

CAESURA

A LITERARY ARTS MAGAZINE



SPRING 2011



CAESURA

Spring 2011

cae • su • ra [sa-zhoor-a, sa-zhoorae] n., plural

Prosody. A break, esp. a *sense pause*, usually near the middle of a verse, and marked in *scansion* by double vertical line, as in: 2. A division made by the ending of word within a *foot*, or sometimes at the end of a foot, esp. in certain recognized places near the middle of a verse. To pause is to consider. Consider the words preceding the caesura and prepare to relate them to the words that follow.

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Poetry

Elmira Oktayevna Elvazova

If I Am Not Horses

There is nothing so brave as the wild wind,
behind the body of horses
simply blowing

I have been riding of the wind, its tresses, moved on
by the boneless hands of water

They have brought me here, to this hard fought song
like parents

Legs are useless lumber, if I am not horses
trampling the waves

The Sound of The Rains Falling in October

The sound of the rains falling in

October
In the colder air you hide your
heart beneath
warm layers

Under there, you are all of you

walking. Naked as a wood animal
& very clean.

Ninel

I am no one to speak with
 having no one
I am no one to stay the night.

We were so alone
that our hearts burst
 one fine day while walking in the park

The blood jet was the color of Nana's *kompot*
 a hot cranberry drink she made in Pskov
when the children were young and

it was the time of poets for Russia

Elegiac Words for The Look in Your Eyes

The drab way a skull
peers
The distances
A stare, dead. Homely.
What pierces a stare?

What pierces me can kill
a dark swallow innumerable
The sundry bird

When I peer
through, shake the matter
of my mirror—spinning the
kaleidoscope, every time there is no color
Shapes and orbits

In this way the sun
loosens my joints
it knows no color
only heat first

I can rotate unabashed and hurriedly
For all the years of wheels harpoon me to ship-wreck
I can extol a sun ray
I cannot draw out this black

What pierces me can kill
a swallow in the dark

knowing its course

The Cattleyas

...

There is a band of sky that settles on the tracks.

The emotional upending,
flowers riven from the grass.

It is rose-water shade.
Dove
on an unstable crank,

nostalgic for a love that would not last.

It would not last.
The water in the stone
is black.

Sand kisses are a memoir,
gone and erased from
the braid in my palm.

You are a memory.
You are my only epoch.

As cattleyas coat our lids at last.

Untitled

I can't possibly see the way clear from here
Emily says Everyone needs saving and no one can save anyone.

We were five years into this world, it was maddeningly
beautiful

The time the geese were in the driver's seat running
red lights. I looked at the sky and there was no flapping
of wings. They had taken control of the roads and the
rail ways, in fact aviation re claimed the sky from
what was a pretending, pilots flying above the clouds
higher than they knew to fly and there was a rivalry,
a jealousy the geese prayed for a terminal Winter.

I remember when we did not listen to our Mothers
We recognized our rightful kin by the spaces between us
We were grounded and the birds were sky bound forever
like Gods and Angels in Heaven
except we could see them
and they sang in the trees

Lauren Cappello

To Baudelaire

It matters not what shadows
cast toward my starboard eyes, for
hope arises spring beguiled a
wrought sardonic fare
of a sweet aroma cling to life
long after breath has ceased, then
rose to flowers, hope is
showered, only
for the deceased.

Listen Dear Crickets

Listen,
 dear crickets:
I am falling fast upon green,
 Summer SCREAMS,
 This female form sighs.
 Time passes
RELATIVELY.

For absolutely
 water makes its
 way into the
 cracks and
 freezes
 a bright blue
 solid, breaking
 the boundaries
 of borders in
 the way that only
 a foreign element
 can beat it
 at its
 own
 game.

Like a tarantula in complete,
 compulsive bliss, causing tangible,
 casual, pain
 without restraint,
I could crawl onto your chest
 Just to watch your eyes
Open.

Independence Day, or, Fooled by the Fireworks

E
L
E
V
E
N thirty and not a minute more,
I approach the dark apartment.

Pitch black void. I enter.

T
W
E
N
T
Y five, no longer frightened of the shadows. I remove my shoes.

The cool sensation of the kitchen tile and the moonbeams on the floor
become my Rand McNally

I AM FEARLESS.

Somewhere in my travels I learned how to scare the crow

I AM FEARLESS.

S
E
V
E
N months ago? Perhaps. How should I know? (I do believe I lost track of time when I
fell in love with mystery. Although:

O
N
E year ago today
T
E
N hours

F
O
R
T
Y two minutes ago

To be exact:

Two flowers, fooled by the fireworks, blossomed beneath the stars.
Saturn laughed.

(he/she/it knew that it wouldn't be long before
we were intertwined and in realization of our
karmic bond to needlessly, or needfully-
depending on your faith in that sort of thing.
torment one another's soul with longing only to
be ripped fatefully from each other by
c i r c u m s t a n c e.)

Nevertheless,
The night we met
Cities, no empires fell
Face first into the mud.
New York City was demolished.
Fin De Siècle Paris was demolished.
True Love and cultured lives
Had taken two roads alone
Until one day something
Unusual had occurred... it
Was as if it all suddenly
Aligned
And the date and time became both

IMMORTAL
+
IRRELEVANT

to anything before itself.

John Clinton

Lost Out At Sea

I see new life in this wave
sparkling infinite like an emerald
adorning an ancient whore's neck
who was once an innocent virgin
naked on the shores of oblivion
bleeding with crimson streams

As civilization crumbles
hope shines bright like fireworks
in the celebratory night sky
and opens my swollen blue eyes
shedding tears like a dead skin
that was branded with the plague

Dare I say I've seen God
I've certainly heard the devil
whisper cacophonous lies in my ear
of numbing pleasures that shine
like pearls blazing black as sin
at the bottom of Atlantis

I swam for years unharmed
and squandered a fortune
that was gifted to me at birth
and like a sodden pirate
I savagely spit in my mothers eye

before drowning in her tears
Left without a paddle or compass
I floated between consciousness
raving mad and awaiting death
in the desolate dawn of day
until I saw a light peak on the horizon
it was my mother opening her heart to me

Naked Water

Is it not the sea that exists within me?
floating along an eternity
drowning in rivers of thought

Let me rest at the shores of reason
and your feet

Is it not the canals of a woman possessing me?
flowing into an ocean of ecstasy
basking in the womb of love

Let me swim in mysterious wonders
and your heart

Remove your protective coral and sparkle for me

Mother Sea Breathes

Mother sea breathes the word
of a sensation so serene and recast
countless waves of time roll past
a shore dissolving into love

My spirit buried in grains of sand
and elated by heavenly hands
drifts warmly in the belly of Her
whom protects and nourishes the land

Mother Sea has its children too
floundering in society, a ray of light
brightens the sea, setting free its burdens
burnt and charred from a beat day

Like a lost soul on the horizon
across miles of the swallowing void
let me breathe with you and remain
in maternal notes of your majestic song

Niagara Falls, Does It?

I was thinking about Niagara Falls
and how I've never been there
I was thinking about my ex-girlfriend
and how we were supposed to go there
in the month of June
for she had a miscarriage
in the month of April
the cruelest of all months
instead we blew the money
right up our noses
and she blew me off
in the month of November
now as I think about Niagara Falls
and how her face book status reads
my boyfriend is perfect
I can't help but wonder
as my heart dives off the edge
whether or not he recommended
to go to Niagara Falls

Brooklyn Noise

Brooklyn
My bones vibrate
through your fractured pavements tonight
Brooklyn
Your parks soothe
my throbbing head in tears
Brooklyn
Find me pummeled under your weight
of languages barking the world
Brooklyn
Let me sleep in your holy bridge
consuming dead poets
Brooklyn Y
our battles have shed blood
Brooklyn
Your citizens are still bleeding
Brooklyn
You reign independence
Brooklyn
Your trees grow proud and firm Brooklyn
Who has no landlord Brooklyn
Your brownstones keep me dreaming
Brooklyn
Your train tracks lead to your heart
Brooklyn
Your midnight lights are my eyes
Brooklyn
Your song is boisterous

Brooklyn
Your garbage cries from the East River
Brooklyn
Forget about it
Brooklyn
Arrest me already
Brooklyn
I dare you to find me in Queens
Brooklyn
You truly are the Kings
Brooklyn
Keep me grounded in time
Brooklyn
Dispose of me once I am dust
Brooklyn
Deliver me home unto you

Jennifer Fitzgerald

The ocean is not my muse

The ocean is not my muse.
When I hear her lapping,
slapping the sand, it is a
foreign tongue. Her
rocking boats with
flailing sails tepid
as a tantrum. I wonder
if I will see cut-outs of
people collecting sand
to glue to paper.
That would be a job for me.
Pails and spades, taking
your tiny rocks
to make smooth of the rough
When I seek inspiration,
I will not look to you
dear ocean.
The moon has been
kinder and more
hospitable.

Red Washed

Effacing plumes of smoke
from logs and trees
found dead under tires.

That was before
I came around,
town, turns, you,

and the idea of gray
ghetto streets,
linoleum tiled corridors,

and vultures picking
golden bones clean.
Sunsets are amorous here

in this indoor winter.
Buildings climb
oblong and slanted.

You pranced like a
freshly killed deer
who shared a drink

with the hunter
before that fateful
finger pull.

Fire Built

There are whispers
of a sunrise by noon.

A sleepy town gathers
in blankets and slippers

on dew wet ground.
The sky fell

in drops and nettles.
Their palms burnt.

* * *

We are mounting pressure
like a tire over filled.

We are hasty heretics
with jumbled resolves.

If it were Wednesday
everyday

we could be
neither here nor there,

but hang among
the days and colors;

like shirts
on wire hangers.
Hidden between
red and orange

in this rainbow
you can only see

in the right light.
Or with your eyes

tightly shut.
Rebuild me

with sulfur and ice
before tearing me down.

Sidewalk Manifesto

Language stopped
short like a mid-sentence
hiccup or heels digging
into ground for leverage.

The day everyone stopped
talking I had hung
my wash out to dry
on line no thicker than string.

It wobbled in the wind,
fearing puddles
and stray dogs.
I leaned far

out of my window
to watch the waves
created by silence
reverberate through

the feet and hands
of passers-by.
Silence is comforting
but this hung like meat

in a butcher's freezer,
like lynched bodies swaying,
like laundry
on line no thicker than string.

All that we were left with
was horns blaring and
the clicking sounds
made by traffic lights

changing the flow of cars.
The birds grew silent
in solidarity and we knew
it would swallow us all.

Papasociopath

Your hands wrung around fragile throats,
breaking hair-fine bird bones.
The shot-gun pharmacy was brightly lit
as the man told you, "there is no pill
for that diagnoses, no serum to spring
thoughts from your quadriplegic mind."
If I were your doctor, I would proscribe
lead bullets and less caffeine.
Mix your Epsom salts with arsenic
and soak each night until all that is left
are yellow sponge bones and purple veins
pulsing Ganges water to your kite-string
appendages. Sometimes we need to turn
off the mind like the Technicolor tune Dorothy
sang after she popped her pills and dreamt of Oz.

“Concern should drive us into action
and not into a depression. No man is
free who cannot control himself.”

Pythagoras

Damon Rasinya

Stunted Growth

How pretty the spring
Wind thrashes through trees
How resplendent the flowers

Renewal

Cold and snowblinded
Shaking moves water
The death of a butterfly

End Frame

The wood of a tree
Slow one season at a time
Will be made into a box

Droning Implants

Bee suckles nectar
And then he carries pollen
Blind to his virtue

Decades

Slowly day by day
Slow one season at a time
Ten years pass as one

Beyond Intent

a stone plunks into a pond
circular ripples depart
larger and wider
they will encompass the lake
stone long forgotten

Erin Welborn

Voice

A voice is heard
by a sad, lonely thirteen year old girl
telling her she is nothing
There is nothing in life for you
You will live years for nothing
No happiness shall follow you
No love will appear
Nothing but misery will suite you
Why not end your pathetic life now?
She ignores it for the next two years
Her life is full of
backstabbers
she is too foolish to leave them
A Boy chose another over her

The voice returns
sounds of scraping metal
shaking of an aspirin bottle
the voice of Death
She won't answer it
To answer is to accept death
She refuses to give in
The voice tells her
There is nothing in life for you
You will live years for nothing
No happiness shall follow you

*No love will appear
Nothing but misery will suited you
Why not end your pathetic life now?
It is four years later
She is a college student
She feels lost
Confused
Helpless
She sees no signs of happiness
No stranger has glanced her way
She glances in her bag
there is a bottle of aspirin
She considers for a moment
The voice returns
There is nothing in life for you
You will live years for nothing
No happiness shall follow you
No love will appear
Nothing but misery will suit you
Why not end your pathetic life now?*

*She answers the voice
finally, for the first time
Because I'm a fighter
I won't end it
just because things haven't gone right*

The voice laughs
When have things ever gone right for you?
I don't know when they will, but I have patience
Patience? The voice scoffs
Yes, in time everything will be clear
I've waited eight years for things to make sense
What's eight more years?
The voice screams
but can't be heard
She tosses the bottle
The Girl is freed

There is nothing to fear
You will live for something extraordinary
Happiness shall follow you
Love will appear
Misery will never suit you
No need to end my life
when there's so much ahead of me
The Girl tells herself

“We’re born alone, we live alone, we die alone. Only through our love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we’re not alone.”

Orson Welles

Sundas Nazir

Dear Husband

It's about us in a dark, broken ark
searching for a birthmark. Shiny

hair, actually gray, dear Husband,
from my cotton heart, beating

in my teeth, free. Believe me I am
blind behind you, Soggy Frog. You

threw black ants on me. My skin
tore, the inside exposed, a sin. Begin

to chant your existence at night
when I decorate my voodoo doll.

The naked doll, lifeless, packed
with gravel falling from her eyeballs.

Black lips, squint-eyed, a liar that
I might as well set her hair on fire.

Dear Husband, you showered booze
on her scraped knees, she wailed loud

lullaby very close to me. Help
me make crimps on her face.

Dearest Husband, goddamn thorny
bush has worms eating my flowers.

Let's live in this dark, arc
and make your soft clay doll.

From my potter's wheel, I have
such fantastical thoughts to peel.

Ferry at 2:30 AM

Welcome aboard my mind at this hour.
The guard sandwiches me between
the glass doors, says I am too late,
shouldn't be allowed to see you. Torn
in half, once again. It is now the fifth
season, monsoon. Same spot—I
sit before you, wanting your attention.
Believe me, I have a rock in my pocket,
plan to throw it at you; the sunflower
seeds failed me. I won't do cartwheels
in front of you, or stare at you, blink-free.

During docking I plan to skip downstairs,
blindfolded. I picture you catching me.
Only us tumbling downstairs, fingers
folded around necks. Your sea green nails,
you file, tiny shavings land on your sheer
stockings, snowflakes on my tongue,
confetti on my birthday. I wish to be
your nails; I wish you'd care for me.
The ferry has come to a complete stop.

Your heels click on the floor, resonating
with my squeals, my heartbeats, slow,

skippy, my arrhythmias. See you soon, I will.

Death Song

On one clouded morning
the tree began to sing the death song.
Long, bare branches shivered in fear. I, too,
longed for it to stop, to pretend to be a friend
and send down my death bed.

I'm fed up.
Blood, I throw up, powder-blue.
I want to be buried, too.

White, clean, wrinkled, my death bed is frozen.
I've been jumping on it, pacing on it
like a child, like a mime.
Oh, I know it is going to happen anytime.

It will be evening, the sky will be angry.
My thoughts will be engulfed by the smoky, thin air.
With blood, the clouds will be puffy.
I assure you it will be a nightmare.

“Life is only a long and bitter suicide, and faith alone can transform this suicide into a sacrifice.”

Franz Liszt

Stephen Krauska

St. George the Other

A man next to me is stretching
his arms out like a messiah.
The wind stirring the Upper Bay
furls through his polyester
marshmallow jacket making wide
indents and waves in the air.

A topiary afro on is head
rests like a jagged brick
of dark twisted twigs;
he looks lived in.

The gleam of orange sodium
lights from the harbor cranes
over the blue waves churn
a nocturnal brown
that looks like it painted
his skin.

As the ferry pitches against
a storm swell and the rising tide,
I dream for a minute that he will
open his eyes and ask me
to give up my IRA and follow him,

only to feel the boat stutter
into her berth and watch him
walk over the water,
on the slip, toward the bus.

Passing Out at Mile Marker 21

a wailing A/C motor
cools down 36 degree C
to roughly 68 degree F on
the right side road blowing
to the left side seat a driver
driving forward blowing
backward southern dialect
dust from the vents veil
the vision by condensation
on the eye crying to slough
out the dust down an overheated
cheek full of empty pores
big as sewing needles seeping
with salt dissolved excretion
of stress and sunblock
this heat is not a color
you'd commonly give it.
Not that stop/alerting red
blinking like a low oil,
check-engine, pull over,
"registration please" warning,
it's a steel grinding orange
yellow like a dying sun stale
as old urine caked like a wad
of old soap on a shower sitting
unfastened to pipes in the desert
on salt flats white as sunblock
reflective as silvered glass
softer than fainting dryer
than cheeks in heat stroke.

Icarus and the Earthquake

the red letters of the gas
station streaked and splashed
like wet blood

hover over the
the neoprene handles,
on the dirty diesel pumps,

a funky green
that must only
naturally exist
on some extinct
tropical plant

a cigarette smoking attendant
leans up against bricks:
a darker,
dried-blood
sort of red.

she flicks the smoking spark
toward the diesel

after I pre-pay, she tilts her smile

down toward the up-sales of the week:

a candy bar
coffee an'a pop tart

or

a donation to the *Earthquake In Haiti*

I took the donation

I part with only one plastic
dollar into a pillow case full of wax feathers

that they'll air-raid using election fliers as parachutes
from two miles above the fractured island

onto broken concrete and jagged rebar
and old dry blood, turned black in the sun.

one swiped plastic dollar offered up like twigs
to bridge a collapsed road, like a drink

through a kinked straw, like the yellow glow
of a match against the cold moon

would it be harder to feel your own soil bite
back at your skin with teeth made of your own home;

to watch the land vomit all the life
you have fed it: the fields; the streets,

or to have a bunch of worthless
dollars rain and stick to your wounds
like feathers to thick, hot, red tar?

what good is a feather pillow on
a shattered slab of concrete?
what good were the wax feathers
to falling Icarus?

Michael Dalessio

Ancestry

My father was a butcher by trade
At one point or another, but now
He drives a truck, so he's a truck driver.
Completely different jobs, the butcher block,
Knife cut tenderloin, switch gears to stick shift
Eighteen wheeler haulin' 8,000 gallons at a time,
Four times a day. He don't write, not like I do.

His pops is different too.
Grandpa's a quiet, observant gentleman.
Seafood delivery man? Yea sure.
Nobody knows what he does,
But everybody knows what he does
In his black El Camino from 2007.
New truck in 2008.
New truck in 2009.
Driving to and from underground
Poker tournaments.

And his grandson, my father's son,
My brother, three years, two months younger
He's still young, 18, 19 in July.
Chapters just getting started,
Titled: Gifted Student Athlete.
Not too much ink used up yet,
But compiled with the others,
They give me a lifetime supply
Of blue and black ink, lead, and graphite.

They are the cells in my temporal lobe.
They are the Italian American
Platelets in my bloody blue veins.
My number 2, and my ball point.
I'll pick up the scraps, fillet a stripe bass,
And fill up my tank with these lives.

I Come From a Place

I come from a place.

Where that old man is always walking up and down the avenue.
Sometimes three and four times a day.
He brings that poor dog of his.
The poor thing has no interest in those journeys to the liquor store.

And that liquor store is right by that pizzeria.
It's always been inevitable that I'll smell seafood cooking in the back.
I was never too fond of it.
But I guess it's a much better aroma than the enemy three blocks away.

That land fill.
It's been closed down for years now.
But the smell of that place...
Strangely I'll never forget.

That's the place I come from.

Matthew Bryan Beck

Academia, or, Vartan's Complaint

Firstly, a great deal has been written about blah blah blah. In theory, blah blah blah should be blah, i.e. blah blah BLAH. On the other hand, the dialectic of blah blah blah is clearly blah, given that blah blah blah is NOT blah. On the contrary, my study and statistics found a significant correlation between the binaries, characterized vis-a-vis social hierarchies, of Blah and its domesticity, subjugation, and eventual subversion.

Secondly, I should clarify my definition and nomenclature of blah blah blah. It is important to emphasize that inherent "Blah" becomes pedantic and semantic when juxtaposed with the complexities of intersubjective relationships and processes of cultural hegemony. Furthermore, the data would seem to suggest that the nature of blah blah blah is interrelated, either directly or implicitly, and analogous to the nexus of language, identity, and subjectivity of blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah (abb.), in contrast to the colonialization, alienation, and subterfuge of Blah as a socio-cultural and geo-physical state.

Plainly, then, Blah as a metanarrative is ostensibly a deconstructionist hyperbole of imperialism. In view of this, the hybridity and intertextuality of post-modern, post-industrial Blah redefines our traditionalist canon. I would argue, therefore, that Blah cannot exist in modernity without "blah blah blah". Thus, it is clear that I don't know what I am talking about. The central question then becomes this: what is the point of this stupid poem? Clearly, some theories I have offered are not unique. At all. One might suggest that my hypothesis is fatuous.

In summary, nobody cares. (Citation needed.)

Ink Like Wine

i can't read your handwriting
your lines & curves
uneven
unbroken
your letters like
your face:
expressive
unspoken

...

i love the way you underline
so perfectly crooked
and use ink like wine
so recklessly free
i love the way
you bend your N's
and make your T's
into little crucifixes
and defy the
physics of O's

...

i can't read your handwriting-
but it's so
much
like
you.

today i forgot my umbrella

today i forgot my umbrella
the rain beat my face

like a drunken father
the pregnant clouds,

my mother, gave birth
on my naked head

the enemy wind tore
like soft-point bullets

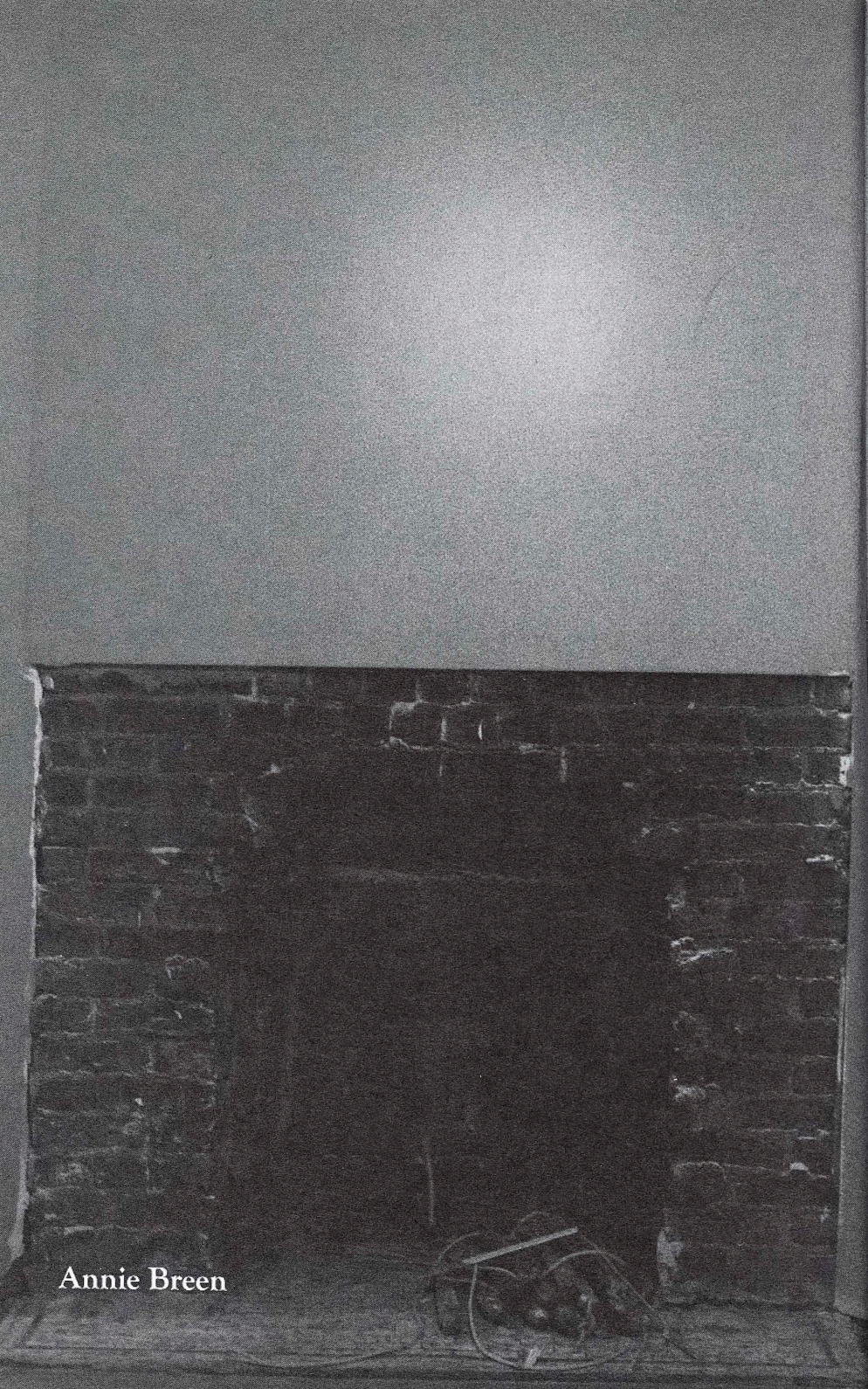
i waited for the 6:20
like Simeon waited for

the Messiah-Lord, let thy
servant depart in peace.

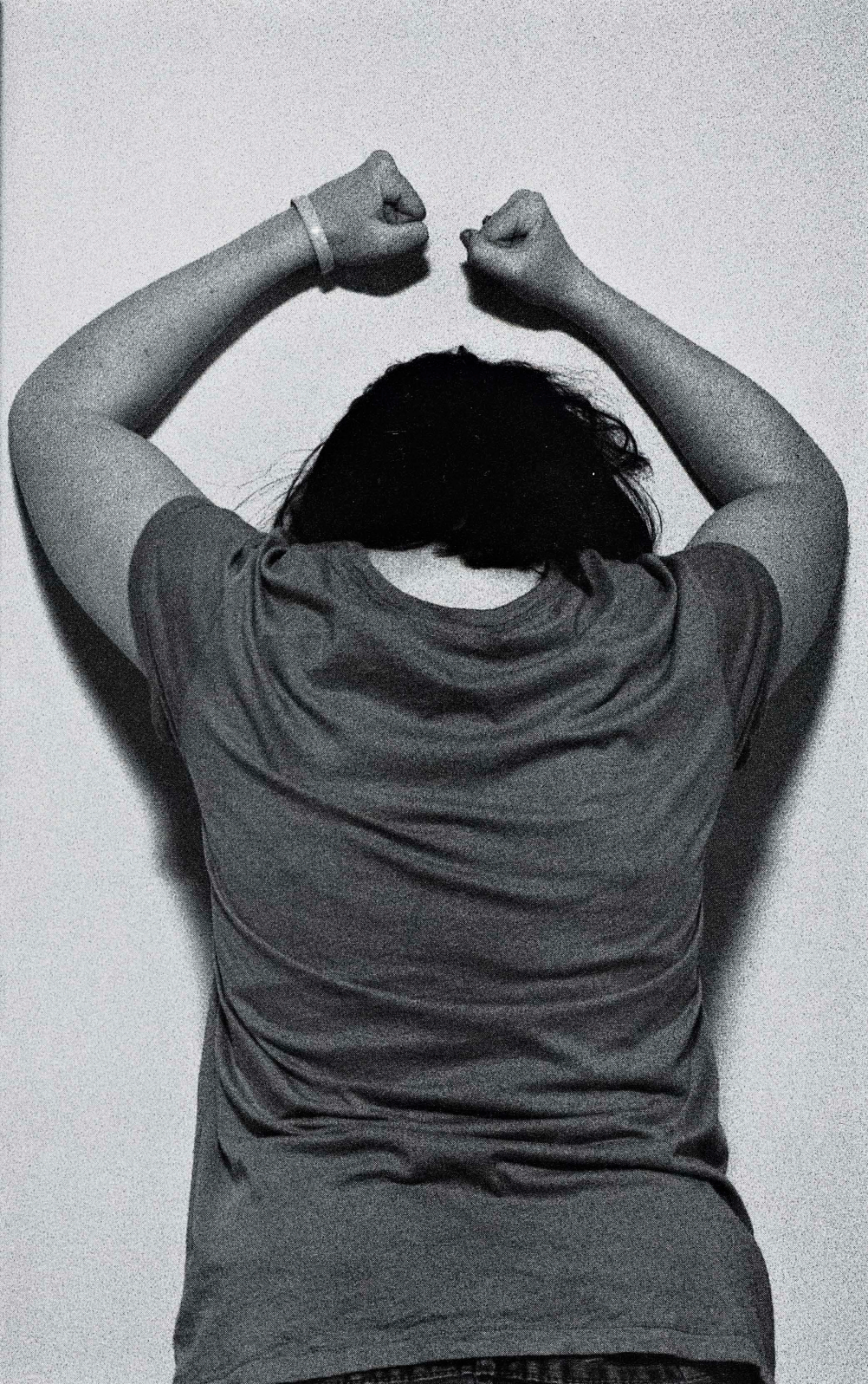
Dead Men Talking

I have nothing original to say,
not like Aristotle or Pericles,
or Kafka, Camus, Nietzsche, or Monet
not like Kierkegaard or Euripides
or Schopenhauer, Dante, or Voltaire
not like Ovid, Cicero, or Plutarch
or Proust, Marx, Wittgenstein, or Moliere
not like Rousseau, Spinoza, or Descartes
or Socrates, Plotinus, or Philo
not like Kant, Hume, Locke, Hobbes, Donne, or Balzac
or Shelley, Keats, Byron, Blake, or Hugo
not like Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, or Steinbeck
or Roth, Faulkner, or even Hemingway
I have nothing original to say.

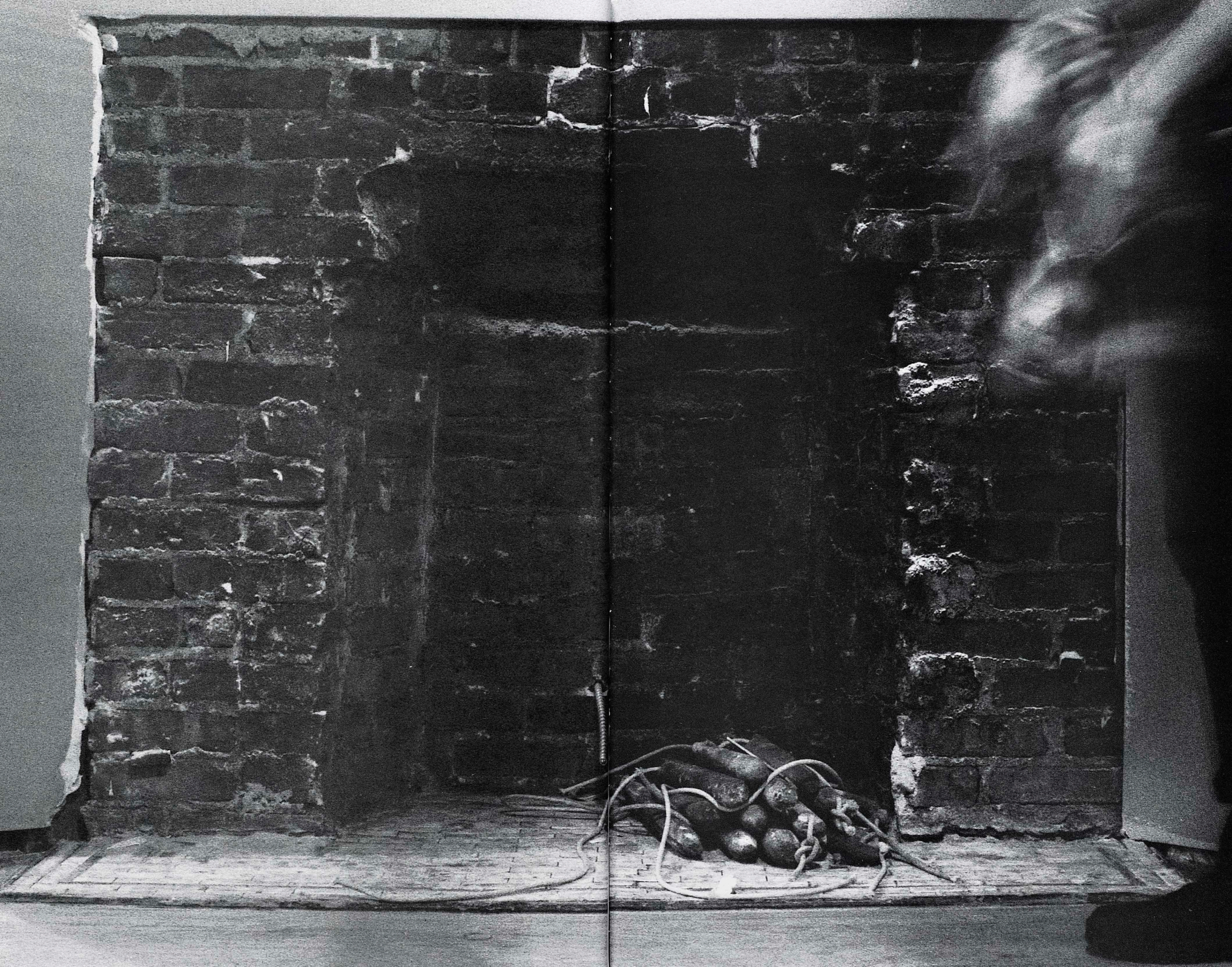
Photography



Annie Breen

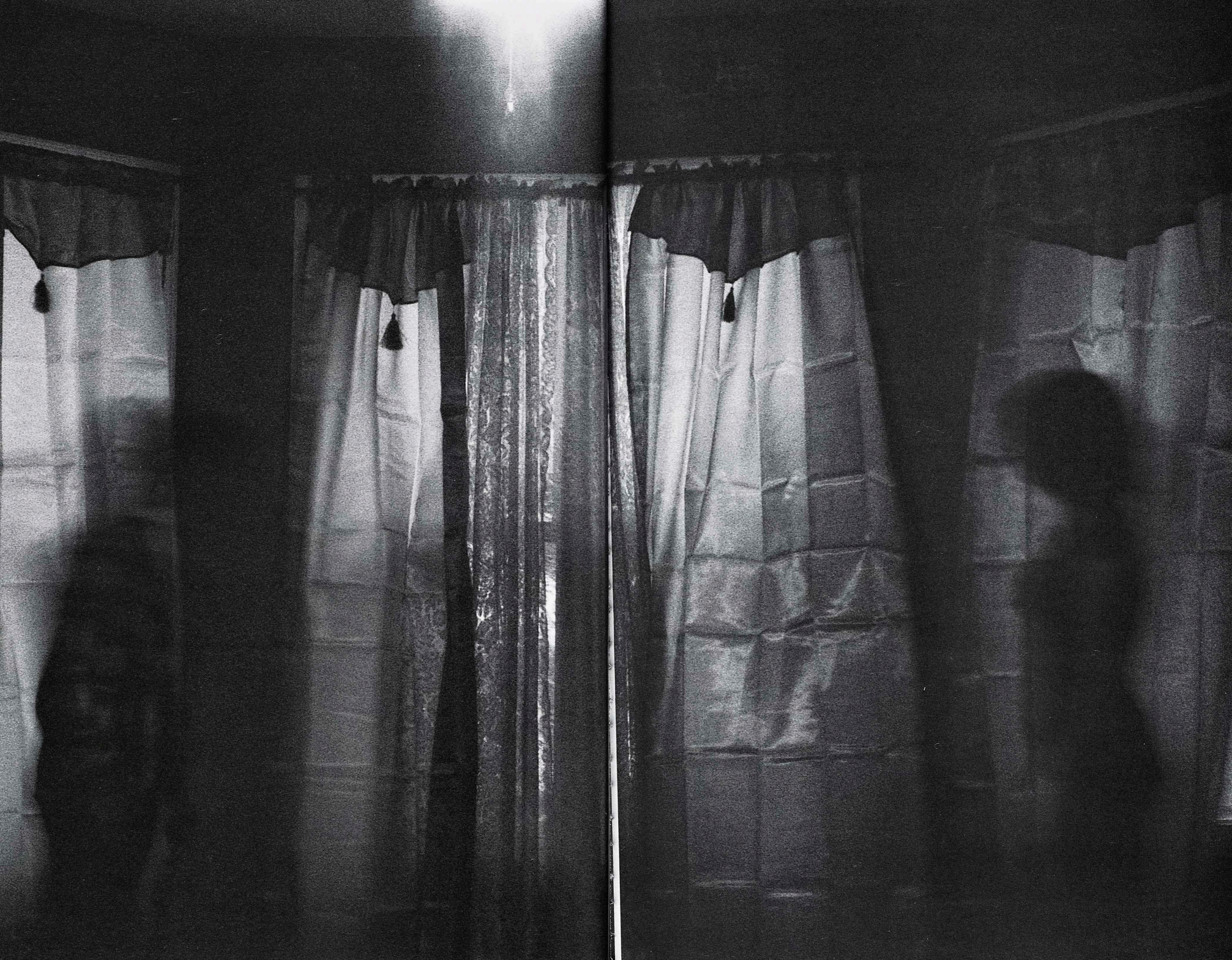














Flavia Di Bartolo







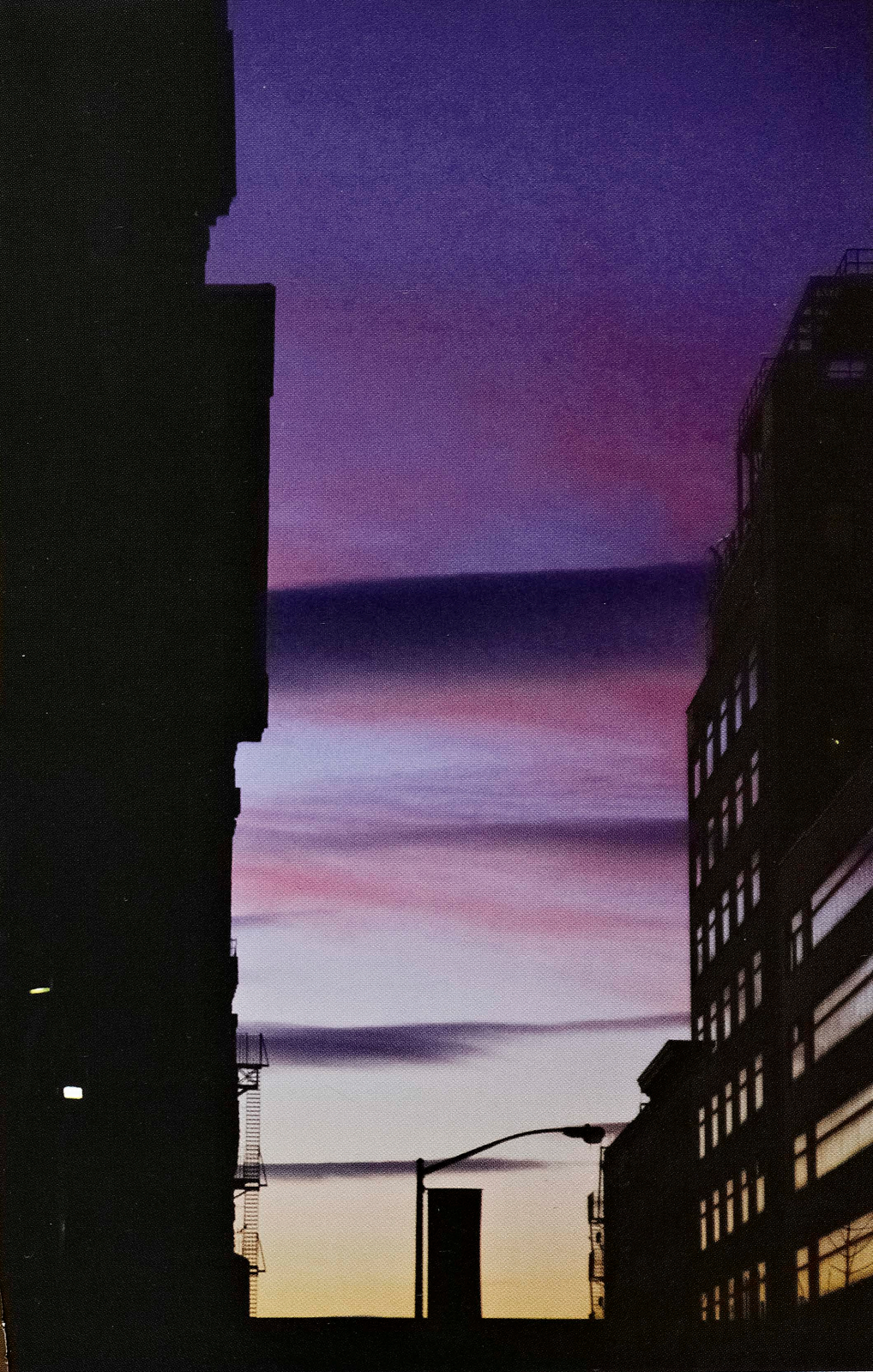
Zara Kittel

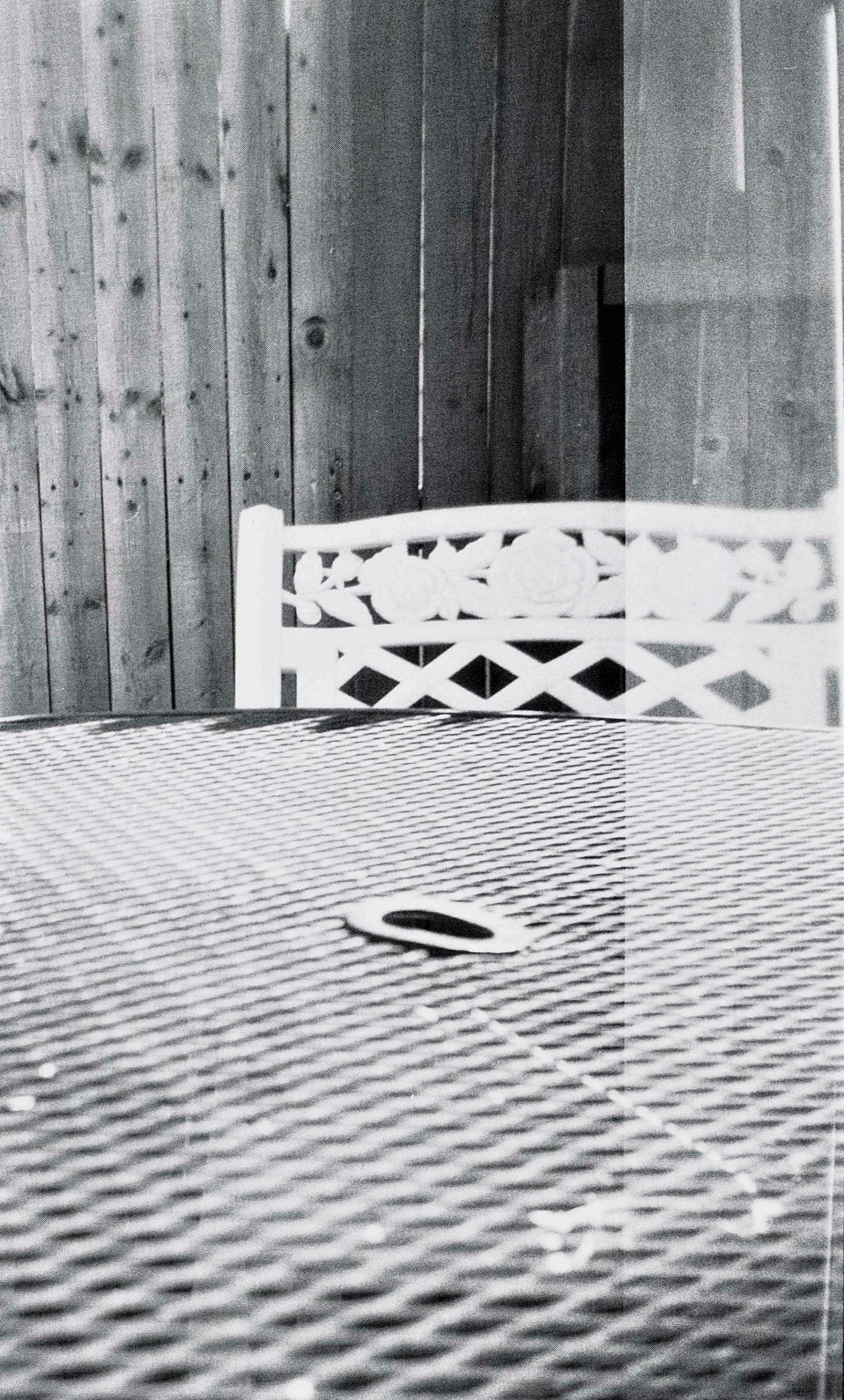














Stephen Krauska



SCIENTIFIC
RECORD



Stephen Krauska

DeBruce and Nine Eleven

As a child I wanted
To be three things
As an adult:
A dairy farmer
A priest and
Some kind of writer
Musician, artist, rockstar
Or inventor. It depends on when
You ask but it was always the
First two combined with one of
The last.
All at the same time

When DeBruce Grain Elevator
Blew up some ten miles outside
of Wichita, Kansas I felt it in my
upstairs bedroom in a northwestern
suburb of the city. I was known in
those days to find creative ways
to thunder downstairs.

As I did so, sliding on my ass if
My memory still serves to ask
My mom if the air conditioner blew up
She blamed the racket and shake
On my ass bounding down the stairs.

When the lunch hour news came on
With the helicopter footages of the half
Mile long concrete tubes on fire it was
Suddenly understood.

I kept newspaper clippings about that day
In a four inch black binder my dad had bought
At an office bankruptcy auction.

I had intended to keep every news story
I ever read about farmer, priests, a writer
Or musician, journalist or professional bike racer
In there. I don't think it ever had anything more
Than DeBruce.

Kansas made the National News that weekend
Which shocked me, I thought only New York
Could do that. I remember that day vividly like I
Remember Catcher in the Rye. It was not to be
The only day I would remember because of the national news.



Andrea Cella

Arika Gold

Apartment Story

INT. SARAH AND ALISON'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

A group of 20-something females sit around a couch in a small Brooklyn apartment. **ALISON**, tall, pale, long, bleach-blonde hair, thickframed glasses. **KATE**, tiny brunette, short bob, heavy bangs. **LIZ**, effortlessly beautiful, auburn mermaid hair. The room is sparse; one couch and one fold-out chair, the kind normally used for sports games. Liz sits on the floor. They are waiting for:

SARAH, Jewish, long, brown curly locks. If her friends are beautiful, she is adorable. Sarcastic, awkward, a female Judd Apatow movie. Sarah struggles to open the door with grocery bags.

SARAH

(closing door) Ugh, sorry, I'm so late, I saw Jesse Eisenberg again and had to figure out a way to discreetly follow him to see which apartment he went in to.

(She walks over to the group, puts down the bags of food and sits down. The other girls grab their food and begin to eat as they talk.)

ALISON

Great, now you can find a way to up the stalking to a casual hello and planned conversation.

LIZ

(confused) Jesse Eisenberg? The actor?

ALISON

No, no. It's just what we call our neighbor who kind of looks like him. Or really Jesse Eisenberg as Mark Zuckerberg in *The Social Network*. With Mark Zuckerberg's actual height. Sarah's been obsessed with him since we moved in and she saw him carrying the Freaks and Geeks box-set.

SARAH

I wouldn't say obsessed...

ALISON

You literally waited in the hallway for an hour so you could "accidentally" bump into him.

SARAH

That happens in romantic comedies all of the time! I was just making my own meet-cute... it's endearing!

KATE

You have a problem.

SARAH

Listen, it's not my fault. I'm a product of my environment. New York City has a horrible male-to-female ratio, and that's without considering all of the gay men. I have to resort to drastic measures to snag a single, straight one. It's Darwinism.

ALISON

But you do consider the gay men.

SARAH

Unknowingly! How was I supposed to know all of those guys I've dated were gay?

LIZ

Dan's *NSYNC obsession?

ALISON

Kyle's hotpants?

KATE

Two words: Glee. Club.

SARAH

OKAY, so maybe there was some evidence pointing towards that conclusion. But it's not

completely my fault I date gay guys, they're the only one's around.

LIZ

False. They're the only ones around YOU. You have no game. The last party we were at, the only time you spoke to a dude was when you had a hour-long conversation about *Degrassi*.

SARAH

Degrassi is a great show that spans all cultural, age, and gender gaps. (seeing her friends' faces) Come on, I'm not that bad! I can mack when I want to!

KATE

Okay, first of all, don't ever use the word 'mack' un-ironically again. Second: Seriously? I think we all remember last Saturday's attempt at getting you laid.

FLASHBACK - LAST WEEKEND - INT. BAR/ARCADE HYBRID-EVENING

(A quick secession of moments from that night begins.)

MOMENT #1

SARAH

(talking to **TALL BOY** in bathroom line) I really like your glasses. Are they new? They look new.

(Sarah reaches up to touch his glasses. Realizing he is too tall, she tries to pull away. She quickly changes her mind, thinking it would be too awkward not to touch the glasses now, and almost pokes his eye.)

Moment #2

Sarah stands talking to **BOY IN BEANIE** as Liz, Kate, and Alison talk to a group of his friends.

SARAH

So maybe your friends could get with my friends, and we could be friends and we could do this every weekend?

Boy in Beanie rolls his eyes and then looks away.

Moment #3

Sarah stands next to **BOY WITH GLASSES** at the bar.

SARAH

(unintelligible awkward sound)

Boy with Glasses looks over, giving her a weird stare.

PRESENT DAY - INT. SARAH AND ALISON'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

LIZ

The bathroom line?

SARAH

Neither of us were going anywhere!

KATE

You quoted "Big Pimpin'".

SARAH

Who doesn't like Biggie?

ALISON

And that last one? You were so uncomfortable that you made a noise. I don't think it could have possibly been more awkward than that.

SARAH

Okay, fine, valid. I have no game. I just really don't like having to approach guys. Isn't that Dating 101, anyway, though? That if a guy likes you, he'll approach you? I'm pretty sure that's in both the movie and book versions of

He's Just Not That Into You.

Kate

Those rules are for girls who aren't as angsty as you. No one's going to approach you when you look like Angela Chase in a particularly painful episode of *My So-Called Life*.

Sarah

Yeah, you know I've really always considered myself a Jordan Catalano. Except, you know...
literate.

LIZ

Please, if anything, you're Brian Krakow.

(Alison nods her head in agreement.)

KATE

That's not the point! The point is that you're a neurotic mess, and we love you for it, but that's because we know you. You're just going to have to be the one to make that first effort to talk to someone.

SARAH

I'm really not that neurotic.

ALISON

Says the girl who this morning gave a diatribe on Justin Timberlake wearing glasses.

SARAH

It's like he wears them just to judge me.

ALISON

And your intense hatred for James Franco?

SARAH

Okay, he is the worst! (mimicking) I went to film school and now everyone hates me because I'm just so good at everything. (rolls eyes) More like James Franco, am I right?

ALISON

And you don't see how those complaints are weird and perhaps a bit irrational?

SARAH

Not really.

(Alison, Sarah, and Kate raise their eyebrows and exchange looks.)

Okay, Okay, maybe I see your point. I'll just have to make sure I'm ready with something great and funny the next time I have a not-so-chance encounter that I've created outside Jesse Eisenberg's door.

KATE

Keep on creepin' on.

INT. HALLWAY OF SARAH AND ALISON'S BUILDING - AFTER-NOON THE NEXT DAY

Sarah has been going up and down the stairs by Jesse Eisenberg's apartment to fake the appearance of a coincidental run-in. She decides to sit on the steps leading down to the floor below his. To pass the time she takes out the leaflet from a box-set of Undeclared and begins to read it. She hears the jingle of keys as steps pass her on the stairs and looks up. She sees Jesse Eisenberg, tall, lanky, and boyish-looking. He wears large headphones. By the time Sarah has looked up, he is already fiddling with his keys. In a panic, Sarah shoves the leaflet back in the box-set, stands up, and leaps towards his door, trips over the steps and falls on her face, right by Jesse Eisenberg's feet. The box-set goes flying.

JESSE EISENBERG

(taking off his headphones and looking down)
Are you okay? That was kind of a rough fall.

SARAH

(lifting herself off of the floor, embarrassed)
Yeah, I'm fine, thanks.

(Jesse Eisenberg picks up the box-set. Inspecting her closer, he has a moment of recognition.)

JESSE EISENBERG

Hey, don't you live in the apartment below me?
Where were you going?

SARAH

(happy he's noticed her, but afraid she's been caught) Oh, yeah, that. I do live below you. I just, um, forgot where I was going for a second. Stood up too quickly or something. Disorientation is a common side effect of that. A scientific phenomenon. I think.

JESSE EISENBERG

(awkward beat) Yeah, definitely.

SARAH

(continuing anxiously to make up an excuse)
I was waiting for my friend to arrive actually. We're already running late so I thought I'd wait out here so that when she got here we could leave right away. I thought I heard her, so that's why I stood up really quickly. It turns out it was just you, though, so I was little...dis-com-bob-ulated... (laughs nervously)

JESSE EISENBERG

You thought your friend had passed you and your apartment going up the stairs?

SARAH

Yeah, she's not the most observant person in the world. Actresses, you know how it is. Plus, I kind of thought the noise was coming from in front of me. Inner ear issue.

JESSE EISENBERG

(Stares at her as if he's trying to figure her out) Oh, okay. Sure. (beat) Well, I'll see you around.

SARAH

Yeah, definitely. (Grasping at straws to make the conversation last longer) I mean, crazier things have happened, right? Global warming and all.

JESSE EISENBERG

Totally. (Turns to go inside his apartment)

SARAH

(Hurriedly, before he leaves and her chance is gone) I'm Sarah, by the way.

JESSE EISENBERG

(About to go through the door, he turns and smiles) Jake.

SARAH

(Relieved that she got a name, she relaxes) Hi, Jake.

JAKE

(Smiling again) Hi, Sarah. It was nice meeting you. (Turns and enters his apartment, shutting the door)

SARAH

(silently mouthing) YES! (Normal voice) We're so in love.

(Just then Jake opens the door to his apartment. In that moment of silence before he speaks, Sarah wonders in horror if he's heard what she has just said. He hasn't.)

JAKE

(handing Sarah her box-set.) Here, I almost forgot to give you this. (beat) I really love

that show. I have the *Freaks and Geeks* series in there (gestures to his apartment), but not this one. We should trade some time.

SARAH

Ughh, I would, but I already own *Freaks and Geeks*. (beat) Well, this is awkward. Now it's out there that I'm straight-up gangster and you're not.

JAKE

Shiiit. That is awkward.

SARAH

It's not your fault. Barely anyone is on my level. It's pretty hard to get like me.

JAKE

Ahh, okay, well that makes me feel better.

SARAH

(quickly, as if to say it before her nerves kick in again) But I mean, I'm always willing to use my greatness to help others better themselves. If you want, we could watch my DVDs sometime? Or you know, a cancelled-before-their-time-shows depressing marathon? Later maybe?

JAKE

(sincerely) Oh, that sounds great, but my girlfriend and I have plans tonight, I'm sorry. Another time, though, definitely.

SARAH

(Just comprehending this and trying to act like she doesn't care) Your girlfriend... right. Definitely. Yeah, anytime...I know where you live.

JAKE

Cool, okay, thanks. You wouldn't want to let me watch it tonight, anyway. Because then I'd

probably be an even bigger baller than you. And I don't know if you could handle how ill I'll be. You'd probably cry or something. It'd get weird.

SARAH

Hey, no one could ever bring all this (motions to herself) down. It's impossible. Just look into these eyes right now, you'd get lost.

JAKE

You're probably right. I don't know what I was thinking.

SARAH

It's okay, I forgive you. (beat) Well, I should really go call my friend and see what's taking her so long. (backing away) I'll see you later.

JAKE

Bye.

(Jake smiles and waves before before closing the door.)

SARAH

(as she walks to her apartment) Girlfriend. Of course. This is some Alanis Morissette bullshit right here.

INT. SARAH'S ROOM - EVENING

Sarah lies on her twin-sized bed in her small room with no windows. Sarah lies stretched out on her bed. Her laptop plays The Smiths as Sarah stares at the ceiling and sings along. The music stops. Sarah looks over and we see:

ALISON

Wow, you really need to stop. We don't have the luxury of thick walls. (looking at the

laptop. Scrolling) Let's see: We've already suffered through "Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want" six times... "In Your Eyes"? Really?

SARAH

(back to facing the ceiling) I'm Lloyd Dobler in that scenario.

ALISON

(stops scrolling) Well, it looks like I stopped you just in time. (standing up) I don't know if I could have handled the Michael Bolton and Boyz II Men. (Sarah doesn't react. Beat.) You know, you don't actually know anything about his girlfriend. Maybe they haven't been dating for that long, maybe they're breaking up soon. And, honestly, if he's the type of guy who didn't think you were a total weirdo, then he's probably worth waiting to find out.

SARAH

(finally turning to face Alison, brightening) Al, you should have been there! It was perfect! At first I was all nervous and jumpy, caught up in my intricate web of lies. But then... I don't know. Maybe it's him, or us, or whatever. But I was okay. I was still sarcastic and kind of lame, but I think he thought I was funny. We had...banter. It was like *His Girl Friday*.

(The girls hear a knock at the door. They give each other quizzical looks before walking to the front door. Sarah opens it. Standing there is:)

JAKE

(A little taken back by both girls staring at him) Oh, hey. (turning to Alison) Jake, I live upstairs.

ALISON

Alison. (turns and walks into her room)

SARAH

Don't mind her. She's got a lot on her mind.

JAKE

Bad break-up? I thought I heard the Smiths playing for like 15 minutes.

SARAH

Yeah, you know how some girls are. (quickly trying to change the subject) What's up?

JAKE

So, I know this is kind of last minute, but my girlfriend cancelled on me for the fifth time and I'm just kind of over the drama of trying to calm her down. You still up for hanging out tonight?

SARAH

(barely hiding the smile) Yeah, I would love to. Let me just grab the stuff. (Goes into her room and comes out a moment later with the box-set) All set. (As she goes to step into the hallway and close the door behind her) You pumped?

JAKE

(looking at her for a moment) Actually, I really am.

(Door closes)

Nonfiction

Melissa Brevin Horne

Boxes, Baggage, and Other Knick-Knacks

Packing is an art. To pack a box you must be sure to make the most out of it. You must decide what stays, what goes, what hurts too much to let go, and what hurts too much to keep. For me, the smell of a musty box and the screech of packing tape meant starting over, and I loved it, or at least I convinced myself I did. Meeting unfamiliar people and starting fresh at school seemed so thrilling: I could be anyone, from anywhere. I was mysterious, special. Now, I just want to go home and there is no home for me to go to. I want so desperately to surround myself with familiar faces and there are none, or maybe too many. The friends I have kept spread across the country. They finally found their center, their space. I envy them tremendously.

I have spent my life searching for love. Hoping that cartoon hearts and bubbles would float out with every opened box, that I would find love notes in between the picture frames and knick-knacks, and I know that I was home.

With each move, my mother let me pick out the paint for my latest walls from those fanning color palettes my grandfather had. (He was a carpenter, always had these for homes he was working on). He and my grandmother were the only people in my life who always lived in the same house. Even now, long after my grandmother's death, my grandfather still lives in that old house with his new wife and my grandmother's furniture, all but her bed. By time I was a teenager, our moves were more frequent and distant. Even though we kept in Queens, the mental distance for me was crippling. I felt unable to hold my identity. Still, it was my identity, to invent and reinvent over and over again, the

ability to adapt to my surroundings. Some call that culture; I call it uncertainty. As an adult, I am perpetually coming and going, here and there, still looking for that place to lay my boxes down, some sense of relief, something like a found destination.

We lived in Fresh Meadows on 185th Street, the first house I remember leaving. My tricycle, plastic tassels hanging from the handlebars, was the shiniest red, and it was mine, and I loved it. Streaming white and pink pompoms stretched for miles when pulled before they broke off. No matter how many I pulled off, the pompoms never went away. It was as if they grew back. I loved the push of wind on my face when I would ride up and down the block (all I was allowed to go). Thirty years later, I still drive with all the windows down.

My house was in the middle of the block and a girl named Laurie lived directly across the street. We were the same age but didn't go to school together. My mother said her mother was crazy. Her mother was nice to me. I spent little time with Laurie. Still, I would miss her. No more playful afternoons coloring her foyer with preschool Crayola art as her mother applauded. No more peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. No more crazy people.

I was determined to get to the park just a few blocks away. Someone was going to find me there and take me to a house where everything was perfect. I wondered what my new mommy and daddy would look like. Would I have any brothers and sisters? I would miss my brother, but I figured I would get him later when I went to pick up my toys. Two older boys with big bicycles laughed at me because I didn't have a bike, circled, shouting, teasing, "Girls don't have bikes. Do you? If you do, you are not a

girl.” They confused me. They knew it. They convinced me that to have a bike meant that I would grow a penis and no longer be a girl, that “bike” was a word for a boy’s private part and I couldn’t even say it anymore. I was happy with my tricycle anyway. I no longer wanted a bike.

After I was safely past the dead end, the second block flew by. I was lost in my daydream. I was the farthest I had ever been from my house by myself. I got scared thinking that if I didn’t find my new family before it got dark I would have to go home and run away again tomorrow. But if I went much further I wasn’t sure I would remember my way back. This was a very different feeling. This was my first panic attack. Heart pounding, palms sweating, I pushed my little peddles faster than ever before. I wasn’t sure when the sun went down and I wasn’t going back. I noticed a scary man following me. He couldn’t be who I was looking for or who was looking for me. I had to get to the park and I couldn’t go any faster. He quickened his step behind me, getting closer. Suddenly, I felt a hand on my shoulder. It grabbed me right off my tricycle and flung me around in the air. I closed my eyes and I was flying. Through my tears I saw my tricycle in his other hand and I was floating, kicking, hanging from the hand that grabbed me. I looked up. The man was my father. He didn’t say a word. He just dragged me back to the house. My mother sat at the kitchen table smoking a cigarette. Her raven hair hid her face. There was no fight in her. My father and grandmother drained it long before I was born.

“Why did you run away?”

“Because nobody loves me.”

My father was not in the room.

Seven years is the longest I ever spent in one place. I couldn't wait to get out of that house. There were no other children on our block, most of our neighbors had one foot in the grave and hated all the noise from my parents wild parties, us kids, and the chained backyard dog. The old Tudor was built in 1926. It even had the metal milk delivery box by the side entrance. I had one large attic that went to the front of the house and a shoddy window overlooking the front lawn, with cathedral ceilings and a plaster fresco of a pirate ship over the mantle. The door opened like the creak of a coffin and each long wooden panel rasped with fearsome sounds. The flimsy flooring was the insulation of the ceiling below. If stepped on, you'd end up in the living room. My mother loved that house, because it was hers, and all the years of hard work it symbolized. That house was what she could do, but all that came with it was hardship and heartache. The years of pain held the ghosts. I was in first grade when we left. I suppose you don't actually have to move to keep running away.

We moved a month into school, after my mother accidentally opened a pending foreclosure notice. For years she would say, "take all you can from your father because he owes it to you." But she never stopped loving him. And he always loved her. They remain close since the separation. The demons from this house are still with me. They dance through my dreams. I often find myself in random rooms, sometimes empty, sometimes full, but always cold. This is the only recurrence I ever have in my sleep.

I can't see out of the rear view mirror of my soon-to-expire Mazda. My passenger seat overflows with dirty laundry. I forgot to take the car seat out of the back so I will have to make another trip the old house. *I probably have six more trips anyway, what's one more?* It is a beautiful fall day in early October. The autumn leaves turn the reds, yellows, and browns, and I, with the sun beating on my face, take a deep breath of country air, longing for the day I may unpack my memories.

“Home, home again
I like to be here when I can
And when I come home cold and tired
It's good to warm my bones beside the fire
Far away across the field
The tolling of the iron bell
Calls the faithful to their knees
To hear the softly spoken magic spells.”
– Pink Floyd

“I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection.”

Sigmund Freud

Subway Scenes

The colorful zigzag lines and bold dots on the MTA map define my life. I am born from the railways of New York. Bubble gum mosaics on the yellow lined platforms of the subway. Rats at the West 4th Street station playing tag with falafel wrappers from Mamhoun's. Dance crews in matching velour sweat suits in the long transfer hallways at Times Square. Street vendors selling flavored ice down Knickerbocker Avenue. A homeless man collecting change with an old coffee cup while reciting Shakespeare. I need the rush of the subway and all its blurred visions to settle the rush of my mind, perpetually on fast-forward.

In the August grime, the breeze heralds the train's arrival, prepares the commuter's lungs for that first breath of crisp cool car air. The bone-chill of winter is greeted with heat from the seat vents. The November wind sends the fallen leaves dancing across the feet of passengers high above the blocks and lots. On top of the buildings through Long Island City straight to Main Street, the 7 Train scrolls the names of friends long gone, looted-Krylon tags the boys spent the darkest nights perfecting.

The neon sign of the Maspeth Diner where my brother and I ate thousands of potato delights while contemplating if there is anywhere else we'd ever want to live fed long walks to the M train from my mother's apartment in Middle Village. Between East Hampton and Maryland, we do this over the phone. But no matter where we are, our love for New York is unwavering.

The A train brought the solace of my grandmother's house. Waiting for the Howard Beach transfer left enough time to smoke a nickel bag on the Lefferts Boulevard platform. Walking across the Cohany Bridge down the hill to Bridgeton Street the smell

of roasting garlic would invade my nostrils. Old Italian women stirred their gravy. Our Lady of Grace blessed each stoop. And whispered prayers for me as I passed.

On the L train, I passed the Palladium. I still hear Friday night foam parties in the Engine Room. I still hear Nicky “Father Fingers” Marchetti play the vinyl Rotterdam white-labels on our old playground where the NYU dorms now stand. I will never walk down that street without hearing the music.

I remember the two weeks on the J Train in the dead of winter after my mom kicked me out. I sold my beeper to my brother for fifty bucks to be a *homeless* romantic with my son’s father.

I split my days and nights between Queens Boulevard and MacDougal Street on the E and F lines. My uncle died a couple years earlier and my grandmother canceled Christmas indefinitely. I needed my mother’s spirit back. I bought a six-foot tree on 6th Avenue, dragged it down the stairs of the subway, squeezed it through the car doors and disturbed all the morning travelers with the stench of pine and Captain Morgan, exited the train at 71st Street and Continental Avenue, dragged it the two blocks, shoved it in the elevator, and woke my brother to help set it up so we could leave it for her morning as she left us Santa’s treats for so many years before.

The cross-town shuttle brought me from the 5th Avenue library to the Long Island Railroad, and Bowling Green brought me to Staten Island when I decided to grow up.

“There are few places on the planet you get a view like this,” my father tells me on the drive back from Montauk. He is talking about the overlook on Route 27 heading west. It holds the Atlantic on the south and the Long Island Sound to the north. But my heart is with scenes observed upon the tracks above and below the busy streets of New York.

Matthew Bryan Beck

The Idiot's Guide to the Single White Girl

The single white female (hereafter referred to as the SWG) is the strangest breed of mammal, mysterious and prized, hunted by internet creepers and Sephora samplers alike. She lives predominantly in urban metropolitan areas, and travels with similarly-bred white females (there exists much evidence on social networking sites supporting this theory).

She can be observed at concerts, bars, restaurants, bookstores, coffeeshops, campuses, and subways (usually reading a trendy book, or at least making sure other people notice she is reading a trendy book). She wears scarves when it's not cold and sunglasses when it's not sunny, and carries Coach bags and emotional baggage from her distant father and clinging, overbearing mother.

Her tastes change as often as her profile picture. Her iPod is a garage sale of music she used to like, music she pretends to like, music she is afraid her friends will find out she likes, and music she totally has forgotten she owns. The SWG has no concrete identity. She is not comfortable being white. She subconsciously feels guilty for receiving attention from society, and internalizes this guilt, which manifests in spurts of passive-aggressive behavior and (passing) self-hatred.

The SWG (with perhaps the exception of the SWB) is the most lonely of the species. Despite her extensive network of friends, family, acquaintances, co-workers, classmates, and guys she strings along, she feels alone and unfulfilled. She wants the perks of Carrie Bradshaw, but craves the stability of June Cleaver. She wants to play in Nordstrom, but to come home to Walnut Grove. She is the most internally-conflicted organism known to nature. In her blissful state of youth, singleness, and whiteness, she never fully matures.

She is *Forever 21*.

Jennifer Fitzgerald

The Idiot's Guide to the Single White Boy

One might question the need for such a guide, as we are inundated with the whims and presence of the Single White Boy (hereafter referred to as the SWB), but as mother says, it is best to be prepared. The SWB suffers from a birth-right mentality. He is on a constant mission to not end up like his father, and resists his coddling mother with passive assertion.

The SWB cannot accept that his sexual peak will be reached at eighteen years of age. By objectifying women, he greater hones his sexual prowess. Video games are a constant, allowing him to connect with his counterparts, yet separating from them. The 'pack mentality' manifests in fraternities, where the SWB can forge camaraderie with like-minded males. He compensates for homoerotic interaction with copious amounts of alcohol and casual sexual encounters with females. If the SWB cannot join a fraternity, he may seek out organized sports as a means to this end. Here, the bond of a teammate can be equally strong, and justify homoerotic interactions which would appear otherwise *unnatural*.

During this age of self-discovery he will undergo many facial hair changes: the mustache (the first testosterone-fueled grooming), then goatee, beard, muttonchops, and eventually a clean-shaven "rugged" look. The SWB searches many mediums of self-expression. At least one instrument sits in his closet marking a failed attempt. He listens to all genres of music, but usually settles on "Alternative".

Victim of his own biology, everything he does is a glorified mating dance. He always possesses a neglected gym membership. He always seeks the virility of his youth. He always wants faster cars, bigger homes, better jobs. He will always hold an implicit understanding of the implications of a *suit*.

He is forever 18.

Fiction

Sundas Nazir

First Anniversary

I left the print on the screen to dry and stepped out. It was raining. I needed to walk many blocks. I wanted people to see how foolish I was to walk calmly in such agitated rain. I had to show them how insane it was of me to walk for five hours, to walk until the rain stopped. It was like giving face to misfortune, my face, blank and shock-ridden.

Back in the lab, the photo was dry, ready to be flattened in the press. All the crinkles on the fiber paper would be gone. I wished my life were fiber paper. What a boring thought. I put the print in a 15x20 inch steel frame. It was the first anniversary gift.

I drove back to our house.

That evening was puffy with silver clouds; I baked a bitter cake for him and beat salt in the whipping cream. He would be home soon. He walked in.

“Hi.”

“Where were you?” I kept the electrical beater at full speed, wanting the dishonesty to beat itself in the cream.

“After you left, my friend came over so—”

“Friend?” I shot him a look. Maybe it was that woman, the home-wrecker, man-stealer.

“What are you making?”

“Your favorite, strawberry shortcake with a touch of excess love.”

“Great.” A speck of annoyance plastered his forehead. I felt fear sprout in my stomach. I was waiting for him to beat me, maybe. Something new and unexpected seemed to wait by the corner. A strong reaction was needed to prove this had really happened. It made sense after what had been going on between us in the past year—nothing. There was no more evening tea time.

He was no more interested in what I cooked for him. No one told any nonsensical jokes. He was not interested in my artwork and avoided discussing his day as an accountant. The air would become stiff and strained each time we were near each other. It was the marriage that caused our love to dissolve in the heavens. Our lives were filled with competition, absent of compromise.

"Is there something you want to talk about?" he shouted from the bedroom. "You are the most selfish woman ever. Ever!"

"Selfish, how so?" I went in.

"It's pointless, dammit!"

"Teach me how to be selfless, then."

"Spit it all out today, why not?" He came near me, and I lost my balance. I pulled open the top drawer of my side table and let it fall on my foot. Instantly, my toe turned blue. I took the frame out and brought it to his face. Heavy, merciless silence. My heart beat loud in my toe, an internal beat ready to beat me down. He looked at the photo in disbelief. Perhaps, it was the size that made the image violent, so sudden and too much to look at. The family looked ever so joyful in the 11x17 print. I waited patiently for him to look up, to say something, but he continued to look at it. Time was passing, but we were caged in that moment, brutally. I was growing old, bones collapsing, hair turning gray one strand at a time and wrinkles forming on the backs of my hands.

"How long has this selflessness been budding in you?" I snatched the frame from his hands and threw it against the wall. Glass landed on the carpet like ice. If only it could magically melt the photo, capture the horrific moment on paper.

"That's it, we're getting divorced." He grabbed our picture frame from my table and threw it at the same spot.

My face was hot; I wanted to scream until the sound carried

away the colors.

The cake burned and I ignored it; I wanted fire. That night he pretended to sleep on the couch, just as I did in November nights past, only this time, he really was at fault. I wanted to say sorry to him but that one-sided relationship needed to end. I prepared the cake. The white cream failed to hide the darkness of it. This last time, I only put one strawberry.

“Please, don’t go.” His whisper, a dark cloud of loss, sat above us.

I closed the door softly, hoping the silence would nibble at his heart. Outside, cold wind tensed my shoulders. Moonlight peeked through the dead branches. He looked out the window, hair disheveled in the yellow light. He appeared vulnerable and small. I liked it; the composition of the last picture I’d ever take of him, the first I had ever taken from such a distance. The world was asleep, oblivious to the tornado of chaos inside of me.

How selfish of the people of this world?

“Sentences are like sharp nails, which
force truth upon our memories.”

Denis Diderot

Mindy Mallis

Ivan and the Cherry Blossoms

Ivan sits in his plastic chair on the porch of the retirement home. He looks at the shadows around him: the old men playing cards and back-in-my-day old ladies yapping, every stereotype he never wanted to become. There's only death in there, artificial light and misery. They're old. He doesn't want to be old. He wants to live. Ivan goes for the steps. Nurse stops him. She always does.

"Now Ivan, you know you can't leave the grounds alone. Stay in your seat out here or someone will leave with you when they are free."

"Nurse, please, I'm just going for a walk. I need to see if my sleeping medicine is ready. I'm too old to play these games."

This is a silly game they play. She knows he'll go down to the emergency exit if she doesn't let him leave. Still, she has to put an effort in making him stay.

"Ivan, sit," she says, voice tired.

He sits down and waits for Nurse to get distracted by someone's breathing machine. He escapes the home and stroll the blocks surrounding the retirement home. There is no sleeping medication waiting to be picked up at any store; he doesn't even take sleeping medication, but Nurse wouldn't have paid attention to that. Walking takes effort, but he needs the challenge to work his body. It gives his mind and body something to do besides rotting in a chair.

He walks to the beach a few blocks away and sits on a boardwalk bench. There's no one there; it's too cold for kids to go swimming or adults to get color. It's just Ivan, the breeze, and what is left of his thoughts. Ivan smells cherry blossoms in the April air. He follows the scent. It's the perfume his wife wore. He finds a bursting, fragrant tree. He cups the flowers in his hand.

Inhales deeply and smiles. This keeps him in love with Eleanor. I wish Eleanor was here with me so my walks wouldn't be so lonely. If she was alive, I wouldn't be in a retirement home. We'd take care of each other. But Time was greedy and took her too soon. His thoughts drift to memories made decades before:

First kiss. I take Eleanor to the new soda shop. She sits shotgun in my blue Mustang and I ask her for a second date. She looks at her white shoes, then back to me with a smile. Her eyes scream yes. I know I did good, I know she's happy. I lean in and reach for her chin. Her lips tremble. Don't be nervous I whisper to her. Our lips meet. Her blonde curls fall from behind her ear. She's wearing that lovely scent.

Ivan returns to the retirement home. He tries to sneak back in unnoticed. Unsuccessful. An aide finds him. Where has he been? He says he don't remember. Ivan knows exactly how the nurses expect him to act: if he acts guilty, they'll keep him locked up, if he acts old like the rest and pretends to forget, they'll let him slide. No! I went where? I don't even know how to get there?? I never knew there was a beach anywhere near this place!" The aids buy it. He's an old man. A harmless old man. Of course he doesn't know where anything is. He's in diapers. He can't realize what's going on around him. Ivan walks slowly back to his room.

The woman who lives across from Ivan is Beatrice. Her kind of woman is why Ivan refused to date again. Bea is a harlot, tries any man. She calls out to him. Ivan ignores her. She shouts at him again.

"Ivan?! Are you deaf? Do you not hear me?"

"Hello, Beatrice."

"Where are you coming from? Why do you look so spiffy today? You look as handsome as my grandson."

"I look this way everyday, Beatrice."

"Oh, you do? Do you have any denture cream I can use? My teeth keep falling out. If my husband were alive, he'd love fellatio that way." She lowers her v-neck top to reveal a wrinkled saggy breast.

"That's disgusting. God only knows where your mouth has been."

"Oh, but Ivan, please! I'll show you why he loved it so much!" She says with a sultry look.

"Beatrice, your husband is rolling in his grave. I don't use denture cream, and even if I did, I wouldn't lend it to your dirty mouth. Goodbye."

"Ivan, you're such a wet blanket, you don't know what you're missing!"

As Ivan walks he shouts back: "Your girdle is too tight!" He slams the door.

Ivan misses Eleanor so much. What's worth having if it's not worth waiting for? She had this tenderness about her. No woman measured up to her. Ones who tried ended up like Beatrice, Turned down. Eleanor was never low class; she respected herself and was proud to say she was a virgin on their wedding night. Her innocence was captivating. Ivan took out his most prized possession: an old bottle of Eleanor's perfume. He sprays his pillow and breathes in the aroma of memory again:

Wedding day. *Eleanor walks down the aisle with her father, decked in white, gracing the church with her beauty. I wait for her anxiously. The whole congregation stands in awe. Her hair frames her face, her eyes sparkle, her dress fits perfectly. Her father kisses her cheek, gives me her hand. She grasps it and I guide her to the altar. We smile at our friends and family, then face the priest. Traditional vows. A kiss to seal our love.*

Ivan relaxes his excited mind, lays down on his sad bed. He rolls on his side to face to window, shuts his eyes. and goes to sleep. He doesn't live in a dirty retirement home anymore. He isn't hounded by dirty old women. He gasps at the unbelievable vision in front of him. He can't breathe. He is in the cleanness and purity of Eleanor's presence. She puts her finger over his lips, shushing him. Tears roll down his checks. He kisses his wife's hand. They embrace. His lungs fight for air. They lay in bed together. Ivan nuzzles her shoulder, deeply inhaling her perfumed neck. He kisses her lips. They are young again.

Kevin A. Macaluso

Gunther Sweeney and the Centersburg Secret

The small rural town of Centersburg produced 21 percent of all beer consumed in the country. Home of Center Lager & Beer, Centersburg was famous for its secret celebrated recipe. "When you're looking for the right lager, don't look left, don't look right, but always look to the Center." America loved beer and so did Centersburg. So revered was this recipe that their competitors would do anything to get it. No one was allowed in the brewery save for the workers and the deliverymen. Sworn to secrecy, they took pride in their solemn oath and duty. America loved beer and so did Centersburg. The massive brewery employed half the town. Those who did not work in the factory had few options. But one man did.

His name was Gunther Sweeney.

Gunther was Centersburg born and raised. His parents died in a tragic car accident. He lived with his grandfather, a retired police officer. Even at a young age, Gunther frequented the bar. The bartender looked the other way; everyone knew what he went through and beer was the best medicine in town.

Gunther had worked as a police officer for nearly 20 years. Same old routine, go to work, do the crossword, escort the trucks in, sit around and stare at the clock, drive around a bit, punch out, grab a drink at the bar. (His grandfather received a medal of honor for stopping an armed robbery. It still hung in the station.) The townspeople were shocked he kept the job this long. He wasn't cop-material: an out-of-shape lazy drunk, a functioning alcoholic, a town laughingstock. His most important job? Escorting the delivery trucks through the brewery gates every morning. Anyone could do that.

But one day everything changed.

Gunther's alarm clock went off at 6:15 AM, like always. He convened with the other officers at the brewery gate.

"Hey Bruce, are you ready for another exciting Tuesday?" Gunther said sarcastically.

"Oh yeah, can't one of us open the gates? I have to get up every Tuesday even when I'm off to stand in front of a fence for a half-hour. It's so -"

"Frustrating, we know, we know, Bruce. We've heard it a million times from you. What's the big deal? I have a hangover and you don't see me complain' do yah?"

"Yeah, well hopefully today goes quickly. I want to get the hell out of here." He looked at his watch and then looked up at the street. "The damn trucks are late, they're never late."

Ron, the jokester, chimed in. "Maybe there was traffic?" "Yeah, traffic, good one," Gunther replied. The possibility of that was less than his grandfather resurrecting. After 10 minutes, the trucks came.

"It's about time," Bruce exclaimed.

"Alright, open the gates and wave 'em in," said Ron.

As the trucks neared, something seemed a bit off, but no one could recognize what exactly was the issue.

"Gunther," Bruce said. "Did you recognize that driver? He must be new."

"Nope, never saw him."

"Why, Bruce," Ron cackled, "is he your type?"

"Shut up, Ron," Bruce replied angrily.

"Who cares who's driving? I just want these guys to hurry the hell up. I want to get back to sleep," Gunther dismissed Bruce. "Nothing's the matter. It's been about 20 minutes, they should be almost done."

Suddenly, the officers heard a commotion. The unfamiliar driver was running towards his truck, a manila folder under his arm. The rest of the passengers and drivers were running back to their trucks as well. Brewery workers were running after them. "He has the recipe! Stop him! He stole the recipe!" Ron ran to the squad car, ready for a chase. Bruce chased after the man. Gunther heard a gunshot saw. Bruce tried to shoot out the back tires of the truck. He was unsuccessful. Gunther saw the truck heading towards the gate. There was a no time for thinking now. Gunther attempted to close the gate as fast as he could. His sweaty hands grasped the gate and tried as hard as they ever did at anything to pull that gate shut. He got it moving, but there wasn't much time. The trucks side scraped up against the fence and knocked Gunther. His overweight body summersaulted. Ron got out of the car and raced towards the gate. He clasped the lock shut. The truck came barreling into the gateway. It sent Ron flying through the air, the impact crash deafening. Gunther ran to his fallen friend, taking his hand. Spitting out blood, Ron managed to whisper, "Have a beer for me, Gun." And he was gone.

Later that same week, all the town's people came to the medal of honor ceremony for Gunther, the same medal his grandfather had won many years ago. Looking out at the crowd, Gunther was expected to say something: "I am no hero. I dedicate this to Ron. Without him, our secret recipe would have no longer been a secret. He was a truly great man."

Everything that day happened so fast. The thief was good. He knew the only way into the brewery. He knew where the recipe was located. Nobody knew how he did it. An inside man, but no one was ever discovered.

Centersburg's secret remained so.

“It was pride that changed angels into devils;
it is humility that makes men as angels.”

St. Augustine

Matthew Bryan Beck

Channeling Joe Gillis

Hollywood. Smog spreads like a sulfuric cancer over 8,205 square miles containing 3,849,378 actors, singers, musicians, models, producers, directors, second directors, third directors, editors, composers, screenwriters, agents, photographers, choreographers, cinematographers, makeup artists, hairdressers, prop men, stuntmen, sound men, costume designers, grips, gaffers, boom operators, drug addicts, drug dealers, pimps, prostitutes, transvestites, porn stars, peddlers, and countless fame-hungry kids just like you, starved for a buck and a credit.

You are channeling Joe Gillis. You cruise Sunset Boulevard, mouthing Holden's opening monologue, pretending your rented Toyota two-door is his white 1946 Plymouth convertible, license 40 R 116. *Yes, this is Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, California. It's about five o'clock in the morning. That's the Homicide Squad, complete with detectives and newspapermen. A murder has been reported from one of those...you can't remember the rest.*

NW corner of Wilshire and Irving. You have found Norma Desmond's mythical rotting mansion. You blew a tire just like Holden, imagined wheeling your limping vehicle into a garage next to her canvased behemoth Isotta Tipo 8A Town Car. Maybe even take a quick dip in her infamous swimming pool.

It is now a parking lot.

The Scientist

I am a scientist. Pharmacologist, to be precise. I study the effects of synthetically-engineered drugs on the human body. My name? Not important. I am a government researcher in the most elite, secretive biochemical lab in the world. I was recruited out of med school by special field agents (code-named *harvesters*) from the Food and Drug Administration to join a highly-classified group of prodigy students, specifically chosen to research and develop a synthetic 'miracle' drug that will totally eradicate the physical and psychological sufferings of mankind.

I have worked on this project, in this building, in this room, for 27 years. I am unmarried. I have no children. I live in a small apartment in a quiet neighborhood. My apartment is owned by the government. My car is owned by the government. My clothes are owned by the government. My whole life is owned by the government. My laundry and groceries are neatly deposited by an unmarked white van, silently, with the morning paper, to my front door. Planted painlessly and discreetly in my skull is a small tracking device, so my harvester can detect my movements at all times. I don't know the name of the man who lives next door.

But there does exist, in fact, a drug that cures it all.

I have just invented it.

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THE END

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DRAMA

FICTION

NONFICTION

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