



Cripple Creek
REVIEW

03

A PRODUCT OF THE FINE ARTS CENTER CREATIVE WRITING CLASS OF 2003

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Adeline

The living room and dining room of my grandparents house had long been converted to my Granny's "museum of dolls" by the time I was born. The dining room, with a large mahogany table and ten chairs, held Barbies, all on stands, and each doll had her own slip, underwear, and socks. The living room was the baby nursery, with bonnets and blue-eyed boys and girls lined on the sofa. Her expensive dolls, porcelain and in original clothes, were out of reach, along with her cloth oriental dolls and the first doll she'd received at the age of seven.

Daddy and I would drive down to Greenwood every Sunday to see her. Granny would be in the sewing room, cutting fabric or making new outfits for a naked doll she'd found at the flea market.

"All of the beautiful babies need a home—won't you adopt this one? Or her, she's awfully sweet," she breathed, her Charleston accent kept so delicately from the changing times of fast, inaudible slang. I approached the couch with my little pink stroller and wheeled it back and forth, debating on which baby doll I would be more happy with.

"I want these twins," I told Granny, and we packed them in the stroller and rolled them outside to the garden.

My Granny's yard was a bird sanctuary, a jungle of low tunnels sometimes featured in the Greenwood newspaper. She won "Best Roses of the Year" and received a sterling silver vase with her name and honors engraved. I'd help her pull weeds, or check the trees for plums and pomegranates. She'd lean on her cane, inching along as I scurried past her with scissors to trim the daylilies and hydrangeas.

Granny would grow tired by 3:00, so I'd follow her back to her room. She'd ask Daddy for "bubbly," her sparkling white grape fruit juice, and sip it with a bendable straw. She kept three bells by her bed on a reading table, and every time she needed help, she'd ring one. My father, or when my father was absent, my grandfather, would hastily make himself present at her side.

Sometimes she'd ring a bell announcing her newest great grandbaby. Then she'd intone a prayer, the date of birth, and the newborn's name. My grandpa would rush down the hall, alarmed by the loud chime. I'd muffle a laugh when he'd come in, hollering, "What's all that racket for?!" and Granny, in her pure and sickly voice, would tell him we were sending out a prayer. He'd grumble and growl, then leave the room.

I hardly noticed the decline in her health; her spirit was alive and vibrant like a curious child, but she worried for her flowers and she stopped sewing doll clothes, possessing only enough energy to paint. She had a set of water-colors and a tiny glass vase she would fill with daffodils or a beautiful pink and white camellia. I'd want to play, but she'd tell me she was too tired, so I'd watch her paint with a ratty brush and an elementary water-color set.

Granny and I both avoided the commotion when the doctors suggested a nursing home. I remember Aunt Dorothy in one of them, the awful smell and the wailing sounds. My father convinced my rich Uncle Robert to pay for a visiting nurse. My Daddy hated Uncle Robert, and said that when Granny was first diagnosed with cancer and was expected to die in a week, he'd gone on a trip to Honolulu, claiming that his wife had been expecting to go for months. Uncle Robert would visit my grandparents once a year at Christmas, fly in on his private plane and stay an hour, maybe two. I hated him as much as Daddy did, but Granny loved her five boys, just as she loved everything that

grew in her garden. She loved every day she could open her eyes and see me smiling at her, watching her wheeze or struggle to breathe. She knew I understood her best.

Granny lay in her bed most of the time, a bedpan near her and she took all her food from a blender. By May, the rain was scarce and her flowers were dying and untended. Granny's two surviving sisters, Anna and Harriet, visited frequently, along with my first cousins Sandi and Julie. I remember sitting alone, playing with the dolls or rummaging through the sewing room full of papers, cloth, books, old costumes, and musty, rat-chewed doll parts.

More family members I had never met, or didn't remember, frequently stopped by on Sundays, just as I had for years of my short life. Every one was claiming dolls or flowers, arguing over who had been promised what. My father, in exasperation, wanted everyone to leave things alone, but the dolls were divided up, and the shovels of nameless relatives sunk in the flowerbeds, pushing up resistant roots.

I kept mostly to the yard, running through tunnels of bushes and staying out of the way. Granny seemed so distant, her tight gray bun unkempt and stray hairs falling loose. Two weeks before her death, when she was sleeping, Aunt Anna spoke quietly beside Granny's bed.

"Adeline told me that she saw Daddy in a dream, and he spoke to her." Her lips were tight and thin, her eyes looking on with compassion and remembrance.

"I believe her." The idea of an apparition lit me with excitement, for I always knew spirits were present with the living. Aunt Anna held an old family portrait taken in the 1930's; Granny was one of seven children, and her father had been the town doctor.

She'd had four sisters and two brothers, Alexander being the youngest of them all, only a toddler in the picture.

“Adeline has been blaming herself all these years for Little Alex’s death.” We all talked as if Granny couldn’t hear us. “Do you know about Little Alex, Amanda?”

I shifted my eyes from Granny to Aunt Anna. My father had told me the story in a vague way, as if he’d known no more of what had happened than what must have been published in the local newspaper. I did know that Little Alex had been struck by a car, and that Granny had seen it happen.

“Alexander was six when he died...”

I started, intent on hearing the story while Aunt Anna was willing to tell it to me in her own words; she had been there too.

“Your Aunt Maddie— she passed away before you were born— and Little Alex were crossing the street from the grocery store, which was visible from the family house. Little Alex ran ahead of Maddie and didn’t watch where he was going— there was no saving him. He went straight to the Lord, and your Granny watched it happen, saw it all from the front porch.” Aunt Harriet and my cousin Sandi, sitting coyly in the room with us, nodded their heads.

“Adeline woke up today and was afraid God wouldn’t forgive her for not saving him. She’s been blaming herself all these years... I told her it wasn’t her fault.” She put the picture down as the nurse came in to check on Granny. I was full of fury, so angry that no one had talked about the accident, or even known that she had been blaming

herself. Only on her deathbed was the truth leaking out. I cried on the way home, for Granny and for Little Alex.

My sister Jamie was home for college, and we were all in the living room when uncle David called from Greenwood and told us to come. It was a Friday night and my mother, my father, my sister and I packed into the Toyota Cressida, uncertain if this was the last time we'd see Granny, though Daddy thought so.

The house was buzzing with people, my Grandpa distressed and silently rocking in his chair. All the older women were in Granny's room. When I came in, she wasn't in her four-poster bed where she normally rested; someone had moved her to a new bed in the corner of the room that was so much lower that my tiny frame towered over her while she slept unconscious. Daddy explained that she was in a coma. I wasn't quite sure what that meant until I saw her. I wanted all the people to evaporate; I wanted to pretend that she was only sleeping and we were playing house. When everyone left, I imagined, she would open her eyes and tell me she wasn't worth all this fuss. I watched her only a minute, frightened by her ghastly pale skin, monitoring her rib cage, waiting for her lungs to stop, then fool me by rising again. Her eyes were half-open, and I saw only the white part, but knew that this still body could not be Granny.

I was carefully moved out of the way as Sandi took Granny's temperature with a tiny glass thermometer. It seemed the roles were reversed; the children were taking care of the woman who had raised them better than anyone could have, better than they were able to raise their own children.

Daddy kept saying, over and over, how grateful he was that his mother had passed away in her home, and not in some sterile, foreign place like a hospital. My Daddy was

shaken; I heard him crying in his room after dark, and in the morning he had puffy eyes and walked with his head down, very distant and confused.

The picture we chose for the wake was shiny brown and white, with Granny and her first two children, my Uncle Robert and Uncle Trap. Granny looked like an old TV star, her face so clean and sheltered from a dingy world. She'd never seemed to notice how bad things got, only how good they could be; I think we all saw her that way.

The casket was open, and lines of strangers crowded around the giant metal box, staring at her as if at some circus attraction. I was skeptical about seeing a dead person—I didn't know what it would be like, I didn't know how I would sleep after seeing her that way. Daddy led me up to her, people respectfully moving away for us. Daddy touched her, said "I love you Mama," then stood still, trying to keep his composure. I came closer, trying not to focus on the body, as if I was in the presence of a solar eclipse. Her skin was blue, her face caked in powder and rouge.

"Why does she look like that, Daddy?"

"She doesn't have any blood in her anymore."

I tried to understand, and felt a guilty thrill from touching her. Later, when my best friends arrived, they dared me to touch her again. I did, and jumped back, as if she was contagious with death. I would never forgive myself for treating her body like a hazardous spectacle, as if it was a game of courage, even though she just wasn't Granny anymore, only a body that her soul had inhabited.

It must have been the hottest day in July. The terrible drought made us forget the last time it had rained. Two black limosines came to my grandparents' home, and all my aunts and uncles and their children got in the elongated cars. There wasn't nearly enough

room for all the nieces and nephews, so some of them drove their own cars. It was an hour's drive from Greenwood to Ridge Spring, where Granny had grown up along with many of my eldest relatives who remembered the Depression, and had never stopped practicing the hoarding and frugality instilled in them with memories of hunger and loss. The line of cars following the hearse went on for miles, it seemed, and I just couldn't believe how many people had known and loved Granny. Many of the people were her former students for when she'd taught elementary school. In their late thirties, they still remembered their favorite teacher. Neighbors, friends, members of the church, cousins—we made a mournful parade down a two-lane highway to the Ridge Spring cemetery; the small town seemed overwhelmed and unprepared. The people on the sidewalks stopped and gazed at the procession.

The traditional tarp was set over the grave site, with about fifteen chairs arranged around it. Strangers and the rest of the family had to stand around and squeeze their eyes shut to hear the pastor. I sat in the first row of seats, uncomfortable and sweaty, running my dress shoes over the astro-turf. When we bowed our heads to pray, it was awkward and new to me—I didn't know who I was praying to, so I just closed my eyes and pretended to thank God for taking my Granny away, as everyone else was doing. My Daddy handed me some loose dirt, and we threw it on the coffin. It seemed a defiling ritual to me, but I decided not to ask why. We stayed awhile, as if Daddy was deciding whether or not he could accept his mother being underground; he was like a woman questioning herself in a wedding gown, wondering if she could still go through with it all. Three dirty men with shovels leaned impatiently on a nearby tree, and I scowled at them.

Back at the family house, where Granny and her sisters and brothers had been born, where her father had delivered babies in one of the back rooms, there were home-cooked dishes of corn bread, casseroles, macaroni, turkey, and various desserts; all of the family was there, catching up or discussing insignificant things to pass the time. I sat with Daddy and Uncle Alex on the large screened-in porch nibbling and poking at my food. Then, the rain fell.

“Granny’s watering her flowers.” Daddy looked up at the blue sky, the sun still shining, but the rain pouring heavily onto her thirsty plants.

Granny was coming from the grocery store, a little child holding her hand and swinging her arm back and forth. There were no cars, no one else around and they disappeared into the garden.

Amanda Hart

Cartographies

1.

I love the framework of my bones
jutting through as delicate and pale as its sheath of skin,
barely concealed by ligaments and tendons,
ribbons of fibrous nerves and muscle coiling close
to this stark white structure,
marking the angular outline of my abdomen,
the sharp cradle of my hips
the uneven xylophone of my ribs singing out
a hungry song to strengthen itself
as it carries my heavy weight along
in a creaking, cracking, snapping, popping dance
to remind me I'm made less of flesh than of the bones
that grin at me in my reflection, so close to surfacing.

2.

And what of my flesh? This fruit, with its soft warmth,
bears a pocked and scarred surface like its phantom sister,
the moon, scars born out of pain and hatred
but loved for being a part of that map, its proof
of life, battle scars, strange designs that danced
with knives, razors, scissors, glass, nails, thorns, teeth,
over forty marks: thick white welted stripes upon the right arm
and chaotic scarification upon the left,
six upon my thighs, three each for forbidden and stifled love
(so many scars for love and the loss of it!),
and four small puckers lining the soft and dormant crescent weal
that still sleeps beneath my right breast
where the surgeons delved for my aorta,
dreaming of an invisible, inverted heart.
Like the moon's, all my scars are luminescent.

3.

But what of that which dwells outside of me,
though still connected to me—my shadow?
She moves in the past, present, and future
all at once, depending on her path or what pushes her,
gliding tall or short, dragging far behind or dashing up ahead,
sometimes clinging tightly to me, afraid of the light
that bullies her away from me.

My shadow loves me out of fear of disconnection,
fearing that one day she will be completely consumed,
even as she knows she'll still remain,
for there is no light without her,
and though she rebels, stands brash, she fears
being drawn back into the place of her origins.
I love how insecure my shadow becomes,
like a jealous woman coiling off of me
to consume the four dark walls of my room
at night, hovering, waiting
for the light to reappear.

Anne Persons

Education by Ink

My pen taught me patience.
I found a new kind of hypnotism
watching its tip scratch paper,
though it couldn't write
for more than an hour;
my hand cramped
like a rheumatic forced to
run a triathlon in the rain.

Graphite taught me to be inimitable.
It's so easily transferred by pressure,
yet a block of rubber sends it
reeling away. And without a point,
it's pointless, shrieking internally
at the thought of sharpeners,
and hoping to be used by a virtuoso:
phantasms of color,
nightmares of ink.

My marker taught me permanence
as it fell into my fist,
clinging to the need at hand,
only to be stalled
by a moment of conscience,
then tempted by the blankness
of the wall, which blanched
like a blind journeyman
without cane or dog.

Words taught me kismet.
When ideas were frail and scarce,
they would exit through the hands,
leaving the mind without thought,
trying to branch as if it connected
the tunnels of moles,
or, perhaps, a mere worm.

Daniel Hutchins

Elegy for Edie Sedgwick*

She was the girl in the black tights,
but she knew what it was like to be the one in
the white pair too,
though her eyes were always
naturally mod
with their
unfixed gaze,
deep-set,
and thick brow,
appearing made-up
even in photographs
taken during her privileged childhood,
which expose a tragically
fragile and sophisticated,
yet
undeniably attractive
girl of nine,
the front sections of her
dramatically dark-rooted blonde hair
stylishly side-swept ,
and a figure
that opted not to change
its proportions
as it grew to scale.

* Rejecting her position as heiress to substantial New-England wealth, Edith Minturn Sedgwick moved to New York at age 21 and quickly assumed her role as a central part of the Manhattan art scene, modeling and starring in Andy Warhol's underground films throughout the mid-sixties. Her career and celebrity quickly deteriorated following a falling out with Warhol, and excessive physiological problems and drug use eventually led to her death in 1971 at the age of 28.

Jane Claire Remick

Grid

The lines of the universe
constrict us between them
in a world of patterned mayhem and gravity.
Even death offers no escape;
the afterlife possesses its own algorithms.

But there must be refusals.
I will become a shape-shifter,
molding and unraveling
so that I may intertwine
into an unknown parallel
to redefine the laws
that lie behind symmetry.

Aaron Jarvis

Operation Naptime

Waking my father up from his naps has always been an art form. There are many intricacies involved in this medium that an amateur would never even consider, such as knowing the exact pressure with which to gingerly nudge a shoulder, the volume of a voice that is pleasing to wake up to, and the syntax one must use in order to clearly convey vital information with as little necessary comprehension as possible.

I am retired now, satisfied that I did my best work in my younger days. Smaller people tend to execute these missions far more successfully than larger ones. But in my prime, I perfected this process over years of practicing my craft nearly every day.

In refining this delicate dance, I learned three core values:

1. Never, at any time, use your voice as your only tool.

Contrary to popular practice, the least successful way to wake a person up is to work solely with your voice. He might respond gutturally from beneath a comforter to cause you to think that he is awake, and you will believe that your mission has been completed successfully. You are wrong.

While your vocal chords can be used as a device in your skill, it should always accompany at least one other. A plethora of methods can be utilized that are highly underrated; for instance, your kitchen houses many potential noises that can be passed off as accidental, yet are extremely effective. Pots and pans that bang and clank in a loud, seemingly necessary manner perform your job extremely well, as do blenders, washer/dryer combos, and

percolators. Beware of the manner in which you use these devices, for if the Slumberer In Question is a grumpy person, you must devise a plan. You must cause him to think that the kitchen noise is simply the effect of your preparation of something for him, i.e., coffee or a smoothie.

2. Always know the right amount of everything you use: your voice, your touch, etc.

Now that you have learned what types of noises are appropriate to make and how to make them without receiving flak from the Wakee, you must learn the amount of emphasis which you should place on these sounds. Precision is absolutely necessary, for if you are unsuccessful, not only will you end up looking like a loud/meek/cautious/overzealous person, you will also get yelled at. For instance, my father always bloomed under the voice of my eight-year-old authority, while my mother only rose when spoken to in a manner similar to that which one would use when speaking to a sleeping infant.

In addition to the Vocal Method, you may use a move that I never suggest (unless you have witnessed it being performed without his resorting to violence): the Firm-Yet-Gentle Shoulder Stir. Please note that this is only effective when the Slumberer is sleeping on his side; otherwise, you are both in an awkward position when he wakes up. The Shoulder Stir is tricky, but can extremely advantageous when performed on the correct person.

Another mechanism that may aid you is a good, dry cough. Coughing can be tricky, because you must do it loudly enough to cause a Wakee to stir even a minute amount; however, if you cough too loudly, you run the great risk of startling him and, of course,

becoming a scapegoat. Unfortunately, there are times when you find that you must use the Coughing mechanism because:

- a.) you are angry at the person you wish to wake up,
- b.) you do not know the person you wish to wake up, or
- c.) you are wary of the person's reaction to having been woken up

In instances such as these, you must use great tact and cough as if you truly needed to cough in the first place, and never as if you are coughing solely to rouse the Slumberer.

3. The cannon law of waking a person up is

never *ever* trust that he is awake if
he is not sitting up.

Once you have gotten the Dreamer to awaken from his sleep, you have apparently executed your task, and tend to go on your way, believing that you have performed your deed without a hitch; your day can move on. This is where things can go terribly, terribly wrong. For instance the Wakee, in a desperate attempt at grasping the blasted "five more minutes" could try napping in the shower, only to find himself dead soon after. The Cannon Law of our medium should ring through to your core when you become an expert such as I in The Art.

If you have successfully woken a person, that person will proceed to do the thing that he needs to be awake for in the first place. This may be getting dressed, making dinner, walking a dog, anything at all that mandates consciousness (read: almost everything, with few exceptions). And if the person you have "woken up" thanks you with jumbled English

and tells you that he needs a few minutes- he is not a morning person, you must reinforce your efforts. For if you fail in waking this person up, my friend, despite your cries that you *had* woken him up, it is your fault. *You* are the reason that his tie is wrinkled, the cat is not fed and he is late to work because he needed “five more minutes” to wake up- he’s not a damn morning person.

Take my advice. Waking people up is an art, just like painting, writing, or synchronized swimming. There are rules to follow, mores to take into consideration. Would *you* want to be woken up by an amateur?

Margaret Tate

Joining the World

My first birthday party, the only one I don't remember, was a world of Minnie Mouse. I was dressed in a pink polka-dotted dress adorned with a synthetic satin bow, and the little hair that I had was held back with two black mouse ears my mom borrowed from the Halloween shop. She even colored my nose pink with old lipstick. There were Minnie Mouse plates and Minnie Mouse cups and napkins that were too pretty to ever wipe cake off your mouth with. All of my other one-year-old friends were there, along with their mothers and their older brothers and sisters, if they had any. They all brought Disney gifts. I still have the giant stuffed Minnie Mouse that my mom's boss gave me.

When I turned two, my mom arranged for a clown and four of his helpers to entertain my party. She transformed our dining room into a circus tent, and our back yard into a petting zoo with ponies and emus and one peacock. Half the time, I sat outside the peacock's fence, amazed at its metallic colors, waiting for it to open its wings all the way. I had seen this before at the zoo with my aunt, when the peacock flared its feathers at us and all of its colors glittered before me. By the end of my party, it happened again, and I was the only one to see it. I don't remember the party except for the peacock.

My mom went to the extreme when I turned three. She was convinced that I would be a dancer when I grow up, so this party was the ballerina birthday party. There was a cake with the torso of a Barbie dressed in white and pink icing, and a skirt of swirled vanilla and chocolate. I wore my dance class leotard and a "turn-around skirt" that flowed around me when I walked. The crown on my head was silver, with plastic diamonds that made my blue eyes sparkle in the photograph. We all sat in a heart shape

on the ground and wiggled in our mother's laps while professional ballerinas pranced and leaped and twirled on the stage before us.

When I was four, I had an obsession with bugs. They were my pets, and I was convinced that I was capable of communing with them. I trained them to do tricks in my back yard, and I put on shows for my brother when they had the routines down perfectly. I kept one of every bug I found in my room, locked inside clear plastic cages where my hamsters used to live. So when my fourth birthday came around, my mom had no choice but to throw a bug party for me. The cake was a ladybug and when they sang "Happy Birthday" to me, they made sure the word "bug" was sung high and clear every time after my name. Instead of playing "Pin the Legs on the Spider" or "Ring Around the Beehive," as my mom planned for us to do, my friends and I arranged a worm- digging contest in the back yard. I won, of course, with twenty-four worms wiggling in my soda cup.

My fifth birthday party should have been as perfect as all the others. I should have had a giant Barbie cake and Barbie impersonators to play games with us and dance in my back yard singing to me. There should have been a tower of presents under my new Barbie tent, with a puppy sitting at the top, my mother's special gift to me. And maybe even Big Bird could have come in his blinding yellow feather suit to cut my cake and sing a happy birthday duet with Barbie. And then my mom would give me her biggest present, a trip for two to Disney World, with five nights in the presidential suite just two rooms down from Cinderella and Prince Charming.

Instead, my birthday came and went. Despite my belief that I would fail to turn another year older without a birthday party, I did. I went from four to five in a matter of seconds, and I felt no different than I had before. I spent the rest of my birthday sulking in my room, trying to persuade my stuffed animals that I was five. I don't think they believed me.

But when I went downstairs later that night, the dining room was a brilliant masquerade. Sparkling confetti glistened off our crystal chandelier, streamers draped the windows and table like a frozen waterfall, and a radiant sign above the front door shouted “Happy New Year” in reflective green, purple, and gold. The table was laid out with my mother’s finest china, the set her great-grandmother had given her. Candles lit the room, filling the coldness with authentic vanilla and cinnamon smoke. It reminded me of a storybook with queens and kings and brave iron knights at their honorary ball.

My mom walked in, wearing the dress she wore only to weddings or fancy midnight parties. When she saw me, she told me that we were having a New Year’s party. Her curls tickled my face as she leaned over to kiss my hair and adjust the tiara I had placed on my head. She smoothed my ruffled skirt and untwisted the sequined straps of my satin fairy dress, and told me that this year, my birthday party would be a New Year’s party. She said that my birthday is also the last day of the year and that tomorrow would be a new one. She explained that I was lucky to have such a wonderful birthday, because everybody in the world celebrates it. This made me smile.

I got to stay up until midnight for the first time that night. We sat on the porch, sipping on grape juice that sparkled in the crystal wine glasses. Fireworks went off somewhere downtown, and I could see them high above the trees. They fell from the sky like rain, and then disappeared into spidery smoke. It reminded me of a peacock’s feathers, fanned open and flaming.

Callie Plaxco

Latitude

The globe Leah received for her twenty-third birthday wasn't even a nice globe, it was the cheap raincoat-plastic kind of globe, with over-bright annoying colors, and it came with a squat metal stand the width of her finger. She rolled it around on her palms, the slimy texture of the plastic making her gag. Then she let it fall, and watched it skitter across the floor. She was angry about the cheap globe; it insulted the memory of her beautiful, and infamous, globe, one which she had lusted after for more than half of her seventh grade year, and which was destroyed the same year. Her globe had been wooden, painted, with tiny mountain ranges that rose from its sleek surface. She'd seen it three days after the start of school, in Pier 1, when she was shopping with her mother for pillows. She was infatuated, and eventually (after a garage sale and many hours of pet-sitting) saved enough money. The day she bought it was the day she met Ashley Fortune.

She'd been too excited about the globe to pay any attention in school. Geography, Pre-Algebra, Literature, she spent drawing diagrams of her room, placing the globe in various locations, scratching it out, and drawing it in somewhere else. P.E., however, wasn't as easy to block out. She dressed out, slowly, and wandered onto the court, for stretches. She sat in front of some girls, and started to touch her toes. She heard one of them whisper (just loud enough for her to hear) about granny panties. She blushed, and pulled her shirt down to cover the elastic waistband that she knew was exposed. When they finished, she got up, and began to search halfheartedly for a ball. The gaggle followed her, and a girl stepped forward.

“Hey, girl, Old Mrs. Hammond is looking for her undies. You better give ‘em back ‘fore she writes you up with a referral.” The group tittered loyally. Leah stared at the space behind her head.

“Joanne, you shut the hell up. I saw your damn underwear in the locker room, and I swear to God I could have made a shirt out of it.”

Leah turned around. She saw a girl with gold hoop earrings, and cropped, lemon-colored hair, who was making her gym clothes as illegal as possible, her shorts rolled up until they barely covered her thighs, and her shirt tied in a knot above her belly button. She wore a butterfly necklace, and her lips glistened with a painted layer of gloss. They flashed when she spoke: “Now leave ‘fore I snatch you bald-headed.” Joanne glared, muttered “Slut,” then walked away. The mystery girl turned to Leah.

“I’m Ashley Fortune. And I’m coming over to your house Saturday night so that we can get you looking like a normal person.”

Leah remembered her now. She’d seen her before, on various boys’ laps, and making out in the Spanish room after school. She smiled, and started to thank her. Ashley grabbed her hand and pulled her toward the bleachers. They spent the rest of the class talking about colors and how fingernail polish smells.

“Whatcha got that for?” Ashley was stretched comfortably across Leah’s bed, pawing through the items she’d bought after finding twenty dollars in one of Leah’s coat pockets, and insisting that they spend it in Eckerd’s buying deodorant, lip gloss, and hair

bows. Leah looked up from clumsily trying to apply the gloss. She saw that Ashley was pointing at the globe.

“That’s a globe.”

“I know what it is, I want to know what you got it *for*,” Ashley retorted. Leah went to the globe, and placed a finger on one of its mountains.

“I dunno.” She smiled sheepishly to Ashley, who didn’t respond. Leah continued after a moment.

“ I guess I just like to think about going other places...” She spun the globe around, letting her finger trace over it, finally resting on the Pacific Ocean.

“Where you wanna go?” Ashley had gotten up, silently, and was beside her, staring at the globe. Leah paused.

“Anywhere. Italy, maybe. I’ve heard it’s really pretty there, and everyone’s nice. But I’ll go anywhere, I just want to get away.”

“Why you wanna get away? You don’t like it here?”

“ I dunno. It’s ok. Boring. The people here...”

“Ain’t nice.”

“No.”

“But if you leave, you’ll miss your friends?”

“I don’t have a lot of friends.” She looked to Ashley. Ashley remained silent, and walked back to the bed.

“...Ashley?”

“I think that we should go to the fair next Friday. I’ll do your hair.”

They did go to the fair. Ashley ended up making out with the Ferris wheel operator, and Leah stayed nervously beside his passed-out friend. They went to the roller skating rink the next weekend, and after that, back to Leah's house. It went on like that for a few months. Leah had started to wear shirts that showed her belly button, and she and Ashley had "BFF" charm bracelets. Then Ashley announced that she was going to take Leah to meet her family.

"I've never been to your house before, Ashley."

"I know you haven't, and that's why we're goin'" They were in the back seat of Leah's mother's car.

"We're here, Ms. Duncan." She sounded tight, nervous.

Leah's mother smiled vaguely. "But Ashley, honey, there isn't a house!"

"We can walk from here, Ma'am."

"If you insist." She pulled over, and let them out. As Leah watched her mother drive away, she asked Ashley how they were *really* going to get to her house.

"Walk," Ashley replied, annoyed. And they did, for half a mile up the highway, Leah asking herself between the stabs of pain in her abdomen why they would have to walk so far. She expected one of Ashley's boyfriends to come riding up in a Pontiac, hollering out of the window, but it didn't happen. They just turned off the highway, into a lot behind a Pizza Hut. Ashley led her to a huddle of trailers. She saw some girls, maybe four, running around with nothing but diapers on, picking clover flowers, and throwing them at one another, a child's pantomime of wedding. Ashley guided her through the maze of trailers, leading her finally up the steps of a faded blue one. The door was open,

and a screen was all that separated them from inside. Leah's stomach twitched. Ashley kicked the screen away and walked in.

It smelled like overripe peaches and urine. She heard yelping, then saw an enormous daschund giving birth. A puppy slid from her, popping as it fell away, covered in blood. A woman was slumped in a plastic covered chair. She was huge, and everything about her was swollen, her legs, her arms, her puffy face with purple and blue veins scrawled over the cheeks. She was wearing a beautiful periwinkle blue dress that folded too tightly around her stomach. She wore pearls, matching earrings, and pantyhose, but her feet barely fit into her bedroom slippers. When the girls entered, she stirred, opening her unnaturally dull eyes. She surveyed the both of them, then stood, slowly, and spoke in a drawl more pronounced than Ashley's.

“Well, Ashley didn't tell me we was havin' company today.” She smiled blearily, taking soft, creaking steps forward as she extended her bleached hand. Leah took it over-carefully, then noticed that the tips of her fingers were shaking, though Ashley's mother didn't seem to be aware of this.

“Y'all wait right here and I'll get you somethin'. 'm sure I got one of them cakes from Winn Dixie here...” she trailed off, shuffling away. She came back only a moment later with two plates in her hands, each with a slice of cake. Leah noticed that her slice was considerably bigger than Ashley's, but Ashley didn't say anything, only began to eat the cake delicately with her fingers. Leah followed her example, and found the cake was stale, and the chocolate icing was hard, and the crumbs stuck to the back of her throat. She wasn't hungry anymore, but she took another bite. Her attention was diverted by a

pitiful yelp from the dog, who was struggling with another puppy. Ashley's mother followed her gaze, and cursed softly. She waddled over to the dog, muttering "Shut up," and stiffening her hand. The dog's eyes rolled madly in her head, and the yelps escalated to wails as she tried to avoid the blows, her claws scraping desperately against the linoleum floor. Ashley's mother sent an apologetic look to Leah before continuing to strike the animal. After a moment, the yelps subsided. Leah heard a strangled sort of moan. She felt the cake sticking in her throat expand, and she looked to Ashley. Ashley giggled nervously, then said in strained humor,

"Well, it ain't Italy..."

Leah threw up.

As soon as she got home that night, Leah burned her globe. When her parents saw her in singed clothing, they called the hospital. She spent the last two weeks of school at home, eating strawberry ice cream and watching "Matlock." Her mother would sit anxiously by her side, staring at her face with large, sticky eyes when she thought Leah didn't notice.

* * *

She picked up the globe carefully, inspecting it once more. Her breath caught when she saw a yellow-gold star pasted deliberately over Sicily. She reached for the box the globe had arrived in, and started to dig through the copious amounts of tissue paper, finally finding a note, scribbled in bubbly girl's handwriting:

Leah—

I heard what happened to your globe. I saw this one at K-mart. It was half-off, and I remembered it was your birthday. Your parents gave me your address, so I decided to send it to you. You know, just in case you never get a chance to go.

Maggie Johnston

Mere Premiere

1992:

Her mascara-stained pillows
and clutter absorb the
heavy blasting music
of Alanis Morissette
that might deafen anyone
who enters the room;
force grinding teeth.

2000:

She re-rearranges
the forks and knives
in the silverware bin,
repetitively strips the counter
of any filth
that might have accumulated
in the past three seconds.

Anne Hasuly

Osmosis

She is a girl plagued by
Public Bathroom Air Freshener Syndrome,
always applying layer upon layer
of deodorant
during times of great distress,
or
before, during, and after
bouts
of strenuous activity.

But where does it all go?
It does not build up;
her blacks are black
and
her brights are bright.
I never detect any milky residue as she trots
from the volleyball court.

There is only one explanation –

it slowly seeps
over her
hair follicles, shafts, and erector muscles,
into underarm pores,
through the subcutaneous tissue,
disturbing the
Pacinian corpuscles,
and eventually
penetrating the
tenuated walls of the blood vessels,

a mixture of
chalky chemicals,
melanocytes,
and

sebaceous gland excretions
continually assimilated into the bloodstream,
so that one day,
her bodily composition
might match the artifice
of her saccharine disposition.

Jane Claire Remick

Purge

The phenomenon of the Tupperware Party was a passing fad, gone with the 80's. At the drop of the 1990 New Year's Ball in Times Square, my mother was packing away her multi-colored plastic containers along with the phone number of the Teflon lady. "Garage sales, the wave of the future!" She prophesied, glowing like Nostradamus in the light of our green shag carpet.

Each Saturday, I stood in front of a box of quarters, collecting dollar bills and giving customers their change. The items were simple excesses of middle class living at first, but as the weeks went on, I saw my family's treasured items pass through the ogling group of second hand consumers. Over time, our house grew more and more sparse.

My father talks of life before the garage sales: luxurious arm chairs, tapestries, and silverware, all tucked away in drawers, seen only by my family. The image makes me sensually draw my lips inside my mouth, tasting the beauty of pawned possessions. A refrigerator once full of gourmet cheeses and breads was eventually reduced to nothing but an empty pizza box and some baking soda. The GE refrigerator was sold for a hefty thirty dollars, but my mother insisted that the buyers haul it away themselves. We had managed for years to hide the pillows on which we ate our watery dinners, but one Saturday I saw them atop the plaster methodically scraped from the walls and sold in the remaining mason jars.

It went like this:

Week 1- Moth-eaten clothes, an unused highchair, splintering toys, an eye patch from a pirate costume, unopened box of band-aids, two fake appendages, an old car battery

Week 2- Two of our three televisions, my favorite Malibu Barbie, the living room rug, the dusty piano along with the unplayed ragtime hits of the 20s, the angel from an untold number of Christmas trees from years before, Halloween decorations, ice cube trays

Week 3- Taped episodes of “Gilligan’s Island,” my father’s books (The History of Philosophy, Kafka, Sartre, Asimov), her fur coat, our entire stock of high heels, family albums, baby books, the dead bird in the freezer along with her uneaten piece of wedding cake

Week 4- Rolls of shag carpet, boxes of tampons currently in use, lingerie, pots, pans, her grandmother’s china, the doorknobs, faucets and spigots, the vacuum dustbags along with the vacuum, water filters, tea pitchers, flea medications, potted ferns

Week 5- My gerbils (Hammie and Gina), the taxidermied body of the dog, electrical wiring (copper was at a premium price), the mattresses, the fiberglass insulation (pink shards embedded themselves in my body so I itched and bled for a week after I helped un-install it), windows, hole punchers along with the paper holes

I began to acknowledge the extent of my mother’s unyielding quest after we no longer had the shelter of the garage to house our sacred wares. She had debated whether

or not to sell the garage whole or in pieces, ultimately deciding to break it down and sell it brick by brick, like the Berlin Wall.

The house was finally freed of all its material burdens, standing as a shameless wooden frame. My mother silently detached the two-by-fours, and I would awake each morning with a little less house than I went to sleep with.

When nothing remained but the foundation, my mother borrowed the sledge hammer of a neighbor and went to work pounding the hard concrete free of the earth. She ripped our remaining clothes we had and issued price tags on the different sizes of smashed concrete: A dollar for the bigger pieces, a penny for the dust.

So we sat naked on the mud and the plants of our two-acre lot, believing my mother had to be content now, as we had nothing left to sell. We could do nothing but shudder when she crushed bits of her broken nails into the grass and offered it to the voyeurs who purchased everything, curious to see what would be next to go.

Rebecca Smith

Ritual

*“...the year that’s about to start
Can only bring us more gray hairs.”
-Translated by Naomi Lindstrom*

The match came in contact with the cigarette, flickering for a moment before catching the white cylinder aflame. The man drew back his head, and his wrist whipped back and forth once, extinguishing the match. Tossing the burnt stick towards the wastebasket, he put his hand to his mouth, drawing a quick breath before withdrawing the cigarette from his mouth and blowing a small stream of smoke into the air. His hair and the paper of his cigarette were of the same color. He was not wrinkled, as were some men near his age, but his eyes were surrounded by heavy lines as if his entire life had been spent squinting into the sun.

He was sitting in a wooden chair that was itself next to a wooden table, both without embellishment or addition. The grain of the wood lacked luster, having no shine or finish. They were not drab; they were plain. The floor was scattered with the headlines of yesterday, the day before that, and all the days before, all the way back to 1957 headlines that declared Charlie Chaplin a father.

As an older woman entered the room, she saw the man’s lit cigarette bobbing up and down in his mouth. She dropped the broom. It made a muffled thud on the layers of paper covering the floor. Both her hands flew to her hips. Her weight shifted to one foot

and her left hip jutted out, her elbows pointing in opposite directions. Her blue eyes, framed in a face creased and worn, stared at the man.

“Ross, I thought you were quitting that. The doctor said to stop.” Her voice wasn’t angry, but it did have an edge. It was a full voice, one that filled the air and held a critical velocity of its own.

Without looking up, Ross removed the shaft from his mouth and said in a voice returning to the pitch of boyhood, “Finish your sweeping, Euneta Mary. Doc ain’t got hold of me.” He knew he could quit whenever he wanted to. He just smoked when Euneta Mary was around, so that he could tell her to finish sweeping.

But Euneta Mary wouldn’t be told to finish sweeping again. She marched across the room, arms flailing. As she moved across the room, the paper crinkled beneath her feet. As she neared Ross, she smacked the cigarette out of his mouth.

The lighted stick fell on the aged, yellow paper, catching flame almost instantly. Ross jumped up from his chair, stamping at the fire as it began to spread. Ross was not a person easily flustered. Euneta Mary screamed, stepping backwards. She swept up her broom, beginning to swat at the flames. But neither the stomping nor the swatting helped. It just fanned the fire, making it grow and swell.

Euneta Mary shouted, her hands wringing in the time-honored fashion of people with stress, “Ross, take the broom!”

She hurriedly passed him the broom, exiting the room as quick as she could. Ross continued to beat the flames, backing slowly towards the door as the flames spread.

Suddenly, Euneta Mary appeared again, carrying a bucket of water. As she rushed to douse the flames, Ross shouted, “Don’t you dare!”

Euneta Mary turned, completely surprised, “Why not?”

Ross said, “You’ll ruin my clippings!”

“Your clippings? Curmudgeon, you’ll ruin my house!”

“I don’t care. Just leave my clippings out of it.”

Euneta Mary’s eyes hardened, and she snorted, “You and your clippings can both drown!”

She threw the water all over the flaming newsprint. The deluge drowned the fire in a second.

Ross stared at her, hurt. He said, “I’m going to town,” then turned and left. As he exited, he murmured, “to buy more cigarettes.”

Madison McClendon

Scorched Earth Policy

Ever since I grew up in the dry summers of California, I've loved that hot season the most. I loved how every drop of water was so precious. It never rained out there until September at the earliest. The grass was golden-brown, and forest fires were frequent. My first word was "ice," because I asked for it constantly all summer.

No one was ever allowed to set off fireworks on the Fourth of July, since this might have sparked a forest fire that would have spread over five counties in a matter of a couple of days. It always horrified and excited me to see helicopters in the distance, dumping buckets of red powder or liquid over the smoky trees with fires burning beneath them. I remember that once, a huge fire in the valley right below us was caused by one cigarette thrown out of a car window. The planes and helicopters flew so close to our roof that the whole house shook with a deafening bellow. I had to pack my Little Mermaid suitcase in twenty minutes—I put in one outfit, the blue porcelain rooster my mom had given me when I'd lost one of my bottom teeth, and Zelda, my favorite bear. We drove to the closest town and stayed with friends until the fire had been put out. This has become one of my favorite memories because it reinforces how much more adventurous life was out there.

I also remember how all the ants searching for water would form a hundred-foot line from their hill outside, all the way up the long steep stairs to the porch, along the wall into the tiniest crack in the window leading to the kitchen, down to the floor and up the side of the counter and toward the slow drip of water from the faucet. It was usually

about 100 – 110 degrees in the middle of the day, and about 90 degrees in the shade. I spent a lot of time in the mimosa tree in the front yard that was still so young and small—that tree and I were a perfect match for each other. I felt only slightly cooler under its thin branches, but until mid-June it bloomed magenta colored tufts of flowers that I adored. Around July, my family and my best friend's family, who lived on the other side of the mountain, would walk about five miles or so to a place called Rock Creek, a small, secluded area of the South Fork river. There were a few deep pools near the 15-foot waterfall, and there were shallower, rocky areas of flowing river water. The water was frigid, about 33 degrees, even in the summer. We spent the whole time trembling in the flow, and had to climb up the slippery rocks to sit in the sun. Tiny fish, which seemed big to me at the time, would always nibble at our legs and toes. The surrounding rocks were littered with coolers and towels, a few inflatable floats and clusters of sandals and tennis shoes.

After the forest fires, we would go for drives along the backwoods dirt roads, the car creeping slowly through the strange, charred shadows of the forests so we could assess the damage. It was obvious which trees had been burnt that year as opposed to the previous years. I remember staring with awe and fascination at the clear line between the blackened forest and the untouched green trees. Only the tallest green trees might have singed the tips of their arm-like branches if they had reached too far over to touch their burning neighbors. What always confused me was the random single smoldering black and red tree completely surrounded by healthy unscathed forestry. Smokey the Bear was never really a joke. I remember the giant signs along the road with his head on it, a

dryness scale besides his massive forest ranger hat, announcing what the danger level of fire is on any given day.

Even now, I still love summer more than the other seasons, although my reasons are rather different now, because I live in a very different climate. But I still love the things that most people dislike—the way the humidity clings to your lungs and to your skin and clothes, the sound of cicadas buzzing, the short downpours every afternoon, and the steam that rises from the streets after the rain.

Sarah Maloy

Slaughter: Numb

Just as the patient lies frozen on a rectangular pad
where the thin paper crinkles with every nudge,
waiting for the essential violation
of her not-so-perfect femininity,
clenching her fists
and wishing herself elsewhere,
her waterproof eyes yielding disturbing photographs—
flashes of rope-burned skin and tiny rivers of blood,
shadows hiding shadows—

so the male widow
loses all physical ability
to struggle for his eight-legged freedom,
and cannot tear through the cemented jaws
of the one he began to share love with.

Anne Hasuly

Sundays

Pulling into grandma's driveway,
I was already weighed down with
a thousand previous brunches,
always roast beef, corn,
and mashed potatoes,
with cheese and coffee
offered afterward,
which I always declined.
Switching on the old television,
I'd wait for my parents to say
"It's time to leave."
I never could feel
how I should have.
I was never able to return
what was not given.

Aaron Jarvis

Symbiotic 1

Every night when I sleep,
A large rock waits,
Poised in mid-air.
It's never sure
At what moment to descend,
So night after night,
As a matter of course,
It waits, and when
It hears my nightmares
Reach their crescendo,
It reluctantly lets go
Into the fall
It so dreads.
When it hits,
My eyes snap open,
But the pain in my chest
Isn't so bad,
So I fall back
Into a fragile sleep.

Crystal Barbare

Symbiotic 2

I watch her dream,
Her whimpers striking at my core,
Her shifting and turning
Make my rocking a perilous occupation.
I try to let her find
Her own way out, but
Finally it becomes too much;
I let go, and after
What should be
Seven lifetimes, I
Push the air
Out of her chest.
Her eyes snap open
With more force than
Should be retained
After her blighted night.
I feel her heartbeat slow
As she returns to the brink of sleep,
And I am comforted.

Crystal Barbare

Transverse Candela

If light's longitudinal waves
flow with luminous flux,
and darkness flares at their absence,
do sound's compression waves bunch and slink,
seeking haven in the beat of an eardrum?
Does silence plead to be broken,
though Echo is compelled to wander
until she loses the power to even splinter it?

Daniel Hutchins

Plywood

Nights are wasted on the plot of ground
where we'll build a doghouse
when we think we
have the time, waiting for
another meteor shower,
though you've never
seen one before and we're both
a bit afraid of falling rocks, but
not as much as we are
of airplanes or Congress.
There we can look through
the gaps in the fence to watch cars
slow down as they pass houses
of people they've never met; then the
tenant shifts a slat on the
blinds and the car engine revs.
When the driver pulls away,
he tries to act surprised.

We talk a lot about sidewalks, and
how taking them away is more a
conspiracy than space
conservation, and that we should
tour older neighborhoods
the next morning
to see some trees and hills,
or how we could save so much
if only I'd start a vegetable
garden. Butterfly gardens are
more profitable, but butterflies prefer
older gardens where flowers have
cycled bright colors with
gray leaves ten times before —
where there are no surprises.
We will feel weathered and grand
at daybreak, finally free to leave.

Theresa Kelley

Ode to a Silent Film Star

Where, now, is Cleopatra?
Not curled at the footsteps of the Abtu
begging mercy from Osiris;
the passage into the mountains
has been closed, so she is left,
buried in the loft of a barn,
or locked beneath the surface of skating rink ice,
trapped in rusted metal canisters,
enveloped in thin strips of celluloid.
We've not submitted to silence any more
than the gods have submitted to existence,
because too much advances,
too much falls behind us.
We do not reach back
to pull her to us like a child,
and thus, she remains a child.
Pharaoh is dead,
and we will take the flail and crook
to smash the reels
and make her flee.

Theresa Kelley

