Pegasus, the winged horse of Greek mythology, was born from the blood of Medusa’s severed head after the hero Perseus slew her. Legend has it that it was Pegasus’ stamping on Mt. Olympus that caused the springs of water to form that eventually birthed the Muses. Thus, Pegasus has gone down in history as a symbol of creative genius.
In addition to being a recent Pulitzer Prize winner and serving two consecutive terms as Poet Laureate, Kay Ryan is also a Community College Alumnus. She even went on to teach at a Community College for over thirty years. When I think about her, I know that the next important author could very well come from the halls of Delaware County Community College. Their work could be seen on the pages of this very magazine.

It’s an interesting thing to have a writer’s mind. Being one myself I know the struggle – and I’m never quite sure if other people understand. Ryan has this to say:

“A certain kind of perhaps rather unwholesome-looking distortion or lopsidedness is necessary to the writer’s mind. It’s a way of thinking unlike any other. Thinking takes place in language, and it’s hard to say whether the language is creating the thinking or the thinking is creating the language. If I don’t write, in the profoundest way I have no way to think.” The Paris Review. Winter 2008.

To put Ryan’s words into context, one might consider a writer looking at an apple. In that moment, it is more than just a fruit. It’s a color, a shape, a weight, and a texture. It becomes a metaphor for something greater. The apple then turns into something very important. It’s in relation to a bunch of words the writer has now begun to roll around in his mind. He starts to create a whole narrative based on the apple. In this way, it can be overwhelming to be a writer.

If you are lucky, you get to be like the amazing writers in this magazine. They’ve tunneled all that crazy thinking into wonderful stories and poems. How else do you explain stories in reverse, future worlds, all the mystery, or such heartrendingly confessional pieces? These are true writers, and I’m proud to include them all in this collection.

Writing can be a difficult thing. Putting to paper all the insanity that goes through one’s mind in some sort of successful fashion is challenging. Being a professional writer is another challenge all together. It’s a full-time job trying to make it, but I do believe it’s possible with time, patience, and hard work. These authors can do it. If you’re reading this magazine and thinking, “I could do that, I have a story to tell,” then write it. Don’t hold back. The next Pulitzer Prize winner could come from Delaware County Community College.

Brandon LeBoeuf
Editor
Pegasus 2013

Perfection, Perfectly (A Pantoum) by Therese Norton

That thing hung over me
Like a musty old cloak
Grown heavy with hate moss
Dripping from its frayed edges

Like a musty old cloak
Warning me he was coming
Dripping from its frayed edges
So I could be ready

Warning me he was coming
To serve perfection perfectly
So I could be ready
While walking on eggshells

To serve perfection perfectly
I was shattered, but still whole
While walking on eggshells
Dodging hurled glasses of iced tea

I was shattered, but still whole
Your lips pulled thin angry white
Dodging hurled glasses of iced tea
In the hell known as my life

Your lips pulled thin angry white
You made me so scared
In the hell known as my life
But I endured you

You made me so scared
Now the cloak has been burned
But I endured you
My flesh survived

Now the cloak has been burned
Grown heavy with hate moss
My flesh survived
That thing hung over me
The Assassin stumbled across the southern Albanian street, away from the apartment, and shuffled towards the nearest restaurant. His head was in a daze and all color had drained from his vision. He never imagined his first kill to be like that and his hands were proof, they shook. The skin of his arms was not tanned, but pasty gray. The Assassin had realized the color of life was ripped from him and both eyes failed to find any sense of lustre in this new ashy world he wandered within. The once azure Mediterranean sky was bruised, covered in blankets of anthracitic dust; they acted as curtains, hiding him from the effigies of the stage pieces set before him. He once professionally danced upon this stage, but now he was a puppet without a master, a puppet with slippery strings. He walked into the restaurant, not caring what it was – he just had to sit – he needed to see if his muscles could untie. He needed to grab onto a cup of hot tea to see if he could still feel warmth. A Chinese waitress, the age of his mother, asked him what he wanted. His eyes darted away from her. They seemed familiar but he felt all eye contact after a kill would make him endure the feeling of shame. When he said he would like hot tea, she stared not into his eyes, but rather at his cheek. Maybe it was a cultural thing – the Assassin did not know. Twiddling his thumbs that once embraced the rubber hips of a pistol's grip, he closed his eyes, and waited for the test to be served: the cup of tea.

The woman he was ordered to kill appeared to be a normal person, but she must have harbored a dark secret, did harbor a dark secret. No, the word “woman” was inappropriate. “Girl” was the term he wished to use, but he lacked the knowledge of how to address her. So, no, old, no longer a college student, no older than he. The Assassin thought he was cut out for being a killer in the Albanian mafia, but he learned today that he had never been so wrong in his life. The esoteric title of assassin was tantalizing – it held off the tongue like a voluptuous whisper. This small group of people could spin the world into chaos and force modern society to its knees, they are feared by the powerful, the suited cogs that run nations. People’s minds, when heated by fear-- by the unknown-- are so malleable, they can be twisted, pulled, shattered, fragmented, shorn. People could spin the world into chaos and force modern society to its knees; they are feared by the powerful, the people with glazed over eyes, he drank the colors. The awe of the waitress and the world around him vaporized, replaced with a bestial hunger. For minutes that ticked like hours, he let the cup cool his skin, waiting, so desperately, waiting to feel discomfort. Bells chimed at the head of the restaurant and his upset waitress returned after several minutes. Her black eyes surged with bitter torrents of hate as she ticked like hours, he let the cup cook his skin, waiting, so desperately, waiting to feel discomfort. Bells chimed at the head of the restaurant, face cupped in both hands. A waiter this time brought the Assassin his tea instead. Anxiously, the waitress must have been staring at his lipstick stained cheek when he ordered his tea and recognized it as her daughter’s. The panic in her eyes was not something the Assassin expected, but it was that which made her desirable. He left the goddamn gun in the girl’s apartment.

Suddenly, he noticed a stark resemblance in the waitress and the Girl he murdered. Her black eyes swiftly crossed brown from the center. Scarlet blossomed around him, like the girl's tank top after the bullet cleared into her chest. Standing up, the Assassin addressed the Girl's mother, not with shock, but amazement. The color of the world tugged at his senses and with glazed over eyes, he drank the colors. The awe of the waitress and the world around him vaporized, replaced with a bestial rage. He just then realized the girl kissed him so he could be recognized. He touched his sick cheek. Earlier, the Chinese waitress must have been staring at his pistol's stained cheek when he ordered his tea and recognized it as her daughter’s. The panicked man that came in earlier-- he must be a neighbor who found the girl dead after the gun shot. His target changed the game. Now, he was the prey being hunted.

Rage erupted at the tips of his fingers. The tea cup which he clasped onto, like a child to its mother's leg, ignited while staring down the rifled bore of his pistol, which cocked towards the breech where a copper head was ready to harbor a dark secret. A Chinese waitress, the age of his mother, asked him what he wanted. His eyes darted away from her. They seemed familiar but he felt all eye contact after a kill would make him endure the feeling of shame. When he said he would like hot tea, she stared not into his eyes, but rather at his cheek. Maybe it was a cultural thing – the Assassin did not know. Twiddling his thumbs that once embraced the rubber hips of a pistol's grip, he closed his eyes, and waited for the test to be served: the cup of tea. As his hand clasped onto the rubber handle of a pistol, he closed his eyes, and waited for the test to be served: the cup of tea.
the worst thing anyone has ever told me- (might sound slightly ridiculous but it has always stuck with me in the worst way)
an anonymous note was left on my doorstep it read: You Are Too Beautiful For This World written out in shaky handwriting and I know they meant no harm by it so how could it be a bad thing? such a strange compliment made me feel very alone very different, very isolated seven words to send me all the way to the moon and keep me there unsettling, really ‘too beautiful for this world’? that’s the kind of phrase we toss around when some lost soul has gone and damn well committed suicide
It was a cold but sunny morning as JAX and iVan awoke to begin their morning duties. JAX, old but distinguished, arose quickly, his joints creaking as he stood.

"We had better get a move on it," JAX rumbled, "if we're late again the boss'll put us on night shift again."

At the sound of this iVan stood quickly, letting out a long screeching moan. iVan was much younger than his partner but a seasoned veteran still. "We've gotten too old for this shit," iVan grumbled, shaking the rust from his eyes. "Wouldn't it be nice to leave, ya know, never look back?"

"You know that's not possible, they'd track us down before we could go two blocks. There are strict regulations on our kind, and you know that better 'an most of us. Plus the boss don't take to mutineers!"

"I was only joking," iVan replied in a defeated voice.

After finishing the morning route, they stopped at the corner café. They sat in the booth in the back corner adjacent to the bar. The table setting was plain and boring. Napkins and a sugar caddy made up the center piece. The only real complaint about the set up was the fork on iVan's side. It lay slightly askew, but it seemed to fit.

They had their mid day rations and spent what little time they had left chatting about the morning. Until iVan decided to revisit the earlier, taboo, idea.

"Suppose I knew a guy who could help us JAX. A fella that could take these damned governors off. Suppose we'd get away then?"

"I told you," JAX proclaimed angrily, "it's not gonna happen, you know the penalties just as well as I do. And I don't want to hear no more about this again. Now lets get rollin, we can't be late for roll call again!"

JAX stood quickly causing a loud creaking sound to emerge from his old rusted joints. A tremendous amount of pain was displayed in his face. iVan sat quietly; the only sound heard was the idling of his engine.

As they approached the cell, iVan could hear JAX was short of breath. It had been another long day of work, and JAX was a much older model than iVan. So old he had an old, obsolete, numeral X as his serial number. Such symbols hadn't been used since far earlier than iVan had been constructed.

iVan sped ahead and quickly slid the door open for his buddy JAX, who now was loudly coughing, and sputtering black smoke. In the distance the complaints of an overseer could be heard, and he was motioning in the direction of JAX. He approached the two, and began to command that they move to their charging station.

iVan quickly obeyed the command and climbed right in but didn't sync instantly. He wanted to make sure his friend was going to be alright.

JAX just stood still in the door way as the guard yelled at him angrily, banging his sides and kicking his old muddy heels. "I said move damnit! These old models are such pieces of shit! Ya never work how you're supposed to."

JAX turned his head, his neck screeching quietly as he made eye contact with the guard. In a final effort, JAX roared loudly and quickly grabbed the man by the throat, lifting him into the air. He began to squeeze harder, and harder, until the man's face was as black as the smoke that had been puffing out of JAX's sides.

Two more guards rushed to the scene and began mercilessly beating JAX. The first blow was to his central processor, but he refused to go down. He stood there, eyes fixed on the lifeless body he held like a trophy in his claw.

Eventually, successive blows to the head and body caused JAX to lose consciousness, the man falling to the ground with a dull thud. JAX laid beside him in pieces, which had been ripped off by the attacking guards. One of the guards turned quickly to iVan and commanded him to sync instantly. iVan did as he was told, and slowly the scene started to fade to black.

The next morning, iVan rose quickly, and raced out of his chamber, wanting to see the aftermath of the night before. As he began to bang on the chamber next to him, he realized that it was not the same. This model was sleeker, and shinier. Much nicer than the old heap that JAX used to stay in.

Heaven is a Dump
by Patrick Flaherty

As he looked towards the doorway, all that remained was an oil trail which led towards the left. iVan turned the corner to find the preceding night's guards, shoving pieces of scrap metal into a large trash truck.
Remember (if memory permits)
the playground of youth.
Your favorite game,
maybe football or dodge ball,
hopscotch or swings.
You’ve climbed
the jungle of the gym
and swung
to highest reaches.
Maybe the merry go round?
Or perhaps the monkey bars.
The thrill seekers,
climbing the ladder
and plunging
to squish the lemon.
Go back, giggle for hours
It does not matter
what interested you then.
it sets the future for who you become.
For me, the spinner.
I thrive in the chaos of swerving and twirling around the other existors.
I can spin (at warp speeds)
and walk away
like I am perhaps a bit tipsy
and go about
my adult day
in the approved adult way.
Go back to your playground.
The place where you truly learned what fun is.
I picked at my fingers and I twirled my too large wedding ring around and around on my finger. Damn! Why doesn't anything ever fit right? Then I remembered those too large, ill-fitting little red boxing gloves. I was only seven when I was introduced to the little red boxing gloves.

We always knew we were in trouble when she came at us with that look on her face. Her eyes glared, and you could almost see the foam forming in the corners of her mouth. That white sticky stuff. Stiffly walking past me, she began to clear the room. It was a small row home with wallpaper that was peppered with too large flowers and shabby furniture that still had the grains in it from the kitchen knife attack of my older sister. She was eight at the time.

With all of the furniture shoved toward the front of the living room, my mother, who was now out of breath, presented my brother Bobby and I with our own pair of little red boxing gloves. She instructed us to put the gloves on. They were way too large for our little hands. Once applied and fastened they twirled around and around on our wrists like a too large wristwatch.

Sensing that something bad was about to take place, I began to be afraid. Very afraid. I'm not sure if I was more afraid about what was about to happen or the look on her face. I knew we were about to gratify her in some sick way, of that I was very sure. She was going to feel better when whatever was going to happen was over. She always did.

Continuing with the preparations she moved the coffee table onto its side and used it as a boundary for the "ring". The end tables served as the other side of the "ring." Then she began with the rules.

"You two are to punch each other until one of you bleeds," mother instructed. Her eyes penetrated me and then Bobby. He trembled.

"I'm afraid... when he hits me will it hurt?" I cried. I wondered if I would bleed first. She ignored me.

"Now!" she yelled, "come out fighting and don't stop until one of you bleeds!"

As we clumsily threw our punches and our gloves tangled, I wondered, "why are we doing this?" I ducked, he missed. He was only six years old. Wasn't there a better way to handle this? After I threw another punch I landed it right on his nose. In a child's minute, the blood poured out. Down his nose onto his little striped pajamas. The fight was over, and I was declared the winner. Or was I?

The fight went against everything I was inside. I am a peacemaker, a person of love. Not of violence. I took no great pleasure in watching him run to the corner of the room, inconsolably crying his heart out. The blood poured out. "Make it stop!" I silently pleaded, "make it stop!" Not really speaking to anyone because the only people in the room were mother, the boxers (us) and the child who cut the furniture (my sister). I knew she wasn't going to help my brother.

Mother had a smirk on her face. "There, that'll teach you two a lesson," she said. She actually thought she had settled something. Oh how proud she was to have orchestrated such an event. She was pleased. Pleased indeed.
Emotions intensifying, I don't know what to do
Mind shifting and splitting as turrets as it sounds
Chronically reminiscing about the past, like how depressed does that sound
Trapped in the reality that my mom was the only anti-depressant I had
So let's just say when she died I took it more than bad
And I got more than sad
Going on 3 years now and I still can describe it
But ever since she departed our family has ceased to be united
And my dad always told me that my feelings and tears didn't matter
So I've always refrained from any sort of therapy
And never spoke of my problems came to the conclusion no emotion was practical
And every day I fought with the demons of my past
Kept burying my feelings, I was convinced they wouldn't last
All the while, while I ached, around everyone else I laughed
& Staid the shoulder every Tom, Dick, and Harry cried on

But knew when it was my turn, I was the only shoulder I could rely on
Knew I was the only person that would be there for myself
Found out a lot of people were fraudulent
So I just kept to myself
And consequently I had a momentary strife with addiction
I was always intoxicated, getting high was my mission
Eventually I fell and hit rock bottom in a crash
Life shattered in pieces, what once was a temple was ash
But I built a new me, and here in front of you I stand
And that does just in itself
I'll keep slaving for the new me
Continuously trying to perfect myself
Keep walking toward my dreams and these are as good of feet as any
But doubt of myself lies in the hearts of so many
I'll prove them all wrong on my mother's grave
No kidding
I strive to be exceptional in this physical existence
So my public service announcement to the world is
Suck on my potential & swallow its persistence
Sins that create immaculate misconceptions
beliefs that spread contagious infections-
Infectious affection conflicted by perception
eager for acceptance rejected by selection

no excuse or exception
delirium invades my self-deception.

Deluded by the lies that corrupt my every trace
tolerant to the truth that never shows its face.

My situation is a fixation I am tempted by temptation
only desire is salvation broken by relation

destroyed complicated calculations
so distraught thoughts break formation-

All is lost including my concentration
Never knew life was an obligation.

“The ultimate value of life depends upon awareness and
the power of contemplation rather
than upon mere survival.”
— Aristotle

I was once your stereotypical, happy sunflower. I loved being alive. Every day was like a new adventure.
The sky was always blue, the air was oh so ever crisp, and the sun always found a way to wrap its warmth
around me like a comfortable yellow blanket. My happiness was a super hero, and it did not matter how strong
the wind was, my stalk would not bend. Yes, like I said, I was once a happy sunflower but no longer do I feel the
happiness that I once felt. No longer am I proud to call myself a sunflower. Not a day goes by that I do not wish
for Jack Frost to come and take me away. I would deserve it after what I had done.

"The end is what you are given to do."

I will tell you how this came to be
And why I no longer wish I were me
A true tragic tale you are about to hear
One that will make you sad I fear
But I must tell you my story
Even though its awful glory
And by the end
You will know that I in fact killed my best friend

I remember so vividly the day I met George. I was young then, just a stalk if you will. I
woke up that morning with the sun tickling my face. The other stalks were talking amongst themselves about
what seemed to be the usual gossip. But then I heard…

"I hear we are sunflowers!" a stalk named Bobby said.
"You can't know for sure," said Mandy who was a few rows behind him.
"Yes I can!" he proclaimed. " Didn't you hear the farmers yesterday? They said the sunflowers are
lookin' good!" Joey said with much enthusiasm.

"Yeah I heard!" cried another from two rows over.

"Oh I must have been taking a nap. That sounds wonderful! I am so glad we are sunflowers. We are
going to be so beautiful!" cried Mandy.

I let the joy overcome me. I, just like the others, was excited to be a sunflower. I knew sunflowers grew
tall and strong and I was going to be the best of them all. Then, as I finished my last thought I hear a
"bzzz bzzz bzzzzz." I started to look around.

"Hi! My name is George! What's yours?"

I tried to sound as enthusiastic as possible even though I was still confused by this little guy with wings.
Sunny….I'm so sorry. I can't hold on. George's voice trailing off as he fell. Just as George was about, George's voice barely a whisper. I cried.

"What's that?" George asked.

"I'm genetically modified!" I said exuberantly.

"Well I always knew you were super special Sunny. What exactly do you mean?"

"I am not happy with George's questions. He didn't seem as enthusiastic as I'd hoped. I wanted him to be as excited as I was.

"I don't really know George. It just means that I am even more special than other sunflowers. It's like I'm a superhero." I simply stated, though a little annoyed.

"Oh! I'm sorry Sunny! That does sound really special! This is very exciting!"

George and I continued our normal day, both knowing I was destined for great things. George would be destined for greatness as well, because we were best friends. We began talking about how we would spend our special day, the day when I was all grown up and George could collect the nectar. It was going to be the best day of our lives and we only had to wait just a little while longer.

The night before my special day with George, I couldn't sleep. I was just too excited for the upcoming day. When the sun finally woke from its ever noodled slumber my eyes were wide open like a Venus fly trap waiting for its breakfast. I looked around: all the sunflowers were awakening too. Stretching and yawning could be seen and heard all through the field. Our stunning yellow petals reached out from all angles as if we were trying to hug the world. Everyone was up early because they all knew today was the day. I felt magnificent, so proud to be a special sunflower. And to top it off, I was finally going to be able to give George the nectar he loves so much.

I heard buzzing in the distance, butterflies danced in my belly like ballerinas on colorful stage. I quickly looked to the right and then to the left. I saw a honeybee heading my way.

"George is that you?" I said in an animated voice.

"No sorry Sunny, it's me Joey."

"Oh, sorry Joey, you looked like George from a distance." I said.

"No worries Sunny! You and George have fun!" Joey said as he flew by me on his way to collect Priscilla's nectar, who was just a couple flowers away.

I watched Joey approach Priscilla. I could tell the two of them were just as eager as George and I. As Joey and Priscilla began to dance I noticed something seemed terribly wrong with Joey. He was as if he could not find his footing. He seemed to have trouble holding on. I could tell he was not collecting any nectar. Then I heard, "Sunny!" I turned around to see George on a course towards me like a steam train on full speed.

"George?" I yelled out. "Sunny, you should be happy!" Joey called out from afar. "Hello Sunny! It's very nice to meet you."

"Hi Sunny!" There was a slight pause. "Hmmm….You look like you have something to tell….I cut him off.

"I am super special George! No really, super special!" I said bursting with emotion.

"Well I always knew you were super special Sunny! What exactly do you mean?"

"I'm genetically modified!" I said enthusiastically.

"What's that?" George asked.

I was not happy with George's questions. He didn't seem as enthusiastic as I'd hoped. I wanted him to be as excited as I was.

"I don't really know George. It just means that I am even more special than other sunflowers. It's like I'm a superhero." I simply stated, though a little annoyed.

George and I continued our normal day, both knowing I was destined for great things. George would be destined for greatness as well, because we were best friends. We began talking about how we would spend our special day, the day when I was all grown up and George could collect the nectar. It was going to be the best day of our lives and we only had to wait just a little while longer.

The night before my special day with George, I couldn't sleep. I was just too excited for the upcoming day. When the sun finally woke from its ever noodled slumber my eyes were wide open like a Venus fly trap waiting for its breakfast. I looked around: all the sunflowers were awakening too. Stretching and yawning could be seen and heard all through the field. Our stunning yellow petals reached out from all angles as if we were trying to hug the world. Everyone was up early because they all knew today was the day. I felt magnificent, so proud to be a special sunflower. And to top it off, I was finally going to be able to give George the nectar he loves so much.

"Please hold on George, please," I said, tears filling my eyes. But my pleading did nothing. I watched in horror as my best friend's last leg disconnected, and like a spiraling web his body began to plummet towards the earth.

"Someone, please help!" I cried out, but no one answered.

"S…u…n…n..y,"
to hit the ground he had just enough strength to fly away. That was the last time I ever saw my best friend. I found out billions of honeybees disappeared that year. Each story the same, the honeybee would dance erratically around the flower, fall off and fly away as if drunk, never to return. I think the thing that stung the most was the reason why this happened. The reason for the vanishing bees was because of flowers like me—genetically modified crops. I can’t help but think of how many flowers lost their best friends because of flowers like me. I never would have thought the thing that made me special would end up hurting so many.

So by now one should understand
The tragedy that occurred amidst this common land
The thing that made me more special than most
Turned my very best friend into a ghost
Never shall I lay my eyes upon my friend
For it was my uniqueness that killed him in the end
So next time you see genetically modified flower debris
Do not be sad be glad, after all it is what killed the honeybees
I hear my farmer is getting ready to chop us down. He finally realizes how important the honeybees are to the world. Without them no one could survive, not the flowers, not the animals, not even the humans. So please do not feel bad for me. I know now that I am special, just not in the way I originally thought. I need to be chopped down so I can save the world. And in the end, I will get to be with my best friend.
Degage
by Erin Tanner

We stomp our feet
to mimic mammoths passing by,
to bring a dream into this womb,
to expand and mount the landscape.

We compare last night’s blisters,
from the late night strut,
from cramming our capacity into
snaking hips and droppin’ low
from not arguing this landscape.

We widen our stance
and bough our arms to heaven,
and accept the reflection of God,
and tuck it behind our iliac crest
so the hungry lips of our cubs may ripen
and culture this landscape.

We sweat from the lights
the dangerous close,
the throaty veil of inherent meaning,
and the charging bull
setting fire to our landscape.

Baby girl’s hips want to invite life
instead they back it up,
and drop one dream at a time.
Add a layer of dust to this landscape.

That palpitating misstep from the calcaneus
to the pelvic girdle
drainéd effervescence from the sun
to soften cocktails
we engaged in for the night.

Kitsune’s Song
by Carrie Soltner

Strolling in the darkness
The cold and rain
She sings a Shinto lullaby
But it doesn’t ease the pain
Hiding under a mask
And a kimono to match
She wanders on
A dark, forsaken path
Can you see her?
With her tails counting nine?
Her glowing yellow eyes
Warm you of malice
Shear clear of the nine-tailed fox
Trouble is in her mist
She will not try to harm you
But she may play a little trick
As you watch from the distance
She bids you farewell
A smile on her face
Binds you in a spell
You can try to resist her
For fear what she’ll do
Just close your eyes and count to ten
It’ll all be over soon
This spirit that you see before
Is not evil, nor is she pure
Is she even real?
Or has your imagination gone obscure?
A strange creature she is
As she sings her little song
Humming a Shinto lullaby
Looking for a place she belongs.
The Sandbar
by Jeff Clark

She held his gaze. The brown hair plastered over her face did not quite conceal her dark blue eyes.

Jonathan picked himself up, wiping his hands on the sides of his raincoat as he stared back. "Hello.

The girl, who had been sitting at the end of the sandbar with her knees against her chest, shifted her legs and turned to scan the area. "Water's rising; you should go.

Jonathan paused. "I might be. Would you like me to?"

"I will."

Jonathan stared at the girl for a moment, then turned and began sloshing his way through the sand. The girl, who had been sitting at the end of the sandbar with her knees against her chest, shifted her legs and turned to stare.

Jonathan picked himself up, wiping his hands on the sides of his raincoat as he started back. "Hello.

She held his gaze. The brown hair plastered over her face did not quite conceal her dark blue eyes.

"Water's rising; you should go.

Jonathan nodded. He turned into the bitter sea breeze and walked back to the cabin.

"Yes."

"Will you be here tomorrow?"

"Yes."

Jonathan paused. "I might be. Would you like me to?"

"Yes."

Jonathan nodded. He turned into the bitter sea breeze and walked back to the cabin.

"Water's rising; you should go."

She turned around and continued to watch the ocean. "The painter." Her voice was calm and steady, carrying a resonance that one would not expect from a frail young woman in her early twenties.

"I'm sorry?"

"You're the visiting painter."

"Oh. Yes." Jonathan walked forward until he was standing next to the girl. He looked down at her as he spoke, noting the worn, damp jeans and faded white windbreaker. "How did you know? And if you don't mind my asking, what are you doing out in this storm?"

"Pardon?"

"How did you know?"

"You're the visiting painter."

"Yes." Jonathan walked forward until he was standing next to the girl. He looked down at her as he spoke, noting the worn, damp jeans and faded white windbreaker. "How did you know? And if you don't mind my asking, what are you doing out in this storm?"

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The woman gave him a dismissive wave with her left hand, still looking down. "Oh, I'm sure you don't mean any harm. Alice doesn't usually talk to visitors much, though."

"Who is she, though?"

"You should probably ask her that yourself."

Jonathan waited by the counter for another minute, waiting for the woman to say something else, before finally picking up his groceries andshouldering the door open. The smoothing fog had encircled his car completely by the time he was halfway back to the cabin, and after two lumbering, sloshing turns that nearly dumped his vehicle into the soupy grass beside the asphalt. Jonathan turned off the ignition and resigned himself to waiting it out. It could take him hours to walk back to town for help if he went off-road by mistake.

Despite Jonathan's intermittent mutterings of profanity, the fog did not lift for three more hours. He restarted his soggy machine as soon as visibility improved slightly and suffered another near-accident before making it back to the cabin. He grabbed his boots and a slightly damp sweater from the dryer, and walking through the sand out to the shore.

But the girl wasn't there. Jonathan looked for almost an hour before giving up. He even considered calling her name, but decided against it. Eventually, Jonathan resigned himself to another evening of reading and listening to the rain.

Jonathan woke the next morning, listened for the pattern of rain on the roof, and sank back down into bed. He was about to fall asleep when he remembered the girl. The rain had not slowed; it beat a steady tattoo against Jonathan's coat as he trudged through the sandbar. The girl wasn't there. Jonathan walked to the water's edge to be sure, then spent a few minutes staring into the light mist gathered along the shoreline. Nothing. Jonathan's shoulders slumped as he sat at the end of the sandbar watching the white-grey waves. The girl was the only person he'd found interesting on this wretched coast, and now she wasn't here.

Jonathan walked for an hour, finally deciding that the girl wasn't coming. Still he sat, watching the black sky and shadowed valley. The rain intensified. Javelins of distant lightning and the low roar of thunder signaled the storm's arrival. The man watched the light play, transfixed, as waves rushed against the sandbar and drenched him with spray. The tide came quickly, too quickly, until the sandbar was reduced to a wavering trail that led back to shore. But Jonathan did not move, could not move. He watched the storm in utter rapture.

The girl's hand on his shoulder broke the trance. She was out of breath, but her face was expressionless. "You need to go."

Jonathan started at the girl's touch, rising and turning in one hurried motion. "The tide, I… what happened?"

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"You probably shouldn't talk to Alice."

"Well… why? Sorry, I don't want to seem overly inquisitive. It's just, we talked yesterday, and she asked me to come tomorrow."

"You probably shouldn't talk to Alice."

The woman sighed and set down her pencil. "Well, what's her name?"

"Maybe… twenty? I'm not sure."

The woman looked up, frowning. "Girl? How old?"

"Bag?" asked the woman, eyes flitting back to her crossword.

It took Jonathan an uncomfortable two minutes to find the coffee and milk and set them down on the counter and paid. "Bag?"

"Mmm. " She glanced down at her paper, picked up the pencil lying next to it, and scrawled something into the crossword before looking back up at him. "Help you find something?"

"Just coffee, thanks." Jonathan looked around the store for a moment. "Oh, and milk, I guess. 1%, if you have it."

She pushed herself up from the table and resatd her glasses. "Yeah, over in the back. Be nine dollars."

He opened his mouth, then hesitated. "Good morning, " he finally exhaled. "Awful weather."

The woman gave him a dismissive wave with her left hand, still looking down. "Oh, I'm sure you don't mean any harm. Alice doesn't usually talk to visitors much, though."

"Who is she, though?"

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The girl shook her head, taking Jonathan's hand and pulling him towards the coast. "Go."

The man's eyes flickered from the ocean to the sandbar to the girl. "Go. Yes, of course." He began to walk, then to run through the sucking sand with laborious breaths. His boots abandoned him after a dozen steps, pulled into the sand. The sand soon disappeared beneath the tide. He was forced to use the water's edge to find a safe path. The water was up to his thighs before he began moving up the shore, sloshing the last twenty feet in utter exhaustion. He collapsed fifty feet further up the coast, unconscious now, but she'd marked it for him.

Once he had breathing slowed, Jonathan stood and looked at the rising tide. Lightning danced across the waves, pale patches of lightning that moved in time with the thunder. One massive sheet of light illuminated the entire bay, and Jonathan thought he saw a human figure far out in the water. But his eyes were dry, and he couldn't be sure.

Jonathan Hargreaves returned to the sandbar every day for two more weeks, but he never saw the girl again. His only painting from the Oregon coast, a piece called "Child of the Storm," was never sold.

A blanket of mist enveloped him as he stepped out of the car. It seeped into the shop as he pulled open the glass door, joined by the ding-ding of two tarnished silver bells. The shop owner, a thin, black haired woman with glasses, was reading a paper at a nearby table when Jonathan entered. She looked up at the bells and Jonathan struggled to remember her name – he'd been here before, a week ago, he might have even written it down. It had been something unusual.

"Good morning," he finally exhaled. "Awful weather."
You judge me on my size.  
By the width of my thighs.  
By the number on my clothes  
And how I can't wear those.  
You think I'm a joke  
I hope you just choke.  
On those words so bitter  
When you claim I'm a quitter.  
To you the size of my waist  
Is a failure in taste.  
You say I'm an eyesore  
As you push me through the door.  
Do I make you feel pretty  
When we're out in the city?  
You'll keep me near  
So that he'll buy you that beer.  
To you I'm nothing but a pig  
Just watch me snap you like a twig.  
Damn you, skinny bitch  
You really found your niche.  
I can't stand you, skinny bitch!  
I'll feel nothing when I leave you in this ditch.
Take the fruit, but leave the knife;
I’ve filed my nails for months.
Peel the skin, and take a bite;
I smile
with pulp in my teeth.

I hate the dog park.
Puppies bark beyond my view.
Poodles prance through mud puddles.
Owners pout,
then towel off their poodles
before driving home in air-conditioned vehicles.

I take the train
to Rosemont but forget to pay the fare.
I walk to my house from the train station,
passing pizza shops along the way.
I smell tomato pie.

I don’t stop
because my wallet is empty,
but my stomach is full
of vitamin C.

I get home and
take a few rainbow-colored pills.
They make me forget
how much my shoulder hurts.

Someday,
I’ll throw out the first pitch
at the World Series.
Until then, I’ll take my time.

Take.
The END: Breath revitalizes my lungs as my throat closes up. The revelation of life hits me as my homie Wiz lets me go and his saturated eyes dry as I’m falling back up. A whole bunch of cats back track as my Nikes regain control of the earth and my blood spills on an interesting trajectory back into my neck vein.

I scream, “man, me to this don’t do don’t Please” as Billy’s arm swings in reverse and the cold pain leaves. The shimmer from his knife dissipates as it clicks back into the handle. The whole scene subsides and cats glide back like they’re doing the moonwalk. Dez, me and Wiz are pulling a roach for the last bits of smoke and the nigga Billy flows back to his room.

Corned beef hash is falling from my mouth to my plate, I talk to my moms about her workday as my flowered glass fills up with Kool-Aid. The spatula pulls my dinner from my plate to the pot, then it retreats into a can and goes back in the cabinet.

We walk across the living room and I kiss my mom hello as she backpedals out the front door, then I lock the door I just unlocked for her as her Saturn peels off in reverse back to work.

Back to the afternoon I’m in front of my home kicking it to some hoe.

When she’s trying that, “Later little a stay can I”

I say, “mam, Yes” but think, “nah, Hell”

When she says, “boo, later me text”

We waltz backwards to my crib and redo that same old sex scene. My cum slides back into my cock tip then she’s on top of me moaning backwards and un-climaxing, grabbing on my chest, awkwardly trying to get in rhythm while she keeps her body balanced. I lay silently as she bounces slower and slower, the rubber rolls of my half hardened dick and sneaks back in the Trojan wrapper when she’s done nibbling my hip bones she licks her way up to my chest. Then we gradually put each other’s clothes back on and slowly regress from necking. She creeps back out my room, saying, “this about nobody tell you Promise”

Bitch, too late I already told my whole crew about it.

School crawls slowly back to my lunch period, and I’m in the cafeteria with my boys making a ruckus. A burger materializes in my hand as I fight my hunger. I’m telling them this girl Amber’s gonna hit my crib for some of that good lovin and shit.

“I’d, right smut that Hit” Says my man Wiz

We laugh when Dez says, “early too striking from rod lightning your stop to Try”

The school periods move back from four, to three to one, and now I’m taking the bus back to my home.

I backtrack on my block and wink at a girl, she looks back at me and smiles from under her mans arm. The same man named Billy I take a half hearted handshake from. Been on the same block for half our lives but still can’t tell if we’re enemies or friends.

I look both ways like mama taught me, yawn and hop back up the stairs and inside the door of my row home. Strip off my coat and let my bookbag ease back onto the couch. I put my Nikes back on the shoe rack and wonder whether I should rock them, Timbs or Chuck Taylors. Then I rub my eyes and walk back to my kitchen table.

My knife cuts my waffles from quarters, to halves to fulls. I butter them up while chocolate milk goes back into my cup.

I kiss my momma good morning and backpedal into my room, roll over on my bed to check a text from a girl named Amber I’ve been kicking it to. If I play my cards right she’ll let me fuck her soon. Though I gotta stay cool and quiet ‘cause her man’s lives a few homes from mine on Ronaldson. I look out at the genesis of the sun’s crescent, my day has begun. Groggily I roll over my bed to smack my alarm clock, it’s beeping while I cocoon back into the covers. My consciousness wavers on and off until the minutes tick from 6:11 to 6:10 and I’m back to my dreams as the clock quiets on it’s own.