

**BAKER UNIVERSITY**  
**HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT**

**A TURNING POINT**

**2012**

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**WATERSHED**



# Watershed 2012

Baker University's Literature and Arts Magazine

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# Production

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With special thanks to  
Baker University's Humanities Department  
and  
Jayhawk Ink.



***Mask***

Graphite and Ink

Cate Richards

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Front and Back Cover    Kyrie Bair





*Florence, 9 a.m.*



Haven Ashley

THE LITTLE NOISE of my alarm floats through the nest of my cabbage rose embroidered comforter and into my ear. Soon after, my sleepy feet touch the chilly floor as I fumble to dress in the semi-darkness. I put my Bialetti espresso maker onto the petite gas stove and like a marionette I go through the motions of getting ready, my little apartment twittering with the hushed sounds of women waking for the day: the soft pat of bare toes on the cold kitchen tiles, the wet hum of my roommate starting the shower, and the subtle sighs of Kat, rolling over in her bed and falling back asleep.

My espresso maker bubbles and emits a hiss. After turning off the burner I carefully pour the scalding, rich liquid into a china mug, pondering whether to add a splash of Baileys to the mix. A hurried breakfast inevitably follows—thick strawberry yogurt, chocolate cereal or even “breakfast” cookies. Failing to pack my things for class the night before, I hurriedly ascend the steps into the

loft, trying to gather my drawing pencils, various erasers, charcoal and sketchpad without waking Kat again. A couple of Euros clink in the pocket of my bag, tokens to purchase a cappuccino at the cafe around the corner.

Early morning in Florence isn't for the tourist. It is for shopkeepers, noisy street sweepers, and students scurrying to class in their chic scarves and chic hair, both tied in tight loops. My footsteps match the pulse of the music playing into my ears. I always listen to music as I walk to class—it is a meditation—20 minutes to myself, no pushing my way through the crowds with a muttered “Mi scusi.” The narrow streets are wide open and filled with crisp air. I pass the sharply dressed, stony-faced businessmen and women waiting at the bus stop, most of them carelessly smoking a cigarette. Others whizz by at dangerous speeds on their mopeds, indifferent to traffic laws. The shops aren't open yet, or their owners are just placing their wares outside—racks of turquoise or yellow bracelets, key chains, and ciao bella! T-shirts: anything to lure the sentimental tourist. Sometimes a wild bike rider flies past, neglecting the courtesy of ringing her bell to notify her double-wheeled presence.

It is the hour before gypsies begin to beg for “just one coin, please, just one coin.” Nine a.m. awakes before the strange foreign men who shove umbrellas and cheap purses into my path. The San Lorenzo market is still sleeping, a maze of white tents obscuring the silent cobble stone streets. In a few hours it will be alive with wandering tourists who peruse displays of leather goods and dried fruit, the air filled with shouts of “Hey! Bella, you buy?”



# *The Artist*

Tyler Keal



Prose cutting adapted from  
*The Life of Michael Angelo*  
by Romain Rolland (1912)

He was a Florentine citizen—  
of that Florence with somber palaces,  
lanciform towers, dry undulating hills,  
sharply defined against  
a deep blue sky,

where it was so good to live, and  
where life was a hell.

It was not merely the sight of wretchedness  
and crime which had thrown a gloom over him;  
the despair caused by lost days, ruined hopes  
and a broken will made him the victim  
of terrors against which he struggled  
in vain.

But after renouncing everything  
which kept him alive,  
a new life—like the spring  
which blossoms again—  
sprang up in his devastated heart,  
and love burnt with a brighter flame.

To this great creator of admirable forms,  
a beautiful body was divine—  
a beautiful body was God Himself  
appearing under the veil

of flesh.



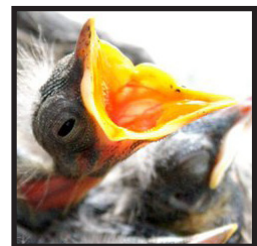
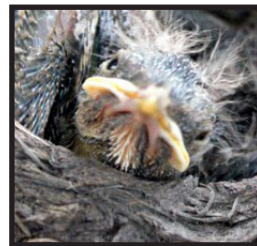
## *Florentine Thrill Ride*

Haven Ashley

## *Grape*

Cierra Terry

Purple marble from the vine of secrets, tell me a story.



*Untitled*

Rachel Dannen

# *Who Rescued the Small Things*

Kyrie Bair

Perhaps she loved  
the small things because she, too,  
was small. She followed  
the baby chick with her  
chicken legs, sang to the bleat  
of the heifer calf, clambered  
up elms like the black bear's cub  
just to hang from its chipped arms like  
a western pipistrelle bat.

She fed squashed peas  
to the new swallow, let the garter snakelet  
tan in her windowsill. The grackle's wing  
she mended, the chickadee  
she set free, the blind cat she gave a home.

She did not seek these creatures. Instead,  
the small things came to her: hounds  
followed her heel, guinea pigs built nests  
in her hair, aphids sought sanctuary  
between her fingers. Her sympathy  
was given in a concentrated deluge  
that no one, not even the beaver, could dam.



# Who Saw Doves

Kate Colby

She came to us from the shore,  
pale-skinned with stringy  
yellow hair. Vultures smelled sea  
salt on her flesh, swooped near  
her ears, and crowed,  
*We love you.*

We told her not to believe  
them -- that they wanted to taste  
the ocean fish in her  
belly -- but she could not hear us  
over the beating of feathers.

Laughing, she climbed the oak  
and crawled into the nest.  
Surrounded by vultures,  
she whispered, *How lovely  
to be a friend of the doves.*



Graphite on Mylar

***Knot Hole***  
Ryan Douvier

## *Early Bird*



Teresa Morse

I WOKE UP EARLY and scooted myself out from under the blankets, careful not to disturb my sister. Creeping down the long staircase, I counted the steps in the dark until I reached the landing and took a left into the kitchen. The paisley linoleum tile was cold beneath my bare feet. Grandma was already there, sipping a mug of hot black coffee. She sat me down at the table and gave me pieces of paper to draw on while she scrambled eggs in a bowl or cut bread for French toast. “Early bird,” she called me, smoothing my sleep-tousled hair.

At the far wall of the kitchen, a large glass sliding door led to the back porch. The world beyond it was still dark; the sun had just begun its ascent into the sky. I tucked my legs up underneath me and leaned over the table, glancing up from my paper now and then. Slowly the kitchen absorbed warmth and light as the sun rose. Dark wooden cabinets took on a lighter hue as sunlight streamed in. Grandma began heating skilletts on the stove. My grandpa woke up and my cousins tromped downstairs, ready to be fed. Grandma stood over the stove, minding pans of bacon and eggs, offering the grandkids milk or juice. My special time with her was over, but the pleasure I took from a morning alone with Grandma remained. I was her early bird.





## An Accident, A Mistake

Katey Chandler

SHE IS THE ONLY ONE in the family with a smorgasbord of freckles covering her body. She is the only one in the family with the most photogenic smile. She is the only one in the family who needed braces, and got them. She is the only one in the family who was diagnosed with mild schizophrenia and manic bi-polar disorder. She is my younger sister. She has shaped my life.

There is this old, family home movie I play in my mind from an Easter in 1997 or so. I can see my mother's tired, young face with her old, cut-the-cheek brown glasses and lipstickless lips hovering over my sister, tying a white bonnet on tight. My sister has her new white gloves on, the pair we only get to wear to Easter service. She holds a chocolate lollipop, which makes my mother nervous, and she tries to take from my sister. My father, steadying the video camera, zooms in on my sister's crinkled face, welling with tears. My heart plummets into my gut as her fat, baby cheeks curl up into her eyes, and she lets out a horrific scream. My mother's head is splitting, and she gives the chocolate lollipop back. My sister's tantrum outweighs my mother's fear of stains on a white and blue flower pattern Sunday dress.

There is an element of that VHS moment in my sister's entire life. Every moment between my family and my sister is a distorted

replay of that scene, that early memory of the symptoms of her disease. There is an altercation, a conflict, a difference in rules, and my sister's egocentric mind. My mother says, "No, you cannot skip school today." My sister says, "Yes, I can." My mother would give in, a prisoner in her own home. My sister would always win, through words, fists or teeth, and my mother would always lose.

My sister still does this. When she turned 18, my sister flipped on a switch of legal right. She would stay out all night, despite my mother's insomniac concerns. My sister then announced she was moving to Texas to live with our Aunt Belinda. Keighley has met a boy over the internet that lives near there and she is determined to go down and move in with him. Any sane person would agree with my family in saying that this is the stupidest thing a young, sick girl could do. My mother says "No, you shouldn't." My sister said "Yes, I will." And she did. She's still there, in an apartment with some stranger she hardly knows, possibly carrying his child. My sister's madness is a mystery to me. Even when we were kids, I could never wrap my mind around how to communicate to her. None of the other kids did either.

Playing with my sister when we were younger was always hard. We had friends in our neighborhood, three girls, who were our "gang." We would get together outside, walk up to the park, and want to play hide-and-seek, or baseball. My sister never wanted to play whatever game we wanted to play. She would yell, cry, pout or get mad. She would claw, slap, and threaten. We had to give in; we always had to give in to whatever she wanted; it was a matter of self-defense. Soon, the gang no longer called. Soon, the gang would scurry to the park behind cars and trees so not to be noticed. Soon, I would lose my friends because of my sister. Soon, I would be defined by my sister's illness.

After all the friends left, my father was accepted to be the "faculty abroad" for Pepperdine University, in Firenze, Italia. This meant that our family, my father, mother, older brother, younger sister, and I were to

move to a villa with 50 college students and one cook and live for two years. Confined in a two bedroom flat, a family of five in a foreign country can most absolutely lose their minds. And we did. I slept all day and stayed up all night. I did not attend school. I should have been in eighth grade, but I skipped. My mother occupied herself by baking and by making tea for the students. My brother learned what “discothèque” meant, and my father taught one class an afternoon and drank a lot of espresso. I shared a bedroom with my sister, a bunk bed, one closet, and one dresser. I avoided her by sleeping while she was awake and being awake while she slept. I avoided her because if I attempted to interact, she would rule me like an abusive child tapping incessantly on the glass of a fishbowl. Her disease developed while living abroad, and no one had noticed yet or had wanted to acknowledge it. When we came back to the states, my sister had flown through the hormonal rages of puberty with a tremen-

## *Everything She Says is Silk*

Pen

Megan Nelson



dous force. Now everything she did was amplified. Augmented. Enlarged. Every conflict in the house, no matter the importance, became a declaration of war. My sister experienced things with a heightened state of awareness. If she was embarrassed, she was mortified. If she was upset, she was enraged. If she was happy, she was manic. Everything she felt or did became the focus of her energy and mental capacity. We became subject to her extension of emotion, sheep in an electric, barbed-wire cage. My sister trained me to be avoidant and patient. If my mother wanted my sister to clean up her mess she made in the kitchen after baking cupcakes my sister would not eat, my sister would throw dishes. My mother would get louder and my sister, more violent. I would retreat to my room, lock the door, and wait silently.

This began my mother's paranoia and never ceasing internet searching in order to diagnose what Keighley's "issue" was. My mother bought bottle after bottle of herbal supplements to moderate mood swings and other hormonal functions. My mother was desperate to solve my sister's "issue" herself. My mother would tell my sister that she didn't eat enough protein and that is why she was cranky. Then, when my sister would eat gobs and gobs of protein, hostility unchanged, my mother said she needed more sleep. So Keighley slept, slept and slept but nothing helped. My mother was becoming hopeless. It was affecting the entire family. Everyone in the house became restless and exhausted at the same time, the combination of on-edge anxiety and mental fatigue of dancing around my sister's "issues" was brutal.

I no longer watched television, because we were not allowed to touch the remote in fear that my sister would hear the infamous TiVo 'bloop' interruption of whatever she was recording and dig nails into our necks. I became confined to my bedroom, tucked into the back corner of the house because my sister owned the entire upstairs, living room and kitchen. As if she was some feral beast, spraying every couch and cabinet with her scent, so you would know to stay out. My parents kept in their bedroom, or my father, at work. My brother could drive then, and he would leave for days. Everyone was terrified of her. We were coming to the breaking point. We

were approaching the end of her reign. We were turning the corner of the medical plaza to bring my sister to a “shrink” to tell us it is not our fault.

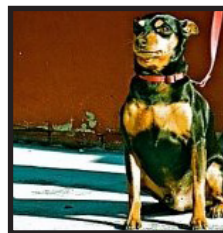
I sat in the waiting room, flipping through years-old copies of Highlights for Children. My mind raced, and I tried to fight it. Why am I worried? What am I doing here, anyway? I fantasized that my parents would come out, my mother respectfully dotting a Kleenex at the corner of her eyes with my father’s arm around her shoulder, and embrace me and say that Keighley was going away for a little while. Instead, my father snorted as he paid the bill for the visit, and my sister throwing elbows in order to make it out of the office faster. The doctor wrote a prescription. He told my sister she was crazy. He told my parents that he was a doctor, and doctors write prescriptions that help. He said that my sister is hormonally imbalanced, and the pills will help. He said that my sister has mild schizophrenia and manic bi-polar disorder, and the only thing to do is to drug her up.

Terrible things can truly make you stronger. I

know this now from the many years I spent with my sister and entire family. How we adapted and grew distant from one another was an isolating, harsh experience. My mother and I try to reconnect now, through letters rather than phone calls. It makes it easier to say what we really want to say, rather than allow emotions to fuel a phone conversation. My mother and I are able to take deep breaths and think about what we want to say, to apologize for or clarify. I appreciate this interaction and I wait for the moments where we do talk about my sister and what has happened. I admit that I sometimes get sick of the only thing my mother will talk about is my sister but I am beginning to understand that it consumes her, the feeling of failure she has in my sister. I cannot be mad or blame my mother for anything more than I can for my sister.

My sister was fourteen when we made that trip to the head-doctor. She refused to take the pills. She kept us under supervision and torture. I had to move to Kansas to get out of the house and now she’s gone, too, wearing different clothes and sporting a

new hairdo and ordering her dinner with a twang. She's eighteen now, claims to be an adult, competent and able but she is still my baby sister, and she is still sick. Keighley insists that everyone is out to get her, and I know that she is only interpreting the hands reaching out to comfort her as forces that wish to harm her. I had no sense of self, growing up in that reality of dysfunction, but now possesses a tremendous empathy for those who are "off." Growing up with my sister has shaped me in ways I am still measuring and exploring to this day. I have been modified to accept others' faults, and not amplify my own. I have been constructed to hide at loud noises, and speak quietly to those that I feel my heart break for. My sister, only eighteen months younger than I, has influenced me greatly, in that she makes me want to help others who cannot help themselves. My sister is the only one in the family with a mental disease, and I am the only one who believes that it's okay.



*Untitled*  
Katy Ehrhard





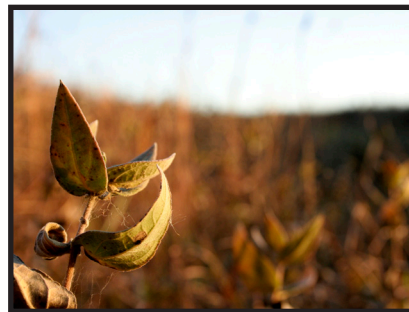
*Heaven*

Ariel Williams



*Current*

Tyler Keal



*Prairie*

Beth Hopkins

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## *How It Goes...*     Brian Lamoreux

Autumn is wistful, the way things could have been and (dare we hope) *might still be*.

Winter is straightforward (perhaps even blunt), the way things are and will (for a time) stay, with an unpalatable message: *learn to wait*.

Spring is altruistic and “Now’s your chance!” the way things will be (if you only want it badly enough).

Summer is consciousness, is *you* (with no running from yourself), a peculiar alloy of the way things have been and the way things are, which can be molded (ever so delicately) into the way things *should be*.

## *The Luck of the Irish*



Brie Lowrey

MOM ALWAYS FOUND the first one. I told myself it was my birthday present to her, but deep down I knew: she was a pro. Out at Granddad's farm (where we celebrated every holiday including Mom's St. Patrick's Day birthday) on the back patio we would spread out the covered dishes, paper plates, plastic forks, and blue flower-printed napkins. After shredded pork sandwiches on homemade buns, two helpings of potato salad, a tall glass of sweet tea, and about a dozen deviled eggs between us, Mom and I would go out to the back yard under the weeping willow and lie on our full bellies in the soft grass, searching out the hidden four-leaf treasures.

We would lie out there, dissecting each square inch of yard before Grandma called us back in for angel food cake and ice cream. After gorging even more, we would continue our hunt, finding our way back to our respective clover patches. Every now and then I would let out a squeal, showing Mom that I had found the rare five-leaf clover, while she took silent delight in her own victories. By late afternoon, when my younger brother had grown bored with the dark recesses of one of the barns, we had to end our game. Neither of us would bother to count our clovers because we both knew that though she had won, I would take the glory, and it was alright.





***Purple*** Parker Roth

This lover, confused with blood-red fire and  
blue heart, bleeds between the lines.  
How can a color be both a lilac  
and a bruise?

***St. Louis*** Kyle Baum

Eyes on the peak of the gateway of the Midwest  
buildings are placed like rows of golden wheat  
where one swing of the bat  
makes the whole town leap

***Flame-wearer*** Teresa Morse

*from Flaming June, an oil painting on canvas by Frederic Leighton*

She wears flowing fire without a flinch  
consumed though she is  
in bright flames  
made into fabric

She commands them with her form  
slaves to the movement of her body  
and their fury conforms to her stillness

She need not fear the blaze  
leaving burn marks on her skin  
for she tames it to a smolder  
in her slumber

# Who Checked the Light Switches

Warren Swenson

No one knows why it started.  
All day, every day, the boy  
went in and out of rooms,  
checking the light switches  
on the walls. Up or down:  
he assessed the condition of each one.

He would check the WHOLE HOUSE each night  
before bedtime to verify their positions.  
The boy would drive himself crazy,  
trying to push each one into place.

If he concentrated hard enough  
he thought he could make those switches stay  
UP or DOWN. Forever.  
Thus they would not creep to the middle  
(where he had heard they *could cause fire*).

He imagined the roar of the siren and the  
rumble of the truck as his family  
fled the house, shaken with grief.

This went on for years: instead of playing with  
friends, petting the dog, or spending time  
with family, he would stare,  
and push, and check, to keep his home  
safe.



## *A Boy and His Dog*

Graphite and Ink

Cate Richards



---

## *Pumpkin*

Haven Ashley

“Happy Halloween,” you say, although your fiery smile looks a little forced.



# *Five Stages of Grief*

Ariel Williams

## *1. Denial*

to stop to stare unfocused, unaware  
to sneer to scorn to scream  
to cry an ocean  
to crash while frozen  
to crumble to crumple to cede

## *2. Anger*

to snark's absurd to scratch with words  
to rant out loud to rave  
to ruin to crave, unravelled, insane  
to ravage to savage  
to strain

## *3. Bargaining*

to plead to beseech  
to profess with need  
to beg to barter to trade  
to promise, persuade,  
to convince, convey  
to be helpless, hopeless, betrayed

## *4. Depression*

to stop to sit, annoyed and bit  
to sulk to sob to shriek  
to stutter to stammer  
to grit out an answer  
to shake to shatter to shrink

## *5. Acceptance*

to bow to break to breathe at ease  
to repute to resign to release  
to look back, to recollect  
to shoulder respect  
to no longer be at war with peace

## How to Love the Ocean

Kate Colby

Do not dive.

Plunge feet-first and kick  
the undertow. Crumble  
sea shells into dust. Shatter  
glass into sand.

Inhale salt, wind,  
mist. Slide your fingers over  
fish tails, and do not trust  
blue eyes.

Worship the night sky: stars  
and sails and wisps of smoke. Hunt  
creatures in the deep. When their  
scales brush your skin, whisper

*I will fear no evil.*



***Nerja Beach***

Allyson Sass

## *At the Aquarium*

Kyrie Bair

Inside, the air is cool and the lights,  
dim. Tank-lined walls come alive  
where endless glass  
can barely separate terrestrial  
from aquatic. I let myself be swept away  
by currents breezing past my pressed-to-glass nose –  
until I, too, am in the tank, staring down wolf  
fish, surrendering to the play of sea  
otters, laughing in wonderment as  
manatees float by – effortless  
as summer  
cotton.



## *When Pink Flamingos Walk*

Pencil

Megan Nelson

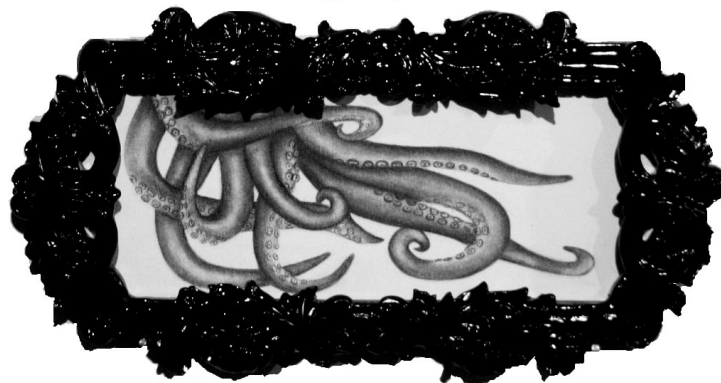
## *Cetaceans*     Tyler Keal

They are deities of the depths,  
as mysterious and magnificent as the fluid  
cerulean plane they rule.  
They are graceful giants:  
fascinating and frightening--yet  
harmless--waltzing to the rhythm  
of undulating waves.

They speak in clicks and groans,  
bellows and moans,  
whistles and squeals,  
and when the time is right  
they sing: sound carried at the speed  
of water, beckoning potential lovers.

They breach the surface in a spray of white:  
glossed bodies break the barrier between  
our world and theirs, leaving us to ponder them,  
the air-breathing, mammalian masters of the sea.

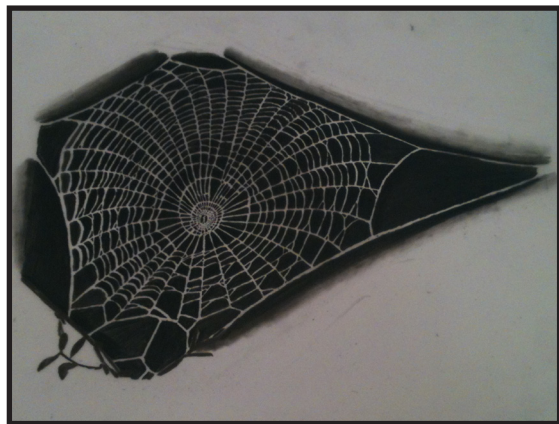
## *Shoukushu*     Cate Richards Graphite and Ink





## *Spider Web*

Graphite on Mylar  
Ryan Duvier



## *Tomato*

Terry Cierra

Bloody mystery of the unknown, are you a fruit or vegetable?

---



## *Red Cabbage*

Samantha Brandt

Clenched, veiny fist, relax – you're turning purple.

## *Untitled*

Rachel Dannen





## *Xena, Warrior Princess*



Kate Colby

I AM A WARRIOR.

I suit up, teddy bear pajamas covering my torso, red cowgirl boots protecting my feet, and candy bracelets wrapping around my biceps. I cut out the middle of a paper plate, creating a large circle, and wrap it in aluminum foil. This is my chakram, the signature weapon of the warrior princess, and I tie it to my waist with yarn. I grab Jelly Bean, my magnificently white, stick-horse steed. I am ready.

I gallop into the living room for my nightly lesson. As my dad turns on Sci-Fi Channel, Lucy Lawless appears on the screen. Dressed as Xena, Warrior Princess, Lucy and I twirl our swords, throw our chakram, and unleash the battle cry, *Aye-yi-yi-yi!* When the show ends, I am ready to save my homeland.

Racing across the living room, Jelly Bean and I leap in front of Patty, my Chihuahua, shielding her from the Cyclops that lurks in the hallway. With one flick of my sword, I defeat him. Next, we dash outside to protect the trampoline fortress, which has been overrun by Vikings. I fling my chakram,

which sails through the air, its sharp edges easily beheading them all. At my mother's call, Jelly Bean and I ride back into the house. It, too, is overrun, so before I reach the safety of my room, I must slay goblins and savages and beasts.

When all of my enemies have been vanquished, I collapse onto my bed. Despite the adrenaline of battle, my eyes close within seconds. I sleep soundly, knowing that my home is safe, thanks to me: Kate, Warrior Princess.



*Untitled*

Haven Ashley

## The BUILDing Blocks

Kyle Baum

Glycine, Tyrosine, Leucine,  
Alanine, Valine, Proline, Lysine, Serine,  
Cysteine, Histidine, Theronine, Arginine,  
Aspartate, Glutamate,  
Asparagine, Glutamine,  
Tryptophan

## *Sri Lanka is Missing*

Parker Roth

My sister's tiny fingers flip over  
jigsaw-ed cardboard, searching for  
Cuba, Greenland, the Dead Sea.  
The world fits together when it is flat, but  
*Sri Lanka is missing.*

How fitting: her earth's hundred hands are  
clasped together and hide shrinking  
stomachs, shoe-less feet. The silence of  
nothing is sweeter than the silence of  
unheard prayers. The world

knows how to hide truth from  
her curious hands, even as she insists  
*Sri Lanka is missing.*

*Don't look for it, I think.  
Your world is perfect.*



*Lily Pads*

Tyler Keal

WHILE EVERYONE ELSE SEEMED PREOCCUPIED with high school and the revolving doors of their social lives, my attention was on the promises of comic books and Saturday morning cartoons. I had been expecting, perhaps for years, to one day meet a mysterious and other-worldly man claiming to be my father, or encounter a strange artifact containing miraculous powers. I would have settled for a radioactive spider. Honestly, any irradiated animal would have done (but I still ponder what strange abilities would be granted by a mutated squirrel).

As a child, I would rush to my mother, begging her to safety-pin a towel around my shoulders (I couldn't be expected to save the world without my cape, could I?). I would run around the yard for hours, fighting imaginary villains in preparation for the day that I, too, would be blessed with amazing abilities that would be the envy of every man, woman, and child. Knowing that I would take up the mantle of world's protector was a heavy burden, sure, but all in all, I think I faced it with impressive dignity and courage. Occasionally, I would take a break from my demanding training regimen and retire to my secret lair (cleverly hidden in the kitchen pantry) to recuperate and gather my mental reserves. I was only six, but even I could tell there were dastardly villains about. There was no time to rest.

While I was growing up, a little part of me secretly wished I'd been adopted. I didn't hate my parents. Far from it. Superman

## Dreaming of Superpowers

Tyler Falck

comics had just shown me that if you're adopted, the odds of developing super strength go up dramatically. When Superman's planet was on the verge of blowing up big time, his real parents shoved him in a rocket and sent him off to another world. That's what I wanted. So yeah, I thought being adopted would be cool. I was waiting for the day that Mom and Dad would sit me down and say, "Son, we've got something to tell you." It would all come out: my history from the stars, my duty to save mankind . . . my awesome superpowers. I might not have had a baby blanket ready to make into a cape (all I had was a little pillow, which, while cuddly, was not good fodder for a super suit), but I was primed and ready to take the fight to all the villains with my soon to be acquired birthright powers. I never thought I was asking for too much.

Unfortunately, Krypton wasn't in the cards. Superman had it easy. He just got to be born special. Being a hero was in the blood, and I'd reached a point in my life where I realized I wasn't going to be waking up to superpowers for Christmas. I would never run downstairs, eagerly looking for presents, only to

discover that my heat vision had disintegrated them all.

Frankly, this was all very disappointing, but I soldiered on. Life marched me right on up to college (or maybe that was my mother, I have a hard time remembering), and before I knew it, I was enrolled. My dreams of superpowers faded. Every time I'd look out the window, though, and see the lights of the city painting the sky, I couldn't focus. I wanted to be out there, dressed in animal theme pajamas and leaping from roof to roof. Oh, and, uh, fighting crime and stuff, too. Maybe it wasn't the healthiest of fantasies, but statistically, it was probably a better career choice than acting.

I held out hope, however, that my dreams would still be realized: attending college meant an increased proximity to labs, chemicals, and the dangerous combination of ambition, curiosity, and idiocy that seemed to be just the right mixture for acquiring superpowers. After all, Peter Parker was bitten by the spider while visiting a college science fair. There had to be good odds that the chemistry teachers were being that irresponsible. Maybe they were keeping experimental badgers in the basement. I probably wouldn't

wind up with anything quite as conducive to crime-fighting as a spider, but if I poked my fingers into enough cages, I was sure I'd get bitten by something beneficial.

Having my hand munched by lab rats might have come with downsides, though. I vaguely remember my elementary school teachers trying to convince me that radiation was not something to be played around with. Then again, I never paid too much attention to those educational videos anyway. The Spiderman comic tucked inside my textbook was always a bit more interesting. I suppose there was always the slim chance that the animal's mutagenic bite could turn me into some kind of horrible, genetic abomination, but let's be serious. The odds of that happening were maybe one in three.

Looking back, it's probably a good thing I never stumbled into superpowers. College is enough of a time sink without the added burden of being obligated to fight crime. I mean, seriously, it's hard enough to get a date. If I had to run out on a woman every time I saw someone knocking over a liquor store or double parking, I'd never get to first base, let alone

***T.F. Kramer***  
Kyrie Bair







## *La Alhambra*

Allyson Sass

second. I've read the comics. Spiderman has enough trouble keeping a girlfriend, and he's actually a nice guy. Even with superpowers and a moral imperative to save the world, I'd still be tough to live with. Women would have even less incentive to put up with my caustic personality if I were constantly ditching them for damsels who just-so-happened to be in distress.

I haven't even begun to address the temptation of evil. If comic books are to be believed (and why should I doubt them?), then

the hero-to-villain ratio has to be so low that the number zero's personal space bubble has been ruptured. The comics might not delve into Lex Luthor's love life too often, but he's got to have an easier time than Clark has with Lois. It's hard to imagine it being much worse. That's ignoring all the other fringe benefits of evil. It might be an ethical nightmare, but the job security might be worth it. I doubt the Green Goblin ever worries about the rigors of unemployment.

Sometimes, though, I still dream about them -- the superpowers, that is. Alone in my bedroom, I'll mime through the motions of my costumed escapades while adding in appropriate sound effects to accentuate the

action (a timely wham, pow, or kashunk can add a lot to a good old fashioned imaginary showdown). Eventually, though, I remember that I'm supposed to be an adult, so I sit back down to write that philosophy paper I've been putting off. I'm reading about Nietzsche's übermensch, but I'm really still thinking about a different Superman. Breaking free of society is important and all, but I'd really just rather be from Krypton. The irony is that, as pale as I am, I'm not sure how much time I'd spend in the sun, even if it did give me superpowers.

Just because I don't have any powers doesn't mean I can't uphold the traditions of my cape-wearing forbearers. Batman is easily one of the most well-known and impressive heroes in the modern world, and his only major advantages over the criminals he fights are his litany of training credentials and a three-pack-a-day voice. I suppose the billions of dollars he receives in donations from his financier, Bruce Wayne, may help, but at least that could be easily overcome. I could simply do a bit of gold-digging to finance my crime-fighting career. If I'm going to spend all night crouching in a sewer, there are worse things than schmoozing with rich people in the off-hours.

Of course, I can't take to the streets without a suitable alter ego to hide behind. It takes a unifying theme to really pull the entire experience together. Without that, you're just a guy in spandex. Some heroes manage to get away without anything really emblematic. Sure, they've all got their signature styles, but they don't really hold any meaning. All the best ones have got an animal. There's something primal and powerful about a grown man dressing up like a fuzzy little critter. It brings out the best in him. It takes him from the kind of silly little kid who likes to play dress up to the kind of unstable adult who does the same.

I've given a lot of thought to the animal I'd want to represent me, and believe me, the choice has not been easy. I couldn't choose just anything. For one, nobody wants to be Beaverman. He just can't be taken seriously, and nothing ends a career faster than thwarting your first heist by provoking uncontrollable laughter from the criminals. I wonder just how many people have packed it in after the first day because the bad guy snickered



(superheroes have surprisingly delicate egos when it comes to image). Beyond that, though, there's a certain divide between the totems that heroes pick, and you'll send all sorts of mixed messages if you blur the line. The difficult part is that so many animals are already taken. This may not seem like such an issue at first, but it is: the threat of civil litigation is a real one. I used to think, "What's the harm in having just one more Batman running around?" A firmly worded letter from his attorneys informed me. As it turns out, heroes are very protective of their animal niches. I suppose I understand. Nobody wants a bunch of copycats running around, battling with their villains. If I'd spent years developing a professional relationship with the Joker only for some other yahoo to come in and exploit it, I'd be a bit miffed myself.

Pending legal action, about the only unclaimed critter left to an up-and-comer is the squirrel. It can't glide through the night, picking out prey, and it lacks the glands to spin a web with enough tensile strength to annoy campers. A squirrel can forage enough food in a month to last it through the winter, but that isn't

very helpful in the fight against crime. Still, I've seen squirrels fall from forty feet and twist and turn until they landed on their feet (if that doesn't scream suburban vigilante, I don't know what does). Squirrels are agile, feisty, and ever alert. Also, they enjoy walnuts, acorns, and cashews. Really, those are all the qualities I'd like to possess as a hero.

Just picking a mascot, however, doesn't solve the gadget problem. While quick to deal in winter coats and other knick-knacks, department stores are loathe to carry much in the way of combat gear. When asked where the store's vigilante armaments aisle is, any salesman I've talked to has responded with a look somewhere between bemusement and mockery. Frankly, that response is a little less than helpful. It's not like I expect him to lead me to a ready stock of walnut smoke pellets and acorn grenades (though that would be amazingly convenient), but the utter absence of anything even remotely resembling a grappling hook is just frustrating. I'm not sure where all these heroes find their tech. They can't all have disgruntled, ex-military weapons gurus supplying their vast arsenal

of ready made, animal-themed tools. Where's a man supposed to come by his utility belt, exactly?

Fighting crime without powers requires more than just a utility belt full of tricks, though. After losing his parents, Bruce Wayne traveled to the East, where he engaged in strict training with ninja masters and a copious amount of montages to acquire his vast array of battle skills. This, then, may be my biggest challenge. Last I checked, tickets to the Forbidden East are pricy on a college student's budget (funny how the comics never show the heroes waiting in airports or digging in their pockets for cash), and I'd imagine ninja masters are hesitant to take you on without references. I have no idea where to get a reference for something like that. Maybe a letter from my high school geometry teacher would help, but I doubt it. The word of a coach might help, but let's just say I'd rather my admittance into ninja school was not determined by my performance in dodgeball.

Even if I spend all that time and money getting ready,

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*Home*  
Erin Wilson



the bad guys aren't quite so obvious as Batman would have me believe. It turns out that the population of criminal masterminds who stalk the streets of Kansas dressed as clowns and goblins is markedly low (perhaps the numbers are different in New York . . . I wouldn't know). The majority of bank robbers and ne'er-do-wells here dress in jeans, a t-shirt, and maybe a hoodie, which just so happens to be the uniform of the average university student. So let's say I take up the costumed mantle of Squirrel Man, putting in the hours to hone my crime-fighting skills to the sharpness of a week-old razor. I'll perch in the trees of Wichita and Topeka until I happen across what appears to be some shady character making a dash through the back alley. I glide down to tackle the thug, incapacitating him with a flurry of girlish slaps, only to hear a shout from down the street. Is it the praise of a thankful citizen, congratulating her new protector on a job well done? No. It's only a woman hollering for the police because some costumed loony has just assaulted the good samaritan who just helped her across the street. There is no good way to explain to the cops that you've decided to take up a masked crusade against villainy when crime rates are as low as they've been in decades. Without a good way to distinguish the mugs from the rest of the Joes, a hero has to rely on his intuition, but let's face it: most people look a bit like criminals these days.

So what's the point of writing this rant? Is it the prelude to my career of vigilantism, or is it the last thing I do before taking a bag of exploding acorns to the top of the nearest tall building? The truth is, it's probably neither. After twenty years, I'm still just a mild-mannered college student, quietly working my way towards a bachelor's in psychology and doing a lot of writing on the side. I don't have it in me to wage a one man fight against all the scum and hooliganism infecting the world. I wouldn't last one day out there in a mask.

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## *Cliffs of Moher, Ireland*

Meredith Hodges

# *What He Could Do*

Parker Roth

Craft anything from wood with a command, but use His  
hands. Fish while standing in the ocean, but  
sit in the boat to teach  
patience. Dine with  
the tax collectors.

Cast demons into swine to save a beggar.  
Define The Baptist.  
Utter *Forgive them, Father,*  
*for they know not what they do.*

Strike Romans with lightning, turn a cross  
to feathers, make a thorn a rose. Break  
the nails.

*With apologies to Elizabeth Holmes*



# *White Walls*

Teresa Morse

*Have you ever given blood before?*

Of course I have given blood!

To sidewalks from scraped knees,  
to needles from accidental pricks,  
to Band-Aids from paper cuts,  
surprisingly deep.

To the turtle's claw  
after I had dropped him  
and his foot scraped my shin.

In truth, this sterile process  
of hemoglobin tests, questionnaires,  
clamps and plastic-gloved hands  
lacks personality. My blood  
is pumped,  
bagged, labeled,  
refrigerated. I will never know  
the recipient.

The prick on my index finger  
barely leaves a mark, the bruise  
at my elbow's crook fades;  
all so unlike the enduring crescent  
scar on my shin.

*No, I reply.*



## *Don Quixote*     Warren Swenson

*after Picasso's sketch, 1955*

The knight plunges headlong into  
his dreams. Fragile and deposed,  
he is left with nothing but a broken heart  
and the admission he cannot  
live alone.

The windmills of the mind stop moving  
when the wind dies down,  
and now we see:  
the weedy legs of the horse,  
a barber's-basin helmet.

He is not his plump assistant,  
(who knows too well the inventions  
of this spinning-wheel imagination).  
This servant does not have it any easier,  
left to collect the pieces of this spent life—  
as sensitive and shrill as the horse they ride.



Samantha Brandt  
Oil on Canvas

*Oddball*

## Green Sky

Tyler Keal

I know, as a Southeast Kansas native, that if the sirens go off, I am to crouch in a corner in our bathroom—the interior-most room of our small, old, basement-less house. I am nine years old, just over a month short of ten, and I fear the idea of tornadoes—I’ve seen the devastation on television and in pictures—but in my mind, I believe I’m invincible. *Nothing will harm me as long as I go through the motions.* I don’t know words like *egocentrism*.

It’s early evening on an excessively warm April day. Arbor Day. Earlier, Grandpa helped me plant in the backyard a redbud sapling, a gift from the local arboretum that my class



*The Barge* Kyrie Bair



visited today. My sister says *we are under a tornado watch*. My mother stands at the kitchen sink, washing dishes, unconcerned. I look out the window and see that the sky is an unnatural shade of green that's casting everything in an ethereal yellow haze. There's an unexpected stillness; the trees aren't swaying; everything is quiet. The sirens start sounding in a Doppler Effect drone.

Mom keeps washing the dishes, determined to finish them. She looks calm. She knows tornadoes have never caused any real damage in Parsons. My sister and I get the cats and as many pillows as we can, preparing to barricade ourselves in the bathroom. We tell Mom to *come on*; she says *I'll meet you in there*. When she finally joins us, we sit together, listening to the wind whipping outside. Soon we hear the tell-tale sounds of man-made structures being ripped apart. Squealing metal. Groaning, splintering wood. Our hearts sink: our little bathroom bubble may not be as safe as we thought. But we are helpless. We can do nothing but wait out the storm.

When we finally walk outside, we will find that everything is black. The commanding solitary voice of the tornado siren will be replaced by the varied cries of a fleet of emergency vehicles. Red and Blue will flash against the black sky. Countless trees and power lines will be down and yards will be littered with shingles and sometimes entire roofs. Eight-hundred homes and one-hundred-and-twenty businesses will have been heavily damaged or entirely destroyed.

We will find a large oak tree lying across our sidewalk, parallel to our front porch and we will realize that if it had fallen at a slightly different angle it would have crushed most of our home. Later, as we chop the tree into smaller pieces, we will find a pink plastic Easter egg among its branches and we will consider the erratic behavior of the windborne beast that will become the talk of our town for years to come.

I will learn to loathe the appearance of a green sky. And Mom will learn that dishes can wait.



# *My Grandfather, Back from the Dead*

Blake Scott

He is standing in the foyer  
and we all feel,  
without discussing it,  
that we must pretend he was never dead.  
We are all so happy to see him, hear him,  
hold his hands,  
and he is happy for a while too  
for all the pretending.  
He cannot reveal anything, of course,  
and perhaps knows nothing.  
But trying to please us  
he makes prophecies about the cat  
in the summer garden,  
and moody predictions about grandma's crocuses.  
We all suspect they are untrue,  
and seeing this his eyes begin to glaze.

Days pass, weeks.  
We begin finding piles of raven feathers  
in the corners of his bedroom,  
and notice them poking out of the collar of his nightshirt.  
They infest the soup ladled from grandma's serving bowls,  
pricking us like sewing needles from inside the couch cushions.

We all study him closely when he is not looking,  
twiddling his thumbs in what never ceased to be his chair,  
the wings we cannot see molting beneath his clothing,  
his voice becoming a wisp from disuse.

Soon he stops talking altogether,  
only following us from room to room,  
so he suddenly resembles a child's balloon,  
days old, forgotten,  
skittering in the breeze from the vents,  
featherless, wilting,  
struggling silently to stay afloat.

# *To Man Ray's Lover and Model of the 1920s*

Based on Man Ray's *Le Violon d'Ingres*

Silver gelatin print -- 11 5/8 x 8 15/16 inches

Kyrie Bair

Your origins resonate  
in mystery – perhaps you string  
from the family Stradivarius. But  
though your silhouette is echoed  
in his curved designs of maples and willows,  
*you* remain an instrument unmatched.

You were my hobby, my *violon*; I  
picked you up when inspiration hummed  
at my fingertips, but was unwilling to memorize  
your voice, to study your seams. I starved  
your soul-post, held you at my shoulder and played.

You took your bow and left my stage,  
sought bread and wine from wide-eyed  
patrons who were entranced  
and entertained. But they  
could never capture you  
as I have all these years:  
my visual opus on a pitch-less page.

You turned your back  
on me long ago, yet here  
you are, inked pores permanently  
printed. I have preserved your  
finely-tuned elegance in the varnish, in your  
chandelier earring and beaded scroll.

## *Wild Strawberry*    Haven Ashley

A token for a cotton-tail. A little berry for the seeking, hidden in the thatch. No bigger than a button or a wink, a tart red kiss tucked inside a clover patch.

## *Peach*    Sydney Johnston

Your orange cashmere skin tickles my lips, as your soft body melts between my teeth.

# *Relativity*

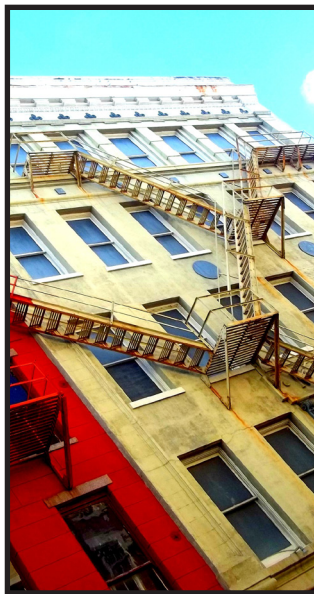
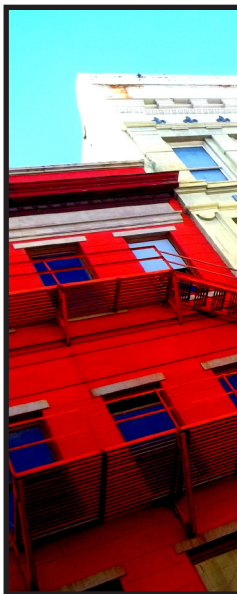
Tyler Keal

*On the lithograph by M.C. Escher*

In this labyrinth, three worlds  
overlap, intertwine.  
Faceless figures descend and climb,  
unaware of the perplexity  
in which they move.

The laborers toil with the wash and the wine,  
while the lovers bask in sunlight  
and the ladies dine. But the man

on the ledge and the man  
with his book both consider the marvel:  
three skies and three pulls to the earth.  
And as they visualize what lies  
beyond the dark doors,  
the man with the bag of secrets  
ascends the cellar stairs.



*Fire Escape*

Kyrie Bair



## *The Serpent's Prize*

Haven Ashley



## *Confession*     Warren Swenson

This is to let you know,  
I blew the bubbles in my chocolate milk  
just to spite you. I probably wouldn't  
have done it if you hadn't told me not to.  
What's more, I stuck my tongue out  
behind your back after you lectured me  
about spilling it on the new oak table.

Also topping the list of things you never knew:  
I snuck out of the house when I was sixteen.  
As I crawled out my window,  
groping for the vine-covered lattice  
in the dark, I smiled to think  
how disappointed you would be  
when you caught me.





On behalf of all of the featured writers and  
artists,  
*thank you.*

