

The Scrivener - Winter 2013

The De Smet Jesuit High School Literary Magazine

Editors

Conrad Dorn
Connor LoPiccolo

Moderator

Robert Hutchison

Special Thanks to

Laurie Kohler and Emily Dames

Table of Contents

Cover: Conrad Dorn's photograph
Cloudy Sunset

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. Joe Swafford's short story <i>The Rebel</i> | 21. Nate Andrews' projection <i>Glass</i> |
| 3. Chris Mausshardt's projection <i>Gridlock</i> | Key |
| 4. Maurice Jordan's <i>John Lennon</i> | Middle spread: Jon Salter's watercolor <i>Sleep</i> ; Chase Elliot's <i>Colors of Unity</i> |
| 6. Eric Johnson's abstraction <i>Working With the Wind</i> | 26. Michael Portel's watercolor <i>Overcome With Emotion</i> |
| 7. Joe Swafford's short story <i>The Sheriff</i> | 31. Michael Mungenast's projection <i>Jack of All Trades</i> |
| 8. Edward Cody's <i>The Endless Search</i> | 32. Jonathan Strickland's picture <i>Woe is She</i> |
| 10. John Salter's portrait drawing <i>Vision</i> | 34. Patrick Bowey's projection <i>Gridlock</i> |
| 13. Debyn Schutz's painting <i>Jobless</i> | 35. John Henry Heideger's abstraction |
| 15. Eric Johnson's projection <i>Development of Horsepower</i> ; Jonathon Strickland's poem <i>My Heart</i> | 36. Jacob Masterson's short story <i>Walk in the Park</i> |
| 16. Kyle Bai's abstraction <i>A Way at Sea Against the Wind</i> | 38. Chris Mousshardt's abstraction |
| 17. Kevin Lynch's short story <i>Euphoria</i> | 39. Eric Bracken's <i>Self Portrait</i> |
| 18. Michael Hodapp's projection <i>Guys Pulling Rope on a Ship</i> | 40. Chris Nowak's <i>Contemplation</i> |
| 19. John Seals' <i>An Open Hand</i> | 42. Pat Bowey's abstraction <i>Awash</i> |
| 20. John Salter's portrait drawing <i>Need</i> | 43. Chase Elliott's <i>Dots of Life</i> |
| | 46. Michael Silberberg's projection <i>Award's Bust</i> |

The Rebel

by Joe Swafford

Things to Get:

1. Cookies – Oreos, Chips Ahoy, etc...
2. Milk – Vitamin D
3. Bread – Wheat
4. Yogurt – Key Lime Pie, Vanilla, Boston Crème Pie.
5. Magazine – Playboy, Maxim
6. Peanut Butter – Creamy, not crunchy
7. Jelly – Grape
8. Turkey/Ham – Deli food
9. Cheese – Cheddar, American, Colby Jack
10. Pickup Prescription – been way too long.

Carl was a rebel. He had run away from home when he was 14, at 16 he was living in a piece of shit apartment in the piece of shit part of town. Carl had chosen video games and drugs over school. At the end of junior year, he had only gone to a month of school. His parents didn't understand him. They were always a step behind him, like an offensive lineman chasing an Olympic sprinter. He had dropped out of school and was supporting himself through various ways. He held a job at Burger King for a couple weeks. A job at Macy's, but was fired just three short days later. He suffered from ADHD, depression and insomnia. He had been out of medication for his depression and ADHD for several days. It was time for a trip to Dierbergs.

He got into his 1971 Honda Civic with classy duct tape holding the doors shut and a beautiful array of rust and traded paint from other cars on the sides. The irreplaceable plastic bag that covered the rear passenger seat window billowed out whenever he reached the maximum speed of 38 mph.

He pulled into the parking spot at Dierbergs and walked inside. If it wasn't his dirt brown blue jeans, then it must have been his shit – smelling shirt and messy hair that alerted people he was a rebel. He walked up and down the aisles with his head

held high looking at the different brands of bread. Choosing the cheapest one, he turned to face the milk and yogurt. He meandered around the store placing a jar of grape jelly, peanut butter, deli meats, and cookies into his cart.

He walked to the aisle with caviar. He looked around before slipping it into his big dirty jean pocket. He backed his cart out of the aisle and grabbed a bottle of wine before heading to the pharmacy.

Strutting his stuff up to the counter, he pulled out a piece of paper with his prescription written on it.

The pharmacist walked over to Carl and immediately regretted it. The foul stench swam up his nose so fast; it would have been extremely rude to walk away now.

"I need this prescription", Carl said as he slid the paper to the unfortunate pharmacist.

The pharmacist pinched the paper with two fingers and held it out in front of him as if he



artwork by Chris Mausshardt

expected it to be wet or have anthrax on it.

"Sure, I'll get those for ya. Just give me a sec."

Carl turned his back to the counter to watch all the people walk past the pharmacy.

The people would walk by the pharmacy, see Carl looking rebellious and pick up their speed. The dirty clothes, dirty face and disheveled blond hair put some people in a panic.

The pharmacist reluctantly came back to give Carl his medication.

"Here you go, that'll be \$47.53."

Carl gave him a funny look and jammed his hand in his



artwork by Maurice Jordan

dirt brown pocket and came up with newfound money. He laid the crumpled bills with several coins on the counter and walked off.

The pharmacist tried to count the money as quickly as Carl had just walked off. He leaned over the counter and shouted, "You're \$24 short! Hey, kid! You're \$24 short!"

As if he could stop a rebel! Carl kept walking, not giving a second thought about even turning around. He made his way

to the magazines. He stopped and gazed at the many goddesses embracing the covers of such high quality literature as Maxim and Playboy. He grabbed a copy of both and flipped through them, making sure he wasn't going to be disappointed when he got home. "These are good ones," he said as he tossed them into his cart.

He picked out the youngest cashier; they were always the most understanding. They didn't care about their jobs. They didn't have to work 40 hours a week to support themselves because they didn't finish college. No, they just needed some gas money and the self-esteem booster of saying 'Yeah Uncle John, I have a job.'

He scratched his new chin hair in hopes of looking older as he walked to the checkout aisle. He started to place the items strategically onto the conveyor belt. He didn't look up when the cashier asked "paper or plastic."

When the cashier got to the magazines, he looked at Carl. "How old are you?" he asked. "I'm old enough," Carl said.

The cashier gave him a different look now. "How old is 'old enough?'"

Carl smiled, "I'm eighteen. Just had a birthday yesterday."

The cashier smiled, "Well, then you must have gotten a new license as a birthday present."

Carl's smile disappeared. "A new license? What do you mean? Where...where would I get that?"

The cashier had taken Carl's smile and added it to his. "Well," he smirked, "When you turn eighteen, you have to get a new license. Since you have no idea what I'm talking about, I'm pretty sure you aren't old enough to buy these magazines, or the wine, or steal that thing of caviar in your pocket. I wasn't born yesterday kid."

Carl looked around, to see if these wild accusations were being thrown at him. He knew he wasn't going to get out of this. Quick as lightning, he grabbed his stuff off of the checkout and threw it in his cart and sped off. Changing lanes, dodging past people, racing to his car, he skidded as he turned the corner

to go outside.

It was a race for the ages, Carl and his groceries, versus the well-traveled security guards and baggers who were on cart duty. Ultimately Carl won, slamming the cart into his sweet ride. He grabbed his stuff and chucked it into the Civic. By this time, the baggers and security guards were on his ass. They grabbed him and slammed him to the ground. Bouncing off the solid concrete, the blood trickled out of his ear.

"Get the hell off of me! Let me go, I didn't do anything!"

That only made the baggers and guards push him harder against the ground, waiting for the police to come.

The sirens told Carl it was all over. His parents had been right. If he hadn't been a rebel, none of this would've happened.

The officer pulled Carl's half-flesh, half-concrete, face up and threw him in the back of his car. He turned to the baggers and guards and said, "Thanks gentlemen, good work. I'll take it from here. I'll take this little rebel downtown."

The door shut and so did Carl's future.



artwork by Eric Johnson

The Sherrif

by Joe Swafford

Bill awoke in the dead of night. The sound of silence filled his bedroom. He looked to his sleeping wife, smiled and went to the door. The howling wind wrapped around the barren trees, shaking the branches. Bill took a giant step off his porch onto the already wet grass. He stuffed his old, tired hands into the pockets of his bathrobe. He trudged around the outside of his house with his boots on, crunching the fallen leaves, looking into the nothingness of the darkness. Today he would retire. He was getting too old for this job, or so his wife said. He marched to the sheriff's office. The stars were his satellite. The light. The way.

The swollen moon lit the doorway as Bill walked inside. He flicked the lights on and strolled around the perimeter, looking everything over. He went to his desk and took his badge. He held the badge in his wrinkled hands. Hands that had done more justice than most are capable of in their lifetime. He licked his finger, and wiped it over the badge. He dried the badge and set it back down on his desk.

He turned the coffee maker on, and grabbed his favorite bag. Old-Fashioned. He started the coffee and sat in his chair. His oversized green leather chair had seen better days. The arms were falling apart. One, or maybe two, of the wheels had a knick in them, so every time he rolled his chair it made a sound.

He watched the sunrise through his window. He drew the dusty blinds, so he could get a better view. The golden crescent rose over the hill in the distance. As it did, he took a sip of his favorite coffee and sat back in his oversized green chair.

The creaky door opened and let in a burst of sunlight. The beam lit up half the room. Bill's wife walked over to him and put a reassuring arm around his chair.

"Today is the day." she said.

Bill took another sip of his coffee and swiveled the chair to face his Linda. Her silvery hair curled around her face. Her glasses poked out from her face, accenting her bright green eyes. Her shaky hands ran through Bill's thinning hair.

"Honey", he said. "I can't do it. I just can't do it."

"Sure you can, Bill. I know it will be hard but –

"Linda, I can't quit on this town. Not after these forty-seven years. I was born to be the sheriff here, and I'll die being the sheriff here. It's that simple."

"Bill... you know it's not that simple. You already hired that young man to take over. You can't go back on your word. You saw how excited he was to get the job. I know he will do a fine job."

"Jeff will do fine. I'm just worried about how the town will like him. They don't take too kindly to change. Hell, who's to say they will think he is a good sheriff?

"Bill!"

Bill almost never cursed. Linda knew that this was upsetting to him. She didn't hold it against him to curse, but it still stung her core when he did.

"Sorry, Linda. It's just..."

Bill let out a heavy sigh, and sat back down in his chair and stared out his window.



artwork by Edward Cody

"Honey, Jeff will be here soon. Don't ya think we should finish packing?"

Bill got up slowly from his chair and walked to Linda. She was putting some of his medals and awards into a box. She took the time to read the description on each one before ever so carefully placing them in the box.

They had just finished putting everything in boxes when Jeff arrived. His long shadow greeted them first. Bill and Linda looked at the doorway as the young man walked in with his head held high.

"Good morning Bill. Good morning Linda."

"It's past morning, Jeff. It's almost afternoon."

As Jeff looked around the walls for a clock, Linda shot Bill a look.

"Bill's just a little sad about leaving. As he should be."

Jeff walked his tall, slender figure around the office, carrying his own personal box. He set the box down on an empty chair in front of Bill's desk.

Bill looked at Jeff, his youth, his inexperience. He got up from his comfy green chair and walked around to Jeff. Reaching to put his aching arm around Jeff's shoulder, he said, "How's about I show you around the town. So you can get more of a feel for it before you start tomorrow."

Jeff smiled, feeling genuinely accepted now, and obliged.

They walked outside to the warm sun battling the cold air. The town was still, as if it was in a peaceful coma.

The fast paced footsteps towards them made them turn before the voice caused them to. Bill and Jeff saw a mid-thirties woman, Nancy, moving as fast as she could, without running, towards them. She had a concerned look on her brow, as if



artwork by John Salter

she was trying to solve the world's hunger problem. Her long brown hair was flinging wildly as she moved against the morning breeze.

"Bill, come quick." She paused for several breaths as she motioned for him to follow.

"There is something going on at the Winchester's house." She turned her attention to Jeff, who was standing beside Bill. "Hi, there. I don't think we have met? My name is Nancy." She outstretched her bony hand as she fixed her hair with the other. She gave a flirtatious smile, before Bill could talk.

"What is happening Nancy? What's the problem?"

"Just follow me." And with that, she turned back from whence she came and picked up her speed. Jeff had a great deal of difficulty keeping up with her without running. Bill lagged behind, trying not to lose sight of them, although he knew about where the Winchester's lived.

Bill saw the house just as Jeff and Nancy were running up to it. They stopped and turned to look for him. They waited outside for him to catch up.

Bill looked at them as he walked towards the door, "Slow and steady wins the race, just remember that."

Bill cautiously opened the huge front door. The furniture was thrown over, misplaced, and upside down. The lights were dim. Bill looked around before poking his head back outside at Jeff and Nancy. "Follow me inside, Jeff. It'll be good training for you." Bill pulled out his revolver as he edged past the door.

Leading with the revolver, he turned every corner by saying, "It's me Bill, the sheriff. Come out or call out if you're hurt." He heard muffled noises down the hall leading to the bedrooms. He motioned for Jeff to follow his lead.

Bill held his revolver out in front of him and took one small silent step at a time. He came to the first door and turned the handle. He threw open the door and slid inside, revolver drawn. Nothing.

He turned around to face Jeff and gave a small defeated look. He worked his way to the next door. The muffled noise was growing louder. He turned to Jeff and brought his finger to his mouth, before turning the handle.

Again, Bill knocked the door open and made his presence in the room. He found the noise. The couple quickly separated and covered themselves with the bed covers.

"What the hell are you doing? You can't just barge in like that? You've got to at least knock." Dave Winchester covered himself with a pillow as he got up. Bill was already backing out of the door, as Dave started to approach him.

"No, no. It's my fault. Just... continue... with what you were doing." Bill waved an apologetic hand as he left the room.

Dave came out in his boxers and walked up to a shaken Bill.

"Listen, Bill. I'm sorry you had to see that, but what the hell were you doing in my house?"

"Nancy, from down the street, came running for me. She said you were in trouble. So, me being the sheriff and all, I came to help."

Dave turned towards the bedroom, "She must have heard the screaming and such. Listen, Bill, again, I'm really sorry about this. You know how things can get."

Bill turned a disgusted face towards Dave. He started towards the door.

"Well, Mr. Winchester, I guess this is goodbye for now. Sorry for the disturbance."

"Bye Bill."

Bill walked outside and watched as Jeff and Nancy came out with quiet faces.

Jeff went first, "Interesting first call there Bill."

Then Nancy, "I'm sorry, Bill. I didn't know. I thought he was killing her or something. There was an awful lot of screaming and loud noises coming from inside the house."

Finally Bill spoke, "I've never gotten a call like that before. I guess I am getting too old for this job." He let out a huge breath that caused Nancy and Jeff to look at him.

Jeff placed a reassuring hand on Bill's shoulder. "Ah, don't worry about it Bill. It was one case, and I'm sure nothing like that will ever happen again."

Bill rubbed his tired temples, "No, I am getting too old for this job, Linda was right. I think I called Jeff just in time. I can't keep up with this new younger town. When I got here

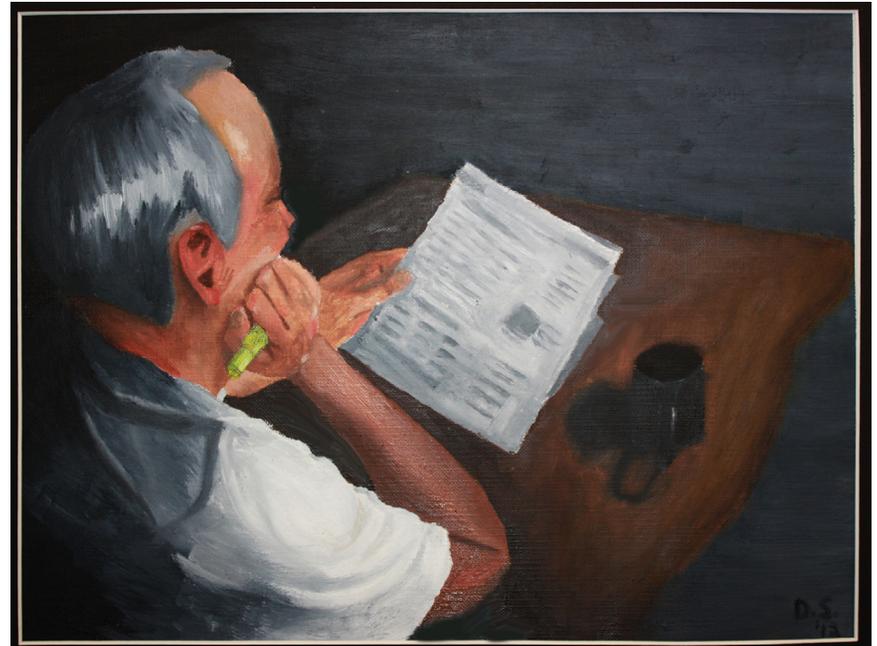
forty-some-odd years ago, I was a little younger than everybody else. When everyone got old they either moved away or stayed shut up in their houses. I just can't keep up with all the hustle and bustle that the town needs from me. Jeff is what this town needs."

Jeff nodded graciously at Bill. Nancy walked towards them saying, "I think I'm going to go. Thanks for coming up here Bill. It was nice to meet you Jeff."

Bill and Jeff walked back to the station shortly after Nancy left. Bill explained to Jeff everything he needed to know before taking over tomorrow as they paced their journey back.

Bill left Jeff at the office, turning in for the afternoon. He shuffled his boots along the dirt road towards his warm cozy house. He opened the door as Linda was just finishing vacuuming the rug leading to the bedroom.

"Hi, honey. How are you doing?" Linda looked at her watch. Seeing it was only half past three, she walked over to Bill.



artwork by Debyn Schutz

"I'm alright, just tired. Nothing a little extra sleep can't cure." He kissed Linda and went into the bedroom. After Linda put the vacuum away, she walked into the bedroom. Bill was already under the covers reading a book. His reading glasses perched on the edge of his nose, just daring to slide off. Linda walked to Bill's side, crouched and kissed him on the forehead. Bill looked up quickly before returning to his book.

"I've got to run to town, I'll be back soon Bill, okay."

"Sure thing, Linda."

Bill read until the sun sunk no more. He placed his glasses on the book. The glasses were too close to the edge, and fell off onto the floor. Bill didn't bother to pick them up, he was too tired. He closed his eyes, as the wind howled against his window.

Linda returned home soon after Bill was asleep. She got into bed with him and stroked his face, touching his thinning silver hair as he slept.

"Happy first day of retirement, honey." She kissed him again on the cheek and fell asleep.

The wind blew against the window again and again, until giving up. It finally crept under the front door crease and made its way into the bedroom. The breeze stirred Linda, but didn't wake her. It crept towards Bill. Up it went from the feet, the knees, the chest, up the neck and finally the head. He opened his mouth as he made his last breath and it was carried away with the breeze back into the nothingness of the darkness outside.



artwork by Eric Johnson

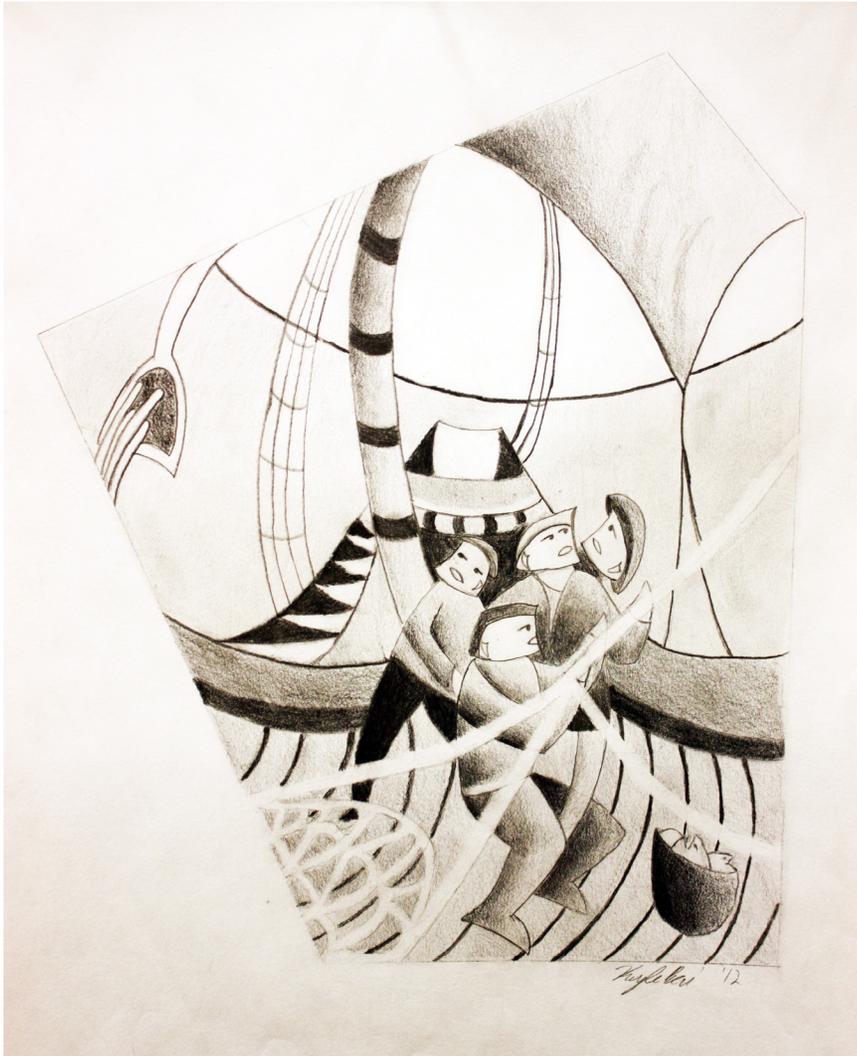
My Heart

by Jonathon Strickland

And to you, my dearest friend,
I give my heart.
Although broken and weak it may seem,
Its rhythm is still strong.
Beating on through the cold days,
And tearful nights.
Take care of it for me,
When I die.
For that day, I fear,
Will soon be upon us.
Promise me you'll keep it safe,
And with it, your memory of me.
In you, the best of me shall live on,
The part of me that didn't give up...

Euphoria

by Kevin Lynch



artwork by Kyle Bai

Have you ever wondered how it will end?

All those scientists on the TV keep sayin' any day now the sun's gonna blow up, just like a balloon that's got too much air in it. The earth's gonna get real cold, and pretty soon there won't be anything but ice. All those pretty roses and lilacs will wilt and die, and the animals won't be able to eat, so they'll die too.

Lightning flashes over the horizon, little green dots float in front of me. I reach out to grab them, but they vanish.

All that ice will make building a fire pretty hard. All the wood will be covered in snow and ice. The gaslines will be frozen over, and the generators will be nothing but cold blocks of metal. Won't be long after the animals all die, that humans will die too.

Mountainous clouds of black gather in the distance, as the storm grows closer to the island. I look out and watch as all the counselors rush the campers back to their cabins.

Sister Cal says all this world ending talk is nothing but "heathen propaganda created to scare us into Satan's demonic cult". Sister Cal told us that the world will end when the Lord returns to earth to save us from our sins and transgressions and deliver us into his glorious and eternal kingdom now and forever, amen, alleluia.

I got it pretty much figured out, though, and so does everyone else at the camp. The world gonna be endin' real soon, so we better get our ~~shit~~ [things of lesser value] in order. That's why it didn't surprise me one bit when Brig told us he was marrying Claudia.

Gull's Rest was a small speck of land just about three miles off the coast of Maine. The island's only about 15 miles

north to south, and only 9 miles east to west. It was right in the center of this island that you'll find St. Lucia's Summer Facility for Mentally Disturbed Children.

About two weeks ago, Brig called a meeting at the hide-out near Ariel's Creek. We had to wait until after all the nuns had run bed check for the night. I counted 500 Mississippi after Sister Eunice had left my cabin. I rolled over and looked at my roommate Avery.

"Avery!" I whispered harshly. "Avery, wake UP!"

"I'm up, alright, calm down."

Avery had arrived at the camp last summer after he had been caught stealing again. Avery stole everything: watches, keys, wallets, you name it, Avery stole it. One time Avery told me he stole his neighbor's dog, and kept it until the old lady



artwork by Michael Hodapp

gave him fifty dollars. But it wasn't until his math teacher, Mrs. Reynolds, accused him of stealing something called a tampon from her purse that his mother started getting suspicious. It didn't take her long to find his stash underneath the swingset in his backyard. After that, the old bitch [woman of experience] called up Sister

Cal, and shipped him off to St. Lucia's. We'd been roommates ever since.

I cracked the door of our cabin open, and peered around. Most of the other cabins were dark, and there wasn't a nun in sight. I nodded to Avery, and grabbed my backpack. We crept out the door and headed for the creek.

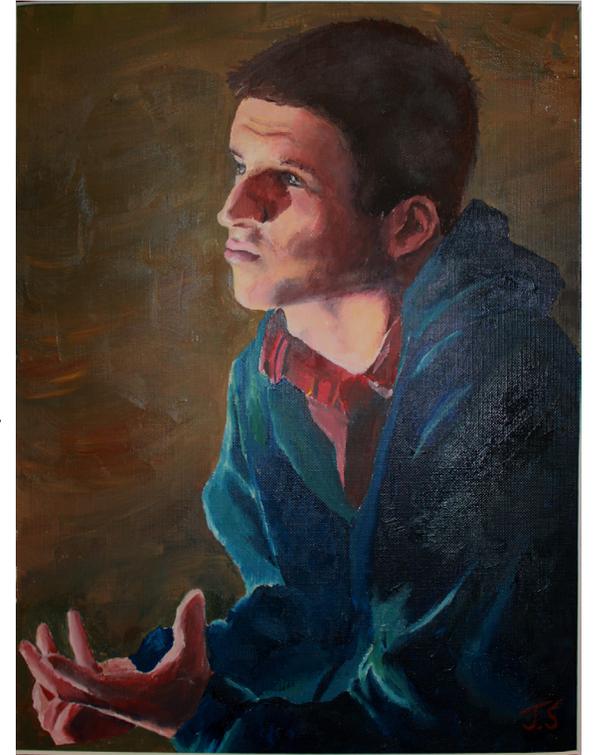
We were about halfway to our destination when I spotted a pale, yellow stream of light in the distance. Being a camp for the mentally disturbed, it made sense that the camp had the highest level of security; which made Herman, the seventy-four year old retired milkman with a hearing impairment, the perfect man to handle the job. Herman walked with a pretty bad limb because of a bullet he had taken in some war way back when. I'm pretty sure it was the one with the North and the South. Still, Herman always wandered around the campgrounds at night groaning to himself, searching for any hoodlums running amok.

Avery and I hid behind the statue of the Virgin Mary in the center of camp, and waited for Herman to pass.

"I hate being out after dark" I whispered to Avery.

"Same."

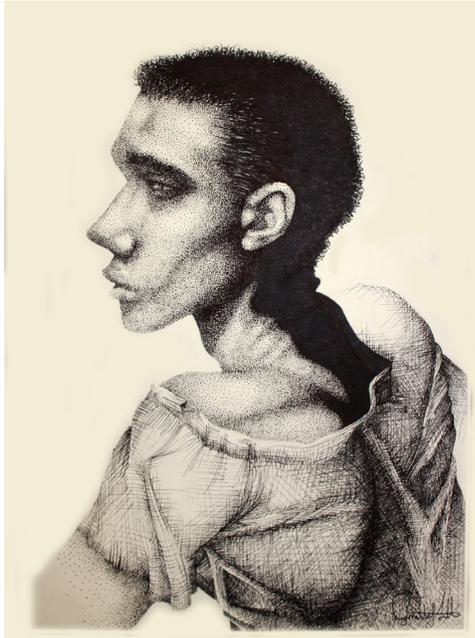
I stared out into the inky blackness. It'd be real easy to creep up on someone out here. Especially if all you wore was a



artwork by John Seals

long, black habit.

I glanced up toward the towering brick mansion looking down upon the rows of cabins: The Counselor's Lodge. There were three stories in the building, with a fourth containing only one room belonging to Sister Cal. All the windows were dark, with the exception of Sister Cal's. I could just see her up there, staring down at the cabins as she polished her wooden cane, dispatching her fearful nun minions to go fetch those little brats hiding behind the Blessed Vir—



artwork by John Salters

"Ok, I think he's gone" Avery said in a hushed tone.

I looked around. Herman had wandered back toward the boys' cabins. Avery and I rushed from behind the statue, and up the hill toward the girls' cabins. We zigzagged through row after row of symmetrical cabins. Finally, we reached the eight-foot-tall barbed wire fence surrounding the campgrounds. Just beyond the fence lied the forest, and just a little ways more, the hideout. Herman had always told us to stay away from the fence because it was supposed to be electrified, but it only took a few days for us to figure that for a load of ~~bullshit~~ [cattle feces].

Avery and I stumbled around, our hands searching the fence. After a few minutes, I felt a light prick on my finger. I felt closer, and found the area where Tom Porter had sliced through the fence with a knife he'd smuggled into camp last summer.

"Over here!" I whispered to Avery.

The two of us pried the fence back, and snuck to the other side. We folded the area back, flattenin' it as much as pos-

sible, before turnin' round and facin' the dark forest.

We walked a little to the south, before entering the Trails. The Trails were a series of dirt paths, twistin' and turnin' all throughout the forest. No one knew who had made the Trails, but I pretty much figured it to be a group of former campers who, after being caught in the act by Sister Cal, had been shot on the spot, and tossed in the lake a lil' ways south of the campgrounds.

The forest was silent except for the impossibly loud, constant buzzing of cicadas. After a few moments, I heard the low "*Blub-blubbing*" of the creek. I felt around in the dirt until I found a piece of dried, splintering rope.

I turned to Avery. "Hold on to this."

Avery took a hold, and the two of us followed the rope off the Trails, into the brush of the forest. Eventually we were led to an old, wooden shed, upon which the end of the rope had been nailed. A heavy blanket was draped over the side. I pulled it aside, and Avery and I walked in.

"What the ~~hell~~ [*place below the earth*] took you guys so long!"

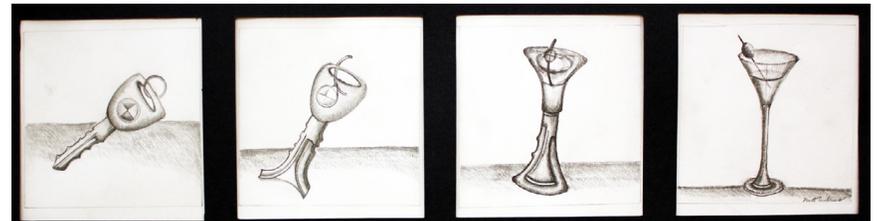
A small table sat in the center of the shed upon which sat a small gas lamp, which illuminated the faces standing around it. Across the table from me was Brig Treadwell, standing next to his wife-to-be Claudia Jacobson.

"Not our fault, we got held up by Herman!"

Brig's eyes got wide. "He didn't see ya, did he?!"

Avery laughed. "You think we'd get caught by that old fart?"

Brig frowned. "We got to be careful, unless we want Sister



artwork by Nate Andrews

Cal findin' out!"

"Ugh, will you two just shut up!" Bella Thorpe, her long, black hair masking her pale face, was standing in the back, behind Claudia. "We gotta lot to do tonight, and I'm exhausted, so can we just hurry this up?!"

"She's r-right." Gordon Shaw said, his high-pitched voice cracking slightly. Gordon was standing to my right, fidgeting with his bright, red inhaler. "We g-gotta hurry and g-get back b-before Sister D-Dorothy makes the s-second round of b-bed checks!" Gordon was scared of everything. He had been sent to St. Lucia's to help him cope with his "anxiety" after he ~~pissed~~ [urinated] his pants during a science class because his teacher had asked him what he had for breakfast. He said he was much better at camp than he was at home, but he still seemed pretty screwed up to me.

I looked around the shed, as my eyes adjusted to the light. Everyone was here. Tom Porter, who had been sent to St. Lucia's after killing his neighbor's cat. Chet Manning, a passionate pyromaniac. Brig Treadwell, the groom and sex maniac. Gordon Shaw, the ~~pussy~~ [individual who struggled with fear]. Claudia Jacobson, who in addition to being the bride-to-be had been sent to St. Lucia's after biting one of her classmates on the neck and claiming to be a vampire. And Bella Thorpe, the maid of honor, had been shipped to the camp after she stabbed her dad with a screwdriver because he had asked her to wear something other than her usual black attire.

Brig clapped his hands. "Ok then, let's get started. Avery, did you get the map?"

"Right here!" He said teasingly, as he waved a folded piece of paper in the air.

Avery spread the map of Gull's Rest Island across the table. The group crowded together, to get a peek at it. Avery covered the map with his hands. "I hope you all appreciate the trouble I had to go through to get this thing. Getting into Sister Cal's office isn't as easy as you might think..."

"Just get on with it, you ~~idiot~~ [person of lesser intelligence]" Bella growled.

Avery rolled his eyes and smashed his finger down on a small picture of a brown cabin with a black crossing hanging over the doorway.

"This is St. Lucia's," He dragged his finger a little ways north. "And we're somewhere around here."

"Then this must be Sunnydale", Brig said, as he pointed to a picture of a brown cabin with a ~~stupid~~ less than intelligent smiling, sun over the roof.

In addition to St. Lucia's, there were two other campgrounds on Gull's Rest Island. On the northern most edge of the island was Sunnydale Activity Center, an all-boy's summer camp dedicated to "shaping true manly men." On the southern side of the island was Madame Thorpe's Institution for Etiquette, a private all-girl's summer school which hoped to "instill behavior beneficial to the betterment of society into young ladies." Ironically enough, the camp was run by Bella's grandma.

"My cousin Gabe will meet us just a little ways south of Sunnydale, by this lake right here." Brig said, as he pointed to a light blue blotch just south of the Sunnydale icon.

"Any idea how long it will take to get through the forest?" I said.

There was silence for a moment before Brig spoke up. "I guess that depends. Do we even know how far the Trails can take us?"

"I doubt they'll take us the entire way through the forest. Sister Cal probably found the campers before they could finish them..."

Brig nods to himself. "Well then I guess we'll just have to take the Trails as far as we can."

"B-But if w-we d-don't know where we're g-going, what if w-we get l-l-lost?"

"Don't worry", says Claudia. "I've got some old ribbons



artwork by Jonathon Salter



artwork by Chase Elliot



artwork by Michael Portell

we can tie to trees so we will know where we've been."

"W-What if there are a-a-animals? Like w-wolves or b-bears or—"

"It'd be pretty cool to see a bear... or a wolf... or maybe even a tiger..."

"Leave him alone, Bella."

"Do your parents know about the wedding?" I ask.

"No, mom says fourth grade is too young to be starting a relationship. Besides she'd just tell Sister Cal and ruin everything..." Brig had been sent to St. Lucia's because he was a "sexual deviant", whatever that is. Sister Cal was just waiting for Brig to step out of line so she could ship him off this island. "I won't have *rapists* at my facility!" She always said.

"How long do you think we'll be gone?" Claudia asked.

"We should be back by nighttime tomorrow. That way, the nuns won't even notice we're gone."

Bella brushed her long black hair over her shoulder impa-

tiently. "Can we hurry this up?!"

"Alright" Brig said. "Let's just go over what everyone is bringing. Chet, you've got the matches for a fire in case we have to stop, right?"

Chet nodded.

"Good. Gordon, make sure you don't forget your compass and flashlight. Tom, you bring that knife of yours in case we run into any trouble. Calm down, Gordon, I said *in case!* Avery, you got the map already. Henry, you bring the rings."

"Rings?" Chet asks.

"Well yeah, every wedding gotta have rings. And since Henry is my best man it's his job to bring them."

"Don't worry, Brig, I've got them nice and safe back at my cabin."

"Good. Everyone bring a backpack with some nice clothes for the wedding, and bring some water and some snacks. Like I said, we should be back by nighttime, but just in case. Any questions?"

Everyone looked around. An owl hooted in the forest. Gordon winced at the sound.

"Alright, we'll all meet up at the statue at 8 a.m. sharp. Let's head back."

The next morning I lay in bed, listenin' as the screen door of my cabin slams against the frame. Sister Cal had said during the announcements the night before over the intercom that a storm was building, and it would get to the island around morning. The wind lashes and howls across the cabin, the windows makin' a sort of "wub-wub" sound.

I wonder if it's ever been done before, broken out from the camp like this. I turn my head to see if Avery's awake yet; he isn't.

Wub-wub.

I feel like a bird who, after years of having its wings clipped, is about to take to the sky, and soar miles above our little earth.

I look out the window above my bed. The first rays of sunlight are just now creeping over the hills of Gull's Rest Island. I wonder if it's 8 a.m. yet. Telling time at the camp can be pretty tricky, seeing as how none of the cabins have clocks or alarms. Sister Cal says there are some campers who would be upset having something as "permanent and oppressing" as time rule over them.

Wub-wub.

I quietly roll out of bed, careful not to wake Avery. The brisk chill of the autumn morning bites into my bare legs. I lean under my bed and pull my old pajama pants from beneath it. I tugged them up over my legs.

Wub-wub.

BANG. BANG.

I hurry over to the front door, and throw it open. I grab hold of the swinging screen door, and secure the lock onto the frame.

"What the hell [*opposite of Heaven*] is going on?" Avery says angrily, as he wipes the sleep from his eyes.

"Just the door, don't worry."

Avery falls back to his bed. "What time is it?"

"Dunno."

I start walking around our cabin, gathering our belongings for the trip. I walk to the back of the cabin and fill up my water bottle at the scummy, old sink. Avery pulls himself from bed, and yanks his backpack from the hook by the wall. We get dressed in silence.

I wonder if it's ever been done before, broken out from the camp like this.

Wub-wub.

I start thinking about that bird with the clipped wings, and I wonder to myself: How can it fly if somebody's already clipped its wings? Can a bird really learn how to fly again? It'll probably just get few feet off the ground, before crashing into some lake and drowning.

A sharp screeching sounds across the hills of St. Lucia's Summer Facility for Mentally Disturbed Children. I jump at the sound, droppin' my water bottle on the ground.

Shit.

Crap.

Phooey.

"Ahem... Good morning, boys and girls. I hope the Lord granted you pleasant dreams last night. Please stand for the morning prayer."

Just like every morning, Sister Cal's voice sounds over the intercom. You probably would expect her to have some deep doom-and-gloom like voice; she doesn't. That's what makes it so terrifying. Sister's Cal has a light, almost airy voice, with just a hint of a southern accent, which she tries so hard to cover up.

Avery and I stand still in our places during the five minute prayer. He looks at me as if to ask *What are we doing?* I just shrug. We got the biggest trip of our lives just a few minutes away from us, and here we are standing, listening to Sister Cal go on about the sin of masturbation. What's stopping us from just going on with what we were doing? There are no cameras, no nuns to slap us if we sit down. We just know that *we can't*. We can't ignore Sister Cal. I look out the window at the other cabins. I can't see in to them, but I know the other campers are doing just the same as me and Avery. I just know.

Shit.

Dang it.

I stand there, thinking about the time last summer, when Sister Eunice had heard me call Sally Green a ~~bitch~~ [woman of lesser quality] during Sunday school. She dragged me out of that

classroom, up to the Counselor's Lodge, and right into Sister Cal's office.

Sister Cal stared at me across her pristine, wooden desk. Her icy blue eyes glared at me down her sharp, beak-like nose. She asked me why I called Sally Green a woman of lesser quality. I said I dunno. She told me it was because I was a servant of Lucifer's.

"Who's Lucifer?"

"Maybe if ya weren't doing the devil's deeds during Sunday School, instead of listening to Sister Eunice, you'd know who that was."

After a sharp caning, Sister Cal ordered me to never curse again. Cursing, she said, was just a way to express yourself in an ignorant manner. She told me anytime I feel the urge to curse, I had to cross out the word and replace it with what I really meant to say. I thought it was a stupid idea, still do, but I never cursed like that again.

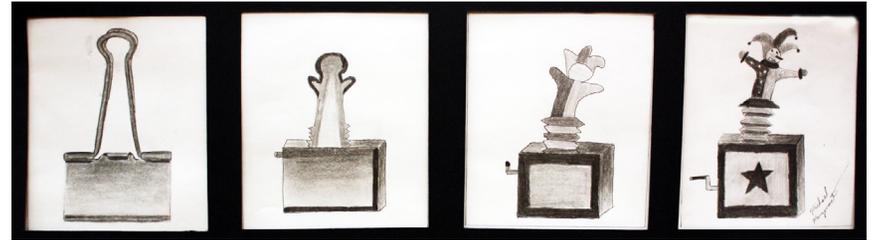
The prayer ends, and Avery and I continue to pack. I shove some extra clothes, a flashlight, and my water bottle into my backpack. I walk to my nightstand and fetch my bible, just in case the priest at Sunnydale forgot his.

I reach under my mattress, and feel around until I hit a cold, metallic object. I pull two gold rings from beneath the mattress. Obviously they're not real gold. Just some metal-circle-thing Avery stole from Herbert's toolbox and painted gold in Arts & Crafts. I shove them into my pocket and turn to Avery.

"You ready?"

He shoves a few fruit snacks into his backpack, and throws it over his shoulder. He nods gravely. "Let's do it."

I'm just closing the front door, when the first whistle reaches our ears. I turn, fear rising within me, to see an army of black habits marching down from the Counselor's Lodge; Each nun blowing a whistle, and yelling commands at the campers



artwork by Michael Mungenast

rushing from their cabins. I glance at Avery, all the color drained from his face. I look at the calendar posted by our front door, and look with terror at the bloody red words written beneath today's date: FIRE DRILL.

I look back at the herd of nuns and spot Sister Cal bringing up the rear with her clip board in hand, with Herman right beside her.

"We'll never get to the forest with all them here!" Avery says, panicked.

I look down to the center of camp, toward the statue of the Virgin Mary. Dread fills up within me as I spot the whole gang – Brig, Claudia, Bella, Gordon, Chet, and Tom – crouching behind the statue. As far as I can tell, the nuns haven't spotted them yet.

Rising up above the onslaught of whistles is Sister Cal's voice. "Taylor Clarke, you take one step from that porch and you'll be on kitchen duty for the rest of the month. Sister Claire, grab that boy there. Oliver Taylor, for God's sake, put on some *pants!*"

"What do we do?" Avery says, his voice shaking.

I rip his backpack off his back and throw it in the corner of our small porch alongside my own. I press a finger to my lips, telling him to keep quiet as Sister Eunice approaches our cabin to take role. She walks up the stairs to our cabin, flashing us a polite smile.

"Good morning, boys. Did you sleep well?"

Avery and I remain silent. Sister Eunice smiles, nodding approvingly. "Very good, boys. No talking during a fire drill."



artwork by Jonathon Strickland

She scribbles onto her clipboard. She is about to leave, when a flash of golden light flashes in her eye. She turns to the corner of the veranda.

I follow her gaze, and look with horror at one of Brig's rings lying by our backpacks, the

sunlight gleaming off of it. She hurries toward the bags, and rips mine open. She turns to face us as she pulls my extra clothes from within. "And where exactly were you boys heading off to?"

Before Avery and I could answer her, Sister Florence is yelling a few cabins down. "Sister Cal, Sister Cal! Gordon Shaw is missing!"

And, as if on cue, a bloodcurdling scream erupted from behind the statue of the Virgin Mary.

Have you ever wondered how it will end?

When I was in second grade, Patrick Higgins told me that when the world ends, every human will catch some rare disease that will slowly kill us, and then, after we're all dead, we'll all be turned into zombies, cursed to roam the world looking for living flesh to eat. Patrick told me that right before we die, we'll be suffering so much from a 106.7 fever and explosive vomiting, then we will be begging for death. And when we finally receive it, we'll enter some heavenly euphoria. The only problem is we

won't be in heaven. Our bodies will be wandering around, looking for things to eat. We'll feel alive and satisfied, but in reality, our world will have come to a crashing end.

It didn't take Sister Cal very long to figure out our plan. After she found the others hiding behind the statue of Mary. Sister Elizabeth and Sister Claire dragged them up to the Counselor's Lodge. Sister Eunice, her hands locked around our arms like handcuffs, dragged Avery and I after them.

Arrangements had already been made for Bella to be sent to her grandmother's camp on the southern end of the island. The Thorpe family preferred to deal with such controversy within the confines of their own family, and, in exchange for a handsome donation to St. Lucia's, Sister Cal was more than happy to allow that.

Brig was sent to Father Moore, the old, senile priest who lived in the chapel just a ways east of the campgrounds. Claudia had been set to speak with Sister Alice, the head of female discipline. Gordon, who was in the middle of a full blown panic attack when Sister Cal reached the statue, had to be sedated and had been sent to the island hospital on the western side of the island. Tom and Chet were caned for "plotting to assist in the escape of mental patients", and promptly sent to the isolation cabins in the northern most edge of the campgrounds where they would "reflect on their sins, and beg the Lord for forgiveness they did not deserve." Sister Cal dragged Avery back to our cabin, and forced him to give up every cache of stolen materials he had buried away. This wasn't so bad, seeing as how Avery only kept half of his goods in our cabin.

Before racing out of her office, pulling Avery by his ear, I hear Sister Cal hiss to Sister Eunice, "A pyromaniac, a wannabe demon girl, a dog killer, a sexual predator in training, a thief, a boy who's scared of everything on this earth, a screwdriver murderer... and this one out there. *A Crack baby.*"

Mountainous clouds of black gather in the distance, as the storm grows closer to the island. I look out and watch as all the counselors rush the campers back to their cabins.

This all leaves me alone, sitting on the cold, wooden bench outside Sister Cal's office.

Lightning flashes over the horizon, little green dots float in front of me. I reach out to grab them, but they vanish.

I think about that bird, with the clipped wings. I think about how it flying ten feet off the ground, before crashing in that lake. Before its end comes to a disastrous, bloody end. I think about what Patrick Higgins told me in second grade, and about the euphoria before the inevitable end of the world. I wonder if, in the ten or fifteen seconds before it crashed into the lake, if that bird enters a sort of euphoria, or some state of pure joy. A state of pure freedom. Shit, I wish I was that bird.

Shit.

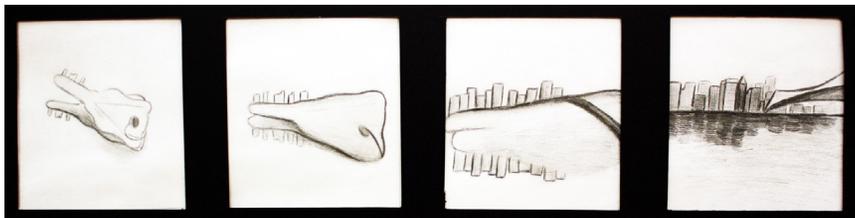
Shit.

And just like that I jump up from the bench and race down the narrow, musty hallway. My feet pound into the ground, as the pale walls race past me. I sprint into the main lobby, where the elderly volunteer lady is sitting behind her crowded desk. She looks at me for a minute, startled, before standing and yelling helplessly, "What's the big hurry? H-Hey! Where are you going!"

I ignore her and keep running. I throw the doors open and race down the steps of the Lodge. I hear the volunteer yelling behind me, "Somebody stop that boy!"

My blood pumps impossibly loud in my ear, as I zoom past nuns and campers alike.

I race down into the rows of cabins, heading towards



artwork by Pat Bowey

the hole in the fence. I feel the wind beneath me, pushing faster and faster toward freedom. Finally, racing up the hill, I reach the should-be-electrified-fence. I hear a flurry of screams and whistles blowing behind me. Finally, one voice rises over the others: "Somebody find Sister Cal!"

I rip the fence off the edge, and crawl down through the hole. I turn and look back at the camp, at the chaos I had caused. Then I feel something rising within me, about to explode out of me. It rises through my throat, up into my mouth, then explodes out between my lips: "FUCK YOU SISTER CAL!"

Then I turned, and raced toward the forest, leaving blessed St. Lucia's Summer Facility for Mentally Disturbed Children far behind.



artwork by John Henry Heideger

Walk in the Park

by Jacob Masterson

Even now that I have three kids of my own, I come to this bench every Christmas Eve. Some years I stay only for a couple minutes, and other years I sit for hours just thinking about my life. I never let anyone come with me. It's the one time of the year that I get peace and quiet to just think.

I started this tradition in 2007. Every day I walked through the park near my house. It had been part of my routine since I graduated. After work I would change my clothes, eat a snack, and then take my dog Rosco for a walk through the park. I remember the first time I saw it. It was a cold day in January, and the park was covered with a blanket of snow and icicles hung from the tree branches. I was in a hurry to get home from my walk to watch a TV show I enjoyed.

I was almost to the gate of the park when Mike walked up to me. Mike was a big, bald man that lived in my apartment building and worked at the same insurance company as me. For some reason he was always sweating. Even in the fifteen degree weather I could see sweat dripping down his face. I tried to avoid making eye contact with the man because he was a known talker. There was a rumor going around the office that our boss, Ms. Mayweather, had quit after her ten minute employee evaluation meeting with Mike was dragged on for three hours.

I saw him waddling over to me. I walked faster. His legs were stubby but they sure could move.

"Hey Woody!" he said.

I put my head down and my hands in my pockets hoping he would just go away.

"Woody!" he said again. "Stop man, I need your help."

I tried to speed up so tubby wouldn't catch me but Rosco sat down and refused to budge. Damn dog.

"Woody? What you got jelly in your ears? Man I need your help," he said.

"What? Oh hey Mike didn't see you there," I said with a fake smile.

"Hey man, I really need your help," he said breathing heavily, "I gotta run into work right away, but I have my dog with me.

Think you could take him back to my apartment for me?"

"I'm really sorry, but I'm in a hurry and I got something important I need to take care of back at my place," I said.

"Come on man, I really need your help. I was supposed to be at work five minutes ago," he said, "What do you gotta do that so important?"

"I met this girl," I said, "She's coming over for dinner, and I need to get back home to start cooking."

"Please! I'm desperate man," he said.

I looked around. "Wait, where's this dog of yours?"

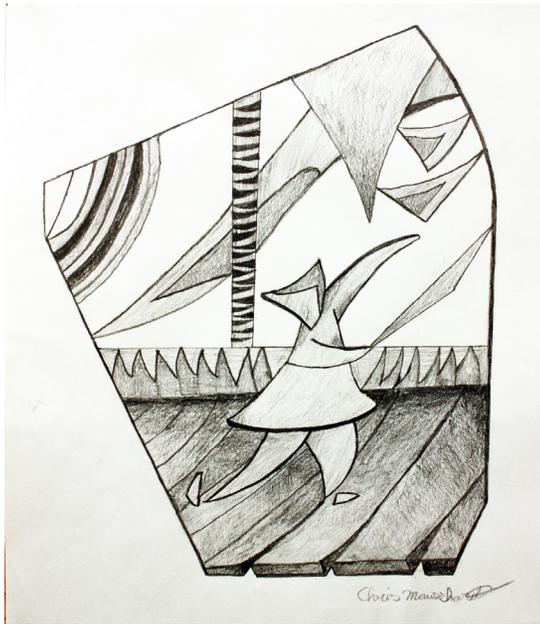
"She's tied to that bench," he said pointing to a snow covered bench with a large chunk of snow missing where he was obviously sitting instead of walking. Poor dog.

"Fine man, whatever," I said with a sigh.

"Thanks man, so much. Here's the key, just let him in and leave the key under the mat. Thanks a million man," he said and waddled away.

I walked over to the park bench and untied Mike's dog. As I was wrapping the leash around my free hand, I noticed something under the bench. It was a small black bag with a small layer of snow on top of it. There were no footsteps around it so I assumed it had been there over night. I didn't think much of it. I tried to run the dogs back to my building hoping that I didn't miss the beginning of my show but Mikey's damn dog was about as fat as he was. I finally got the dog back to Mikey's apartment and slid the key under the mat. By the time I got back to my place I had already missed the first ten minutes of my show.

I wasn't able to go back to the park for two days because I got caught up at work and it was much too dark out by the time I got home. The day after that the snow was too deep for Rosco to walk through so I spent my evening organizing the magazines on my coffee table into neatly, alphabetical piles. When the snow finally melted enough I was able to get back into my routine. I got home from work, I changed my clothes, I ate a snack, and I took Rosco to the park. I couldn't help but notice the same bench I saw a few days earlier. The black bag was still sitting beneath it and there were no indications of it being moved over the last couple days. My curiosity got the best of me. I sat down on the bench and lifted up the bag. It was all leather with several tears on the side. It was



artwork by Chris Mausshardt

clearly damaged by the weather. I unzipped it and inside I found a dusty book and very old and expensive looking camera. I was shocked that somebody could leave it in the snow for several days without coming back for it. To the left of the camera was a slightly bent envelope with the date 1957 written on it. I was curious on why it hadn't been sealed for so many years so I

curiously opened it and began to read.

My dearest Amelia,

The past week with you has been the most memorable time of my life. I could not have asked for a more wonderful woman to have shared it with. You were right about New York; it really is a beautiful city. I love my family, but I have not regretted spending the holidays with you even for a moment. The past few days have proved that I do not need their approval. I cannot even begin to imagine spending my life with anyone but you. I am writing this letter with the intention of giving it to you at a much later date. Tomorrow I will ask you to be mine forever. I have no doubt that you will be a wonderful wife and mother, and I only pray that I can be the best I can be for you. No matter what fortune befalls on us, whether good or bad, I promise to be at your side. I love you Amelia, and I always will.

Forever yours,

Benjamin

As I finished reading, I felt as though my head had become too heavy for my body, and I was forced to sit down. Thoughts were sent racing through my mind. Why did I open the letter?

Who were these two lovers? Why was the bag left here in the park? I had so many questions, and I became overwhelmed with the desire to find answers to them. I decided to cut my walk short and take Rosco back to my apartment.

When I arrived back at my place I knocked all the magazines off of my coffee table and neatly spread out the entire bag's contents hoping to find a last name or maybe an address written somewhere. I began with the camera. It was a very old and fragile camera. I had no idea how it worked, but I found the initials BG and AG carved into the bottom. I remembered the names Benjamin and Amelia, but the letter G was still a mystery. I gently placed the camera down and opened the dusty book. Inside there were dozens of black and white photographs neatly positioned on the pages. I began looking through each of them hoping to find a clue. To my surprise they actually looked very professional.

One in particular caught my eye. It was of a girl in a heavy winter coat leaning with her hand against a brick wall with a big, sincere smile on her face. Her dark curls flowed out beneath her crooked hat. She had a magnificent figure and the hand that was pressed against the wall looked very smooth. She had the most beautiful eyes I had ever seen.

They seemed big, but somehow managed to be proportional to the rest of her face. There was something about this woman. I was attracted to her. I felt like I knew her. Even though it was taken over fifty years ago, I felt like this woman and I were close. The picture to the right was of a very young looking man in a restaurant. He had very broad shoulders and seemed to tower over the other man in the picture. His short, dark hair was slicked back to his neck. He had a very rugged face with a jagged jaw line and a giant smile. The man was a giant, but he seemed very gentle. He was holding a picture of



artwork by Eric Bracken



artwork by Chris Nowak

himself and shaking the hand of the little Italian man next to him. The wall behind him was titled "Wall of Fame" and was lined with several other pictures of people. Under the picture, in very neat cursive, was written,

"Giovanni's Pizza Contest Winner."

I was so distracted by the pictures that I didn't even realize I had missed my favorite show. It didn't bother me though. I became intrigued by these people and was determined to return their possessions.

The next day was Friday. It was very cold, but all the snow had melted. I worked through lunch and was able to leave early. When I got back to my apartment, Rosco was sitting next to his leash.

"Not today buddy, I got work to do," I said.

I threw my work clothes onto my bed and changed into something warmer. My plan was to go to Giovanni's which was only a few blocks away. I must have eaten there a hundred times so I knew how to get there. The funny thing was, I too had my picture on that wall for eating the famous "Giovanni's Giant" which was a 24 inch pizza with what seemed to be five inches of various top-

pings piled on top. I grabbed the black bag and its original contents and headed out. When I arrived at Giovanni's, two teenage boys were standing on a ladder putting up Christmas decorations.

"Hey guys, do you know the owner?" I asked.

The boy holding the base of the ladder turned around and smiled at me.

"Mr. Gabriele?" the boy asked.

"I believe so, is that Giovanni?" I asked.

"It's his grandson, Lou," he said.

"Alright, is he here today?" I asked.

"Yes he is sir, would you like me to go get him for you?" he asked.

"That'd be great, thank you." I said

The boy ran inside leaving his friend on top of the ladder without help. He came back a minute later with a middle aged, overweight, Italian man in a grey pinstriped suit.

"The name's Lou," the man said in a thick Italian accent, "What can I do ya for sir?" he asked.

I pulled out the old book and showed him the picture of the little Italian man shaking Benjamin's hand.

"Do you know who this is?" I asked.

"Sure do, that's my Granddaddy Giovanni," he said, "He died about thirty years ago, and I took over the pizzeria."

"Oh, I'm sorry. That's a shame, I would've really liked to talk to him," I said.

"Well maybe I can help you out with something," he said.

"Well, I am wondering if you have this man's picture on your wall," I said while pointing to the picture of Benjamin.

"Well come on in and have a look sir, I don't see why somebody woulda taken it down," he said.

He led me inside and over to the big wall covered in black and white mug shots.

"You ever seen this wall before, son?" he asked.

"Sure have, as a matter of fact, I'm on it," I said pointing at the embarrassing picture of me covered in pizza sauce looking like I was about to throw up.

"Well isn't this the gentleman from your picture?" he said pointing to the picture right below mine.

To my surprise, there it was. I looked at my picture every

time I went in there, but never once had I paid attention to the other faces around me. Symbol of self-centeredness.

"Benjamin Glanchette," Lou said.

"What?" I asked.

"The man's name is Benjamin Glanchette," he said pointing to the small handwriting at the bottom of the picture. "1957, wow that's a long time ago. Hey if you don't mind me asking, what's this guy to ya?"

"It's a long story," I said.

"Well if you'd ever like to share it, I'll be here," he said.

"Thank you very much for all your help sir," I said.

"Anytime son, glad I could help," he said as he smiled and shook my hand.

I sprinted back to my apartment with the name Benjamin Glanchette fused into my brain. I unlocked my door and walked into my house leaving a trail of mud behind me. It didn't bother me. I was too focused on my task to stop and take my shoes off. I sat down on my couch and opened my laptop. I typed in Benjamin Glanchette, and several results came up. After reading through a few useless webpages, I came across a page titled Historic New Jersey. One of the pictures showed a small Diner with a neon sign

that said BEN'S. Below the sign stood Benjamin with his giant arm around Amelia and his hand around the door handle as if making a "come on in" gesture. Below the image was a brief paragraph describing the history of the owner including gallery of images. I clicked on the link hoping to find more clues, and up came about twenty pictures of the young couple.

One of the images was the two standing



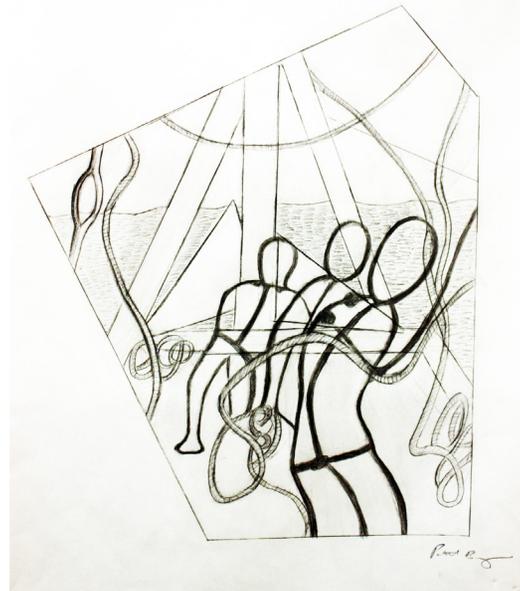
artwork by Chase Elliott

on the stoop of their New Jersey apartment building. The small building had two red doors dividing the two residencies. On the door directly behind them was the address 148 Stevens Avenue.

"New Jersey," I said to myself with a sigh of disappointment. Being from New York, I had absolutely no desire to go to New Jersey, but I figured that since tomorrow was Saturday and I had nothing better to do, I might as well.

I woke up early the next morning and took a 7:45 train to Jersey City. After about two hours and one very expensive cab ride, I arrived with the camera bag in my hand. I compared the front of the apartment to the picture to make sure I was in the right place. Other than new patio furniture, the building hadn't changed a bit. I walked up to the door, eager to meet the owners of the camera. I knocked on the red door, but nobody answered. I knocked harder and harder, but still no answer. After a few minutes of knocking, a black woman stuck her head out the door next to me nearly scaring me to death. She was a very large woman with a green bandana hiding a jungle of messy hair and a polka dot dress that was poorly patched up in several spots. She reeked of cigarette smoke, and cheap perfume.

"Watchu makin all dat noise for boy? My babies is tryin to



artwork by Pat Bowey

sleep," she said very loudly.

"I'm terribly sorry ma'am; I'm trying to find Benjamin and Amelia Glanchette, the owners of this house. Maybe you know them?" I asked.

"That's no reason to be makin all that ruckus, child. 'Specially on Christmas Eve," she said.

"I sincerely apologize miss, but can you tell me about your neighbors?" I asked.

"Ms. Amelia? I got a call last night sayin she was in a hospital in Manhattan," she said.

"Manhattan? I thought she lived here?" I asked.

"Yeah she does, but er year she go out to Manhattan ta visit," she said.

"Visit who?" I asked.

"I don't know boy, all she ever tell me is dat she leaven," she said.

"So why did the hospital call you?" I asked.

"I is the only person Miss Amelia knows, I guess," she said.

"Is she alright? Why is she in the hospital? What hospital is she at?" I asked without giving this woman time to respond.

"Calm down, calm down child, they said she was at Lenox Hill Hospital o'er in Manhattan," she said.

"But what about her husband, Benjamin?" I asked anxiously.

"Alright," I said disappointed. "What about Benjamin?"

"Oh child. Mr. Benjamin died a couple years ago. Po' man. He was da nicest man I ever did meet," she said.

I stood there silently for a moment. I couldn't believe that he had died. And why is Amelia at Lenox Hill? Why was the bag at the park? I came to New Jersey looking for answers, and there I stood with more questions than ever.

"Boy, is you ok? Can I help you wit anything else?" she asked.

"I'm sorry. Thank you very much for your help ma'am. Merry Christmas," I said.

"Same to ya' child," she said as she closed the big red door.

I caught the last train back to Manhattan and headed straight for the hospital. By the time I got back, the orange light from the setting sun glistened off fresh blanket of snow. By then most people who at home with their families. The city was quiet.

I took a cab to the hospital. I ran up to the front desk and was greeted by a young lady in blue scrubs behind a computer. Her name tag said Peggy, and she seemed way too happy for somebody who was working on Christmas Eve.

"What can I do for you sir?" she asked with a huge smile on her face.

"What can you tell me about Amelia Glanchette," I said in strict tone.

She typed something into her computer and then looked up.

"She was brought in a few days ago," she said. "Somebody had found her covered in snow on a park bench."

"What room is she in? I need to see her," I said.

"I'm sorry sir, visiting hours for guests have ended," she said while maintaining her smile.

"You don't understand, this is important," I said.

"Unless you are family, I cannot let you go back there," she said.

"I'm her son. My name is Benjamin. Please let me see her," I said.

"Benjamin? Why didn't you say so earlier? She's hasn't stopped saying your name since we found her," she said.

"What do you mean found her?" I asked.

"Please follow me, sir. The nurse will explain everything in the room," she said as she got up and began walking towards a line of elevators.

The elevator let us out on the fourth floor and Peggy led me down a completely white hallway. I was a bit uneasy. The answers to my many questions were waiting for me in a room just ahead of us.

"She is in here Benjamin," Peggy said. "Room 433. I will send a nurse in to check on you shortly."

"Thank you very much ma'am," I said.

I walked to the door but hesitated. I pulled out the picture of Amelia stared at it for a moment. I was uncomfortable with the idea of meeting this woman, but I knew I had to. I spent the last week trying to find her to return her stuff. I couldn't turn back now.

I opened the door and entered into a room with a strange smell. The room was very warm. The curtains were pulled shut, and static filled the television screen. On the night stand was a tray full of untouched food and a half empty glass of water. There was a lamp on near the mechanical bed that provided just enough light for me to see the small body covered in a pile of blankets.

"Amelia?" I asked.

There was no movement.

"Amelia, is that you?" I asked once more.

Suddenly the ball of blankets shuffled, and a fragile head turned and looked at me. She had tangled white hair and many wrinkles on her face, but I recognized her big, beautiful eyes from the pictures. She reached down for the remote control and raised the bed so that she was sitting upright.

"Hello son, who are you?" She asked in a quiet, gentle voice.

"My name is Woody," I said. "You must be Amelia."

"Yes, I am. I'm sorry, do I know you?" She asked.

"No you don't, but I went through a lot of trouble trying to find you," I said.

"I've always been rather sneaky," she said with a smile, "but why on Earth have you been looking for me?"



artwork by Matt Silberberg

"I think I have something that belongs to you," I said and laid the black camera bag on the night stand beside her. "I went all the way out to New Jersey only to discover that you were here."

A giant grin spread across her face. "New Jersey? That is quite the trip. Why did you do that for a total stranger?" She asked.

"Curiosity I guess. I looked through the pictures, and for some reason I became attached. I felt like it was my responsibility to return it," I said.

"Well, thank you so much for returning it. I'm very sorry

you had to go through all that trouble," she said.

"It was my pleasure," I said.

"You remind me a lot of my husband," she said. "He was always going out of his way to help out anybody he could no matter what it was."

"Benjamin?" I asked.

"Why yes, how did you know that?" she asked.

"I looked through the bag trying to find some clues on who it belonged to and I couldn't help but open a letter from him addressed to you," I said.

Right then she let out a monstrous cough followed several smaller ones.

"He told me he was going to read..." she said but paused to take in a deep breath, "...me that letter on our fiftieth anniversary."

"It was dated 1957. So that would've been this year," I said.

She took another long pause for air.

"Yes, that is why I was in New York. Fifty years ago we spent Christmas here instead of with our families who did not approve of our relationship at the time. He proposed to me at a park nearby. We had very little money at the time so instead of a traditional ring, he wrote me that letter and promised he would read it to me on our fiftieth anniversary. I remember that night. It was very cold, and I fell asleep in his arms," she said.

"I am very sorry Mrs. Amelia. I am sorry about your husband, and I am sorry I opened your letter."

"Oh, that's quite alright," she said. She began to cough violently for a few seconds, and then sat quietly.

"Would you like me to go get the nurse?" I asked.

"I'm alright son," she said.

"You don't sound alright, I can have her check on you if you need it," I said.

"Oh, I'll be fine," she said.

"The receptionist said that they found you in the park. What exactly happened if you don't mind me asking?" I asked.

"Well, I don't remember much," she said struggling for air.

"I was sitting on the same park bench we sat on fifty years ago. The last thing I remember is looking through our old photo album. The nurse said that someone had found me covered in snow and called an ambulance. Do you mind if I read the letter?"

"Of course," I said and I handed her the opened envelope. I watched her as she read the letter. She read the whole thing with a peaceful look in her eyes. When she was finished reading it, she held the letter over her heart and began to cry. After a few minutes she stopped crying and I noticed that she was having trouble breathing. I immediately ran to the hallway.

"NURSE!" I said as loudly as I could. "FOR THE LOVE OF GOD I NEED A NURSE IN HERE RIGHT NOW!"

I ran back over to check on Amelia. Her mouth was open wide trying to gasp for air. She gestured for me to come over to her. I stood by her side, and she grabbed my wrist with both of her boney hands. She pulled me closer so that my face was within inches from hers.

"Thank you... Benjamin," she said in a very soft voice.

I stared into her big, beautiful eyes not knowing what to say. She looked back at me, gave me a small smile, and then exhaled her last breath as her grip around my wrist loosened.

I sit here on this bench thinking about that day. I imagine Amelia Glanchette sitting alone on this bench on the night that her husband promised to read her the letter he proposed with. I imagine her feeling helpless, sad. And I imagine her feeling peaceful as she drifted off to sleep, just as she did with her husband fifty years earlier. She spent her last moments filled with joy. Her last words still ring in my ear. She called me Benjamin. I was able to bring her husband back into her world. I did not know it at the time, but finding that bag was the most important thing I had ever done.