Write. Create. Experience.
2015. Rights revert back to the artists upon publication.

Thanks, you guys.

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You’re cool.
Communication is a thing; it has a sort of matter to it.

The *written* word is like its solid state.

The *spoken* word is like its liquid state.

The *unspoken* word, called a thought, is like its gaseous state.

And *art* is like *wine*, a cosmic combination of each state coming together in swirling acceptance of intermingled inebriation.

Enjoy these lines and let the *wine* of our words overwhelm you.
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“There is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.”

- Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*
In my hurriedness,
a state of constant motion,
packing, unpacking, repacking, greyness,
I feel as if I’ve forgotten something,
Left it behind in a motel with no cable,
Or a museum whose paintings
were little more than opaque blurs,
flashes of film cameras and half-empty rooms;
I had it once, a gift, a lineage,
but young and foolish,
I took a wrong turn;
I missed my exit,
And now there is no off-ramp, no way to rest,
only the knowledge that the road before me
has no end.
Grass blade chutes shoot up from underneath them;
Filigree folds together, smattering patterns and mixing indications,
As flyleaf lies, told unoriginally, sold insubstantiality
To sinners caught in God’s gaze.

Immature reflections on august insurrections
Bleed words from willing herds.
The sound of a nation dying:
A subtle chuckle undercuts rippling through
The Ritalin induced social cues,
Held up and belted out by a voice too booming to be true.

Bibles thump, and the constitution skitters
Across the critters’ minds,
A fine line obliterated by double blind fines.

Double-time cries,
Let out sidelong through thin lips, taut,
Over clenched teeth, creaking.

Batted back by feeble sighs;
Ennui lies. Tipped in ricin
Cats’ tails curl twice each second,
Flagellation a furlough.

Shore leave shimmering ease of mind
And peaceful times,
As garrulous guides
Sweep mines from my eyes.

by Phillip Howells

Breakneck Breathing
You stirred softly;
my eyes fluttered open to see
a hazy, orange sunrise
peek around the edges of the closed curtain.

Messy brown hair
rests on silky shoulder straps;
ethe morning finds us tangled in limbs like vines
with no desire to reach for the sun.
The lace sprawled thin, like spider webs. 
It stretched itself out in black lines against pale skin, sticking only to you. In the stale basement we moved with flashing lights; loud voices were our tempo. Condensing bodies spun around us; intoxicated, they became invisible heat.

I wondered if the spiders crawling from the hole in my chest were the ones that painted you so delicate.
Clipped Wings
by Alex Haney

My only wish in life is to fly, unfettered and free,
through the turmoil and strife around me,
but even as I set my sights high,
the doubt
and fear
floods through my mind,
crippling me.
Why,
as I sit here
trying to find my courage,
do doubt
and fear
have such a vice grip on my soul,
when all that I have ever wanted to do in life
is spread my wings and soar as a bird through the heavens?
Image by Amanda Kowalczyk
I’m not ready to leave yet. I stand here on the wooden dock, frozen with only the core left in my loose grip. My hand is sticky. I don’t care that my hand is sticky. I know you wouldn’t care if your hand was sticky. You don’t care about a lot of things anymore.

Throughout that Sunday after I found out, I was in shock. The severity of the situation was not kicking in. After our conversation, though, I couldn’t breathe. I couldn’t stay in that room anymore with that empty box. I couldn’t look at that stupid apple for one more second. Before I knew what I was even doing, I was at the lake with a hacked up apple in my purse.

The surrounding air made it clear it was the calm before the storm, just like my current state of union. I could feel the clouds brewing, waiting to let it all go. I walked to the edge of the dock and stared outward. The wind was blowing towards me, forcing my hair back, and growing ever heavier. It brought the movement of the black waves in my direction. The rain began to come downward and I screamed.

I screamed and cried and yelled and cursed. It was not pretty. Nothing of what was happening was pretty. I reached into my purse and grabbed a slice of apple. I held it in my hand as I remembered returning your call, having a strange woman answer, “UPMC Medical Center, how may I help you?” Why didn’t you tell me in your voicemail? You said everything was fine in your message, that I should just open the package you sent and everything would be okay. You left me there to imagine the worst… the worst that ended up almost being true. I threw the apple slice as far as I could. I heard it splash.

I took out another piece. “How dare you!” I screamed into the rain. How dare you let me be angry at you all week, ignoring you. How dare you call me on Wednesday telling me I’m not good enough at my major and that you see no future
for me. How dare you let me yell at you, exclaiming that you were the one with this problem and not me, that you were the one who didn’t know of your direction in this life. Little did I know you were just projecting; you were projecting your issues onto me while standing in the street looking up at the building in which you were planning to jump off. I threw the second apple slice, and it made a whoosh through the air.

And those poor people in room 1107. You were just going to borrow their balcony to die? How would that affect them? How would that affect all of us? Do you know why I’m not thinking about how this would affect you? Because it doesn’t. It doesn’t affect you. You would be dead. No, I am affected; your mother is affected; Nick, our best friend, is affected. You didn’t even think about anyone else, did you? We weren’t the center of your “plans,” as you call them. I shook my head, and I chucked the third apple slice.

The package is what broke me. You lied. You said I should wait to open it so that the anticipation would make it more special. You told me to open it on Saturday, but then changed your mind to make it Monday. I opened it Sunday when you told me to in the voicemail. In it was your shirt, the watch that I used to wear when I was your girlfriend in high school, and an apple with a note attached: “Stay healthy; eat more fruit. Love, Ryan.” I understood your irony in that I am such a picky eater, as did I understand the sentimentality behind those items. For a second, they made me feel better, safe, like everything really was going to be just fine for us. I threw the fourth slice.

But that wasn’t true, was it? No, you sent me that package to open after you were dead. You changed the day because you thought I would not find out as soon as Saturday, but that I would definitely know of your deed by Monday. Cyclic repetitions between friendship and courtship over the years have brought us beyond close, so how could I not have known? That box disgusted me. That apple horrified me. That is when I chopped it up and ran for the lake.

You aren’t sleeping in your bed tonight because you wanted to die. You are in a mental health care facility right now, out of my reach, because you wanted to
die. I am the only one who shares your burden now, the only one who knows about what is now our situation. Apple slice number five into the water. I am the only one who knows that you aren’t allowed to have shoelaces right now because it is a safety hazard. Apple slice number six into the water. I am the only one who had to answer “patient,” instead of “staff,” when I called the hospital asking for you. Apple slice number seven into the water. I am the only one who knows that you’re not wearing your signature belt because they’re afraid you will wrap it around your neck. Apple slice number eight into the water.

And here I stand. Hours are passing as I see my tears ripple the black water I hover above. My mind floods back to the core which my fingers are wrapped around. Once I throw the center piece I will have no more excuse to stand here and question why you tried to die. I am so happy you had a sliver of doubt that made you call the suicide hotline. I am so glad you are locked in that mental health care facility for four more days.

But I hate you for not letting my love be enough to make you want to stay, and maybe that makes me by definition a shitty person. I look at the core, brown now where the indentations of my fingers pressed too hard, with yellow at only the very top and bottom where the skin remained. Seeds fell onto the dock. I wind up my right arm and with all the strength I can muster, throw the core to the farthest point. It distorts the reflection of the moon that surfaces on the water. I look down around the dock to find all the apple slices make their way back around me due to the storm. They bob with every wave interval. Their presence makes me sad. I guess everything comes back around. I mechanically wipe the tears from my left eye, and then my right.

I walk away from the bobbing yellows in the sea of black. Yellow just like your eyes, drowned in black because that is all I see when I look at you now.
I’m sitting here with my headphones in, but the music stopped hours ago
The silence in my ears is deafening, but I just can’t seem to turn the quiet off
I can’t hear anything but nothing, and that keeps me awake
It’s a sound that’s like something you’ve never heard before

I’m lying hear with my eyes open, but the room’s as black as night
The lack of light is blinding, but I can’t seem to close my eyes
I can’t see anything but nothing, and that keeps me awake
It’s a sight like something you’ve never seen before

So I’ve got no sight and there is no sound, and I’m standing here alone
Despite the lack of existence, I clearly am alive
I am anything but nothing, and that keeps me awake
It’s like something you’ve never been before.
Onion Head

by Daniel Kushner
Visible Light
by Jamie Linderman
Image by Andrew Henley
A lone dove journeys from afar
Over deep seas to foreign lands
With tired wings she settles down
Into the palm of my open hand

My fingers gently built a nest
A new home for her fresh start
But another home was forming elsewhere
In the cradle of my heart

I protected the bird and held her close
And nurtured a bond, the dove and me
I learned her coo, she knew my voice
Feathers and fingers like lock and key

I was a refuge for the dove
A mighty castle built for a king
But when my own walls crumbled down
I escaped the rubble on her white wings

This delicate and quiet creature
Lifted my heavy lids to the sky
She reminded me of the shining light
And that even I can learn to fly

And when the fateful day arrived
The bird returned to her distant land
But a bond feathered with love remained
That only a girl and a dove would understand
Wood burnings done by Dara Belohlavek
And a Laughing God
by Maggie Hess

He is a laughing god – or she –
who tossed me with the autumn leaves,

windswept and harried and scuttling
around feet after fog-wrapped mornings.

When a strange wind hurries past ankles,
it doesn’t feign control, the human impulse.

Every day has its blessings:
a private song, a letter at last,

the bright fire of foliage crowning
the upper limbs.

To smell the damp leaves and know
it is what you love –

Every day has its miracles,
those you accept and those you create.

The sound of divine mirth is the dry shuffle
of twigs, plans.
Eternal Recurrence
by Phillip Howells

You are my family,
The twisted spirits
Lingering together on this
Curving turn of time
This eternal modernity.

My ever-present audience,
My cast of characters,
The colors on my palette
On my brush
On my fingertips,
The strands of sinew
Connecting my scattered consciousness
To the scapula of this enigmatic existence.

Drawing by Daniel Kushner
His demeanor forceful in the way to teach
A drive to demonstrate in attempts to reach
For showing drama to write had a goal
That “show me”, not “tell me”, was its vital soul

Of intrinsic desire a writer’s to reveal
Not preach, or tell, but basically anneal
What’s behind a thought or idea or truth best explained
Projected subtle, yet vivid through words unstained

There exists deep within the truth not told
For that path for many shouts out too bold
Answers come more by an internal clock
Which coalesces amid a various flock

We’re a mixture of beliefs so highly conglomerate
Hard to make sense through noise it does commentate
So better to “show me” than “tell me” oft stated Chris
A phrase often come to my fore is this
Forget Alex and Be You: A Manifesto
by Zachary Shively

My friend told me he would give his left arm to have the talent of Van Halen. This is illogical for two reasons. First, how can he play guitar without his left arm? Second, why should he aspire to play like someone else?

Langston Hughes criticized African American poets for wanting to write like white ones, which he sees as them wanting to subconsciously be white. I think that reaches a much higher level. You shouldn’t want to do anything like anyone. You should want to do things like you do.

I am not demanding you to “make it new.” I’m telling you to make it you.

Your prose will never read like Joyce, Faulkner, or Dostoyevsky. You won’t write satire as Bulgakov, Adams, or Swift. You aren’t Dickinson, Frost, or Ginsberg. Your artwork cannot be a Monet, Warhol, or Rembrandt. You will never have the wit of Twain, Allen, or Carlin. You won’t compose anything like Mozart, Wagner, or Vivaldi. Your graphic novels will be nothing like those of Moore, Millar, or Gaiman. You cannot rap like Dre, RZA, or Nas. You are not Hendrix, Ma, or Ellington. Your drawings won’t come out like Spiegelman, Watterson, or Herrimen. You can’t create drama like Chekhov, Williams, or Stoppard. You will not direct like Anderson, Scorsese, or Capra. Your screenplays are incapable of being like those of Kaufman, Wilder, or The Coens.
You cannot do these things because you are not these people. This is not a bad thing. Be your own, not a mimic.

Embrace your voice. Be distinctly you. What’s greater: something unique or an imitation?

Improve. Continue to look to these works as what they are—great examples of great artists. Look toward them as influences in order to hone your own voice. I’m not preaching newness. If you want to reinvent the wheel, go ahead. But make it your wheel. Look to other wheels and make your own. Make it unlike anyone else’s wheel. It’s your wheel.

You’re with your friend Casey. Casey says something about wanting to be like Alex. You realize that Casey should never want to be like Alex because Casey is Casey and that’s why Casey’s your friend; that’s why you’re with Casey and not Alex. You explain this to Casey. Casey understands but still wishes to have a quality or two of Alex’s.

This situation reflects you. Don’t do things like Alex. Do things like you.

You hear Louis Armstrong and recognize it’s Satchmo. You hear his voice and instantly know. You read a passage by Virginia Woolf and it sounds like Woolf. You hear her voice.

Now, you examine something you wrote/drew/sang or whatever you do—it’s undeniably you. And that’s great.
Carrie Anne
by Jamie Linderman

Carrie Anne was a giving person since the day she took her first breath. Had it not been for her birth, her parents’ marriage may have very well fallen apart. They were high school sweethearts who vowed their love would stay young even as they turned old, but time wouldn’t allow it. Their love started out healthy and unbreakable. As they grew into adults, their problems seemed to mature too. When Carrie Anne’s father lost his job, a bruise began to surface on the skin of their relationship.

Two years later, Carrie Anne’s mother had an affair that broke a few bones. It wasn’t until she miscarried with their first child that the relationship became truly crippled. That is when Carrie Anne arrived. She saved the day, and she saved their lives. Her tiny breaths were all that they needed to heal. In fact, when the doctor held her out for her mother to take, she swore she saw Carrie Anne give her a reassuring smile.

When Carrie Anne was six years old, her mother insisted that she ride the bus home from school. She believed that the streets were too dangerous to walk alone, and maybe she was right. For the most part, Carrie Anne was an obedient daughter. She did her chores as soon as she was asked, with no open objection besides the occasional eye roll. She was always home by curfew, even if the game of tag that she struck up with the other neighborhood kids wasn’t over.

But one sunny afternoon, something told Carrie Anne to walk home instead of listening to her mother. By the time she came to the realization of what she must do, she was already sitting in her usual window seat. Quietly, she slung her lady bug backpack over her shoulders and exited the bus the same way she got on.
When the driver asked her where she was going, she said, “I forgot I had to stay after school today. Don’t worry; my mother is going to pick me up later.” There was a pause before the driver was assured by those cool baby blues, and waved Carrie Anne away.

She walked back toward the building and when she noticed that the driver was no longer looking, Carrie Anne hid behind a tree. So as not to ruin her white cotton dress, she carefully sat perched atop her bag until all the buses were gone. When the coast was clear, she started walking toward her home. The feeling that this was what she was supposed to do intensified inside her.

Fifteen minutes later and she was almost home. Nothing had been out of the usual. In fact, she hadn’t passed a single other person during her walk. Just as she was feeling discouraged, like maybe she had missed something incredible, she saw her neighbor’s cat. He was a gray thing, with scraggly fur and a fat belly. He was always causing trouble, knocking garbage cans over and chasing mice. Her dad always threatened to trap the beast and deliver it to some shelter in the next county.

Today the old cat had its attention fixed on something. As Carrie Anne got closer, she realized that a baby bird had fallen from a nest in the tree. The cat gave her a head nod, and they were off. Carrie Anne ran with all her might. Just as she reached the bird, she cupped it in her hands. The old cat was just a few seconds too slow. His claws grazed her delicate hands. She stuck her tongue out to him as she placed the bird safely back into the nest.

Fast forward a few years and Carrie Anne was still giving. Her parents had friends that lived a couple of blocks away. They were going on vacation, they said. They needed someone to watch their dog. Carrie Anne’s parents volunteered her services, and when she rolled her eyes, they told her to not be so rude. These were their friends. You would do anything for a friend.
So as the Robertsons packed their suitcases full of bathing suits and shorts, Carrie Anne zippered her coat to her chin and walked to their house. She listened to them talk about where the dog food was kept, where the leash was, and how often their bloodhound needed to go out. Mrs. Robertson, a stout woman with lipstick on her teeth, leaned in close to say, “Now don’t go telling Mr. Robertson, but I’d be surprised if that old flea bag makes it through the night. He hasn’t eaten in days.”

Carrie Anne looked at the pitiful dog. Both Robertsons shook her hand, and then they closed the door behind them. In the silence of the empty house, Carrie Anne walked over to the dog. Through dreamy eyes, he looked at her, scared. She gently touched his head, and he knew she would never hurt him. “It will be all right,” she whispered. In the next instant, she reached up and plucked both her eyes from their sockets. She rubbed them on her jacket the way you would an apple just before you touch it to your lips.

She laid her eyes at the base of the dog bed before getting up and feeling her way to the door. It took her a while to adjust to the dark, but Carrie Anne was strong. Though no one can say for sure, the old dog probably died that same day, maybe the same minute. But, he died with someone watching over him.

Carrie Anne was growing into a nice young woman. She had just finished high school and had moved away to college when she lost her ears. It was mid-semester and her roommate had gone home for the weekend. It was well after midnight when Carrie Anne decided she had studied enough for one night. Into the bathroom she went, ready to brush her teeth. Mindlessly, she listened to the bristles as they rubbed the inside of her mouth. When she opened her unseeing eyes to spit, she sensed a girl on the other side of the sinks.

She smiled at the girl before retrieving her towel. Carrie Anne was rinsing
her face when she realized the girl had moved to be standing right beside her. She was real tiny. If anything, she resembled a mouse. Carrie Anne had never spoken to the mouse-like girl before, but that didn’t matter.

“I’ve never swore before,” the girl whispered to Carrie Anne.

Confused, she replied, “What?”

It was as if Carrie Anne had turned on the girl’s faucet. Endless information began to pour from her. “I’ve never said a curse word. My father is a pastor and I don’t think he’d like it, but I think now is the time, don’t you?”

The girl did not wait for a response. “Shit,” she said. Her cheeks reddened and she clutched her chest. Finally, a sly smile settled on her face. “I’m not sure I believe in God either. I know I’m supposed to, but…”

That was the last thing Carrie Anne ever heard, because that was when she soundlessly, and with courage, removed both her ears and laid them on the bathroom counter. She smiled to the girl, who just kept talking to the ears. Carrie Anne gathered her tooth brush and went back to her room.

Soon after the ear incident, Carrie Anne lost her spine on the subway. She was sitting alone near the window. The car stopped to let out some passengers when a skinny teenage boy tripped over Carrie Anne’s crossed ankles. It was his fault. He couldn’t see or control where he was going with his long hair in his eyes and his pants that almost touched the ground. Startled, she reached out to catch the boy before he made full contact with the floor. It worked and he was steadied.

The boy was not appeased. Though she couldn’t see or hear him, for she was both blind and deaf, she could feel him yelling at her. His breath was hot in her face. She could feel the disturbance in the air and he drew a pointed finger inches from her nose. To those with working ears, he was blaming it on Carrie Anne. She was the clumsy one. She felt that urgency in her heart again, the same feeling she got
the day she saved the bird. She knew what must be done, so she did it. She reached
to the back of her neck and pulled her spine straight out of her body.

The boy did not even flinch, though he was quiet. Carrie Anne reached out
and placed her free hand in his. After a little squeeze, she turned his palm skyward
before placing her spine in his hand. She was deflating.

Carrie Anne didn’t live long after that. Not because she couldn’t do it, but
because someone came along and took her most important piece. Though took is a
bad description, because she gave it to him with not so much as a second thought.
After the subway incident, she was bed bound, but there was life still left in her.

That is why her parents asked her. Her father was dying. After two heart
attacks and a battle with cancer, his only chance at survival was a transplant. She
felt her mother come into her room. Her perfume was her signature. She refrained
from getting too close to Carrie Anne at first. After a few minutes of just lingering
by the door, she walked over to the side of her bed and placed her wrinkled hand
on Carrie Anne’s heart. Carrie Anne could not nod her head. She could not speak.
She could not anything.

But her mother knew. Carrie Anne was a giving person.
With shaking hands, her mother removed her heart. It beat just one time in
her palm, before a medic popped into the room. He too had been waiting. While he
carried the heart away, Carrie Anne’s mother grabbed her hand and ran her finger
over the existing scar.
They say he was a king once,
but he died in the rain at a quarter
to three.
He laid with his face in the gutter,
bottle in his hand and tears in the
street
his only company.
Blackened hats with blackened veils
paid hurried respects
as the teardrops fell,
drip-drop,
outside panes of glass.
The monsoons do not stop
for decadent gatherings
now gathered too soon,
while the world is still mourning.
Watches move forward
while the Earth ceases its turning,
and only watches stoically
as peacocks preen ruffled feathers
and prance in their finest
eveningwear.

Blackened finery needs not
the movement of the world
to be plucked from manicured heads.
The gone is so soon, so easily forgotten.
He died just a week ago
it must have been,
lying in the gutter
with a bottle of gin.
They say he was a king once.
No one asks the rain where it began, only why it ended.
I stripped to my skin for late March showers,
drowning under cold pins that dissected
impurity from my sodden lovely flesh.
My bones stayed damp for months. And then

all the wild language in my outstretched arms
swooping arcs around my bobbing hips
could not hasten the clouds.
He did not come back for my embrace.

I lifted a live coal to my breast, branding
my heart as an ornament for the dried up body.
I ran to the creek’s edge on the gusty
limbs whose emptiness had betrayed the dance.
I demolished the rocks in the riverbed with
palms scarred from giving without discretion.

Take to the wind and you will wish for the rain.
My face points to the clouds, hoping they
are heavy with the weight of remembering
and that you will materialize in the downpour.
White to Pink to Scarlet
by Troy Abbott

My skin has turned from white to pink to scarlet.
My hands filled with quivering distaste.
Each word is a struggle to type,
Like lifting an oversized bottle of liquor
Or taking one’s first steps.
I feel my conscious wearing thin.
I don’t want to fall away.
Life is out of my control, and I can do nothing.
Reflection, what have I done wrong?
Revision, what could I have done better?
My feet lose feeling.
Numbness seeps to my thighs.
A chilling calmness washes over my intensely warm body
The computer desk covered with anxious papers,
Notes of a tired manic; a fitting death ensues.
Worry is futile.
I clear my head in my final moments.
A good life, better than some,
I close my eyes,
As my heart grows still.
Oh,
I get it now.
It’s actually not about
who you bed,
but more about the
morning sex.
‘Twas either that or
confusing formalities for love.
Neither here nor there;
living in extremities.
But really,
just drink the milk
from my cereal bowl

and maybe
let’s get tattoos together.
Shotgun me for breakfast
to get a kick
before our
starting coffees
so we can begin our days.
You have your mug,
and I’ll have mine.
Let’s be modern;
Let’s be classic;
Let’s just say ‘I love us,’
and call it a day.
Just except
only in the good kind
of way.
Image by Natalie Hamill
I Want to Write the Fire
by Phillip Howells

I want to write the fire.
To catch its curls on my fingers and twist them as they
Twist me,
As the wind twists us.

I wish to capture it before it floats away and disintegrates,
To speed coalescence on its way as the breeze speeds the boats in my eyes,
To put a ceiling over the blaze and watch it burn within the walls of my own con-
sciousness.

I want to put it in ink
And watch it try to run away.
I want to have it in front of me in my own hand, glowing and smoldering,
In bleached white paper,
Preaching its lack of control across its two dimensional prison
Spreading its distraction to the four corners of existence.

I want the unpredictability,
The vigor,
The spark of life in my pen and at the tips of my fingers
And above them, around them, inside them,
Throughout me.

I want to write the fire on the page of my chest
And watch the tendrils of voracious indifference spread beauty and chaos in equal
measures.
Across what can be known.
I want to become the blaze.
I want to rise from ashes,
Not a phoenix but a golem of the pictures shown in the caves of our minds.

I want the glow of insanity to be the light in my eyes.
I want the revelations of my mind to be the insecurities of millions.
I want the terror of life that I feel incessantly to increase to fever as the heat burns away the healthy cells, leaving desiccation and dehydration in a burning swath of rich, red velvet.
I want to write the fire.
I want my words to burn.

Image by Rebecca Tomson
He inspired me to write. When I first met him, everything he did inspired me to write. The way he laughed, the way he talked, the way he spun the pen in circles, weaving it in and out of his fingers. Weaving. Hah. People always talk about underwater basket weaving. Is that a real thing? I know I could just look it up in under a minute, but I don’t really want to. There’s something more naïve about letting myself wonder.

Seriously though, if it were a real sport, I think I would have heard about it. My friend Tori was always doing weird, eclectic stuff like that. Her real name is Victoria but she said that that made her feel like she had to be some fancy princess in a corset. Instead, she cut her black hair short and dyed it with a purple streak. It sounds kinda odd, but I swear she can pull it off.

I never understood that phrase. “To pull something off.” Like, if it’s too hot, I’ll pull off my hoodie and just wear a T-shirt but I don’t understand the idea of pulling off a style or a look. It’s funny because if you tell Tori she has “a look” she’ll get all defensive and say something about how that’s just how she is.

But anyway, Tori was really good at hula hooping and I imagine if underwater basket weaving were a thing, I would have heard about it from her.

So he spins his stupid pen in a stupid circle while he works on his stupid stories. I think he inspired me to write because that’s a connection for us. We were always finding these strange little idiosyncratic connections of things that brought us closer and made us happy. I always liked the idea of connections. Not in the traditional
sense, of course. I always thought Connect the Dots was the most insulting of games.

“Here, let’s count from 1-20 and call it art.”

Please. I can already tell it’s supposed to be an elephant squirting water out of its trunk. Then again, at least it wasn’t an elephant eating peanuts. Elephants don’t even eat peanuts. You know that, right? They’re the biggest land animal; they spend over half their day eating, and we really chose to believe that peanuts make any substantial impact on their diet? It’s almost as insulting as Connect the Dots.

No, I like connections in the sense of how an old armoire can be connected to a giraffe. Well armoires remind me of fancy old wardrobes and fancy old wardrobes remind me of C.S. Lewis and The Chronicles of Narnia. Narnia makes me think of Aslan, the famous lion from the series, which makes me think of other animals that I see at the zoo…like giraffes.

My friend Ren’s favorite animals are giraffes. I don’t know why I remember that. Ren moved away two years ago. We haven’t talked in a while. We went to the zoo once—a whole group of us. We were on the cusp of winter, and the first snow of the season had fallen while we were asleep. And we went to the zoo. Funny the things you remember.

We stopped to get breakfast first at that little diner right before you catch the highway. We all got the “Early Bird Special Buffet.” Someone stood up to get another plate of eggs and questionable breakfast meat and knocked over Ella’s class of milk. It wouldn’t have been a big deal except Ella’s a drama queen and it landed on the expensive new purse her boyfriend had just gotten her. Tori always said if anyone deserved her name and a fancy corset it was Ella.
Anyway, Ella got upset and started weeping. Ren said we had to call it weeping because her petite body shook with every hurried gasp at air. I guess nobody told her never to cry over spilt milk. She didn’t come to the zoo.

So I met him as a story. There’s a George Burns quote that says, “I spent a year in that town, one Sunday.” I always thought that applied to us. One silly afternoon spent hanging from the monkey bars at my hometown park was the firework for a million stories.

What if one thing had been slightly altered in our day? What if we had stopped for lunch somewhere else and met some famous celebrity? What if at lunch we got our orders mixed up but decided to go with the flow and discovered a new favorite dish? Would we still try it if it were something exotic like octopus? I’m always thinking like that, you know? The difference one moment in time can make.

I was leaving Costco earlier with my mom, holding a multi-pack of almond milk because for whatever reason Jemmie can’t drink normal milk.

So I’m trailing behind Mom, who’s holding that bean salad that Nana really likes when all of the sudden true love turns the corner, and I mean, I dodged him—the edge of the milk box just barely missed his black jacket. I wonder if we had collided what would have happened. A millisecond later, a slight misjudgment in reaction time and milk would be spilled all over the front sidewalk of that Costco parking lot.

Would he have apologized or would I be the one with frantic “I’m sorrys?” Maybe we would have laughed and started to clean up the mess together. Maybe we fall in love and end up sitting in rocking chairs on a porch in the middle of Colorado telling our grandkids about how the Universe intervened at the perfect moment to assure that we’d be together.
Then I'd tell them that I'd changed my mind and that it’s perfectly acceptable to cry over spilt milk. Sometimes, a mess is exactly what you need.

It’s funny. About how you can know somebody for so long and still not know a thing about them. You can stay up all night, bringing in the moon, your feet dangling from the edge of the cliff. But when the sun rises, are you any more connected? Or is it just another “remember when?”

And maybe that’s not it at all. Maybe we aren’t strangers. But perhaps we were never supposed to be. What if every single person we meet is supposed to be a dust blink in our history?

I was dusting my room one time, spinning little stupid circles with the little stupid duster weaving in and out of my mind with little stupid stories about fake sports. I could hear my dad downstairs, mixing up something. He’s always making stuff.

On my seventh birthday, I got a little apron so I could cook too. It had a wooden spoon and a little wire whisk and some other random utensils. I would dance around the kitchen, pretending to make brownies. In reality, I was just the first to try whatever my parents made.

When I was 10, I bought a cooking book with a gift card I won. I won the gift card by mindlessly dropping my last Chinese lottery ticket in a random basket at some church carnival. Later that night, my neighbor showed up at my house with a basket of bookmarks, books, and a $100 gift certificate to the book store. It also contained a small grey book light that could be clipped to the back of the book so you could keep reading at night under the covers, even after you had been reminded several times to go to bed.

Anyway, I took my gift card to the store and bought some cook book that came
with colored plastic measuring spoons.

When I hit middle school, I went through a short phase of wanting to be a cake decorator. I tried to make a multi-layer cake for Mother’s Day but it just ended up like an uneven Italian landmark.

In high school, I thought it was fun to make dough with my dad. Pizza, cinnamon rolls, etc. That’s why I thought I knew about apricot jam and homemade bread.

I thought that was inspiration. That’s what I wanted, right? Maybe I was just looking for a mess.

I used to think that life was all about connections. The business people of the world will hound on the importance of networking and my friends always wanted to introduce me to their cute—read, available—friend. I always romanticized the idea of bringing people together…even if only for a passing moment. Connections used to be a game, a talent, a beginning.

Connections meant understanding people. Someone should have told me to start with myself. Because now? All I can see is my own disconnect.

Image by Liz Buechele
No Words in War
by Laurel Michalek

Horror is an empty word
Loss, Bereavement
Terror, Desperation
Torment
all are such empty words
There are no words
not in English, Arabic
Greek, or German
to describe

marching over comrade’s still warm corpses
as boots squelch in liquid sand
stumbling through
the fields of men
men lying in pieces
men you trained, bled and bet with

Left as common cattle
limbs torn, bodies gone
medics no longer anything but sandy red
captains gone and sergeants left
the battle field
seems eerily quiet
the orders, the screams
the shelling and the bombings
part of background noise

there are no words in any language
that can honor those
that can understand those
who lay there gasping
who will never make it home

there are no words
that can assuage a mother
mourning all of her sons
a child wailing for his papa
a wife weeping for her husband
a father never to see his child again

There can be no words
to replace the empty hole
once filled by a comrade
words meant to convey
only ring out hollow
sorrow holding bitter reigns

Words cannot convey
the human spirit
the human mind
the human heart
as soldier’s march to war
and only some
come marching back
Sidewalk Foxtrot
by Alina Clough

There’s a thousand years between dusk and dawn ‘cause this city never sleeps,
And ten thousand tears from girls with nothing on who’d rather die than have something to eat.
There ain’t never a day when these streets stop clicking, but there’s only some time before your heart stops ticking and the Beat stops.

Punctuated, punctured with a 9 milli Full stop.

And there’s never a white-bearded, sinless, deacon over me,
But it’s a comfort at night to pray when you’re sleeping in the streets.

Free

drop.

Feet hit the ground and they’re typing tiptoe terrors to the
Bus stop.

Mangey Ginsberg gripping ground, howling curses to the
Alleytop.

Stoplight bleed streaks in the sleek streets,
They can’t breathe by the end of this bleak week,
Strobes shatter window panes, wrapped in rain like cellophane and it’s Nonstop.
Home is the place
Where the sound of the flag
and the bare bones of tree limbs
shake together, doing melodic justice
to all who were stolen away
by apathetic adulthood.
Where stands the old house covered with vines
in which children played their voices
upon the walls, each moment emoting
unspoken words of love.
Where you are.
AUTHORS AND ARTISTS

Troy Abbott: An avid League of Legends player and the originator of #pist, Troy is a junior English major with a minor in writing. He is an editor for The Holcad, Westminster’s student newspaper and is a member of SGA. Troy also plays on the Men’s tennis team and was voted MVP of the 2014 season.

Haley Barger now believes that the world is a fine place and worth fighting for. She would hate very much to leave it.

Dara Belohlavek is a sophomore early childhood/special education major with curly hair and nifty glasses. In her spare time you’ll catch her crafting, playing guitar, hiking, writing letters, reading in her hammock, or pondering life’s beautiful mysteries.

Liz Buechele is a third year communication studies major with writing and marketing minors. Her spirit animal is Dug from Up, and if all she had to do for the rest of her life was give speeches and write stories, she thinks that would be just fine.

Alina Clough is a first-year international studies major and Ben & Jerry’s connoisseur. She enjoys dogs and tea, almost exclusively.

Kearsie Dougherty is a senior education major who enjoys finger painting, binge watching Netflix, and making homemade guacamole.

Madison Ennis studies Spanish at Westminster College.

Sarah Gabrick is a junior English major. Her favorite green dinosaur emoji can only be found on Samsung phones.

Rev. Herbert G. Gates was raised in Turtle Creek in a family of 18 children and graduated from Westminster College in 1971 with a BA in Theology. He was ordained as Elder in a United Methodist Church, June 1975, and he served other UM churches until 2007. He presently attends First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem with his wife, Barb.

Harry Greene is a junior undergraduate student at Westminster College.
Natalie **Hamill** is a senior history major with an international studies minor. This is her first time in SCRAWL.

Alex **Haney** is an undergraduate student at Westminster College.

Andrew **Henley** is a second-year history major who has a large obsession with Cookies and Creme ice cream. His spontaneity is constantly shown as he might leave at any moment for a destination unknown until he arrives. He will always make you laugh with his eclectic knowledge about lemonade.

Maggie Rue **Hess** is a senior English major and secondary ed minor. She spends her days convincing teenagers to read poetry and her evenings convincing herself to write it. Her favorites include Batman, plane rides, ethnic fusion foods, and 80s sitcoms featuring older folks (i.e. “Murder, She Wrote” and “The Golden Girls”).

Phillip **Howells** seeks only to one day surpass his dark lord and master, Darth Elrond Hubbard. He plans to attain this goal through strict intrapersonal discipline, long hours of meditation, and numerous editing software upgrades.

Amanda **Kowalczyk** is a junior math and biology double major with a writing minor. She is a member of various organizations on campus, including the equestrian team and the all-college honors society, and in her free time she enjoys writing, horseback riding, photography, and binge-watching old shows on Netflix.

Daniel **Kushner** is a sophomore philosophy and music double major, assistant pig keeper, and gentleman of adventure.

Jamie **Linderman**: I am a junior who studies environmental science and writing. I believe in the power of love and an open mind.

Olivia **Martin** is a junior English and fine art double major. She enjoys spending time with her dog, drinking coffee and being patriotic.

Laurel **Michalek** enjoys chocolate and good company. She never complains if you give her a book, for her words and art come from the same place.

Rebecca **Mobley** is a graduating senior majoring in business administration and minoring in psychology. After college, she plans to pursue a career in human resources.
Sarah **O’Malley** is a senior media art + design major with a public relations minor. This year’s cover art is her first and last submission to SCRAWL, and she is honored to have created content for each student publication at Westminster.

Lindsay **Schich** is a junior communication studies major who loves crafting, traveling and eating cookie dough ice cream.

Zachary **Shively** climbed the Himalayas, dined with Her Majesty the Queen, twisted and shouted with The Beatles, and lives in his own reality.

Rebecca **Tomson** is a senior business administration and English dual major. She enjoys defying people’s expectations and would rather be known as “the weird one” than normal any day of the week.
“Language is wine upon the lips.”
-Virginia Woolf.