The Lake is Really a Magnet
Great Lake Review

The Great Lake Review

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The Great Lake Review, published once each academic year, presents a collection of writing and artwork created, selected and edited by the students of the College at Oswego. Students in all fields of study contributed to the magazine.
Great Lake Review

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Front Cover Photo by Ann Aumick
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The Fall of Contentment

Donna Johnson

Content—
When the midnight warmth
Trickles down
Into the placid hands of fall

Lulled—
By her sleep-heavy smile
Blissfully distracting,
As the moon steals the light
In her eyes

Embraced—
By her cool breath
That feeds the mind
And induces to rise
Upward
The swirling colors of her hair,
Honey-streaked amber

Numb—
When the wild blue wind
Whispers: never ask
The rain to drown the sun.
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Mark Wilton

Dimethylethylmethane and Me

Dimethylethylmethane and me
took pause, while under a willow tree.

Her covalent bonds – long and white –
you see; her atoms are out of sight.

We sit; I love to look at her,
she is my only isomer.

She giggles and laughs and takes my hand,
she’s the most butyl alkaline in all the land.

She lays down – her head within my lap –
in her structural formula I find no gap.

We laugh and lay there – all day long –
I sing her favorite halogen song.

I kiss her and ask her one special thing,
as I present to her a carbon dating ring.

She smiles and whispers, quietly to me:
“Together, forever;”
Dimethylethylmethane and me.

Greg Shemkovitz

Paul

In the entire office, twenty-three cubicles, monotone phone conversations mixed with the tapping of computer keys and humming of the copiers, I was stuck with the one man who felt compelled to repetitively hum the *Sanford and Son* theme song while sitting with his feet up on his candy cluttered desk, legs spread wide, revealing the hole in the crotch of his jeans and the pattern of boxers beneath. His jet-black hair danced on his head with every movement, and his eyes bared dark rings from long nights of moonlighting as a rhythm guitarist for a little known band named *Genitalia*. The stench of neglect with a hint of tuna casserole permeated from his mouth, while his faded sweater reeked of thrift store air freshener. To make matters worse, he was too smart for his own good.

Paul worked his nostril with his finger like a child scraping the remnants of frosting from a mixing bowl. I could see him out of the corner of my eye. In his other hand, he flipped a small coin that he insisted was given to him by Leonard Nimoy. I never understood why he concocted such stories. Moreover, I feared such an understanding of the methods to his madness would mean serious psychoanalysis and eventually lead to the use of heavy narcotics.

It was quite obvious what fueled my aggravation with him. While he slacked off, I worked. The head boss, William Pratt, gave us each assignments and from the looks of it Paul wasn’t entirely immersed in labor. His calm demeanor suggested an uncanny relaxation. Even though I hated him, I longed to just once, see the world through his eyes.

I could feel him watching me as I worked at my computer, his lazy eye wandering as if with a mind of its own.

“What?” I asked, without looking for an answer.

He put his feet down. “Nothing,” he replied with a certain casual ring, "Just watching a master at his craft."

"And what would that be?" I asked never raising my head to him.

"Holding the weight of the world on your shoulders."

There was a bit of truth to that. I felt accountable for almost everything I came in contact with. At the same time, I dreaded that responsibility. When it came to just about anything, I was a wreck. I broke a sweat over where to park my car each morning. From purchasing a major appliance to deciding what socks to wear with my
khakis, I considered every option. Coincidentally, my dryer had eaten most of my favorite wool hikers.

I kept working though. He could stare all he wanted. I was busy tracking down outdated contracts for bands whose songs were climbing the charts from recent movie soundtrack releases.

Any artist signing with the Walden Records label was put on file. Their contracts were placed on a database to track the files being shipped between the records warehouse and the main office. Paul and I were in charge of maintaining that database. The job wasn't difficult by any means. Paul alone could prove that. Sometimes though, I let the pressure get to me. I saw Pratt as the fine line between my mundane life and that same mundane life but on the streets. He had the power to destroy me. Paul, on the other hand, seemed indestructible.

Paul sighed while he watched me struggle to locate a particular contract. I looked his way to see him reclined in his chair, sipping from his coffee mug. I tried to justify my anxiety.

"Pratt wants this contract pronto and I'm not about to hear his little ambition-equals-success speech again."

Paul rolled his seat beside mine and huddled up to the computer. "Step aside, Timmy-Poo." He swatted my hand away, grabbing for the mouse. "The Harrison Gibb contracts are all under the New Client file."

With his arm extended across the desk, my eyes began to water from the odor of what smelled like the ocean; and not the ocean scent one would find in a fragrance spray, but rather the stench of rotting fish and sewage run-off.

In a few clicks and a drag, Paul found the band's contracts among the hundreds of legal agreements in the company's database and had them faxed, copied, and sent to Pratt's desk for his mid-afternoon meeting with the spotlight, boy-band of the moment.

"It's that easy," he finished.

Paul had a vast knowledge of our companies archive system, its related software, and had something to say about every topic you could mention. To me he was a nuisance. To the Walden Records label, Paul had all the answers.

"Now if you only put some of that knowledge and ambition into more constructive endeavors, like shaving, or shampooing your hair." I cleared the computer screen of any evidence of his presence.

"That damn rinse and repeat process they got goin'. So very demanding," he replied, turning back to his computer to continue doodling on his paint program.

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Desperately needing some space from Paul, I got up and headed for the break room to get a cup of coffee. When I got there, I found Cal Krispen and Stacy Moore from worldwide distribution chatting by the water cooler as if posing for a satirical office photo. Cal, with his cock-sure bob of the head, had his arm extended to the wall as he leaned over the captivated Stacy, who in my eyes could do better. Startled but masking it gracefully, Cal turned to me quickly.

"Hey there, Tim. Taking a breather are we?" Both Cal and Stacy laughed.

"Another day in the life of a glorified file-monkey," I replied while heading straight to the coffee maker. "It's a tough job, Cal, but someone's gotta do it."

"I meant from Paul," Cal shot back.

"What about him?"

"I think he's cute," Stacy chimed in. "You know, in a mommy wouldn't approve kind of way."

Threatened by this, Cal backed up a few inches. "Yeah, well, if that's what you're going for. I just think there's an age when we stop playing dirt rocker."

"Oh, Cal." Stacy playfully slapped Cal's arm.

I poured some coffee into a styrofoam cup and added a few packets of Equal. Cal looked at the company bulletin board and laughed.

"Hey, Tim, have you seen the latest?"

I took a sip of my coffee and turned to look at what had Cal's attention this time. When I looked at the bulletin board I knew right away. I had to clamp my lips closed to keep from spewing my coffee all over. There, aside a posting for a used Mitsubishi Eclipse hung a portrait of Pratt, dressed like a little schoolgirl holding a leaky water pistol. I forced the coffee down my throat.

"Not Pratt," I thought aloud.

Cal laughed. "Whoever's doing this has got some balls. I'll tell ya that much."

Stacy stared at the picture intently. "I wonder where this weirdo finds the time."

"The Phantom Artist," Cal laughed.

Stacy studied the picture intently. "It's freaky."

"I think it's hilarious," Cal said.

"Yeah, well, whoever it is obviously isn't too bright," I quickly ripped the picture down and folded it in quarters. "Pratt would have their head for this."

"I don't think this one's gotten around yet," Cal added.
I took another sip of my coffee and left the room. "Let's hope."

It was easy how the artist got the pictures in there. Paul arrived before everyone else in the morning and hung them all around the building. I was the only one who knew about this, making my life even more miserable than it already was.

Among many other things, Paul was a wonderful artist. His renditions of various co-workers had been posted across break room walls company-wide, capturing the attention of every staff member from payroll to custodial, striking fear in the hearts of those who hadn't yet been sketched or interpreted in cartoon form. This fear was a direct result of Paul's uncanny ability to extract one's passions and fears from the few words they would share with him, and later compile them into a frighteningly accurate caricature frozen on paper.

After two short lunches and some small talk in the cubicle, I found my likeness tacked beside a company picnic notice just above the coffee machine. The detailed sketch had me in an Ancient Roman soldier's chest plate and a Cherokee Indian headdress, while bow hunting for llama. I'll never forget what Nancy in accounting had to say about the unknown artist. "They steal a part of you. And just when you think you're angry with how they invaded your privacy, you get lost in admiration." She was dressed like Cleopatra and milking a cow.

I hated the little games Paul played with management. I didn't realize his little drawings would be so well known. Though by the fifth portrait, I had been reduced to a liar and a possible accomplice.

On my way back to the cubicle, I decided to take the long route to gather my thoughts. The last person I wanted to see was Paul. He'd gone too far this time, drawing a cartoon of the one man who could single handedly destroy us both. While I passed through the maze of cubicles filled with monotone drones, I realized I didn't get a good look at the picture of Pratt. I was too shocked at the time to gather any of the minute details Paul was notorious for creating.

I stopped at a tiny alcove and stood beside a lonesome copier, huddling over the piece of paper in my hands. As I began to unfold it, a voice came from behind me.

"Are you using the machine?"

"Huh?" I turned around to find Annabelle, Pratt's bushy-haired secretary, holding a small stack of papers. "Oh, I'm sorry." I stepped to the side, quickly folding the picture but not before she caught a curious glimpse.

"What's that?" Annabelle asked, reaching for the folded paper.

"Nothing," I shot back, fearing the idea that often times the secretaries hold as much power as the management they represent.

"Well, then you won't mind if I take a look," she said, as her quick hand snatched the paper from my grasp.

She snapped it open with a flick of the wrist and gave it a quick glance, cocking her head to one side. My heart sank. Her eyes grew wide.

"Is this who I think it is?"

"I was just-

"Timothy Ivan," she said appallingly. "Did you do this?"

"I just found this in the break room."

"Did Mr. Pratt see this?" She shoved the paper into my chest.

"I don't think so."

Annabelle gave me that look a mother gives a delinquent child, saying don't make me tell you twice. She must have forgotten her copies because she followed me back to Pratt's office.

When we approached the foyer area before Pratt's office, a stray golf ball rolled through the slightly opened doorway. Soon after, Pratt followed the orange ball, inventorying any witnesses. His face was slender and long, and his graying hair curled at the ends, crawling around his ears and neck.

"Mr. Pratt, Timothy Ivan would like to speak with you."

"Mr. Ivan, what brings you to my neighborhood?"

"This." Annabelle once again grabbed the picture from my grip and handed to Pratt.

Pratt unfolded the paper, shot me a look of complete disinterest, and glanced down at his portrait. His eyes widened, then scrunched, and finally his face went blank.

"Thank you, Annabelle." Pratt turned to me. "Mr. Ivan, if you would please step into my office."

Annabelle picked up the golf ball and placed it on the corner of her desk. Pratt guided me into his office with his arm around my shoulder.

His office was cluttered with statuettes and novelty items one can only find in special-interest catalogues. The ceiling was high, and the furniture was real leather. We both sat at either side of the large, oak desk.

Pratt looked at me with his practiced face of concern. He leaned back in his cushioned chair, taking a long breath.

"Mr. Ivan, where did you find this?"

"Well, you see, I was in the break room and-"
"I've seen these before," Pratt interrupted. "And I know you wouldn't do anything so childish."

"No. No, sir." The lump in my throat grew larger.

Pratt leaned forward, studying my face. "You share a cubicle with Paul Scanlon, don't you?"

"Yes." My eyes looked away for a second.

"Is he—" Pratt started to ask. My heart began to beat faster. "Is he the one drawing these pictures?"

Before I could even think about betrayal, deceit, and the bond between co-workers in alliance against the strongholds of upper management, the words spilled out. "Yes. Paul did it." I wanted to crawl into a hole.

Pratt leaned back in his seat, tapping the ends of his fingers together. "You knew about this."

"Well, no but just recently I—"

"Thank you very much, Mr. Ivan. You may get back to work."

I'd ratted on my co-worker. I had achieved the lowest of the low in corporate convention. "Sir, if I may—"

"That'll be all, Mr. Ivan." Pratt looked to the side.

I took the hint and slowly made my way out, closing the door behind me. I paused for a moment to collect my thoughts. I noticed the golf ball on the corner of Annabelle's desk and looked around for any eyewitnesses. I picked it up and put it in my pocket.

On my way back to the cubicle, I thought about Paul not being there. I thought about how, soon, I'd never see him again. He was asking for it. He would have gotten caught sooner or later. It was just a matter of time.

When I reached the cubicle, Paul was hanging up the phone. I stood by the cubicle opening, watching him lean back and run his fingers through his hair with a long exhale. He sat gazing at the ceiling riddled with pencils, then got up and looked at me.

"Oh, you're back?" He stood directly before me.

I just stood there.

"Tag. You're it," He pointed to my chest. "C'mon. Cat got your tongue?"

He squinted to see something on my shirt. I looked down, and he jokingly hit my nose with his finger. I was a sucker for such simple pranks, and I wouldn't miss him for taking advantage of that. This, of course, amused him greatly. His laugh was obnoxious, like a taunting little boy.

"You know, Paul, crap like that will eventually get you in trouble."

Paul's smile melted away and his eyes grew narrow. His head cocked back a bit. "You told him, didn't you?"

I said nothing but sat in my chair and turned away from him. I could feel his stare for just a second then he walked away.

I tried to get back to my work. Only I found that my thoughts were shoved aside by the impending doom of my cubicle-mate. Paul smelled, carried a terrible attitude, and had a remarkable gift for fitting the word contraceptive into any and all outgoing mail and memos, but he was familiar. Furthermore, I didn't want to train a new guy. It's always a drag to have to pick up a rookie's weight. Despite how smart they are, they just don't have the required instincts that come with experience.

I looked over at the mug on my desk that held all my pens and pencils. It was entirely white with big black letters that said, You Stink. Paul gave it to me on my birthday the year before. Coincidentally, he was the only one who remembered.

Normally, I cherished times when Paul was away. The air was cleaner, I had room to stretch my legs, and best of all, it was quiet, like being in a vacuum. At that point though, I felt like the vacuum was holding me in rather than keeping Paul out. I went back to work.

Before I could even access backlogged publicity agreements and round up the associated amendments, Paul had returned from his meeting with the same blank face he always had. He sat down to his computer, gazing at the screen with an unending stare.

A moment of silence crept by, leaving nothing but the dull tapping of keyboards from other cubicles to fill the air. I turned to look at Paul. He played with a stack of papers beside his computer for a moment and sighed deeply. When I turned back to my desk, my chair made a strange groaning sound. Paul picked up the phone and began dialing. He sank back in his chair, using the mouse to add a few details to his latest creation.

I started to talk but stifled myself to an awkward exhale.

"Yeah, hi, could I get seven large sausage and pepperoni pizzas sent to the Walden Records building?"

I turned away, listening to his quick conversation.

"4635 Santa Monica Boulevard. Third floor, room 48-B," he continued.

I couldn't concentrate on anything but him. That was Pratt's office, and from what I remembered, Pratt was a vegetarian.

"William Pratt. Right. Thanks a lot. Bye."
He hung up the phone.

I turned toward Paul, leaning forward in my chair. "You okay?"

He leaned forward, staring at the floor with his arms resting on
his knees. "My band signed with Walden Records."

"That's good, isn't it?" I couldn't tell if he was lying or not.

"Of course," he said, turning back to his desk. "But I signed
with Lester upstairs and didn't go through Pratt."

"That's not good."

"Exactly. You know Pratt. You go through me or you screw
me." Paul imitated Pratt's high and mighty voice. "And if you screw me,
I'll screw you harder."

"Let me guess what followed," I added with a Pratt rendition of
my own. "I don't fire people. People fire themselves."

"Yep."

"So that's it?" I asked.

"I thought I'd make some long-distance calls on the company
line, then head out early."

I slowly turned back to my desk. "Listen, Paul. I'm sorry."

He turned to me halfway. "It's you I feel sorry for." He turned
back around and proceeded to call his friend Lucas in New York.

I leaned back in my chair, breathing in the faint scent of printer
toner mixed with the stench of Paul. I reached into my pocket, pulled
out the orange golf ball, and blindly rolled it onto my desk. I listened to
the ball slowly roll along the hard desktop, until it met an obstacle and
stopped. My eyes remained shut.

At the end of the day, I sat in my cubicle alone. Paul left by noon on an
extended lunch, as he put it. Co-workers filed out slowly, making small talk
about their plans for the night. I sat for a moment, listening to the hum
of the copier across the way. I decided to check my email before I left
for the day. I opened my Inbox to find forwards from people I'd never
met but had my email address on their department mailing list. Usually
they were humorous chain letters or cartoons about corporate life that
people would print out and hang in their cubicles for conversation's
sake. Sometimes I thought these were the only things keeping these
people from ending their lives. In fact, I used to pass them along to
friends if they were good but, after I while, I stopped reading them
altogether.

When I went to shut down the computer, I noticed the orange
golf ball resting beside the printer. In the printer tray was a copy of
Paul's caricature of Pratt. I pulled it out, taking a moment to recognize
the way the nose curled downward from his forehead to his chin, and
how the plaid skirt waved in the wind, revealing Pratt's scrawny legs and
bulging knees. The water from the leaky water pistol made a puddle on
the ground below his feet. His features were grossly exaggerated in an
impeccable portrayal of Pratt's personality.

I brought the picture a few cubicles down to where the
department kept their scanner. I scanned the picture onto a disk and
brought it up on my computer. In a few clicks and a drag, the picture
was attached and sent, by email, to everyone in the department, giving
them something new to talk about in the morning.
Lock and Key

(With Sincere Apologies to Alexander Pope)

When starting life the Lord was wise
He did not give us alibis
He said I am the boss so don't be miffed

We had no choice of what we got
Whether it was key or lock
It was assumed each one would like its gift

My preference I'd like to voice
I'd say that if I had a choice
I'd rather be a key than what I am

It seems that in this world so strange
The keys have had more luck than brains
And of the locks the keys don't give a damn

The keys take many locks to try
And no one seems to question why
In fact they sometimes brag about their feats

But if the locks let many keys
Open them they're called diseased
For locks should connect only with one key

Oh if I were a key I could
Try all the locks and think it good
And then I'd sneer at all the locks I'd done

Because the world has demanded
There shall be a double standard
The keys get many, the locks get only one

To the tune of paint it black

One brother killed the other, and God gave him the mark,
Cain wandered the desolate places, he searched the endless dark.

I taught the angels when they fell,
I taught the serpent to talk.
God said let there be light,
where before there was only dark.

One good son slew his father, knew his mother, thus myth born.
The Madonna clutches the babe, rosary and serpent adorned.

I held the centurion's hand,
I taught him to embrace.
I banded Vanessa the washcloth
That captured the messiah's face.

One brother seized the other, they struggled in the womb.
The father blessed the one, the other ruddy bloomed.

I hid the arc of the covenant,
I know where the grail is kept.
I consoled our sister Dinah,
held her hair back as she wept.

Two sisters loved the one, seven years did he serve.
The father that tricked them all, in the end got what he deserved.

I lit the lamps prepared the bridesmaids,
I announced the groom.
I helped Nietzsche stand
and together we put god in his tomb.

Two brothers suckled there in a she-wolves solemn shade.
Romulus and Remus took their leave and Rome the great was made.

I taught you how to walk,
I taught you how to stand,
I gave you the freedom to sin,
I made you understand.

One father raised a knife, and the angel stayed his hand.
God offered up his own sons and forgot the sins of man.

And I was the sickle
And I was the reaped
I was the mud
I watched him breathe
And I was the water
And I'll be the rain
I was the olive branch
I drank the rain
And I was the apple
And I was the tree
I was the evil
I made us free

I had never been bit by a dog before.
Never knew they could open locked doors.
I must have smelled like meat. A veal steak, marinated in Jack Daniels perhaps.
I played dead and that dog ripped at my clothes.
I played dead and died inside.
“Let sleeping dogs lie” – lie, he did.
in the dark, on top of me while the neighbors politely closed their blinds-
I must have smelled like meat.
Because I didn’t move, didn’t motion the dog closer- didn’t even see it coming my way.
I had so much Jack Daniels in my eyes.
“Dogs are beasts, they’re carnivores, they have sharp teeth.”
But, I never knew those strange-strong paws could untie shoes.
I shouldn’t have smelled so delicious, coated in liquor-
I shouldn’t have drifted off in his territory.
This wasn’t the first time he had bit a drunken child-
and all the while,
the neighbors knew.
They knew this dog had a history of attacks.
But I laid on my back, oozing with the scent of JD and rare meat,
as he bit and he bit and he bit again-
I never knew how deep those teeth could sink. How painful the violent stabs of incisors would feel-
on my chest, on my thighs, on my stomach and toes.
I didn’t understand the danger of strange dogs.
I had never been bit before.
Camping

Kim Trela

And sun showers ripple my face from within.
I'm still just a thoughtful mind sitting on a stone, alone
Hearing kindle cracks on the darkness thin.

I hear my old voice crack in the kindle.
I hear my child's voice sing to the window.
Man on the moon, cast my shadow on distant stone.
My vision at 40 has already begun to dwindle.

Fish filth foams the currents of the ocean.
Flocks of seagulls sneeze up commotion.
Familiar waves crash on someone else's shore.
Forget me, I'm rotting. I'm going through the motions.

Shaking the aspen tree with my upset breath,
I claw at the sky for a moment's rest.
It isn't this place I stand in alone.
I long for the comforts vanished from home.

I was once told when eyes of blue reflect the gray
And strength collapses and decays,
The path erodes to reveal what you sought
Beneath what superficial being begot.

A thousand butterflies kiss the mourning grass like wind
The storm outside is deafening with the god-like thunder and there are winds that rip shingles off the rooftops. Every now and then a gap in the storm clouds show a bloated moon hovering in the sky. A small house at the end of the block is where this stranger wants to go. It is run-down and stray cats cower under the porch. In his youth, the elongated sack over his shoulder would not have slowed the stranger down. But he isn't young anymore. A low growling responds to the hideous doorbell and the squeaky door cracks open.

"Did I miss anything important?" asks the stranger as he enters the building. He unwraps the package to reveal a tied-up cheerleader. She is still alive, but a spigot has been grafted to her chest.

"Just hearing about Frank's wife. He has to be home in an hour, so this poker game is going to be very short. It's her time of the month again," says a voice from the other room.

"Damn it! I hate it when that bitch gets her bolts tightened," responds the dark man. He walks into the next room to see a werewolf, Frankenstein's monster, a Mummy, and a floating cigar sitting around a poker table.

"Pull up a seat, Drac. We saved your favorite chair as usual," says the werewolf. He takes the time to reach down for a stray cat. He guts it in a swift movement and proceeds to eat up the insides like one would eat a melon slice. Dracula puts his cape on a wall hook and places his food on a wooden chair. He moves one of the plush recliners to the table and sits next to the werewolf.

"That's sick, Wolf. You have any idea how diseased some of those creatures are? Get some real food and maybe your fur wouldn't be full of split-ends," says the Mummy as he shuffles the deck. The cracking of old bones fills the air as he does this. Finally he starts tossing cards out at everyone and puts the deck down.

"Then find me a job. I haven't had a good movie or television appearance in years. My last movie was that stupid American Werewolf in Paris or whatever the fuck it was. I made barely enough money to get this house. Unlike you four, nobody has any interest in werewolves these days."

Frankenstein's Monster suddenly bellows and slams his fist on a snack table. It shatters and he goes back to looking at his cards. Dracula takes a nearby mug and draws himself a glass of cheerleader blood. She squirms a little and he waves his hand over her eyes. She silently falls into a trance.

"Nobody wants Frank for a job either. Not like he really had any good jobs in the first place. No offense, big guy. Ever since that first movie, he's been stupid. It was never supposed to be that way. I remember the days when we could all join Frank in stunning conversation," says Dracula as he sips his drink.

"I heard your career is starting up again. Hey, Jim! Put that ace in your coat pocket back on the table," growls the werewolf. The invisible man takes a card that is hanging where his chest would be and puts it face up on the table.

"Nice nose, Wolf. You caught me," he says.

"Nose had nothing to do with it. We can see through you and the card was just hanging in open air. How the hell did an idiot like you restart your career?"

"Charm and talent."

The Mummy laughs before saying; "He probably haunted a movie executive's house and scared him into making the television show. I'm just surprised they made the series after that movie. What was it called again? Hollow Man?"

"It was Hollow Man. Now what was so wrong with that movie?" asks the Invisible Man.

All of them, except Frank, suddenly announce, "Kevin Bacon."

"I could really go for some bacon right now, but I just don't have the money. Eating cats makes me feel like I'm back in Romania with you, Dracula. You would think your country would know how to cook something that didn't eat rodents," says the werewolf. Dracula just glares at him and replaces two cards in his hand.

"At least I have a career. That television movie on my real life was enough to stir everyone's interest in me. That and Dracula 2000 helped to pull me into the new time period. I can guarantee that Dracula has a good number of years left in him," he says while going for another drink. The body is starting to turn deathly pale, so he makes sure to heat up his blood by putting a lit matchbook in it. Frank suddenly jumps to his feet when he sees the fire.

"Calm down, Frank. It isn't out to get you this time. So, how's Buffy these days, Fangs?" asks the Invisible Man. Everyone around the table starts to snicker and they almost fall down laughing.

Dracula shatters the mug in his hand and stands up. "Stop reminding me of that entire incident. I was not even consulted on that appearance and they proceeded to make a fool out of me. Me! The
Prince of Darkness! One of the greatest monsters of all time! Twice that petite bitch staked me and made me into a laughing stock. I swear if I ever meet the people behind that episode, I will rip out their spleens and stuff them up their noses."

"I sense some aggression. Maybe you should just go and have a talk with the guy who wrote the script. You weren't killed, so you can come back for a grudge match. Those are getting very popular with the audiences these days. Of course that entire episode was a copy of Bram Stoker's story. The old man must have been spinning in his grave," mutters the werewolf as he looks at five cards that combine to make absolutely nothing in poker. He bends down to grab another cat leg and forgets to hide his cards from view.

"Trust me. The old man was spinning in his grave. I made sure to check him once the episode ended and it took me all night to calm him down. As for talking with the creator, I tried. But his office is only open during the daylight hours. You've been pretty quiet, Mummy. I heard about your new movie coming out. Hope it's as funny as the last one," says Dracula as he eyes the werewolf's cards.

"Whatever. I'm not too thrilled about it. The first movie was a good hit for me because it got me back in the spotlight. Those special effects and the new powers they gave me helped pay the bills. But I'm not so sure about this movie," says the Mummy as he throws ten chips onto the growing pile.

"I don't see why. The trailer looked really good. Of course, I snuck in to see Hannibal and everything was free. Not having to pay always makes something look a lot better," says the Invisible Man.

"Ignore him. Why don't you like the movie?" asks the werewolf.

"It has The Rock in it. A pro wrestler has a part in one of my movies. That might be good for Highlander or X-Men, but I don't trust those muscles heads. It just doesn't sit well with me."

"Oh please. If the man can make a fan following with the name of a piece of earth then I think he can do this movie. Give the guy a chance and see how it goes. It could always be worse. They could have given fleabag here the role," says Dracula with a smirk.

"Keep laughing, jerk-off. I'll get a chance soon enough. Now, let's finish this game. Your turn, Frank." Frankenstein's monster grunts before pushing all of his poker chips into the middle of the table. Fishing around in his pocket, he throws his car keys and wedding ring into the pile.

"Too rich for my blood," says Dracula as he throws his cards down in defeat.

"I'll just turn with my tail between my legs now," says the werewolf with a cat's tail sticking out of his mouth.

"That is disgusting. I'm out," agrees the Invisible Man. He throws his cards down and lights another cigar.

"I'll see you, big man. Just for fun, I'll add in my summer home in the Sphinx. I just had it redecorated. What have you got, Frank?" asks the Mummy.

Frank puts down his cards and shows everyone a King, a Queen, a Jack, a ten, and a four. None of them match suits except the Queen and the four. The Mummy places his cards down to show a pair of three's.

"How did you know he was bluffing?" asks Dracula.

"Simple. He was holding his cards backwards the entire time. I thought everyone would have noticed that. Oh well. Looks like I win tonight," laughs the Mummy as he stretches his arms around the pile of chips and starts to pull them in. Frank screams before knocking the Mummy across the room. The bandaged man stumbles to his feet only to fall back down with a thud.

"That had to hurt. Guess the big guy would have to go home with something considering his wife thought he was at the golf course. So, what is everyone doing tomorrow night?" asks the Invisible Man as he gets his coat from a hat rack. Frank has already taken most of the money and walked out of the house. They hear the screeching of his car before another explosion of thunder.

"I'll be healing in my sarcophagus," announces the Mummy as he stumbles to a chair. Dracula walks over and helps him to his feet.

"Meeting up with some old friends. I haven't seen Abbot and Costello since their funeral. They'll be in town by evening. So, I will probably see most of you next weekend. Hopefully, we don't have to play at Frank's house. His wife hasn't liked me since I tried to drain her canary," says Dracula. He helps the Mummy out the door and his cape turns into a bat to follow them.

"Fucking Vampire! That bastard forgot to take his corpse with him!"
Great Lake Review

Kenton Morales

Over Six Billions Served

In a past life I was pure glacial spring water.
Good to the last drop, Snap crackle pop, Choice hops,
It’s Miller time, I heard it on the grapevine,
Make seven-up yours, Drink Coors,
Give it to Mikey he’ll eat it he’ll eat it,
Give him some Nikeys Just do it, Just do it,
Do the dew, Do do do do do do do do do do do do,
Two for me none for you,
Have you Yahood?
Be all you can be,
Nobody does it like Sara Lee,
Have dinner with Betty Crocker,
Gap dockers, Are you a jean or a khaki?
Khaki swing,
Khaki groove,
Khaki country,
Khaki soul,
Khaki a go-go,
It’s not T.V. it’s HBO, Taste the Rainbow
Got to Go-Go, Pow pow powerwheels, pow-pow
Powerwheels,
Because so much is riding on your tires,
Wires? Wireless? Marvelous!
They’re magically delicious, The most magical place on Earth,
Obey your thirst, Thirst is everything,
For the man who has everything, Anything else would be Uncivilized,
Absolut compromise
Don’t get mad, get glad, comply,
Fly the friendlier skies, Size does matter, Rich foamy Lather,
You’re not fully clean unless you’re zestfully clean,
Mr. Clean gets rid of dirt and grime and grease in Just a minutes,
Minutes rice, New lower price,
Gets rid of lice, and their eggs,
For smoother legs, Nair, love your hair,
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The choice of a new generation,
Absolut pinflation
Absolut procreation
Less than 79 bucks across the nation, By bus,
Go greyhound and leave the driving to us,
I love you Jimmy,
Gimme gimme gimme gimme,
Absolut capitalism
Gonna be there for awhile?
We love to see you smile,
Absolute complacency
The nice time stuff nose, scratchy throat, achy
Head,
So you can rest medicine,
Your way right away,
Absolut obey
Parkay,
Two scoops, Fruity loops,
Better eat your Wheaties,
They’re great,
Absolut Hate
Lose some weight,
Wait, did somebody say McDonalds?
Over six billion served,
And it keeps going,
And going,
And going...

Great Lake Review

Wakefulness

She sleeps alone
now-a-days
he knows this
drifting beside
her; knows the
Seasons by
name, always one,
then another
until what seems
like eons
have passed and
dawn is nowhere closer.

The moment after
everything changes,
like the seasons.
When spring comes
there'll be a new
fancy. He
knows this too, but
wonders what
will happen if
Spring is
late this year.
Great Lake Review

Estimate of the Damage

Melissa Stefanec

Close my eyes
Cry some more tears
Chained to the pain
Captive of your indifference

You cut through my flesh
The sting runs deep
Nerves pulse and throb
My blood is on your hands

So many people
So many times
But you cut deeper

The scars too plain to hide
I head for the hills
Wandering in circles
Living in misery

I can't look myself in the eye
Your face brings me back
Memories won't die
Forever driven into me

Illusion, delusion
Been lying too long
Should be heading out
But the road is too long
Great Lake Review

West

Every evening I watch as it sinks below the horizon
I ask of it to take me
Let me fly away with you
Float away with you
And every evening it leaves me
In the same place
The same heartbreak
The knowledge of its return simply isn’t enough
I want to see the water
The waves
The way its light reflects on the lakes and oceans
To form shapes of light that dance
And move
Like it moves
Like I dream of moving...
Yet it too is alone
It too is taken for granted
And though its eyes see more than mine
It has no joy
No life
It can’t stay
It must press on
It must go
As I must remain
Every evening
And we look at each other
It waves goodbye with a promise of its return
I have only the promise of being here when it arrives once again
And we cry
Together
The Powerline Trail

"You gotta watch out for them," Althea says, "They can't be trusted. Sorry I forgot what we were talking about. What'd you need hon?"

"Directions to the Powerline Trail and a trail map if you got it," answers Diana.

"Take 56 North out of Lihue. You'll see the sign for the Princeville Airport. Take the next left, go in about a mile. Who ya going with hon?"

"No one. I'm going by myself."

"All by yourself? Not a good idea. You get hiking up there and you run into a group of drunken Hawaiians...and they're almost always drunk, did I tell you that? Or high on pakalolo. You get caught by a bunch of 'em up there and you'll be lucky if they only rob you. Those damn Hawaiians, they ruin this place for everyone else."

"I'm sure I'll be fine Althea. I did a lot of hiking alone back home in Maine."

"This ain't Maine. It's just too dangerous with all these crazy Hawaiians. Anyway, I said my peace. Don't say I didn't warn you. I'll go look for that trail map. I think I got one in the back."

Althea lumbers off behind the curtain that separates her living quarters from the welcoming desk at the hostel. Diana shakes her head. She has only been on Kauai for two days. Maybe Althea is an anomaly. She can't imagine a place as beautiful as Kauai is awash with bigots.

Diana turns around and sees Victoria. Victoria is a leathery woman in her mid 50's from Sydney. "Wanker!" Victoria exclaims, referring to Althea.

"Can women be wankers?" asks Diana.

"That one can for sure. Rotten Seppo."

"What's a Seppo?"

"Seppo is short for septic. It's what we call Americans in Australia."

"I'm an American," says Diana.

"Oh no, love! I don't mean you. You're a delight. But some Americans..." Victoria rolls her eyes and turns down the corners of her mouth.

"Can you believe how prejudiced Althea is?" Diana whispers.

Nawiliwili Bay is a picture postcard charm. The water is the color of blue Kool-Aid. Waves look like Poseidon's whiskers are they crash against the shore in a chaos of white foam. Diana relates her earlier conversation with Althea. "I am amazed at how openly prejudices she is," Diana says, "Have you ever heard her talk this way?"

"No," answers George, "but I don't think she'd talk that way in front of me. Althea's brand of racism is poisonous, for sure, but the other type is just as bad."

"Other type?"

"Someone like Althea, you see her coming a mile away. She's very open about her hatred, so you know what you're getting up front, but Victoria is a different story. She's a wanker, a rotten Seppo."
and you can figure how to deal with her. The other type of prejudice is subtle, subversive. Like this guy I used to work for, Johnny Kelly. He considers himself the most tolerant human on the planet. He gives money to the NAACP and the anti-defamation league, and is properly appalled by people like Althea. This makes him very dangerous because underneath all that limousine liberal crap is a racist.

I worked personal injury cases for Johnny, handling lawsuits for people hurt in industrial accidents and car wrecks, things like that. After processing about a dozen scarring cases, I notice a trend. We are accepting a lot less money for scarring cases involving non-Caucasians. I ask Johnny about this. He says scares aren't worth as much on dark skin as they are on white skin. This really pisses him off, he says, but that's just the way it is. It's a societal thing and he can't change it. I ask why don't we try? You know, take some of these cases to a jury, see if we can get some good money numbers, set a new precedent. He laughs and says it isn't worth the time or money. That's why I quit my job."

"Did you like your job?"

"Yeah, liked it a lot. But I would've felt like a hypocrite if I stayed. I just couldn't stomach that kind of covert racism."

"So you quit your job over a principle. Do you really think you changed anything? Or, did you do it because it has something to do with your..."

He cuts her off. "With my ability to easily find a new job because I'm you, charming and brilliant? Possible. But, to answer your question, yeah I think my quitting made a difference, sure. You know Diana, Eldridge Cleaver was right when he said, 'if you're not part of the solution, then you're part of the problem.'"

"Who?"

Diana perches herself on the soft white sand, and watches George bob up and down in the turbulent waters. He calls to Diana, "Hey, are you coming in at all?"

"The water looks too scary."

"Then let me escort you and offer my protection." George stumbled into the shore, picks up Diana and heads back to the tumbling foam.

Diana shrieks. "George, put me down!" George ignores her request, pulls her closer, and kisses her. At first she returns his efforts but then becomes frightened. Diana jerks away from him saying, "You've got the wrong idea about me."

The next morning Diana heads to the Powerline Trail in her rented economy car. The day is dewy and moist. The air tastes like sugar. The trailhead announces itself with a tiny brown and yellow sign. Diana smiles as she steps onto the cinnamon colored clay-like dirt of the trail. She listens to the bird songs and the suction of her own footsteps. The soft ground is like pudding. The valley is twenty different shades of green. "This doesn't even look like Earth," she tells herself, "I almost
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expect to see two moons or something. It's like heaven or Mt. Olympus."

It starts to rain—big rain, like gumdrops, warm and sticky. Diana runs and laughs, the red dirt creeping further up her white legs. The rains stick to her like child's glue. After fifteen minutes, the rain ceases. She grows concerned as the tail turns into a muddle river. The browning mud now swallows up her lower legs to her white calves, making walking difficult.

Diana suddenly hears dogs barking. She looks up and then she sees them. Her heart pounds so intensely she can feel it in her head, her stomach, her toes. Her knees fail her and she falls into the brown mud. Two dogs are running toward her. Behind them, three large brown men advance. One carries a rifle. Another holds something that catches the shine of the sun. She realizes it is a knife, the biggest knife she has ever seen.

Somehow, she climbs to her feet. She frantically twists her head hoping for an escape route. The dogs reach her first. They circle her, barking eagerly. The barking becomes more intense as the brown men get closer. She knows dogs smell fear and it agitates them. She smells the sick sour odor of fear leaping out of her body.

Her wet clothes and her intense fear suddenly envelope her in a chill. She begins to shiver uncontrollably. She looks down and is horrified to see her nipples, large, pink and erect—pointing outward, like two accusatory fingers. She rubs and scratches at them desperately trying to reduce their prominence.

Why didn't she listen to Althea? These three brown men are going to rape her, she is sure. Maybe even kill her.

The first man reaches her, the one with the knife. "Aloha aikane," he calls out. "Eyau alone here on da trail?"

Diana cannot speak. This is what it feels like to die, she thinks. Everything moves slower. The dogs bark in four syllables. The first brown man looks like a mountain. "You speak English wahine?" he asks. "You look English. Maybe German? French? You say anything, ya?" Diana still cannot find her vocal chords. The man grins, showing an even parade of white teeth. "You alone on da trail fo' real?" he shakes his head, "Auwe! Not smart! Rain wash out da trail, all mud up to your okole!"

By this time, the other two men reach Diana as well. They too, smile, and wish her "Aloha." The first man keeps talking. "We're out hunting for pigs. Sorry to scare you with da dogs."

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He then looks down, eyes widening. Diana instinctively looks down too. She notices a quarter size pool of blood on her shirt, around the location of her left nipple. "Did one of my dogs bite you?" the man asks with great concern.

"Oh no! I... I scratches myself on a sharp leaf." She knows he knows it's a lie. He doesn't press the issue.

"How far you plannin' to go?"

"To the end."

"Auwe. You better turn 'round fo' real. The trail past here is bad. I know this trail real good. How much water you got?" Diana holds up her remaining liter of water. He says something in a language she doesn't understand. The man with a rifle produces a bottle of water. "Here," says the first man, "You take. No way you have enough to get all way back. The sun gets very strong."

"Really, I'm fine," answers Diana. She does not want to even touch the bottle, much less put her mouth on it. However, the first man insists and she accepts it to avoid further discussion. Just then, the dogs start to bark excitedly.

"The pigs gotta be close! Let's move!" cries the first man, "Aloha, wahine!" The three men then rush into the thick forest, chasing after the dogs. They disappear under the heavy brush and undergrowth.

Diana is alone again. She plops down in the mud and cries. She suddenly understands what she should have known all the time—the world is a dangerous place. She must stop being so naive, so trusting. She also cries from relief because she dodges a bullet. It is a miracle that she escaped this encounter unharmed.

Diana reverses her direction and struggles back to her starting point. The mud is like a prison. Constantly trying to arrest her feet and legs. The sun unveils itself and the day becomes unbearably hot. Thirst lunes on her like a desperate mugger. She greedily gulps down the remainder of her liter of water. She resolves not to drink the other water and throws it into the thick brush so her thirst will not betray her judgment. When she finally makes it back to the hostel, the brown mud of the trail coats her arms and legs. Dried brown blood stains her white top. It looks as if she has expressed some kind of septic, poisoned milk. As she enters the threshold of the hostel, Althea's sharp blue yes widen. "What the devil happened to you? Oh my, you're bleeding!" she explains, "Did any of those crazy drunken Hawaiians mess with you?"
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Diana ignores Althea and rushes to the water fountain. Althea follows her. “You’re getting me worried kid. Are you OK? What happened to your...”

“I’m fine,” Diana says, “It rained and the trail got muddy. Then I cut myself on something, I don’t know what. Maybe it wasn’t so smart to go alone.”

“I told you so! You mainlanders come here totally unprepared, ignorant about the terrain and weather. But believe me, it could have been much worse. You know what I mean?”

Diana is tired and in pain. The adrenaline rush is gone, and her left breast aches. Why should she make trouble, start an argument? It isn’t her fight anyway.

“Looks like the powerline over-powered you,” Diana swivels, there is George, smiling, pleased at his own weak joke. “Can we please be friends again, Diana?” he asks. He then sees her chest, and adds, “Just what kind of power did you find up there?”

“It’s just a flesh wound. I’ll make it. Yeah, we can still be friends. Forgive and forget, live and let live. Shoot me before I spout another cliché.”

“You know darlin’,” George drawls, “there’s a full moon tonight. A spectacular June moon. Why don’t you clean up. We can ride to Poipu and watch the moon rise together. I’ll even buy you dinner.”

Diana looks at him. She sees her reflection in his large brown eyes. She looks disproportionate, small, and off kilter in his pupils. Her mind doesn’t want to think anymore about anything. Nothing is the way she thought it would be. Not Hawaii. Not the world in general. Not this tall, dark, and handsome man in front of her. “Yes, I think I would like to watch the moon rise with you tonight. I’ll be ready in an hour.”

“Outstanding!” George responds, and grins as he watches her climb the stairs.

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Jill Stankewich

The Difference Between an Orange

Colorless shades phasing the mind
They cover their fragile heads
As they run against the cobblestone
Rain palpitating their skin
Scurry under cardboard boxes
Shimmering to hide
I her dreams she meets him
Runs gracefully forth and grasps hands
Arms outstretched to the earth
Clouds engulfing the wandering few
But she is brought back to a place
Alone and outspoken
Resting the glass before her
Peers out at the stillness of the water
The endless cycle of things
The mountains to the water to the breath
Of everlasting madness
Headaches are not exactly the best things to have when you are trying to do something important. You peer out from the office window above the floor and watch them all rush around looking to beat someone else to the last copy of *Rush Hour 2*. You ask yourself how many times someone can see Jackie Chan jump off the roof of a building.

The classics, that’s what you like. You like watching Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau in their prime. The fun that you have had watching them! You keep looking and begin to realize that the headache is getting stronger. You know what will make it feel better. You know that magic little piece of paper and herb that will help you feel like a man again. At least you’ll feel better. Of all the things that you could have given up. Masturbation would have probably been a better choice. Hell, it would have been easier to deal with.

But why did you make this choice, why of all of life’s vices did you pick the one that has stuck with you since you were able to shave. It was for her. What did she know about anything. She’s just a doctor. And so what if you do get a little cancer. What if you can’t exactly breathe right? Is the air that much cleaner than the smoke coming from one of your little friends?

It isn’t. And you really believe that. So then why not. You see the damn thing sitting right there on Barry’s desk. Why not just steal one. He’s so drunk half the time he won’t even realize he’s missing one. And besides, it’ll feel good to just tell the doctor to shove it for once.

You reach for it and the nausea sets in. You’re doing wrong. You’re lying to her when you go down to the office and tell her that you are doing just fine. That you haven’t puffed one for a few days. You haven’t. It’s day 7. But you love her. You know that you can’t have her. You know that she doesn’t want you. You cry at night sometimes. She’s taken care of you, more than that lousy mother of yours ever did.

You look at the floor and look for her in the Romance section of the store. She’s not here yet. She can make you stop. She can tell you that you don’t need it anymore, that your life is different now, even though it really isn’t. Her soft voice can ease the pain. It cleans your lungs more than any damn fresh air ever could.

Barry’s desk calls you. It’s sitting right there next to the Manager sign. You pick up the pack and pull out the long and sweet cylinder. You slowly bring your chapped lips to it, and you sit down in Barry’s chair, hoping that she might walk through those doors and make you feel guilty for lying to her. You’ll just take a puff, that’s all, just one.

You light it and you feel the heat inside your body. You watch as the match slowly burns. You take in the smoke deep, making sure that it’s like the last time you’ll ever live. You know it’ll be your last time. You know you’ve failed. And so you get up and breathe in and out, looking at all the people. You find her. Your heart sinks. Today is the day you ask. You will invite her. You’re just friends, that’s all. Just friends. That can’t be threatening at all. She flips her hair back and your heart flutters. The fire on the match reaches your dirty fingers and you drop it. You take the cigarette and put it out in Barry’s ashtray. You place the evidence in your pocket. He won’t miss a lousy pack of Marlboro’s. He’ll probably think he smoked them all.

She always gives people these weird looks that make me wonder if perhaps she doesn’t approve of them or whether she admires them. She just finished giving this one couple a look that caused me to be interested in what she thought about them. I carry a bunch of comedy tapes to restock. People watch the stupidest crap, like the Howie Mandel Comedy hour. But not her. She always watches the movies that I never see anyone rent. She rented *Love Affair* last week. Last time I was in her office I listened to her talk about *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* while she took my blood pressure and felt up the glands in my neck to see if there was any swelling. I got to hear all about how Lorelei and Dorothy make their way to Paris on a cruise. “Marilyn Monroe sings ‘Diamonds are a girl’s best friend’ in that one, I can’t believe you never saw it.” She said.

I watch her select the evening’s movie from behind. She is stunningly meticulous about it, making sure that she reads the synopsis. Her left eyebrow is raised as she reads. A bandage decorates the front of her head. She even asks who is in the movie, as if it matters; most of the actors, I or anybody else in this store, have never heard of. She has a copy of *The Last Time I Saw Paris* in her hands and she is obviously confused over something. I step over to where she is and wait until she is startled. It’s a weekly routine.

“You look very well today, Joey.” She says. She looks outside the store.

“Thanks Doc, I’m holding up well.”

“Have you smoked?”

“Smoke? Me? I have a will of iron, my dear lady.” I say. I feel
disgusting lying to her. I love her too much. She always knows how to make me feel good, or extremely lousy. She called me a slob once for not taking care of my cholesterol. She was right to do so. Now I exercise every other day and I eat sensibly, just like they always say on the Slim Fast commercials.

"Have you seen this?" She asks, handing the video to me. Elizabeth Taylor's face is splattered all over the cover of one of those corny MGM classics tape covers, the lion sits there looking at you as though he'd like to devour you. "Liz is great in this, she is definitely a strong woman, wouldn't you agree?"

"I haven't seen much of her stuff, Laura. Is it alright if I call you Laura?"

"I'm your doctor, I'm sure you're entitled." She laughs.

"What's it about? I ask.

"It's about post World War II and its effects on peoples domestic relationships. People are so miserable in this movie."

"That's pretty rough stuff; you sure you don't want a comedy?" I say. She squints and rebukes the idea. She only watched good material from the "golden era of cinema."

"We have some great new releases out if you wish?" She refuses to say that they were only made to make money. The only movie that she likes past 1976 is Titanic. "It's a beautiful work... imagine that, the boyfriend dies."

"Your secretary was rather rude to me the other morning that I called, I forgot to mention. I told you, she definitely has something against me."

"Lucy's just temperamental, you know how these divorcees are. And besides, you're a nice fellow, why wouldn't she like you? In fact, I believe that she is looking for someone to go with her to a cousin's wedding or something like that. Do you like formal events?" She startles me with these questions and the notion that perhaps I might have to date her. I am not for this. I want to go with her on a date. Doesn't she know that? You give a woman flowers on her birthday and still she doesn't get it. Oh yes, he's just a harmless patient. Her delicate hands sift through her handbag, looking for the number of Jill Weathers, her secretary.

"I don't like them at all." I say. "Besides, I make it a rule not to date divorcees, they carry too much baggage. I like calm and resilient women, like yourself. Ms. Weathers is way too young for me. I need maturity and sophistication." Her round face blushes and she doesn’t say “thank you” to my compliments.

"You do realize that I'm married." I sense a morbid kind of pleasure coming from her.

"Yes, but you're tempted." I grin at her.

"Perhaps, but I don't think so." She smiles back and drops her secretary's number back in her purse.

"Are you flirting with me, Doctor Bouvier?"

"I'm rejecting the offer that is imminent." I look around to see if by some act of God her husband is around. I don't even have the slightest idea of what the man looks like. "I thought that dinner between a patient and his doctor would not be such an issue."

"I think that you are a very good-looking man; you are romantic, and a very charming gentleman, but I cannot go on a date with you, perhaps if things were different."

She walks ahead, leading me to the register where she will rent The Last Time I Saw Paris for three nights and four days. I sell her a packet of microwave popcorn with extra butter. She wears a long brown skirt that stretches to her ankles. I wish I could see her legs. She also has on a khaki colored turtleneck sweater made of a very soft fabric. My arm brushed it before when I passed her. I am wearing an Aerosmith T-Shirt, proper attire for any 49 year-old trying to dress like his 15 year old would if he ever had one.

"When do I get to see you again?" She says, waiting for me to finish ringing up her tape. The machine is broken so I have to enter the code number manually in the store computer. I look up from the computer and she has put on a pair of sunglasses.

"You like 'em?" she asks.

"It's six-thirty." I say.

"I bought them at Macy's on Thirty fourth street last week. I'll make the appointment for next Monday, how's that? I will await my favorite patient." She smiles quite gracefully.

"I am not you're favorite. That old guy, Charlie, he's your favorite, you always give him a kiss on the forehead." She laughs, grasping the tape and popcorn with her long and flexible fingers. Her hand briefly touches mine and she grins selfishly to herself. "Sometimes I wish I wasn't married." She walks away wearing the dark glasses. Now I have to go home.

"Say, what happened to your head there?" I ask.

She holds her wound with her hand. "An accident, Joey... just a
Madeline leaves the door unlocked every goddam day when she comes back from that college of hers. She doesn’t realize that some psychopath could just come right in and take my things. Ma wouldn’t do anything. She definitely wouldn’t. She’d sit there and watch the guy walk out with my shit. Oh, but if he tried to take her television, god forbid. She’d stand right up and demand that he drop it. Then he’d take out his 45 and put a nice bunch of holes in her damn belly. She’d deserve it for being stupid. The television is loud as always and as I turn the knob I notice Mrs. Benjamin next door on her porch, smoking her damn smelly cigars. She’s giving me this look because of Ma’s loud television. I tell her every day to keep it down.

“Hi Mrs. Benjamin!” I yell from our yard. I think that Bedford-Stuyvessant is the last place in Brooklyn with houses that have yards. The woman squints to see who is speaking. She has become quite senile and annoying in the last few years. I remember when she and Ma used to be friends. They both had brown hair in those days. She used to sit out there with Ma and Dad and just talk about how things were changing in Brooklyn. I’d play around in the yard with Madeline. Mrs. Benjamin would give us the cookies that she bought from Angelo’s Bakery over on Avenue U. Back then she used to get around in a Jag her dead husband had left for her. Then Dad died of a heart attack and my mom hung out with her less and less. She was a sweet lady before she was crazy.

“Get your own place to live you little leach!” She spits on the ground in front of her.

I almost trip on a bunch of Madeline’s clothing. She has so much, usually clothing that Ma’s bought for her over the years. She still buys her clothing on a regular basis, sort of this sorority bullshit that Ma likes to tell Madeline.

“You home, Joey?” She screams. She wears that same apron, stained in the blood of all that red meat she cooks. “A little red meat’s good for you,” she says, “Your sister eats red meat.”

“I’m here Ma.”

“Maddie isn’t home yet, I’m worried, you gotta go and check on her.”

“Ma, she’s goin to Brooklyn College, that’s right down the road.” She walks over and smacks me on the back of the head.

“You little brat, you go get your sister.”

I find her with some fellow from her class. She is so melodramatic whenever I’m around her friends. She begins by pretending to not see me. Then I call her Maddie, which she hates. And so she calls me an asshole. This one is some sort of an attorney, studying for his masters degree in Criminal Justice. He’s got a really long nose and just because I happen to point it out, she gets upset. He wasn’t too happy either.

“Ma’s out of her mind!” She says, upset at the fact that I had come to pick her up.

“Well you didn’t call, young lady.” I say, walking next to her. I felt just as stupid as I did when I would walk her home from kindergarten, when I would walk her home from grammar and middle school, and then from Midwood High.

“Why did you come, anyway?”

“She was upset so I thought a walk would do me some good.”

“You smoke at all today?”

“I don’t smoke anymore, I told you that!” I say. She is always trying to find some way of pissing me off.

“Oh, I thought you gave that up.” She says.
"You're gaining a little weight these days." I could sense the anger.

"What's that doctor of yours say?"

"She says that I need to cut down on my stress at home, particularly that of the people I associate with. I should go on a vacation."

"I think that's a good idea, Joey. Maybe you should go somewhere exotic like Saudi Arabia. How does that sound? I think that's a good idea."

I think that she's been seeing this guy for a while now. She's always out with him until about Eight at night. She always calls Ma and tells her that she'll be going out or that she's going to be late. In all the time I never thought she'd pull one of my own tricks and just not call. Ma loves her though. She never gets in trouble for anything.

"Your jacket smells like shit." She leans over and sniffs the wet leather.

"It rained you know," I say.

"I didn't notice, Ralph had me deep in conversation."

"He try anything?" I ask, watching our backs to make sure nobody was behind us.

"I think I'm in love." She looks up at the moon and smiles.

"That's great."

"He's just the sweetest guy," I see her head turn towards mine, expecting me to be enthused or something.

"You know what's on TV tonight?" I ask.

"You know what he did the other night," She begins to sift through her purse.

"No."

"He invited me to stay up in his cabin in Connecticut." She shows me its picture. It was a very ugly thing.

"Is he gonna cook you a deer."

"You wouldn't get it. You're a man."

Those types of comments don't bother me. I am well aware of my gender and therefore the problems associated with it. She is so stupid for being with this guy. He's obviously a jerk. Honestly, a cabin, this is insane. It's her life and I have no intention of butting in. I know she could care less about mine. Her eye sparkles a little when she begins to talk about him. I guess I wasn't prepared for what she was going to tell me next but then again one is never prepared for stupid statements.

"I have a surprise for you, my brother." She is smug. I stop walking and turn to her to receive what I know will be a blow.

"Ralph proposed to me." I sure can call them, can't I? We walk the rest of the way home in silence. When we get to the door Mrs. Benjamin is still sitting out there with that beat up transistor radio of hers listening to the news. Madeline screams while I unlock the door I'm not used to unlocking.

"Mrs. Benjamin, I'm getting married!"

"Oh, congratulations, my dear, you're so blessed! I'm so happy for you, love!"

The lump in your pocket is not an erection. Although you wish it were at times. It's the equivalent of one however. You notice that. You can feel the little craving inside of you. It's only been three hours since your last and you know that you promised yourself, "no more".

You know that she'll ask you again. You know that she is going to be there, smelling you to see if you've lied and when she finds out she'll never love you. You slowly pull it out of your pocket and your senses pick up on the odor. Your nostrils flair and you look at yourself in the mirror. You wonder why it is you try to make a decision about something you already know the answer to.

You pull out the card she gave you a week ago and read her sweet, sweet name. Laura Bouvier; like something out of her movies. She has a perfect life, a husband and a career that she loves. Her life is her addiction. Yours lies in a little fucking piece of paper that you inhale like an idiot. But you know it tastes good. You know that it's the only thing that will make the sound of your damn sister's happiness go away.

Your ignorant mother will cease to be and the pounding headache that hurts so bad, the pain, it will be no more. You know that this is true. You know that reality is spelled, M-A-R-L-B-O-R-O. You know that in a second, after you've lit the match and sit on the toilet, all your problems will be gone, all the things that make you a 49-year-old living with his mommy; will not be there anymore. You, the man, gets to choose if you wanna stop or not. Not the woman you love. The woman you love -that is quite an interesting thing to you as you open the bathroom door.

The sounds of those fucking women are downstairs and you want to get rid of them. But you know that the number on that card is your salvation. You know that you should call her. In your room you sit and dial the number slowly, as if it were some painful project to accomplish. Some man answers the phone and says hello with his deep voice. You hang up, afraid. Your cigarette wouldn't have made you
afraid, it would’ve helped you say that you wanted to talk to his wife, your lady love.

You slam the phone and go back into the bathroom. The two old women sit downstairs making ridiculous plans to hold a wedding in the house. You are fed up with them. You know what will make them leave. You don’t care that you shouldn’t, besides, it’s not like they’ll know. It’s not like Laura will know. No she’ll sit you down on the examination table and she’ll check you. She’ll ask you if you’ve smoked and you’ll say no. You’ll say no and believe it.

You reach over to the shower key and turn it so they can’t hear you. It almost shines in your hand. The package has three left. You pull one out and sniff it the way you used to watch your daddy do to cigars. “Ahh, the best,” you say. You light it and the tip of your tongue tingles as the paper touches your mouth. Your head hurts less and less as the seconds go by.

You can hear the individual droplets as the carbon monoxide enters your blackening lungs. They’re the only things that you hear. You imagine that the force of each drop makes a dent in the bath tub floor. It pleases you.

Nothing bothers you anymore; not your headache, not your damn family knocking at the bathroom door, not even the thought that the woman you love might be having sex this second with her husband. Then you close your eyes.

“Okay, cough.” She says. This cold instrument tickles my bare skin as I wonder what it would feel like if she had her warm hand over that spot of my back. I could feel her breath on my neck.

“Sound good?” I ask.

“Let me check the front.” I straighten myself so that my fat rolls aren’t evident while I’m sitting. I hope that she can’t smell anything. It’s been 7 hours since my last.

“How did you sleep, Joey?”

“Not that great, I didn’t fall asleep till two.” She doesn’t seem too surprised.

“That’s pretty late.”

“You kidding? I woke up two hours later with a killer headache.”

“You smoked?”

“It hurt like hell, Laura. She puts her instrument over on her desk.
“And why not, I’m sure that you’re a good teacher.”
“Well, I have no problem teaching students, but I’m sure my husband would.” She looks at her watch and then looks up at me teasingly.
“I’d like to cook for you. You could come over to the house some night that everyone’s away.” She looks tempted.
“Absolutely not, Joey. I can’t.”
“You want to.”
“I can’t. And I just won’t. I hope you can handle that.” She puts three more packs of the chewing gum and some more of the patches.
“Good luck with the smoking.” She says. I walk slowly to the door and turn around. She grins and blows a kiss. I raise my hand and catch the kiss and I put it in my pocket.
“I’ll save that for later.” I say as I leave her office.

A David Bowie album is part of the best solution for a real pounder. They come and go. You especially don’t know what the hell is supposed to make you feel better. But music and a good smoke always seems to do the trick.

The damn thing is half burned in your mouth and it’s terrible because it’s your last one of the pack. You’re lying down on your floor with the ashes falling down your neck. The headache’s been gone for a few minutes now and all you can see is Laura’s face in the ceiling of your room.

You were twelve the last time you were lying on this floor, imagining that you were inside the cockpit of space-shuttle. You’re distracted for a little while; at least you have that. You hear the door open downstairs and you rush to open the window and push the smoke outside. You stop and realize that there is something strangely familiar about the scene. You bend down to throw the ashes and the cigarette out the window and the door comes flying open.

Your headache incarnate is back. And you try to ignore what she is saying. The younger version slowly makes her way up the stairs. You’re distracted for a little while; at least you have that. You hear the door open downstairs and you rush to open the window and push the smoke outside. You stop and realize that there is something strangely familiar about the scene. You bend down to throw the ashes and the cigarette out the window and the door comes flying open.

Your headache incarnate is back. And you try to ignore what she is saying. The younger version slowly makes her way up the stairs. Luckily, she doesn’t care enough about what’s going on to come in and eavesdrop. She yells and yells about how much of a disappointment you are to the family. How your daddy is rolling in his grave. How your grandmother would cry. All the money that’s been spent on the patches and gum, and you can’t even do this right. She goes and calls your sister, who’s getting ready for her bridal shower.

Your mother asks your sister where she went wrong. Where did she get such a quitter for a son? You say that you thought she wanted you to be a quitter and she just keeps yelling. You don’t even know what to say anymore so you try to think about what to do. You just wanted to enjoy your day off. You just wanted to hang out and kill your pain.

The pounding needed to stop and the nicotine helped. They didn’t understand what you had to go through. That the woman you love is married, and that she is teasing you. You want to get out of this place and go work for that drunken slob, Barry.

It’s your day off. Now you really feel bad about having to get out of the house. She follows you down the stairs and keeps yelling with your 30 year-old sister lagging behind like some mutt. That’s what she was wasn’t she. A product of your mother sleeping with some stranger. It’s close to the time she’ll get there. You might as well go. You pay no attention to Mrs. Benjamin who’s screaming “I saw you in the window boy! Hahah!”

There are no customers when I walk in. I’m upset at that. When I’m working there are always people looking for videos I can’t find and returning them without rewinding. I quickly can the place to see if Laura is there and I realize that it’s not Six o’clock yet. Barry is hanging out in his office doing nothing. I looked up at the glass window and saw him standing there looking at the wall. He does nothing all day except count the last day’s money and check the store’s receipts. I hate him. I’m sure that when he’s not doing that he’s watching Mick check out the tapes and restock them in the shelves. Mick works by himself on my days off. I would feel bad except for the fact that there’s no one here and I suspect that no one comes here Mondays or Tuesdays.

“Hey Mick, you seen a lady come in to rent a movie?”
“What, that lady you’re always talkin’ to?” He doesn’t even look at me. He keeps scanning videos through the computer.
“Never mind.” I say.

I make my way up the stairs and knock on Barry’s door. He says come in but he doesn’t mean it. He hates to have people sit there and look at him in the eye while he pretends that he is busy. He’s 43 and divorced. I think his ex-wife has something to do with his baldness. But he always wears the finest clothing. I don’t understand. Mick says that his uncle’s rich and that this store is just a perk.

“My boy, have a seat,” He lights a cigarette and gives me a look. He quickly puts it out and apologizes. I don’t acknowledge it. “I know what this is all about, your raise right?”
“No I wanted to work today.”
“Ooh, can’t do that one baby boy. Mick’s here and all, He’s alright.”
“Well I could use the money.” I look out his window and see Laura make her way in the store. She looks better than ever with her sunglasses. It’s dark out but that’s okay, she looks great in them.
“Sorry pal, can’t afford the overtime.”
“You’re probably right, never mind then.” Not listening to whatever bullshit he was going to tell me, I walked out of his office and made my way down to see Laura.

“Doctor, I could use a diagnosis today.”
She giggles a little and gives me a warm smile. “How are you feeling today, Joey?”
“Well, I’m better now.” I look at her and I’m asking her out inside my head. In my heart I know she’s saying yes too. It’s just a matter of asking. The sunglasses are odd to me. I’m not sure why she is so fond of wanting to be covered up all the time. She’s quite conservative I guess.
“What can you recommend for me tonight, Joey?” She asks so innocently. I love that about her. She wouldn’t hurt a fly.
“Well it depends on what kind of mood you’re in.”
“I think I’m in the mood to cry, how’s that?” She looks behind her and then smiles at me.
“Well I can’t think of anything in particular.”
“You don’t work today, what are you doing here?” She says.
“How did you know I don’t work today, huh?”
“I always keep track of my patients.”
“I’d like to treat you...” She blushes. “We’ve been through this, you know.”
“Yes, and every time I come closer and closer to convincing you. Look, it’s just two friends going out to dinner. I’d like to treat my doctor for once. I’m sure that’s no real problem.”
“I...I can’t.” She goes right out from where she came.
“You suck!” Yells Mick from behind the counter.
“You ‘aint been laid in years either, ass, so don’t talk!” I scream back.

Maybe its one of those things that you attribute to the gods but I find myself in the midst of a very interesting situation. I can see Laura all the way on the end of the subway platform. She waves her purse around like it were some kind of toy. A woman from one of her dumb movies wouldn’t be doing that I can tell you.

I fumble around for several minutes pacing, thinking of the right things to say. How would I ask her and make her see that it was the right thing to do to go out with me on a date? I just want to be with her in a nice place, alone. Her figure bounces around happily when she walks. She is coming in my direction and I don’t think that she’s seen me yet. Her long dress is a dark green that sort of reminds me of the color of Mrs. Benjamin’s old Dodge. The sunglasses look so strange in the dark subway station. I mean, this is Brooklyn, not Hollywood for godssake. When she gets in front of me, I smile and she grins at me. She tells me about how her husband is working late tonight and that she would love to have dinner at her favorite restaurant. It’s just dinner with a friend so it’s no big deal, no one should give her a strange look.

So we walked into Uncle Wong’s Chinese restaurant on 18th Avenue. She was quite friendly with the waiters, almost flirtatious I’d say. She introduced me as her friend to the head waiter, Richie. We sat down and I felt quite strange sitting across from a doctor. Most of my dates involve ex-prostitutes and bowlers and a nice meal at the All American diner under the Belt Parkway overpass.

“So what’s with the sunglasses?” I ask. “It’s okay here in a restaurant; I don’t think the sun’s gonna get ya.” She laughs and says she wants to keep them on. She’s having some eye trouble. About five bites into my General Tso’s chicken platter, I excuse myself and go to the bathroom. My head is throbbing and I just need that cigarette to help me feel better. It’s in my mouth, unlit. I look at myself in the mirror. I can’t go through with it. I have to wait at least until the end of the date. I sit back down and continue eating, the sweat begins to pour and I start to feel rather restless.

“How’s the smoking?”
“What about it?” I ask nervously.
“You haven’t smoked have you?”
“I didn’t know this was an appointment.” I say.
She’s cautious now. “Well it came out in your urine sample.”
“You don’t know what it’s like.” I say.
“Really, tell me.”
“The pain is awful, Laura. It’s like there is nothing I can do about it because if I stop I get terrible headaches and I feel faint and I get sick. I hate those goddamn patches and the gum tastes like shit. I just need real treatment, my own. I only go to your appointments because you’re there. I’m so in love with you, Laura. I need you, I want...”
to make love to you and all of that. We can even leave Brooklyn if you want and we'll go someplace exotic like Hackensack, or something.” She does something I'll never forget. She lifts her sunglasses slightly and shows me her eyes.

“This is pain.” She whispers. A shiner the size of Mercury was stuck right there on her left eye.

“When?” I ask.

“Last night. I was talking to my neighbor, George. So I got it when I came back in the house. It was a clean hit he got. I slept right there where I fell. Don’t preach to me about your little headaches. Truth is if you don’t cut that shit, you’re gonna die of cancer, and it’ll be pretty soon.” She is amazing. She is everything I want in a woman. She is direct and loving, everything those two at home aren’t.

“Let’s get out of here.” I say.

“I’m still eating.”

“No, I mean let’s leave Brooklyn. We don’t have to say anything to anyone.”

“My practice...my patients, Joey.”

“I don’t want to go alone. I need you to go with me. Just you and me. We’re not going to say anything.”

“Tomorrow then. I’m ready tomorrow.” She looks through her purse for a calendar I think.

“I’ll meet you at the port authority. I’ll even buy the tickets, babe.”

She leaned over and kissed me on the lips, the way those actresses in her movies must have kissed their lovers. “You ever been to Paris?” She asks.

“No.”

“Well I’ve been there several times. That’s where I’d like for you to visit someday with me. It’s the most beautiful place. My mother and father would take me there every other summer. Then I went a few times with my husband.”

“When’s the last time you went?”

“When I was a little girl.” Her attention drifts as she stares at the entrance of the restaurant.

“Fuck.” I look behind me and see a very large man stomping down the aisle with a blank look on his face.

“I was just having dinner and we were talking, Matthew. I’m sorry.” He is six-foot three and looks to be well built underneath all that clothing. He’s a construction worker. The pure brawn is evident. He speaks in a low volume and with authority.

Great Lake Review

“Come.” He says to his wife. They walk out of the restaurant - he holds her by the hand the way my mother used to hold mine before I learned how to cross the street on my own. I knew him from somewhere. I recognized that face. I followed the two out the door and I saw him putting his object in his Subaru.

“Hey asshole! You know you’re supposed to rewind your fucking tapes before you bring them back!” He grins and makes his way over. He grabs my neck and I start trying to make my way out of it and then he punches me right in the pit of my stomach. I fall to the ground and I gasp for air. I can’t move and my head is starting to pound. I really need a cigarette. He starts to walk back to the car and I get up and jump on his back and try to choke him from behind. Laura is watching in horror from inside the car. He tries to ram me into the wall of the restaurant and I still find myself holding on. He backs up about five feet in front of the glass doors and quickly charges backwards with the energy of an angry bull. I let go knowing what he wanted to do and the next second he is unconscious and bleeding. I waited for the ambulance. Laura didn’t leave the Subaru until the ambulance got there.

“They’ll want info from me,” She says.

“Tomorrow?” I ask.

“Tomorrow.” The lights flashed and she was free. She finally had a choice.

It doesn’t hurt as much as usual but it is sensitive. You look to see if maybe you should buy one and you look for a newsstand. There are plenty in the damn place. You end up buying some off of a bum that’s just hanging out. You just want to have them in case it gets worse. You feel inside your pocket and you are content with the hundred dollars for the tickets. You pace around a little more in front of the Greyhound terminal. You wait anxiously and impatiently. You’re waiting and the pain is getting worse. Doubting the quality of the product you bought you throw it out and look for another place to buy while you wait. Women are always late anyway.

You buy your necessity in the newsstand. You waltz over to the ticket booth and buy two tickets. You imagine buying a little place with her someday. You’ll probably get married soon. People this age don’t wait as long as the youngsters. You keep waiting. You wait all day if you had to. A few times you think that you see her but you don’t. You go and buy an expensive Pepsi from the machine and are called to board the bus to Hackensack.
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Your head is now hurting more than ever and you finally pull it out. You bring one to your lips and place it on your warm and wet tongue. You take one more look behind you and there is no one. You take a sip of soda and you bop your head back. You feel the little white pill go down your esophagus and the soda fizzing and bubbling down with it. A homeless man stares at you from his home, the floor. You can see the need for something in his eye. He asks you for a smoke and you ignore him. You've got a seat all to yourself in the back and you press your head against the cold window. As you go farther and farther away from home, your head starts to hurt less and less.

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Mural

Kim Trela

smile sweet stranger,

paint yourself without that anger.

erase the barren tree and let be what will be.

save space for late night thought

and hope for prayer,

then wash those stains of amaretto from your hair.

the perfect moment comes and goes

and the love within you no one knows.

could you believe in me

if simply believing could set you free?

you seem confined behind the lines

of frostbitten time.

see me shivering under tattered sleeves,

hear me praying on bruised knees

stranger, you're pale from fear of love

but fright of love is what we're made of.

the constellations know, we're paddling too slow.

there's more ahead to

unravel, un-ripple, unwind.

clear as the colors flow, there's things we'll never know.

but, stranger, hold your head to you mind

in this frostbitten time.
Bad Poetry

When I die and go to heaven
My heart won't be heavy laden
Because for me will be a kind of induction

Great poets will come forth to greet
My spirit, they'll be glad to meet
It's I who made their works a grand production

Cummings will shake my hand with glee
As will Keats and Percy Shelley
And all will know that of fame I'm deserving

If it weren't for my poor writing
Bob Frost would be uninviting
My awkward feet make his feet worth preserving

Oh I'm just a poor romantic
Don't know syntax from semantic
I am aware Syl Plath I will never be

But I keep on writing with great hope
A place of fame I want to grope
Reserve a place in Sound and Sense just for me

So I say to critics biting
Don't be too harsh with my writing
Although there's little reason to my rhyme...

You can never appreciate
That a poem is truly great
Until you've heard bad poetry in your time
Dear Readers,

Ever since I arrived in SUNY Oswego I couldn’t help but be aware of the wealth of writing talent that had come here. Since the Great Lake Review is an organization that depends largely on the support of these talented individuals, I would like to thank not just those featured in this magazine, but everyone who submitted their work to us as well, so that we could once again feature the work of many of Oswego’s talented writers. I’m honored to have been a part of this magazine now for three years.

This contribution is a part of but by no means limited to members of SUNY Oswego’s excellent Writing Arts Department. So I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Joellen Kwiatek, who acted as our advisor and aided us in our poetry readings, and Brad Korbesmeyer who’s simply always been available and willing to lend a hand.

This literary magazine not only belongs to those whose writing lies within these covers, but everyone in the college community. So to all of you out there who continue to plow their way through semester after semester, simply like a good read, or like myself will be graduating this May, good luck in your endeavors.

Yours sincerely,

Sean W. Tresay
Editor-in-Chief of the Great Lake Review