.

Amphetamine

Artificial attention, measured in milligrams
pressured me to act now and
uppers are a punch—
My third eye opened; the paranoia faded
into the furious desire to interpret souls
all of a sudden.
A lover in a rush
told me to read *Candide*.
I read it on amphetamine
and the wild earth stood still.
No past, no future—
Only my recovery,
a beginner's first high, inspired
by the body electric singer Del Rey.
Bruises, for the sake of speed,
are one talking snake
Coiled around my dark arms.
It is Cleopatra's suicide, stalled.



Jeremy Hurst

Fear of Flying

I guess I imagine myself a bird who sees his shadow
and hears the thunder of his own black wings
and never flies again he is so scared
of the sound and fury of his own bold self;
the trembling tips of the branch of a tree
shaken to its core by a north wind dreamed,
one night, stronger than his roots;
a sleepless midnight begging the silent moon
to sing back to the lily throats of wolves
and keep his moment alive just a little longer;
the empty, crumpled sheets of some lovers,
abandoned, but still in twisted fits of passion,
still waiting for a return that won't come;
a velvet-lined box of beautiful secrets
upended on a kitchen table and filtered for content,
stripped of all its dog-eared yellow love letters
and tarnished rings and coffee-stained polaroids;
a flower afraid of the last frost returning
and so he never blooms, always worried the cold
will come some strange and sleepless midnight.

It's all fun and games
until someone loses their shit
and you catch yourself
speeding on the curve
and leaving black stains
on the passenger's seat
and searching for home
in other people's bodies,
but I dip my apples in my honey
anyway, partaking of the fruit
in the hope of a future
that looks less like car crash
and more like highway,
committing my sins of experience
in the hope of outliving
this solitary feeling
of having outlived myself.
In the dark, with the wan
and waxed face of the moon
peering in through the window,
I don't want G-d to see me
with the juice running down my chin
and my fingers honeystuck
to everything I touch
and I have to remind myself
that prayer is allowed to be messy
and I am allowed to be messy
and holy and hurt and - shit -
taking the turns too fast,
hoping a sweeter future
is just around the next bend
or the next
or the next.

Charlie Orlando Leppert

Centrifugal

Trending toward the bottom of gravity,
the slow unfolding of iterations
of the self, bathed in wet, neon city
light and sewer steam venting frustrations,
kissing on the train to the cosmic tune
of dreamed realities and true fictions,
the melancholy fantasies of June,
and decay, that sure result of friction.
On inevitability's long arc
we are the dancers in the midnight sun,
we are the impossible, the skylark
not shot, the truth not changed, the witch not hung -
We are the quick, the dead, and the known,
living our small eternities, alone.

Birds & G-d Over New Jersey Turnpike

I always wondered what high tension wires
carry. It must be big. It must be important.
You have to be important to get up toward heaven
with the blackbirds that dance like a bedsheet, together,
then scatter like ashes across the linoleum floor
of the clouds, white as ghosts. Ghosts are just souls
unstuck in time, trapped in the world's windshield wipers
like dead leaves. There are plenty of dead leaves
and ghosts and crosses on the roadside today.
I thought I saw a hillside all dressed in heather and pinks
a few miles back, but I can't be sure - we passed
far too quickly for me to trust my eyes on it.
Besides, my hair is always getting in the way of the details -
I should cut it before it gets long enough for bad ideas
to get tangled in it, the bad ideas stuck like gum
to the underside of exit ramps, that tell me I need
somewhere with a bigger horizon and a brighter sky,
that the white on the back of my tongue
is the residue of everything I never said, festering,
and just when I am starting to really believe
that I am the ghost that haunts this body,
somebody punches a hole in the ceiling
to flood the roadway with sunlight.
Traffic is light and we are driving
out from under the clouds -
the road and the wind are singing
and I swallow the song the best I can.

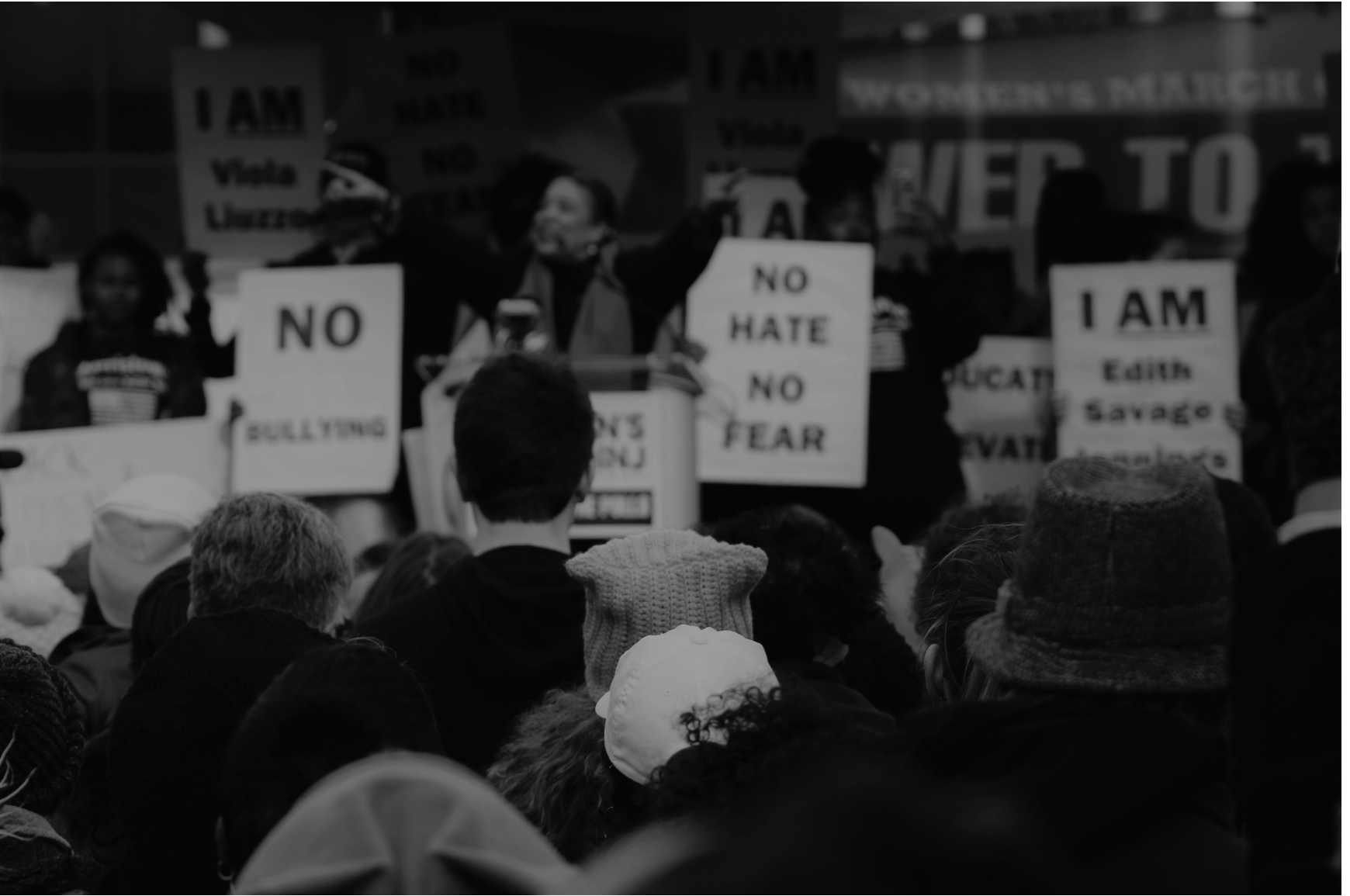
Guns Don't Kill People the Way No One Dies of AIDS

He takes his time saying goodbye to me,
works his hand up under the edge of my sweater
so he can press his warm palm against my skin.
I let my fingers linger in the thick hair
along his throat, memorizing the smell
of his shampoo and his dress shirt and his cologne.
People are always laughing at our goodbyes,
saying it's like one of us is going off to war,
like we're never going to see each other again,
like teenagers who kiss each other goodnight
knowing that every small catastrophe
is the end of its own little world.
We don't have the heart to break it to them -
that it's because he works in an elementary
school, and I work in a gay bar,
and on June 12, 2016, I didn't go to work,
just sat at home with the news on
calling friend after friend after friend,
letting him hold my hand so tightly I thought
he might break it, squeezing his even harder --
held,

hold,

holding

on.



Dylan Barrick

The Truth of Blindness

I walk among them through the hallways blind,
wondering what they find so frightening.
Walking with them, nothing is brightening
and I see that true friends are hard to find.
When someone happens to say something kind,
the endless pressure is less tightening.
Everything they say is enlightening,
but the storm of emotions can still bind.
Their words and voices echo in my brain.
It seems as though the teasing has no end
and anger surrounds me like a dark stain.
Blind as I am, I always tend to gain.
I am happy to have found my true friend
because, with true friends, there is no dark rain.

Do you remember the memory of
that sound? What is it about that great sound
that covers you in a memory glove
that takes over you and spins you around
until you arrive at a different time?
To this day, you remember where it came
from and why it's a reference to this rhyme.
You remember that great sound by its name.
It held something special that would surprise
you immensely and, no matter the day,
you knew it came from someone with bright eyes
who, with no doubt, would always light your way.
To some, it's nothing but a simple noise,
but to you, it's like a determined voice.



Anthony Crespo

Wishes & dreams.
Dishes in the sink,
Festering, coated in crumbs.
Scrape the crust of a bloody blueberry pie.
Then set the wash to run.
Run, run, run, down the damned hill.
Falling into a dream.
Dreams to wash me.

Rhombus Glass

Closet open. Doors ajar.
A wall lined with gleaming spectacles.
Great gradients, shaded, glossed, matte, and polarized.
The iris shifts, adjusts to the new light.
From sepia tones to vertigo views, the fringed fjord took my breath away.
I'm left gagging, grasping for another free breath.
Overwhelmed with an unpleasant joy.
I keep changing lenses. Following with smooth scotch.
...
That closet is empty now. Dishes climb, papers get shredded. "Only Jack can
save me now."
Or so they tell.
I have since stopped listening to an imperfect lens.
Spectacles shouldn't stop splitting my spontaneous existence.
As per usual, they spend my time with a chord around my neck.
I will suffer no longer, but forever remain a hypocrite.

This be me,
I'd like to leave.
Windows have cracked,
 And bookshelves are brackets.

This be me,
 I'd like the warmth.
 Of the beautiful brown sun.
Burning bridges has not begun.

This be you,
 Enjoying your time.
 But riddled with holes ever so.
You want to be you and hold water,
but can't.

This be you,
 You're cheerful, beautiful, and sweet.
 But you're enigmatic, distant, and tough.
Your skin be thick, like leather.
Your tone be as soft as a bell.
 But I did not expect your life to be a hell.

This was us.
Together despite adversity.
That was, until June.



Dylan Barrick

he does not have eyes -
they are dual eclipses, trapped in marble,
slowly rolling towards the sense of my knowledge,
leading others down paths to fall upon
and never continue forwards,
carelessly wandering, wondering,
forever lost in a humid gaze

he does not know of the word venture -
his feet are glued to the soles of shoes,
shoes, glued to wooden flooring,
as his mind was once believed to be a graveyard,
his lungs, following soon after,
with thoughts in a delicate approach
to an always, equivalent to more than

he does not contain lips -
yet, two statuettes of a romanticism,
containing the urge to part before meeting,
the reoccurring visionaries of time,
and time, again,
if only, where I could kiss,
solemn, just use my voice

it took quite some time,
I'll admit that.
it took a vast amount of patience
in order for me to find myself.

I had looked in small corners,
crevices of folded journal paper,
between pencil shavings
falling on floors.

half-full.

I stopped looking at my words, instead,
focusing on the spaces between them.

half-empty.

the day I realized that I was enough
was the day I gave someone my heart
and they handed it back to me.

filled, to brim.

I was given to him as a caterpillar
at an early age.

Today, I caught him bathing in sugar water,
holding out his finger,
waiting for something
that never seemed to arrive.

I flew past his ear as a butterfly,
landing on a man that would know
how to do more than glance -

One that would appreciate my beauty,
even without wings.



I remember sitting on his lap, listening to his loud voice become animated as he read me storybook after storybook. I liked *The Three Little Pigs* the best. Especially the pig who built the house out of bricks, because I knew that is what my dad did at work every day. Even when my father was obviously tired and weary from his day at work, he'd always prop me up on his lap and read me a book. Whether it was the classic, *The Velveteen Rabbit* or a *Sesame Street* storybook, his normally loud voice would be pitched high and become animated as he turned every page. I was not so much hooked by the pictures, but the sound of the words.

Dad would dance with me, every now and then. Usually to an oldies song or to country music. He'd pick me up in his arms, and dance around with me. I was probably the only five year old who knew of Neil Diamond ("Real Diamond" as my younger brother used to call him), Ricky Nelson, or Hank Williams. Of course, we did listen to some children's music. Most notably, a song from *Sesame Street* called "The Alligator King." It was about an alligator king who had seven sons, and who, by the end of the song, taught them about the number seven and about kindness. My father is the type of person who finds children's music ear-splitting, but whenever the song would come on TV, he would pick me up in his arms and dance around with me. Every now and then, I look up that song online, and even after so many years, he takes my hands, and we dance.

His hands would be stained red from the food coloring and strawberries. Dad would always say that they were red because of all the love he had for me. I'd hear the electric mixer whirring in the kitchen, whipping the cream for the cake. It was Valentine's Day. He has a little tradition of making a heart shaped angel food cake, filled with chocolate pudding and topped with homemade whipped cream, for me every Valentine's Day. I see those red, stained hands every year on the 14th of February. And it's just another reminder of his love for me.

I sign all my cards, letters, and presents to my father in the words of soft rock musician Stevie Nicks. She dedicates her song, *Landslide*, to her father, by starting out by saying, "This is for you, Daddy." Everything I write or give to my father has that written below my signature. My name, with a rosebud drawn next to it, symbolizing the name my father has called me since I was small. Rosebud. It doesn't matter whether it's rosebuds, the number seven, rabbits made of vel-

veteen, brick-house building pigs or angel food cake. They all remind me of the man who has spent years raising me. The funny, kind, caring, smart person that I am proud to call my father.

“This is for you, Daddy.” -Stevie Nicks



Maria Brown

Grave Robbers

As the clock on the wall hits close to midnight, I set my old radio on the coffee table and tune it to the NPR station. If only I can get a damn signal. As the radio continues to play static, I start off my night by reading *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nigh-time* by Mark Haddon; because we can't afford a TV. I continue reading from page 100 while sitting on our old brown couch; the only couch that we can afford. In the middle of my reading, I hear the front door open and slammed shut. The loud slam scared me and I quickly turn around to find my brother in all black and covered in dirt. I can see the panic in his eyes. "We have to get out of here, now!" He says. He grabs my arm and pulls me away.

I say, "Why? What happened to you?"

He says, "I'll explain everything later. We just got to get out of town."

Before I could say anything else, a loud banging interrupted. We could both hear it from the front door.

I say to Marty, "Who's that?" He stays silent.

Wanting to know more, I approach the door. Marty tries to stop me but, I get there in time to open the door. In the doorway: a sweaty man in a blue track suit. This seems a little odd to me. Now, how could Marty have anything to do with this guy? As I opened the door, he saw me but, he was looking for someone else; my guess is my brother. He turned away from me as soon as he saw Marty in sight. He points and yells, "You!"

He tries to get inside our apartment but, I don't know this guy. Marty probably does but, I don't chance it. I stop him at the doorway and I don't let him in. He can't go inside but, he still yells at Marty. "I saw you what you did!" I try to calm the man down and ask about who he is and what Marty did.

The man says, "I'm Patrick Burlington. Wallace Burlington is my great grandfather. I'm the new owner of the Burlington motel and I now overlook my great grandfather's grave from that apartment on the other side. I look out my window, I see that guy coming out of the graveyard with a shovel." He turns back to Marty. "I saw you, you bastard! Give me the envelope now or I'm calling the police!"

Envelope? Now, I'm really confused. I turn to Marty, hoping for an answer. Marty only talks to the sweaty man. "I don't have the envelope."

The man goes, "Yes, you do!"

“No, I don’t. There was no envelope!”

“I’m telling the truth! There was no envelope!”

The man looks at Marty and seems to finally believe that he’s telling the truth. He says, “Seriously? There was nothing in there?” Marty shakes his head no. The man calms down and looks all depressed. It was a deep and awkward silence for a while. He finally turns to us and says, “I’m sorry for everything. It’s the middle of the night. I probably woke up your neighbors. Don’t worry, I’m not going to call the police anymore. Hope that no one does. Anyway, have a good night.”

“You too.” I say. He walks away and I shut the door.

I turn to Marty, who’s sighing from relief.

I say, “Umm... what the hell was that all about? I want the truth.”

Marty sat me down on the couch.

He says, “Okay. You know about my cinema class, right?”

I say, “Right.”

“I had to do a paper about Charlie Chaplin and I found out that two guys tried to body snatch

Charlie in 1978. I looked into more and then, I thought hey, what about the cemetery across the street? It’s been abandoned for years. There’s probably some interesting people still buried in there. So, during the day, I went in the cemetery, wrote down some names and dates and went the library to check out old newspapers. I did a lot research and I found out that, in 1911, a man named Wallace Burlington is in there. He owned a chain of resorts and hotels across Florida called Burlington’s. He died of stomach cancer. In his will, he gave his fortune to his three children and wanted his children to pass it on to their children and generations after. Unfortunately, in 1953, his business was on the line and eventually went bankrupt. Five years after that, Burlington’s reverted back to a tiny motel in Key West with the same name.”

Being the computer genius that he is, it didn’t surprise me that he got all of that information in one day.

He continues, “But, there’s more to this. During the time when Wallace died, it was rumored that he had a yellow envelope buried with him. It was rumored to be \$20,000. However, he mentioned nothing about an envelope in his will and the funeral directors never saw one in his casket.”

I say, “So, tonight, you went in the cemetery and dug up his grave, assuming that the rumor of this “envelope” was true? Are you insane?! You can’t just do that. This is a rumor from 1911! That’s more than a hundred years ago! What made you think that it still existed?”

Marty says, “I took a chance, Jen. We’re on the verge of losing our apartment here. You can’t sell the Ford that you’re still fixing and nobody wants my old iMac. I couldn’t just stand here and do nothing.”

“But, you got caught. He almost called the police on you. You could have been thrown in jail.”

“Okay. Look, I’m sorry. It won’t happen again.”

“Thank you. I know what you did was for us but, we’ll make it. We’ll find a way.”

We hug it out then we went to bed.

The morning after, I wake up to Marty shoving my shoulder. He says, “Jen, wake up.”

I say, “What is it?”

“Okay. Listen.” I sit up as he stands next to my bed.

He says, “He came back.”

I say, “Patrick?”

“Yeah.”

“What did you do now?”

“I didn’t do anything. He wanted to talk about last night.”

“He saying sorry again?”

“Yes. But, there’s more. He says that there’s still hope for the envelope to exist.”

I just look at him with a blank expression and say, “I’m going back to sleep.”

He goes, “No, no. Just listen.”

I say, “How? How does the envelope still exist?”

“Okay. He explains everything. After the death of his great grandfather, the Burlington family followed his will and continued to pass down the family business to the next generation. But ever since the funeral, rumors of an envelope filled with cash began to spread like wildfire. To keep Wallace’s grave from being violated, a member of the new owners of the hotel would stay in an apart-

ment in Wallace's hometown, here, in Macon; across the street from the grave. They would keep an eye out for anyone trying to get in the grave. Patrick and his wife now own the Burlington motel in Key West and continue the tradition of keeping robbers out of the grave."

"What about last night? You were pretty successful, weren't you?"

"Yeah, Patrick confessed that he lost concentration due to his jazzercise routine.

"Jazzercise?" That pretty much made me laugh.

Marty continues, "Anyway, after our talk, he went home and called his wife in Key West. He tells her everything that happened and that there is no envelope. Later that same night, his wife calls him and says that she called his mother and father. She told them about the nonexistent envelope but, they disagree. They told her that there were some members in the family that saw the envelope in Wallace's casket on the day of the funeral. There were some that didn't see it when they were about to close his casket to be buried. After that call, Patrick calls his grandfather, who was a young boy during the funeral. His grandfather said that he saw a man that he did not recognize at the funeral. He said that the man approached the casket like everyone else did. But, he left the funeral early. Last night, Patrick had dug deeper into the story of the mystery man at the funeral. He called other relatives for answers and when he found his name, he searched him up. Patrick was able to find out that the man was Stewart Arnold, an ex-bell boy at the Burlington's hotel in Orlando. Stewart was married to a woman named Martha Lambert, a woman who looked exactly like Wallace's wife, Alexia. Later, Patrick was able to identify Martha as Alexia. She was having an affair. After Wallace died, she got married to Stewart three weeks after. However, before they could get married, Stewart was only a bell boy at the time. He was making little money but, Martha (aka Alexia) was told that he was rich. Stewart said that he was a founder and owner of a chain of restaurants across Florida. The truth is that it was his father who was the founder and owner but of a small chain in Jacksonville only. Stewart knew about the rumors of the envelope being filled with cash. To pay for his wedding, he goes to the funeral and when no one was looking, he took the envelope from the casket and walks away. Three weeks later, Stewart and Martha had a very big wedding."

"So, it's true? The envelope was for real?"

“Exactly. But, when Patrick looked deeper, after three years of marriage, Martha became a widow once again when Stewart had a train accident on his way to New Jersey. Guess where that envelope is now?”

“Where?”

“Buried with him. With Stewart!”

“With money still in it?”

“Probably not all of the \$20,000 but, some.”

I get out of bed, cross my arms and look at him. I say, “Don’t tell me, he wants us to join forces to find the envelope.”

“Yep.”

“We are not joining him. That is final.”

I go back in my bed and turn to him and he seems uncertain. I say, “Wait, you want to go with him?”

He speaks, “I think that we should.”

I get out of bed in rage. “Are you kidding me? You just said that you would never do this again and now you’re thinking about doing this again?!”

“It’ll be just one more time, the last time.”

“No, Marty. It’s inhumane. If I join you, it would go against everything that I believe in. It would go against God.”

“I know. You’re Christian and everything.”

“If you weren’t raised an atheist, you wouldn’t want to do this. Why do you want to continue with these ‘Burlington mysteries’ anyway?”

“Because, if we help Patrick find the envelope, then he will probably give us a share of the money. It would help us with our debt.”

“If there is money in it. This Arnold guy probably spent it all on his big fancy wedding. Even if there was, what makes you think that he would want to share it with us?”

“We can convince him.”

“But, we’re not doing it.”

“We have to, Jen. What other choice do we have?”

“I’m not doing it Marty!”

“Jen, I think that this can really help us in the long run. Plus, remember our pact from back at the farm? Our traveling pact? We finally get to travel. It’s what we always wanted. Besides, this would be a pretty great story to tell to our

friends, right?”

I knew that this wasn't right but, he's right. We're risking our apartment if we don't do something. I guess we're willing to do anything.

I sigh, “Fine, we'll do it. But, just this once.”

“Great. Now, come on. He's waiting downstairs.”

“Wait, he's still here?”

“Yeah, he was waiting for a response.”

We go downstairs in our pajamas. Marty opens the door and Patrick is there waiting. Guess he wasn't lying.

Patrick says, “Well, do we have an agreement?”

I say, “We'll do this on one condition. When we find this envelope, you give us half of the earnings. Assuming that there are any earnings.”

“Deal.”

Marty says, “So, where is this Stewart Arnold?”

Patrick says, “He's buried in Jacksonville. It's a long way from here. We can all use my van to get there.”

I had a bad feeling in the pit of my gut. After a week of preparations, we go into Patrick's van and drive off to Florida.

Shrieking Warfare

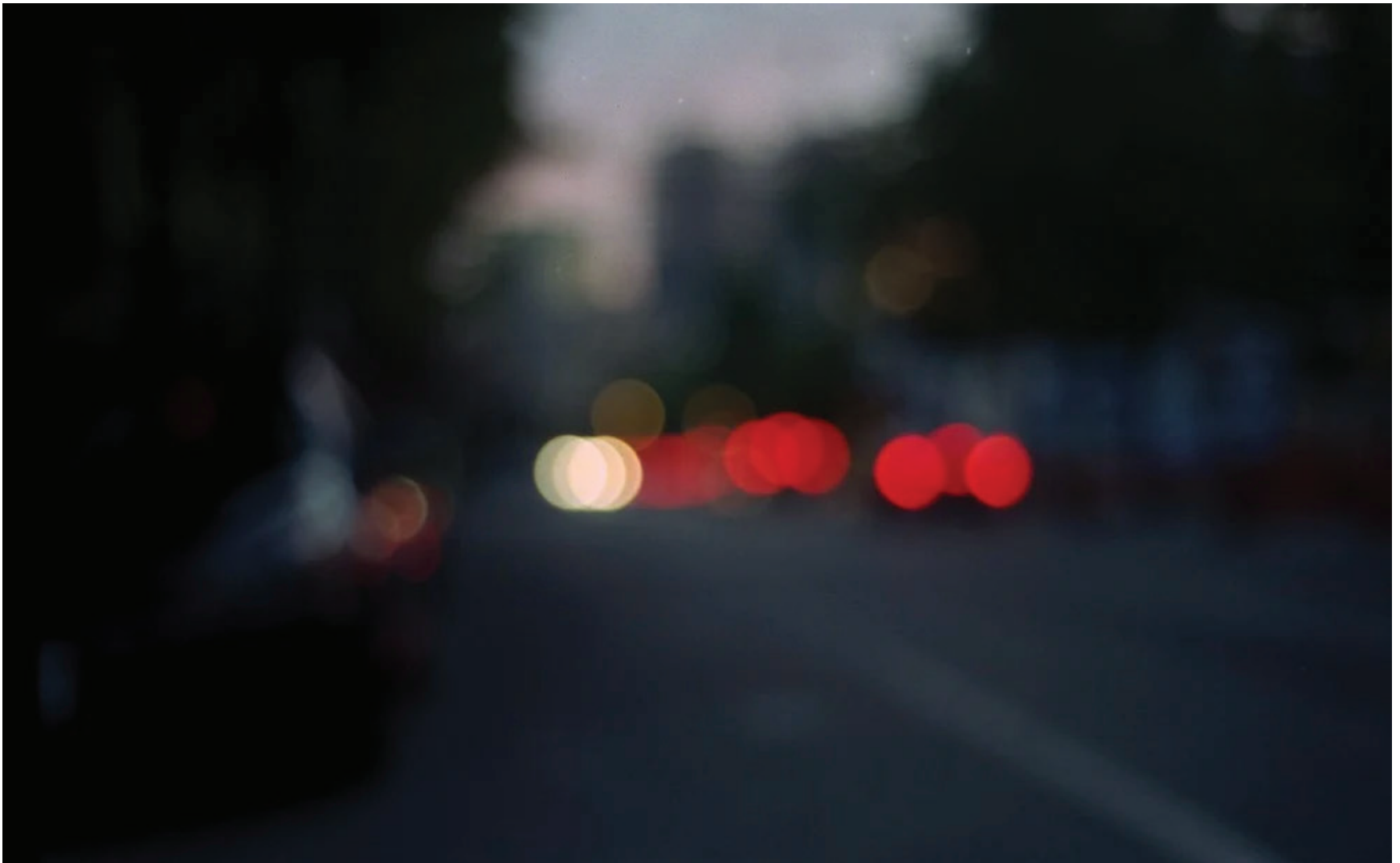
The war began, I guess, when I was born. But, it really started when I was a teenager. The summary of the war: constant bickering at each other, yelling and screaming down each other throats. This is how it started and continued throughout. The two sides, the right and the left, both think they know better than the other. That's what this constant fighting is all about. Right before the war started, I remember that I was stuck between two choices: taking a gap year or going straight to college. Taking a gap year would mean travelling and working on my own time, exploring my options, exploring myself and discovering purpose. College would mean competing for a stable future, studying and fighting to be financially and, maybe, mentally secure in the future. Also, loans and lots of them. This is when the war really started to get worse. I eventually made a decision and the right became furious. They ordered more militia, more planes in the sky to drop more bombs on the left, more boots on the ground to take over. During the course of any war, time can fly by really quick. With all of the dust from toppled buildings and the sound of explosions and screaming civilians, I didn't notice that ten years had rolled by. Ten years down the road, the landscape is ruined. My hometown, my parents, the college that I went to, my new house, my ex-wife, my children, my job, all gone. Everything that I had worked for is lost. At least the student loans are gone too. That's the only bright side, the only thing that can bring me joy but, not enough to make me forget. No matter how much I drink, it would not make me forget. There is no cure to my pain but, there is one solution. This war is what caused this, caused everything to fall. No government can end it; no god can end it. The only person that can end it is me. With this gun, I can finally put an end to the twenty-year civil war. All I have to do is pull the trigger and let the bullet enter.



Dylan Barrick

Hell Reigns

I'm on the court playing ball as I flick my wrist
I see a brother walking up looking really lit
His eyes fire wishing to get higher
Begging for loud he cries his most important desire
Conversation leading to K2
Telling me not to try it cause that stuff will have you lose
He could tell I'm foreign to his land
Trying to focus on my shot but he keeps on carrying questions
Inside I'm like "let me be" staring at his face
Taking sips from his bottle a disappointment standing in place
I'm thinking to myself "how did you get like this"
Oblivious to the reality in which he lives
A standing hypocrite
Well...I should know better
Needing cheddar for green were my only endeavors
So, I can't judge the man
Then we start talking about my rhyme skills and other plans
I can see right through the BS
Talking studio-time I would but I get ShopRite checks
Plus, school's on my back so my time is limited
Besides when I get free time I want to chill and kick back
I didn't want to seem like I wasn't down
But I could tell he's one to drown his sorrows into a pool of liquor to bust down
his frown
But Woah....!
I got people who know people who do the same
I guess that's cultural pain something I plan to change
But it's hard to do when you know that hell reigns.



“I Can’t Control My Brain”

I don’t remember the first time I heard “Island in the Sun” by Weezer and I don’t wonder when I did but I will always remember the time it made me feel so content and happy in the moment. A feeling that was far overdue.

Tinton Falls in South Jersey is about an hour drive from my home. We found two rooms at a Red Roof Inn where the ruddiest receptionist named Doug worked, who can’t understand why we wanted separate rooms.

“You girls want the two rooms next to each other” he says while typing “I have a room with two beds in it, why not that one?”

“No, we want the two” Mia responds her fair white skin turning red with anger/annoyance, and I just nod.

His face changes from confusion to curious with his mouth curling into a slight smile

“Well alright then.” He says in a relaxed tone.

Once outside and walking to my car I start to laugh.

“Mia, that guy had to think we were prostitutes or something!”

“I’m so happy you said that because I thought it too.” We stop at the car doors still laughing, and her strawberry blonde hair falls in front of her face as my head goes back.

At least our rooms are clean and right next to each other, like we wanted. Me and Nick the new friend and younger than us, have one room while Mia and her boyfriend, Stephen, big and tall and dressed like someone’s dad, are in the other.

We spend our night watching TV and snacking on Starburst and gummies. I squeal when I see that Hocus Pocus is on TV during the first week of December.

“No” Nick and Stephen almost say in harmony.

We play it anyway, Mia and I sing every word to “I Put a Spell on You.”

“I put a spell on you! And now you’re mine!”

Mia jumps on to the bed, and I laugh so hard I might just laugh up a lung.

Soon we are all roaring with laughter, laughing because everything around us looks like a world of imagination. Outside I see the ocean far ahead but it not the ocean just some cars driving but in my eyes, it’s the ocean like the tree beside me is sprouting squid tentacles. And every time I go outside the bare tree in front of my room moves closer and it absorbs the light from the lamp next to it making it look plastic. Like we’re in a plastic play set.

Squishing onto the bed to watch TV so everyone has a good view and joking about how we are some weird family. Mia, the mom, Stephen, the dad, Nick, the son, and me The Dog.

Eventually it's time to say our good nights only to wake up two hours later all groggy, we pack up my car and make our journey back. The ride home is quiet, and I keep my eyes on the road and sky in front of me. It feels like I am watching a scene from an Indie movie, but it just stayed in a loop on one scene. Clouds are a light shade of white while the sky is baby blue. I wanted to start a conversation, but what's the point? Our brains can't function it took me 10 mins to say

“Cookie dough overload bagel please” when the girl at the counter of The Bagel Nook, where we stopped before making the trip back home, asked what I wanted and was obviously annoyed by my late response so how can I hold a conversation. Until Mia perks up in the backseat.

“Hey, can I get your phone? There's a song I wanna play.”

I don't feel like answering so I give Nick a little nudge which is code for pass her the phone please.

He hands it over and that's when I hear it, the light strumming of a guitar followed by a familiar voice.

“Hip, Hip.”

My grogginess fades away just a little and all I can say is “Thank you.”

I tap my leg that's not on the gas pedal, a new scene of this movie, the sun shines brighter on my little black car.

*“When you're on a holiday
You can't find the words to say
All the things that come to you
And I wanna feel it too”*

We all sing along, I don't know where this energy came from, like every chord that plays or word that's sung transfers more energy into me.

*“On an island in the sun
We'll be playing and having fun
And it makes me feel so fine
I can't control my brain”*

The windows are open, and the wind flows into the car.

*“When you’re on a golden sea
 You don’t need no memory
 Just a place to call your own
 As we drift into the zone”*

I don’t know if Mia, Stephen, or Nick feels it, but I do. As if every word being sung was about the night we had just spent. As if Weezer used a special time traveling spy machine and saw the night we had and decided to write a song about it.

*“We’ll run away together
 We’ll spend some time forever
 We’ll never feel bad anymore”
 “HIP, HIP”*

I yell out because now I have this nostalgic feeling of the night before.

“We’ll never feel bad anymore (hip hip)

no no

(hip hip)

We’ll never feel bad anymore

(hip, hip)

In an island in the sun”

Nothing feels bad anymore.

Everything is going to be okay.

Interested in submitting to next year's *Labyrinth*?

Submission format:

E-mail to thelabyrinth@bergen.edu
Subject line: [Author's last name] {Title of Work}

Submission Guidelines:

Contest and publication in *The Labyrinth* is limited to students of BCC enrolled in academic years 2018 and 2019, including part-time and Learning-in-Retirement students.

All work submitted must be original and previously unpublished. By submitting to *The Labyrinth*, the contributor verifies that the work is definitely their own work and has never been publicly presented in any format, including print, personal blog, internet sharing site, or social media website.

Only electronic submissions will be accepted. Please format text documents to be readable by Microsoft Word. Artwork and photography should be submitted electronically in JPEG or PDF format, minimum 300 DPI.

Length restrictions: Fiction and essay, 5000 word maximum; poetry, 35 lines maximum; play, approximately 10 minutes performance time.

Artwork in any 2-dimensional medium will be considered.

Each work should be submitted separately. Maximum number of submissions per individual is limited to 3 in each prose category or 5 poems. Multiple submissions in fiction, poetry, drama, and essay are permitted. Artwork submissions are limited to a maximum of 5 in each category.

All text submissions must be typed. Prose must be double spaced. Plays must be in standard dramatic manuscript form.

All work must include the contributor's name, student ID number, full address, telephone number, and e-mail on each page. Contributors are advised to thoroughly edit and proofread work before submission. Artists and photographers, please title each submission.

Questions may be directed to Professor Mary Crosby (201) - 879 - 8931



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