

The Salamander

2012

SALAMANDER
RENDER

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The Salamander

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The Salamander is published annually in the spring semester of the academic year by the Literary and Graphic Arts Society at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York. The journal is financed by Le Moyne College's Organizational Finance Review Committee and is distributed free of charge. No formal subscription is available, though copies of the most recently published issue may be mailed to interested parties depending on availability. Availability and mailing costs will be discussed at time of request.

The purpose of the Literary and Graphic Arts Society is to encourage literary and artistic creativity in the Le Moyne community and to publish outstanding student work in The Salamander. Submissions are usually solicited towards the end of the fall semester and start of the spring semester, depending on the editorial board's preference. Short stories, poems, manuscripts, non-fiction essays, photos and artwork are solicited for publication.

The Salamander was first published in 1975 with no volume number. Volume I was published in 1976.

Electronic submissions are preferred and are only accepted in response to the call for submissions, issued annually by the journal's editorial board. Submission guidelines are subject to change annually, based on editors' preferences.

The Salamander is an independent journal housed in Le Moyne College's Creative Writing Program. The editorial board normally serves for one academic year (September to May). All editorial positions are volunteered.

Cover and interior design by Nancy Boyce. Cover illustration by Heather Goodnow.

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Visit The Salamander on the web at www.lemoyne.edu/salamander.

ISSN: 2161-2846

The Salamander

Volume XXXVII 2012

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Fiction

But Deegan and Brian had a chance. That is until they grew up with me. It's so much easier to understand when it's over. They looked up to me because I gave them all the answers, and above all, always warned them not to be like me. Whole lot of good that did... looking out for them only made me love them. Them and my Pop were the only people that I could look

in when making them; after all, engineers are men. He knew he'd made up

Eyes on a Bookshelf

I am Fergus. This spot on the bookshelf has been mine since they were built. The books were filled in about me; I liked their closeness. There are many, many books on these shelves that curved about the room to encircle the woman; she liked it too.

The woman was Finn, and I liked her, I suppose. We had similar

neither advanced nor retreated and Finn did not seem to know what to make of it.

on the counter. There were two mugs next to it. How could she do this to me? Maybe I could get hair in it...

Yet, here he was at the door, being invited in. I narrowed my eyes at

Another Rainy Night

The town was always empty of people. Only cemeteries and monuments to wars are tended by its residents. The young move away and the old drink coffee, talk about the rain and the ache in their knees that predicted it. The tavern and the rest of the town are divided by a rough, black strip of road.

A wife and husband walk down the damp sidewalk; its cracks and pits filled with water. They walk to the door of the tavern and the man's shoe sprays water on the woman's jeans. She shivers. He swings the door open

walking quickly, each step spraying more water from the sidewalk's cracks and holes. The wife slowed down her pace to avoid the spray.

Inside their house the woman walked up the stairs to change her clothes and go to bed.

"Are you coming to bed?"

"Yes," he said. "I'll be up in a minute."

He could hear the water in the sink upstairs turn on and then off. He pulled a bottle of beer from the refrigerator and stood over his wife's desk. Then, from the bedroom, he heard the typical squeaks and immediate silence of the mattress. The man stared at the papers neatly stacked on the desk. He picked one up but did not understand the numbers or brightly colored charts. He dropped the paper back on the desk and watched some of them flutter off of the desk. He turned on the television, took a sip of his beer, and sat on the couch. He was asleep on the couch with an unfinished beer in his hand. His wife lay awake on the cold mattress in the bedroom.

Morning People

“Uuuhnnnuuhh...”

The daughter of Aoife was an early riser. The sun's light was only just

an angel, knelt blocking the light — its rays framing her slender form like a heavenly aura.

He pursed his lips, trying to focus on her features against the bright light.

“Honey... I don’t think it’s even open yet.” Hell, he didn’t think the janitors had been round to clean up from the night before yet, but what was he to tell her?

“Yes it is,” she responded patiently. In spite of her child’s voice, she tended to argue — at least with him — as if she were the adult — as opposed to the whining and complaining of most other brats.

“The commercial said seven o’clock. It’s past that now.”

“...What time is it?” His voice was impossibly hoarse.

Aoife’s daughter was only just learning to tell time. She took his watch from the nightstand, passing it into his open hand. He shifted more onto his back so he could hold up both the pillow and the watch.

After an eternity of squinting and straining, he handed it back to her. “I can’t see it.” He rolled fully onto his back and dropped the pillow onto his face. “See the longer hand?”

“Hand?”

“The black thing. S’called a hand — what number’s the longer one pointing to?”

There was a moment of silence as Aoife’s daughter counted, on fingers and by mouth, forcing all of her limitless concentration to the task.

God love her. “Honey?”

“It moved.”

“What number is it nearest?” Good Lord; he’d be better with a digital.

“Three.”

His mind filled with a curse.

“Is that... ten?”

Oh. That’s what she’d been doing. “Huh? Nah, honey, that’s fifteen —”

“It didn’t get there yet, it’s nearest there.”

“All the better.”

She waited, but that was all he said. At length, she sighed, quietly but dramatically. She settled down cross-legged beside him, facing the head-

DAY 8:

Nashville was an old town. Older than I thought it would be. I was now over a thousand miles away from my diagnosis and that fact seemed to give

"Me? Jack."

"Jack, I'm Tennessee. Tennessee Reaves."

Tennessee opened the box and pulled out a bottle. It was half empty. He opened it carefully and poured us each half a glass.

"This here whiskey was brewed in 1939 and aged forty years. The first time it was ever bottled was '79. I've been savin' this half for some time now and I can't think of a better time to finish it. Drank it first when my son was born, then when my son died, and the last time was when my granddaughter was born after his death. My daughter-in-law found out after he passed that she was pregnant. If there ever was a miracle, that was it right there."

"Why finish it with me?"

"Because, you remind me of him. He was diagnosed like you... I see him in your eyes. I see the same worry he had. And I'm gonna sit here and tell you the same thing I told him. And that's there ain't nothin' you can do about it. Don't worry about what you have no control over. Leave today knowing it as the day you lived your life."

Poetry

Coffee Bean Bonanza

Beep, snooze, beep, wake up!
 It's raining which makes it so much harder to leave my cocoon,
 eyes heavier than two cinder blocks,
 body slouched and dragging,
 I beg for death just so I can sleep.

At least there's always that first sip of coffee to get me through.
 Ahh, that first cup of Joe;
 that excellent espresso;
 that jamming java;
 that perfectly blended brew;

I don't even think coffee could shake this slump this morning.

First sip and I feel different,
 my body feels light like a feather as something called energy enters me,
 it's not a caffeine rush, or a jittery jolt,
 I feel invincible as the coffee continues to flow.

I go out to my car, but why drive when I can fly?
 Another sip, lift up my arms and on to class I go,
 flying through the sky with the birds and clouds,
 as if I am still dreaming or in a corny love song.

Class begins,
 I take another sip and turn the teacher into a clown.
 She runs around on a unicycle with her red nose
 while the class goes crazy and I savor my magic coffee with an evil grin.

Time to go home to make a jungle in my backyard
 or maybe a safari — possibilities are endless.

No! This can't be happening!
 No more sips of my magic coffee?
 How will I get home?
 I'll have to call someone to drive here
 or maybe make another pot of coffee.

Rabbit Hole

Sleep won't come for her tonight
for she is hopped up on coffee,
thoughts of all the nights that she has laid untouched.
She has found a remedy to her out of tune melody —
water, a lightly scented candle
and the salt rocks to scrub and grind
away the female need to be sexed and cuddled,
stripping the layers of this undesirable trait,
clothing the raw supple skin of longing.

Strapped to her feet is her release
treading fast to mimic the intensity of pleasure she desires to feel
breathing, thinking, pushing beyond
her breaking point to gain at once
not even the fraction of closeness
she desires from the object of her sex.
Yes, three months ago she died.

Even the puddles are gray.
We waded our way through the memories,
forgetting it is October, forgetting it is fall.
The kitchen table's still loud, ghosts
of laughter and ice cream from the truck.
We couldn't see the sky,

Lamp-post

"It will not go out of my mind that if we pass this post and lantern either we shall find strange adventures or else some great changes of our fortunes."
— The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

It was the same journey each August.
Dad, Andrew, and I
squished into whatever whining car we had with
pillows, macaroni salad and "Goodnight Saigon."
We took the drive to the hidden cottage.

In the aluminum canoe, we'd voyage out to the hidden pond.
I never learned to steer but
Andrew couldn't even paddle.
Dad navigated to the secret fold of the lake (it was full of unexpected places).
I marveled at the beaver's dam that rose from the water;
Andrew dipped his fingers in the pond and pulled up
lily pads.

On rainy nights, there was no outside playtime.
Dad picked movies from his college years,
usually starring Robert Redford.
We watched them on the tiniest of televisions.
The rain and the bats and the tree's arms pinged
on the tin roof while I cuddled
into the tired, green velour arm chair.

When everyone slept, I'd disappear into the spare room
with the ancient paperbacks and C. S. Lewis.
Andrew never wanted to come.
Beneath one bare bulb
I'd travel into those endless woods of deep magic,
Fearing nothing — not even the Lion.

.....

Trust

Nonsense, confusion
about wanting to know why
you snatched away my inner core,
my body, my strength, my soul.

The television enticed you
with its negative remarks;
you just shushed me and playfully
yet quickly did your part.

You flopped, you fiddled, you held

Sweet Air

i see her in an adjacent row, her sweaty forehead darkening her
 blonde hairline,
 she is crouched over in a white and blue checkered short sleeve, focused.
her glasses positioned on her head, ready to jump off and inspect
 any questionable berry,
 anything unable to meet her steep standards.
96 degrees today, I am hiding from the sun's unbearable rays,
but she doesn't notice. she is busy cleaning out bush after bush with
 her stained fingers, nobody could do it like her.
i know her well enough to know she is panting, slightly gasping for air,
especially this berry infused air,

The Lively Bunch

Some drink to their memories,
some try to forget.
Never let them tell you it's all in good fun.

They're a lively bunch,
that is certain.
They tell you not to threaten them with a good time.

It's never just fun
when you're with the wild bunch.
They'd rather push the limits than waste a good night.

They're young and stupid,
but that's no excuse.
A mind is a terrible thing to waste.

I wish they'd grow up,
those useless wastes of space.
They're still sleepin' and wastin' good daylight.

I gave up my health,

Apology for an Apology

When I leave this court
I shall go away
condemned by you
to death — Socrates

I am writing you
Grant's letter,
surrender or die.

Evidence exists.
Like Washington's
cherry blossom,
it cannot lie.

Do with my words
as you please.
Place them in
Lincoln's pocket.
Tie them to
Franklin's kite.

I am Jackson.
You are Carolina.
Secede if you must.

But join
or die.

The Wanderer's Song

A little night music plays,
providing a lyrical
mood to my walk
from your window.

The mood is sad,
eerie it seems,
but no,
no sorrow is felt,
no fear strikes this mind
as I go on my search to
find your mirror,
your perfection.

I try with words,
art,
but only God can make perfection.
I have its key.

So as I walk from
your window, only
happiness
is heartfelt, for
as it seems each step
is moving
away.

I find the next moment
closer to you.

11.24

My Sister's Long Hair

My sister's long hair,
slipping over her sloped shoulders
as she blew lightly on her spoon,
dipped gently into the thick ceramic bowl
that sat heavy in front of her.
She drew back quickly, not noticing her hair
becoming damp with broth, and the tips
of her dark, winding ponytail
swung back against her body.
Tomato bled across her ribs
and when she felt it seep through,
she sighed.

Mouth full, she motioned
at her shirt with her free hand,
the other pulling it away from her skin
and I passed her a small bouquet
of coarse, white napkins.

My Colorless Pen

rests stubbornly in
between fingertips.
Ink becomes letters.
Letters become words.
But they are lifeless.
Still words go on and
catch pages ablaze.
But it is only
a gray flame, vibrant
as fading bone that
seeps through cracked coffin.
Thriving dirt carries
cryptic dust into
sun-bathed leaves. Concrete
now gleaming within
Spring's new births.

Caring Hearts and Lonely Souls

Decide forever what is now,
and feel love drift away,
but only if the winds allow,
to not be blown astray.
Caring now for only one,
but lying to myself.
Feeling e'erything's undone,
a forgotten soulless self.
To what degree will all this end?
And I have peace once more.
The choice is then:
 to comprehend,
 or rather to ignore.
Doubts echo inside my head,
and drive me to the edge.
Answers I always seem to dread,
are with me on the ledge.
But if I turn, will they follow,
and haunt me to my grave?
Or do the lies I swallow,
beg me, be their slave?

Death, Justified

They lead me through the square,
 through the maze of sneers and stares.
 My hands, bound in iron chains.
 Clothes with my own blood are stained.
 I cry, the heavens; Take this away!
 To God I plead, to see a new day.
 As I grow closer to my final state,
 I see those who wished me this fate.
 Colorless, death-driven eyes,
 crowding the streets to watch my demise.

My lips mimic my innocence,
 to societies' deafened ears.
 A mockery of their common sense.
 They watched me decay,
 these past few years.

Suddenly I laugh aloud,
 and smile at the thought of death;
 to be rid the ignorance of this crowd,
 of drawing my final breath.

"Let death come!" I cry;
 "Let the devil comfort me!"
 Over the jeers I hear the reply,
 'Never the devil would take thee!'

I climb the stairs to face my fate,
 and turn to scorch this town with hate.
 As I hear a new voice above the others,
 "Hear me! Hear me, my brothers!
 This man accused of many crimes
 ones that live throughout the times
 is brought before you this day to die
 and so with death he must comply;
 Charged is he for many dead.
 Justice be served, off with his head!"

The crowd erupting in applause.
the shadow lays my head to rest.
All to see in work their laws,
with naught but one contest.

I smile as the axe is raised,
and again begin to laugh;
force a thought of better days,
the work done on my behalf.
'So here ends my tale,' I thought,
barely heard above the town.
Now at peace with all I've fought,
as I hear the axe bare down.

Transformation

So easily we hide,
no death but suicide.
Fall victim to this fate,
and cleanse ourselves with hate.
We've lost ourselves to sin,
to the dark that grows within.
A phantom we must fight.
Another vengeful plight.
The daemons I well deserved,
hang the love that I once served.
Turning eyes to black,
and again they spin the rack.
The pain that I've forgone,
is lost within this song.
But will again be born.
Behold its newest form:

A shadow overtakes me
and bathes me in cold sweat,
a shivering death that I foresee
or a life I can't forget.
Decisions I wish that I'd once made
and mistakes I wish I'd not,
seven days since I've last prayed
to a god I've long forgot.
A broken dream of something new
the last remaining light,
cast upon the midnight view
to vanish out of sight.
Life goes with my dying hope
for all this world contains,
a time at last I couldn't cope
I couldn't break these chains.

I only wish to set in stone
the words in ancient dust,
to crawl from out the great unknown
or back within disgust.

.....

Schizophrenia

He knew
What he did to me;
Loved what it did to me.
I loved it too.
His hands know where to touch.
His body screams for mine
And I feel on top of the world.
We're swimming in the sheets.
He craves more,
But I'll make him beg
Because I ache for him,
And he's unsure.
But that's not fair;
Stop.
Doesn't he know

Of course he knew
I wanted him.
He watched me ache for him
Was I that stupid?
From all of his experience
He knows I'll give in.
But I'm powerless
And I'm drowning
In a faded shadow of love.
I'll make him care;
We could have everything.
And I'm positive
He should be mine.
Stop.

An Archaeologist

An archaeologist's job is to know
 the difference between relics
 and remnants. The separation
 of meaning and meaningless things.
 The fjord between the fossil,
 the valley between the bone.

A copper bottle, the clay pot,
 a convoluted wicker basket that
 carries the muffled sound of dust
 resonates in the mud. Hands dig
 for what? The dull feeling
 of discovery, or the thing to fasten

their lives to. Once, my father
 wished he was an archaeologist.
 All that year he dug a deep crevice
 in the backyard, searching
 for a luminous head, a skull,
 the skeleton of his past

sunk beneath the soft grass-root.
 Things fell in: televisions, the
 sound of the radio and newspapers,
 then worse. Shapes, images,
 language, big malleable dreams.
 He never comes up for air,

talking to him is like speaking
 in echoes. My voice carries down
 like a mouth full of dirt. It sounds
 like the breaking of things. Clay
 becomes soft, copper turns green,
 wood-soaked, heavy from rain, things rust.

I flew to Memphis, to Gaul,
 and found my father's face
 beneath the sand, the dirt, the ash
 and behind glass, improperly labeled —
 this is us, it says, this is time,
 this is history, this bag of grey dust.

Fractures

A city grows from my fingertips:
Fragmented concrete, glass filaments,
a naked steel frieze. I'm putting things
together. I'm giving the world the fragrance
of new paint. Oranges, yellows,
fuchsias, a deep saffron: fresh brush
strokes for each falling leaf. I'm gluing
up the slow faults with reflections.
I'm mending the false walls with
fancy chandeliers. A distraction works
best by forging bald attractions. I
fill the sidewalks with newsprint.

Even strangers are fixable.
I apply the best of my paints to their faces,
foraging for that full-look that defies fate.
That wide-eyed fracture of the brain-bones,
the look of wonder in a dented femur.
I'm covering up for feeling.
I'm covering up for fractures.
 I'm covering up
 our wildly fractured selves.

Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Why anyone would choose to bother about it,
 a hole dug by a stranger, the green moss still
 growing up the rope, shining in the sunlight,
 only Josh, Paul and Lesley know.

Looking deep into that black pit,
 the diseased algae dances across the fibers,
 the vine, like grapes. Lesley says first,
 all the colors in the world make white,

losing all the color makes black. I don't believe her.
 Darkness is a combination of things, not their
 absence. Bound by love and disability,
 and keeping the echo of a promise

I take out something I've carried inside
 a long time and let it drop, gently falling
 against the green rope. Josh and Paul
 do the same. Lesley looks heavy; she holds

the weight of her breath and has more to drop —
 a book of blank pages, old men and elbow
 patches, the painted jars and fresh silverware.
 We wait for the evidence of the bottom,

the sound of the splash, the smell of disturbed sea.
 The sky falls. Everything illuminated turns black.

Behind the Mona Lisa Smile

tuesday morning

At one o'clock in the morning the sky is red charcoal in a wood-burning stove.
Deep sangria ashes dusted across white clouds.

tuesday afternoon

You know sometimes I wish I could dispose of my emotions.
It would be a freeing sort of experience,
to think clearly without the storms of love.

wednesday morning

And yet when I go to bed, I see
those red clouds peek through the blinds.
The light making its way across my face, reminding me it's morning.
And I have still not had one hour of sleep.

wednesday night

If I could lay my body down and escape for a while,
let my soul run around
and live,
I think I would be happier.
Chase bluer skies away from haunting oceans, I
think I would be safer.

thursday morning

I sometimes feel like the beauty is haunting me,
taunting me,
chasing me.
My eyes are cluttered with sceneries and smiles, perfect hair, and
bleeding rainbows.
I am never alone.
Even inside my mind the wind is screaming.
I cast my faith out into the sea.
I'm waging a war against myself
and I'm losing.

I put my trust in burning buildings.

Nocturne

Moon like and
full of inconsistency; I
with my chasten white skull —

It holds those
sunken eye pits, and
a crown of loose hair

black as roots.
How celestial! I drag out —

Disposable Boys

Red and blue cups jammed in the wrought
spell "WELCOME" above the homeward highway,
naivety displayed across public overpasses
and scattered like limbs in our own back yards,
our firecrackers retired the grenadiers and artillerymen.
"Boys, lunchtime!" — Our queue to negotiate a ceasefire,
two-inch, green men abandoned with childish gluttony.
The loser would bury his captain 'neath a garden-rock tomb
we hadn't the mental faculties to recall these damned soldiers
their memorials would serve as mountains, bunkers, and mausoleums again.
Sidewalk wars would be waged on and ever on
'til the day when only the radiomen and some lucky minesweepers remained.

Red and blue cups jammed in the wrought
two-inch green men abandoned in a childish act of gluttony.

Growing Up

Acid Velocity

Shattered glass,
oil smeared on wintry flakes.
Sounds of children
laughing through
arid throats:
wind through skin like
acid velocity.

A trunk full of cans,
wine, pans, and

Mother always
told me we're
fortunate when
problems happen
on Thursdays.

It's Friday night.

Final Blow

The crystalline constellation of Orion's belt lies on a mirror, shattered,
sickled pieces. The morning breath lingers booze and passion.
Surely you have done the same in mere longevity and bitter selfishness.
I have allowed myself to break so gently;
so beautifully and so peacefully.
It's a tired state of bliss that I am left in. Letting go
is something I must do and must essentially enjoy.
Do I enjoy the rest?
Possibly. Yes.
I close my eyes and see dark blue-swirls,
spinning until I finally fall.
Fall into such a
sleep, so serene — so finite
Love is finite.

The Light

"It gets better" — it's easily said...
Peaceful silence sounds more appealing.
Breaking free is more rewarding.

Breathe in sweet child — your shallow breaths will
gain strength.
My promise is not empty.

The light glistens — so follow it.
Not the light in front of your visage,
the light at the end of the
Tunnel of Struggles.
You will conquer, you will gain
sanctity and sanity.

There is so much to hold on for.
The cry of a newborn, the singing of baby birds —
the mere value of helping another.

You are cherished here.
You are adored — so break the violence,
expel the silence.
Hold onto the pure white light of
hope and life.
Breathe in Sweet Child.

Aftermath

"The roses look beautiful," I hear the women
say across the yard.
They said you looked beautiful too.

Considering
That word sends shivers through my body.
How dare they breathe that word.
Considering
How the truck buckled the car.
Making you one with the pavement.
Considering
How your own mother couldn't recognize your face.

Out of the corner of my eye I can see
my coat flung on the chair next to the bed.
A rainbow of silk and satin shattered across the floorboards.
He kisses my cheek and breathes "Was that good for you?"
Faces, details blur.
The end result is all the same.
My thirst quenched.
I no longer dwell on the small details like names.

Considering
The line of men I have pulled in with my siren song.
What would you say if you were here?
Would you recognize me or be blinded by their hollow eyes of earth?
The way I was always blinded by your golden curls
draped over your shoulders.

An Aftertaste of Dinner

it shriveling in a wicker
basket it becomes a
luminous pergo dance
floor to lindy hop

on on our way to
god, yes sir, a nice
strong pergo floor,
no rug, we cut it

up dancing, tearing
through, exploding
like alligators from
hatching eggs. No,

no, there is no container
for our love, we will be
the last couple still dancing
when the jukebox stops

after the sun freezes over
and the moon burns out,
so let's go lover, feed me,
so I can dance, for you,

with you, you matter,
whatever is left of me
from the waking and
sleeping eating is here

to tell you that yes, you
do matter, here, now,
and always, dance in
me and with me, amen.

Head in the Clouds (Along with Everything Else)

They laugh at me, they always laugh at me.
I scowl, but the wind does not howl.
I frown, but the sun does not go down.
I call, but hail does not fall.
What good is it being made of clouds
if you can't even storm out of a room
properly? All those blowhards
get storms named after them.
And they think it's funny calling me foggy.
I might as well just let Aeolus
have his way with me.
Of course, he'll probably send
his vassals to do it.
I don't even merit an "it was a dark

Velocity

I see I saw I
seesaw with mama
who mama say mama
saw mama who saw a
deliveryman with manna
ride up and down with data
where to deliver on alpha
in beginning and omega
in ending to reach his quota
through the street and mama
starts yelling Hey Hey Fella
come over here I want vanilla
I want some vanilla and the Fella
drives up or down the vista
depending on where the Fella
is or where we are the Fella
has to drive to the alpha or omega
and turn around its a common idea
on how to get to our little vista
since we are the center and mama
wants some manna for poppa
his favorite vanilla
we ran out of extra
since there was no comma
in our eating of the vanilla
we only could get the idea
to eat manna under magnolia
amidst the gardens in all their flora
amidst the ponds in all their fauna
in the midday sun with its corona
while we seesawed so mama
yelled Hey Hey Hey
Hey Hey Fella

Lust and Love

I want someone to lay with me.

Run their hands down the sides of my mind.

Touch the soft curves of my thoughts and
brush against the fragile bones of my soul.

I want to be addicted.

A junkie looking for my next fix,
searching for a way to pay for my next moment, of euphoria.

I want to feel needed.

That choking feeling of hope
that someone would grab the rope
before I jump, before I let go.

Because I ache for more than the surface.

More than conversation down dates
and broken hotel rooms.

I want to feel real.

A rush.

It's Lucky You Live Here

You: "What are you doing here? It's two in the morning."

Me: "I thought I'd surprise you." (Lie; truth:

Drunk off of Admiral Nelson's
 "Premium" Spiced Rum, I
 stumbled from the room of
 toga-wearing partiers,
 desperate for a skirted stick figure
 on a square sign beside a door
 and eager to escape the rancid
 reek of liquors blended and roaming
 past the walls and absorbing into
 the sheets draped over shoulders,
 when someone came sprinting past,
 arms flailing and linens around
 his ankles; taking this as a message
 from above, I ran at full tilt right
 behind the runaway, escaping
 'round the corner and down a ramp,
 across a field and into some woods
 until I realized my shoes remained behind,
 so I settled on a stump and watched
 stars through the sections of sky
 barely visible between branches; but
 rowdy howling somewhere off —
 who knew how far? — sent me
 scampering somewhere down a shrouded
 pathway, crickets chirping rambunctiously,
 until I came to an exit onto a street, and
 turning right, I knocked at the door
 of the first house. Here we stand.)

We will fall and snap.

A mind is a Kenmore refrigerator,

Visit Me

I remember stomping in Aunt Sue's
 cranberry bog last summer —
 our black boots sloshing in the gushing red
 that stained our clothes and dyed our skin
 like the blood our bodies shed
 the night of the hurricane;
 pushing us through the sliding glass door
 Katrina was in control, penetrating our bodies with glass.
 I heard her cackle that night, gusting the fierce wind
 through Aunt Sue's house as she stole and obliterated you
 like a spoon in a rusty garbage disposal.

I remember visiting the house of Frida Kahlo
 in Mexico, acting like a fluent Spanish-speaker —
 Do you think they could tell?
 The culture danced around us, and we ate too much salsa.
 Galapagos Islands — it was your choice,
 Remember? It's still on the shelves / F0s / F0s63.3671 T.?

Non-fiction

Revelations From Nature

The most philosophical question that one can ask is "What should I do with my life?" Many individuals spend their entire lives searching for the answer to that simple yet complicated question. Many times the answer appears extremely obvious, but many times it appears much later or not at all. Individuals usually fall into a situation that defines their life whether it be a career, job, or a pre-determined station in life. To many, their place in life is not satisfying; the craving to want more is ever present. Many individuals want to make a difference in the world, but they don't understand how to make it transpire. Finding one's plot in the world is one of society's most mind boggling questions. All that one needs to do is take a walk alone with Mother Nature to answer this question.

The earth is a very complicated place that works extremely efficiently, while we as humans are aliens that invade the music and natural rhythm of nature. We can become part of nature and thus fertilize her and make her thrive. One must find where it is that they fit into the puzzle of the universe.

The path of life is very similar to walking along the trampled earth that leads into the darkened forest. The tranquility that envelopes the spirit is reminiscent of the deadening silence one feels as they are thrust into the world without any warning of what lies ahead. The luminescent sun that so vividly lit the path of a promising future fades into the forest canopy as the ferns along the forest floor envelope the soil. The glorious routes of life's passions have disappeared and one must search their soul for answers alone isolated from society. The answer to life's most daunting questions lies in the depths of nature.

Being lost in the forBet05 s5 (e)5 () 5 (s) 5 (l) 5 (o) 5 (r) 5 (n) 5 () 5 (t) 5 (a) 5 (

petals to allow him entry in order to suckle her sweet nectar. The honey bee takes all the nectar that he can hold and transports it back to the hive where he deposits it for his queen. The colony works efficiently with drones, worker bees, honey bees and a queen to produce one of nature's most succulent treats. The honey bee proves that everyone has an important place in society and working together as a team producing a product is endless and beyond comprehension.

The silence of the forest is as deadening as the rustle of an evergreen branch that pierces the air, eyes dart to the right and the body is frozen still. The sun gleams through the branches and there she is the most graceful and elegant of God's creatures making her way across the meadow. There appears a small fawn bouncing and teasing a butterfly. The gracefulness of her movements resembles that of a small child, carefree and fanciful. One

sun disappears. Silence is broken as the howling of a pack of coyotes can be heard echoing over the forest. A frightening chill travels up the spine as shelter needs to be obtained. But, how can one protect himself from the barren forest? Mother Nature's carnivorous hunters roam the forest floor in search of their next meal, shadowed by the darkness of night. A human possessing a weapon is the strongest beast, but alone and unarmed, one now becomes the hunted. Scraps of wood and branches can be gathered to build a fire to ward off the dangers of the night while keeping the body enveloped in warmth. As the eyes get heavier and heavier, one drifts off to the paradise of sleep. Dreams enclose upon the soul with visions of being lost in society, one must create a defense mechanism or allow one's personality to blaze like a fire in order to ward off the hunter that lurks just beyond the next corner, waiting to destroy one's pre-determined destiny.

The slumber is broken by a cool mist as the body awakens; the dew of the pi9 5 (t)is 0 0 9nh m (u) 5 5 (s 0 (b) 5 (y) (e)5 (w (e)5 (w)5 () 5 (s) 5 (r) 5 (e)5

Where No ~~Man~~ Woman One Has Gone Before

I can't recall a time when I wasn't a nerd — or a feminist.

For as long as I can remember, sci-fi was a constant presence in the Casey household. Well, for three of the five members anyway. The love of science fiction that my oldest sister Kelly and I shared stemmed from our mother's wonder for fantastical literature such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. This deeply contrasted with the taste for earthy realism that my other sister Tricia inherited from Dad. If it couldn't happen in real life — or on Earth — they wanted nothing to do with it. But Mom, Kelly, and I were another story.

Growing up in a house with such strong women — and a poor, outnumbered father — I was instilled with an inherent sense of feminism: that girls are just as good as boys, and an independent, enterprising woman can make it in the world. Barbies were just as legitimate a plaything as Hot Wheels. There were no gendered limits on the toys I played with or the imagination I developed. I missed the "Sci-fi is just for boys" memo.

Although my allegiance would come to lie primarily with *Star Trek*, my lifelong love of sci-fi began at the age of two, cuddled up on the couch with Kelly, who was watching *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* through a free trial of HBO.

"Who's that?" I asked.

"Luke Skywalker."

"And who's that? Why is there so much snow? What are they doing?"

She dutifully answered each of my questions. From then on, I was hooked. It must have been Princess Leia's doing. Her unwavering sense of right and wrong, her smart and sassy mouth, and that double-Danish 'do which I've never been able to recreate became the standard by which I measured the worth of other female characters.

Three years into my sci-fi education, Kelly went off to college. I asked her what grade she was in.

"It's not like that in college," she explained. "I'm a freshman."

"But you're a girl," I pointed out indignantly. Five years old and ever the tiny feminist-in-training. "Why don't they call you a fresh-woman?"

And so Kelly introduced me to *Star Trek: Voyager*, the only *Star Trek* series to feature a female captain. It is the *Trek* incarnation with the most "girl power," which certainly appealed to my inner Spice Girl. In addition to Captain Kathryn Janeway, played by Kate Mulgrew, *Voyager* featured a plethora of strong women. The chief engineer is a half-Klingon woman named B'Elanna Torres. Seven of Nine is a formerly human woman whom the crew rescued from the Borg and put to work in the astrometrics lab.

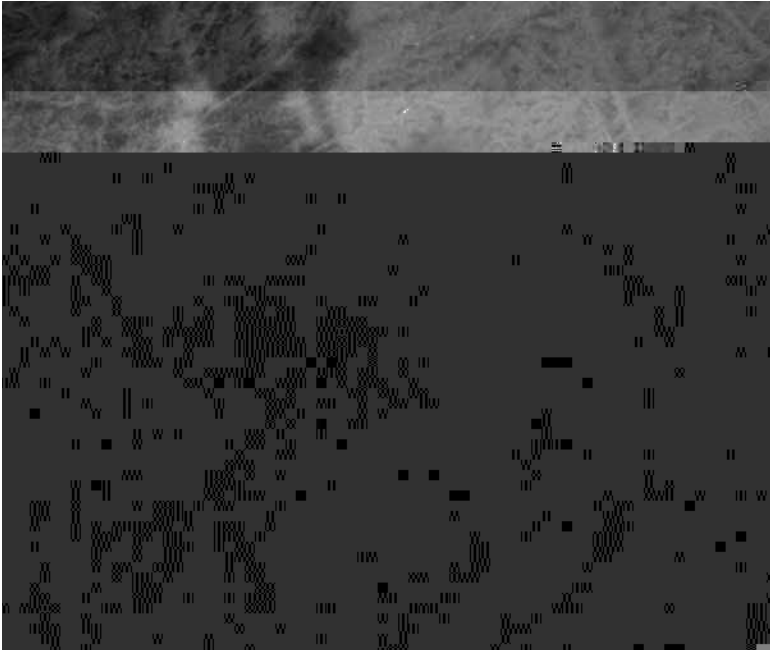
Kelly got me so addicted to the *Voyager* series that I'd act out away missions with my stuffed animals. (For the record, Captain Janeway was a

When Tricia discovered my makeover, she was less than thrilled. Actually, she was pissed. I'm not sure what upset her more: the fact that I'd wasted her free eyeshadow, or that I'd made myself up to look like an alien freak with saffron, charcoal, and a hint of olive green blended across my eyelids, giving me the illusion of elegantly upswept eyebrows. Although there were many things over which Tricia and I bonded, Star Trek was decidedly not one of them.

However, there are enough fascinating — to use Spock's favorite

Photography

Intruder

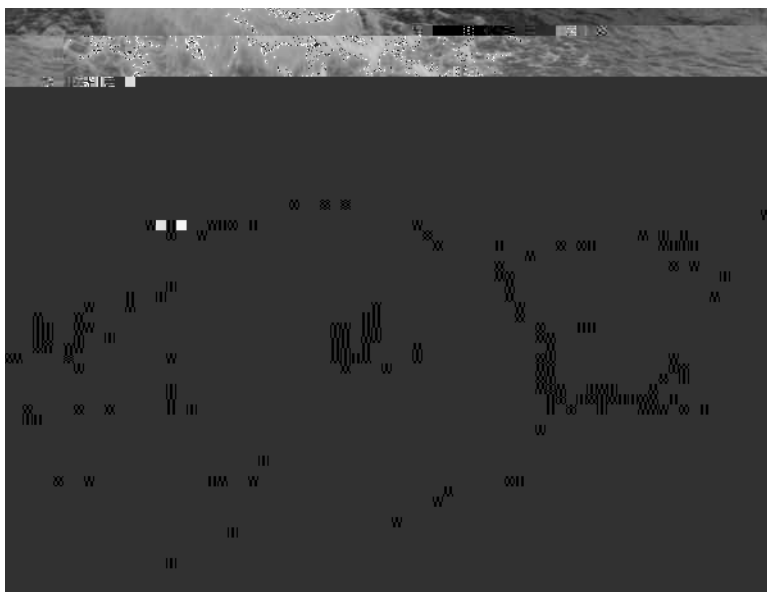


Fading Woman

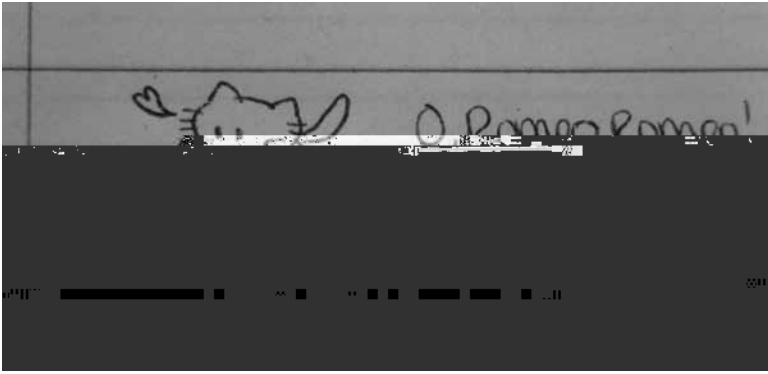


Got a Problem Bud

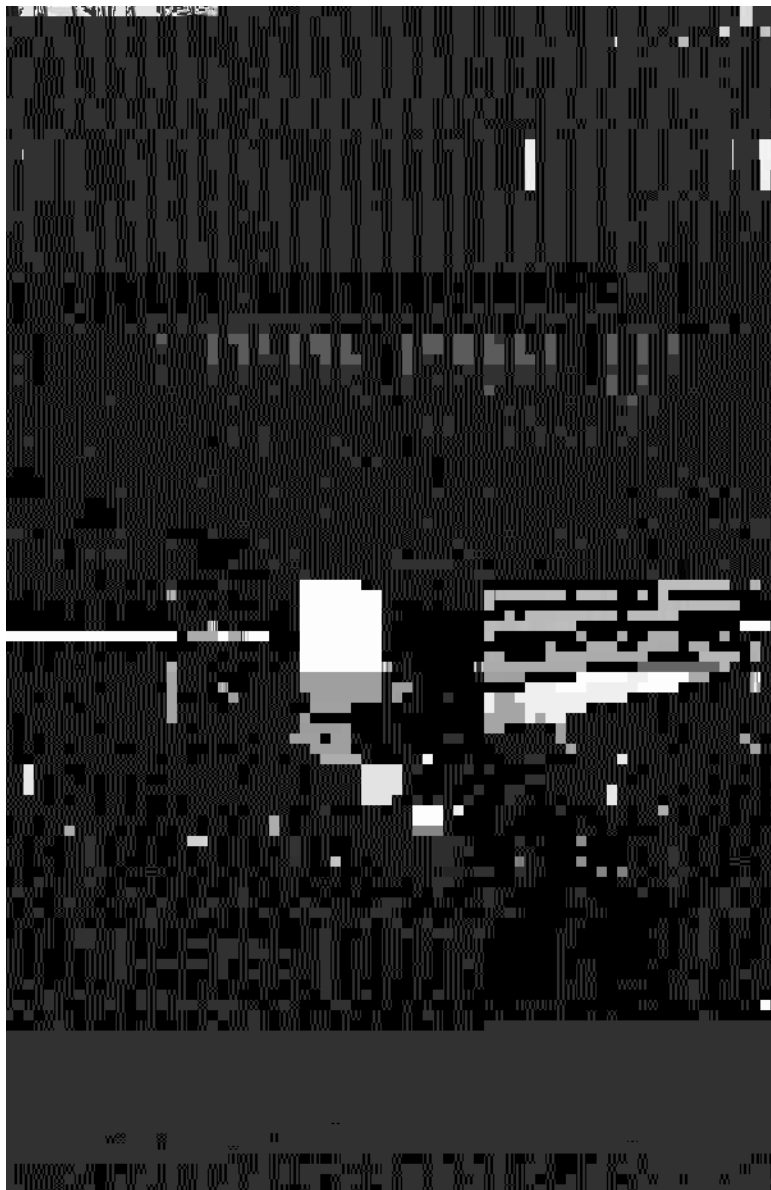
Happy Valentine's Day



Kitty Shakespeare



Ceaseless



A Different Perspective



Laundry



Radiance



