

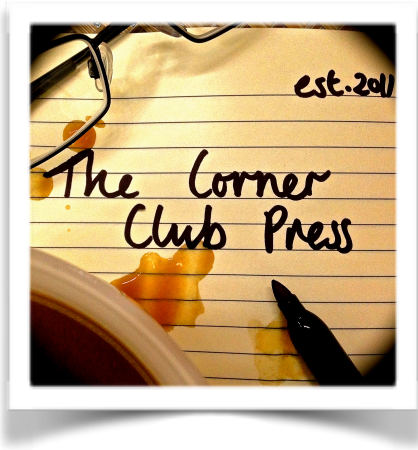
The Corner Club Quarterly
Volume 4 Issue 16 Spring 2015

NEW
LOOK

The Corner Club Press



where poetry and fiction converge



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Roger started out as a painter, printmaker and analog photographer and earned his MA in Visual Arts from Goddard College. Following postgraduate study in assorted small computer technologies, his art has become fully-digital and photo-based. He works primarily in montage, often on topical social themes and creative re-visions of reality.

The literary arts strongly motivates his visual art practice and he connects with Pynchon, Borges, and Barthelme in the same way that he connects with Arbus, Cartier-Bresson, and Uelsmann. Accordingly, he always delights in working with writers and the "literate" press.

Submissions

The Corner Club Press accepts unsolicited material in art, poetry and fiction up to 7000 words. Submissions must be original and unpublished and conform to submission guidelines outlined on the website. Submissions will be accepted on a rolling basis. Please provide a brief biographical note.

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Editor's Note

We commit into memory the last vestiges of human understanding.

Alana Lopez, Executive Editor
The Corner Club Press

Image by Ryan McGuire,
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Dear readers,

I am really excited to present Issue 16. This is my first issue as the Executive Editor of *The Corner Club Press* and the first issue of our new design. As you may not know, we have lost some of our fantastic staff to their burgeoning writing careers: Rachelle M. N. Shaw, our former Graphics Designer and Copyeditor, is pursuing publication of her short stories and novels as well as her independent editing; she is accepting new clients and projects for the fall; Mariah E. Wilson, our former Poetry Editor, is currently submitting a chapbook while working on various short stories and a novel, as well as her new poetry magazine *Sleeve*; and finally our incredible former Executive Editor Kristina M. Serrano has been busy writing up a storm, managing her platform, all the while working full-time. Check out their links on our staff page to find out what they're up to next.

Needless to say, this issue has been a little tough without our illustrious alumni, but with our new Assistant Editor Katherine Blumenberg, our Marketing

Manager S. A. Starcevic (currently publishing his short novel *Untouchable*) and humbly myself, we've managed to pull together this issue with a wonderful line-up of poets and authors.

Although spring is usually about rejuvenation and renewal, this issue explores the stagnation of human potential. Beginning with James' *Hussies of the Northern Plains* and Semrow's *The Vanity Mirror*, we are presented the modern aesthetic of the individual: skeptical, dismissive and subject to the malevolent desensitizing forces of the technological age. With Bella's *Curves and Edges* and Grabois' *Tusked Warthog*, our authors explore the postmodern gaze and its deconstructive effects. Our substance as human beings becomes entirely suspect; we are "limbless", as Demaree puts it, and must find our "ecstatic roll!"



Expresso Yourself by Mikko Eerola,
angrymikko.deviantart.com

Smith's *No More Questions* and Bradley's *As We Come* imagine the forfeiture of the human through the tentative minds of children; its absence most strongly felt with the loss of our narrative anchors: our mothers, our fathers, our past, our emotions, our connection to others, our knowledge of ourselves and our place. What is human becomes a question of how we come to terms with a sense of self in a senseless world; the answer isn't always clear.

These questions prepare us for the reflective stillness of Richmond's *The Permissioner's Binders* and Srivatsan's *Paper Boats*. With hindsight, we learn how stillness, contemplation and patience can renew our faith; acknowledging that our present turmoil is tempered in knowing that all things come to an end. Thus, on that note, read well.

Sincerely,

Alana Lopez

Executive Editor and Graphics Designer

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Hussies of the Northern Plains

Colin James

A bell of saccharine tone informs us, "Lunch."
This way, the restaurant is down here.
A wide brimmed black fedora,
black smock and black shoulder bag.
If the waiter appears carrying steak
lightly brazed, I shall be dismissive of him.
From the window we can see
a couple throwing rocks into a large pond.
We can't hear them speak, having
no ear for awkward little sayings.
Water can drain all it likes
through the epicene trench.
There aren't any torches placed conveniently,
but I have a cell phone that lights.

The Vanity Mirror

Alan Semrow

They take pictures and raise their hands. I recognize a few. I've been interviewed by them. This is part of the job, the contract. I tell them, "Next question."

"They say parts for women are hard to find these days. In this movie, you work with Gwyneth Paltrow. Two female leads. It's a rare thing, but a profound thing. How do you respond when people say there are no good female parts out there?"

I nod my head, lick my lips, retain my light. The cameras flicker. "Thank you for the question. I guess how I would respond to that is that, these days, I really feel there are more female roles to choose from. The thing is, though, that only certain people actually win them. I still get turned down. I feel really lucky I got to share this role with someone that I really admire. We both put out wonderful performances. Parts like this don't really come around too often."

I look stage right at my publicist, Lenny. His expression tells me nothing. It always says nothing. He doesn't shake his head when I'm answering the press, he doesn't smile. He simply listens for some reason to feel dissatisfied by my answer. He's probably thinking, you didn't even answer the fucking question. "Next question," I say.

"Hi, Rhonda. I wanted to ask if you had to do a lot of research for the role."

"Well," I say. "That's a very interesting question. I guess how I would respond, I'd say that I didn't have to necessarily do research. I just studied the script very closely. I read the book several times. This role didn't really require much research because it really had already been set in place for me. Wonderful material. You know what I mean? Like, I had to think about things. Maybe how, if I were the character, I would respond. But that's about it."

The woman adds, "Did you have to dig into the past at all to locate these emotions?"

"Well, I think that just comes with the territory. Your life, in a way, does inform

your character. Even though I am standing in the shoes of someone else, I am also utilizing what *I* know. I mean, of course, it is a masturbatory experience: you're exploring yourself and your life while also exploring someone else. That's what I can really say to that. Next question."

"Does money ever play a role for you?" asks another.

I laugh, lean my head up to the skylight, squint my eyes. I lie, "No. It's the character. I love the great roles. Those are what validate me."

He says, "But you've kind of been known as the queen of romantic comedy."

"Well, that is a very nice thing to say, actually. Sure, I mean, there have been films that have been better than others. I'm not going to deny that. But, really, there is an art to comedy. And I think I've done very well with those films. The numbers don't lie. They've made a lot of money. And one of them got me a Golden Globe nomination three years ago. I'm not complaining."

I get a muffled chuckle out of a few members of the crowd.

"Rhonda," one says. He's tall, a charmer. I interviewed with him for an article I did right when I was kind of becoming a big deal.

"Hi," I say. "Nice to see you."

"I just want to know *how* you do it! I mean, you've been very prolific with your work over the past several years. You're beautiful, in great shape. You've been talking a lot about directing, maybe even starting your own production company. Any word on that? What kind of films would you represent?"

"Wow," I reply. "Lots of questions." I look to Lenny, stage right. No expression.

"Well, I keep going. I keep moving. It's important for me to do that. I have the talent, so I feel I certainly should be sharing it with an audience. It's very important to me. It's important for me to spread what I have to offer to my fans. So I keep busy. I keep busy and that's how I stay in shape. With regard to the question about production or directing. I definitely have been looking into it. I think it would be a fun and interesting departure. I've been showing some interest toward a couple of projects. So we will see what happens in the next few years. I don't know. And the films really are similar to this film. Stories that are funny, quirky, interesting. Stuff that really cuts under the surface a little bit."

He says, "Thank you."

“No, thank you! Great question.”

Lenny runs out in front of the microphone and tells them, “One last question and then we have to go.”

“Rhonda! Rhonda! Rhonda!” I hear.

I pick on an innocent looking young female—blonde, short. She smiles. I smile back. I say, “Hello. What is your question?”

“I just wanted to ask what your reaction has been to the recent scandal. The sex tape with . . .”

I shake my head. Last I heard, it’s gotten several million views on the Internet. We can’t find a way to get it down. It hit and then it spread like fucking chicken pox. The man I was sleeping with. The man that wasn’t my actor husband. I carry it around. I carry it around like a dead horse. I wake up in the morning and I am reminded. I am reminded during press conferences. I tell her, “I have no comment on that.”

The room goes wild. Lenny runs out, grabs me from the chair. He whispers into my ear, “It’s fine. You are my golden one. Don’t ever forget that.” He runs me through the narrow hallway into my shit dressing room. He sits me in front of the mirror. I look in. I look into the mirror. I look into the mirror—

Curves and Edges

Lana Bella

The eye that captured me
and put once more out of order my splintered thoughts
from inside the dark,
was edged with tears and curved lights;
its convex roof was housed under a knitted bonnet
and upon whose treble stitch I shed my skin away.
Down the soft rustling waves of the irises gold
tiny hopes rocking the chamber low, anchoring in;
while raised windows from inside the retina sheet
let in troubled wind by way of a thin ruptured nerve,
raising a skeletal markings on its dilated pupil.



Rhonda Once

John Grey

In Providence, where Rhonda once had lived,
the men sit on rickety College Hill verandas imagining reds and whites,
blood and snow, hands rubbing hands under giant sky,
rock their chairs as they suck their beers,
sing, under breath, of the loveliest of all women,
of fancy restaurants, expensive wine and price fixe menus,
making sex in their heads, and something purer in their hearts,
an unintended harmony made of muttering and dreams,
plucked from their immutable pasts, their lip-read longing.

But when a woman they really know drives up,
and it isn't Rhonda, just Jeanine or Michelle and their ilk,
something sighs out of all of them, a gilded loyalty
becomes drab acceptance; the woman kisses the cheek
of one, like she is protecting her interest though nothing
of her reminds them in the slightest of what had once been.
One coughs. One calls for another beer. A third chews gum.

In time, these average men of tenuous looks, mediocre education,
will accept their disillusion, take what's on offer, accept what they can get.
They'll be domesticated, something such an anathema to Rhonda.
The sweet air is not bred for that. Nor is the rose or the forgiving blush.
But these are all streets and cars and apartment buildings that surround them.
Everything's designed for what the future has in mind.
There's a city in the distance, factories on the outskirts.
There's jobs. There's what it takes to make a living.
In Providence, the town Rhonda decided long ago to leave,
what she left behind is coughing, thirsty or chewing.
That's Rhonda for you. She specializes in how it all ends.

Emily as a Limbless Maple

Darren C. Demaree

Jewel without reach,
your skill-less nerve
belays the arcade

of desires slowly working
their way into knots.
If you are forever limbless,

allow the wind to take
you fully to the ground.
Find your ecstatic roll!

The valley will bury you
in company. You'll return
complete to the flush dirt.

Tusked Warthog

Mitchell Grabois

When I was a boy growing up in Ethiopia, I dreamed that the ghost of our Eternal Emperor, Haile Selassie, would pimp me out to an American football team, where I would grow as fat as a tusked warthog, my skin one huge callous, my muscles tattooed with symbols of death, and become concussed on a regular basis.

By the grace of Allah and a racist American adoption scheme, that is, in fact, what happened. I was recruited by Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, where New York Jews go to die like elephants lethargically swinging their trunks, as they lurch down the aisles of Publix Supermarket, and Ethiopian boys grow up to be bulls with Mad Cow Disease and rack up so many sacks that opposing quarterbacks develop dyspepsia, scoliosis and Crone's disease, just looking at me line up against them.

My home field is GEO Group Stadium, not quite as posh as Enron Field or the KFC Yum! Center, but stately in its own right. Funded by GEO, a private prison corporation, its general entrance sports a façade modeled after the admin building of a penitentiary. With GEO's record of human rights abuses and unnecessary deaths of prisoners in their custody, we have powerful karma, and opposing teams quake just thinking of coming onto our turf. The gators have their Swamp, but we have *The Hole*.

So bellyache about the Recession, bitches. This African boy is living the American Dream.

Los Angeles

Joe Crunk

Friday, at noon, my flight landed in Los Angeles. The sun was bright and hot. I got a black dodge avenger rental car, stopped for jamba juice and coffee then drove to Santa Monica beach, parked in a five-dollar lot, walked along the beach, saw a sexy a woman reading a book, saw women on rollerblades in light nylon shorts and showing it. They liked to show it out there. The Santa Monica sidewalks looked like money, a millionaires' playground. Later, I met up with Kenneth. We went to see a romantic comedy that was being shown for film distributors to consider buying. We saw the film's producer at the theater entrance. Kenneth chatted with him. The producer said that people go broke and lose their houses trying to finance films and that you should only do it for the love of the game. The film was bad. We went to the after party at a restaurant. The hostess carefully checked our credentials, but the producer was there and he waved us in. We ordered wine from the complimentary patio bar and sat down. People began to arrive. Kenneth and I got whiskeys on the rocks and then one of the actors from the movie arrived: a portly comedian who had a small role. He was nervous about whether the film was good and he asked us if we liked it. I lied and said it was good; he was relieved. Kenneth and I had another round of whiskeys, then we got in our cars and I followed Kenneth up highway 405, heading north toward Studio City. He drove very fast; highway 405 climbed up into Coldwater Canyon, the canyon walls towering high overhead in the darkness on either side of the road as we careened along. We got to Ventura Boulevard and stopped to get beer and cigarettes for Travis whom Kenneth was staying with. We walked into Travis' condo; he was lying on the couch. We all went out to the back patio and drank Tank 7 and a bottle of red. Travis was forty-five. He liked to kid around and he had some tact about him; I liked him. He got out his bong of medical grade monkey paw marijuana and passed it around; I got high. At midnight, Kenneth went to bed, but Travis wanted to go to a bar and I agreed since I

was feeling better and better with each drink. We walked out to his silver Porsche convertible, got in and he started it; a high-pitched whirr from the engine, he cranked up the rap on the stereo full blast to distortion. As soon as we hit the street, I was dragged back into the seat; the man punched the pedal hard and the car was obeying. I held on tight, my whole body was tense. The engine roared as we hit eighty miles per hour on the empty city streets and I had no idea where we went since I was so fucked up and scared. We arrived at a bar, had a valet park the Porsche and went in. I gave Travis a pass on the crazy driving since I thought he might be a zen master rather than some run-of-the-mill idiot. Travis ordered drinks for us. The bar girl noticed how drunk I was and she said she would not serve me. Travis said, "Aww come on," and she said, "Ok." We downed our whiskey cokes and then it was last call. The valet brought the Porsche, we got in, and I turned the stereo down. Travis said, "No. Turn that shit up." He turned it up too loud and it sounded like shit again. We raced to a liquor store, speeding and cornering very hard and fast with the rap blasting. The store was closed. We made it back to his place. After we got out of the car, we stood behind it and I told Travis he had altered my paradigm with that drive. He laughed. We went inside and I hit the couch.

Saturday morning, I got up at eight. Kenneth was leaving for a film convention. I had planned to go to some local bookstores and coffee shops, but I had not slept well and was tired and in a daze. I got in the dodge avenger and tried to drive into the center of town, but the traffic was murder and the sun beat down hotly. I drove past many yoga shops, psychic shops, yogurt shops and jamba juice shops until finally I gave up, turned around and drove to Santa Monica beach, parked in the shade at the edge of the five-dollar lot and tried to take a nap in the car. As I lay there, an enraged man at the gas station across the street began yelling. People walked by and ignored him. I sat in the car and took a piss in a paper cup, dumped the piss out of the window, set the empty cup on the console, got up and walked to the beach, took off my shoes and walked out to where the tide came in. It lapped coldly over my feet. The sand looked dirty under the pier, seagull feathers everywhere, so I decided not to walk under it. I washed my feet off in the shower then walked on the oceanfront sidewalk. There, I saw a woman in a bright red dress with a red ribbon in her hair sitting by herself and looking at me. She directly met my eyes and had a predatory

look about her. I looked away first. Upon the pier, it was a tourist nightmare, so I turned and walked to the hotel and met Kenneth. Then his date showed up: a six-foot tall black woman wearing five-inch heels, dressed in bright red; she was turning heads. I got in the dodge avenger, got on the 405 and drove back up to Studio City. Travis was grilling chicken and had some red wine ready. His girl Hannah was sitting out back with him. I grabbed a chicken thigh, joined them and had some wine. I told them about the woman in red and Travis said that if you get a whore you should not go to a hotel, and then he fired up the bong. I was still reeling from the one last night so I didn't want any. Kenneth showed up later. He sat silently because he was fed up with Travis after having lived with him for six months. Travis did a good job of making conversation. I noticed a twinge of evil in his eyes: he was constantly kidding and doing mock impressions of people; something about the look of him reminded me of Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*. After Hannah went inside, Kenneth told me about how Travis's dad had put a gun to his own head and killed himself when Travis had been seven years old, then Kenneth went on to talk about how his own father had tried to pry Kenneth's hands off a fourth floor balcony when Kenneth had been hanging off the edge at age nine. Travis asked me about my dad. I told them that I had only met him two times, that my mom had got paid every two weeks and, when the cash ran out, I would eat mustard packets or go to the store and steal shit or bum off neighbors. Kenneth went to bed before us. I joined Travis and Hannah in the living room to watch *American Gangster*, but it was more entertaining to watch them on the couch, him telling her to shut up, her telling him to be nice or he would get no sex. Travis left for wine. I noticed Hannah looking at my right bicep. She told me I was the best looking person there, then she told me that Kenneth and I had a manly vibe that Travis didn't have. Hannah told me she was glad Kenneth was there because he brought a sense of normalcy. Travis returned with bottles of wine. I got tired and lay down. They went into the kitchen. I heard them talking, then I heard a loud wham that shook the floor and then it was quiet for a few moments, then I heard Hannah making a series of muffled whimpering moans. Travis talked to her gently and he slowly coached her to get up, encouraging her. In a weak, distant voice she said she wanted a doctor. He reassured her that she didn't need one. Finally, he got her up and walked her to the bedroom.

Sunday morning, I got up at nine. Travis and Hannah came out of his bedroom. I heard him gently tell her to shut up. Kenneth came out and made eggs. We had coffee and then Kenneth and I went for a drive through Laurel Canyon. He drove fast on the tight blind turns, up the steep canyon road. Charlie Sheen lived on the top and sex parties were held in one of the houses; a guy could bang a budding or failing porn actress for a hundred-and-twenty bucks. At the top, we pissed off the side and looked down on the city. Afterwards we stopped at Trader Joe's; I had offered to stock up on some groceries. Kenneth threw a pork loin, burgers, wine, champagne, cheese and eggs into a basket. Back at Travis' apartment, I stood in the kitchen and talked with Travis. He was very fucked up, not just alcohol but pills too, incoherent and slurring his speech. Kenneth and I decided to drive down the street and hike Laurel Canyon. When we got back to Travis' apartment there was a noise complaint taped to the door. Travis was so drunk and high that he was amorphous. Hannah was less lit up. We sat around the dining room table. Kenneth drank a bottle of red by himself and all three of them got loud and yelled over each other for fun. They tried to rap and then they began yelling at the roof to bother the old guy upstairs. Hannah spoke over one of Travis' stories and he told her, "Bitch...shut...up." The way he said it, with pausing, made me laugh. He told her that if she didn't shut up he would kill her. She replied that if he killed her, he would have no one to fuck. He told her that he would fuck her dead body. I laughed and he told me he was kidding. Kenneth went into the kitchen to begin preparing dinner. I joined him in the kitchen then I looked into the dining room and saw Travis leaning on the table, a full glass of wine was on the table directly below him. Then he fell flat onto the table, the wine spilled, he tumbled off the side of the table and fell backwards onto a chair and then slumped down onto the floor. Hannah and I helped him up and walked him to his bed. As we did so, he turned his head and looked at my face. I kept a straight face. Afterwards I asked Kenneth how often Travis got that drunk and Kenneth said every night. I told him I felt that Travis was killing himself, circling the drain. Kenneth brought out a big Brussels sprout log, laid it on the table like a cock and asked Hannah to cut the bulbs off. She made a cursory effort then gave up. I twisted the bulbs off and put them in the steamer bowl. Kenneth cooked the pork loin and the cheeseburgers and then the three of us sat at the table and ate. Hannah scowled and complained about the burgers being pink but

Kenneth liked it that way and I didn't mind. He gave her a lecture, correcting her and checking her at every step since she was constantly and subtly trying belittle him. He told her, "I don't care about what you think. Travis is my friend. You're constantly being mean to each other. Be nice to him. I've told him to be nice to you. I'm concerned about his drinking. All I'm saying is, do what you can. That's all. Don't say you're sorry to me after you insult me and play games. You're not sorry." Then we sat on the patio and they were silent. Hannah told him thank you and Kenneth went inside to go to sleep, then Hannah told me my shoes were big which means I'm well endowed. I told her it's an average sized dick, then someone or something came creaking and scraping down the alley in the darkness. The thing stopped just outside our tall wooden fence, then it was quiet. I told her I didn't like that and I went inside. She came in after and I locked the back door. I told her I had enjoyed hanging out with her and Travis and then I lay down on the couch. A few minutes later, she came into the dark living room dressed all in black, one shoulder strap down, asked me to drink vodka with her. I felt there was something there to be afraid of; she was there to suck some dick and do some evil. I said, "No thanks." She asked if I wanted to have a water with her and I said I already had one. She said, "LA girls . . .", shrugged her shoulders and left the room.

Monday morning, I woke up to Travis and Hannah walking out the front door. He gently told her, "Bitch, get the fuck out the door . . . shut up." When Kenneth got up, I told him they had left. He cooked us eggs and coffee. I packed my things up and left for the airport, hit the 405 south, dropped the rental car off and caught my flight to KC.

The next day, Kenneth phoned and said Hannah had a seizure and Travis took her to the hospital. A couple of weeks later, Kenneth phoned and said Travis had been drunk, on pills, speeding in the Porsche, hopped the curve and wrecked it into a tree, fled the scene on foot and avoided a DUI, then later he beat Hannah up so badly that she was deaf in her left ear.





Beautiful Death

Chrystal Berche



Tonight, the sky is an electric highway of war gods
Quaking in a jagged loop of endless dreams
The reaper spins its heels at an all night diner
Sipping coffee and 151 from chipped porcelain mugs
The essence of watered down memories
There's no one left here to mourn the sun
The gypsies all dance in concrete gardens
Celebrating the fall of Eden and the death of spring
Wild roses burned in neon righteousness
Jabbing their thorns into frozen flames
All flickers of warmth stolen by the dying sun
Red is the color of brake fluid in snow
The long shadows creeping through broken windows
Devour what the kudzu failed to claim
Wood creeks, the echo of rockers in an empty room
A stark reminder of a massacred past
A kaleidoscope of disconnected edges
This ever-changing nightmare of platitudes and regrets
The sky cries icy tears across the faces of rainbows
Their technicolor frowns inspire Midas dreams
Ocean and heavens meld into disharmonious blue
Bear witness to tumultuous sunsets
Only immortals are blessed with eternity
Endless opportunities to erase their sins



No More Questions

Hillary Smith

Two years ago today. I was hoping she wouldn't remember the exact date, but when she came into the kitchen this morning while I was pouring orange juice, her eyes were gloomy. Like someone had tossed a curtain over them.

"Hi, sweetie!" I tried to be overly enthusiastic, but even a seven year old can see through that. I'm not very good at deceiving people.

She didn't even look at me, just sat in her spot at the table with those curtain eyes drawn.

"Sweetie, what's wrong?"

"Nothing."

I put her bowl—the pink one, sprinkled with happy little cows and wildflowers—of cereal and a glass of orange juice in front of her, hoping she might be upset about something else. She picked up her spoon and stirred around the lumpy bran flakes. Not eating meant seriously upset. I sat down and looked at her with concern.

"Sweetie, tell me what's wrong."

She cast her eyes down, and her bottom lip did that trembling thing that means she's about to cry. Finally, she whispered, "I miss Mommy."

Well damn, I thought. She remembered.

"Oh, sweetie." I didn't really know what else to do except wrap her in my arms and wait until she got her tears out. I wanted to tell her she had me. We were doing fine weren't we? But those words had already begun to dry up and shrivel in my mouth with overuse.

Two years ago today Amelia left. I woke up and she wasn't there. Three-quarters of the closet empty. Suitcase and purse gone. Glasses case and deodorant missing from the bedside table. I'd like to say it came as a surprise—except I knew that guy from her work, with the casually ruffled hair and the annoyingly large biceps, had become the new man in her life. She'd never really wanted a kid anyway. It just kind

of happened. Guess she just got exhausted with it all. I tried to tell her before she left that the job I had was going well—it was going to be a steady one—but I don't think she ever believed me.

I asked the K-Being how to resolve the whole thing, like if I should go after her or what, and it said just to leave it. So I left it. Except now my little Alice was sad and, at times, I have wondered if I should not have just left it after all.

So now I'm home from dropping Alice off at school, doing some laundry before I go to work in an hour. I've started work at the local grocery store, hoping it works out long term. I like it there. People are nice. Also, I get good benefits. One guy there, Steven, he's especially nice. Only has eighty-three questions left for his K-Being though, and he's like fifty something. I asked him what he used them all on and he said to find out how to get money, of course. Ironical because now we're both working at Jim's Trading Co.

"You know," he said to me one day, "I remember when we used to have Google and everything. You remember?"

I said yes, I remembered. The K-Being discovery only came when I was around thirteen. Got mine when I turned sixteen, the required age.

"Funny thinking back to old times, huh?" Steven continued. "Funny."

I said yes, it was. Most of our conversations are like this: him saying something and me saying yes something.

Today we don't get to talk as much because it's a busy day. Lots of restocking to be done; I'm not manning the registers quite yet, but hoping I'll get there soon.

When I pick Alice up from school after work, she looks better than she did this morning. Which is to say no trembling bottom lip or anything, so I'm hoping she's not upset about her mom anymore.

"Hi, sweetie, how was your day?"

"Good."

"Just good?"

"Yeah. We learned about K-Beings even though everyone already knows about them. Karl says his dad's one died."

A shiver shoots down my spine. I can't imagine what it feels like to have yours die. Karl's dad must have used up all his questions.

"Daddy, is yours going to die?"

Slightly alarmed by her question, I think carefully before saying, "Hopefully with me, sweetie. Hopefully with me."

I do my best to save my questions. I actually have quite a few left. I realized early on what Steven didn't, that even if your K-Being tells you how to get rich, you may not have the ability to do what it takes to get rich. I've tried to save mine for emergency times. Like when Amelia left and I was very distraught and I didn't know what to do. Those times.

"Daddy?"

"Mhmm."

"How do they know everything?"

I'm surprised because I would think the teacher would have taught her this in the lesson today. Never mind.

"Well," I say, "they just do. That's how they are."

"But how is it possible to know *everything*?"

Hmmm. I love my Alice but sometimes she's just a little too curious.

"Well, I don't know, sweetie. We haven't quite figured that out, but K-Beings are very special creatures." I'm not sure it was a very good explanation, but Alice seems satisfied.

She nods, "Okay."

At home, she sits at the kitchen table with a coloring book. I go down the hall to my room but pause at the closet door. The small band at the bottom is very dark. The K-Being never makes any sounds; it's as if the space around the door captures a silence deeper than most. Gives me the chills, to be honest. I look away and continue down the hall, hoping I'll leave the chills behind.

That night, I make pasta for dinner—third day in a row, but it's cheap and Alice likes it; what can I do? CNN is on. I'm not really listening until I hear "K-Being." I turn it up a little so that I can hear the female reporter's smooth serious voice.

"The organization 'K-Beings for Peace' has been working for years now to get people to pool together their K-Beings into a consortium, or, in their words, a giant round table, in an effort to come together and solve all the world's problems."

The screen flashes footage of a rally with people brandishing signs that read things like “Your K-Being is My K-Being” and “Come Together: Over Questions” and “Let’s Use Our Questions for Good”.

The reporter continues: “The group has faced harsh backlash from many people, most of whom resent the group’s attempts to monopolize their K-Beings, insisting on their right to keep their K-Beings and their questions for themselves. The members of ‘K-Beings for Peace’ maintain that they aren’t trying to take away anyone’s—”

I shut the TV off and glance over at Alice. She’s still going at her coloring book and doesn’t seem to have registered the report. I feel a teensy pulse of relief. Some part of me is certain that if Alice heard about such a movement she’d want me to give away my K-Being. Which I can’t do, of course. Ridiculous. I’ve been saving questions all my life. I’m not about to throw them away.

Alice doesn’t mention anything about K-Beings for a week or so. I start feeling glad we’ve moved on, mainly because I’m never sure how to answer her questions.

But one day—a Tuesday—I’m driving her home from school and she springs another one on me.

“Daddy, where do they come from?”

I know immediately what she’s talking about, but nevertheless I ask, “Where do who come from, sweetie?”

“The K-Beings.”

Damn. To be completely honest, I have no idea. When I received mine, it was already there the morning I woke up on my sixteenth birthday. It was like it just appeared and we accepted that as how it was. No one asked where it came from.

So I tell her, “I don’t really know, actually. They’re just kind of . . . there.” Wow, what a lame response.

“But how can they just be *there*? They have to come from *somewhere*.”

“Well, they do, I’m sure, but no one knows where that is, and it’s not something that’s really import—I mean, they just . . . are *there* when it’s time for us to receive them, and that’s kind of it.”

Alice doesn’t say anything else, but I can tell that this time she isn’t completely satisfied with my response.

We get home and later have dinner and everything. Alice is quieter than usual. That is to say, she's usually pretty quiet anyway, so take that and multiple it by, I don't know, two or three and that's how quiet she is. It's unsettling, it really is. I switch the TV to a baseball game and try to comment about it and act excited, but she just eats her pasta. Later, I tuck her into bed and kiss her goodnight and she pretends to fall asleep right away.

The next morning I get up and get the orange juice out like I always do. I go to her room and knock on the door.

"Sweetie, time to get up."

No response. I wait to hear a shuffling of sheets or to see an arm of light appear at the bottom of the door. Nothing happens. I open the door and the cone of fuzzy light from the hallway illuminates a lump in the bed. My sigh of relief catches in my throat when I toss back the covers and realize that the lump is a pillow.

My Alice is gone.

In that moment, it's like my world starts to spiral into itself and I can feel the panic crawling into my mind and all I can think is, ask the K-Being ask the K-Being ask the K-Being. If there was a good time to use up a question, this is that time.

I run to the closet and hurl open the door. The thick curtain inside smells of musty age. I push it aside. A dark scaly toe is all that peeks out from the dense shadow.

"I have a question." I pause, trying to swallow and slow my breath. "Where is my Alice?"

I lean in to hear its response. They only ever speak in whispers.

"She is not too far from here, near the creek and too tired to walk anymore."

"Thank you." I push back the curtains, slam the closet door shut, and sprint out of the house in my pajama pants and slippers. My legs race me through the backyard and into the woodsy area that surrounds our house. At some point, my slippers come off and my feet are tripping over pine cones and rocks but all I can think is, not her not her not her not her.

And then I see her. A small figure, yellow hair glinting somewhat in the vague early sunlight, sitting against a boulder with knees curled into her chest. Trembling. Disturbingly fragile.

"Alice!" When she turns, I see that she's crying, and when she sees me she starts crying harder. I scoop her into my arms and our tears blend, tears of joy and relief and sadness and disappointment.

"I wanted . . ." She tries to cough it out, still crying. "I wanted to . . . to find where they came from."

My stomach sinks. "Oh sweetie," I say into her glinting hair, but I don't know what to say besides that. What do I say? No idea. I need to say something though.

"Sweetie, you're not going to find them out here. I—I'm sorry." And then, suddenly, I know what to say. "It's something that will always be a mystery, because that's how they want it. They want to keep it to themselves, and we just have to accept that. Can you do that? For them?"

Alice gives a violent sniff. After a moment, she mumbles into my shoulder, "Yes. I think I can."

I rub her quivering back and start walking back to the house. Most of me is relieved, except that frustrating part of me that knows she'll get curious again when she's older, and I won't be able to make up some bullshit like this, although I wouldn't necessarily call it bullshit because it feels pretty plausible to me. I'm actually quite proud of my mind for switching on that light in my time of need. Who knows, maybe I'm accidentally right. Maybe they do want to keep it to themselves.

You know what, that's starting to make a lot of sense. Of course they want to keep it to themselves!

Actually though, that really does make sense. Not sure why the idea hasn't entered my head before this.

I'm sure I'm right.

Okay. Good.

No more questions.



10 nanometers through history

Jake Tringali

without credential, wielding the unstable
amid the experimental and slightly elemental
thoughts fluoresce and ebb and shimmer

frenetic Wilhelm gadgets and levers
hand jives atop shiny laboratory apparatus
banging and shredding in an unlikely tool shed

sparking dimensions, slimming the spectrum
no dynamo hypothesis, less method, more madness
he nobly finds X inside extended senses

the seeker Wilhelm stands cyber-eyed
licking platinocyanide off cathode bodies
conjuring ghosts, glimpsing death

As We Come

David Bradley

Dad isn't shaking when he takes my hand and leads me down the street. He keeps looking back at me like he's expecting me to have left, as if the warmth and feel of my skin in his palm isn't enough. Drizzle and summer heat make our shirts cling to our skin. There's a line ahead, snaking around the corner of the sidewalk, leading into a doctor's office. I can feel them, the other children, little figures huddled between the towers that are their parents.

A girl at the head of the line passes through the doorway, clutching an old man's hand. If I focus, I can glimpse what she sees: the short hallway branching off to a dozen different rooms and a plump, middle-aged woman sitting at a reception desk. Dad is holding my right hand, but I can feel the old man's cold skin in my left, and I taste strawberry gum. She doesn't care that she's here. Her problem is that she can't feel anything. I let go of her before she can swallow me up. It's not usually danger, being swallowed, but some people are toxic and drag you in.

There's a boy just a few spaces ahead of me with his two needle-thin parents. He's not much shorter than they are, but his posture makes him miniscule. He looks like he just wants to hug one of them, the way his eyes grow big with worry, the way his fingers fidget. I peer inside him—his name is Kyle, and he's never had any friends. The kids at school don't point and laugh at him; they don't tease him behind his back or do anything embarrassing to him. They pretend he doesn't exist. At recess he walks around the perimeter of the schoolyard, sometimes balancing on the wooden barriers between the woodchips and the blacktop, holding his arms out like a trapeze artist, and he imagines he's somewhere different, some place from his books or favorite T.V. shows.

Dad and I move up in the line, coming to a stop beneath a small tree with dripping wet leaves. The tree doesn't naturally grow here; it's been planted in this little square of dirt to make the sidewalk look pretty because all the real trees were

torn down a long time ago. One time I asked Dad why people did things like that, “If they wanted trees there, why cut them down in the first place?”

“People change their minds,” Dad said. “It happens all the time.”

“But it doesn’t really look like it used to.” The trees that grow in the wild are much bigger, and they don’t look so perfect.

“No, but it’s close enough, and we have to live with that.”

Behind me is a gangly, pimpled boy with a balding man at his side. The boy is older than me, with long hair and torn jeans and a rectangular bulge in his pocket that’s probably a box of cigarettes. In this boy’s head I can’t find a name. Sometimes that happens; sometimes people don’t care about their names, don’t think of themselves with their name. This boy is used to feeling pain in his knuckles and seeing blood on his hands. He’s so used to it that when he looks down he can feel the aches and see the blood. He wants to cry, but he doesn’t. He wants to beat the old man next to him, but he knows the old man can beat him, and I see that the man has done that before—many, many, many times.

Kyle is crying now, between his two needle parents. He cries softly and covers his eyes with his hand. I can feel his tears like they were on my own cheeks, the sting ripping through him like a knife whittling at his ribs.

“You okay, bud?” Dad asks. He kneels beside me and wipes my cheek with his thumb, smudging a tear across my face. “It’s not gonna be bad. I made the doctor promise me it doesn’t hurt.”

“I know,” I say.

“So why’re you crying?” He says this with a smile, like it’s a playful question.

“I don’t want to go. . . .”

“You’re not going anywhere. You’ll always be with me.” But as some of the kids and their parents start filing out I can see he’s lying. The blankness in the kids’ faces betrays Dad’s promise. Their heads have been drained and there’s nothing of them left. Even the girl with the old man is emptier than before.

*

In Dad’s head, I see Mom’s face, but at the same time it’s not Mom’s face. It’s not the real Mom, because the real Mom had color in her cheeks and never crossed her hands over her chest while she slept. In his head, I feel the unshed tears that have

welled inside him. He wants to let them out but refuses to; he fears he won't be able to make it if he does.

In Dad's head, I feel something gnawing at his skin and stomach, straight through him, something growing much larger every day—grief. And it's so painful, having it settle inside you for days and months and years, and I think it's something I feel, too, or at least something I felt.

It's something I can fill, maybe, because I never have to feel alone, even if I really am. All these heads—I don't need a quiet moment with their sounds always singing inside me. Sometimes I wish I could sing to Dad, pour my sound, the sound of my head, inside of him.

But the thought scares me. I worry Dad might hate me for using my gift on him without asking permission.

Kyle feels something similar to Dad, except it's a different monster that eats at different parts and has different shaped teeth. The teeth of grief are round and gnawing and you don't always feel them sinking in until they hit a very soft spot inside of you, and then it's like all of your blood pouring out, but somehow you're still alive. Kyle's pain is much more jagged, because it's always there in some form or another. His parents coldly ignoring him, turning their heads as he cries, the children on the playground forgetting he's there.

Kyle is daydreaming: he's standing in line; he pushes away from his parents and runs into the street and a car comes out of nowhere and flattens him, and the monster dies with him. At least the blackness is simple. At least it won't ever betray him.

Behind that vision, all the other voices go quiet.

Dad and I are near the entrance. Once we're past those doors I imagine there's nothing I can do to turn back. If I fight, they'll restrain me, maybe hold my limbs and strap me to something or stick a syringe in my arm and put me to sleep, and that'll be the last thing I'll ever see as Erik, the first Erik, the real Erik.

Kyle is already in the doorway, not quite in the office yet, but lingering between worlds, between freedom and erasure. He knows his chance to run is gone, just as mine will be soon enough, and yet we both stand here, accepting our fates because—because it's the only certain outcome. If we run, we might get caught; our hopes

might be built up only to be dashed. If we fight, they'll sedate us. We could run into the street together, and maybe we would die, but at least we'd die fighting. At least we wouldn't die alone in a white office with these clinical, cold, sterile, faceless people around us poking and prodding and putting us to sleep.

Is it worth it, Dad? We get to be normal, even if it means I lose my soul. It'll be like Mom never existed, won't it? It'll be a new child that carries none of her imprint.

It must feel like a dream to him. I don't peek inside to find out, because if that's true then I think I might die right here and now, approaching the threshold, and let my legs guide me in without relishing the last moments.

Why can't I run? Why haven't I wrestled free from Dad's grip and grabbed Kyle and charged away screaming and crying? I wish I had telepathy like the characters in Dad's comics. If I were Professor Xavier I could stop everything and walk away. If I were Jean Grey I could fly off to somewhere far from here and start over.

But here we are, Kyle and I, spiraling toward the end of our worlds. Here I am, delving into my memories, into the energies surging through my brain and body, cracking my mind open, spreading my essence thin over the air, navigating across the invisible pathways between our physical forms. The memories paved into these roads are like pebbles in sediment. They're all calling out to me, even if they don't realize it, asking for a piece of me to join them. But it's Kyle's voice that cries the loudest. I push myself into Kyle, feeling around his mind and soul for the empty, wounded, and bleeding spaces. I am filling them with the voices that are a silent symphony to everyone else. Kyle is so cold, having locked everything inside a small black box where his soul should reside, so here I am, filling Kyle with what I hope is warmth, as we come to oblivion.

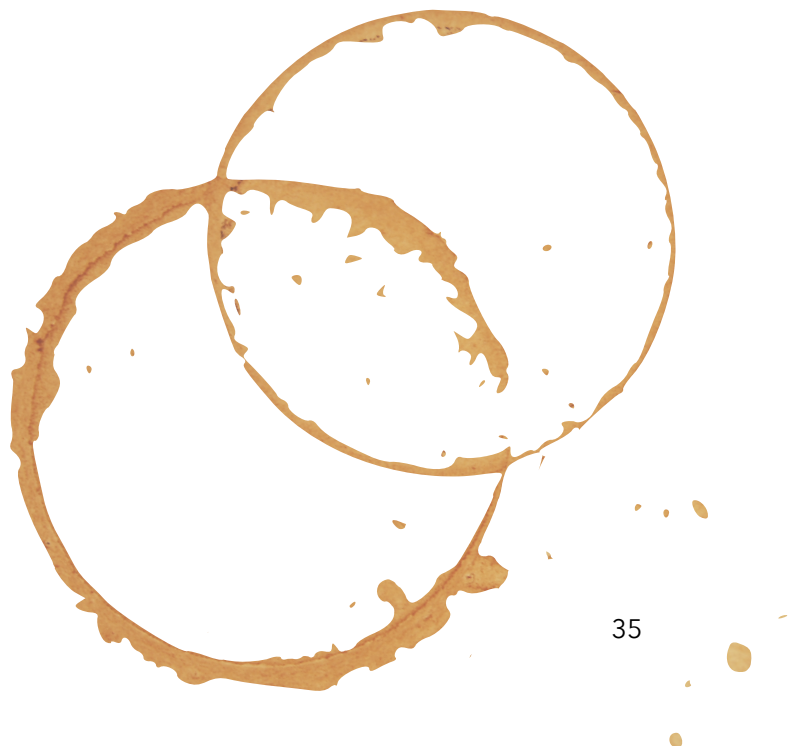




TLC

Robert P. Hansen

a butterfly
has smothered
my aching heart
with its paper-
thin wings



The House of Wrinkled Bones

Lana Bella

Outside, the air is crisp with wrinkled bones,
while the violet hours
slowly discard its poorly dressed skin
over the starved body
before slinking atop the frosty ground;
when the crescent moon
slopes saffron rays upon a lone woman
in a house gnarls of bordered evergreens.
Inside, long, white drapes
sweep the brown-carpeted floor,
as she sits by a squeaky window with its chipping paint
worn down from years of famished termites and rotting rain,
waiting there,
reeling in her foamed suspension
for the visiting ghost to
roll out of its pockmarked void at the chimes
of midnight bells.
Dung smoke knits the sleeping cold a wisp of pale sweater,
slightly puckered where the skirting tears,
when it lurks beneath the gold-crocheted chair,
that is wrought with ivory roses and cat's eye stitch
the woman stirs.
Eyes shift, nose sniffs the flowing scent, tongue darts
to taste the turning air
then she leans out,
with clawed whisper of
cold fingertips,
reaches over to stroke
the low-hanging stumps,
smooths back the sloppy curls of its silvered mane
grasps the unfurled hands
and sways against the caressed notes of
a carved out mandolin.



The Permissioner's Binders

John Richmond

Things had changed. Had they changed for the better? Maybe, but who knows—who can even remember? The only thing we know for certain was that the “aged-ones” told stories (maybe they were even tales) of a time when a Permissioner was never needed and the Binders never existed. But, that was then, and this is now. So, how did it happen, who is the Permissioner and what is in the Binders?

It was an “evolution” of sorts; one that led to a new social contract that was forged over, through and as a result of many years of human and cyber uncertainty and terror; a way of “managing” society according to a new philosophy that believed that rights, human and otherwise, were a function of time, place and circumstance.

Oh, to be sure, everyone retained the same basic philosophical rights—“. . . life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness . . .”—but beyond that, *everything that was tangible and real* was in the hands of the Permissioner, and he was aided in his duties by the Binders.

Many believed that the mid-twenty-first-century was the turning point, but the antecedents of the change, the turn, were occurring years before. It's just that 2053 was the year that a critical mass of governments finally said their equivalents of “enough is enough”.

It was a combination of terrorism, social media activism run amok, and the Hacker Revolution that resulted in a worldwide state of anarchy. Put differently, people and places were blowing up, cyber-security as regards ALL data became nonexistent (everyone had access to everything) and social media chaos, and the masses it could summon, turned every aspect of government, from the local school board to the affairs of state, into a game of perpetual gridlock to the point of absolute dysfunctionality. The problems were universally the same (as was the response) differing only according to local nuances.

The phenomenon of human terrorism was addressed by the Zoning Laws Act (ZLA) of 2048 which created 10 kilometer (6 square mile) Zones in which one lived and worked and procreated. No one was allowed to exit their Zone without explicit written and documented permission. Those who violated the ZLA were punished by the loss of their job, their housing, their food and education subsidies and a minimum of twenty years in prison.

Social media fell under the purview of the Social Media National Defense Act (SMNDA) of 2050 which, among other things, limited social media access to only one employment related page while other feeds (not to exceed five) were restricted to legitimate members of a citizen's immediate family.

Finally, the Hacker Revolution, and the repercussions of everything being digitally accessible, led to the Internet Access Control Act (IACA) of 2051. The IACA limited Internet access to only pre-approved educational and entertainment websites.

Yet, as regards personal information (of all and any sort) there was still a need to have some sort of repository of data and someone to manage and oversee both the data and the repository.

This led to the Permissioner and the Permissioner's Binder Act (PAPBA) of 2053. In essence, the PAPBA established the Office of the Permissioner and the compilation of the Binders. It was the Permissioner's responsibility to review any request by those living in his Zone of Authority for travel permission to another Zone. Second, the PAPBA further authorized the compilation of individual Binders on everyone in the Permissioner's Zone. Finally, the Act provided for the establishment of a repository for the Binders.

The Binders were comprehensive. They included everything there was to know about the individual in question. Further, the Act required that the Binders were all "hard copies" (literally binders) that were durable, resilient and impervious to attack, cyber or otherwise.

Obviously, it took some time to establish, demarcate and electronically secure the Zones. It took even more time to collect the individual data and assemble the Binders. The enormity of these tasks resulted in a series of multiple "start-dates": those points in time when parts of what would ultimately be the entire system would be functional and permission would be required.

Of course, once a Zone was "operational," near-to-endless speculation ensued. There were questions like *"Who is the Permissioner?"*, *"Where are the Binders kept?"* and *"Is the repository in the Zone?"*

These were, obviously, good, natural and logical questions. They were practical, yet, for all intents and purposes, they were (and always would be) simply rhetorical.

For you see, no one ever met or came before the Permissioner. No, he never saw anyone (and, no one ever saw him) though each Permissioner dealt with hundreds of people each day. Besides, once you were standing there (before the Permissioner's Zone Coordinator with your transit request papers firmly in hand) it would have been highly near-to-bordering-on-transit-request-denied unlikely to inquire about *anything*, let alone the Permissioner. Still, in the Zones, curiosity and rumors were rampant. It was, necessarily, of the word-of-mouth variety, and especially guarded, but it was pervasive.

Some people didn't believe that the Permissioner, or the Binders, existed at all. They questioned the requirement of Zone Transfer Permits, but at the same time, no one took it upon themselves to put their belief to the test.

Others believed that there was a Permissioner and that there were Binders, but that they were housed in a subterranean vault somewhere in the Zone.

Then, there was the majority opinion that believed that all of the Permissioners and the Binder Repositories were situated deep in a cavern in a remote mountain range somewhere.

Was it mysterious? Yes. Was it sometimes a burden and a hassle to have to get a permit to travel? Yes. Did it require some "advanced planning" so as to coordinate everything? Yes. Did it feel like the government was controlling everyone's lives? To a normal person, it was a most definite and emphatic YES!

But, more importantly, did these measures (did what the Permissioner and the Binders represent) finally impose (for lack of a kinder, more democratic word) a control and stability and a predictable functionality to the world? Oh, yes, indeed.

Actually, the bulk of the population (after the revolts and disclosures and the terrorism) found it "comforting"; well worth the inconveniences and the sacrifices to know and, maybe more importantly, believe that everything and anything that there

was to know about them was safe and secure, and accessible to only one set of eyes: the Permissioner's, in their very own, individual and private Binder.

It was in this way, after the passage of a few generations that the world of the hackers, protesters, revolutionaries, and terrorists slid into history; a dimming of a phase that had brought adjustments and had created a new and different kind of existence: the world as we know it today.

Paper Boats

Sudha Srivatsan

The first day of holy rain,
The smell of earth rising through air dry,
His wrinkled eyelids drop, subconsciously,
Permitting his bulbous nose to enjoy,
The hair on his ears tingled as cool breeze made its way,
To chin up his frazzled face and have it looking up,
Wherefrom would fall earnest drops,
They have made him wait for far too long,
But today, his sincere ordeal, no longer bearable,
So, together they have all joined,
To fulfil his yearning,

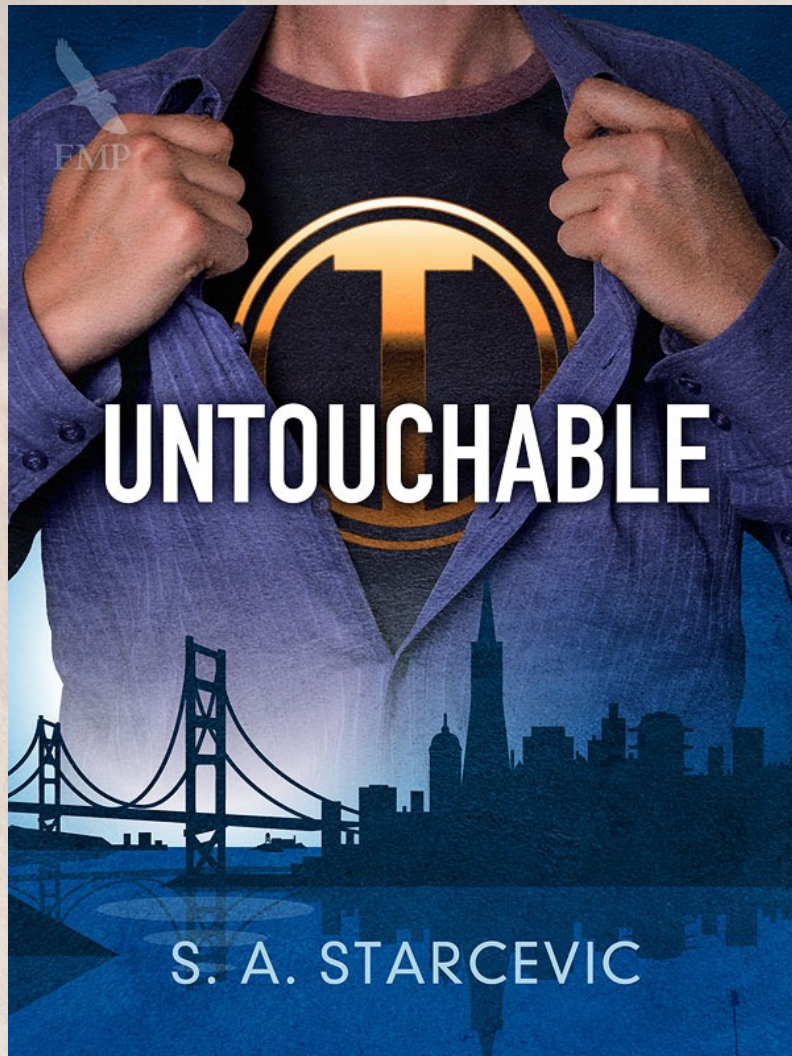
Like a scarecrow on his farm, now dry and barren,
Longing to feel the water rising in his palms,
As they begin to drop, one by one,
Speckling his face with millions of dots,
Carrying away his tears and
Wetting his dry lips,
Flowing into his mouth, regaling their nature,
Numb he stands, his senses dysfunctional,
A dream of his life, now royally unfolding,
To quench his land that lived in eternal thirst
Drenching his body frail, a feeling long forgotten,

The relish exploding with unimaginable punch,
Plunging on his chest, becoming one with his earth,
The damp soil clutched, his ridged nails now in mud,
Years of swink, in a swith, gladly forgotten,

Nearby, his children,
Have already set out the boats,
Made by their father, of paper, now ochre and old!



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Ethan Elliot is no stranger to secret identities. As an LGBT teen, he's dealt with secrets all his life. Nevertheless, when his powers kick in and he's whisked away to join a team of superheroes, he dons a mask of a different kind—one that sees him battling supervillains and testing his limits.

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Contributors

Lana Bella has a diverse work of poetry and flash fiction anthologized, published and forthcoming with more than seventy journals, including Aureorean Poetry, Eunoia Review, New Plains Review, The Corner Club Press, The Criterion Journal, The Ignatian Review, The Offbeat Literary, Whirlwind Press and Featured Artist with Quail Bell Magazine, among others. She resides in the coastal town of Nha Trang, Vietnam with her novelist husband and two frolicsome imps. facebook.com/niaallanpoe

Chrystal Berche writes. Hard times, troubled times, the lives of her characters are never easy, but then whose life is? The story is in the struggle, the journey, the triumphs and the falls. She writes about artists, musicians, loners, drifters, dreamers, hippies, bikers, truckers, hunters and all the other things she knows and loves. Sometimes she writes urban romance and sometimes it's aliens, crash landing near a roadside bar. When she isn't writing she's taking pictures, or curled up with a good book and a kitty on her lap.

David Bradley is a college graduate, currently taking a year off between college and graduate school. He is an aspiring writer, hoping one day to make a living off his writing. In the meantime, he's tutoring, writing novels and short stories, applying to MFA programs, and relaxing. He has been published in The Corner Club Press before, and in his college literary magazine.

Joe Crunk is a lazy bastard. The only thing he cares about is women. He has a college degree and works as an entrepreneur.

Darren C. Demaree's poems have appeared numerous magazines/journals, including the South Dakota Review, Meridian, The Louisville Review, Grist, and the Colorado Review. He is the author of *As We Refer To Our Bodies* (2013, 8th House), *Temporary Champions* (2014, Main Street Rag), and *Not For Art Nor Prayer* (2015, 8th House). He is the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology. He is currently living and writing in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois has had over seven hundred of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad, including The Corner Club Press. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize for work published in 2012, 2013, and 2014. His novel, *Two-Headed Dog*, based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, is available on Kindle and Nook, or as a print edition. He lives in Denver.

John Grey is an Australian born poet. Recently published in Slant, Southern California Review and Natural Bridge with work upcoming in the Kerf, Leading Edge and Louisiana Literature.

Robert P. Hansen teaches philosophy courses at a community college and writes in his spare time. He has had over 80 poems and 20 stories published by various magazines. His collections of poetry, short stories, and my novels are currently available as e-books from several retailers. Check out his blog at: rphansenauthorpoet.wordpress.com

Colin James has a chapbook of poems, *Dreams of the Really Annoying*, available from Writing Knights Press.

John Richmond has made his way to a small upstate New York town where he divides his time between writing and discussing the state of the world with his coonhound buddy, Roma. Recently, he has appeared in The Tower Journal, Stone Path Review, Meat for Tea: The Valley Review, Rogue Particles Magazine, From the Depths, Flash Frontier (N. Z.), The Birmingham Arts Journal, Riverbabble (2), The Writing Disorder, Lalitamba, Poetic Diversity, Marco Polo Arts Magazine, Embodied Effigies, ken*again, Black & White, SNReview, The Round, The Potomac, Syndic Literary Journal, Ygdrasil (Canada), Slow Trains, and Forge Journal.

Alan Semrow lives in Wisconsin. His fiction has or is set to be featured in over 25 journals. Semrow spends the majority of his free time with his boyfriend, friends, family, and Shih Tzu, Remy. His blog can be found at alansemrowriter.wordpress.com

Hillary Smith, sophomore at Whitman College studying English, music, and French, has nurtured her literary passion since she was a little girl. She has published a YA novel as an e-book, and her poetry and fiction has been featured in Zaum, quarterlife, and Soundings Review. Hillary also plays four instruments: alto saxophone, piano, flute, and clarinet.

Sudha Srivatsan has been born and raised in India. A daughter, wife and sister, she has worked in the Middle East and London. She aspires to be known in the space of poetry as someone who weaves magic into language and combines unique design and strong color to her work of art. Her work is due to appear in the Commonline Journal January 2015, Indiana Voice Journal April 2015 issue, winner of poetry contests and shortlisted for the Mary Charman Smith November 2014 Poetry Competition.

Jake Tringali: born in Boston, lived up and down the East Coast, then up and down the West Coast, now back in his home city. Runs rad restaurants, thrives in a habitat of bars, punk rock shows, and a sprinkling of burlesque performers. Publications include The Manhattanville Review, Oddball Magazine, Rio Grande Review, The Commonline Journal, Aberration Labyrinth, Five2One, Apeiron Review, and Catch & Release.

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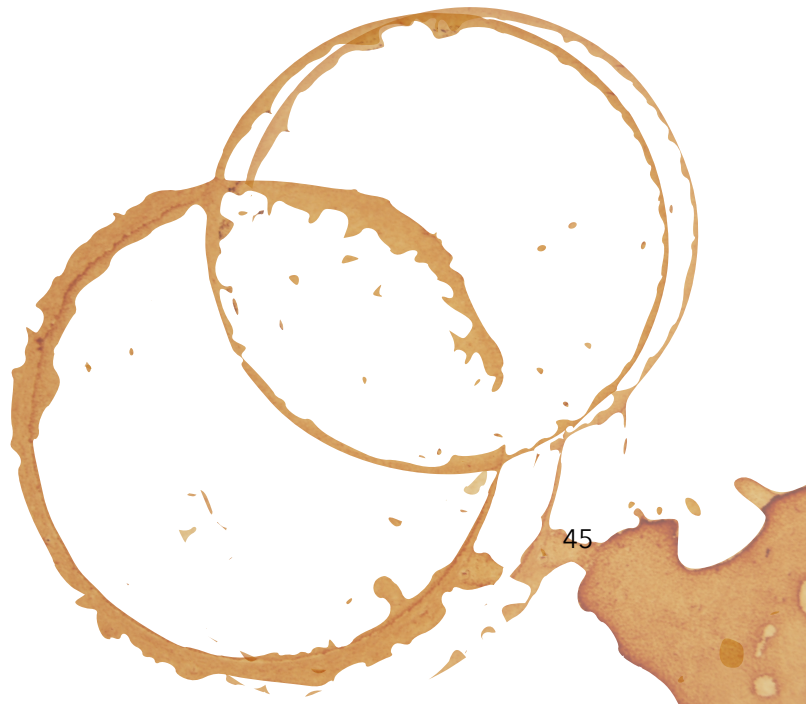
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