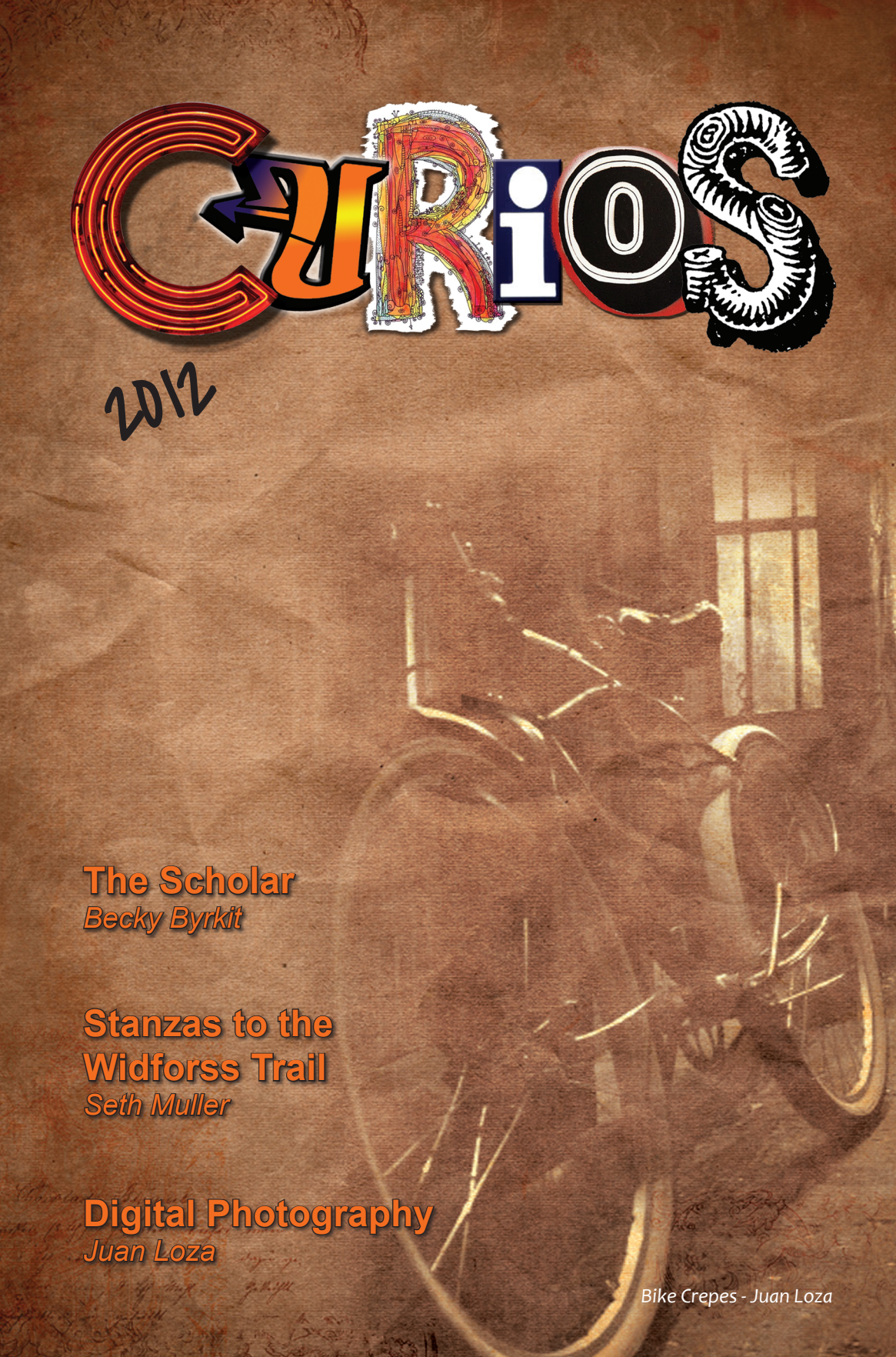
CURIOS

2012

The Scholar
Becky Byrkit

Stanzas to the Widforss Trail
Seth Muller

Digital Photography
Juan Loza



Bike Crepes - Juan Loza

Stanzas to the

Time lost
On a path
Named after
A watercolorist.

Where aspen trees
Favor red in their
Wardrobes.

Fine dirt coats
Sandaled feet.
Water bottles slosh
And leaves shimmy.

Between the trees
Casual glances
Into the abyss.

The path eases
From the gorge,
Flirts with it.
Does not share my
Gawking love.

I yield to its aspirations
To be a woodland passage
Strangely coy
To the sublime.

Seth Muller

The Body in Tanner Wash

Twelve hundred feet
From the river.
Water less than fifty
Degrees—coursing
By air well beyond
One-hundred.
Deep and pumping
Water, along with
An eminent rescue.

A liquid-sapped brain
Turns misshapen
And we discover
What lies underneath
The civilized self—
Panicky animals.

Our programming
Not always meant
To save us.

At the canyon
Bodies are recovered,
Relocated, and buried
Elsewhere.

Skin not left to parch.
Bones not left to blanch.
Reminders not strewn
here
To mark the distance
Between the living
And the dead.

A distance at times as
Short as twelve
hundred feet.

Seth Muller

NORTH RIM
POEM 1

We journey
To the fringes
To feed
A sunrise addiction.

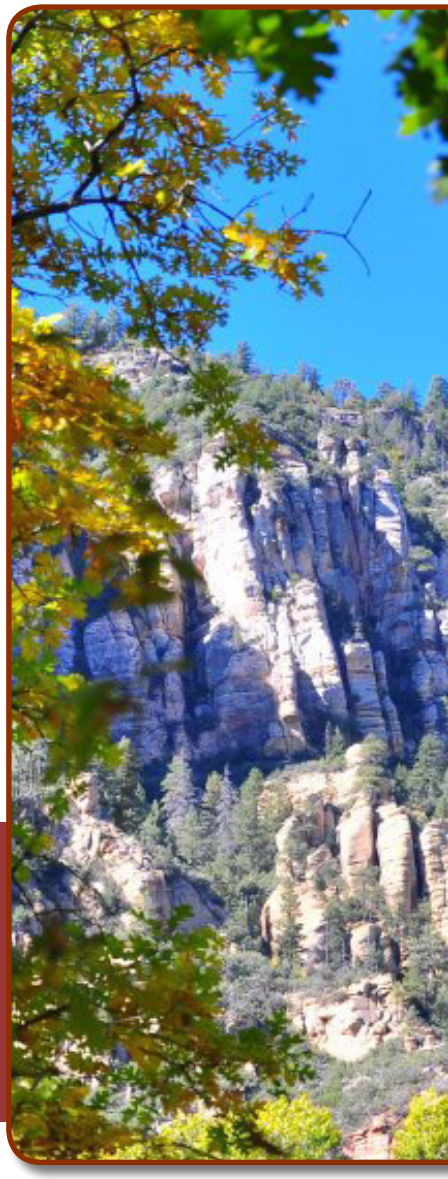
The Angel's Window
Waits below the
Sun line.
Waits for the
beginning of the
new show—
Grand Canyon
In daylight.

On this day
When absolutely
Nothing but rock
And light matters.

An old man
Raises his digital
Camera—pushes
The button—

The electronic
Beep from the
Canyon's edge
Might as well
Represent our
Lifetimes.

Seth Muller



Road 89 - Juan Loza

As I looked up, I saw Scottie come through the swinging door of the Cane and out to the sidewalk. He took one step and collapsed. Not a fainting episode, not a misstep, not a grabbing of his chest and falling to his knees, nor a steadying of himself against a lamppost. His strings were cut.

He was dead. Stone dead!

No flies hovered. No air moved. Missy stopped her counter wiping. The fan stopped its rhythmic squeal. The jukebox went silent. The sweat rolled nowhere. Antoine's spatula stopped half turned, and the flipped eggs stopped above the grill's surface. It all stopped. Except...

I was alive!

My heart began to race. My skin flushed, and my scalp prickled with the knowing.

Hazel Kimball

Dog - Juan Loza

On that afternoon in 1963, my attention was drawn to The Gold Cane Lounge three doors to the left of my address at 345 Saint Charles.

Scottie, the swamper of the Hummingbird cafe, was a regular at The Gold Cane. He was an older gentleman of seventy-five years or so. No one really knew his age. He told me that he had worked the river since he was a kid. He slept on the back porch of the building. He washed the floor of the cafe daily and carried the kitchen trash out to the alley in return for his meals. The girls upstairs asked him to run errands and to deliver notes for them. They also took care of his bar bill over at the Cane and sometimes gave him a clean shirt or found shoes that would fit him.

The heat was oppressive that afternoon, and the flies that avoided the sticky paper hanging in strips from the ceiling were batting against the window three feet from my face. The ancient, overhead fan badly in need of grease, and off center, had a rotational squeal and thunk. The jukebox was playing, and the fan was busily thunking out the beat to "These Boots Are Made For Walking," a Nancy Sinatra song that was played almost constantly in the gay bars all that year. Between keeping the beat of the juke box and trying to provide a livable condition in the cafe, the exhausted fan could barely push the stale air away from the fly spotted blades. The sweat dripped off the fry cook's nose as he worked the grill. Missy, the afternoon waitress, having taken a liking to the yankee in their neighborhood, insisted I take a glass of lemonade. She also gave me a bowl of cracked ice. I was to wrap the ice inside a wet cloth and to lay the ice and cloth on the back of my neck. Something all of New Orleans did on days like this.

payment of the bill, my hand was on the great, brass bell hung on the mansion's front gate.

A moment or two after I had whacked twice at the side of the bell with the clapper, Madame walked out onto the second floor balcony. She barely raised her voice asking my business.

"I am looking for a place to rent," I shouted. She nodded her permission for me to enter the mansion's walkway. As my hand closed over the brassy, green doorknob, the front door swung open to the odor of the waxed richness of the maple wood flooring. The oil of citrus in the verbena scent made my nose tickle and my eyes water. Madame was standing at the head of a curved stairway, her hand resting on a balustrade of mahogany that had grown nearly black over the years. I glanced up, and through the coolness of the afternoon's shadow, I caught her black eyes sifting my intention. She gestured for me to join her, and as I climbed the stairway, my hand trailed along the bannister, the wood alive with the patina of use. This house was solid and silent. The years had settled a great weight on this staircase, and each stair directed me to the open door of a room, where she was waiting.

"This is the room where I receive visitors," she advised me, as she handed me a cup of tea. I was to address her as Madame Coquillon. I was never to leave the ground floor unless I was invited to do so. My room was to be behind the ballroom, and the sum of fifty dollars per month was to be given to her attorney, a Miss Euphemie Lenoir, whose office was at 151 Dauphine St. I was to hand the monies to Miss Lenoir in person, during office hours, and I was never to acknowledge Madame if I were to see her during the Sunday Afternoon Promenade on Canal St.

The Hummingbird
Hotel and Cafe 1963

A hotter-than-hell June day in New Orleans, and I was sitting in the front window of the Hummingbird Cafe with a plate of eggs, grits, and a cup of pure coffee. Upstairs, the Hummingbird Hotel was business as usual, with the girls and their customers.

I looked across Saint Charles Avenue to the Creole Mansion where I lived. My room was the servant's quarters behind the ballroom. I had a three-quarter-sized, old, iron bed with a horse hair mattress on top of coiled metal springs. Maybe a hundred years ago when people were smaller, it was called a double bed. There was a mahogany armoire with tiny drawers for cufflinks and socks and whatnots, a place to hang one's tuxedo or ball gown, and then, there was that magnificent, black marble fireplace.

I liked looking at that house. It had a decaying elegance, the under layer of bricks and lathing showed through in patches. This home of Madame Coquillon had definitely seen better days.

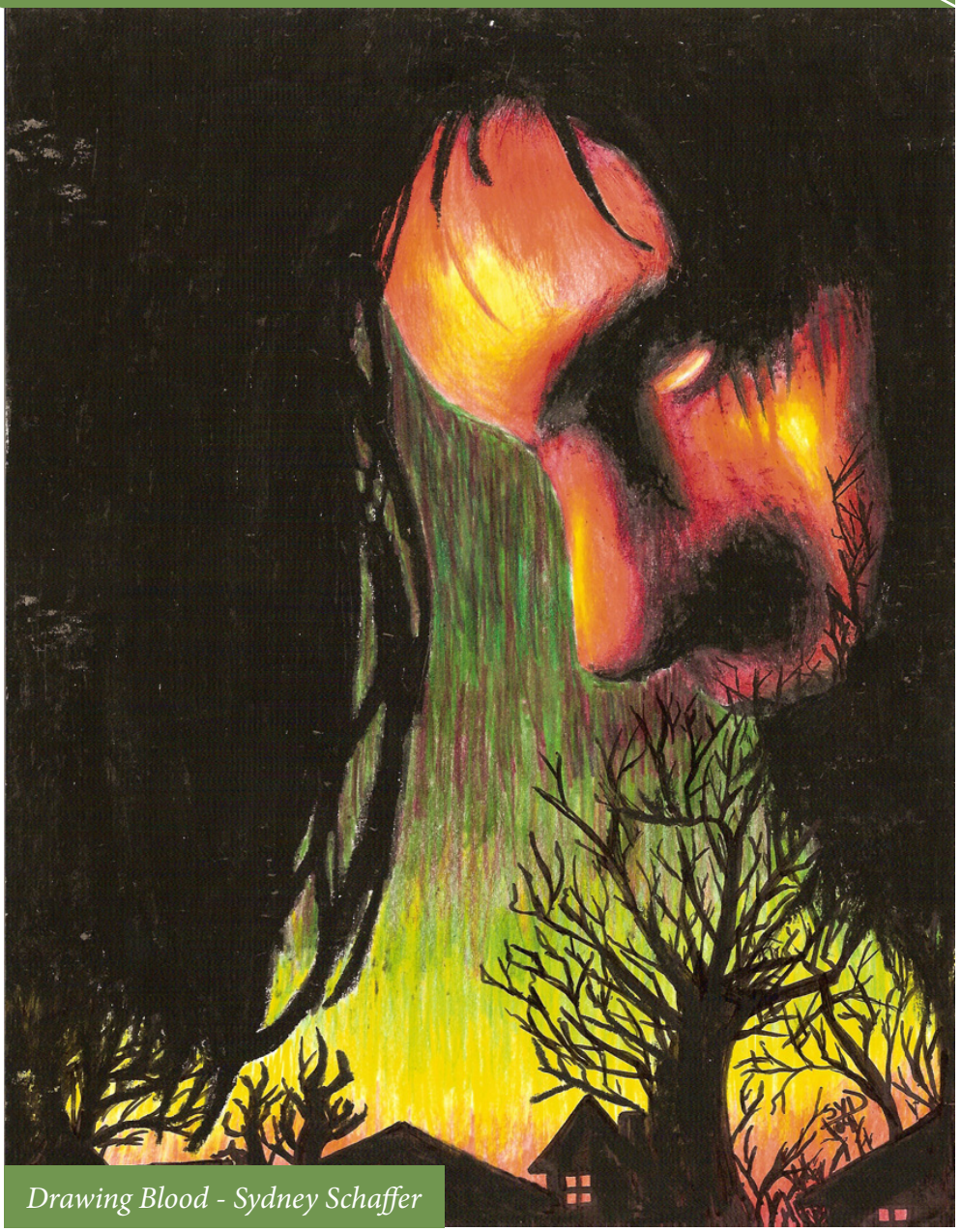
I met Madame six months ago. It was three weeks before Mardi Gras, and I had just arrived on the ten a.m. bus from Boston by way of Bogalusa, Louisiana. I was looking for a place to stay. I had stopped to rest and to take a glass of lemonade at this very cafe, and while sitting in the front window, I noticed the faded creole mansion across Saint Charles Avenue. Being a New Englander, I was born with an appreciation for homes with a past. So, after finishing my glass of lemonade, and

Frog Pond - Sydney Schaffer

Piece of You

I think of you in the morning
When I wake up,
When I make my coffee,
When I meditate and pray,
When I drive to work,
When I try to grade stuff,
When I open my email and hope for some sort of communication,
When I talk to friends and colleagues,
When I drink my water,
When I take a break,
When I exercise in the afternoons or evenings,
On my drive home,
When I drink my tea at night,
and when I lay down to go to sleep.
In my dreams you are with me.
When I think of you,
I hear your voice in my head.
Your kind voice and radiant joy energy, which you put in me, into my heart, to open me up, from my long time shut down, broke down, closed off, violated, self-defeating, self-defending place of seemingly no return.
A place where I didn't know I was.
I hear your voice in my head and feel your energy encouraging me to reenter the world and experience love, love that is beyond anything I have ever known or imagined.
You gave this to me, this piece of yourself.
It lingers in me, now and always, making me more like you; an open heart, this piece of you reminding me to love myself, as I love you.
I am so grateful.

By Maxie Inigo



Drawing Blood - Sydney Schaffer

BEGINNING

1.
The winter trail begins
as the wind rips leaves in clusters
on the still warm path

2.
Rain on the roof, night
like a blackened root pulled
from its own dark earth

3.
The wet chill touches
your lucid hand as you dream
your real self dreaming

4.
She cuts back branches
summer light stretched those long arms
to form these shadows

5.
Crickets gather quiet
the sky softens, the center,
clouds like low curtains

6.
The crows talk in clicks
like a black swath of hunger
ruffled in brief light

7.
That loon black on white
moon stands still, wings, north to south
open their distance

Kate Harkins

the roads are still, but I am not.

It is the most maddening peace I have ever felt. I sit cross-legged in the damp grass, feel its needle wetness seep slowly through my skin, as I watch fireflies launch into the air like phosphorescent airplanes. They flash yellow-green at a languid pace—as they pulse light in one dimension, they fall dark in another. A chill saturates my spine, and even my cells quiver.

So this is how the longing began. The longing for someone or something else, for a connection beyond the mundane. Manure still lingers in the air, and I put my head to my bent knees, holding my breath. I fall back into the dank ground to be absorbed. The longing rests in a place beyond sleep, beyond dream, somewhere in the void that created darkness and light.

Dawn begins to telegraph its arrival, with faint wisps of lustrous blush. Dandelions unfurl into my scalp, planting sunlight in my hair. I am reborn into the next stage.

III

I rise onto the roof of my old high school, its surface recently tarred. The humid air thickens the tar smell and paves the mucous membranes of my nostrils—all the way to my brain—turning my myelin to asphalt, my dendrites to cul-de-sacs.

Soon, I am stuck in a dead-end of memory.

Summer, at the age of eighteen, is with me. We lie on her thick blanket, our bodies eclipsing its moon-howling gray wolf. We stare at the indigo cornea above us, viewing and contemplating infinity—our hands constellated, our heads colliding planets. The Pleiades meteor shower rains

I wonder where the ambulance is. The only lights are from traffic signals blinking red in one direction, yellow in the other, going blank while the other flashes. It is a confusing, silent symphony of light. No sirens yet. I move to look inside the rear window. My two-year old daughter, Angela, is still in the car seat. She is eerily still and silent, her blue eyes now dormant. With no blood anywhere on her small body, it appears as if the crash killed her from the inside. I try to scream, but only light comes out.

Soon, the road unfurls shrill flashing red. Sirens slide from alto to soprano. Stepping back from the scene, my field of vision telescopes. Our electric-blue Lumina has crashed into a fiery-red Blazer. A giant, brown, metallic Hershey's kiss from the fallen lamppost sags on the crumpled roof of our car, its white-ribbon flag sticking out like a severed arm.

Over top, the cooling stacks of the Hershey's factory billow steam. My body sublimates into water vapor as its steam engine propels me into the sky. I am transformed again, this time into the lightening rod on top of the Kissing Tower. My heart is a radio transmitter, broadcasting my loss and longing throughout the city. My frequency matches the rippling American flag above me, its stars releasing me into oblivion.

II

A band of fog clings to the oaks, maples, and pines of the Susquehanna valley. It is one day after full moon, its light a thick red, a hemorrhage in the darkness. Its reflection on the nearby pond evokes a cacophony of crickets, cicadas, and frogs. For once,

Symphony OF LIGHT

I

The screeching of tires. The crunching of metal. The shattering of glass. Then…silence. As silent as August has ever been. I float out of this body and observe the scene. Peering inside the broken glass of the driver's side window, I see my wife, Summer, dead. She is now just bloody meat trapped inside a seatbelt. If I were still corporeal, I would reach in and release her, remove the glass shard tiara from her forehead, brush the fallen hair from her face, and press her into me until her soul comes back.

View From The Front Seat - Elaine Dillingham

Marlon - Juan Loza

Watch for a brown VW, pans
Dangling from the inside, back
Full of bedrolls. Watch for you, resting
The laptop on the steering as you type.
In the morning, I offer a sticky bun,
Munch sausage in tacos rolled
As tight as wind felled trees tripped
In palms after a storm.

Barbara Bloom

Being There

Taking Hwy 40 west
While listening to Classic
Female Zulu Jive. For 8hrs
Soweto and the Mohatella Queens
Never Sleep but jump to metal cracks,
Your voice talking through the car so
That when I finally stop it's not
For gas but to put down the poem
Like visitation in my head.

Past the San Bernardino's, past
Your house in Alhambra, a straight line
From winter to summer, to my favorite
Sandy Topanga on the beach,
Waiting, watch as younger fools
In their wetsuits, washout, trailing
Their surf boards around their ankles
And I, holding only to hot coffee,

that Mom insisted on hauling that bulky antique dresser.
That a young girl had a Barbie collection 100 strong
and that a toddler loved Spider Man above all.

Bodies would have been…sad…broken….
anonymous.

I don't want to picture downy heads lolling on beanbags-
now a million beans scattered dead in the dirt
amongst weeds and trash…

I don't want this family to rear up before me every time I see skid marks on the highway.

Sometimes when I am driving now,
I see twin trails of rubber,
snake left, back right,
and then stop
in the middle of the asphalt.
I am relieved and I pretend to know that someone swerved,
gained control, maybe cursed, then drove on.

Other times I am driving
and I see that long black trail, laid down hot,
jerk past the white line
and I see what's left of a guard rail, or soil berm, imploded-
That family hovers there.
Their possessions crowd my peripherals,
stuffed animals and silk shirts clinging to my windshield for miles.

Natalie Nixon

If I had seen just bodies,
an instant's glimpse in irreverent headlights,
what would it have been to me?
Could I have known--man or woman? Perhaps, but
I don't know.
Hair color? That I might have seen.
And that would have been

all.

Less personal information exchanged than
between strangers
passing silently on a sidewalk.

But this bloom of belongings on the roadside-
obscene.
Life, a family
splayed out spread eagle before rubberneckers.

Mementos of love,
close kept secrets.
Knick knacks, junk,
bad habits, treasures
all spewed out of a ragged mouth, on the wrong side
of this truck.

My kids are home safe, sleeping in their
beds.
These kids aren't SAFE and their beds are
shredded-
yellow foam impaled on dead branches.
Skin and blood and hair ground into
malpais stone
in a ditch.

I don't want to know
that Dad was a Marlins fan,

I don't remember any black streaks on the road,
they must have bled into the night.

Only twenty-five minutes from the crackle of
cinders in my driveway,
the squeal of my front door--opening onto quiet
kitchen, dark hall, breath of sleeping children.

Rounding a corner in blackness,
the white arc of my headlights stumbled on a riot of
color.
Against a dull rock cutbank, a sudden field of hues-
neon plastic, patterned fabrics,
jumbled chromes and coppers, red wires, blue wires,
painted steel, strewn rubber, glinting glass.
Too much
to take in all of a sudden
-but made cohesive,
unified,
thematic,
by the white and orange branding
of a U-Haul truck.

The cab, crushed like a beer can under a drunken
heel,

one boxy side peeled back
like an orange, half undone.

There were no bodies. Ambulances had already
come and gone.
Police cars? I don't remember-
I don't see them in the picture in my head,
instead-
a little girl's princess pajamas, and shattered plastic
toys.

Asphalt

The White Line - Juan Loza

The haunting began
on a drive home from Phoenix.
Alone in my car, no kids (thank God).
The night was chilled and solid, scent of withered
leaves puffed through a gap,
window cracked, a breeze stiff against my tired skin.
Landscape the color of ash- dark pines, leafless
brush,
night cold asphalt.

Asphalt.

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Curios
MAGAZINE

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Curios
MAGAZINE

Our intent for CCC's Curios is to provide a student-produced publication that supports and reflects the breadth of creative expressions across our northern Arizona community. Here we present a venue to display art and literature, providing exposure not previously available to those in the region.

We invite you to enjoy the works of friends and neighbors and encourage you to submit your work for our next edition.

For Submission Guidelines and Charitable Contributions, Please visit us at: *http://oldsite.coconino.edu/curios/*

o the Widforss Trail

Aspen Tree - Emily McRobbie

Dinner - Juan Loza

Pit-Stop - Juan Loza

Deception - Juan Loza

Coiled - Juan Loza

POWER play

Bookstore Bike - Juan Loza

When Lisa pushed open the diner door, a rush of quiet entered the bright space with her, like the suck of cold air that pushed her shoulder length hair past her eyes. This was expected. Perhaps it was the way the waitress glanced at her gratefully as she passed, carrying a heavy tray of burgers and fries, or the way the teenagers crowding the corner booth shushed and elbowed each other, girls giggling, the guys slumping lower in their seats. Maybe it was the way the rough looking truckers around a square table suddenly became interested in the dregs of their coffee mugs.

Lisa strolled up to the counter and dropped onto a stool. She swung her broad shoulders towards the pass-through to the kitchen, and threw a wave at the cook.

"Afternoon, Officer Dunlap."

Nancy was manning the counter today, and slid a Diet Coke and a paper covered straw to Lisa. Lisa frowned. The paper on the straw was wet. She fished another from behind the counter.

"You're late for lunch, but early for dinner," Nancy remarked, pulling used filters from the coffee makers behind the counter. "I worked on the garden through lunch today. Heard we were supposed to get some weather and I didn't want my tomatoes to suffer." Lisa liked the way every ear in the diner was tuned in to what she was saying. Trivial or not, it was always good to pay attention when a cop spoke. She spun casually around on her stool, noting with pleasure the cool, microscopic bubbles of her Coke flying around and bursting on her forearm. "It's a hot one out there today." She said it to no-one in particular, but those within 20 feet nodded fervently.

After ordering fish and chips (she'd worked up a sweat in the yard today, and could treat herself to something deep fried) she chatted with the owner, Paul, who had emerged from payroll in the back office to come out and say hi. Paul laughed heartily at her jokes, and asked for the local P.D. gossip.

"Now you know I can't name names Paul." She leaned back, and the edge of the counter bit pleasantly into the base of her rib cage. Tipping her head back slightly, she widened her peripheral view to take in the teenagers' table.

"No, no of course not," Paul quivered, "but..."

"But, I will tell you, last night, I arrested one of the stupidest criminals I have encountered in a long while." A communal breath was held, and Lisa flexed

her power. Many of the folks in the small town would have heard about last nights activities, but only rumors. She grinned with wide, white teeth, and then cranked her neck from one side to the other, eliciting a dangerous sounding pop each time. She sighed with pleasure, then looked back at Paul.

"A juvenile was approached concerning rumored possession of narcotics. Pot, to be specific."

A young mother at a nearby table looked uncomfortable, suddenly snatching up abandoned crayons from her tabletop and trying to distract her 7-year-old daughter with scribblings. Lisa ignored her.

"The juvenile apparently panicked, ingested his pot, and took off, evading police briefly. When he was located again, he tried to escape via the reservoir."

Paul's thin lips puckered slightly as he tried to divine the significance of this.

Lisa's fish arrived and she turned her back to Paul, carefully applying a silver dollar sized pool of ketchup to her plate's edge. Paul hovered, the pastel orange of Lisa's tank top reflecting like a blush onto his white, collared shirt. She turned back to him after a single, crisp fry, and continued.

"The kid tried to swim across the reservoir, only he wasn't much of a swimmer. He went under. Drowned. Legally dead for all of five minutes. I went in and managed to find and then resuscitate him. The catch is this--the kid was in waist deep water. Stupid. High, but mostly stupid."

A sandy haired teenager suddenly stood up from

his seat at the booth in the corner. Silence in the room was broken only by gusting wind outside. He slammed his knuckles down on the table and leaned on them, glaring at Lisa from sunken eyes. She had been expecting this; the idiot kid from last night was this one's younger brother. She returned his look coolly. His jaw clenched. He was taller than her, would have the reach on her if it came to blows. "Fucking bitch cop," he muttered, barely audible. A ghost of a smile played across Lisa's lips, and the muscles in her shoulders flexed. Everyone knew she maintained her black belt in Judo. The kid suddenly turned away, his palms slammed the diner's glass door open, and a blast of dust marked his exit. Lisa's smile broadened. Another boy at the table muttered "Hey, what the hell? What about Derek's pitch?" and made to go after him, but the girls at the table squealed fearfully, looking pointedly at Lisa, and the boy sank back down.

Lisa stood and walked back behind the counter, helping herself to a refill of Diet Coke from the soda fountain. As she sat again, the sun suddenly came glaring through the windowed walls, and the wind outside instantly died. Ah, nature seemed to approve as much as she did of the days events. She got back to her battered meal, savoring it, dabbing her fingertips on a cloth napkin after every bite. "Thanks Nancy," she called as she stood and pulled a ten dollar bill from the back pocket of her pants. Just as she tossed it down, the front door opened again, and another gust of air rushed in and flipped her cash to the floor. "Damnit."

She reached down to retrieve it as a voice rang out across the room, "Everyone get down on the floor now. I'm telling you, now, if you don't want to get hurt."

Every cop-linked synapse in her brain lit up as she twirled around, recognizing the voice as that of the angry Derek. Her body hunkered into a crouch, half tucked behind the dubious protection of the base of the diner stool.

Derek stood where the front door had slammed behind him.

"Everyone, get down now!" His voice was harsh.

Lisa came out of her crouch slowly, confused, the tazer in her hand ready, but frozen. In Derek's arms he carried not a weapon, but a trembling mass of fur. It was his border collie, the one that always rode around in the bed of his pickup. Lisa had noticed the dog when she pulled into the lot earlier. Derek's husky frame shook as he cradled the violently quivering dog in his arms. "Get under the tables, put your coats over your heads. Do it now!" Lisa noticed now that Derek's face and clothes were coated with a uniform grime; he was the color of dust. No one in the diner moved.

Derek looked over to his buddies still in their corner and now he shouted, "Jesus, Ted, Allison, get away from the god damned windows! Get down!" His voice cracked with urgency. Lisa felt all eyes focus on her.

Derek suddenly rushed toward Lisa, unconsciously holding the dog out towards her in a pleading gesture. She felt gooseflesh prick from the back of her neck to her tailbone, and sweat caused the tazer in her palm to slip.

Emergency - Elaine Dillingham

"They won't listen to me, but they'll listen to you! There's no time to get out, tell them to get down! Tell them something!" Rain and hail suddenly lit into the roof of the diner like a jackhammer. People at their tables began ripping open the blinds that had been closed at the sudden burst of sunshine earlier. The tazer clattered to the floor and Lisa pushed past Derek, shoving at the dog in his arms. She strained to open the door of the diner and Derek was at her ear now, screaming, "There's a fucking TWISTER coming, make them listen! DO SOMETHING!"

Lisa wrenched the door open and heard the screams of those behind her as she stared at a wall of blue-black air boiling across her field of vision. Dirt and freezing hail ripped away at her exposed skin as she stood, frozen and small, a dark, wet stain spreading down the legs of her pants.

Natalie Nixon

Death Mask of Russel Ugly - Tara Nunimaker

LIGHT

I am the star,
falling
Beyond the horizon
That lands in the
corner of your eye
As you recite the
wish you've wished
A thousand times
before.
I am sunlight in full
force,
The gray stones
thawing
On the canyon's
floor.

I am the drum-
beats
That quicken and
rush
Towards the
middle
In the climax of a
song
The spinning
dancers; red
And purple,
turquoise,
Yellow cloth,
ribbons and
feathers
Merging- high
voices riding
rhythm,
Piercing thought.

I am water-
The changing light
at the rising
Of the sun, the
fiery sky
Preceding dusk.

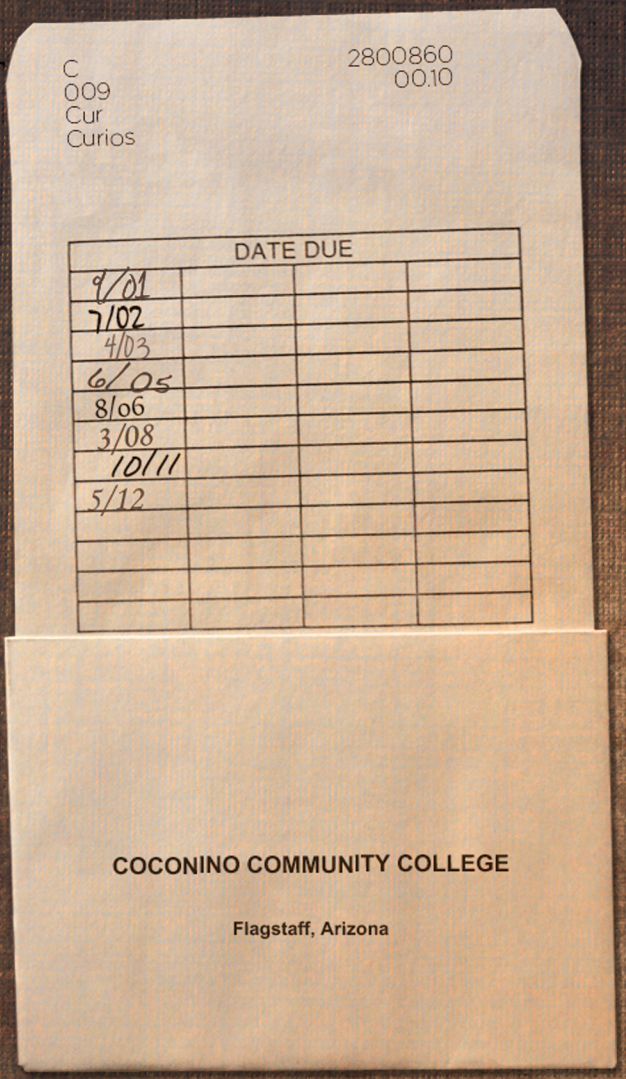
I am the cumulus
cloud changing
From dragon to
rising Phoenix
To Osiris, in the
moment
You look away.

I am the blue fish
darting
In the shallows,
Light playing
On powdery wings,
The blooming
meadow-
The violet seas.

I am the silver slice
Of new moon,
The delicate shell
That has traveled
From the wild
depths
Of the ocean
To grace the
turquoise
Water-colored sky.

Maria Jensen

Captain Jack - Sydney Schaffer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COCONINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Flagstaff, Arizona