

Tidal Echoes

10th Anniversary Edition



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Dedicated to the Southeast Alaskans who read and support this journal

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Editor's Note

It's that time of year again when we come together as a community and share the artistic work we have to offer. And this year is a little more remarkable, as we are celebrating our 10th year anniversary. That's right, it's been a decade since the birth of *Tidal Echoes*, and we couldn't have done it without you, the writers and artists that live in our community. This journal is regional to Southeast Alaska, and without the help of local creativity we wouldn't be able to have this special opportunity. So we thank everyone who has submitted for the past 10 years. This journal would not exist if it wasn't for your courage to step into the spotlight and share a part of yourselves with us.

We had the honor of receiving 300 submissions this year, up from 210 last year. This shows us that more and more people are getting involved with the journal. Congratulations to everybody who made it into this year's edition of *Tidal Echoes*.

For those of you who haven't yet submitted think about someone who's already been published. Odds are that whomever you're thinking about has one thing in common with other artists. They all took the time to put themselves out into the public spotlight. And that's what *Tidal Echoes* helps people accomplish. That's what this journal does every year. It gives people the opportunity to share their insight as Southeast Alaskans and show what it is that this community has to offer. Now consider our featured writer, Kim Heacox, and our featured artist, Patricia Helmar. At some point in their lives they put themselves out for others to see, to let strangers look at what they had to offer. That's why they are where they are today. And just like them, there are many others who have recently taken that giant leap. And some of those people are now gracing the pages of this year's journal. I urge you to be like these people. Put yourself on that pedestal. Put yourself up for review. Give yourself the chance to become recognized as an artist.

Please enjoy yourself as you flip through the pages in this journal. It's been my honor to work with *Tidal Echoes* over the past few years. I've seen it grow immensely with each year and I know that it will only continue to get better. I plan to be an avid reader and supporter of, and submitter to this journal in the future so I hope that you find it as rewarding as I do. We are looking forward to many more years as a regional publication, as well as seeing your submissions in next year's edition of *Tidal Echoes*.

Thomas Bay
Senior Editor

Acknowledgments

First of all we would like to thank this year's editorial board for all the time and expertise they offered us; if it weren't for Sol Neely, Sarah Minton, Karen Mitchell, Jenifer Vernon, Jeremy Kane, Annie Wedler, Kevin Maier, Ashia Lane, and Chalise Fisk this journal could not exist.

We would like to offer a special thanks to Dr. Dan Julius, University of Alaska Vice-President of Academic Affairs. Thanks to Dr. Julius *Tidal Echoes* received a UA Foundation Grant which really helped in strengthening the quality of this journal.

We would also like to thank Chancellor John Pugh and former Vice-Chancellor Carol Griffin as well as Provost Richard Caulfield. Without their support *Tidal Echoes* wouldn't be half the journal that it is today.

Katie Spielberger is also a huge contributor to this journal; her continued support has really helped *Tidal Echoes* grow and we appreciate the enormous amount of time and skill that she has put forth. Without her help we would be lost.

A special thanks to Virginia Berg who made the production of this journal much less stressful. No matter what she always seems to be on top of everything and without her there is no way that we would ever have made our deadline.

We also would like to thank Kim Heacox and Patrice Helmar for agreeing to be our featured writer and artist this year. Their work and talent is greatly appreciated and truly makes *Tidal Echoes* extraordinary.

Thank you to Christy Namee Eriksen and The Canvas for collaborating with REACH and working with individuals with special needs. They provided them with the opportunity to write creatively as well as showing them how to submit their work to *Tidal Echoes*. We are truly delighted to showcase the diverse work of Southeast Alaska.

Above all, we need to say thank you to the artists and writers of Southeast Alaska who submitted their work to *Tidal Echoes*. Their exceptional work is what fuels this journal and we hope to see even more submissions from the residents of Southeast Alaska next year!

Alexandra Brown, Junior Editor

Thomas Bay, Senior Editor

Jacqueline Boucher, Fall Intern

Emily Wall, Faculty Advisor

Chintatown Hotel

To live here means a bad job somewhere,
Or no job at all –
The boatyards, perhaps,
Scraping barnacles from a rich man's boat,
Or working freight on the midnight shift,
Boxcars booming,
One blinking light your guide to safety.

Brick breaks from the windowsill in pieces,
Like slow hours peeled
From the lives of those who live here:
Nothing happens all at once –
Earthquakes,
Sudden gustings of hurricane wind,
These filter themselves to unpronounceable islands;
Here, there is a simple breeze,
This weather flaking dust from the ledge,
Alley voices, like water,
Picking at weaknesses in yellow stone.

This third story walk-up,
Hallway paper peeling
With the weight of so many meals
Juggled over slow-burning coils
While beer cools on an outside shelf;
That same voice of a downstairs tenant returning,
Early hours,
His key fumbling your lock with raw frustration
Until he sobers enough to realize his recent failing.

Downtown trains muscle the night,
This building shoulders its way into a growing fog –
Sirens birth and die in shadow;
The Chinese restaurant across an alley
Pulls its doors shut,
Lights staying on over the stove
As the usual message sings of occupancy and concern.

A single man slowly walks the curb.

There will be no furniture
Thrown through the window tonight;
No mischief,
No need to bring authority down like a whip
Across the backs of those
Who limp their days in shadow –
Just this slight breeze to tickle a curtain alive,
Music from an all-night café down the alley,
Sweet lullabies drifting up
To lull a poverty to sleep.

Living by a Tank Farm Cradle Song

The fuel man's yelling again, 3:00 a.m., a January night at 10 below, Put out your goddamn woodstove, it's sparking the sky. You'll blow up the town like the 4th of July. Our backyard: the black sludge dump where dead cats seep in sappy mud holes. And every night so far, I sing to the marrow of our tomorrows, to my drowsy children—Don't let your tiny red chambers weep into your colorless stem-celled dreams. Spin-dizzy in the sweet threshold of this benzene lullaby—Go to sleep, little children, go to sleep.

Originally Published in *Slick*, White Knuckle Press, 2010



Shellscape, Sarah Cohen, Haines
Ceramic and Wood



She Would Never Understand His Hipster Ways, Hollis Kitchin, UAS Student, Juneau
 Ink & Watercolor on Paper



Eagle, Jill Dumesnil, UAS Faculty, Juneau
 Photography

Superfund

He flew in with his red cape on and landed on our front porch. He stood wide-legged, hands on hips, and announced he was there to save us. He leaped off the porch and zipped around like a dirt devil, digging a dozen test pits in our front and back yard. He scooped up some dirt and sniffed it. He let fall a handful, stuck his chest out, the big “S” shield oozing guck, stains to his knees, and declared the site “cleaned.” And when he leaped into the sky, his chromosomes deleted their long arms and his double-strands broke, raining diesel down on top of us.

Originally Published in *The Legendary*, Sept., Issue 31, 2011

June 20, 1977

The first barrel flowed 800 miles down the Trans Alaska Pipeline and was hauled across the Alaska Highway and ferried to our island. We'd won the lottery: the first barrel of oil. We heated it up with all our kinetic energy, the Budweiser and BBQ. In the morning, we broke our longer chains, treated it for impurities, distributed it. Some townsfolk went hunting with their new outboards. Some relit waterlogged wood inside their stoves. Some donated to our City's diesel light plant to watch the Six Million Dollar Man on the Zenith. Some folks set fire to themselves. You could see our flash from Salyut 5.

Originally Published in *Word Gumbo*, Vol. 1, Issue 3, 2011

Pipe Dreams

We made our claim in 1963 because the state came in and selected our land — everything, even our village and graveyard.

—Andrew Isaac, traditional Tanacross chief.

In our carbonfurnace era, we wait for our new pickup truck,
the diatoms to die in the basin of the earth, new Sears
windows for our house, for the fine-grained shale to heat.
We wait for the beach lot we've had our eye on, our share
of 44 million acres. We wait for the 92nd Congress, a declaration of settlement until shockwaves
passes through us and we're left out of the deal. And like Raven stealing water, we fly up from our
own myth, up through the smokehole where the smoke spirits hold us and the fire turns us pitch
black.

*Five SE Alaska communities were excluded from land claims under The Alaska Native Claims
Settlement act of 1971.

23 Camp Rules

Auntie worked in Skinny City along the length of pipeline. Sourdough, Five Mile, Old Man, and Happy Valley. \$15 dollars an hour. 84 hrs. a week. Fly tapes of Police Story and M*A*S*H in from California. Welding certificate traded for an apron at the cookhouse. Ignore 23 camp rules booklet someone handed her the first day on the job. Survive with her own rules: wear shirt buttoned to neck, clothes one size too large, look over your shoulder, look over your other shoulder, don't trust a 798er, wear kick-ass boots, sleep with a knife under your pillow.

Originally Published in *The Legendary*, Sept., Issue 31, 2011

Facing the Wind

Pre-schoolers can squeal in the face of a wind
that delivers a fierce rain to fog my glasses
strips coloring leaves from trees
and cleanses away summer's buildup of decay.
Gone soon the rotting salmon
washed away with the tasty trout
now forced by flood water to retreat from the spawning grounds
to deep water lakes surviving on little
but the promise of a rich spring.
Our fall table will groan with plenty
so will the one set in winter when snow and ice
open up ground for those willing to lean
into a stiff northern wind.

Gray Peace

Tonight the spruce reach up and tear the clouds
to fragments rising as smoke from a doused fire
as a gray peace settles over those I love
and those I don't.
In these minutes between rain
and wind
and the easy sunshine
someone should bundle up the town's troubles
and toss them onto the deck of an ocean going boat
like that gill netter moving up channel.
They should do it from the Douglas Island Bridge
before the wind reunites the broken clouds

Music on Troubled Waters

The *MV Matanuska* quivers with the throb of the huge diesels as it thrusts off from the Bellingham pier. Early April sunshine bathes the solarium deck as a score of walk-on passengers claim deck space for the voyage to Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Juneau, Haines and Skagway. They un-stack plastic reclining chairs and drag them onto the sunlit deck.

I know not to trust the sun, certainly not for my three-night voyage to Juneau and drag a recliner well back under the solarium roof. Remembering how the ceiling heaters can cook you in a sleeping bag, I position my recliner where I can enjoy heat from two heaters without being directly under either one. I also avoid setting up too close to the noisy intake fans to the engine room four decks below. After reclining the chair as horizontal as it will get, I spread my sleeping bag and a rented blanket on my now-inflated sleeping pad. Nearby a young couple nest their chairs together near the starboard bulkhead. We nod to each other.

"How far you going?" the young female asks.

"To Juneau," I answer, "that's home. How about you two?"

"Skagway," says the young man as he steps over and offers a handshake. We trade names. "We have jobs in Skagway up on a glacier looking after sled dogs."

"Oh, one of those dog mushing tourist outfits?" I ask.

"Yes," Carol beams. I can hardly wait.

"Have you done this before?" I ask.

"No, first time," she says. "First time to Skagway, first time to Alaska."

"Wow," I say. "Sounds like an adventure for sure." I wonder if they can even imagine their coming experience.

Carl, the young man, takes a guitar from its case, and Carol follows him out into the sun of the outer deck where no fewer than four tents are being erected and duct-taped to the deck. Carl finds a place to lean against the railing and strums the guitar quietly.

* * *

The weather holds throughout the night. I turn in early and go to sleep quickly. When I wake in the night with a complaining bladder, I am struck with the serenity of the solarium. There's heavy breathing here and there, but no loud snoring. I feel the pulse of the big engines and hear the rattle of air through the ship's metallic arteries. The ship creaks and pops. In the relative quiet I hear the rush of the sea along the vessel. Standing near the overhang of the roof, I see starry pin-pricks in the black satin above.

The community of sleepers comes alive before six with giggling and laughter as I snuggle deeper in the sleeping bag to catch a little more sleep. Failing that, I slip into my pants and mention to Carl and Carol the quiet of the night. Carol grins and says she heard some snoring. When Carl laughs I realize she's talking about me.

* * *

During the day people move their sleeping chairs further under the lip of the solarium roof as the sun disappears and dark clouds build. The tent campers check and re-secure the taping of their tents. With the loss of sun, only the tent campers stay on the open deck.

With freedom to do whatever, I enjoy the passing scenery while reading David Quammen's *Song of the Dodo*. For me this relaxing day is heavenly. During the afternoon I take breaks from the solarium and go below where I can plug in my computer.

* * *

By dark the weather has changed for the worse, but still no rain. Over the speakers the purser tells us when the ship will enter the relatively unprotected waters of Dixon Entrance, and that due to a weather front moving through the southeastern Alaska panhandle, we may encounter some “rock and roll” water during the crossing. About an hour before reaching Dixon Entrance I get comfortable on my recliner and go to sleep.

Discomfort wakes me as the roll of the ship presses my ribs against the arms of the chair. There’s a babble of voices as campers wrestle with tents, some trying to secure them, others yielding to the stinging rain and dragging them and their gear under the lip of roof. The tents still up inflate and deflate with the push and pull of the wind, and I wonder if one of them will go airborne. The ship rolls, then shutters as it plows ahead. My insulated cup has overturned under my chair and now clatters back and forth under nearby chairs. Water from the deck has drained back into the solarium and as the ship rolls, the accumulated water streams back and forth across the deck. Carl and Carol are up moving their packs to keep them dry. The wind screams outside and through openings I didn’t know existed in the solarium. From the deck is disorganized retreat. It is clear the tents can’t survive the blow and the last two are being taken down.

The wet campers are loud and boisterous as they pile into the solarium, and I can’t fight back resentment. Everyone is awake and the jostling frays nerves. I hear a guy snap at his girlfriend about how sleeping out under the stars had been her stupid idea. I begin to worry about getting sea sick, and wish I could see a fixed point on land. But beyond the orange glow from the heaters, the world is pitch dark.

“Hey, watch out,” somebody snaps. “Your wet tent is dripping on my sleeping bag.”

“Sorry, buddy, I’m just trying to hang it up.”

“The floor in here is already awash,” says the voice. As if to prove his point the accumulated water streams across from port and starboard. I reach down and snag my cup as it rolls within reach.

Suddenly Carl strums some chords on his guitar and starts singing “I want to go home” and about the Sloop, John B and sheriff John Stone. Someone else joins in with a harmonica. I get up and slip on my boots. “Hey, there’s floor space over here,” I call to a couple of wet tenters. “Hold on a moment and I’ll give you a little more room.” I slide my recliner a yard toward port, and the couple slips two recliners between mine and Carl and Carol’s.

“Jesus Christ,” the guy says, “my bag is soaked.”

Carl has started to sing “Nearer my God to Thee,” and laughter mixes with the song. I tell the bedraggled guy with the soaked sleeping bag that the purser rents blankets.

“Thanks, man,” he says.

“Pretty strong wind,” I say.

“Pretty strong is right,” he says. He turns to his girlfriend, “Watch our stuff, and I’ll get some blankets.”

“I don’t think anybody wants our wet stuff,” the girl laughs, “I’ll come with you and borrow some towels, too. I want to take a hot shower before I try to go back to sleep.”

“I’ll keep watch on your gear,” says Carol.

Chairs scrape against the deck and people move to let the wet refugees position recliners. Within minutes the little community in the solarium had closed rank against the storm outside and the little squalls developing inside. The ship rocks and rolls, but the music goes on until we escape the worse of exposure to open ocean. By then I’m tucked deep in my sleeping bag, enjoying the music and camaraderie—and savoring being alive.

Dark Smoke of Goodbye

After tucking the tour bus in for the night
I drive my truck through town toward home.
Rain deepens the darkness and gutters flicker
red as if blinking beer signs bleed bright blood.
Shoppers hurry to board the only cruise ship
still tied to the dock, its stacks belching
the dark smoke of goodbye.

Do these stragglers hurry to dine with friends
in the brightly lit floating hotel or to show off
their baubles to an appreciative spouse or friend
or do they, like me, face an empty room?

I brake sharply as a woman, shopping bags
in both hands, darts suddenly
into the cross-walk ahead.
Facing my headlights she gives me
an embarrassed smile, then disappears
into an alley, leaving her smile hanging
in the headlights and me feeling more alone.

1969 Anti-War Rally

We skirt the 405 lock the doors
through downtown zigzag
to Pershing Square, historic
park of intellectuals who soap boxed
their opinions to each other
and passersby amid elephant plants
and concrete benches
populated by secretaries on lunch,
councilmen checking out their secretaries,
and cops protecting both
from long-haired proselytizers.
Like us.
We grab the signs we made
in summer art class with mother
on the porch of the Foursquare Church,
block traffic, and lift our mantras
to MayorYorty and City Hall:
1, 2, 3, 4 ... we don't want your fucking war!
Make love not war
War is not healthy for children & other living things
(okay, so we bought that last poster).
We chant with our parents and the throng:
Hell no we won't go
We sing Lennon and Ono:
All we are saying is give peace a chance
And we flip off the man through the KTLA cameras.

Old Canyon Studio

My mother's studio sits in an old niche
by the side of the road. The slow smell of oils
infuse the oaks and sage brush. Engrossed
in another cross, she paints. Oblivious.

I love her studio. It looks like pieces
of strange dreams, scattered hallucinations nailed
to the barn's silver walls: the frog our dog barfed
up; old Mexican papier-mâché dragons
dangling by their broken tails; a Balinese
lion mask; a hundred Christs on a hundred
crosses; portraits of her children; pallets, thick
with sienna, cerulean, ochre, green,
bright colors that tumbled into her blackness;
antique Chinese embroideries; dead flowers,
starfish, sand dollars, her lucky cormorant;
a milk pink potato bug in the small space
between Adam's fingertip and life; charcoal
hands tacked everywhere; small pieces of faces:
eye:nose:brow, mouth:jaw. Paintings lining the walls.

She scrubs the 4 x 5 foot homemade canvas
with a new sable brush, a camel hair clenched
between her teeth, her face and hands a Pollock,
adds an empty wine bottle to the old trunk.

Elegy

I once wrote a sonnet
to a woman I did not know.
The words would drip from my mouth,
bleed through the paper like ink on skin.

Words become change,
clingy bits of lint stuck to your collar
where that warm-tan foundation powder stains;
straining to form a complete circle surrounded by white linen.

Left behind on a cracked, yellow parchment
are some spare moments
(tangled, woven coal wrapped around my fingers).
It looks to me to be an elegy now.

I find solace in a kayak
on a lake of crushed ice
where the blue flame of experience turns solid
into glacial dreams.

It seems I'm sitting on a spider's web
of ripples barely holding me afloat.
Baby arctic terns, peppered with the brown of youth,
climb upon a rocky hillside, the pebbles slipping out from underneath
their feet.

Watching them, the gravel in my stomach becomes finer still.

Lifeline

Lifeline.

Strung heavy by our disappearing distance.
Pretending then knowing.
I hear the ocean waves knocking under this stage.
And we all stall for that curtain call.
Conduct your life tightfisted by the third act.

Drink up dreamers:
tea over trauma / coffee over calamity.

There's an onset after the upset.
All ends end unnaturally,
and fall back into the beginning.
It was not a normal morning;
he left like woodsmoke, still clinging to my person -
like cream, stirred in home-brew,
like dawn, pushing the curtains of night away from the city's sleepy eyes anew.
Always greater was his return later -
freshly inked.
Attached to me by invisible tattoo.
And every time his sojourn beckons him back into view -
deep sea flowers unfurl - doubts unravel.
If I could give him something grander than a ring - a locket - a loose verse sonnet,
I would steal not stars, but heaven's Milky Way, and leave the sky scarred.
How does a man, humble, make love into the tangible?
As poets, we stretch our voices to echo love,
and we know we'll never be articulate enough -
to convince this world
(of badlands and blues singers)
of providence.
Still we linger.
I admit to never waiting to let my suave flow.
Even as a kid I knew every word that I learned was meant to be thrown.
And each time a word gave me the downright spooks and scrumptious need to scribble,
I'd shout its name!
Rejoice in all my trouble!
In tribulation we glimmer so!
I don't sleep, but I dream for sure,
knowing what I live for.

Load your lips!

Load your lips!

with ammunition

ready for a kiss.

Speak:

Preamble to happy apocalypse.

Write the path to a fit of pique.

Prelude to confessing what others might insist.

Love is the only temple.

Favorite mosque.

Holiest obelisk.

Oldest religion.

Before the word,

there was a drum slamming,

a heart beat singing!

Counting up to the moment the end is ending

in a kiss.

The great unknown known.

What to do when we're finally alone.

For it was after the first kiss

that poetry began to exist.

A kiss so awe inspiring gods knelt and mountains bowed.

Today we could compare it to a rocket soaring or a Kamikaze howling.

A kiss that in all mighty wake could turn over oceans.

An inversion of destruction.

Popping pink atomic clouds proudly.

Reversing of brutal car collusion.

Mending any piece found broken.

Maybe now our governments would try to harness the power of such a pure force,

that they would become blinded to their violent course.

Warheads would fall weak.

Speech writers would be speechless and Poets wouldn't know what to write.

Incite. To a kiss.

The opposite of pleading, wilting, lonely abyss.

Wastelands to aching edens.

Prepare your wailing army of words;

bring a parade of poetry

when love moves you. Closer.

Burning prose in your throat.

The wait is entirely too long

on the wing of hesitation

before a proper

(kiss.)

Let's Call this One an Origin Story

Let's Call this One an Origin Story

of me;

The upbeat chronic depressive,
the fire starter, hey and maybe not quite the medieval martyr-
but i'm gonna stay awhile, walk the parallel pathways farther.
And after my words, you'll be more than content.
Finally hearing somethin' echo resonant.

Let me present- an introduction
fueled only by poparts, spicy chai!
An almost anchor-less joy and lucky sigh!

i am the daughter of Moshe And Jonna.
My father comes from the old country,
New Jersey, Pal Park!

Feeling the road move before him.
He jumps trains wit' my mama.
She hails from the north-land, snagging hearts with sleight of hand,
She's got her nomadic ways;
Kotzebue - Unalakleet - Ambler - Oakland.

Hell i'm a
Hasidic cowboy
with star of David spurs on my feet.
A driftwood viking
with Beowulf howling in my belly when i speak.
My family juniper tree
split down the middle
to the roots of me.

i'm an honest liar.
i take on names that aren't mine to keep.
i name myself after famous idiots.
i tilt at windmills
and lose.
i joust towards those stars known as dreams
bull's eye!

Spearing night terrors-
i fall in flock with a murder of crows-
i come from a village of ravens.
i am girl hear me slam.
i'm not heading to either point a OR z.
Nontraditional homesteadin'.
 i'm only as free as my mind
 as free as a brush on paper
 calligraphy on clouds.
This is me today.
i'm the home-schooled wonder!
A cosmonaut breaking orbit!
Claiming gray cells and breaking outta any no good institution!
Tripping on my own mythology!
Keeper of my story.

And i write down all my wrongs.



Badlands, Kent Pillsbury, UAS Student, Juneau
Photography



Dryas from Ground Level, Richard Stokes, Juneau
Photography



Learning the Ropes, Ryan Cortés Pérez, UAS Student, Juneau
Photography



Lucid Memory, Ryan Cortés Pérez, UAS Student, Juneau
Photography

Dirt

Dirt. The Guinness that I-don't-know-who spilled has seeped and dried into the carpet. I noticed it last night soon after it dropped—a wet, brown mess I didn't want to deal with. My carpet, but not my beer. I turned away from the filth and headed to bed; I shut my bedroom door on the remnants of my housemates' Après-ski dance party. I relished the safety of my clean room and I snuggled in with my already sleeping mate, Lee, while in the living room the bodies of friends sagged and faded uncomfortably into our furniture; the sweat from their dancing stuck to their faces and beer seeping through their pores.

There's a bottle of soy sauce and an empty bowl and spoon in the corner next to a lime green tutu and a map of the Tetons. A Crazy Creek Chair, two empty PBR cans (one crunched down flat, as if the drinker had a passing thought to help recycle) and a shot-ski rests by the window. Set down, then forgotten. I wish the mess were something unusual—the dregs and dirt of this party, the evidence abandoned for just one hung-over day of work. I wish I trusted my housemates to clean when they get home tonight.

They might.

But they might not even notice. This state of dirt: a normal amount of clutter and mess. The kitchen looks average. Crumbs scatter the counter and litter the floor. A cheese-stained knife rests on our only cutting board, next to a carrot peel, an onion head, and stale white snowflakes of sourdough bread. All left as housemates hurried to make breakfast and coffee, pack lunches and rush to the slopes this morning. Last night, Lee and I had made sure the kitchen was spotless before we left for bed: I swept, wiped counters and scrubbed the stove. Lee washed dishes and we both smiled as we watched dancers whirl and meld together. Colorful entities of happiness spilling Guinness on my floor.

Dirt. Piles accumulate. Dirt comes of its own accord.

A deserted house builds castles of dust, a fireplace spits ash as it burns. Right now, ash litters the ground around our own woodstove, leftovers from the gluttony of last night's firewood meal. I'm reminded of a highchair and a toddler's first cake; wood devoured so heartily that half ends up on the floor.

Boots transport mud when you thought all you'd stepped on was the pure white of winter. We stomp into this house, wipe our feet and remove snow boots and backpacks from a day on the slopes, tired and hungry and cold. We grab a meal (forget to put the milk and salsa away) make a fire (don't bother to clean the ash from the night before) and relax. Dirt is so thoughtless. I don't realize I've made it until it's there.

In her drunken state last night, my best friend Emily called Spencer, another friend far away in New York City. Emily, Lee and I sat on my bed as Emily slurred and giggled. When she was done, Emily passed the phone to me. I sat, snuggled close to Lee, holding hands with Emily: a circle, pure and clean and loving. On a bed well made, in a room well kept. The only clean space in this dirty house. I listened to the voice far away, on a dirty street in a dirty city.

"I'm only telling you this because I'm drunk," Spencer said.

Emily began relaying a funny story about her day in the snow to Lee. I let her voice become far away and focused on Spencer's voice in the phone.

"I know it was a long time ago, but I thought you should know: a woman I slept with before I slept with you had HPV. You should get yourself checked. Men can't get tested, so..."

Dirty.

I am suddenly repulsed by the secrets that could linger in the corners, could crawl beneath my skin.

Dirty.

I itch to be away. I itch to be clean and outside, in nature that does not betray me or the ones I love. I look into Lee's beautiful face, at freckles, at plum-colored lips and deep brown eyes. The smooth, strong lines

of a body, perhaps soiled by my history, dragged in from a party long ago.

Dirty.

I hang up the phone and sit, my loved ones talk around me, but I am alone.

Dirty.

Sun sparkles on the snow outside our window, a white, pure entity, soft snow like soft skin. Passion drives me to climb steep mountains for this, and float down in gentle, perfect curves. But when I get home, my boots muddy the doorstep, and I leave a trail of dirt as I go.



Liquor Shack, Ryan Cortés Pérez, UAS Student, Juneau
Photography

Constellations

I found my star chart the other day, the one Em, Ian and I brought to Utah. The one that actually belongs to Ian, I think, but in the shuffle and meld and then redistribution of gear throughout the time the three of us lived together, it somehow became mine.

I miss him. I miss her, too, although the pain of our severed and slowly sawed off relationship has left me raw. But now, star chart in hand, and two-thirds of our threesome shipped off towards their next adventure, I realize what we had. And what I let go.

We'd step away from the campfire almost every night, Ian and I, to trace the patterns in the stars, while Em made hot tea, or huddled close to the flames to read. The fire's orange orb hugged the edges of her face and illuminated her for the two of us in the dark: our shared, vibrant star.

Away from the comfort of fire, Ian and I braved the severity of the fall air. Never before had we seen stars so clear, so bright. The minimalist decor of desert meant we could, for the first time, stare, entranced by the beauty of a skeletal world. Crisp air left layers of rock exposed. No tree hid the expanse of rolling, cracked earth. Water's angry path seemed more noticeable than in rain country because few plants hid the deep cuts of red-blood canyon. And the stars, too were exposed: the same stars as elsewhere were here clearer, more precise without atmospheres of barely-held dew dimming our view. Never before had we had the luxury to watch the stars migrate across the sky; night after night, six weeks in a tent. The three of us surrounded by the delicate earth and brittle stars.

Ian focused on patterns. He liked to see shape and order in natural beauty. As for me, I found the constellation names bound me to ancient ages, stories and people.

"Wait. Where's Vega again?"

"Ok. It's the big one at the bottom of the Lyra constellation: make a straight line from the tip of the big dipper to Draco's brightest star to Vega. See?"

"Oh!!! Yeah! Neat!"

Vega, as well as Thuban, one of Draco's stars, have each at one point been the "North Star": the axis around which the earth moves. As other constellations fall behind the earth's horizon, the North Star remains central all night. Vega and Thuban will each be the axis point again, a phenomenon that is called axial procession: gravity tugs and tweaks the earth's rotation, as if gravity, the perfectionist, is never quite satisfied with the axis around which the earth moves.

Ian told me. And I believe him.

Draco—who slithers around the big dipper and protects Ursa Minor from Hercules next door—means snake in Latin. Draco the snake guarded golden apples, but Hercules the Hero looms nearby always ready to steal them for his own.

This I told Ian. He laughed but didn't much care. I didn't mind.

Night after night, we'd trace stars with our eyes, proudly sharing with each other the patterns and forms we'd discovered. Yet while a friend can describe and point, no one can really help you trace the shapes; it's a solitary epiphany when Cepheus finally comes into focus or Pegasus's orientation begins to make sense. Here we stood, necks craned: friends in the dark, individual eyes searching up, each one of us a solitary star in a larger constellation.

Individuals. And gravity pulls us in different directions. Our axial procession in ten years will tilt us so that different stars are the center of our night's sky. Ian has Emily. And she used to be the center for me, too. Before I moved home to my temperate rainforest home in Southeast Alaska, and before I pulled them here to share this home.

I remember when I first met Emily, both of us freshman in college, both of us scared despite the independence we thought we'd procured as teens. Suddenly my family, community, and friends were far away in Juneau, hidden by the mountains and the rain that hems them in. Em and I clung to each other, as if in one person we could replace the whole communities we'd left behind. Both of us loved to play outside, as did our new friend (and in quick succession her boyfriend), Ian. The three of us would gallivant around the mountains and rivers of Eastern Washington, Ian, the outdoor preppy, in perfectly coordinated Patagonia; me, the homespun girl, in hand-me-down flannel; and Emily, the free spirit, in a tutu or sometimes in nothing at all. We'd laugh at her eccentricities and she'd bask in the light of these two sets of eyes that gravitated towards her.

I remember the first sight of snow in the darkness outside our window. Emily, with a shriek, ripped off her clothes and ran outside to dance, naked and white against the snow that fell like powdery stars cascading from the sky and settling into the night. And over the years, she coaxed me out of the awkward layers I wrapped around myself and taught me how to dance in the darkness, just us and stars and fresh snow.

In Juneau, moisture mucks up the stars. Wet crowds us with leaf and tree and mist so that we focus on more intimate details, confined to the very close. Mountains cradle us from the expanse of space, trees grow lush and close and obscure mountain views, and then mist rolls in and hides all but the closest tree. I'm left staring at one droplet on one lime-green dogwood leaf. I do not even think of stars.

I brought my two best friends home to live with me. We'd shared dwellings for four years, and made each place our temporary home: a farm house in a rural Washington college town, a transient tent in the Southern Utah desert, a house with a wood stove cuddled up to the Tetons, and now Juneau Alaska; the next adventure for our makeshift family. I came to reconnect with my hometown, Ian came to explore with friends a new expanse of wild land and sky, and Emily came because gravity pulled her here; she came (how easy to see retrospectively!) for our little family.

But this place was different from our other homes. Here I had friends, family, jobs, errands and routine—a former life that crowded my world and made it instantly full. Here were connections and familiar faces and friends and people and arts to crowd out the two who'd come here with me. I knew this entire town, they knew—me. We'd walk down the street and I'd stop to catch up with every third person. We'd step foot in a bar and I was off, whisked away for a drink by some long-lost high school companion. I'd invite them to my Juneau friends' houses and they'd feel uncomfortable, awkward. I'd invite them to a gallery walk—sentimental for me because I'd been going for years—and they'd politely decline.

Even as we went out to share Juneau together, Ian and Em would mourn my loss. They could feel the shift; that here I wasn't theirs only. They had to share me; they didn't want to. I had to make time to be with just them; I didn't.

"Are you breaking up with me?" They each asked me at separate times while they lived here.

"I...didn't know I had to," I told them. They were dating each other, not me. But the platonic group was us, a family of three.

So yes, I guess I was.

I wanted them to enjoy and accept this rich community and my role in it, and they wanted me to remember not to forget them, my stars, lost behind a full, bubbling life. We all failed.

"I can't tell if you love me anymore," Emily said once, eyes pleading that she was wrong.

"Em, I'm sorry, I'm trying, I really am—you'll always be my BEST friend," I assured her, annoyed that she needed constant reassurance. But as she victimized herself I became the enemy and already I'd begun to build walls between us. Best. Best bestbest, she was my best friend if she'd stop needing to be number one, and just share me with my parents and my friends from high school and my sister and my significant other.

And I could see panic and hurt in the way she clung, stung by the realization that while she'd been the center of my universe for the past six years, now, as my two worlds collided, she was "best" from the other world, the one that wasn't Juneau.

Ian let go. I could see sadness in his face, but also the understanding that he had to share. He let me live and let me go. He enjoyed the moments we did have together without begrudging me the time I was gone.

Emily fought; and to fight against someone's home is to lose; despite the power of the sun, which pulls our little planet in wide, circling arcs, in rain country it cannot win against the clouds. I wish I'd had the clarity to see what she fought for. Instead, I only saw what she fought against, and I fought back. My eyes, which had been attempting to focus on every overwhelming detail of this crowded place, suddenly had one less person to whom I felt loyal. Suddenly it was easy to turn decidedly away from her.

Two mornings before they left Alaska for the next adventure, I saw the most vibrant display of Northern Lights I've ever seen. I'd come to Skagway to run a race over the Klondike highway, and right as the mountains cut off the wet of coastal Alaska and created the dry of the Yukon, there they were: Aurora Borealis. Green streaks tipped in red danced and swirled over my head and tickled the dark rim of the horizon. Colors spiraled and turned above me and I stared, neck craned, up.

Northern lights are caused by the energy of charged particles colliding headlong into atoms. It's something Ian would have told me if he were beside me in the dark. I would have laughed, and made it a metaphor. Then he would have laughed at me.

Some peoples think the Northern Lights are dancing human spirits. I can see Emily up there, dancing in a pink tutu, twirling, whirling. I love watching her, the selfish child, lost in herself. I wished I could tell Ian that, see him shrug and laugh at my romantic notions. And then we'd go back to silence, individuals seeing in our own way, but sharing in the beauty.

But Ian wasn't there. Nor was Emily. I invited them, but they chose not to come.

This time, I stared up, a solitary figure on the dark highway, and watched particles rush at each other, like people so charged with emotion that red colors their cheeks as they run towards each other. In love? In battle? It seems, most often, we fight because we love so much. Because we're charged enough to care.

Ian's dream is to see Northern Lights; he came to Alaska hoping, not too hard, but hoping. He needed to be North, like Juneau, to see such a heavenly display, though actually he needed more than Juneau could offer in the summertime. He needed a dry, naked sky that cleared away leaves and dewy air, so that he could stare through troposphere, stratosphere, mesosphere and into the thermosphere, where particles collide.

I wish I'd remembered to explain this to both of them before they came: that Juneau would be different from anywhere we'd been before. That I was coming home, to nestle into the intimacy of a lush community I'd forged long before I met them. That lushness, while beautiful, can hide the stars, and the Aurora, until we forget there's anything beyond our clouded view.

Chemawa School Cemetery (Founded 1886)

In my arms I carry Jon, age one,
part Tlingit, as we search the grass for grave
markers of departed Tlingit students,
relatives or in-laws, when we find
the 1918 graves of Aleuts
whose names survive: Merculieff, Ermanoff,
Rukovishnikoff. I softly sing them
“Memory Eternal” in Slavonic.

A sunny day in spring, the last of April,
a muggy afternoon of nettles, bees.

Amtrak clacks the rails that separate
the cemetery from the old, brick school
building, now abandoned, passing through
to Portland; sounds its horn. Again I heft
the baby, changing arms, keeping up the search
for Tlingit names like Zuboff, Dick, and Jackson,
my shoetip clearing, polishing the name-plates
on graves of those who never made it home.

—*Chemawa/Portland, April 30, 1991*

Unfinished Business

Retirement plans: first,
turn potato garden,
plant potatoes; start to
shred old paperwork, old
IRS returns, bank
statements; then fly south for
cancer surgery; spend
the summer getting well,
return to thirty years
of Tlingit texts to finish,
edit poetry,
and watch potatoes grow.

—*April 20, 2011*

Triptych, Easter 2011

I

From childhood up, we know
the story, witness it
confirmed in lives of friends
and family, and then
ourselves: cancer,
a wake-up call that death,
rather than much later,
no longer a distant
concept, is coming soon.

II

We become the lines
of ancient poetry
and texts, like Kogutey,
Altai, from Central Asia,
“His past days lengthened,
his coming days grew short.”

III

The text: Gesthemene.
Even Jesus didn't
want to die. No one
wants to die. But Christ
accepted. We prepare
to meet the promise of
the empty tomb.

—April 23-25, 2011

Gardening with Elijah

Gardening with five-
year-old great grandson
Elijah, preparing
to plant potatoes,
we unearth eternal
questions: the anatomy
of worms, and rising
steam, where sunbeams
meet the fresh-turned earth.

—*May 13, 2011*

Winter Promise

Winter daybreak, crisp,
a hint and promise
of midday sunlight,
silent, save for the sound
of tiny taps on hemlock
that would be raindrops
in another season,
but today the foraging
of unseen winter birds.

—*November 19, 2011*

Daanaawaakh

I've known this Tlingit name
for over forty years.
The world at large has known it
a century or more
through Muir and other
Alaska travel books:
Daanaawaakh, Silver Eye,
more precisely, Silver
Dollar Eye. Today I
see it for the first time
now, as this enormous
parking lot Raven perched
on my top carrier
looks at me and blinks.

—*November 24, Thanksgiving, 2011*

Morning Miracle

"Just another morning here. It's a miracle and it comes around every single day of the year." - Nanci Griffiths

In October, after a storm, it is good to take an inventory, upon waking, of the miracles in your own home.

An electric light that brightens the kitchen with the flick of a switch,

cool water from the tap,

banked coals in the woodstove,

coffee brewing,

and best of all, a gentle old retriever who has not died in the night and is willing to be coaxed into standing up and staggering outside.

It is just you two in companionable silence out there in the windy rain of pre-dawn.

The raincoat over your pajamas just another miracle.

The hens murmur in the coop. The tide ebbs. The wind blows through the spruce trees. The school bus labors up the hill.

Just another morning here.

Later, in the kitchen, while you sip that coffee and read the news, the good old dog will groan in his sleep and you will look out the window just in time to see one apple on a bare tree, hanging on for dear life.

Just another morning.

Just another miracle.

Untitled

The morning sky: red
like the salmon strips hanging
in the smoke house.



Reflecylec, Joel Mundy, Juneau
Photography

Pets at Marks Trail

My Uncle Jim Marks and his wife Jennie never had any children, but they adopted two of my brothers, Leo Marks and John Marks, whose Tlingit names were Aak'eiÉesh and K'óox. K'óox was Jennie's brother's name. Leo only lived to be ten years old, but John lived into his sixties.

Jim and Jennie adopted a dog—the kind that looks like a wiener. The dog's Tlingit name was ShaagiTláa. One summer the entire family went to Port Althorp, a salmon cannery on the outer coast. The superintendant had a German shepherd dog, a huge dog. My aunty and uncle's wiener dog went into heat about the time when the German shepherd was around, and she mated with it. ShaagiTláa produced two huge dogs. One was a German shepherd, the other had a black coat with orange markings on its face. They were both male. They were both huge, as you would expect puppies from a German shepherd to be, but the mama was so small. Can you imagine any of this?

Uncle Jim gave the dogs to my brothers Alex, Raymond, Leo, and Peter. Uncle Jim gave the dogs Tlingit names. The German shepherd was given the name KaachKudak'aa, a Shangukeidí clan name, but Lukaax.ádiyádi, a child of our clan, the Lukaax.ádi. In English, the human with this name was Tom Jimmie. The other dog's name was also for a child of Lukaax.ádi. Its name was Kax'weisÉesh, one of Uncle Jim's Tlingit names.

Tom and Jimmie were happy dogs. They traveled with us when the family the family was camping from our boat, the New Anny. When we were able to go ashore we'd take them to the beach with us and they'd play on the beach.

Then my Uncle Jim bought a parrot. He always did the unusual. After they bought the parrot, I'm not sure which member of Jim's family taught the bird to speak Tlingit. But it spoke in Tlingit. When a woman was coming down to the house at Marks Trail, it would say "Shaawátkadaanwéixy-aanagút!" (A good-looking woman is coming down the trail!)

So, hey! You guys and girls out there—if you think you can't learn Tlingit, just remember that the parrot, Kax'weis, learned it! If a bird can learn it, you folks can learn it, too!

Summer Bears

In August red berries cluster
and salmon slap the water
like a timeless, offbeat drum
beckoning brown bears –
 sow, two cubs, and lone, young male –
and thrill-seeking humans
angling for the perfect photographic shot.
Regardless of hour, day or season,
with a lens on fall
and an eye on summer,
I'm hard pressed to think of change ahead –
 quiet days and storm and rain.
And on the bookshelf
propped behind votive candle and beach glass
is the photo of the summer bear.

Originally Published in *Alaska Women Speak*

Rie's Song

We are girls of the sun and the rain
proclaims Rie as she skips on lengthening
legs down the forest path.
The rare 80 degrees in Sitka has eclipsed
the dreary drone of summer rains.
Three years old and full of spontaneous song
that could be poetry – if only I understood all the words.
Along the trail, Rie names each slug “Baby”
and exchanges chatter with ravens in the canopy of cedar and spruce.
She pockets coins at the Money Bear
and other treasures:
 eagle feather, blue bead, lichen.
Near the end of our trek, we quicken our pace
to avoid busloads of visitors.
Not even this alters the song.

Originally Published in *Alaska Women Speak*

October Luna

From inky, black sky
above Baranof Island
emerges the moon.
Crescent, croissant,
a tangerine slice.
Mandarin autumn light
she filters
 through the intricate lace
 of bare, alder branches.

Originally Published in *Alaska Women Speak*

Persephone's Return

Persephone returns with glitter in her hair
moonbeams and extended daylight hours
fireweed in her hand,
a trail of blooming lupine,
violet & wine,
in her wake.
This pale queen
does not arrive on some cruise ship,
floating virus net, contagion carrier.
No, she walks on water.
Her shoulders back,
she inhales fresh salt air-
rubbery brown Extra Tuffs, Sitka slippers, on her feet.

“Arctic Terns”

They appear in April
Light-struck and shimmering

As the lake opens,
As the snow contracts,
As the willow tips swell and gleam,
The terns drift down to the shore.

Furled, they rest,
Sharp and small,
Balancing into the wind
For a few trembling moments—
Then open their wings again,
Welcome the wind,
Rise

Their lilting flight has carried them
Across ten thousand miles of sky:
Hungry for light,
Rising north along the slope of the tilting Earth—
Small, small weights of warmth, suspended
From reed-stalk bones and feathers;
Eyes filled with sky.

Immersed in air, in light,
Cirrus flags, they leap on the wind
Like light leaping on ice, on waves.

Each one glimmers with such bright grace
That for all its lightness, it becomes
A pivot for the day—

And sky, and ice,
And stone, and sedge
All swing around it;

And I too, am swinging:
Rapt, breathless,
Hearing from within
The faint cheeping
Of my own feeble, hatchling grace.

Previously Published in *L'attitude*, June 2011

Let's Not Give Mind to Existentialism

Sometimes when you ask me about purpose...I tell you *Born to beWild* will be the theme song for our Magic Carpet Ride, because with those boys we don't need to watch the hands on the calendar tick. And then as the wood smoke fills our tent, perfuming the sweaters we wear for the cold we refuse to welcome, we become Newanda, the Captains of our Souls so that we may rescue sticks from the fire to paint names in the sand. Even my galosh melts slowly into inky molded puddles creating rain jackets for rocks. I must remind you that To-Do lists merely give purpose for checkmarks.

And then, when I ask you about purpose...We sit and sip black tea to ward off the parchment-brittle language we refuse to speak. Determined hearts pool warmth to those black tea tongues which strive to spill clover honeyed breath into the sails of wayward affirmations – beautiful – you agree, because for you such language is meant for more than carving black features on a white page. Then your hands which were made to drive iron stakes, which were made to pull sunflowers from the earth, which were made to warm my flesh, pull me around you. This is you reminding me that we can talk of such things later.

Killing the Queen

Women huddled around massive pots of broiling, steeping tea. The basement of the modest village townhouse ruminated with the medieval smell of Bozkov – the tea mixing with this pungent rum – a relic of heritage. We were waiting for the town butcher, our second guest of honor. I stood, braced against the wall, ignored, left to my observations while the women finicked, playing catch up. I'd spent enough time in this country to be acclimated, yet there was a perpetual sense of a membrane separating the Czechs from the rest of the world. The lethargic, sleepy feel of their old world traditions bleeding with the Euro-grunge culture of the country's youth was disjointed, but cohesive. It always surprised me how the younger generations of purple haired, tattooed, students of technology were spawned from the survivors of the cataclysmic tumult of near Eastern European politics, Hitler and the Sudetenland, and the Velvet Revolution.

I watched these lovely plump mothers cluck with one another as they did what made themselves happiest, and at this early hour that seemed to be basking in the hollow glow of light emanating from the cellar's tiny ceiling window, reminiscing, and drinking Boskov laced *čaj*.

The stagnant gaggle of women was hustled into action with the oncoming sound of men's laughter. The guest had arrived.

"She's here," a bright-eyed, fat woman thrusts me a fresh cup of *čaj*, and I can smell the Boskov wafting up.

"Thanks," I mumble in my Yankee slur. And we were swept up the stairs into the frigid March air.

The village house gave way to a Norman Rockwell backyard – picturesque. Soft cotton mounds of snow creating the virginal, unscathed backdrop for the foreboding execution. I peak around and through the wall of women to see four lithe men carrying our guest in on a rust encrusted throne. She lounged awkwardly, gauging the situation with long lashed beads of eyes, her unrest apparent. Watching the men set her down, I marveled at the bovine, fleshy pig.

When I had first received the invitation to attend the *Zabyčka* – In Czech *zabít* means to kill – I was elated. To me it had been a symbol of my acceptance in this new culture. The realization that I didn't get to wear the cultural merit badge until after the event was lost in my enthusiasm over the mere invitation. I had heard about *Zabyčkas* in the hushed murmurs of my new classmates. (Querying whether I'd been – or would go – and if so, the poise with which I view the event). However, the prospect seemed slim seeing as how the "killing" season was nearing its close and I still hadn't been asked. I felt, as I'd assumed, some of my female classmates back in America had felt about not being asked to prom. Only my giddiness held thick and tangible over my head, incessant.

It is a cultural tradition stemming from the days of pre-refrigeration. Families would raise a pig from infancy with the sole purpose of making it fat enough, so that they could publicly kill, eviscerate, and eat the creature – all in the same sitting. So when I finally received my invitation, I was not only asked to the ball, I was Cinderella in all her crystal pumpkin glory.

Shivering in anticipation, and partly with nausea, I craned over the women to watch the men set the hefty lass on the crystalline snow. The bundle of women exploded in flurries of heckling, fondling men's coffee cups until they produced more hot, brackish booze. The men shuffled about, like a stage crew setting the scene for an upcoming performance. While standing in the midst of this small innocuous backyard, I was taken into my history books, to the European country sides with their ripples of pastures bleeding into smudgy grey skies; I realize that I was the only member of this audience preparing for a tragedy. As the women continued clucking and the men laid out wooden pallets in the center of the small circular cobblestone drive, they carried about in laughter and jest; the picket-fenced yard pulsating with tremors of excitement.

A sense of foreboding writhed down my vertebrae and settled behind my navel, I swept the yard and came to a halting stop upon the discovery of the long lashed eyes watching me from inside her royal chamber.

I'd forever been told that pigs were intelligent creatures, and I will not soon forget lest I find myself without the searing image of that poor queen's eye. The deepest wells of abandonment fathomable; however, what unsettled me

most was the slightest tinge of peace bobbing slightly below the surface of the torrid sea of terror. This purely human gaze transfixed me. The throbbing of the fifteen or so would-be executioners thrummed slightly as I approached the cage.

She was folded neatly, holding herself with tragic class. Although she was dirty and seemed almost broken, a deep gouge dribbling blood down her thigh, her composure remained intact. Approaching the cage I reached my hand through the top to smooth the frazzled hairs on top of her head – they were the only remnants of her crown.

“I’m sorry,” I offered in English, convinced the poor thing would understand the sympathy if not the language of my voice. The guilt washed in waves down my goose-pimpled spine, for as I began to talk I couldn’t refrain from thinking how much I love bacon, and how absolutely delicious that pot-bellied porker was going to taste when I peeled that sticky meat from the bones it held so tightly to.

“You’re beautiful, little porker, thank you for your sacrifice,” I said this as though it had been her choice to offer up her body for the gastronomical enjoyment of her execution’s audience. “Goodbye Ophelia,” – the most tragic name I could think of. Kissing my hand I brought it back through the cage to lay it gently on top of her head before retreating back behind the safety of the pneumatic wall of women. No one had seen me. I fear it would have been considered disrespectful. And I reflected on how appropriate I had been in dressing in black. My mourning.

I had imagined this queen being taken out back and shot in the head, quick, clean, and away from dagger-like stares of expectance; unfortunately, my PG style execution, previously pondered, was unacceptable. Instead, to preserve the animal’s brain, and for risk of contamination, as well as tradition, a captive bolt pistol was to be used. The men and women began to congregate around the cage, forming a half circle; it was almost cult-like in the raw fascination held in the slaughter of this animal.

The onlookers parted as a goliath of a man stepped into the center of the ring. He wore galoshes that left size sixteen crevasses on the snowy cobblestone and sweatpants caked with grime thicker than the wedge of midriff attempting to climb over his oppressive waistband. An utterly abhorrent apron swung from his massive neck, which looked to be twice the diameter of my thigh. I had a watery image of Stromboli from Pinocchio, only with crustier features and the lazy eye of a lunatic – two marbles rolling in opposite directions.

I looked back at Ophelia and I saw the panic rise and the realization and confusion all collide in a hauntingly lucid moment – the epitome of pure terror. She was Anne Boleyn and Marie Antoinette, as Stromboli approached her with the cylindrical device that would send a bolt crushing through her skull.

The countdown began. I tried to shrink back into the fleshy wall of women again, but they refused, *raž, dva, tri*, and the most sickening shriek of the purest agony permeated every inch of the village, rushing down the street, bouncing off the alley walls, and leaking under doors. I felt hot and sticky. I remember the feeling, like a hand squeezing my midsection, as the contents of my mind evaporated, leaving an empty tin can of a space for the scream to rattle around. I felt my tea bubbling back up, searing the inside of my throat, and a cold sweat slinking down my back and chest, raising again those goose pimples.

A commotion commenced as she began to twitch disturbingly, rattling herself out of the cage. I watched horrified. I couldn’t look at her; I couldn’t look away. A guilty part of my brain forced me to show respect to the poor thing while she rolled, shrieked, and convulsed, blood trickling out of the questioningly small hole in her head. I had expected the whole experience to last not much longer than the sound of the bolt pistol, but I was sadly mistaken. Apparently we had experienced a problem.

I braced as the wet pave stones jutted closer to my face and then retreated, closer and then retreated. The screaming echoed; my eyes closed; I was collapsing and spinning; I felt drunk and damaged, like something was leaving me.

I waited for the sound and all action to stop – for everything to stop. I searched with my fingers for the rewind button, the one that would shove the bile back down my throat, release the hand from around my esophagus, shove the bolt pistol backwards into Stromboli’s hand, and suck the blood back into Ophelia’s head.

The moment began to settle and I looked at my cold fingers to see that my color had not faded like wet watercolor pigmentation on paper.

The poor creature started to slow and eventually, hesitantly, stopped lurching and seizing, twitching only every few seconds. The butcher approached as innocently as though he were merely the coroner rather than the murderer.

"*Mrtvá dost*," he exclaimed in what to me looked like sheer pride. 'Dead enough' wasn't good enough for me; I wanted crusty-spider-on-a-window-sill-dead, something with a little more assurance.

As if to prove to my unspoken wish, Stromboli bent down and gouged a hole in the abdomen — direct to the heart. A macabre sight -- blood spewing and pulsating from a gaping hole into an awaiting milk pail, steam rising from the crimson liquid as it struck contact with the frigid air. A boy in his late teens — about my age — took the pail and began stirring the hot thickness with his bare hands. Elbow deep he dug into the slimy vat. My invitation had allowed me the front row seat to the Queen's execution — a sadistic, culinary blood-bath.

The Queen was resituated atop her pedestal. Her toenails were ripped off like a royal hand being de-gloved. Two giant meat hooks were produced and the frame of a gothic torture device erected in the center of the courtyard. Hooked by the back legs, she was inverted — gravity would empty the rest of the blood causing rubies to drop from her mouth and shatter on the frozen ground.

The rapidity of the event had slowed, and for the first time all morning I was alone — everyone scurrying off to their preordained chores. The ground was attempting to stop pulsating and the hand-like grip had released my middle. I closed my eyes and could taste the contaminated salty air, the particles landing on my tongue.

The innocent feel of the backyard was violated in a grotesque way I couldn't at first comprehend. With the first glance the yard looked the same as it had. My eyes roamed the picket fenced-yard — strolling, strolling, until they got stuck in something sticky, a small hang-up, a catch; the oddly displayed corpse, which dominated the unspoiled scene, demanded attention. A sickly brick-red pattern was blooming across the ivory snow.

The actors returned to the stage: the butcher, the audience. She was split from *prdel* to *rypák* with a utensil similar in shape and size to a machete, her innards carefully removed and saved. The juxtaposition between the tenderness by which the butcher dismembered the pig and the brutality by which he killed her, surprised me. He caressed the hanging meat, delicately removing every valued piece. His smaller, daintier knife smoothly disconnected livers and intestines, brains and lungs, with all the same care a surgeon would endow his patient.

Although flayed and splayed indecently, like a courtesan of Paris salons, Ophelia was fleshed out. Those long lashed eyes still open, but long since glassed over, not without life, but rather without focus. I had seen this living breathing creature killed, but after she died and was no longer twitching, after she was hanging upside down and split in half, my mind subconsciously quit referring to her as a "her" but rather as a piece of meat. Once the life was gone and the fleshy shell was all that was left, logic filled gaps in my mind as Ophelia's image was reconstructed from Marie Antoinette to bacon.

The entire process, from live pig to dissected chunks of meat, was watched, like a court watching a jousting game, a morbidly fascinating event, with people clapping and sighing and wincing at all the appropriate times. Stromboli worked soberingly fast, filleting and stripping, dismembering with his arsenal of knives, between shots of *Slivovice* — a paint stripping strong alcohol.

And I watched as every ounce of the Queen was salvaged. The head was boiled and set whole in a wooden trough presented before the group. The table erupted in barbaric shrieks of "mine" as forks speared, jabbed, and eviscerated the meat. The head was devoured. And I reveled as I pulled that sticky meat from the bones it clung so tightly to.

We ate the pig brains with eggs, onions and mustard smeared on bread, washing it down with goulash. Every innard not eaten alone was ground into pulp and stuffed back inside the stretched intestines to be cooked later as sausages. We drank pig's blood soup and I questioned if this practice consisted of a form of vampirism.

I think I loved Ophelia, as the pig — the Queen — but like the way she tasted even better: salty brains with an egg-yolk like texture, the liver goulash swimming in fatty oil which dribbled down chins, and the salacious lust of the smells which spritzed the air. Wondrous fat, salt, and onion, mixed with the seedy warm smells of fresh earth, boiling swine flesh and burning wood.

I got my invitation. Pig-kisser, blood-drinker, brain-eater; we the killers of the Queen. Try that on for size Cinderella.

Split Wood

that's what I want to do

forget this minuet around
 over through
situations/words/
phantom
blink of tears

just 2 foot lengths
spreading wide
for a 12 pound maul/
random tangle trap of hair
for beads of honest sweat

excluding our palms,
our skins
are too tough.
The answer—
The balm?

Split wood:
ash, maple, pine, cedar,
elm, hickory, apple

heave grunt slam crack silence

Work with me/
 with me/
aim for the perimeter
and the heart will break open
 smooth clean
 still full of life
and ready to burn

Capturing a Moment: An Interview with Patrice Helmar

I'm reeling the afternoon I'm scheduled to interview featured artist Patrice Helmar. It's five minutes to one, and I'm frantically recounting all the things that could go wrong with this interview. What if I misquote her? What if there are awkward silences? What if I'm intensely inarticulate? It's only then that I realize that such dreads are superseded by my one looming failure: we're supposed to meet at Spike's Café in minutes, and I haven't the faintest clue what she looks like. After a frantic—and ultimately fruitless—internet search, I sit back in my chair, heart sinking at the realization that I've lost my subject.

Thankfully, I needn't have worried. A figure approaches and politely calls my name. She introduces herself as Patrice, and apologizes for being late (she wasn't). She counters my offer to buy her a coffee by buying us both a cup of tea, and we find an empty classroom to talk. Minutes later, after expertly helping me resolve an issue with my recording software, she opens up to me about artistic parents, documentary photography, and how aspiring artists should persevere to find their voices.

JB: All right, so we're just going to get started with our questions here. How did you first become interested in art?

PH: Let's see. Well, both my parents are photographers. My mom studied at a two-year program in Seattle for commercial photography. My dad had a camera store, so I've been surrounded by cameras and photography my whole life. I've also been really interested in visual art. We constantly did a lot of art-oriented stuff at my house.

JB: So creativity was definitely encouraged in your house.

PH: Definitely. It was just sort of a natural thing. I love drawing; I was always drawing as a kid. So it was sort of a natural progression. I remember in kindergarten I was obsessed with wanting to draw a picture of everyone in my class. It was really important for me to remember those people and go through that process. So that's my earliest memory of being interested in art. I think you get bonded with certain people and you want to remember them or capture that moment. I would say my dad was a key figure in modeling what it means to capture important moments with a camera. He emphasized by his actions the importance of always having a camera and taking pictures.

JB: Did you study photography formally at a university, or did you get most of your education from your family?

PH: I studied it a bit in my university experience, but I apprenticed with my dad at his photo shop in downtown Juneau for probably ten years or so. Most of the time I was just hanging out with my dad and probably getting in the way. I would just go in after school and "work," and probably the most valuable experience was just being with him and seeing what his business and work was like. The practical study really started with people bringing in their cameras. A lot of time, the problem with film cameras would be that they were dirty. My dad would feel bad about charging people a lot of money to fix their cameras if it was just something like



Man Feeding Birds in Istanbul, Patrice Helmar, Featured Artist, Juneau
Photography

“clean the camera, run a roll of film through it, and send them on their way.” So he would put me in charge. One of my first jobs was to take the camera out with a roll of film and then get the pictures I took developed and see how they turned out. That exercise was really fundamental in teaching me so much about composition and formal aspects of photography in terms of how to do things correctly. We would come back and I would have the prints, and he would say “Which ones do you really like?” In those days, you would have a red pen and put a square around the ones you really liked. He would leave me alone, or be back in his dark room, and give me five or ten minutes to pick out which ones I really liked. He would come back and say “Well, I like this one,” or “This one, your exposure’s too dark or too light,” and we would really talk about what made a good photo and the importance of capturing the moment, or what the moment was, or the right light. We would talk about other photographers, especially street photographers. He would say “this photographer would always be taking the bus or subway and shooting photos of people, just capturing their everyday lives.” Or he would talk about Ansel Adams and how he would set up somewhere for hours waiting for the perfect light, capturing exposures over a long period of time. We had these discussions based on my practice, shooting these cameras that people thought were broken. So that was a really big part of my formal education as a photographer. Now, as I’m going through the teaching program, I see that my dad probably didn’t know that he was being a good teacher, but that’s how I’m learning how to be a teacher now. You need to model what good photography is, have examples of good photographs around the room, and tell someone how to use a camera: what this lens does, what this film does, what this shutter speed does, and then give them the opportunity to go out and practice that in the field. The more you do that, the more comfortable you become with a camera, and it becomes second nature. They say in teaching that there’s a point where the student is able to apply their

understanding time and time again. The students are able to be fluent after watching, practicing, and looking critically at other people's work. The student masters the skill, and they take it with them and use it wherever. I think the time I spent in my dad's old camera store was really fundamental.

JB: Some of the photography you sent me, your abstract work, seems to deal a lot with the play of color and texture. How do you decide on your subject matter for your abstract photos?

PH: Well, that particular collection is from the exhibit that was at the Juneau city museum this summer. Those were all photographs of older boats around Southeast Alaska. I guess it's hard to say how you make a decision to take a photograph of something. I guess something sticks out to you, but boats have always been important to me because I grew up commercial fishing with my family. My parents owned a small hand trawler and so we'd go out hand trolling in Icy Strait, Elfin Cove and Hoonah, and one thing my dad really loved to do on weekends was take walks around the docks and look at boats. This was after we sold our boat, when the price of salmon went down. We'd spend hours walking around, talking to people and looking at boats, and when I was a kid, I was bored stiff having to do that. It was cool being with my dad and being at the harbor, but I didn't understand why he always wanted to be there. My dad just loved boats. And in this past year or two, I started noticing these boats that were in dry dock, like the layers of paint that were on them, how cool they were, and just being really drawn to that. So I started taking pictures of boats in Sitka—there's a dry dock there near the ferry terminal—and thinking that they looked like paintings. They looked like abstract impressionism, or Rothko, like the color field paintings where there are lines and different textures, and just layers and layers of paint. But I didn't really know where I was going with it. I just had hundreds and hundreds of pictures of boats. I guess it was an unconscious thing that just sort of happened. It probably had a lot to do with childhood memories of being on boats. I just thought they were really beautiful.

JB: So, as an artist, what catches your eye in other people's work?

PH: I think I love things that are real, but also can be surreal at the same time. I love photographs that don't look like they're posed, or like they're on purpose, or they're too convoluted. I like seeing sort of just when you capture a moment of something, that's something that really attracts me. Especially in documentary work. Everyone in the world has moments of grace where they're beautiful, in all of their imperfections. I'm drawn to imperfect beauty. I like realism that isn't contrived.

JB: Do you have any preference toward film or digital photography?

PH: I love both; I'm happy with digital photography. It's quick, easy, and awesome, and so forgiving. It took me a long time to get to that place. I'm really sentimental when it comes to film photography. Film photography started dying off as an art form right around the same time that my dad passed away and so it's kind of symbolic to me in a way. It's just the way that things happen, but my dad passed away in 2002, and that's probably when the first round of semi-decent digital cameras started coming out. They really weren't that great, but people were amazed that they could take as many pictures as they wanted. It was a revelation in the photography world, and it was gonna make film cameras obsolete. My dad was really old school about photography, really so caught up in the process of developing, so that was a really important part of my education, and it was tough to switch from film to digital. There's kind of a gap in my work from that period of time. I kept taking photographs, but when my dad's dark room closed and I had graduated from university, I didn't have a dark room anymore. Sort of like a painter not having a studio. So I continued taking pictures, but I didn't have that place to really work on my work, and I'd say that now there's kind of a happy medium

between digital and film photography where you can process your film and scan your negatives and work from there.

JB: How do you feel that the transition from film to digital photography has changed the manner in which you take your photos?

PH: It allows me to be less discerning. I think I've heard other photographers talk about this, that with digital film, you don't necessarily have to be as analytical because you have fewer limitations. There aren't a certain number of exposures, like with a roll of film. You have as many tries as you want to take photos and delete them until your battery runs out, or your memory card is full. With film, you really had to think about what you were doing. You had to make a conscious choice to frame a photograph, to think about the light, to set up a shot if you had time, or to capture it if it was an unconscious thing, like a street photograph. So, there's a real art and craftsman-like approach to film photography, kind of like being in a play as opposed to being in a movie. In a play, you're onstage and have one shot to get it right, whereas in a film, you can go back and edit and change the way things look. All photography's a bit like film in that you have those choices in the dark room to edit. But digital photography has made it even more accessible and mutable and changeable, and at the same time, dispensable, or kind of throw-away in that you don't keep every shot. You don't have these books full of negatives that you've carefully labeled and kept. You may lose a memory card and therefore lose a ton of your photos. It's a really different process and I'm still trying to understand how they're different. Trying to get photos for this publication, and looking back at my old negatives, has made me really sentimental about film because I see all the mistakes I made. But in those mistakes are moments that I captured, people that I knew, that I may have deleted with a digital camera. The grain of film photography is another aspect that digital photography can't capture. The silver gelatin printing process is a beautiful method of printing. Many digital photographers make the mistake of over processing their photographs and making people look alien, just really unreal.

JB: Has your art been influenced by another artist's work? How?

PH: Definitely. I think all artists are influenced by other artists' work. I'm influenced by modern painting, street photography, fine art photography, documentary photography, and film. To name specific people: Italian film director, Federico Fellini. I think he has a quote, something along the lines of, "it is only when I am doing my work that I feel truly alive." His films are sort of real and surreal at the same time. And there's an adjective in art and film, Fellini-esque, and he's just constantly going back to these childhood memories and characters, and I guess his stuff is on the cusp of the school of Italian Neo-Realism. But just really beautiful film. I love how honest, irreverent, and funny his work is. I love the dream-like quality of the scenes in his film "Amarcord" which depicts his early childhood in a seaside town in Italy. The characters are larger than life - they remind me of some of the characters I grew up knowing in my own childhood in downtown Juneau. Henri Cartier-Bresson is a French street photographer that did a lot of great work in Paris in the evening, worked in cafes and bars, and took photographs of people who really hadn't been photographed as much. I'm really influenced by Nan Goldin, who photographed people she knew, or her friends. She took a lot of photographs of drag queens and people in the cutting edge subculture of New York in the 1970s and 80s, and that's such an awesome time period for art, music, and film.

I think that as a young adult, when I really started getting into photography, I was influenced by punk rock, zines, and my friends, constantly having my camera and taking pictures of people around me. My dad was a huge inspiration. He was a visual anthropologist, and he was constantly taking pictures of people as well,



Real Good Heart, Patrice Helmar, Featured Artist, Juneau
Photography

but maybe along the lines of social sciences and studying the relationships between people, and why people were doing what they were doing. Also, since I studied English and literature, a lot of writers and narratives have a big influence on my life. I feel like, without necessarily trying, art has its own narrative, sort of like novels or poetry, and so early on, I loved poets like Bukowski, Lawson Fusao Inada, Adrian C. Louis; I loved writers like Carson McCullers and William Faulkner, some of the southern writers. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, by Homer, were huge influences for me growing up. Also, my mom's Irish-American and my dad is Greek and Irish, so the Greek culture is very important to me. My grandma was a hundred percent Greek, and I think that the names of my pieces have a cultural aspect to them.

JB: Was there ever a moment that you felt like you truly “made it” as an artist?

PH: That's kind of a hilarious question for an Alaskan artist. It's tough to feel like you've made it. I remember being thrilled that I was allowed to exhibit at the Juneau-Douglas city museum last year. I'm still really young as an artist and there's a lot more that I could do. I think it's a huge honor to be in *Tidal Echoes*. It's like a really big deal to me, just because I really value the artistic community in Juneau and Southeast. I see artists here who really inspire me to keep doing what I do. Some of the faculty and artists here like Jeremy Kane and Jane Terzis are incredible artists. Jeremy's love for what he does with art is infectious. He lives and breathes art and music and positively influences people around him. Ricky Tagaban is one of my favorite artists

in Juneau, doing incredible things with Raven's Tail weaving, silver carving, print making, and traditional form line. I love being around people like Ricky who have so much passion for their life and work. I had the opportunity to work with Ricky last year, photographing him working outside on a stencil project he did for a print making class. David Woodie is another great painter and draughtsman. But is there a moment where I feel like I'd made it? No. I'm happy doing what I'm doing, and I'm content, but I'm definitely not selling pieces of art for thousands of dollars in galleries, or traveling much with my art. I'm happy when I take beautiful portraits for a family, portraits of a new baby, or gorgeous photographs of a wedding. There's a tradesmen/craftsmen approach to my photography as well. I love seeing my photography in a museum, but I love seeing it on people's walls too. In terms of feeling like I've made it - I'm making it - it being art.

JB: Sounds like there's a lot of room to grow.

PH: Yeah! But I'm content doing what I'm doing, and I love what I do.

JB: Throughout your studies, have you explored other media, or do you consider photography your main medium?

PH: I remember my dad used to say "you can be the jack of all trades and master of none," because I was into so many things as a young person. And I still say that I wish I was a painter. It would be so awesome to do oil paintings. But I feel blessed that I'm a photographer and can say that I'm a photographer. I've done other stuff; I've studied visual art and done figure drawing, but I would say that my passion and my fluency is in photography, and I think that's what I'll keep doing.

JB: What plans, if any, do you have for the future direction you'd like to take your artwork?

PH: I would like to keep exhibiting. It's exhausting and really expensive, but I think I need to explore grant-writing, which I haven't done a lot of. I see other folks who are obviously a lot smarter about it, and they're able to support their art that way. It feels like this incredible thing to do. I love displaying my art, but I usually break even, or go in the hole a little bit. But if I were able to continue to afford displaying or exhibiting my work, and to have people appreciate it or not like it, I would be happy. I think that's kind of the point of being an artist: to get a reaction whether it's negative or positive. I just want to be able to continue working. I feel lucky to have what I have and do what I do right now. I'm going to school right now to be a teacher, so it's going to change things for me in terms of my focus and my direction.

JB: Probably the most important question we ask: do you have any advice for aspiring young artists?

PH: Don't listen to anyone who tells you that you're not an artist, or you're not a good drawer or artist. Don't listen to anyone who says that you're not good. I think that everyone is an artist, and I hate to hear when I talk to people that are interested in art, who say that they had a teacher who told them they weren't good at something. My advice is to do whatever you have to do to make art. And if you're an artist, I think you just do it and it comes as second nature to you, but you have to spend time doing it. That's the thing that makes me know photography is my principle focus. Taking pictures is a part of me; I can't stop. Like I said earlier, if you do something enough, your camera becomes an extension of your hand or your eye. I see people who are much more disciplined about that than me, but even if I put my camera down for a week or two, I get this compulsion to take a photograph. I feel like I'm missing out when I don't do it. My advice to aspiring young artists is to do their art and not feel weird or feel like whatever they're doing is wrong.



Self Portrait, New England, Patrice Helmar, Featured Artist, Juneau
Photography



Roald's Hair, Patrice Helmar, Featured Artist, Juneau
Photography



Harem Wall, Patrice Helmar, Featured Artist, Juneau
Photography



Roma, Patrice Helmar, Featured Artist, Juneau

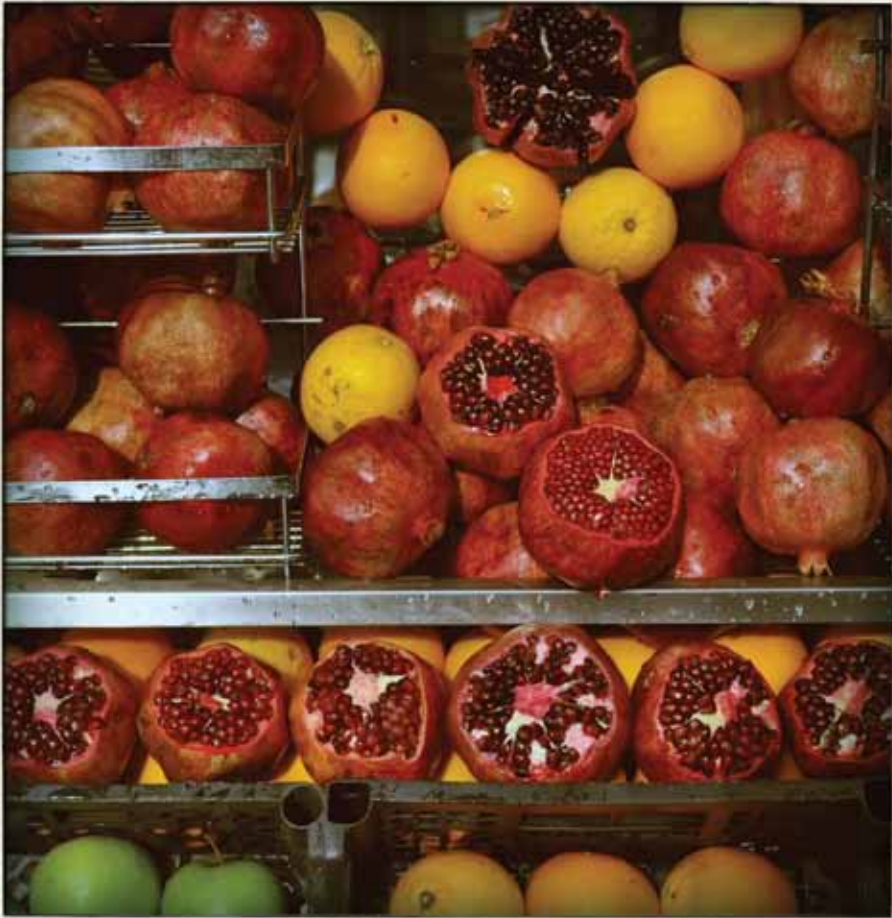
Photography



Calypso, Patrice Helmar, Featured Artist, Juneau
Photography



The Suitors, Patrice Helmar, Featured Artist, Juneau
Photography



Dream of the Kores, Patrice Helmar, Featured Artist, Juneau
Photography



Domestic Items, Pedar Dalthorp, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Stoneware, Cotton, Found Objects



Steel Ka, Calcedonio Charles Giordano, Juneau
Steel and Aluminum



Cast Iron Clay, Chelsie Harris, UAS Student, Juneau
Ceramics: Stoneware



Oil and Vinegar Set, Bonilyn Parker, UAS Student, Juneau
Ceramics



Coffee Set, Bonilyn Parker, UAS Student, Juneau
Ceramics



Queen of Wastelandia, Kate Laster, UAS Student, Juneau
Mixed Media with Cigarette Filters



Shinto Tea Set, Chelsie Harris, UAS Student, Juneau
Ceramics: Stoneware

Cleanse

His first bath was a big moment
and his mother took pictures.
His father stood at the sink,
afraid he'd do it wrong.
The boy let the water warm him.
He was content.

His brother took up most of the tub
and his mother got mad when he splashed.
His father stayed late at work,
afraid he'd fall behind.
The boy let the water warm him.
His brother peed.

His clothes were covered in dirt
and his mother told him he smelled.
His father hadn't called,
afraid they'd find where he was.
The boy let the water warm him.
He touched himself.

His girlfriend broke his heart
and his mother said he'd be fine.
His father wrote him a letter,
afraid they'd call if he didn't.
The boy let the water warm him.
He cut his wrist.

His brother found him
and his mother stopped speaking.
His father came to the funeral,
afraid people would talk.
The boy let the water warm him.
His ashes at sea.

Aunt Jen

Beneath a red and white apron rests well digger's wrists.
Her meaty hands quartered legions of chickens,
washed a million plates, mopped the kitchen floor
across the Atlantic and back. Makes coffee strong
as sin. Her memory, a cabbage layered collection
of recipes, can concoct any dish of beast or plant
residing on this side of the equator - Cajun, curried,
with cilantro, without rosemary. On a given day
sweet potato pie, pumpernickel bread, crab cakes,
pheasant under glass may rise from the oven.
While basting, mincing, sautéing
she conjures up stories. Some way back when.
A spring flood Cousin Jane swam the Chena,
Uncle Earl's jumping jasmine tea bag,
somebody's goat licking frosting off Miles' birthday cake,
that stormy aught eight November night Pa's teeth froze in a cup.
Her kitchen, a kingdom's skillet where many were fueled
from hunger, where some got chastised about eating pancakes with a bad attitude, where freezer
meat never has a chance to burn.

The Spoken Forest

Xootz

Brown bear dances in the dark in the dark forest in the night to the remembered melody of a happy song his mother once heard her grandmother hum—the nearly lost memory of a song meant for this time of the night, to take away our grief, to help us laugh again, to set the bear surely to spin beneath the darkly spinning stars

He knows winter when he sees it when he smells snow making the air fat with promises of sleep he knows he can eat fat that will burn his fires in the night in the dark night and warm his cave of dreams where his breath steams the air that carries our unforgotten songs our unremembered dances our unsaved prayers

Yeil

You carried me into summer with your sideways glance and your raucous crooning calling to your relatives there she is there she is stale crumbs boiled bones cold fat pilfered bacon dropped from my practiced hand onto the ice-covered ground when you supposed I'd looked away you dared a crumb and I returned your sideways glances into the spring

Gootch

The wolves are singing like old women keeping ancient songs until the young the careless the inattentive come back to their senses and begin again to remember who they are and begin again to sing

Ch'aak'

Were I an eagle I would toss her onto her side bury my talons into her one exposed wing pierce her one good eye with my stare this stare that contemplates morsels hidden in the beach grass three islands away that watches hatchlings fighting and eating one another in the nest this gaze that reaches into her heart with only one blink that sees the long-from-now time when she regrets each lost chance to thank her own grandmother for sparing her one exposed wing her one good eye

(Hemlock Trees)

Spruce and hemlock whisper one to another. Our history our histories our story our stories our memory our memories our life our lives who we are what we are how we are where we are spruce and hemlock watch as we hurry to places with no sun no rain no humans they tenderly fold us into their whispers knowing that in the next days in the next generations in the next worlds our stories will be the at.oow they bring out to display to us their opposites when they host memorials for our

impeccable purpose

The Spoken Village

Land otter man uses his cell phone on the bus

When I look at him I know: This kooshdaka has wrapped himself as human.

Human, yes. But ... different in some way. Different in some ways.

In the way his black hair lies flat straight back from his flat wide forehead. In his strict posture, his barrel chest. His always-shined shoes. His surprising, high voice.

In the way his lip remembers
the adornments his grandmothers wore
when they were still those innocent girls
before dleitkaa came to tell them
they were dirty.

The Spoken Word

They are holding everything for us

Love

Love is green
A dark green
Like my favorite sweater
it's really nice
 it looks good
 and it's soft
 and it's warm
 and it's fuzzy

Love smells like hugging
 It smells like a good smell
 Their hair smells like soft
 Their clothes smell like clean
 The environment smells like refreshing
 It smells like everything

Love tastes like soup
 Like garlic soup
Love tastes like ice cream
 Chocolate ice cream.
 It tastes good.

Love feels like something fuzzy
 Like my cat
 My cat is very loving to me.
 I feel my cat twice a day
 It feels soft

Love sounds like the phone when it's ringing.
Love sounds like people talking.
 They're just saying, "Good Morning."
 "What's going on?"
Love sounds like busy typing.
 Busy working
 Sounds really busy.
Love sounds like going out.
 And having fun.
 And enjoy yourself.

Things I Remember About My Dad

Hello my name is Mike Godkin. My dad passed away this past Monday. Here's a happy poem about my dad.

My first thing about my dad
He used to work on a gas station
The one on Seward street
Now it's on Sealaska
He used to help pump gas
We went and visited him a few times
We just talked to him for awhile and that's how I knew him

Then he used to be a fireman
You know
He'd go out on a fire calls
You know if there was a big fire at the Baranof
Or wherever there was a big fire
He would help go on fire calls

He used to help work on cars, trucks
He used to help me fix breakfast on Sundays
He used to help me get on Skype, get on the computer a lot
He liked the TV, watched baseball and he liked wheel and jeopardy
And other shows like CSI and other stuff

My dad every year after thanksgiving
Him and my brother and everybody all the men
They used to go out to Tenakee
And they used to go hunting for deer
And they would always bring me deer
And we would eat deer for dinner,
Sometimes spaghetti.

He used to help my brother do stuff
Work on motorcycles

He used to help work on the washing machine and the dryer
Sometimes if it leaks he would try to fix it
But if he can't, he would get new ones for us.
Right now we got a new Kenmore, boy it's a good one,

It's a good washing machine.
[washing machine sounds]
First time he put it in it flooded
Then he got a repairman, he came over and fixed it
Because there was not enough air in the hose.
He would stay right there
Just in case the machine overflowed or leaked.
I liked it when he was close to it

I like him about the dryer
He got that dryer hooked up
Then he tested it and make sure it works
And from there
It's working really good
From here on out.

He used to work on the pipeline up in Fairbanks
Also he used to work on watches
He would fix them
Like the batteries
If they went low he would put new ones in
And if they weren't low he'd buy me a new one
And he would set the time for me

And he would fix the garbage disposal.
And he would get me new stereos a lot for my bedroom
Like radio, cds

He used to be a painter
I liked when he used to help paint
He painted the whole house.

He did so many things.
He was so helpful to me.
He was a helping man.
Boy, he was right there if anything went wrong.
He helped me, he helped my mom,
Helped my sister, my brother in law,
My brother
And everybody
He just helped everybody,
That's all I know.

September on the Cruise Ship Dock

It's days like these

(pouring, no, monsooning rain. freezing rain.
wet socks, wet underwear, jeans wet in places where it looks like it could be pee.
hair pasted to cheeks
and I'm not sure if what's running from my nose is rain or snot.
stiff, cold, red fingers clenching expired handwarmers.
occasional bursts of wind.
sharp prongs of umbrellas snatching at hair, assaulting.
hands on the clock moving slower
every
hour.
soggy, torn paper.
five minute breaks in the doorways of tour busses.
hot, then cold tea in my travel mug.
giving bad directions.
pointing out the tram.
seeing who can find the worst dressed tourist
like the guy with the fur shorts.
huddling with seasonal friends.)

that I love telling tourists, "Well that's Alaska."

Potatoes

Answering phones at work, trying
to be nice as pie
I am thinking about the recipe for roasted
potatoes I read last night. It called for
purple potatoes and fingerlings, exotic,
and I wonder if I can even find them here.

After lunch, sorting the mail, I think about
potatoes the size of a big toe, the color
of a bruise after the blossom of blood cools
beneath the skin, tuber-like, and fingerlings
ivory skinned and knobby, lovely and cold.

At work sometimes impatience shows;
my voice like fingernails on slate
smile so tight
it's not really a smile, irritation
buried just beneath the surface,
thin-skinned and raw.

But today, right now,
I think about potatoes, small and new,
blue as the moonlit sky,
cut in half
tossed in olive oil and garlic, tiny leaves of rosemary
flicked along their unpeeled skin
cut-side down in the oven, 350, for half an hour

And my desk silent after hours,
silent as a patch of dirt.

Gray Matter

for J, 17

Sometimes I try to imagine
what your brain looks like, bear bread fantailed against the rough spine
of hemlock, tenacious,
synapses clicking like the wings of a beetle against the closed lid of your skull.

Your brain, that fragile unregenerate lump, is wholly
precious to me, as complex as tapestry;
your thoughts weaving back and forth tacked to sparks
of impulse that flash and finally resolve
into the hand I reach out and touch as we drive home
over roads slick with rain.

Before you were born I carried you, my uterus
like a cranium, and at night before sleep, cupped
my stomach in both hands, imagined their heat sparking
your brain to life, a match struck and set to gasoline,
the essence of you alight
burning hot
in the torch of your skull.

Termination Dust

Walking Thimbleberry as evening falls
I watch winter drift down the corridor of mountains.
In a week snow on the highest peaks will cake and slide, then hold.
The grass along the edge of the lake has turned to rust
and everything is torn
the leaves, the light, the jagged sky ripped with gray.

I turn and the ghosts of summer come hiking through
you and me in our backpacks, afraid of bears
and little else, the whole summer laid at our feet like dew on fleece.
You never stay around for this, the death of everything
when alders blacken and rain quickens, when devil's club molts back
to spines and the robins and even the humpbacks
head south for warmth.

Walking along Silver Bay on the way back
I see a car pull off the road and stop on the shoulder.
A man unrolls the window and smokes a cigarette,
the bay tossed below like a gray skirt.
He knows what's coming.
He wonders again
why the sight of the moon rising over Bear Mountain,
ivory button on a cold shirt,
makes him want to stay.

October, 2011

Pick Up Lines For Poets

So . . . do you scribble here often?

Allow me to alliterate how achingly amazing you are in the anachronistic afternoon.

I never believed in love at first draft, but - reviewing you - I can't picture a single revision.

I enjoy banned books and I like long walks at the library.

Is that a sonnet in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?

Is that a verb on your body? Cause I really wanna do it.

There is not a form that can contain you,
not a rhyme scheme that I want you to end on,

If you were acrostic,
I would fall into your letters,
get lost in your center,
your name would be my backbone.

I am 16 syllables and you are the one.

Baby, there ain't no stem high enough,
ain't no root low enough,
to keep me from
prefixing you.

My love,
I heard you order dinner in iambic pentameter.
I appreciate your personifications of the weather.
I'm tired of all these young similes, I want a real metaphor, someone who is.
You make the line breaks in my heart feel like a stanza.

Sit here:
next to my raven,
be a man of your word,
let me read between your lines
and highlight passages of your breath, my favorite sections.

Let's go outside:

I will grip you like a lifetime of leaves in Walt Whitman's grass, like tripping over Nikki Giovanni's ego, like an amethyst rock slung by Saul Williams, like a tree between Yusuf Komunyakaa and a sniper's bullet, like Langston Hughes' night, like the stars, the sun, my people,
You must be an allusion!

I will invite you to my secret places,
I will spill my coffee on your corners,
I will rip you out, fold you up, carry you with me.

Solitary poet,
raise your eyes,
tuck your pen to bed,
and while all your
demons are sleeping,

Read
my
lips:

I will whisper synonyms into your skin like a thesaurus in heat if you will open me.

Come here.
Let me give you something to write about.

The Catch

Celebrities, I found out, still have to do homework. I'm in the 3rd grade and my dad and I are already famous. I figured that was a good enough reason to end my school career. I told Dad all about my ideas to drop out of school and travel around the world and train seals at a zoo and work as a librarian or a veterinarian, and to scuba dive in the ocean. He said that I was to remain in school until I graduate and then go to college, and that I couldn't be a veterinarian or librarian without a college degree. I told him that was bogus and that it didn't seem fair that I wasn't allowed to have fun till I was old like him. He laughed at this and said, "That's how it is in the real world, kiddo." He always says that about things I don't want to do. Anyway, I suppose you're wondering how we became famous. Well I'll tell you. It wasn't through movie star talent, or through a game show win, or even the lottery. We caught fame in a foot hold trap early one October morning.

I run downstairs from my room, jeans and wool socks on, and the new flannel Dad bought me-- maroon and black with beige buttons. Best of all it's warm. Dad is downstairs already. I swear he gets up at like four in the morning or something just so he can watch the news and drink coffee and complain about me taking too long to get ready. As I cross the living room I see him on the recliner holding his giant, blue, coffee mug. He looks sort of like a slouchy king on his throne, lazily holding a big goblet. As I pass in front of the T.V. I shuffle quickly so as not to bother his royal majesty's news program. Dad always gets mad if me or my sisters walk in front of the T.V. too much. I pass through the doorway into the kitchen I hear the T.V. yell "*Riiide Theee BUS!*" and then some shuffling. Dad appears in the kitchen. He's on his way out the door wearing his red flannel and wool pants, and his silly wool hat. I told him how funny it looked on him once and he said, "It's from the seventies, one of a kind, with ear flaps that come down from the inside and a pom on top." He told me that he has tried to look for a new one, "but all the ones they sell *now'a days* don't have the pom on the top." I remember thinking that he sure does like poms. He ended by saying, "It's a damn good hat. Period." Every time Dad ends something with "period" I know not to ask him or talk about it anymore.

I hear Dad's last two clunky-boot steps, and then the door slam. I scoot on the floor to lace up my hiking boots. The sharp smell of the lure from the trapping pack hangs in the air; it has become a welcomed scent to me in the mornings. I'm rushing, and it's hard to get these things on because they're stiff and these laces are a mile long and have to crisscross in a million places and hook on all these little tabs just so. Finally, I get them laced up and run outside; I see Dad sitting in the driver's seat, his silly red hat matching the outside of the truck. The air feels cool on my face and hands, and as I stop at the truck I look down at my feet and see that the toes of my hiking boots are darker on the tip of the toes. I tug at the dewy handle of the truck door, hop into the passenger seat, and then slam the door shut. I hear two familiar low, grumbling voices talking to one another. KQDS is on. I expected to hear AC/DC or Aerosmith soon, after Bill and Jason tell us some really funny stuff on their morning show like they do every morning. "I like these guys," I say. Of course, my dad already knows, because I laugh whenever we listen to them. Most people my age don't even know who Bill and Jason are. My friends from school usually sleep in on the weekend, but I like to get up and go trapping with my dad, so I hear them all the time. They're really funny. One time they told a story about how a kid my age was pointing a chicken nugget all around a cafeteria at a school, yelling "Bang!" and he got suspended. Boy, did my dad and I laugh at that. Heck, I even like the music they play on this station, especially Aerosmith's "Walk This Way." It's music for old people, but I can't help it -- it's catchy and stuff. (I blame Dad.) Dad backs the truck out of the driveway, and we start driving up the hill toward the church. It seems like everyone else in town is still sleeping because there are no other cars driving on the road. As we stop at the four-way I see that the steeple of the church looks more yellow than usual because of how bright the sun is this morning. As we continue forward, out my window I see colorful slides, a seesaw, and a plastic, purple dinosaur on a big, wire spring pass behind my shoulder. I bounce my foot to the familiar beginning of a song.

"Dad, where are we going?"

"North of town, to that place with all the poplars and the pines that run along the trail."

I've been too long, I'm glad to be back. Yes I'm, let loose from the noose snarls a singer on the radio. I think for a minute... Forget the hearse 'cause I'll never die. I've got nine lives. Cat eye...

Gee, Dad. I can only think of a bajillion places where there are trees where we've been trapping. So I sit and wait to see.

When we get to the spot with all of the trees, we turn off the main road down a dirt road to our left. It doesn't even look like something that would be passable by a truck, but I know we'll make it, 'cause Dad always does this stuff. The dirt road starts out pretty normal, but then huge, jagged rocks start appearing in the dirt. Somehow we maintain the same speed. The truck is rocking back and forth, jumping up and down and branches are screeching across the windows and the side panels. Dad grabs his favorite travel mug, a mostly green, plastic cup with a worn four-leaf clover on the front. There's a permanent black circle stained around the inside of the cap, which has been there ever since I can remember. Coffee jumps out from the small opening in the cap like a miniature geyser, reminding me of the time my sisters and I went with Dad on a family trip and we sat in the car while he drove a million miles so we could go see "Old Faithful." Suddenly a sound similar to the noise the garbage disposal made when Dad didn't know a spoon fell down the drain starts coming from the bed of the truck. I turn and look out the line of small windows behind me to see the trapping pack bouncing around. As the truck jumps its way further down the road, I begin to think it can't possibly get any bumpier. I ask Dad what the noise coming from the wheels is, and he yells something about leaf springs over the squeaking and crashing coming from below us. Our truck sounds like it's laughing at the joke the grass is playing on us—hiding all of those big rocks from us. Sure enough, the road continues to get rougher. It seems like I'm closer to the ground, and Dad is up in the air, that big pom on the top of his hat wobbling around like a fishing bobber on a very windy day. After a few seconds we level off again, and continue cruising over rocks, brush, and pot holes. I'm being thrown against the door and then tugged in the other direction. One second I think my seat belt is doing such a good job at keeping me in my seat that I think that I might be strangled to death. Other times I swear I feel the hair on the top of my head brush against the roof of the truck. My vision is all weird from all of the fast movement. Looking out of the front window it seems like the trees and the road are jumping and dancing around all crazy like. They look like they're sort of doing the dance that I saw my aunt doing one time when Grandma and I went to pick her up at the a place called "Harold's Bar." I asked why auntie was throwing her arms all over the place and stomping around really fast; Grandma told me that people dance funny when they have too much to drink. I thought that whoever Harold was, he must have a big fridge with a lot of stuff to drink in it.

While our truck continues being yanked around by every rocky tumor that appears in the road, Dad's driving with coffee in one hand and steering with ease. I've seen him drive with his knee before. He's a pro. I'm pretty sure he could drive this trail with the truck in reverse, coffee cup in one hand, and the morning paper in the other, while reading and steering with his knee. That's the joke I always tell my sisters and my friends, anyway. I begin to wonder if I'll need to see a chiro...chiroprac, ...one of those doctors that fix your back when it hurts before this road starts to mellow out, but after a few minutes we pull off to the side of the road and I open my door, hop out of the passenger seat, and walk around to the back of the truck. Dad grabs the pack out of the bed of the truck and stomps into the woods. I follow. Twigs break and dry leaves crunch beneath our feet. Dad leads the way. Sometimes I walk in his footsteps, but walking seems more like jumping because his strides are really long, like ten feet apart. It's cool outside. The trail is muddy, and everything is damp from morning dew. Gold and red surround us in a grove of poplars with a few tall maples.

After walking like fifty miles, we cross some railroad tracks. We walk a bit farther past some tall pines where the line is set. Dad makes his way through a patch of tall grass. I'm right behind him following his steps when something hits my forehead. The "thud" seems like it echoes in my head for a bit, and I bring my palm to my forehead to rub away the sting. Angry, I quickly raise my head to locate the source of my pain and find Dad's hand about an centimeter from my face.

"What the heck, Da..."

My voice echoes off the palm of his hand back into my face, creating a muffled sound, and I'm cut off mid-

sentence by my Dad's voice.

"Quiet!"

"But you nearly poked my..."

"Shhh."

We stop and I look around to see why I have to behave like I'm in church. I can barely see anything over the grass, so I just stand there looking at the red and black squares on Dad's flannel. With each breath little white clouds come out in puffs in front of our faces.

"Dad, I can't..."

Then I hear it. It's faint at first, like wind sweeping through a pile of dead leaves. We tip-toe a bit further through the grass and the rustling becomes louder. It's coming from somewhere ahead and off to our right. As Dad pushes through the last bit of overgrown grass, he halts at the entrance of a clearing. I hear a snarl, followed by quiet growling. Another sound slowly fades in with the rustling--a steady, pounding noise like someone hammering something far in the distance. I realize it's my heart. I hold my breath to see if I can determine what it is that we've caught, and then I hear Dad mumble under his breath... "shit". Dad continues to block the entrance to the clearing, so I'm still summoned to staring at the checkers board pattern of his back. I figure a skunk wandered into our trap. That means I will have to "stay put" as Dad always says, and then we will return to the truck soon for an incredibly smelly ride home. Standing, slightly disappointed, I wait while Dad mutters his curse slowly over and over. I'm startled when his voice begins to get louder. I listen to his strange chant. Soon I realize I missed a part of what he had said the first time. The term continues to roll out of his mouth with increased speed and volume:

"Ho-ly... shhh-it. Ho-ly shit,... holy shit, holy shit. HOLY SHIT!"

Now I've heard Dad swear plenty of times. In the garage once, my sisters and I listened while bad words a'plenty echoed from within the garage and bounced their way into our house. Later when he came inside and we were sitting at the dinner table I noticed his thumb nail was black. I've never heard him go off like this before. I want to see what's going on so I push myself past him, clambering over his grounded clunky brown boot. I realize then exactly what he meant. Holy crap is right! I jump ahead and begin hustling toward the trap but make it only a few steps before my chest is met with the same hand that had met my forehead a few minutes earlier. I stand behind Dad's extended arm like a road-raged driver at a railroad crossing. My eyes widen when I realize the size of the animal just ten feet away from me. It's a huge, white animal. Looks to me like it's probably about *fffty* feet long from tip, but when I ask Dad he confirms that its length is about seven feet and it weighs about one hundred and eighty pounds. This furry creature is far too large to be a fox, or even a coyote, but it still appears to be a canine of a sort. It stares back at us with its red eyes, and yips and growls, bearing its snow colored teeth. After vomiting a few more "holy shit's" and "what the hell's" into the empty forest, Dad and I determine that it is, in fact, a wolf. Pure white, the whitest wolf I've ever seen! So white it looked like my light blue shirt after mom used too much bleach in the wash that one time. It has reddish eyes, and a bushy tail that is so large that it alone could be an animal of some sort. After staring at us for a while the wolf hunches down low to the ground and pulls its ears back until they sit almost flat on its head. It looks sort of like a big, dirty snow bank left over from last winter sitting in a pile of grass. The large ruby eyes look back and forth from me to Dad while his snowy- white paws crunch around in the yellow leaves. Dad and I just sit and look for a while, and then he finally says, "stay put," and hurriedly walks toward his truck.

I stand looking at the wolf. He is now sitting calm and alert, with his one leg stretched out to the foot-hold trap where his paw is held clamped between brown, metal jaws. He doesn't struggle like I've seen other animals struggle. Instead of running back and forth, baring his teeth he sits and looks up at me. All of the sudden I notice how quiet the woods have become. A breeze shakes the branches on the surrounding trees, mimicking the "shhh" sound my Dad made when we first heard the wolf. I look into the furry, white animal's eyes, and I feel him looking into mine. I shift the weight between both of my feet.

"It's alright, boy. Dad will be back soon."

His large ears rise up, and his head tilts slightly to the right at the sound of my voice. I begin to wonder why I started to call the wolf a "he." Somehow it just seems right, like I just know.

Crack! The Giant white pup in front of me jumps to his feet. I spin around and look behind me toward the direction the noise came from. Following the sound of crunching and crashing I finally see a hat with a little red

pom ducking in and out of the branches.

"See, here he comes now." I whisper.

Dad walks up to us carrying a long, slender object in his hand--the .22 rifle that he got from my Great Grandma when she died. Supposedly, it will be mine some day. Dad approaches, and stands at my side. He reaches into his pocket. I look down at the wolf. He's looking up at Dad. He looks sad. His ears are back, his head is dropped. Then he turns his snowy face towards me. I hear a jingling, and turn to see Dad take a tiny gold cylinder from his palm, and place it into the chamber of the .22. He pulls the bolt back and slaps the lever down into place with his palm in one quick motion. He looks up at me.

"Alright, kiddo. Stand back. The Trapper's Magazine is going to want a picture of this one when we're done!"

The wolf flinches at the sound of Dad's low, grumbly voice, but continues to look at me. I watch the end of the gun's barrel slowly rise from the ground up to the wolf. Dad's thumb brushes the safety switch. *Click*.

"Dad, wait."

Click. His shoulders drop. He lowers the gun.

"What's up, kiddo?"

"Well, I don't think we should shoot him. We can't."

"What? Yes we can, and we're going to."

"But, Dad. Why?"

"Because that's the sport of trapping, and that's final."

"But..."

"I usually make you wait at the truck during this part. This is a rare opportunity, and I thought you were ready. If you can't handle it then start walking to the truck. I will be there in a few minutes."

The wolf crouches low to the ground--its stomach brushing against dead, fallen leaves. He is still.

"But, I don't want you to."

"Then start walking back."

He raises the gun once more.

"Dad! Stop!" I stomp my foot and throw down my arms.

"I said, no, and that's final! Start walking, NOW!"

He grabs the gun and turns once again toward the wolf. I huff an exhale of frustration, and I reach up to brush my bangs aside. I notice both of my hands are clenched in tight fists. Looking down towards the wolf once more, it turns from my dad to face me -- its eyes meeting mine once again. Warm tears begin rolling down my cheeks.

"NO!"

I stand there-- startled by my own voice. I turn to look up at Dad. His eyebrow is scrunched down to his nose, and his eyes are narrow. A much worse look than his "you are late coming home" face.

"What did I just say, start wal..."

"No, Dad. I don't want you to shoot him!"

I walk forward from my spot beside my Dad and stand just a couple feet in front the wolf. I turn to face Dad. Tears continue to roll down my face, and I start to yell.

"You can't shoot him. I won't let you..."

I watch as Dad grows more and more angry. His eyebrow sinks further down his nose, more lines show up on his forehead, and his face slowly begins to turn the color of his flannel. That silly little pom on his head is shaking so much that if you were staring at it alone you would think that Dad is *very* cold instead of very angry.

"Kiddo, you better move *now*. I mean it."

His voice is serious and stern. I feel defeated. Just by the sound of his voice I know now that trying to talk him into changing his mind would be like trying to talk my older sister into liking school. So, I stand where I am, and I say the last thing I can...

"Okay. But if you shoot him I will never go trapping with you again."

We stand looking at each other. Dad doesn't say anything for a long time, he just stands and looks at me. After what seems like a whole year, he turns and walks toward the pack basket, bends down, and rests the .22 on the ground next to it. He turns to look at me again, and then lets out a sigh. His arm rises from his side, and his

left hand quickly dips into his front flannel pocket. A few seconds later I hear him speaking.

“Hello, I have a report to make about a rare animal...”

* * *

The DNR has arrived, as well as news reporters, and a vet is here to tranquilize the white beast. Groups of people are cluttered around the wolf right now, like that one day at school when my friends and I gathered around Jimmy after he fell from the very top of the monkey bars and got the wind knocked out of him. Only, the adults were more worried then, whereas everyone here just seems really excited and busy. Everyone is talking and it sounds like a loud hum in my ears. The DNR people are all gathered in one spot trying to take pictures while they discuss tracking collars and doing tests. A young news reporter is standing on the other side of the wolf talking into a microphone that has a channel six news logo on it. His nose reminds me of a parrot or hawk’s beak, and he has eyes look sort of droopy and make him look sad all of the time. He keeps looking back and forth from the camera to the white wolf an awful lot and seems kind of nervous. I suppose it’s like presenting something for show-and-tell and not really thinking about what you’re going to say beforehand. Anyway, I recognize the older man talking to a camera from a different news station, because he’s wearing the same grey suit that he always does on the news. He’s kinda short and round looking, with goofy, square glasses that look small on his face, and hair parted off to one side all funny. “Boy, he sure knows how to wear a mustache.” Dad always says – and he’s right. It’s even bigger than I remember it being on TV!

I thought for sure that Dad would be really excited about him being here because he watches him on the news all the time. Dad calls him “Ol’ Denny” and says that Dennis Anderson is the only person worth a damn on the news most days. I guess Dad doesn’t notice Ol’ Denny though because he’s standing off to the side near the bushes that we passed before finding the giant, bleach-white creature, talking to some guy. No matter where we are it seems like Dad always knows *someone*. Dad is yelling and laughing really loud, and talking really fast, and that big, red pom on his hat is waving around again. I recognize his friend as one of the people from the Minnesota Trappers Association that worked at our booth at last year’s Fall Convention. He came to take pictures for the monthly newsletter. It looks like the nervous reporter is walking over to them to ask some questions. He must have said something mean because Dad is furrowing his brow and getting all stern, like when me or my sisters don’t do our chores or stay out past curfew. Now the reporter guy is saying something else. Dad smiles, holds up his pointer finger in front of his friend, and mouths the words: “One minute”. He turns to the reporter, scrunches his eyebrows down to his nose, and I hear him yelling, “I said I don’t want to be on the goddamn news, and that’s final!” When Dad says that something is final you’re not suppose to ask about it anymore, and when I see the reporter turn away and walk back to where he was standing earlier I am very happy that he didn’t try to ask my dad about it again. Maybe Dad will get along better with Ol’ Denny.

Later, members of the DNR told us that we had trapped an incredibly rare animal and kept on emphasizing how amazing our find was, like we didn’t already know or something. In the end they decided that the Ely Wolf Center would be a good place to keep the animal. That way other people couldn’t shoot it and it wouldn’t go extinct right away and stuff. To this day you can go visit him, and view him from the glass walls within the center. They call him Fang, after the book by Jack London, which I thought was incredibly stupid. When we went to see him I saw him running around outside in the snow with some other wolves. There were black ones and grey ones but none of them were quite as big as the one we caught. He was out chasing one of the little black wolves, when a lady leading one of the exhibit tours saw us and announced to her group that Dad and I were the ones who found “Fang.” Everyone sort of politely smiled and looked excited about seeing us, and then when I asked about the name I was actually embarrassed for the guy. I mean, come on. How would you like to live with such a cheesy name? Anyway, after they left my dad started ranting about something along the lines of if he had it his way he would have named him MacGyver, or Steven after some Seagal guy we see doing kicks and throwing razor credit cards at bad guys on TV. I would have called him Butch. As we made our way toward the exit of the building I thought about talking to Dad about why I stood in front of the wolf that day, but I didn’t. I don’t think Dad will ever understand why I did it. That’s okay, though – we both still like trapping together.

Low Fidelity

Michelle.

She was a one life stand.
The kind of girl
I could sleep next to forever.
With too tense two am talks,
twist ties were severed
and I was left with a pocket
full of tangled wires
and rotten wood knots.
My bee nest heart,
swarmed with red hornets
pricking holes til blood
swamped my lungs
and every swollen apology.

I
never thanked Michelle for being apart
of my forget-me-nots
and marigolds.
All the things that I thought
would not get old
withered in syllables,
I thought we built
a resistance to.
Convicted of crimes
I didn't intend,
conniptions clutched every footstep
away from her door
into insomnia.

Lucy.

I found her in the laundry room,
sitting cross legged and smirking,
her body vibrating on a dryer.
She wrapped me in her
unfamiliar, soothing legs.
A vacation from an arsoned home
to a writhing, humid south.
Under teal Christmas lights,
she studied my skin,

as she coated me in scratches,
bruises, and bites leaving
jaundiced skin patches
under ink letters.

Time
heals all wounds, but
stranger's supple bodies
serve as time machines.
Touch puppets
nerve endings
to reconnect dead joy.
For three hours
I felt weightless
guiltless,
wanted.
For ten seconds,
I forgot.
Sometimes that all anyone needs.

Icky Little Miracles

I have been present at approximately three human births. The first birth, obviously, was my own and I can't remember it at all, but I think it is safe to say that I was at least a little bit present at the time. The second and third births were for my brothers, Alex and Dylan. My mother doesn't have any children besides my two brothers and me, so I guess you could say that every single time she's squeezed a baby out of her vagina – I've been there.

I was four-years old when Alex was born and twelve for the birth of Dylan. Both boys were born at home with a midwife because my birth at Bartlett Hospital left our mother with quite a bit of disdain toward hospital-births. She didn't like the nurses coming in and out of the cold, impersonal room, offering her drugs that she didn't even believe in, and asking her to keep her voice down all the damn time. The stirrups really freaked her out, too. So when my mother's second and third pregnancies rolled around, home births with a midwife were really the only option. Alex was born on an old black futon in the living room, and Dylan in a tub of water in mom's bedroom. I remember both births quite well, although I'm not so sure that's a good thing. The thing about birth is it's quite grotesque – disgusting, even. If you've ever seen the birth of any mammal, or given birth yourself, you know what I'm talking about. Mystery fluids mix together, there's a ton of sweating, panting, some poop, and quite a bit of grunting. And the stretching! Oh, the stretching. No wonder mothers always make such a huge deal about childbirth: shit looks fuckin' painful. And I was four-years old the first time I saw this! Imagine that, for a second: being a confused four-year-old watching something as gross and graphic as childbirth. It was quite nasty, but my mother, who has always claimed that birth is natural, shameless part of life, insisted that I be present for the births of both of my brothers.

Young children are far more intuitive than one may expect. They are able to pick up on small social cues and are surprisingly aware of their surroundings. When two parents fight, their child knows what's going on. When my mother was pregnant with Alex, I knew a baby was on the way. What I did not know, however, was how the baby would arrive. So when mom began groaning, breathing heavily, and yes, stretching, I was terrified. I was certain that my dear mommy, my shining light, was dying a very painful death on our crappy living room futon. Worse, my entire family was watching her die. I was overwhelmed with fear and began to cry deep, sorrowful sobs while I sat helplessly on my grandmother's lap. Mommy was in agony. Her face was a deep shade of crimson, tears fell from her eyes, she groaned with animal pain – and no one did a thing. Dad's eyes were wide as a fly's, but grandma and the midwife seemed calm and even happy. After several hours, I couldn't take it anymore. I ran into my room and buried myself under my Little Mermaid sheets and comforter. Mortified, I thought mommy was a goner. I moped and sobbed in my blanket cocoon for only a few moments before grandma Caroline came in. She entered my room quickly and with purpose, snapped her fingers and told me to hurry up and follow her into the living room. I shouldn't miss what was about to happen. She held my hand and walked briskly down the hallway while my teeny little legs ran to keep up with her. Grandma plopped me down on the brown shag carpet and we sat together in our front row seats, only a few feet away from all of the bloody, disgusting action. As I watched Alex crown and emerge from our mother, my fear was replaced with incredible fascination. A human head was literally appearing, as if by magic, from between her legs! Before too long, our small living room, which hadn't heard the sound of a crying infant in a few years, was full of healthy, guttural baby wails. Alex looked cute, in a slimy alien sort of way. Covered in wet goo. When I saw tears of joy in my mother's eyes and a big, beaming smile on my father's face, the whole childbirth thing began to make some sense. I mean, yeah, it was pretty disgusting, but it was over, and a real human who wasn't there before was suddenly with us. In retrospect, I cannot believe that I spent my last moments as an only child crying like a clueless moron – but you know what? Disgusting as it was, I'm glad I was there for the birth of my first brother. Witnessing Alex's birth prepared me for what was to come in the same house, with the same midwife, eight years later.

When I was twelve and my mother was pregnant with Dylan, I was no longer oblivious to what the end result would be. Although I was only in preschool when Alex joined our family, I remembered his birth well and was fairly

certain that my age and experience would make Dylan's birth a cake-walk — for me, at least. I even briefed poor, clueless, eight-year old Alex on how everything would happen. "You know it's gonna be really gross, right? You'll actually see mom's vagina. It stretches!" My young brother, who may or may not have known the meaning of the word vagina, accepted my words of wisdom with wide eyes and a crinkled nose.

Mom went into labor at the dinner table. I remember watching her grip her fork tightly as her face contorted into a bright red wince. "I just had a contraction," she said calmly. "I think I'll call the midwife."

As her contractions grew stronger and closer together, the calm composure that we saw at the dinner table began to fade, and was replaced with the familiar agony of labor. I won't lie, the stark contrast in my mom's mood between contractions seemed incredibly weird to me. One minute, mom seemed totally fine. She'd smile and speak about how damn excited she was to have the baby. She made jokes about how being pregnant had totally fucked up her bowels, and commented on how she was "so over being fat." Then, a moment later, the lighthearted discussion would come to an abrupt halt. Once again, mom's face would turn bright red and contort into an unrecognizable mold. She made growling noises that sounded like a lioness being murdered, and got really bitchy when grandma tried to comfort her by putting her hand on mom's shoulder.

The sight of my mother in labor wasn't actually a cake-walk for me the second time around. Yeah, after Alex's birth I thought I could handle anything, but the pain is just so damn frightening to be around, especially as a child. Labor is quite possibly the most raw, truly human event to witness, and I'm not gonna lie, I cried a little when she was having those murdered-lioness contractions. Although my tears weren't filled with the same fear that I once had as a confused four-year old, they were still speckled with uncertainty because let's face it, a woman in labor is a terrifying thing, and quite difficult for a little girl to understand. Mom even heard my cries over her own animal wails, which is a pretty impressive use of maternal intuition, but there wasn't much she could do to calm me down. She was a little preoccupied, so I dried my eyes and turned my attention to Alex, who was also crying. It seemed quite obvious that I hadn't briefed him well enough on the toils of childbirth, but how could I? No amount of prep-work could have prepared the kid for blood-curdling wails and Earth-shattering screams, so I tried my hardest to put on a brave face. I told Alex that all of the grotesque images and terrifying noises were totally normal, but I doubt he believed me. He was on his own journey. Eventually, just as I had eight years earlier, Alex would learn on his own that mom wasn't going to die during childbirth.

After a few hours and countless contractions, Bev, the midwife finally arrived with a medical-grade inflatable hot tub. Grandma Caroline had spent the prior few hours cleaning, tidying, and preparing our home for the new baby. She did it all with the speed and enthusiasm of a frantic, headless hen. When Bev surrendered the hot tub to my grandmother, she wasted no time dominating mom's bedroom, inflating the tub as quickly as she could, and filling it with warm water. Since mom's room was being occupied by hot tub-filling, she decided to use my room as a makeshift examination room. Bev needed to give mom's cervix a little peek to see how many centimeters it had dilated. On my bed! For some reason, I found the idea of a woman in labor spreading her legs within a ten foot radius of my bed deeply disturbing. I began having flashbacks of Alex's birth, of all that fluid, of the poop. What if she couldn't hold the baby in long enough to go downstairs, undress and hop in the tub? Dear, God. I didn't want her to ruin my brand new flannel sheets or get any of those gross juices on my teddy bear! I sat outside my room, arms crossed, listening for any signs of labor. Thankfully, things on my bed went fairly smooth. Nothing was stained and nothing was ruined, but mom was dilated about ten centimeters, which meant it was tub-time.

Alex and I sat at the edge of mom's bed while she gave birth in the hot tub only four hours after going into labor. Like I remembered, the entire thing was absolutely disgusting to watch, and I'm fairly certain Alex thought so as well. In water, blood and placenta-fluid float around like red ribbons. Poop floated, too. At the sight of all of that bodily weirdness, Alex's big, wet, eight-year old eyes looked to me for reassurance. He wanted to know that everything would be okay, and I tried my hardest to be the experienced sibling and give Alex the reassurance that he needed, because despite all of the groans, all of the slime and all of the blood, we were sitting in on something beautiful. It can certainly be hard to remember how amazing childbirth is when the actual sight of it is really, really icky. In the hot tub, the graphic grossness of it all seemed magnified and mystified by the water. Dylan just sort of slid out of mom like a worm and floated to the surface of the water. He was a lanky, fleshy little rubber ball in the water for a moment there, but man was he adorable.

When Dylan was born, love leaked from every single crack in the house. He was just as wet and slimy as I remembered Alex being, but this time it seemed far less grotesque. I was older, wiser and able to focus on the simple fact that life is a goddamn miracle.

The Geometry of Words: An Interview With Kim Heacox

*I used to wonder whether it was possible to be star struck by a person you've never met. When I first picked up a copy of Kim Heacox's *The Only Kayak* at a Hearthside Books in Juneau, I began to suspect it might be. Within those pages of lyric, poignant prose is a chronicle about life in a changing landscape that grips a reader from the first page. How could I not be impressed? Then, after crossed wires — and a few emails that traveled to portions of the world I can only dream of — I realized that I am, in fact, star struck by this Gustavus writer with a passion for wordplay, the world as it once was, and the world as it could be. Read on as Heacox corresponds from "The Island at the End of the World," and I try my best to keep from asking for an autograph.*

JB: How did you come to find that writing was a passion of yours?

KH: I had a great English teacher in my senior year of high school who taught me the beauty and power of words by turning me on to song lyrics by the Beatles, Paul Simon, Bob Dylan, and others. Then, as a young man in my Huckleberry Finn years, I traveled around the world and often had nobody to talk to since I often traveled alone. So I spoke to my journal. I wrote. I became my own personal scribe and soon I fell in love with writing — what I call "the geometry of words" — and learned to approach it as a craft.

JB: Since *Iditarod Spirit* was first published in 1991, you've experimented with several different forms — memoir, photography books, and fiction, to name a few. How did this come about?

KH: Life is a buffet. I like to try it all. I started out as a writer and used photography to help sell my early magazine articles, but over the years I also ended up writing to help market my photographs; words and pictures go together. Overall, though, I like the specificity of writing, how words can target a subject — and change the world — in ways photography cannot. Look at Arab Spring, the U.S. military isn't spearheading that deep change. It's the written word, the Internet, millions of emails and thousands of blogs, and to a lesser degree: photography.

JB: Do you feel like your style has evolved since you first began writing?

KH: Yes. I write more humor, sarcasm, and self-deprecation that I used to. They give me greater license to be a critic (after all I'm critical of myself). I'm also more playful with my writing; I break grammatical rules in a way I didn't used to.

JB: Similarly, do you approach writing memoir or fiction differently than other work that is more informational, such as your photo books?

KH: Yes. A writer has to balance "scene" and "summary" in his writing. In a memoir, I can't always be summarizing (and passing judgment) without first taking the reader on a journey to discover how I arrived at such a point of view, and how I learned my own lessons along the way, some of them were hard lessons.

JB: Many of your books are accompanied by your own photography. Can you describe the process of pairing writing and images?

KH: I never work alone in the critical steps of making a book, unless I was going to become the publisher which doesn't interest me. Once the writer or photographer becomes a businessman/publisher, he risks his relationship with objectivity and the truth, like an actor who directs himself in a movie...how honest can he be with himself? Or can he take constructive criticism from others around him? Typically, I work with a designer/editor/publisher to pair images with words, and most often it's great fun to see the whole thing come together. Sometimes the pairings are overt; sometimes they're subtle. Sometimes I fight hard to get my way; sometimes I let a collaborator prevail. It's like having a child, creating something that will hopefully outlive me and carry my values into the future to positively affect people. I'll never know.

JB: Your upcoming novel, *Jimmy Bluefeather*, has you returning to fiction for the first time since *Caribou Crossing* in 2001. Is it difficult for you to return to a particular genre after spending time away from it?

KH: Not really. In a way I've never been away from fiction. The novel is always in my head as an alternate universe, my own little make-believe world where I breathe life into special, magical, beautifully-flawed people. That's why writing fiction is like taking a drug, you feel god-like in your powers of creation and perhaps you awaken the next day to find it still needs a lot of work, that the apple isn't as shiny as you remembered it from the night before when you drank too much red wine and wrote three pages using sentences that were 80 words long because you thought you were Cormac McCarthy, when in fact only Cormac McCarthy is Cormac McCarthy. I will say this, though. *Caribou Crossing* is a plot-driven novel about politics, intrigue, big oil and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. *Jimmy Bluefeather* is a character-driven story – a very different critter – about a grandfather and his grandson and a journey they take deep into the human heart.

JB: Has living in a small community shaped the way you view the world, and your own writing?

KH: Yes, greatly. The memoir I just finished (and emailed to my literary agent), *Fixing a Hole in the Ocean*, is about the essence of true community (Gustavus, my home) that I discovered through the transformational power of music, water, and wildness. I worked on it for five years.

JB: How about your travels, particularly to the Arctic and Antarctica?

KH: Also a great influence on me. I started out as a travel writer with the National Geographic Society in the 1980s (and ended up writing books for the NGS in the 1990s). I'm in southern waters now (as I answer these questions) sailing on the expedition ship, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORER, from Ushuaia, Argentina to the Falkland Islands, then to South Georgia (which I call "The Island at the End of the World"), then to the Antarctic Peninsula, and finally back to Ushuaia, a trip of 20 days. I've been coming down here since 1993 as a naturalist and historian. In Alaska, mountains dominate the landscape, and glaciers fit in where they can. In Antarctica, home to 90 percent of the world's ice, ice dominates the landscape and mountains appear where they can. Imagine Lynn Canal and Chatham Strait filled with ice. That's Antarctica. It's Alaska 20,000 years ago. It's the Ice Age. Antarctica is what the world was.

JB: As an Alaskan author, do you feel pressure to write about a certain subject matter?

KH: Pressure, no. License, yes. I feel I have the right and responsibility to write about Alaska in ways that somebody from Outside does not. As an independent author, I feel somewhat duty-bound to write about truths that are not self-evident. For example: how Ted Stevens always spoke about "extreme environmentalists," but never once mentioned "extreme capitalists." Apparently there's no such thing. It's essential, I believe,

that the independent writer document how things are but also how they ought to be. Kurt Vonnegut did this, as did my other exemplar, Edward Abbey. Both took considerable criticism for it, and showed great courage. It reminds me of a line from *Flaubert's Parrot*: "It's easy, after all, not to be a writer. Many people aren't writers and very little harm comes to them."

JB: Who, or what, inspires you to write?

KH: The many little wondrous things I see around me every day inspire me: how the moon gets tangled up in the trees, and sea birds chatter in a cove, and children play and laugh; how tides come and go and bring the day and take it away, and snow falls on boats, and rain brightens the trees, and the natural world makes us who we are and tempts us with her easy gifts, and challenges us to live more simply so others may simply live.

JB: Was there ever a moment that you felt like you'd made it as a writer?

KH: No. Well, maybe once, when I wrote an essay about my brother in the Coast Guard. He was fourteen years older than me. I was in the third grade.

JB: A good portion of your work deals with finding a connection to nature in a world where nature is shrinking. Do you feel like living in Alaska has made expressing this connection more important to you?

KH: Yes, very much. A million people come to Alaska every summer (most of them on cruise ships) looking for the America that used to be. They're looking for their four-legged shadow, the wolf within, the wildness they walked away from forty years ago in order to get the big house and buy hundreds of things they don't need to impress dozens of people they don't like. They're looking for Bedford Falls before it became Pottersville, the fictional town in Frank Capra's classic movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*. They're looking for another kind of wealth and many, I think, find it once they get past the jewelry stores. I love writing about that because I think our nation has lost its way. The great secular religion in America today, Vigorous Economic Growth Forever, is a Faustian pact that every year does more harm than good. It burns our ancient past (coal, oil and natural gas) and sends the costs into the future, adding more CO2 to the atmosphere until one day (in the not-too-distant future) our hydrocarbon economy will be regarded as equally bankrupt and ethically wrong as we today regard the slavery economy of 200 years ago. As heretical as that sounds, we cannot grow ourselves out of every problem. We must invent and innovate in ways we never have; we must develop without growing, and find better ways to live with each other and the larger-than-human world without plundering nature and robbing our grandchildren of a bountiful earth. A revolution is under way, one that says the American Dream is a fantasy, and it's time to change. It's time to find a new definition of "wealth" and "progress." I'm excited to write within that revolution, to be a spark in the fire.

JB: Do you have any advice for aspiring authors?

KH: Read. Write. Fall in love with words. Study and practice the elements of what makes a good story. Be grateful. Be modest. Celebrate the successes of others. Find your rewards and identity in something other than money. Simplify your life. Go outside. Stay healthy. Never give up. Laugh often.

Yesterday

EVERY KID SHOULD HAVE A WONDER DOG that runs like the wind. A short little mutt blasting forth with his tongue out and ears back, his stubby legs moving so fast they're a blur.

I did. It goes like this:

I'm riding my Schwinn Red Racer with everything I've got. Hot on my heels is Max, the family pooch, a terrier of some kind running with all his might. We're not fooling ourselves, Max and me. He's no pedigree. He's a mutt of some kind, a distant wolf. And I'm little more than a mutt myself, a regular kid from middle-class America, free-ranging, mutt-loving, bike-zooming, as unmindful of my limitations as Max is of his.

Weaving past cars, we head up Bernard Street to the end of Spokane's South Hill, where we cross High Drive and stop atop the Bluff. I lift my bike over the guardrail, then little Max, and turn my back to the traffic. Before me, the world falls away in a breathtaking slope of dry summer grasses and ponderosa pines that ends far below at a cliff. Below the cliff, another couple hundred feet down, a long sandy slope runs into Hangman Creek. I study the clean, free-flowing waters that sparkle in the sun. They beckon me. I look at Max. He looks at me, vaguely aware that I've volunteered him for this dangerous, top-secret mission. What a team we make: two buddies who would never do alone what we're about to do together. We'll be heroes if we survive, dead if we die.

It's the summer of 1963. The season of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, the Beach Boys and muscle cars, Martin Luther King Jr. and "I have a dream." The summer before John Kennedy visits Dallas, and death has a face. It's the summer after the Cuban Missile Crisis, the great Soviet threat and the much-talked-about eyeball-to-eyeball standoff that put Khrushchev in retreat and everybody on edge.

The summer before the Beatles arrive.

I straddle my bike and face down the hill. Behind me, clawing the pavement is a river of Detroit metal and glass — mainstream America — going places that don't interest me. Fear makes a small fist in my throat as I fight it back and focus on the task at hand, something I've thought about for months, years. How would it feel to fly off the Sand Cliffs of Hangman Creek?

I feel the bike pulling, impatient, ready to go.

"Come home in one piece," Mom said that morning. It's what she said every morning before she headed off to work. She knew me better than I knew myself.

I push off. In seconds I'm going faster than I can pedal. My bike is a rocket. I try both brakes. Nothing. It's all gravity and acceleration. *Holy shit.* Pines whip past me. Grasses rake my ankles. A fleeting image of my own sensational death flashes before me, how my story will read. KID RIDES BIKE OFF CLIFF. In a split-second I see my funeral, everybody in black, Foxy Felicity from down the street, daughter of the retired Navy commander in tears, her face wet with regret for having never kissed me. A red rose in her hand. It's a perfect fantasy for a self-absorbed kid who like every other self-absorbed kid occupies the center of his own universe.

Whoosh. . . I sail off the cliff and feel the earth fall away, my bike too, flying, falling, my heart in my throat, my skinny body twisting in the air. Am I weightless? Everything is happening quickly yet slowly. Beside me I see little Max, his legs pin-wheeling against the blue sky, his tongue out, ears and tail high. He did it, the crazy mutt. He ran down the slope and launched himself off the cliff with me. He's the coolest, stupidest dog in the world. Falling now with his cool, stupid master, twisting, spiraling, falling fast. We hit the sand and tumble down, down, down, coughing, spitting. I stand up, laughing, a jester, a fool, a king. Max jumps into my arms and licks my face and we tumble more. My bike is half buried in sand. The sun rides high, shining magnificently on our great accomplishment. I run across the railroad tracks, strip naked and jump into the creek. Max joins me, splashing, frolicking. We dry ourselves on a big rock in the middle of the gentle current. I scratch his belly and he pulls back his lips in a cartoonish dog-grin. I laugh at him and he laughs at me and we laugh at ourselves. Damn, we're funny. We're hilarious. Look at us. We're rascals in paradise, ramblers and gamblers on the best day of summer, the best day ever. Had a freight train

come by with Woody Guthrie in an open boxcar we'd have jumped aboard and gone wherever it is hoboes go. Had Huck Finn and Jim floated by on their raft, looking for America while hiding from the law, we'd have given them our last Snickers bar. Had Katharine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart chugged by on the *African Queen*, the old riverboat belching black smoke, we'd have cheered them on. Had a Soviet sub slipped by, its sinister scope spying on Spokane, a city of strategic Cold War importance, we'd have stoned it and saved America and gotten medals for our bravery.

Had you asked me that day, sun-struck in the middle of Hangman Creek, what is the greatest source of my joy, I'd have said Super Max the Wonder Dog. I didn't know then – it would take me years to understand – that it's something much bigger, much deeper.

And fears? What are my fears back in the summer of '63? Aside from global thermonuclear war and the annihilation of all life on earth – watching Mom, Dad, Max, my brothers and me turn to toast, watching Foxy Felicity melt before me eyes – I have none. I am fearless. I am happy.

UNLIKE MANY memoirists these days, I cannot claim grave mistreatment by my parents. Raised in rural North Dakota with no obvious scars or resentments of their own, they impart none on me. Dad loves his Monday night Montgomery Ward Bowling League, his Saturday afternoon major league baseball and beer, and his daily Jim Beam on ice after six. As alcoholics go he's a gentle man, always good to Mom and my brothers and me. He sits at the dining room table and smokes his pipe and devours Louis L'Amour novels like candy. Mom favors the James Michener 1,000-page epics about faraway places. She reads in the bathtub, tired after a long day of work, and comes out with the book soaking wet and twice its normal size, having fallen asleep and dropped it in the water. Dad says, "Reading is supposed to expand your mind, Virgie, not the book." She takes the novel down to the furnace room to dry it out, tediously separating the wet pages one by one so they don't stick or tear. Never will she buy the same paperback twice, or a new hardcover. We don't have the money.

Mom and Dad grew up in the Great Depression and attended no college. More than anything they want their three sons to get university degrees and have better lives than they had. My brothers, Mick and Bill, fourteen and ten years older than me, are like uncles, each mythical in his own way. At eighteen, Mick joins the U.S. Coast Guard and sails the world and sends me post cards from Hong Kong and Hawaii. Bill wins the Washington State high school chess championship and gets a scholarship to Whitman College. To help pay for his tuition, Mom marches down to a pawnshop and sells the coin collection she's been working on for thirty years. It has a 1909 Denver Mint Lincoln Penny worth thousands. I stand beside her as she barter for every dollar.

With my brothers gone, I'm left alone with Mom, Dad and Max. On Friday nights, after a long week of work, Mom gives me enough money to ride my bike down to the local A&W to buy three root beer floats and bring them back. We eat in blissful silence, grinning at each other, rich as the Rockefellers.

Max licks the cups.

Our first television is a magic box that costs exactly what we have and tells us when to laugh and worry, what to think, what to buy and why. We love it. "Stay right where you are," it says. "We'll be right back." We stay right where we are and it comes right back, faithful as a friend. It gives us our favorite movies, *Ben Hur*, *High Noon*, *Moby Dick*, *Bridge Over the River Kwai*, *The African Queen*, and regularly scheduled programming: Sunday night *Bonanza* and *The Walt Disney Hour*; *Rawhide* and *ABC's Wide World of Sports*, and the trusted newsmen Walter Cronkite, Chet Huntley, David Brinkley and Jim McKay. It melodically tells us to see the USA in our Chevrolet. We have an old Buick with whitewall tires and a dinosaur engine that drinks gas like water. About the best we can do to see the USA is a trip west to Seattle every other summer. For me, a bumpkin kid from Spokane, Seattle is Paris on the Pacific. It has the ocean and Pike Place and the Public Market where fishmongers throw salmon across selling stalls and banter with buyers. Best of all, Seattle has the Space Needle, Washington State's Eiffel Tower with a restaurant on top. I can see everything from up there – Mount Rainier, Mount Olympus, the entire Emerald City spread out below, perfect in its proportions, humming, thrumming and growing, always growing.

En route back home, Dad sometimes gets off the interstate to drive the backroads, as he puts it, "to see what

we might see.” I sit up front – Max too – to sing with the radio and watch every curve in the road and what new places it might reveal. That’s how it is: the road, like television, reveals new worlds. It takes us places. One time we follow the mighty Columbia River as it courses its ancient way east of the Cascades, a great artery framed by bone-dry scablands and imposing black walls of basalt colonnade. So much water running through brown, thirsty country. Where does all the water come from?

Nothing prepares me for Grand Coulee Dam, a tall, graceful and imposing concrete plug set into a bedrock gorge as if by aliens, a divine hand, an extraordinary power. Behind it is a large lake where a river used to be, Lake Roosevelt, named for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. I stare. Even little Max is without words.

We get out of the Buick. Dad lights his pipe and speaks solemnly about the men who built the great dam back in the 1930s, how some fell into the wet concrete and remain there, entombed, sacrificed to progress. He talks about turbine power and kilowatt hours, more in numbers than words. Big numbers. No salmon swim past that dam, he says. The Bureau of Reclamation built fish ladders to assist salmon on all the other downriver dams: Bonneville, The Dalles, John Day, McNary, Priest Rapids, Rock Island, Rocky Reach and Chief Joseph. But not Grand Coulee. It’s so big, so tall, they didn’t bother. If you’re a fish descended from millions of other ancestral fish that for ten thousand years returned home up this river to spawn and die and sire your own kind, to feed ospreys, grizzlies and lean-living, barefooted people who once gave spiritual dimension to the land, then tough luck. Grand Coulee Dam is the new geography, the new beginning and end.

I have no reason to question its rightness. Everything we do in America we do for good reason, to make us stronger, better. Deep in the basement of the local library, books tell me stories about people who belonged to the land once, long ago, the Indians and all that. But TV says that romance is exactly that, a romance, a silly nostalgia. The land belongs to the people now, to you and me and John Wayne on his big horse as Woody Guthrie sings, “This land was made for you and me” and we all sing along. The land is ours to harness and put to work. Nature isn’t a community we belong to. It’s a commodity we own, and for good reason.

I stand beside my dad a bit bewildered, a happy twelve-year-old kid who doesn’t know what he doesn’t know. Grand Coulee Dam doesn’t charm or impress me like the Space Needle. It makes me a little sad, and that sadness embarrasses me.

Everybody admires Grand Coulee Dam. Why don’t I? Even Woody Guthrie sings its praises.

“Roll on, Columbia, roll on.

Roll on, Columbia, roll on,

Your power is turning our darkness to dawn,

So roll on, Columbia, roll on.”

BACK HOME, I pull out a map of Washington State and find Hangman Creek where it flows into the Spokane River, which flows into the Columbia, which flows into the Pacific Ocean. Not like it once did, though. What would Huck Finn say? And Lewis and Clark who crossed the Rocky Mountains and followed the time-honored, free-flowing Columbia to the Pacific?

Progress, is what they’d say.

One morning in school as I stand at attention and face the flag and recite the Pledge of Allegiance with my hand over my heart, I feel my mind forced narrowly upwards. A good citizen, I am enthralled with America and American exceptionalism, the shining ideals of liberty and justice for all, the powers of creativity, innovation and higher learning, the summertime apple pies, hot dogs and baseball, the crisp originality of rock ‘n’ roll, bluegrass and the twelve-bar blues. I am also enthralled with the girl down the street, Felicity, whose father, a retired Navy commander, sits in his dark basement and insists that I sit with him and listen while he plays stirring military anthems and cadence songs on his scratchy old record player, and I do as he commands because he has authority and I can stare at his daughter’s soft curls and deep brown eyes as she coyly winks and drives me crazy.

My sixth grade teacher reminds my classmates and me (Felicity to my left, hand over her heart) that we have good reason to be proud. We are civilized Americans who live in the greatest nation on earth, in modern homes with

soft beds, electricity, ovens, radio and television. Grand Coulee Dam gives us that; it gives us comfort and convenience. It turns night into day. It lights our future. Yes, it's an end of some things. But it's the bright beginning of so much more. Every dam on the Columbia River is a great engineering feat and conservation project, a tribute to human ingenuity, a bold step forward that improves our daily lives. Foxy Felicity nods her pretty head. All the kids are nodding. Think about it, the teacher adds. All that water that once ran to the ocean unused as a river, going to waste, now turns turbines to make the desert green with alfalfa, to make our homes glow with television.

Maybe it's something loose in my head. I tell nobody about how weird I feel upon first seeing Grand Coulee Dam, or about my adventure with Super Max the Wonder Dog, flying off the Sand Cliffs of Hangman Creek. Like a make-believe hero in his own secret movie, I alone carry the knowledge of my achievements as I struggle to be just another kid fitting in. The only thing otherworldly in my life is my imagination.

Then the Beatles arrive.

THEY LAND in New York in early February 1964 with America still in shock less than three months after the assassination of President Kennedy. "Please join me in welcoming these fine youngsters from Liverpool," says Ed Sullivan, the host of his own NBC TV variety show. He waves his hand and the music begins, "All My Loving," "Till There Was You," "She Loves You, yeah, yeah, yeah..."

I sit transfixed by the mop-top hair, knife-sharp suits, black boots and youthful, easy smiles. Mom taps her foot. It's the first time I see her come alive since Kennedy's killing. Max cocks his head. Dad says they look funny and don't sing like Bing Crosby or Frank Sinatra; Mom says they don't sing like Roy Orbison. I think, *give me a break. Nobody sings like Roy Orbison.* They have their own sound, a tight, bright Mersey beat that juices things up ten degrees into — what? I don't know. Does anybody? Such vitality and originality. They project something akin to the young new balladeer, Bob Dylan, who seems to dare you to think he's kidding.

Everybody has a favorite. Mine is Paul, with his contagious, winning spark in the way he kicks off a song, "One, two, three, FAW..." He plays bass left-handed and stands next to George and sings lead vocals as if he were part choirboy and part canyon wren. According to their producer, George Martin, Paul is "virgin olive oil" next to John's "lemon juice."

And John? He stands alone, far to the right, faintly bowlegged and defiant, wolf-like, and seems to know something the rest of us do not, something we'll have to figure out. Not until the final song, "I Want to Hold Your Hand," does his voice ring through as a street-wise counterpoint to Paul's.

"He's the interesting one," Mom says.

Seventy-three million Americans watch that performance and step from darkness into the light. It's a national epiphany, a cultural phenomenon that acknowledges music heals. Music is transformational. It makes us feel and think in ways we never have before. It's not a luxury but a necessity, a profound way to express our humanity, the deepest part of ourselves. To some, the Beatles are a simple pop band, all sugar and no salt. But many critics quickly grasp that what runs below the playful lyrics is a musical sophistication to rival Cole Porter and Irving Berlin.

All that winter I hear Mom humming their songs.

When they return to America for a concert tour six months later, Paul opens alone with "Yesterday," the song that came to him in his sleep, and John belts out "Twist and Shout" with a voice one observer says comes from "leather tonsils in a steel throat." Later, in a televised concert attended by Queen Elizabeth II, John thanks the audience and says if it's too much to applaud, "you can just rattle your jewelry."

MY DREAMS change after that. My school essays too. A small wolf takes up residence in my heart. Call it rapid cognition or the adaptive unconscious or the crazy ability to know a thing without thought or explanation. I'm not sure what it is, but something is born in me the day I hear John Lennon stand before the world and challenge a queen. I begin to question things and feel more alive than I did when flying off a cliff.

I start to sing, quietly at first, then with more gusto while riding my bike or mowing people's lawns, or mowing the Manito Golf Course, my summer job. On perfect putting greens I jam my heel into the soft earth to make

a divot or two, fulfilling my apprenticeship into the School of Civil Disobedience, inspired not so much by the soft-spoken Henry David Thoreau — who went into the woods to “live deliberately” and later spent a night in jail to protest a war — as by John Lennon, the tough, cynical, crude, creative, funny, brilliant, vulnerable son of a sailor and a loving but insecure mother who like John would die too young. Stepping from a hedgerow into a street, she is struck and killed by a speeding off-duty policeman who pays no fine and serves no jail time.

Life presents itself to me then as something infinitely wondrous, beautiful and unfair. As such, a defiant little seed takes root, watered with images of insurrection. I decide it isn’t the divots in putting greens that are wrong. It’s the golf course itself, a big lawn where a forest used to be. And a dam? Could an entire dam be wrong?

When my stern sixth-grade teacher tells me to stop humming and start writing my assigned exercise, I write the music in my head. “Write an essay about one of your heroes,” she tells my classmates and me. I choose Paul McCartney and John Lennon, unaware that television has clouded my ability to differentiate between a hero and a celebrity. “Your hero should be one person,” the teacher announces. “And an American.”

“Bob Dylan?” I inquire.

“An American patriot,” she adds. “Somebody with wisdom.”

Okay. I write about Pete Seeger with his banjo and guitar, out there inspiring people to sing. *He’s a patriot, isn’t he?* Foxy Felicity writes about Jesus Christ and smiles smugly when she gets an A and I get a C. *Jesus of Nazareth? Wait a minute. What instrument did he play? Did he get his U.S. citizenship that day?*

I respond by writing more. It appeals to me, pulling a pencil across paper to give birth to words, ideas, a story, a voice, maybe even a truth, whatever a truth might be.

SPOKANE in the early 1960s is still in the 1950s, stuck on Elvis Presley’s “Blue Suede Shoes” and Bobby Darin’s “Mack the Knife.” Beatniks and other proto-hippies are in Seattle, the thriving, jiving nerve center of Washington, but not Spokane, the dry side of the state, where political sentiments foreshadow the Age of Conservatism, a giant wave that begins with Goldwater and will crest with Reagan and hit the rocks with Bush II. You can still find lawn placards that say, “I Like Ike,” and pro-Nixon signs squirreled away in large garages awaiting the shifty man’s return. The Burlington Northern Railway runs through the center of the city near the Spokane River. A thirsty Alcoa Aluminum plant, electrified by Grand Coulee Dam, drinks from the river as well. Fairchild Air Force Base has its squadron of B-52s ready to kick Khrushchev’s Soviet butt.

“Capitol of the Inland Empire” reads the Spokane Chamber of Commerce brochures written by businessmen with dreams of, well . . . empire. The “Inland Empire” encompasses the vast political backwater of eastern Washington and northern Idaho that the more populous and powerful portions of each state either ignore or ridicule. Seattle has Mount Rainier, Spokane the Palouse Hills. Seattle has Boeing (and soon, Microsoft), Spokane a Wonder Bread factory. Seattle will soon have Jimi Hendrix and “Purple Haze.” Spokane has Bing Crosby and “White Christmas.” Many Spokaneites regard Seattle with a complex mix of contempt and envy, as an adolescent girl might her worldly older sister, the pretty one who moves to the ocean, discovers designer coffee and goes liberal.

Seattle calls the “Inland Empire” the “Ingrown Empire,” which my friends and I think funny. In fairness though, when early autumn light spills over the sensuous Palouse Hills before wheat harvest, no other landscape is more beautiful, not even the Cascades. Eastern Washington will one day lay claim to artist Gary Larsen, creator of the *Far Side* comic (who attends Washington State University, in Pullman, south of Spokane), and novelist/essayist Sherman Alexie, a real Spokane Indian.

Until both move to Seattle.

Resentment runs deep. Spokane city fathers speak of forming their own state, Lincoln, with Spokane as the new capitol. Some say we should secede from the union and form a new nation, an enclave of gleaming libertarian, neoconservative values, a beacon of hope for Christian gun owners everywhere. People fly little Confederate flags from their cars, apparently unconcerned with the Lincoln-Confederacy-let’s-secede-from-the-Union irony. Bumper stickers say “Honk If You Love Jesus.”

It will take twenty-some years before Spokane has gangs and growth and between five hundred and five thou-

sand meth labs and Neo Nazis headquartered nearby in Idaho. And likewise twenty-some years for all my favorite childhood places and open spaces – Moran Prairie, Browne’s Mountain, Hangman Creek, the Bluff – to become housing tracts, gated communities and mini-malls.

The chamber of commerce always wanted growth. They finally got it. I often wonder if things in Spokane are better now than they used to be.

IT NURTURES MEWELL, that lovely, Republican city. I ride my bike anywhere unafraid, partake in mischief but never crime, and come home happy and exhausted, a poster boy for “No Kid Left Inside.” My friends and I love our carefree days. We are Lewis and Clark discovering America all over again. Any place without rows of homes and commercial development is a new frontier, a wilderness to collect butterflies and bugs. No vacant lot escapes our investigation; each is rich with a million little things other people might find useless but we know as treasures. He among us who discovers a kestrel feather or a grasshopper longer than his thumb is king for a day.

“Where’ve you been?” Mom asks Max and me as evening falls and we arrive home famished, me on my Red Schwinn, Max on his tired paws.

“Just around,” I say.

Mom smiles as if we remind her of her own unbridled youth in North Dakota where kids played in barns and hay wagons and everything ran to the horizon and you could walk forever toward it and never get there and not really care. And nights were as quiet as the outer rim of the universe. Was it still that way? Must everything change?

She has black hair, olive skin and a small, attractive figure. Despite her size she stands firm against life’s storms and scoundrels, hands on her hips. I admire her with all my heart. She never attends college, yet with great determination becomes a railroad secretary, a certified public accountant and a licensed travel agent. Years later, when she dies too young, she’ll own her own travel agency and a passport filled with stamps from twenty countries. She’ll nearly get arrested in Leningrad and Lima for reasons I can only imagine, given the repressive regimes there. Somehow she’ll get herself to Castro’s Cuba where a physician will teach her to tango on a torch-lit beach outside Havana. I can still see tears in her eyes when she tells me about the woman who offers her a baby on a crowded Cairo bus at the beginning of the 1967 Israel-Egypt War. “He’s my son,” the woman says. “Take him. He’ll have a better life in America.”

“YOUR MOM, she’s not like the rest of us,” my Aunt Elda tells me one day. “She’s different.”

It is no blessing to be “different” in Spokane in the 1950s and early 60s. People aim to fit in and succeed. Success being what it remains today: to acquire a good life, become financially secure and earn the respect of people around you. Only a communist or a fool questions the goodness of progress and technology that makes success possible, that gives us aluminum foil, electric toasters, faster cars, taller buildings, and the polio vaccine that saves millions of lives. Progress brings America together with interstate freeways that pick up where the railroads left off, their prime function, according to one observer, “to obliterate great distances.” Things have improved hugely over the last several decades – the past couple hundred years in fact – and will continue to improve. Nobody questions this except a few troublemaker scientists, poets and musicians. We can grow forever, boomers and boosters say. Never mind that the earth is only so big.

We’ll find a way around that.

Mom has seven brothers and sisters, all the fair-haired, fair-skinned children of the red-bearded North Dakotan, Luther Masters, who Elda says is a direct descendant of Edgar Lee Masters, author of *Spoon River Anthologies* and other literary works. I believe her until she adds Daniel Boone to our direct ancestry and I make the mistake of boasting this at school only to discover that half the kids in America believe they come from Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Kit Carson, Thomas Edison, Ben Franklin, Franklin Roosevelt, Frank Lloyd Wright, the Wright Brothers, Doobie Brothers, Brothers Karamazov, take your pick.

How to account then for my mother, the one child in eight who looks unlike any of her brothers or sisters? Years ago, young Luther is out on the prairie when a lightning storm catches him alone on his horse. Taking shelter in a teepee along a river he finds a lone Mandan maiden (or a sexy Sioux) who warms him in her most intimate

way, and nine months later gives him a spirited baby girl. All this according to Aunt Elda, who doesn't state it as fact so much as implies it with breathless "might haves" and "maybes." Families create their own exotic legends when they have a storyteller like Elda. My mother probably comes from nothing more than a recessive gene hidden away generations before, from another Indian perhaps. I'll never know.

Luther names the baby Virginia. She grows up feisty and at eighteen falls in love with the Williston High School quarterback. They run away and break Luther's heart, Elda says. Virgie is his favorite. He never says so, but it's obvious. She marries the quarterback and has her tender moments. But with nobody left to boss on the football field, the quarterback bosses her. One night it's too much. As he makes the mistake of bossing her and turning away to go down the stairs, she smacks him on the head with a cast-iron skillet and sends him tumbling to the bottom in a crumpled heap, knocked out cold. According to Elda, she packs up and moves out. How much money she has nobody knows. It's the late 1930s. She makes her way to Libby, a dirt-poor logging town in northwest Montana, and moves in with Elda and her husband and infant son. It seems the right thing to do, as my mother has an infant son too, Milton, the son of a quarterback. She calls him Mick.

Twenty years later Mick comes home from the Coast Guard. When I write about heroes in school I should write about him. How worldly he looks in his blue uniform, the sailor's white cap tipped jauntily on his head. I sit at his feet while he tells stories. He's named the USCG Coastguardsman of the Year, a great honor that earns him profiles on Spokane radio and in the newspaper. I'm so proud I can hardly breathe. He has the cut and swagger of another Mick, Mickey Mantle, the great Yankee center fielder who personifies everything right and strong about America.

Brother Mick teaches me to play baseball aggressively, cleverly, to use all my wits. Most of them anyway. I want to be like him and play third base, but I'm a lefty. I can't charge ground balls and make a strong throw to first like most right-handers. Mick decides I should be a pitcher. I have a good fastball but need something more. We work on my sidearm, developing it into a crazy curving-slinging-zinging-screwball mudball that gets nervous parents talking. I strike out hundreds of kids and walk hundreds of others. Dreams of grandeur run through my head. Soon I'll play in Yankee Stadium.

One day Mick takes me to the Bluff. I figure he's decided my pitch is so wild I can't throw safely at Comstock Park. I might hurt people or break windows across the street. He has another reason, though. Guns. We drive along High Drive past Manito Golf and Country Club and down Hatch Hill Road. We park and hike into the wilderness not far from the Sand Cliffs where Max and I learned to fly. Max comes along thinking we might go skinnydipping. The minute we start shooting, he runs off. We begin with .22 pistols and quickly moved to Remington .270 and 30.06 rifles. Anything is fair game. Soup cans, Coke bottles, pine cones, flowers, we kill them all. Such marksmanship and rapid fire. We're ready to defend the Alamo or storm San Juan Hill. Let the commies or liberals try to take Spokane. They'll never get by us. I improve quickly and Mick rewards me by notching things up to .44 and .45 magnum revolvers. Miniature cannons. He pins my forearms to the ground while I lay prone and squeeze the trigger. Boom... boom... boom. Do I hit anything? My head rings like a bell. Do we wear ear protection and eye goggles? Give me a break. Did American insurgents wear ear or eye protection on Bunker Hill? Those scrappy colonists that one frustrated British officer called "a rabble in arms," did they give a damn about ear protection? Hell no. Soldiers have to be tough.

"Shoot faster," Mick tells me. "In rapid succession." I do as I'm told by the USCG Coastguardsman of the Year, my big brother, my hero. We do this every time he comes home. Go shooting but never hunting. Max wants no part of it. After awhile neither do I. The thrill is gone. I do it only to make my brother happy. He seems to require it.

"I don't want him shooting guns all day," Mom tells Mick upon our return one afternoon. I think that's what she says. My ears are still ringing.

Mick bristles. He doesn't take criticism well. I suspect he thinks me a mama's boy who enjoys too much privilege. I'm the final son, "the caboose," many years behind my brothers, pampered like an only child. Mick and Bill grew up on Idaho logging roads and cut their teeth on the cougar-filled Bitterroot Mountains and listened to Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly in the years before we could afford money. By the time I become a teenager the world is something new. Buddy Holly is dead. Elvis is fat and sequined and singing in Las Vegas. The Beatles, the Stones, Bob



Sprout, Sarah Cohen, Haines
Glass, Wood



Catch, Sarah Cohen, Haines
Glass, Metal, Gold Chain



My Eyes Have Seen You, Rebecca Shockley, UAS Student, Juneau
Charcoal



Minuet, Bonnie Elsensohn, Sitka
Acrylic

Dylan, and Simon and Garfunkel are singing anthems of social unrest.

Six weeks after the Beatles arrive in America, the Good Friday Earthquake hits Alaska with devastating force. A rocking chair moves in our Spokane living room, more than one thousand miles from the epicenter. Glassware shakes. Lamps swing on their chains. The next day we read about the destruction in Anchorage: buildings collapsed, streets ripped up, more than one hundred people dead, shorelines displaced by twelve vertical feet. I think: *Why would anybody live in Alaska?*

"North to the Future," proclaim the Alaska license plates that show up now and then in Spokane, their cars always old and rust-beaten, and I wonder, what does it mean, North to the Future?

BY 1967, the "summer of love," I'm a sophomore in high school, heartbroken that Foxy Felicity seems to show interest in every boy in Spokane except me. Her father falls over dead from a heart attack. So tragic, it fills her eyes with tears that make her all the more beautiful. I imagine him down in his dark basement marching to his cadence songs... left, right... left, right... when he collapses to the floor. The crazy guy. He smoked like a chimney, but nobody says it killed him. It's heresy back then to say cigarette smoking causes lung cancer or congestive heart failure. Better to say he marched into the afterlife, a good soldier to the end.

Mick is a newly minted Army Airborne lieutenant, a husband and father and career soldier living in Germany, bound for Vietnam. He comes home when he can. One time he brings us a golden tomcat named G-2 that sleeps all day, prowls all night and leaves little dead birds everywhere. Not exactly a cuddly lap cat, G-2 becomes a legendary lion of Spokane's South Hill. Mick boasts that he's the cat who takes other cats' nine lives. Every night we hear horrendous cat screaming out in the street, metal garbage cans falling over, lids rolling across the pavement. More screaming and hissing. The next morning G-2 is on the porch, untouched, sleeping it off. We let him in and watch him go to his cat bowl slowly, like a gladiator, pieces of shredded skin between his claws. A cat with an ego, image-conscious about eating under less-than-lion-like circumstances, he doesn't touch his food until after we leave. Give him a gazelle and he'd run it down, kill it, and pull it up into an African acacia tree for the world to see. But give him Purina Kitty Chow in a plastic bowl on a linoleum floor in a modern American kitchen and he acts as if it's beneath him. Max takes special care to avoid him.

Mick walks around the house humming "The Ballad of the Green Berets" while I sing "Yesterday" and "Eleanor Rigby." We don't go shooting together much anymore. Now and then I find him down in his basement bedroom reading or playing the ukulele he bought in Hawaii, or oiling his guns, spinning the chambers. I love the smell of gun oil and help him run the cloth over the barrels and down the bores and over the wooden stocks until each weapon is a marvel to look at and touch. My favorite is a .22 long-barreled quick-draw revolver like Little Joe Cartwright used on *Bonanza*. Mick tells stories about each gun, its history and age. I find him encyclopedic, fiercely intelligent, and a little frightening.

Mom opposes the Vietnam War and tells him so. One day – a day I'll never forget – they end up yelling at each other, a conflict a million times more earth-shattering than the big Alaska quake of three years before. Mick says if we don't stop the commies in Vietnam they'll take Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, maybe Indiana, Iowa, Idaho. Imagine Commies in Idaho. Let that happen and we'll be next. Like dominos, one place after another falling to Marxist-Leninist regimes. We have to stop them in Vietnam.

No we don't, Mom says. It's a stupid war cooked up by Pentagon hawks who have holes in their souls and require conflict in their lives. If Kennedy were still alive we'd be out of there. He'd have saved thousands of young American lives by now.

Back and forth they bark, their words as biting as the tone. I leave the room with my hands over my ears.

Later I find Mick down in the basement smoking a cigarette and listening to military anthems like Foxy Felicity's father. Soon he too might fall over dead, killed by cigarettes or commies. I love and admire him and want him to live forever. If he dies so will Mom. Die in a way that leaves her walking around but not really present. I want to fix things and put our family back together but have no idea what to say, what to do.

How small I feel.

Mick sits there brooding, oiling his guns. He no longer plays the ukulele.

"Let's go shooting," he says.

IT'S OUR LAST TIME on the Bluff together, above Hangman Creek, two brothers in the sunshine and pines. Part of me wants it to last forever. Another part doesn't want to be there at all. I'm growing distasteful of guns. I want to fly again, sail off the Sand Cliffs of Hangman Creek with Super Max the Wonder Dog.

When Aunt Elda told me my mom was different, I think she meant in the way she looked but also in the way *she looked at the world*. I remember a time, not long after our visit to Grand Coulee Dam, when we gathered in the living room to watch *The African Queen*, a movie we never missed. Mom loved all the Katharine Hepburn films and called her Kate, as if they were girlfriends, Virgie and Kate. We ate our TV tray dinners and watched Kate struggle to keep her dignity while her boat-mate, the rough-hewn, greasy-sleeved skipper, Mr. Allnut, played by Humphrey Bogart, climbed into the bilge to fix an engine problem. They bantered as the boat bobbed downriver past hippos and rhinos. Finally Kate said, "Nature, Mr. Allnut, is what we are put in this world to rise above."

"Is that right?" Mom said disparagingly.

No wonder she liked John Lennon.

I later found her reading not another Michener novel but Joseph Heller's anti-war classic, *Catch 22*, and Rachel Carson's anti-pesticide lightning rod, *Silent Spring*. People read those books by the thousands in Berkeley, Boston, New York and Seattle, but not in Spokane. Yet Mom read them cover-to-cover and never dropped them in the bathtub. When Saturday morning cartoons came on the TV she liked the roguish Bugs Bunny more than the fastidious Mickey Mouse with his white gloves and squeaky voice. When Yankee slugger Roger Maris threatened to break Babe Ruth's single-season home run record, the most exalted record in all sports, many people wanted the uncharismatic Maris to fail. Nobody should dethrone the great Bambino, they said, least of all Maris. He had no shtick or charming one-liners for the crowd. But Mom liked him and said to Dad, "He's a North Dakota farm kid for crying out loud. Why don't they give him a break?"

MICK PARKS THE CAR and we walk across the Bluff. Dry grasses nip at our heels. Sunlight dances through the pines. "Let's just shoot .22s," I say.

"Okay. Just .22s."

After an hour of plinking cans and having more fun than I had expected, Mick says, "You like that long-barreled one, don't you?"

"Yeah."

"You can have it."

"Me? This? Really?" I turn it in my soft hands. He's offering me the coolest gun in the world. The Little Joe Cartwright quick-draw, shoot-from-the-hip Bonanza gun. I stand in the warm spring air, free in the wilderness.

"You don't have to take it if you don't want it," Mick says, his voice surprisingly conciliatory.

I hand it back. "Maybe someday."

Does a cloud of disappointment cross his face? To this day I regret that I didn't accept the gun. Not for my benefit but for his. I say nothing to him about my adventure four years before, flying off the Sand Cliffs of Hangman Creek. At twelve it seemed heroic. Now at sixteen as I walk with a brother who's about to ship off to the jungles of Vietnam, it seems corny. Nothing is what it used to be. Woody Guthrie is dead. Bob Dylan is electric. And on radios everywhere Paul McCartney sings over a pounding beat,

"We're Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band,

We're sorry but it's time to go..."

Even the Beatles are somebody else. Another band.

As Mick and I head back to the car in the late afternoon light I see something I missed earlier: dozens of small wooden survey stakes pounded into the ground in tidy rows across the Bluff, each marked with bright red flagging.

The next day I return with little Max and pull up every one.

Prince Rupert

That morning I awoke with
the screams of women in the forest.
Cries in their own language
as they hung by their long black hair
from the trees.
My hurting head lay against
the window of the car,
condensation wet on my cheek.
These screams, these hundreds of screams.
Me waiting for a ship to take me
to my new home.
I still hear these screams
thirty years later —
the ravens in the woods.

around a white man's fire

There are some ingredients that the white man's fire have in common with the ceremonial fire
I attend on a weekly basis.

-seasoned wood

-lighter

-people

around the weekly white man's fire you can expect just about anything.

around the weekly indian man's fire you can expect just about anything.

for the white man the fire is nothing sacred.

it is to be spit on and kicked.

the words exchanged around the weekly white man's fire

are to discuss where they fit into this world

and how to justify or unjustify their

connection to their forefather's actions.

they may speak about white guilt as if it were a

borderhopper that somehow illegally made

its way to the high castle of their minds,

and quickly weave words in and out,

over and around to construct some sort of

intellectual acceptance for themselves.

the white man's fire becomes a place for empty energy drink cans,

candy wrappers, and thought, natural elements they have turned into

something called garbage that burns a bright green and

black smoke when fed to the fire.

the white man's fire is nothing sacred.

the white man's fire is welcome to all sarcasm and

heavily stereotypically genderfied remarks denouncing all others who are not
white men.

--it is difficult to tell who is racist from who is just ignorant,

difficult to tell how much of what has been taught by white men

from how much is around this fire.

they have made white masks for me to wear.

there was a black woman once who tried, like I, to sit with these white men at their fire.
they told both her and me that we need to work harder to explain how we were born into:
sitting off in the distance of the fire,
or amongst its ashes.
around a white man's fire you can expect marshmallows and hotdog consumption
but nothing of lasting substance, no offering of their hotdogs or marshmallows
to their ancestors through the fire.
a fire to white men
is like anything that isn't a white man.
free for the white men to do anything he chooses with it.
around a white man's fire you cannot expect to join the conversation
unless you cut someone off, each only waiting to speak again instead of
actually listening.
around the white man's fire, there is no feather to be passed, no speaker's staff,
no opening prayer to connect us to ourselves and to each other and to the
sacredness of elements like the fire,
and how it gives of itself.
the white man's fire is nothing sacred.
there is a swamp of theory and concept and 50cent words that
you will find around the weekly white man's fire.
you will find shards of glass and rusted nails in the place where their fires once burned.
you will find smoke in your face around a white man's fire.
you may not be able to see around the white man's fire.
you will find both white men and indian's eyes, squinted and
watering around the weekly white man's fire.
you will be spoken about, around, under, and over but hardly spoken to
around a white man's fire.
i'd like to invite these white men to our weekly fire,
they have accepted me around their fire.
we welcome them to ours.

Once So Close

He always
sleeps so sound
 hair stuck up
 squishyface
 shoulder bare
 then a slight
twitchy dream

His eyes closed
hidden dreams
 stubble-jaw
 hand in mine
 bare feet hang
 body draped
to one side

His leg wrapped
with my own
 blanket-twist
 eyelash dance
 ex-boyfriend
 almost wakes
just not quite

He used to
share the bed
 now who knows
 what he dreams
 now that he's
 away from
me

Stasis

Steering my car to a waterfront space
so close to the ocean I can trace the waves
meeting the breakwater;
hear, but not see,
because it's heartbreakingly dark.
Provoked by a 2:30 afternoon sunset I park
and draw inward,
wanting the upholstery to fold round and hold me.
Then I see seven dull lights mark a barge heading south
plowing dark into dark, steady prow
parting waves back into that briny mouth
a deeper black than imaginable
rising like ink on black paper
the barge disappears.

Haul Out

1:30am August 29

High tide 18.7

I rise from sleep and slip into xtra tuffs
like a fireman on a late night call

Liquid laps the Lund as I take the bowline
heave ho and gain another ten feet up the beach

It's time to winterize the outboard,
lean the skiff against the cabin

scrape the barnacles off her sides

Under a full moon I wade into water
and phosphorescence
Aquatic fireflies brighten around my boots

A flock of wild geese gargles
into the gathering clouds

I begin to sing

A whale breathes and I feel my heart
beat strong against my ribs and into my throat

The song struggles for air
rides on the outbreath

whispers into the night

Heidi's Boy

Funny, if you think about it, adoption is all around, all the time. I remember a girl named Heidi Halvorson I knew in high school who got pregnant our junior year. She was the talk of the after church luncheon crowd. Folks pointed at Heidi's mother who always sat against the wall next to the emergency exit. Took me awhile to figure out that was the warmest spot in the church basement, right next to a heating vent that blasted hot air on your legs.

Heidi disappeared from school midway through the year and then appeared the next year like nothing happened. Word was she'd left the state, had her baby and gave it up for adoption and everyone knew about it so all the subterfuge was for nothing except it meant we had to pretend we didn't know. But a year later Heidi was still the talk of the church basement. We all stood over the jello salads and the three kinds of hamburger hot dish and whispered about Heidi poor girl, poor Mildred, Heidi's mother. Poor, poor girl.

I myself had no pity for Heidi. She was the same popular cheerleader type. She looked the same, still stuck up as far as I could tell. Still doing gymnastics, ballet, dating Jocks. I watched her closely when we had gym class together. Her body looked the same, her whole life seemed the same. Except for the occasional whispers but in school that died down. It lasted longer in the church basement.

I didn't know much about Heidi or her younger sister Janet who was a year behind us. They rarely went to the church functions but then her family weren't regular church goers as far as I could tell. The Halvorson girls never even got confirmed according to my sisters. Neither were in my confirmation classes I know and said so when asked.

"Well that tells you something right there doesn't it," my sister Candace said. I wanted to say I knew two girls in my confirmation class that had also got knocked up and most of the girls I knew had lost their cherries by age fifteen and confirmation class, as far as I could tell, had nothing to do with it.

My sister Annette said "They let those girls run wild. Out at all hours of the night. Spoiled rotten. So what do you expect?"

I ditched Candace and Annette and wandered around the basement. The chairs along the wall were filling up and if I wanted one I had to make a dash for one. Even if I got one it was temporary since old folks got first dibs and I'd most likely get ejected if someone thought a old lady needed my seat. Little did they know how tight and painful my new shoes were. I could feel the blisters pulsate with every step. I made it to a seat and slid my heels of my shoes.

Mom was giving me a dirty looks but I was busy holding a cupcake in one hand and a styrofoam cup of coffee in the other while trying to keep my shoes half on and answer the seventy thousand questions my old sunday school teacher, was asking me. I summarized the last seven years of my life for her and updated her on both sisters, their husband and kids, my father, my mother and several of my cousins when I was recused by someone pulling a tottering old dear in my direction.

I slid my feet back into my shoes, swallowed the cupcake in three bites, slurped down my still hot coffee, relinquished my chair to the old lady and made for the exit. Two steps out the door, Heidi Halvorson and her mother stepped right in front of me.

Heidi said Hi and then introduced me to her mother, whom I'd spoken to more then Heidi herself. I smiled and waited for one of them to get to the point. I already knew what they wanted.

Mildred, Heidi's mother, grabbed my arm and said in almost in a whisper. "I'm sure you know about our situation last year don't you?" I kept my eyes on Mildred and ignored Heidi who was pleading with her Mom to please just forget it.

"We just wanted to know if, if you think, if you're all right about being, if you think it's.."

"I'm sure the baby is doing great," I said. I glanced at Heidi whose face was bright red. Mildred had tears

in her eyes but Heidi looked furious.

"Mom please stop it."

"Heidi's boy, he was my grandson. I know you're not suppose to think about it. But we saw him. Blue eyes, bright red hair. I just can't get it out of my mind... I know you not suppose to but..."

"I'm sure he's doing great Mrs. Halvorson." I said. Her grip on my arm tightened.

"Do you really think so?," "You're colored so it might be easier for him, you know they might not even tell him he isn't theirs. That might be the best if he never knew about...us. What do you think?"

"For god's sake Mom come on," Heidi was yelling, her straight blonde ponytail flapping behind her. A few folks in the parking lot turned to look. Suddenly there was a tall man next to us.

"Come on Millie let's go home." "I'm sorry," he said to me, loosened Millie's grip on me and lead her away. Heidi was already in the parking lot ahead of them both.

Candace and Annette were both on me in a flash. Had they been crouching in the bushes?

"What the hell was that about? What did they say to you?"

"I don't know, nothing," I said. I figured they'd probably heard most of it anyways, so I refused to say anymore and headed back into the church basement.

Later, Candace told me that Mrs. Halvorson almost collapsed before Heidi and her Dad got her to the car.

"That was creepy," Annette said, "Don't tell Mom." I agreed.

Candace asked me, "You alright?"

"Of course," I said, "what else would I be?"

A few weeks later Heidi, Janet and their folks all showed up at the steakhouse where I worked. I was at the grill and saw them for a second when I served up their steaks. I took my break in the back room just to be on the safe side. It bothered me to think about them. The books call it "the adoption triad." As far as I'm concerned we're all just a triad of liars: adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents.

For the next few days all I could think about was Mrs. Halvorson holding the little red headed baby. I could picture the whole thing. The long white curtains that go around the hospital bed pushed back. Heidi lying on the bed, turned away from her Mom and the baby. Mildred kissing the baby's forehead before the nurse takes him away. Then she sits down next to Heidi and for that one moment, Heidi cries with her mother, about all of it, everything.

Pearls of Wisdom

Strung along a strand of string
my rebel, hockey player, cigarette-stealing, sister
pushes my stroller, “Don’t drop the baby on her head, Maureen!”

The eldest, type-A, beauty queen with a routine,
she kills ugly men with roundhouse kicks, and looks of steam
“The corporate villain in romantic comedies is always hot. And rich.
Filthy Rich. Why can’t I find a guy like that?”

My mother, a 60-year-old tropical firecracker,
“We’re not selling this house! I don’t care! It’s nobody’s business!
Don’t tell me what to do! I’m older than you!”

My head spins,
“Your ideas are stupid. You can’t believe that crap on the TV.”
“Nako. Jesus. When are you going to get married?”
“Too many verbs. Not enough adjectives.”
“Needs a new title.”

My ears burn,
“You think you’re some kind of radical anarchist, huh? Christ, you’re just a girl. A nobody from
nowhere, Alaska. Do the world a favor and go home.”

“Capitalists!”

“You want to change the world? Good luck with that. One person can’t change the world. It’ll take
more than one person to make any difference.”

My favorite,
“Think for yourself.”

Only Once

Like lightning striking a ponderosa tree, bark exploding off the trunk as the enraged bolt of natural fury ran down the ever skyward stretching pine; as if he'd been swimming- no drowning, in a murky, lukewarm pond, thrashing for a way out only to be ripped up onto shore, and through painful gasps of oxygen turning back to find the pond was only knee deep; like seeing a fire born for the very first time only to realize that it was his own flesh that served as the kindling, that it was a spark he'd been clinging to since he sprung into this world, that he'd carried with him in a tiny vessel, shielding it, protecting it from the plaguing winds that threatened to extinguish this minuscule hint of comfort, and now it was a raging flame, consuming and remolding blood and bone- making him both fire and wood, an ever flowing cycle of ends and beginnings that once ablaze could never be fully quenched, and while the moon did not cease to wane into slivers and burst into a pregnant orb again, and while the stars still hung firmly mounted somewhere above the clouds that cloaked them, and while the rain did not cease to fall down like diamond curtains separating him from diamond eyes- time did stop, and he imagined the moment would continue onward for as many years as the earth was wide, and that he could step forward and part the shimmering sheets to take up his destined place on the other side; like walking into an old friend in a dark ally, like crawling into a warm bed in December; the moment he saw her, it was like coming home.

Utopia

Utopia is the first, last and fleeting, infinite
That glance from you I stole
The laugh, I watched, illuminates your face
 Leaves your lips only once
In five years I will not remember
the way your hair fell across your face just now, but
It happened, was a moment of my life
Counting the freckles on your body
 Creating constellations of them
Making love a universe, this one stops
 Lets another spin till sunrise
Utopia is the longing, the solitary walk to work:
 All these people have also just left their beds
 Their universe, now back together in ours
Utopia is giving you me
 There are no guarantees
 Do not go looking for them
 Take this, do what you want with it
Utopia is the heart that slips closest to the edge-
but does not go over
 or going over, laughs
Stares down into the void
 flirts with it
 steals its secrets
And crawls back from the depths
 humble, knowing
Utopia is the heart that does not make laws of loss
Does not sell its wisdom for a day's love, losing both
Utopia knows love, knows love knows:
 No reason.
 No rational.
Utopia is counting streetlights,
 -this is how I toss away laws that would otherwise become prisons
Checking them for different hues, I have a favorite
 Having nowhere to go I will circle the town all night
 Love sad music, dance in my mind
 Alone, yes
Utopia does not make lists of its scars
 Does not make amusement parks of them,
 show them off as a matter of worth

Does not confuse the wound with the fight
Utopia is listening to Jerome describe the 1048th in Afghanistan
 “Tell me; is the future of humanity a high yield investment?
 I don’t want kids anymore”
Someone needs to listen
Utopia is finally coming home,
 Finding a home
 Making a home
 The high pitch of tea boiling rings against the mettles walls of the bus
I get up and walk over to the steaming pot fogging the windows
Wipe my hands across one to stare out at the moon over the channel
 Pull a fresh bag of red rose and let it steep



Shooting Stars, Richard Stokes, Juneau
Photography



Escape Artist, Anna Cramer, Juneau
Photography



Fall Leaf, Anna Cramer, Juneau
Photography



First Cast, Anna Cramer, Juneau
Photography

Autumn's Turning Colors

Dreams of summer, yellowed and brown edged, are whisked away by the brisk wind of a new season. I wonder if they will return in the same fashion or if they will merely leave a dying imprint on the dry sidewalk I tread. Downtown, I walk past covered windows, locked doors, bare-cement pathways no longer crowded by curious travelers -- in the emptiness there is solitude. There is hopeful expectation -- Rest, darkness, serenity. A season of old friends, cozy in afghans, drinking beer, market spice tea, and black wolf coffee, watching movies, recounting the day's escapades of hunting, jobs, and the nasty costumer who wouldn't take no for an answer.

My pace quickens at the foreboding heavy rain, the puddles already smiling, their dimples rippling, bumping into each other. My eye is drawn to a yellowed maple tree just ahead. I am that tree, roots solid and unwavering, but my edges dying every fall. New friends come for a season, then, scatter in far corners having taken a piece of me away in their fiery burst. I must not fear letting go, spring will come again bringing new dreams. Time has a way of healing the old yellows that fall.

Eight-Bar Screen-Door Blues

broken glass on an oak floor skipping record at its end
broken glass on an oak floor skips the record to its end
sweep up the pieces and start again

outside, his car door gravel tires spit road
outside his car door, gravel tires spit road
windup reverse; can't unload

flies stuck on tape bangs damp over eyes
flies stuck on tape bang damp over eyes
refrigerator pictures laughing; can't get high

the kid won't stop crying ceiling fan whirs on low
the kid won't stop crying, a ceiling fan whirring on low
comes around to praying, this light don't work no more

Bloodlines

As YuukiShinobu braids her hair on the shoreline,
her image reflects in the quietude of the lake's surface:
her pale kimono¹ loose and the hilt of a katana² protrudes
from her waistline sash as if she were run through with
profound contentment. Her face as sharp as the backside
of a blade, her eyes as clear and deep as artesian wellness,

she carries the surrounding mountain-hemlock airiness
about her shoulders and curls from lying beside the shoreline
on a makeshift mat of boughs that held her backside
beneath the night. The morning's sun began to surface
in the valley's cleft beyond the fields of rice she'd crossed with
the village daughters, who gathered around without intruding.

Her return to Yukiko blossomed joy that precluded
a timely departure to visit her teacher's welcomeness
atop the mountain. She'd spent a year in a week with
remaining childhood friends across the shoreline
of time. Her final night, she slept beneath the surface
of stars so breakfast wouldn't delay her start in a backslide.

Because the oldest part of her wants to backslide
those forty years to see her parents again, without the protruding
katana's force, she lets the past's desire surface,
detached from yet another bout of mindless illness.
Her braid completed, she pinches toes into geta³. More lines,
she knows, will soon appear, her eyes cornered. She bows with

the reeds, forever grateful for the chance to move with
the wind and a place to sleep. She turns her backside
to Yukiko and places her kasa⁴ upon her head. A shoreline
will always change, she thinks, and so will people too, including
not only those behind her who worry about her wellness,
but someone who will also soon resurface.

1. long robe-like garment, with wide sleeves, tied in place with a sash

2. twenty-four inch, single-edged samurai sword, slightly curved

3. sandal-like, raised platform combination of wooden clogs and flip-flops

4. mushroom shaped hat made out of woven rice straw

She looks up the path, aware of danger's surface,
has trained her whole life within a hairsbreadth width
of death to learn how to safeguard the wellness
of any beings unable to protect their backside.
This is why she's wedded her sword, to exclude
any unnecessary bloodshed soaking up the shore, lines

surfacing as bodies of loved ones' backs, sides
chopped with blades, their bones protruding,
all outpours of wellness rotting the shoreline.

Sky Blue Sky

On our way to Big Eric's Bridge to drink
smoke and jam with campfire friends,
she shifted gears through July's evening,
windows down, the new Wilco on, and her dog

in the back of the truck with the cooler.
The Aura Jamboree faded behind
us, settling dust. Overgrown farmland,
fenced with hardwoods and pine,

passed by like a drive-in movie. We rolled to a stop
in a field, picked our way through fallen barbwire.
A two-story house leaned with the wind,
stared vacant, shutters clicking. She took pictures.

I lay in the tall grass, propped up on
my elbows, chewed on a stem of wheat.
Grasshoppers jumped like river swims—
country where no one lived but me and her.

The Best Country Song She Never Wrote

Maddie sat on her porch with her guitar,
watched the cars pass by her truck,
dusty with neglect and aching for her dog.
Though it wasn't too early for whiskey,
she wanted to wait for the heel scuff of boots
coming up the sidewalk to bring her man.

She tried not to think of herself as his woman,
knew that led to awful endings, a weeping guitar
that drowned the sun and filled up her boots.
So she pictured him riding beside her in the truck,
felt like the throat-burning, gut-glow of whiskey
as she squirmed in her jeans like a pent-up dog.

Paws scratched at the door, so she let out the dog,
scratched his ears as he panted, needed some man-
made sour mash. In the kitchen, she poured whiskey,
downed the first shot, which struck like a steel guitar.
Behind the screen, the dog sniffed the tired truck.
She poured another, tugged on her drinking boots,

ready to walk the line. Couldn't help that she boots
a man out the door before he's in. The dog
sat on his haunches and whined at the truck.
He peed on a tire and loped back, the one man
who never left her high and dry. Beside her guitar,
she cupped her hand, dribbled two fingers of whiskey

for him to lap up. Last weekend, Cal's whiskey
breath refused to even take off his boots
while the cicadas strummed one guitar,
when he should've fucked her like a dog
in the meadow beneath the Big Dipper. Man,
she thought, his withholding wouldn't truck

well with her. She crossed the lawn to the truck;
the western afterglow triggered more whiskey.
Knew she shouldn't have waited on a man,
his promises expired like worn-out boots.
Behind the wheel, she spat out, "That fucking dog,"
and the radio aired a country song with pedal guitar.

She ground the truck out of first and turned up the guitar.
Her panting dog by her side, she was all out of whiskey,
and that man could kiss her boots.



Caribou, Joel Mundy, Juneau
Photography

Author and Artist Biographies

Aya, Nahaan (Juneau Student) - is of the Dakhł'aweidi clan. His father is Paiute. He is a grandchild of the Inupiaq people. His precious outer shell is the Lukaaxh.adi. Nahaan was born and raised in Seattle, and has returned to Tlingit land to immerse himself in Tlingit language and culture. Nahaan is also a spoken word poet who strives to be poetry in the same way his ancestors have been in the past.

Branch, Dan (Juneau) - has spent his adult life in Alaska (10 years in Bethel, 2 and some change in Aniak, 6 in Ketchikan and 16 in Juneau). The state makes him want to write. Sometimes someone will publish a piece of his work. He's been in writers groups in Ketchikan and Juneau and took writing classes from UAS.

Buckley, Linda (Juneau) - has lived in Southeast Alaska for over four decades. Her writing is inspired by the landscape, the wildlife and by the complexities and challenges of family. Buckley has been published in *Tidal Echoes*, *L'attitude*, *Alaska Women Speak*, *Tenakee Historical Journal*, *Capital City Weekly* and the *Juneau Empire*. She is currently working on a memoir and a collection of poetry.

Budbill, Andria (Juneau Student) - is a born and raised Juneauite, but doesn't own Xtratufs. She likes to travel, sing, read, and you could say writing poetry is also something she enjoys. Andria wants to travel the world teaching English, and maybe learn guitar one day. Yes.

Buffalo, T.M. (Juneau) - is a published author, poet, and visual artist and has been the recipient of several writing awards. Several of her short stories have been previously published in *Tidal Echoes*. She is an enrolled member of the White Earth band of Minnesota Ojibwe, and she's currently living in Juneau, Alaska with her partner, three dogs, and a crabby gray cat.

Burge, Heather (Juneau Student) - is an undergraduate student in her second year at the University of Alaska Southeast. She has hopes of eventually pushing for an Alaskan Native studies major, while continuing to minor in creative writing and the Tlingit language. While she grew up in the Sonoran Desert, it wasn't until she found her way to Juneau that she truly found home. She hopes that regardless of where school takes her, she always finds her way back.

Bush, Megan (Juneau Student) - lives in Juneau. She graduated with a Classical Studies degree from Whitman College, and is currently taking creative writing courses at UAS. She works at a residential treatment facility, ski instructs, and romps around the mountains in her free moments.

Campbell, Jack (Juneau) - has recently retired from the teaching profession after working primarily in rural villages for the past twenty-five years. Most recently, he worked for UAF as a Content Specialist, assisting first year teachers in rural sites. He resides in Excursion Inlet.

Chadsey, Brad (Juneau Student) - was born in New York City and grew up in Western New York. After graduating high school, he began traveling and volunteering around the country. He worked for Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and again in Brooklyn, where he became passionately involved with writing. He left the city, purchased an old 42-passenger bus, and traveled around the country for a year and a half writing, and playing music. He eventually came to Juneau, where he took a position with SAGA and eventually returned to school.

Christianson, Kersten (Sitka) - is a raven-watching, moon-gazing Alaskan who teaches high school English and French, and composes rough draft poetry. She lives with her partner Bruce, daughter Rie, and labs, Steve and Odin, in Sitka, Alaska. Kersten is also the co-editor of the quarterly journal, *Alaska Women Speak*.

Cohen, Sarah (Haines) - lives and works in her hometown of Haines. Inspired by the diverse artist community of her childhood she went on to study art in the lower forty-eight and abroad. Sarah now works primarily with glass, often combining it with clay, metal, fiber, and found objects, to create sculptures that are whimsical, delicate, and ephemeral. Her work plays on the juxtaposition of seemingly disparate materials, marrying them together to create intrigue and beauty.

Cortés Pérez, Ryan (Juneau Student) - is passionate about capturing the life around him through various mediums in a way that can retell stories to his audience. Right now, he is working towards creating a

seemingly blasé aesthetic that can be distinguishable as his alone.

Cramer, Anna (Juneau) - lives in Juneau with her husband, T.J., and their three cats, Vinny, Cairo and Machete. She likes to think of herself as a woodswoman who just happens to enjoy indoor plumbing, electricity, central heat, and her Oprah magazine subscription. A few of her favorite things are exploring Juneau's trails with her husband, the smell of the ocean, sunshine, fall leaves, photography, day dreaming, reading, writing, warm summer nights, the smell of a wood-burning fire, and being inspired.

Dalthorp, Pedar (Juneau Faculty) - was born at the Anchorage Community Hospital. He began his career in art at the University of Alaska Anchorage where he studied psychology and fine arts and received his B.A. in psychology. He finished his formal art education by receiving a M.F.A. from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. Pedar is pleased to be continuing his career as an associate professor of art at the University of Alaska Southeast.

Dornbirer, McKenzie (Juneau Student) - is a writer, a student, and most importantly, she is an Alaskan. She enjoys being active outside during the summer months, and pensively looking out her window during the stormy Juneau winters. She hopes to graduate from UAS with a Bachelor's in English with an emphasis in creative writing in the fall of 2012.

Elsensohn, Bonnie (Sitka) - retired in 2007 from working as a graphic artist and specialist for Sitka campus. She now paints a variety of subjects using acrylics, and often taking her own photos for reference work. Her work has been featured at Sitka's Gallery Walks, and is also on display at Fishermen's Eye and Sitka Rose galleries.

Eichorst, Annie (Juneau) - is from Juneau. She does art at The Canvas Community Art Studio. She likes working, shredding papers and getting paid. She loves visiting friends - eating with them, talking with them, and hugging.

Eriksen, Christy NaMee (Juneau) - a.k.a. *Jung Na Mee*, is a Korean Adoptee spoken word poet from Alaska. She has performed at art centers, universities, and theatres, including The Roundhouse in London and Equilibrium's spoken word series at The Loft Literary Center. She has been published in *Alaska Women Speak*, *The Fulcrum*, *Tidal Echoes*, Race-Talk.org, and is a featured artist on the 2009 Minnesota Spoken Word Album of the Year, *¿Nation of Immigrants?* produced by The Loft Literary Center. Christy has shared the stage with Def Poets like Ishle Park, Mayda del Valle, Bao Phi, and other really cool people. She co-founded and co-hosts a monthly poetry slam.

Giordano, Calcedonio Charles (Juneau Student) - is a 46-year-old marine mechanic. He is attending UAS with the objective of transforming his craft as a tradesman into a career as an artist. He has focused his studies on sculpture and considers himself a true industrial artist. He is the Timemachinist.

Godkin, Mike (Juneau) - was born blind in Juneau, Alaska in 1960. He went to Vancouver Washington State School for the Blind for ten years. He now lives in Juneau, works every day at REACH, and likes to help his mom. He began writing poetry this year, because everyone else was writing and reading at the Poetry Slams and he thought, "Why not me doing it, too?" He likes to help judge at the Slams, and remind people to clap when others go up to the mic. He is a good listener.

Haight, Lauren (Juneau) - lives in Juneau with her boyfriend, Gary, and their three dogs: Crimson, Max, and JD. She's a recent graduate of UAS with a Bachelor's in English, emphasis in Creative Writing. She was published in *Tidal Echoes* last year, and hopes to be published many more times in the coming years.

Harris, Chelsie (Juneau Student) - her medium is ceramics, focusing on the design and production of functional pieces. Her work is made to enhance intimate social situations, such as dining together or sharing a cup of tea, in order to prolong these dying traditions. Her aesthetic is greatly affected by her off-the-grid lifestyle of living in a cabin with no running water or electricity. She gleans inspiration for her work from the day-to-day activities and chores of cabin life.

Hayes, Ernestine (Juneau Faculty) - was born in Juneau. When she was 15, her mother and she moved to California, where she lived for 25 years. After she came back home, she pursued her education at

UAS and at UAA. She is now an assistant professor of English at the University of Alaska Southeast.

Heacox, Kim (Gustavus) - a writer, photographer, musician and conservationist, has authored eight books, four of them for National Geographic. His most recent title, *The Only Kayak*, a memoir about finding home in Alaska, was a PEN USA Literary Award finalist in creative non-fiction. He has twice won the Lowell Thomas Award for excellence in travel writing, and his book *In Denali* won the Benjamin Franklin Nature Book Award. He lives in Gustavus, near Glacier Bay, with Melanie, his wife of 26 years, and his two guitars, one piano and a winter wren on the woodpile. Learn more about him at www.kimheacox.com.

Helmar, Patrice (Juneau) - is a fifth generation Alaskan, born and raised in Juneau. Helmar earned a B.A. at Southern Oregon University, where she studied creative writing and visual art. Helmar's work is influenced by documentary and street photography, as well as by modern painting and literature. Helmar's series, "Honeymoon Tonight" was a featured solo exhibition at the Juneau Douglas City Museum for the summer of 2011. Patrice is currently enrolled in the teaching program at UAS, and hopes to find a job in Juneau teaching language arts to middle or high school students this coming fall 2012.

Hocker, Kathy (Juneau Faculty) - is a naturalist, writer, illustrator, and teacher. She's written and/or illustrated several books and articles about birds, plants, glaciers, plankton, bears, bugs, streams, and more. She enjoys exploring Juneau's wild places, but can't seem to stay on the trails.

Hoffman, Anna Marie (Juneau Student) - was born and raised in South Central Alaska and moved to Juneau when she was sixteen. Her growing up years were filled with imagination, wilderness, and adventures. She started writing life and her faith in middle school and has continued to do so throughout her college years. She sees life around her as art and enjoys expressing her observations through creative writing.

Holloway, Robyn (Juneau) - is a graduate of UAS with a BLA in English Literature and a minor in Creative Writing. She is a displaced Californian who loves living in Juneau with her husband and children. She is a member of the Alaska State Council for the Arts. She assists with the organization of the Poetry Out Loud competition, and supports various local arts activities.

Kelleher, James (Juneau Student) - his heart is a nest swarming with honeybees and red hornets. If he could smoke a pack of pens instead of cigarettes, it'd better illustrate how addicted he is to writing. He believes that words are empty glasses that contain liquid meaning. Buy him a drink and he'll give you a hug. Give him a smile and he'll return the favor.

Kitchin, Hollis (Juneau Student) - is a senior at UAS working on her Bachelors of Art in Art. The emphasis of her degree is in drawing and ceramics. This is her first time submitting to *Tidal Echoes*. She worked as a *Tidal Echoes* Intern in 2009 for the 2010 edition.

Landis, Rod (Ketchikan Faculty) - is a full-time Professor of English at University of Alaska Southeast - Ketchikan and a part-time poet. He takes a break from being on the editorial board of *Tidal Echoes* every once in awhile so he can submit something himself.

Laster, Kate (Juneau Student) - remembers when another person with her writing style said of her, "Kate Laster, a bumbling art major by day, a mixed-media cartoonist by night." She thinks herself rather lucky to have such imaginary lifelong friends, and some real kindred spirits to boot.

LaVerne, Heather (Juneau Student) - grew up in Seward, AK, and was very active in the theater arts there. After graduating high school she did a year of college in Chicago studying theater, and then transferred to UAS to study creative writing. She enjoys writing short, comedic stories that have a bit of a morbid nature. Besides writing, she enjoys doing improv, drawing, and collecting DVDs.

Lende, Heather (Haines) - is the author of two books of prose, a contributing editor of *Woman's Day*, and the obituary writer for the *Chilkat Valley News* in Haines, Alaska, where she lives with her family.

Lumba, Grace (Juneau) - is an Alaskan-Filipina with roots in Juneau, and also a UAS graduate with a degree in Creative Writing. Some of her hobbies include red wine and dark chocolate. She wants to thank her closest friends, most supportive family members, & the inspirational professors who encourage her to pursue poetry + literature.

Merk, W. S. (Juneau) - has been living and writing in Juneau, Alaska since 1991; he lives with his wife, bead artist Beth Handley. His first book of poems, *Bright Silence*, was published in March, 2011.

William's poems have previously appeared in various publications, including *Explorations* (1992), *Dragonfly*, *L'Attitude*, *Tidal Echoes* (2010) and *The Sleep of Grass: A Tribute In Poetry To William Stafford* (2006).

Mundy, Joel (Juneau) - is a photographer living and working in Southeast Alaska. His current home is Juneau, where he lived as a child and returned in 2006 at the age of 27. The focus of his most recent work is the harbors that serve as a backdrop to life in Juneau.

Parker, Bonilyn (Juneau Student) - was born and raised in Alaska. Currently residing in Juneau, she is finishing up her senior year at UAS with a BA in ceramics and sculpture. She plans to further her education in the ceramic field by pursuing an MFA, and hopes to go on to teach ceramics at the university level.

Peterson, Daniel (Juneau Student) - was born and raised in Juneau, Alaska. He only recently identified this place as being one of the most unique spots in the world, especially to have been raised in. He has developed a deep love and appreciation for the mystical quality of the rain forest which surrounds him. He found writing to be a way to channel the difficulties that everyone must face as they grow older. He once sought counseling to deal with life's challenges. After his counselor gave him a notebook to fill his thoughts with, he has been using that as a means of expression.

Prescott, Vivian Faith (Sitka) - is a fifth generation Alaskan. She was born and raised in Wrangell, Alaska and is a resident of Sitka. She and her husband are temporarily stationed with the U.S. Coast Guard in Kodiak, Alaska. Vivian is a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee and she was recently awarded the Jason Wenger Award for Literary Excellence. Her poetry has appeared in *Catapult to Mars*, *Cirque*, *Dead Snakes*, and *Turtle Quarterly*. Her first collection of poetry, *The Hide of My Tongue*, is available through Plain View Press.

Pillsbury, Kent (Juneau Student) - Is it poetry? Is it theater? Is it insurrection or just garden variety crankiness? Inspiration or idiocy? Though his hands are idled—and the Devil and he are at gaming-buddy status—he's still able to incite. Right? Don't believe what you're told to/be careful about believing in general/choose curiosity, skepticism, and wonder over certitude—three faces of the four-sided die he likes to roll in, well, most situations. Fourth side, of course, is randomness—greatest force in the universe. Whatever of his fiddlings you see here will have endured this process, and as always, thanks for your support.

Shockley, Rebecca (Juneau Student) - was born and raised in Juneau, Alaska. A sophomore in college, she's striving for a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts. Alfred Hitchcock films and the horror genre itself, play a heavy influence on Rebecca's style and technique. She prefers to work in charcoal, but is trying to broaden her abilities and work with other mediums. Her ultimate goal is to become an illustrator one day.

Stokes, Richard (Juneau) - a 40-year resident of Juneau, retiree of the Department of Environmental Conservation and now a seasonal naturalist guide with Gastineau Guiding. His work appeared in 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2010 in *Golden Poetry: A Celebration of Southern Poets*, in *Ice Floes* in 2006, in *Tidal Echoes* in 2007 through 2011 and in several issues of *L'attitude*, a magazine of the *Juneau Empire*. He had poems selected for Juneau's Poetry Omnibus in 2006 through 2011. His prose has appeared in *Gray's Sporting Journal*, *Alaska Magazine*, *Alaskan Southeaster*, *Juneau Life* and in Juneau newspapers. He has self published two chapbooks of poetry; "*Notes Searching for a Tune*" in 2010 and "*Juneau Seasons*" in 2011. His wife, Jane, is a Juneau artist.

Stangeland, Meghan (Juneau Student) - was born and raised in Juneau, Alaska and has loved every epic moment. She began writing travel pieces while studying abroad, but her interest and love of writing requires the challenge of constantly attempting new styles and exploring new subjects. She is currently a student at UAS studying creative writing.

Swift, Lauren (Juneau) - has lived in Alaska for 31 years, the past 28 in Juneau, where she's worked for Alaska Public Health and Alaska State Fisheries. She attended the University of California at Davis for three years before transferring to the University of California at Chico where she graduated with a B.S. degree.

Whalen, Teague (Ketchikan Faculty) - is an Assistant Professor of Humanities for UAS, Ketchikan. He received his M.F.A. in creative writing from Northern Michigan University. Besides a writer of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, he is also a performing singer/songwriter and guitarist.



Tidal Echoes presents an annual showcase of
writers and artists who share one thing in
common: a life surrounded by the
rainforests and waterways of Southeast Alaska

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