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THE AIMS OF INSCAPE

We are privileged to be students of a school that is guided by the principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Church is, inevitably, a key component of everything we study and a key component of who we are as a people and as individuals. It would be almost impossible for our beliefs and values and worldview not to enter into our studies and our writing. And I believe that it is better that way, that we are better students and scholars and writers because our faith is inseparable from our work.

It is true that our faith sets us apart from the world, but we are not meant to exclude ourselves from them. It is our mission and purpose to share the light of Christ with all. We should not withhold our knowledge or talents from any who are seeking truth. It is because of this mission that we need to write so that we may touch all who come upon our work, not just members of The Church. Our writing, while perhaps not explicitly different in terms of subject matter or theology, will seem different to the readers of the world because of our unique perspective on life.

That is our goal at Inscape—to write and edit and cultivate literature that will celebrate the divine gift of language, literature that will reach beyond the English Department, beyond BYU, beyond Utah, beyond the borders of our nation, and beyond the membership of our Church, to show the world not only what we are capable of, but also what God is capable of.

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INSCAPE

is the inward quality of objects as they are perceived by the joined introspection of a poet, who in turn embodies them in unique poetic forms.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS
The Long Hot Boil, a horror flick about global warming, made Wayne Knutson pee his pants on a field trip in the seventh grade, and we laughed at his expense. We knew that if Becky Kingsley called you “dweeb” in phys. ed., she really meant, Kiss me ardently by the soda machine between fifth and sixth periods, lover boy. In junior high school I flunked geography twice, unable to press a grimy finger to the map and say “Sicily,” “Beijing,” “Kalamazoo.” Big whoops, I thought, peddling home on my blue Schwinn with baseball cards pinned in the spokes, pausing occasionally to chuck rocks into swimming pools.

Life was the thin stretch of rope we funambulated on. Large quantities of Pixy Stix and a bad case of ADD added up to weekly counseling sessions with Mrs. Schlozenheimer, school nurse and lunch lady. “Eat more greens, less Ju Ju Bees” she’d say, depositing
a multivitamin in my palm with one hand, stroking her fine blond mustache with the other, looking pensive. Puberty hit us like a barrage of spit wads, and our voices cracked in unison. We knew the incriminating evidence of report cards: *A* for *awful*, *D* for *damn fine work*—as the world spun round like a lopsided basketball on some enormous finger, leaving us dizzy.

Days lurched past like tired elephants. We longed for pale blue summer days, sweaty palms and grass stains. We longed for Becky Kingsley in a two piece, or even a one piece. But geography had me lost. I kept waiting for someone to point to the map and say, “You are here,” lines of longitude and latitude wrapping me up like a safety belt. Did we know the Pathway to Enlightenment? We knew a shortcut to 7-Eleven, and seven ways to conjugate the verb *esperar*—to wait. We knew enough math to realize the *X* of desire rarely equaled the *F* of reality. Like equations, we waited for a solution. Mrs. Schlozenheimer shoveled more coleslaw onto our trays,

her thin purple hairnet holding things in place.
Kevin Hawkins

ONE EVENING

The bleeding stranger touches my shoulder and points to the television.

"Look," he says.

My living room is dark, except for the TV, and in the electric-blue glow the man is a flickering patchwork of blood and clothes and pallid skin. His left arm is missing. He keeps pointing, with his right hand of course, and I cannot help but wonder if he is a natural righty.

I turn to the television to see a gray-haired, pale-eyed old man telling us to repent. It is too late, he says, the end is here, it is much, much too late, but still you must repent. Patchy gray stubble sprouts from the few pores of the old man’s cheeks that aren’t scarred by some ancient acne. We have already caused so many storms and earthquakes and killed so many
hundreds of thousands of people, he says, because we are so little like Jesus.

I begin to think that maybe this man, this bleeding stranger in my house, is an angel—heaven sent as part of some aggressive new “scared righteous” campaign. Why else would he have me listen to this guy?

The preaching man on the television gets louder. Hurricanes have been sent by God, he says, because we search for pleasure in the creases of each other’s thighs. He doesn’t say it exactly like that, but I know he wants to. I also know he isn’t Jesus. I don’t think Jesus had scars like that.

I turn to the stranger still standing beside me and shrug.

“Not him.” He points instead to the bottom
of the screen, to the news ticker and the words scrolling by.

. . . STRONG WINDS IN SOUTHERN UT BLAMED FOR DEATH OF NV MAN WHEN HIS VEHICLE WAS BLOWN FROM INTERSTATE-15 . . . NO FURTHER INJURIES REPORTED . . .

"I'm a news story," he says.
"I'm sorry."

The man shrugs and lifts the dark, pulpy stump that was once his left arm. "It happens."

"Not too often, I hope."

"No, I guess not—not like this. But there are so many ways to die."

The man walks from my living room up the step into the kitchen and starts thumbing through the morning paper scattered there on the table. In the low light I see he is a young man, in his early thirties maybe, with clean, dark hair and a pleasing face—the kind of guy you might nod at while passing on the sidewalk just because he seems decent. He looks athletic, rugged almost, but that could just be the gash that runs the line of his right cheekbone. He continues thumbing through the paper and pays no attention to the blood that drips thick and pools deep and red, almost black, in the grout of my kitchen tiles.
"I have three kids," he says, finally. "I have an ex-wife and still-living parents."

"I am truly sorry."

"I believe you."

On the television the preaching man has been cut short for a sponsor break—something about a new pill that lasts longer, up to thirty-six hours, allows you to choose when the moment is right. The stranger walks back down into the living room and stands staring beside me at the television. Programming resumes, and his banner scrolls by again.

Nothing has changed.

"It doesn't make any sense," the stranger says. "It doesn't even say my name. There's nothing about my family or even my job. It doesn't even say what the hell kind of car it was."

I stay quiet. *Am I one who would be curious about what kind of car it was?* I might be, but only so I can remember never to get one—because I, too, have kids of my own. Maybe I'm just curious.

"It was an old Volkswagen bus," he says.

"That doesn't matter now."

The stranger shrugs, "I just never wanted to share my death with so many strangers."
Hollis Hunt

JANAE

She splashes words
bright pink
lower case

She tosses hair
casts eyes
no embrace

Evicts my heart
like an unwelcome
renter

Filet Mignon
cut to the red rare
center.
James C. Phillips

THE FLOWERMAN

The smile of petals leapt to her face
and happiness won
(the moment).
Ashley Mae Christensen

**FIRST TIME I KNOW SUMMER**

My parents tell me to get back in bed. I stand at the blinds without moving slats: watch neighborhood kids run cat-footed in fields and dusk. Sun setting silhouettes christened in purple shadow and wet, wet, wet, sprinklers clicking on lawns. Orange sky yawns—slow as counting stars. When you know something, you’ve taken the first step toward losing it. Buttered cream light through lazy white drapes, darkness is coming, first firefly night.
Holly Baker

DEGREES OF

Toutes les passions ne sont autre chose que les divers
degres de la chaleur et de la froideur du sang.
[All passions are nothing else than different degrees
of heat and cold of the blood.]
~ La Rochefoucauld, Premier Supplement(VIII)

I sit on a snowy bank, my legs wet up past the knee
and my hands bare and red. Beside me, Jen lies on
her back, her soaked coat on the ground beside
her and her boots a few feet away. As the seconds
tick by, my clothes stiffen against my skin, harden-
ingen as water turns to ice in the frigid air. I can
see crystals forming in Jen's long braid and thin
lashes. She is not shaking. Not yet. Just breathing,
depth—long, rasping, steadying breaths. Then
she coughs. Her breath escapes in visible puffs of air. The car rests at some distance up the hill, a distance that seems so much longer because of two-feet deep snow. I don’t know if I can stand, but I know I can’t carry her there. It’s too far. I have to wait until I can feel, until I can move.

Above and surrounding us, the sky is gray and has no warmth. The sun a distant orb, paler than the moon. The lake looks like hardened fog, its surface dusted white and smooth but for one break in the field of white: a jagged hole that reveals the thinness of the ice so close to the shore. That’s where she fell in. I can see it from where I sit, see the trail cut through the ice, broken as easily as glass. The water is dark and laps slowly against the shards. Our gear still lies on one side
of the hole: one pole and a kit. A line still runs into the water. The other is lost. I know I will not go back for any of it—eventually, it will all be lost to the lake.

I had taken off my gloves to fill the sinker. My fingers were already stiff and cold beneath the gloves, but I could not manipulate the tiny rubber plug through the thick finger padding. So I had set them aside, knelt by the tiny hole we had carved, and released the plug. The shock of pure cold bit through the flesh of my hand and straight to the bone, stealing my breath away in a gasp. The pain was real, but the pleasure also to feel something so potent, so unequivocally genuine as pure, unalloyed cold. Five seconds. Ten seconds. The cold began to burn. I screamed and laughed, watching the air rise from inside the sinker in tiny, fluttering bubbles and knowing I had to hold my hand there for seconds more, until the last of the bubbles had escaped and burst. That’s when I heard the ominous sound of splitting ice. A frightened gasp. A frantic scramble. A scream. In one, inconceivable instant, I watched Jen’s head disappear beneath black water.

Now Jen moans. I see she is shivering violently, and at the same moment I begin to feel the battle of heat against cold enter my fingertips as
I press them against my chest beneath my sweatshirt, under my coat. My heart pumps warm blood to my legs, my toes, and all is torture. As the heat at last manifests itself, I know the horror of cold.

Softly, it begins to snow.

> Children are born true scientists. They spontaneously experiment and experience and reexperience again. . . . They smell, taste, bite, and touch-test for hardness, softness, springiness, roughness, smoothness, coldness, warmthness. . . .
> ~ Richard Buckminster Fuller

"I remember that winter well. Oh, it was cold! Your shoes would freeze to the pavement if you stood in one place too long. And it was impossible to get the Buick running before sunup. That’s how cold it was. Of course, we couldn’t get very far, what with all the storms and snow. A typical Wisconsin winter, I suppose."

I grin as my mother tells the story I have heard more than twenty times, once a year, and I know that the next line will start, "Sixteen degrees below."

"Sixteen degrees below," she continues, shaking her head as if she still can’t believe the
temperature could drop so low anywhere but the Antarctic. "That's how cold it was when we brought you home on Christmas Eve. Such a wonderful Christmas gift, our little Holly berry."

On the nineteenth of December, 1983, I entered the frosty world and found my first home to be the upper-Midwestern town of Oconomowoc. That's probably when I developed my tolerance and love of winter, of snow and cold and ice. As a child in grade school, I looked forward to the summer vacation only because it meant no more school—the heat of summer was never my friend. The Midwestern humidity left me feeling sticky and unclean, and I never liked the feel of sweat on my palms or hot blood in my cheeks. On sultry days I sought out shade or kept indoors. Or, if I had to go outdoors, I sought out other ways to keep cool: running through sprinklers in the front yard, sucking popsicles bought for fifty cents from the ice cream truck, and racing my bike down steep hills just to feel a breeze on my face.

But winter was my haven season. As October approached, I would begin to search the skies for the first snow clouds—I learned early to identify them. And then, when the first flakes of the season began to fall, I raced from the warm house to catch the crystallized rain on my tongue, and
once enough had landed on the lawn I balled it into my fist to feel it harden and begin to melt at once, wetting my palm with frigid water. I liked it. The cold. Every time I touched it felt like the first time, and I was a scientist learning its properties and intensities.

A snowball became the base of a snowman. I crunched through six inches of snow and called to Meredith to bring the midsection. Our creation would stand no higher than three feet tall once we were finished, but for eight-year-old girls it was an impressive statue of snow.

It wasn’t long before the snow had seeped through my thin, blue knit gloves. I pulled my flesh and blood fingers out of the knit ones and curled them against my palm, trying to warm them again and make them mobile. Suddenly, from behind, a ball of ice struck the back of my neck and slipped down my back as if I weren’t wearing any coat at all. I screamed, more in offense than in pain or discomfort. As Meredith laughed behind me, I shoved my fingers back into place inside the gloves, stooped down to gather a handful of perfect packing snow, and lobbed one back.

We played for another half an hour, but my fingers only lost more and more heat. Soon, I could barely move them at all, and we called a quit.
to our play. We stomped our feet on the porch and stepped into Meredith's warm house, shucking off our hats, coats, and scarves and letting them dry in the entryway. I spread and clenched my cold fingers, willing them to warm up.

"Holly, warm up your fingers at the sink," Mrs. Olson said.

I went to the kitchen sink and pulled the tap all the way to the left. The hot water hit my hands, and pain shot through my knuckles to the very tips of each finger. I gasped through my teeth and withdrew my hand. Mrs. Olson appeared at my side.

"You don't want to do that," she said, pushing the tap the other way. "Warm them up with cold water."

_I was in the drug store the other day trying to get a cold medication... Not easy. There's an entire wall of products you need. You stand there going, Well, this one is quick acting but this is long lasting... Which is more important, the present or the future?_ 

~Jerry Seinfeld

The November of my sophomore year of high school started off unusually warm. I was un-
happy. We had seen snowfall in early October, and I had entertained hopes of a long, white winter. But warm weather invaded shortly thereafter, and it lasted. The Woods had even refilled their backyard swimming pool.

"We're going swimming this weekend," Scott Wood told me. "My place."

"It's November," I countered. My mentality did not allow for a warm November.

"It was seventy-eight yesterday," he said.

And so it was that I found myself changing into a swimming suit in the Woods' bathroom on Friday night. With plans set firmly in place, no one had bothered to attempt a readjustment as the temperature dropped to fifty degrees on Thursday. Chantell, noting this right away, had already backed out, and Becca used a family get-together as an excuse. That left me, Scott, Chris, Clark, and Stew. I pretended that I didn't notice—or care—that I was the lone girl in this group, as I was secretly pleased, and there was no way that I was going to back out now.

The boys were laughing together when I finally joined them, fighting to show no fear of appearing before them in a swimming suit. There was a nip in the air and the effect showed in their shirtless skin. I wondered if they could see the
same through my suit.

"Who’s first?" they said.

"Holly! Holly!"

I knew I’d be volunteered even before the question had been asked. No fear, I told myself, and with a grin, I nodded and said, “No problem.”

On the side of the pool was a low diving board. I couldn’t dive straight to save a drowning child, so I opted for the male favorite, a cannon ball. The water was bound to be more than just a little chilly, but I didn’t even think before leaping, tucking my knees to my chest, and screwing my face up in anticipation of the impact. The water hit like a wall of ice and then engulfed me, stinging my bare skin and seeping straight through my suit to regions that should never know such cold. I came up gasping and heard the laughter all around me.

“You’re next!” I cried, keeping my jaw from trembling with some effort.

One by one, they each dove in, and one by one they each surfaced with curses and screams on their lips. But we were all laughing. For several minutes, we swam around that cold pool, our skin paling and our lips turning blue, but I found that I was able to bear it easier with each
passing minute. The cold was strangely invigorating, and I actually felt warmer putting my whole head under the surface than I did when the air touched it. Above all, I was determined to stay longer in the water than any of the boys, who continued to yip and splutter and grind their teeth as they splashed water into one another’s faces. Yes, it was cold, and I would never deny it, but the cold was worth gaining their admiration. If I backed out now, if I backed out first, I knew I would somehow be diminished in their eyes. I would be somehow weaker, lesser, more a girl, and I refused to allow myself to be seen in such a way. The future was more important, after all, than the now.

“That’s it, I’m done,” said Chris, and the others wasted no time in following him out. Smiling to myself, I completed another lap or two before I, too, left the pool. They smirked and guffawed and attributed my tolerance to higher female fat percentages, but I knew they were impressed. I was, too, for that matter.

The next morning I awoke with a cold.

_ Truly to enjoy bodily warmth, some small part of you must be cold, for there is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself._

~Herman Melville, _Moby Dick_
Few pleasures equal that of sitting in a steamy, frothing hot tub. Of course, that experience is made all the more potent if there is snow on the ground. And on February the fourteenth, my junior year in high school, the skies did not disappoint. That night, I found myself surrounded by cloud-white snow and sitting in a hot tub with my friends. Not one of us had dates for Valentine’s Day, so this seemed like appropriate compensation for a faulty love life. It had been snowing all day, all week, really, and there was fresh powder on the ground. My first suggestion had been to build a snow fort, but my friends—apparently unimpressed with this childish suggestion—opted instead for Chantell’s hot tub. We sat there for twenty minutes or so when I suggested that we run through the yard, in our bare feet, through the snow, and then hop back in. After five minutes of persuasion I had them convinced, and on the count of three we all jumped out of the hot, bubbling water and, squealing and shrieking, we sprinted through the snow.

The cold was biting but exhilarating, stinging toe to ankle to calf, and the cold air met wet hair and skin with a ruthless malice. But I was smiling. Not shrieking, not even gasping. Just running and allowing myself to feel winter’s purity.
JoAnna, I noticed, refused to leave the pool and so denied herself the experience. Ellen slipped and fell face first into the snow, hollering something horrible, and then returned as quickly as her stiffening limbs would allow. Soon I was the only one still bearing the contrast. Grinning, ambling back to the hot tub without care—so as to demonstrate my unusual and most unfeminine tolerance—I stepped back into the pool. The hot water enveloped me at once with a thorough and wonderful relief. I was the only one there who truly understood the joy of heat.

*Patience serves as a protection against wrongs as clothes do against cold. For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases, it will have no power to hurt you.*

~ Leonardo DaVinci

We had heard about Chinese torture methods from my older brother and his friends. How they knew about such methods I don’t know, but they derived a certain pleasure out of tormenting little sisters. Jacob threatened me with bamboo shoots up my fingernails, electrical wires in my chest, and water dripping onto the center of my forehead for days until the skin wore away. I never believed he would actually do any of that of
course, nor did I believe any of it was real. The idea of torture and the horror of pain nevertheless fascinated my seven-year-old sensibility, and I convinced a few impressionable friends of my same young years to try one with me: ice cube on the forehead.

“Mind over matter,” I told them wisely, quoting something I must have heard on TV. It sounded clever enough.

We each took an ice cube, lay down upon the living room floor, and placed the ice between our eyes. “First person to quit loses,” I reminded them.

The cold cube against my warm skin wasn’t too bad at first; but it quickly became rather uncomfortable. It was melting, the freed water dripping into my eyes. Patience, I coached myself, you can beat them. It’s only water.

“Ow,” Gina groaned next to me. “That hurts.”

And I began to feel it, too. Like a knife sinking between my eyes. The discomfort intensified into a pressure that seemed to have very little to do with the cold. I squeezed my eyes shut as the seconds passed. My skull was being cleaved in two. Tears of pain spilled from my eyes, mixing with the drips from the ice cube. Melt, I thought. Melt!
Gina screamed, and Meredith sat up quickly, throwing aside her ice cube and pressing a warm palm against her forehead. "Oh," she moaned.

The ice cube was torture—I had not known that simple cold could be so painful. My senses were splitting just as surely as the space between my eyes. Then Gina rolled over and was out of the game.

I screamed. I won.

_Cold feet are often symptomatic of a legitimate intuition that you may be heading for the wrong place at the wrong time._

~Suzanne Fields

The spring of my senior year of high school was wet and green in Indiana. With May approaching, the one thing on every senior’s mind was the upcoming prom. I had not been asked as a sophomore, nor as a junior, and I had little hope of being asked in this third and final year of eligibility. My guy friends were just that—friends—and saw me as nothing more than another one of the guys who was forbidden to use the same restroom. Those I did secretly eye were perfectly oblivious to my interests, and I lacked the courage to enlighten them.
So it came as a supreme shock when Alek Andrisani, a tall young man with broad shoulders (on account of the swimming team) and Greek ancestry (on account of his mother), invited me to Columbus Park to have a picnic with him on Saturday before a friendly game of ultimate Frisbee, the default good-weather activity of half the high school. Instantly I said yes, remembering, of course, that he had broken up with Nicole Pearl the week before. Had he had his eye on me the whole time? My spirits soared, and I at last had confidence that I was not, after all, the school's number one reject.

Saturday morning, an hour before we were to meet, I began to rethink my hasty answer. Why had Alek invited me? When I said yes, I thought that, at last, my overlooked qualities were beginning to shine through and had caught the eye of someone I had before considered a shallow, self-involved pretty boy. But, as the week progressed, the reality that he was a shallow, self-involved pretty boy regained my attention. I had no choice but to question, repeatedly, why, of all the more beautiful, flirtier, wannabe supermodels he had singled out this plain, quiet (relatively), mouse of a girl. It was a miracle he even knew my name. With painful realization, I decided that I had probably misunderstood.
“Maybe I just won’t go,” I commented casually to my mom.

“It’s just cold feet,” she assured me. “Go! Have fun.”

And so, twenty minutes later, I found myself sitting on a stone bench in Columbus Park, waiting with dreaded anticipation and a fluttering heart. Above me, dark clouds began to crowd in from the west. A stiff wind blew, and I turned my head to keep my hair out of my eyes. I wondered if the untamed hair, tossed about in the wind, would prove alluring, and so I tried to remain perfectly still and unperturbed by the maddening strands whipping my face.

Slowly, my toes began to hurt with cold, then my fingers and ears. I looked down at my watch and read 1:13. He had said 1:00. Traffic, I assumed to ease my aching conscience. He does live on the other side of the county.

At 1:24 I checked my watch again, and a single drop from the sky splashed against the watch face. Another struck my wrist, my head, my lap. Within moments, it was a downpour. I shot up from the bench and ran to a nearby tree trunk. It was at that moment that I saw, further down the path, two boys about my age shoot out from behind another trunk. I recognized them as Chuck Powell and Wes Jacks, two of Alek’s friends from the swim team. They were struggling to remain
upright for the fits of laughter that were forcing them to run doubled over.

I understood.

_Every man has his secret sorrows which the world knows not; and often times we call a man cold when he is only sad._

~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I never told my mother that I had been the object of some jock’s joke. When I returned home, three hours later, I was soaked through and told her through white teeth that I had had a blast. No one asked me to prom that year. I didn’t date at all in high school. My brother Jacob, ever the observant one, once explained to me why.

“The boys all think you’re cold,” he said.

I suppose I am.

_If I accept the fact that a god is absolute and beyond all human experiences, he leaves me cold._

~ Carl Gustav Jung, _Psyche and Symbol_

Only March, and the sun beat fiercely down upon the island of Fuerteventura. Forty-five degrees Celsius. I could not do the conversion in my
head, but I knew that it was too hot to be wandering these dusty streets, looking for somebody to talk to. And I didn’t want to talk to anyone. It was our sacred charge to share this message of hope and happiness, but all my feeling had been sapped by the heat. At one o’clock in the afternoon, we had another hour to go before mediodía and the respite of indoors—still hot as a furnace, but at least out of the sun. And then it would be back on the sun-scorched streets for another five hours. The dread of it already filled my stomach. I could scarcely recall the enthusiasm I had once felt in becoming a missionary, some nine months ago. It felt like a lifetime. My watch slipped over the sweat on my wrist, reminding me of the languidly ticking seconds, but I refused to look at it. Somehow, it was always worse when I looked.

My companion, the girl I had to study with, teach with, live with, and suffer with, walked haggardly at my side, no happier than I was. No one had allowed us in their home in over a week, and even then it had been only out of pity. No one had willingly looked at us since church on Sunday. The Canarians would see us coming, two instantly recognizable figures that patrolled their streets every day with an objectionable blue book in hand, and quickly cross to the other side, warn
their neighbors, and hide behind their doors, over which hung a sign: Somos Católicos—No cambiamos. No insista!

I repeated the words dejectedly in my head: “We’re Catholic—We won’t change. Don’t ask!”

I turned my water bottle upside down over my open mouth, and groaned. I had emptied it ninety minutes ago. Now my lips, tongue, and throat were desiccated, as though I hadn’t had any water in days. I considered insisting that we stop inside a locutorio and buy more, but I was down to my last few euros for the month, and I knew I could wait another sixty minutes.

My eyes began to burn, but with a heat quite disparate from the sun. Why had he sent me here? Why had he chosen me for this desert place, a place he himself had forsaken and forgotten more than ten years ago? I felt utterly alone, stranded in the middle of the Atlantic, and friendless. My companion knew how I felt—she felt it too, the isolation, the emptiness, the purposelessness. But it was a feeling one could not share, only understand. Despite the wretched heat, my soul felt cold, and I could not believe that he would abandon me like this. Not now. Not when there was such work to be done and I needed him so much.

We turned on the fans the instant we got
back to our piso, but all they did was blow around warm air. As soon as I had taken off as much clothing as possible and still remain decent, I put my head inside the freezer. The relief was artificial, and I knew it.

Two hours later, we left again. The temperature had climbed to forty-nine.

Nothing is lost yet, nothing broken,
and yet the cold blue word is spoken:
say goodbye now to the Sun,
the days of love and leaves are done.

~ R. P. T. (Robert Peter Tristram) Coffin

I don’t know how the conversation started.

We were all sitting around the dinner table, my family and I, just talking. The meal was finished and the remains were left to harden to the plates. I cherished these times, even though they came nearly every day. We would sit and chat away the hour, arguing the difference between antiperspirant and deodorant, championing salad dressing over mayonnaise, quoting Seinfeld, and it never mattered what was said or who said it or how long we sat there.

Tonight’s topic had somehow drifted from candied apples in Estes Park to old Halloween
costumes to snow days.

“Remember that Christmas break when it snowed three feet?” I said. It had been one of the best Christmases of my life—school had been cancelled for nine days in January and I spent hours outdoors building snow tunnels and a veritable maze. Our dog, Gus, had gotten lost for almost a full hour.

“Two weeks off of school,” my brother Colin said with relish. “But not church. Why is it they never cancel church?”

“They do, sometimes,” Dad replied, “if it’s bad enough.”

“Like that one time, remember?” said Mom, and Dad nodded soberly. I was always amazed at how little they had to say to one another to be understood.

“What time?” I pressed.

“Oh, it was years ago. You were only a baby when it happened. We were living in Wisconsin. Wakesha Second Ward, wasn’t it?”

“No, it had split by then.”

“The third ward, then. With Bishop Ulridge.”

These details meant nothing to me. I crunched the leftover ice from my glass and waited patiently for the story to continue.
"Anyway," said Dad, "it was a bad winter. Saturday night the temperature had dropped to ninety below—"

"Oh, it wasn't that cold," Mom interrupted.

"With the wind chill, it was. Anyway, it was cold. The bishop and his counselors decided that it was too cold and dangerous to go to church in the morning. We had eight o'clock church—"

"No, it was nine," corrected Mom. "No one has eight o'clock church."

"Nine, then," Dad conceded. "So they cancelled it. Called all the high priests to call the families they home taught and let it trickle down through the phone tree, as it were, until every member was called. I guess a branch got broken off somewhere, because the Bingham's were never called."

Mom was shaking her head slowly from side to side.

"So they got their kids up in the morning—four of them, I think it was—"

"Three."

"Three. Got in the van, and rode to church." He paused. "Their van broke down on the road. Country road. And no traffic that early, especially in that weather. They couldn't leave the
van. There was no where to go, and anyway it was too cold to walk anywhere. And these were the days before cell phones. . . . They all died. Froze to death in their van."

The story finished, and my brothers and sister started asking questions. But I sat silent, transfixed, unhearing. The broken ice slipped down my throat, unnoticed. Such a thing could not have happened to a righteous family on their way to worship services. God would not allow it! But more than this, I was horrified by the prospect of sitting in a van I could not leave, slowly freezing to death. What had they been thinking? Had they known their end was near? What had the mother done to comfort her children, or what had the father said to assure them that things would be all right? But they hadn’t been all right. They had all died, and I could not keep myself from imagining those final moments in the isolated van. I saw that van, encased in a thin layer of ice and dusted with snow on the side of an invisible road. The world was still and empty, and for miles in any direction all I could see was white, as if there existed nothing at all. But inside that veritable coffin, there was darkness and merely the shadows of bodies. I could not stop myself from wondering what it had been like for the man who discovered them.
In my own head, I did not hear children crying, wind howling, or mother and father asking one another what they would do. I did not hear the final I-love-you’s. All was silent.

*Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
Where most it promises; and oft it hits
Where hope is coldest, and despair most fits.
~ William Shakespeare, All’s Well That Ends Well*

“Where do you see this going?” he asked, almost timidly, as though this were a question he had been dreading for a long time now—two months, probably, if he was anything like me. And all the evidence suggested that he was.

I offered him an apologetic smile. “I... I don’t know.”

“I mean, if we don’t really feel anything for each other—”

“There’s no sense in forcing something.”

We spoke in unspecific terms, but we each understood exactly what the other meant. That was what our relationship had always been. It was familiar, easy, and without any true warmth.

“You know, I really do think you are a great girl.”
“Oh no, I totally get it. I know. I feel the same about you. It’s just not—”

“Right. I mean, you’re right.”

Silence invaded the car for a few seconds, and it was the first time I had ever felt uncomfortable around him.

“I just don’t want things to get weird, you know?”

“Oh no,” he agreed quickly, “of course not. We’re still friends.”

“Yeah. We can still talk and all.”

From the viewpoint of a textbook, he was exactly right for me. And I for him. So why was this so wrong? But it was. I had known it for five months, only I had neglected to tell myself. I guess I had convinced myself that this was my only shot, that if it didn’t happen with him, it would never happen. Not for me. But try as I might, I could not love him. Not like that. Not even close. I allowed him to put his arm around me on the couch, hold my hand as we walked, and even kiss me at the end of the date, but I had felt nothing. Mom kept asking if my heart ever skipped around him. I didn’t know hearts could do that.

When he pulled up to my apartment, I smiled at him and permitted myself the question
I had sworn I would never ask. "Is there—just be honest, okay? I'm not saying I don't completely agree with this, because I do, I'm just curious. Was it something about me? Something I did?"

He smiled back at me, and I could tell he was debating how to say it, whether to even answer at all. At last, he answered, as I knew he would. "I don't know, I guess I just felt like—like you weren't really into me, that's all. I held your hand, but you didn't hold mine. I'm sorry, does that make sense?"

I swallowed, but hid the action. "Oh yeah, it makes perfect sense. I'm sorry."

"No, don't. It just felt a bit like . . ."

Here I provided the term: "Cold shoulder?"

He sighed, the smile never leaving his face. "Yeah. Sort of."

"No, I get it. And I'm sorry. Really, it wasn't you. It was me."

I still can't believe I used that line.

_I shall soon be laid in the quiet grave—thank God for the quiet grave—O! I can feel the cold earth upon me—the daisies growing over me—O for this quiet—it will be my first._

~ John Keats
My Grandpa Baker died on March ninth. It is a significant day for my family, it seems: it is the day my dog Gus died, the day my grandmother was born, and the day I found out that I would be spending eighteen months of my life in the Canary Islands.

We had been waiting for him to pass away for several months, but on the day it happened my father sobbed like a child. I had never seen him like that before. I didn’t know how to react myself. I was an adult, barely but legally so, but I had never lost a close relative before, unless you count losing my grandmother to Alzheimer’s disease. She was still alive, if you could call that living, and not many in my family do.

The funeral took place just two days later. After a service in the church, we drove to the cemetery in Logan, Utah, where Grandpa’s baby sister had been buried in 1921, where his parents’ graves lay, and where he would now join them in the cold earth. The hole had already been dug, a deep, dark depression in the snow, and the headstone had already been placed. It was wide and gray. On the left side, the words John Age Baker had been carved neatly into the stone, along with his birth date and the date of only two days before. The right side of the stone bore the words
Clara Jean Simpkins Baker, with date of birth as well. The death date would not follow for another four years.

My brothers and cousins, each wearing a heavy black coat on which was pinned a snow-white rose, carried the casket from the hearse to the gravesite. It was the first time I had ever seen such a procession for myself, and I thought it beautiful. All around, figures dressed in dark colors stood upon the pure white snow. The cemetery was otherwise untainted by our presence and seemed to offer, in its own way, solace. Soft flakes fell earthward, blanketing the land anew. The world was quiet in the cemetery, still and solemn. Uncle John prayed, we sang, and we said goodbye.

I do not remember feeling cold that day.

*If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry.*

~ Emily Dickinson

The fireplace is glowing, warming the whole room, and Jen and I sit on the couch, wrapped in blankets from head to foot. We are silent as we sip the steaming cider, but occasionally we glance at one another and grin ashamedly. Her mother still
doesn’t know about the mishap, and I will never tell mine. She pulls her blanket tighter around her shoulders and shivers.

If I think about it, or sit still long enough, I can still feel the poisonous cold in my toes. I can still remember the agony of what it was like to feel again, as if I was experiencing heat for the first time in my life.

I had grabbed the hood of her parka and pulled, but the sudden weight beneath my knees had caused another resounding crack in the ice. I sank up to the thigh before I could fling my body back onto solid ice. Jen was screaming, for the pain, I knew, the very pain that caught my breath in my throat and prevented me from crying out, too. I reached for her again, this time securing my hold on her arm and my feet on the ice, and I heaved with all the strength in me. Another ominous splitting noise sounded piercingly in my ear. In fear and desperation, I prayed. I had just barely reached the shore, dragging her the whole way, when the ice shattered completely along my newly forged trail. It had held just long enough.

The heater in Jen’s car had been cranked as high as it would go. I had not forgotten the lesson taught to me so many years ago—Warm them with cold—but Jen kept pleading from the backseat. I can’t feel the heat. Please, turn it higher. I knew she was feeling it, though, her blood returning heat to her body. She
was moaning, rubbing her bared skin, and shaking terribly. I can’t feel the heat. Not long after, we had both begun to perspire. I felt slightly ill, but the memory of dipping myself in such glacial water to pull her out still numbed my sensibility. Trying not to think at all, I drove her car down the mountain.

Jen’s home was a sanctuary of warmth.

Now Jen looks at me as if to say, “Never again.”

I offer no response.

Mrs. Hardy comes into the room.

“There’s some warm apple pie and vanilla ice cream, if you two would like any.”

“Just the ice cream,” I say.
Michael Lavers

AFTER THE PARTY

Your hair was sweet and it hung
down in rivers long enough
to lap against my knee. By long, I mean
shorter than now, and tucked
behind an ear. I loved you then, which is to say
I needed you to love me. We left the party;
drove the Buick back to your house in the dark.
Instead of going in, you asked me to keep
driving. I hoped you meant
don’t ever stop. You slept beside
me while I drove in right-angled circles around
your block. My sadness did its best to beat
back desire. By desire, I mean
seeing you in the lamp light holding a child on your hips,
hips that seemed to be part of the body
of a woman
who holds a life in her hands.

I did not say any life, but my life.
I do not mean my life, but your life.
Johnna Thompson

I PROMISED THE CLOUDS A WEDDING

In those days the dust would settle in like an unwelcome guest who plans to stay for a very inconvenient length of time. In those days I’d stand on the front porch with little Evey on my hip and hope at my heels like a faithful but old blind dog—one that you know you’re going to have to shoot soon, even though you’d like to keep it around for company—and I’d stare at the evasive wisps of clouds on the far edges of the horizon and I’d beg them to drift inward and down. I’d promise the clouds a proper wedding if only they’d consummate the marriage right then and there and give birth to a healthy litter of raindrops.

At night I would dream of showers and, like the parched earth, I reach up to the swollen clouds and hunger. And in the morning I’d awake to the echoes of drops thrown at my windowpane by my thirsty subconscious. The searing light of the morning would stream in through the window, uninterrupted by clouds, and my tongue would lick the dry air and taste the light. A small sigh slips through my lips and I covet the very moisture that I’ve expelled. I sip it back in one sudden breath and gather the water around me as a barrier, and then I pray.
I have this recurring dream. Have you ever had a recurring dream? They aren't common. Well they are common—they're recurring—but I mean the phenomenon isn't common. I asked ten people if they had recurring dreams, and they most certainly did not. But I have one about a girl named Daphne.

Most guys can tell you what she looks like—the girl they're going to marry. But I can tell you what her name is. In my dreams she is raven-haired and blue-eyed and her name is Daphne. She has beautiful cream skin and we are always talking while it's raining outside. It's the earliest dream I can remember. I remember dad coming home from the bakery in white clothes, I remember my big wheel, I remember watching mom cook,
and I remember Daphne. And it’s always been that way.

Sometimes I pretend I have a therapist. She wears a black turtleneck and sips quietly on something warm while I jitter in a corner. A picture of counseling calm, and maybe that would be enough. Sometimes I pretend she tells me things (maybe this is cause enough to get one). But I think my therapist would tell me that telling strangers is healthy. Maybe it is. I don’t know you, you don’t know me, but we’re talking about important things. And maybe you are wearing a turtleneck, sipping something warm. I don’t know.

See? I feel better already.
The smell of books in the morning is not the same smell as books in the night. I know because I work at a certain bookstore in Provo. The best way I can describe the difference to you is this: in the morning, that deep, illustrious scent has the sun in it. It’s a warm, bright smell. Especially the bookshelves facing the windows. In fact, at the right times of day, a yellow slice of morning browns the paperbacks on the back wall. That, my friends, smells good. If things are slow, and most mornings they are, it’s a perfect time to read poetry. Poetry was meant to be read in sunlight.

At night, when traffic is heavy and headlights are glowing behind the front windows, the books kind of clap shut and tighten away as the temperature cools. Don’t tell anyone, but they’re that much harder to open and the smell is locked deep away. At night you can hardly smell the books without getting right inside one. This is what Dickens is for. And Dostoevsky. And Joyce. The night.

I’m determined to surround myself with words at all times. I don’t mind people, I hate numbers, but I love words.

I hope they bury me in a library.

I can tell you the names and name tags in a
place the way some guys can tell you who is wearing a ring. I'd like to think my motives are purer, higher, better than the rock-counting desperation I'm all too familiar with here. I love a good name tag. I'm looking for her name, of course, but once that's out of the way (and I haven't seen it yet), it's fine for striking up conversation. I think I've always preferred Wingers over Red Robin because the latter doesn't have name tags. There's something so comforting about that first awkward social step becoming a bright, shiny, readable sign for all to see.

It would be far too easy to have her wearing a name tag the first time we meet. And maybe even a little anti-climactic. Every nameless woman is a breathtaking opportunity and future, sashaying past with so many glances. She could be the mother of my children, the keeper of my secrets. She could be my knight in shining armor. She could be a bitter argument, a long talk under the stars, plane tickets to Paris, a wrinkled grandmother, a weary housewife, a poet reading Dickinson in the morning with bare feet baking in dappled sunlight. She could be anything, but today, the girl in the café, she was nothing—no, the girl I saw today curved between the magazine racks and disappeared into the blue-skied outside.
I’ll never know about that one. And some days, that’s ok.

Veronica came in today.

Here is a girl I cannot figure out, and therefore she intrigues me. She wears both pointed glittery shoes and plain white flip-flops with reckless abandon. Some days her collar is flipped up and her hair straight and long and firm. Other days the collar is down, the strands are pulled back, and she clicks by on stiletto heels with a hundred eyes following. She’s a real doll, let me tell you.

She comes in on Thursdays and talks to Brett, the muscled, bleach-blonde store manager. Go figure. They’re like two movie stars drifting in a crowd of nobodies until they reach each other. It’s not unusual in this city. I would write her off as a product of the ritzy apartments uptown but for the way she looks sometimes, when her hair is down and her toenails don’t have bright paint. She looks so girl-next-door in those moments; I forgive her for the proud and indignant smirk she clicks around with on the other days.

Did I mention her name’s Veronica? It’s like I’m reading Archie all over again.

I think I learned about icebergs in high school psychology. Something about the id and the
superego, submerged deep into the subconscious like an iceberg underwater. They say that 80 percent of an iceberg is underwater, obscured from view, impossible to see even up close because of the blue-white reflective light.

I think love is like that. And I can only see myself on top, scratching at it with a fork.

It’s all well and good, in the comfort of youth, to imagine love as that fleeting, sweeping, magical moment. Off your feet, on a cloud, in the air. But something happens as we approach the Volga boat ride to Marriedland. Love becomes serious. Deadly serious. Love seemed so harmless when it was a series of crushes and dreams of kissing tag. Today, as a single male navigating the waters of the Provost, it’s a deadly game fraught with truth, lies, and error. Call me dramatic. But watching, as I obsessively do, the passings and goings of boys and girls and men and women with their false smiles and careful text messages, I can’t help it.

This love thing is tough. Sometimes, when I’m shelving the self-help section, some poor soul with his mouth drawn tight comes in like he’s on a mission. It’s always a guy, and it’s always at night. He’s looking for something, and I can tell from down the aisle he’s looking at books on
relationships. Everyone from Dr. Phil to Bill Cosby has written something about it, and more often than not, the lost walk out of the store with a few books tucked away. I’d like to tell them to just leaf through and find a section that’s relevant to them today. Because tomorrow it’s something else entirely.

All this in an attempt to break that iceberg down into something manageable. I would know, I’ve probably read them all. There’s a lot of downtime in a bookstore.

Fact: Every good superhero has a fortress of solitude.

Just ask Superman. He’s had one in steep mountains, in the sun, in the Antarctic, and now hidden in the Cordillera Del Condor mountain range in South America. He made it famous. With a key so heavy only he could lift it, he locked away his favorite villains, artifacts, and weapons behind an impossible door:

When I lived back East, that fortress was a gathering of quaking aspens shivering over a small pond that I swear had never seen man before me. I found it on a drive, the kind that takes you past your familiar boundaries, urging you to leave, as much as you can’t or don’t want to. I drove until I
found someplace quiet, left my car, and laid down in flat, wet, windblown leaves like a weirdo. Thing is, I was by myself, and I didn’t feel weird. I felt alone, but not even the lonely kind. The clouds blocking the sun hid me from nature herself and I took a half hour remembering every sense so I could bring it back later. The fortress of solitude.

It’s harder here in Provo. The myriad parks are always thick with draping couples and smiling families—no place for a shunned superhero. These are grounds for buried and brighter tomorrows, far past the hanging guilt I feel today. The lookouts are surrounded by quiet tanks of cars with shadows in the back, dark wisps of almost-love. Sometimes I think Provo is kryptonite. Find the quietest, loneliest corner of town, and I will find you a blonde and her on-again-off-again boyfriend, about to be engaged for the third time.

It’s no place for a superhero, I tell you.

My aunt had every Garfield book that ever was, and as a babysat kid, I read every one. A lot. And somehow Garfield’s hatred for Monday turned into a real-life adult disdain. The only good thing about today was the rain, popping
off the roof at work and blue-graying the people coming inside.

K was married last weekend, and though I didn’t receive a wedding invitation, I did receive a text message. This is what it said:

Thinking of you. I hope you’re happy.

Like all text messages, it stared back at me and demanded response. And what? She had been mine once; I held back her hair when she threw up, just like in the movies. I was the favorite of her little sister, the recipient of Mom-made cookies, and the Only Boy Who Dad Ever Liked. It had seemed so right.

If I didn’t know she was kissing in white Saturday morning, I’d almost say she wants to see me again. Thinking of you. I would hope I wasn’t thinking of her on my honeymoon. But after what we had, or at least what I thought we had, maybe I would be. But the I hope you’re happy. Text messages are always teetering between tragedy and disaster. They’re always in context, so it probably just means what it says. But what if it means,

I’m married now. I hope you’re happy.

Or what if it means,

I’m thinking of you on my honeymoon for crying out loud! I hope you’re happy.
Well K, wherever Niagara Falls finds you, I hope you’re happy too. There’s an incessant rain outside and some small part of me hopes it’s raining on you. You never liked the rain like I did.

I think I’ll just keep that text to myself, though.

K had these pink lips that just—well, you would be talking to her, and you’d want to kiss her. You’d just watch her mouth.

“You like the rain?” She was incredulous.

“I like the rain.”

There were gray clouds knotting overhead as we settled the picnic blanket down and opened the mustard. We watched them hulk above us, her eyes behind glittery gold oversized beach sunglasses and a lopsided scowl, me with a satisfied comfort. Sometimes I thought the sun and I were enemies. I always felt better when he couldn’t see me. I still do. It isn’t rational, and it makes me a killjoy for all those fun things people like to do in the summer—boating, tanning, biking, hiking, running. I never could explain this to her.

“I’m sorry. I think the sun and I are at war.”

“You what?” Increduulous.

These details, I think lost on the general male population, make all the difference. Sometimes I’m asked what makes my perfect woman. And that is a question you just can’t answer. It’s the only mysterious thing a man has, the answer to that question. Revealing it can end the dance before it’s begun.

Tonight she was a brunette in pale yellow flip-flops. A small, brown woven number for the purse, and little jewelry. In fact, what there was impressed: a single matching yellow bracelet. Blue jeans and white top, crouched at the middle shelf.

“Can I help you?”

She didn’t even look up. “Just looking, thanks.”

“You’re looking pretty hard.”

Laugh. “Well, I’m looking for Tolstoy.”
“You’ve found him.” I pointed a shelf over, same row.

Tolstoy. We talked about Tolstoy for almost fifteen minutes. It doesn’t get better than that.

So we’re going out Saturday. Her name isn’t Daphne. It’s Susan. And it’s not the recurring dream. But if you are what you read, I could read a girl that reads Tolstoy.
Mary Hedengren

Fara's Baptism

d this is my first burial and second
birth and another death awaits me when it comes
let it come like a plunge of cold water
resurrection in a rush of a wave
brushing dark hair from off my face
past my ears to my neck clinging
in cumulous cloud swirls when I stand
gasping in the fluorescent presence
of a roomful of arm-crossed
smiling saints.
SOMETHING MINE

I met him first; I pressed my fingers against his lips before she even knew his name.

Over a chessboard with two of our friends around us—their names and faces are now faded yellow in my mind—I reached over and tested them, this soft bit of skin between my fingers.

It wasn’t for too long, or altogether welcomed for that matter, and I don’t know why he let me, but when my hand came back I checked it for traces of him.

TRACES

Margot was a nun once, but there isn’t anything left of that anymore.

Her husband is long like a lecture and thin...
like Bible pages. He tried to tell me—but his toothless accent was too thick so I had to hear it from someone else—that he was an Argentinean soccer player once. He stood around as I dove headfirst into knees and shins belonging to boys with worn-out tennis shoes trying to score against my team. My arms wrapped around the ball like desperate lovers, and worn-out tennis shoes raced back into midfield.

Her husband, whose name escapes me now like so many other soccer balls did then (even desperate lovers often miss each other), held his hands behind his back and mumbled unintelligibly as passes were missed and kicks miscalculated. Every day, behind my goal in the tall grass, there he stood with nothing but jumbled words. He
never played and never talked to anyone in particular, but day after day there he stood, tall grass up to his knees, on the grounds of the school his wife founded, while we won and lost, lost and won, and sometimes hardly even played at all.

Margot’s once soccer-playing and now soccer-watching husband is still standing there for all I know. Mumbling under his breath, three countries away from his own, for reasons I’m only left to imagine.

FOR LOVE

Lili is dead—dead as a drowned hamster.

Which is what he is.

My older sister Paula killed him—named him, too, in case you are wondering about that. Once, long ago, he was a young, healthy hamster running around with his oversized hamster testicles (as hamsters tend to have), up and down happily (as hamsters seem to do). But with time, age or some mysterious sort of disease overcame him. He started hissing at us from his cage, with green patchy fur, biting anything that came too close, or at least trying to with his now twitchy reflexes. We, fiancé and sister, tried to get Paula to let us take
him to the vet—"If nothing else they can put him down painlessly." She wouldn't listen. Not to me, not to him, not to anyone.

She held him in a water-filled plastic bag, "until his little feet stopped kicking," she said. I never saw him dead; she wouldn't let anyone see him, wouldn't let anyone else put a finger on him, "not like that," she said.

She loved him too much for that, I think.

Too Much

The mid-eighties found me in Colombia, and Colombia found herself in a fit of extravagance: fur coats in ninety-degree weather and gold chains on sticky chest hair. These were the days when little boys wanted to grow up to be sicarios. I went to school with them and I watched their dreams on TV, flying through the street like wasps, bzzzz, on their motorcycles, bzzzz, one driving, bzzzz, and another riding. Through cars, through taxis, through wet streets with a gun and a prayer, "Virgen María dame puntería"—Virgin Mary give me aim. The driver would grip the handle tightly and pull it back like an eyelid. Speeding between cars—rabid dogs with the memory of rabbit on their fangs—until they reached the
right window, and then the wasp stung, the dog bit, Bam!, and buzzz again, they were gone.

With someone's love, for someone's love.

"Millón por cabeza." A million for every dead cop. You can do so much with a million, too much even. But they have to be "muertitos muertitos"—dead dead, and sometimes a bullet is not enough, so the wasp stings harder and the explosion follows.

Watch the documentaries, read the books—you'll find it anywhere. Among the first things they always bought were big-screen TVs for their moms.

**Gifts**

Henry was the best teacher I ever had, the only man who ever got me to understand chemistry. I actually answered questions, raised my hand and enjoyed the miserable science. "Of course water boils at a lesser temperature in Bogotá," I exclaimed one day in mid-lesson. "We're at a higher altitude here!"

Makes perfect sense now.

I don't think he is teaching anymore, at least not at my school. He's the type of man who makes the same mistake twice. Different girl this time, though.
Last I heard they were still dating—is that what you call it? I heard he met her parents, and I wonder what they said. I never saw anything “inappropriate”—is that what you call it? Only ice cream: he bought her some once; he offered to buy me some too. I still like ice-cream; chemistry, not so much.

**YOU BREAK IT, YOU BUY IT**

“If I should die, think only this of me,” wrote the poet Rupert Brooke, “that there’s some corner of a foreign field that is for ever England,” though in actuality he saw very little combat before dying of blood poisoning.

It feels a bit like cheating (doesn’t it?) to make that valiant claim before the battle, and then have the fortune of dying before reality catches up with you. And the whole thought is preposterous, like a flag on a beach claiming an entire continent. Or a pair of lips an entire human being.

All the same, I don’t think people are like foreign fields. (Sometimes I wish they were.)

**CLAIMS**

She ripped out every wire hanger from the closet, and then the rest of the closets suffered the same fate. With hangers in hand and ready ammunition on the linen, she sat alone in the dark,
waiting for him to come home, gripping her letter, squeezing it like a lemon, like rosary beads, alone, for hours waiting for him to come back to their bedroom.

She never told me how or when he came home, so I’m always left to imagine his footsteps. I wonder if he noticed his leather suitcase, open and with one less love letter inside; I wonder if he felt her lungs drink up the air like a shot of aguardiente when he walked into that darkened bedroom.

My grandmother tightened her fist as she related this part, as she told me of how she took the first hanger and with the whistling of thin wire came down upon him until it was bent around and inside out, like a dried limb. He just stood there, elbows up, hands like lids over his sockets. Took the beating and kept quiet like no Colombian man ever does—he could have reached out and with the back of his military hand sent her down like an injured bird. He could have beaten her, could have kept on with his affair, but instead he just stood there, quietly covering his pilot eyes, quietly gripping his career as she clawed at their marriage.

My grandmother cries a lot these days. If the pudding is not good, if the maid is late, if the pin falls, if the wind blows. I still try to take her se-
riously, sometimes at least. She cried that day too, and words came out all soggy from her wrinkled lips—"I told him I hoped he’d fall, right out of the sky"—and her eyes filled up with tears too young for her face. "I held up the letters and with two fingers behind the pages, I aimed for his eyes."

Loved him enough to want to do worse than death, to take away his wings.

**NOT ENOUGH**

Worst question I’ve ever been asked: “What type of kiss?”

Though the answer might have been worse: "Not the right one."

**ENOUGH**

I was alone at home when I watched the most interesting documentary: how to get away with the perfect murder, or how to dispose of bodies . . . something.

The best way, apparently, is to put the whole cursed thing into a vat of acid and then there won’t be a single trace left. Poof, gone! Unfortunately it is very complicated—not to mention suspicious—to buy the amounts of acid needed for this method. Fortunately we have other very corrosive chemicals at our disposal in the convenience of our own homes—usually already pur-
chased in massive amounts—that can replicate the effect almost exactly.

The answer to the question in your mind?
Laundry detergent.

We may be about 75 percent water, but in essence human beings are basically giant stains. Or in more accurate terms, we are enormous walking bags of proteins and fats, which are precisely the hard-to-get-out stains that most detergents claim to be designed to eliminate.

As long as you are thinking about what is convenient and not suspicious, then you might as well stay away from purchasing vats, enormous containers, or industrial-size buckets. So instead what you do is fill up your tub and pour in the Tide! Soak for three to four weeks and you will be left with easy to manage (cut, break, crush, or smash), clean white bones. Though by the end the tub will have more than a faded ring, and the room will be forever permeated with the greasy stench of decomposition.

(I watched this enraptured; murder should not be this simple. And it is so simple! It almost—
stress almost—makes me want to kill someone just to try it.)

Apart from that murderous notion, only one other thought was left clean, white, and smooth in my mind: I want someone to love me enough to lend me their tub for three to four weeks.

**WHAT GOD GIVES**

A thought came to me once. I said it out loud as if it made sense, and even now it gives me pleasure to think it, though I am far removed from its meaning and further still from the person I was when it came: “God gave men broad shoulders because they couldn’t have wombs.”

**WHAT PARENTS GIVE**

I don’t really know how my parents met, but I remember the first time I asked. I remember where I was, too—Cartagena, the heroic city of Spanish inquisitions and bloody small-pox corpses flung over stone walls.

But I don’t remember the city for the fortresses or the sea; I remember it because it was there that my parents first told me the story that has now mutated into a voracious monster that devours all conversation. I remember it because
it was there that I first heard the word *burundanga*, which I now know to mean an indigenous form of roofie. My dad used it on my mother, she said, when he kidnapped her from her castle and took her away from her royal heritage and privilege. My dad claims it was not *burundanga* he used, but money, to buy her off the slave trade and remove the stick from her mouth—“the one they wisely placed there to keep her sharp, vicious tongue in check.”

I’m not that interested in the real story.
Driving away from the Calgary 7-Eleven where I spent an entire seven minutes filling my blue Buick with gasoline, I imagined that my exit went unnoticed but (let’s face it) because of the generous smile I give the cashier and countless glimpses of my eyes in the rear-view, the minute I drive away, a million people to my back, I feel understandably quite handsome and believe there must be at least a dozen families who have to stop buttering their toast because they feel such an indescribable lack of blonde hair in my general direction, and are wondering who just left so fast and so in the middle of breakfast.
There it goes, that sick feeling in my stomach. The hair swarming all over my face, the heightened pulse and the realization that that was just a fragment. And I blink, and then begin. Truthfully I don't care about BMWs or lonely sunsets, I don't even care about the hair that is still covering my face. Hiding, leaving the pulse and thumping to the traffic and sliding and jumbling of cars, in my own universe, where I exist, you see. You don't? Ok good, I'll talk about carpet instead.

He said he wanted it shaggy brown, like the seventies or something. Something every guitar-playing hippy wanted. Long—underestimating the accumulation of dirt possible. The carpet moved back and forth in my open ears and told me stories of vacuuming with two kids in my mother arms.
Back and forth, cleaning out all that dirt, covering it up with rugs and his guitar and spilled mugs for a lying mouth—not clutter on a desk.

Sleek brown porcelain circling upwards to my dusty pencils. I got him a mug. Yeah, that’s right, I studied abroad and put down five pounds on something that breaks. Its soft, tan color lingers to a distinguished brown, the type of thing I could see covered in peppermint tea. He wanted one with the Beatles. I wanted him to be a man, so I bought the tan mug with the brown rim. The kind that a child couldn’t wrap their hands around, and that if put on the top shelf would have to come down gently and with a serious mind. He would sip that mug every morning, and he would be my man, the soft brown protector and the safe cradle
to my porcelain.

So he left me. Doesn’t make sense, right? Yeah, an email sent to say goodbye doesn’t. It wouldn’t be human to say that it didn’t matter and that all I wanted to do was lie upside down and move home to the hills of sanity.

Los Angeles makes sense. It just does. The traffic makes sense. It jumbles and weaves but eventually you know you are going somewhere and everyone else is too. You even know why everyone else is going at it the same, because that is when work ends. Work, I guess like making phone calls and talking in person. And leaving work makes sense.

I was left, which is worse than broken. Broken at least has pieces, left is one social scene of peeking smirks and quick eyes. Los Angeles has a lot of fakes. I mean, a lot of people just walk down the street and think they are broken. They want to be broken because their clothes are pieces, Rembrandts that smell like cocaine. Torn from the something other than the truth, because you know they bought them that way. Even their expressions pull from the gravity they didn’t discover. You know, wherever I am, I think about Andrew. And he wasn’t even the one I bought the bloody mug for. He’s not from Los Angeles; he’s too real and broken.
I got the hippy’s email in Spain. A place with breezes of gelato, white linen pants, ruffles in a flag—and me—in a dry bathtub, holding on to slippery porcelain, and praying to breathe. And I stayed there, all day, all night, with no further illusions of safe hands lifting a mug for adults.

Ok, maybe I do care about BMWs, but who doesn’t really? I mean, they are safe and reliable and German. That was probably the problem. He wasn’t German. Einstein didn’t lie. I’m pretty sure Hitler did though. So maybe relation to Germany wasn’t the kicker, or in this case the breaker.

I stayed there in that bathtub overseas and in bedrooms and white walls and mountains majesty. And I don’t know why I started with this. Maybe it’s because I’m scared. So I died. Fair enough to say. And then—the snow fell and the wind blew and the porcelain became shallow, shallow enough for me to slip out of and into. A lifeless ordinary, is that the phrase they use?

So you see everything became paint; probably something like oils, something that slides, or glides, on ice. Something that spun so fast it didn’t know what it was doing. Ok so that spinner, that’s me, and this story—it has to do with Andrew, ok? I said it didn’t, but I’m from Los Angeles so that makes me a liar (and the spinning was my heart).
So it spun and, well, I guess he slowed it down didn’t he? And cradled it softly back to me, peace. That’s when I loved him, for being soft and sailing through my breeze.

The kind of breeze that wrinkles your hands because you feel it slipping up your fingertips chasing freckles from too many lonely sunsets that you pretend not to care about. That was a fragment.

So I’m alive, that’s fair enough to say. I imagine some pumpkin turned to carriage and some mice into horses. He traveled and listened and . . . ok, I’ll stop.

And now I’m here, in a hotel room in Boston, wondering how you know, when they sip so carefully and give you that glance, that it’s going to be another goodbye. And you move, and you chase, and you throw away that vacuum because this hotel has short carpet and vacancy for thick tongues that aren’t broken.

And you know what else makes sense? Well, I’ll leave that to you, because I really don’t.
Skoticus

( ) [ ] [ ]

Sometimes
I wish that I
were thin. But
instead of doing
exercises I sit here
eating ice cream and writing
poetry growing ponderous and fat.
I inherited many physical attributes from my deceased mother: her smile, her cheekbones, her size 9 ½ feet, her hands, and most noticeably, her hips. People often told her that her hips were great for child-bearing. That proved true after four boys and four girls. I am the only girl fortunate enough to have inherited the childbearing hips. Though I have borne no children in my twenty-seven years, my hips have served a purpose.

I come with my own theme music. Take your pick. “When I hear this song, I think of you.” I have heard this said several times lately in reference to the recently released single by Will.i.am in which he asks the ladies, “Baby, where’d you get
your body from?” To which they each respond, “I got it from my mama,” (this line also being the song’s title). This and “Shake Your Money-Maker,” or “Miss New Booty,” or even “Baby Got Back” often inspire thoughts of my hips.

My younger brother, Jimmy, finds himself very amusing. Since his discovering the song “Honky Tonk Badonkadonk,” whenever we are walking together he will stop behind me and sing his favorite line in his best Trace Adkins impression, “I hate to see her go, but love to watch her leave!” Very funny, Jimmy.

II

I volunteered to deliver two plates of leftovers to the night guards at the front gate. It was
warm and sticky out, as most of the nights were in Mozambique. I approached the gate with my two plates. “Oi guardas!” I shouted. Dinis came out of the dark, took the plates, but did not turn to go back to the gate. Instead, he took a long ogle from my toes slowly up to my eyes with a look that suggested he had something to say, and so I waited—I shouldn’t have. The thick atmosphere may or may not have influenced Dinis to say what he did. The basics of the one-sided conversation were that he’d never been attracted to a white girl before he saw me, and regardless of whether or not I had a boyfriend, he wanted to know if I had ever considered having an “intimate” Mozambican friend. My response was a nervous giggle, and his closing remark was, “Tens tudo que eu preciso utilizar numa mulher,” with a penetrating look at my hips. Loosely translated, I have everything he needs to utilize in a woman! I never delivered leftovers again.

III

I asked my grandma if she remembered any hip-related incidents from my mother’s childhood. She quickly responded, “Well, she was swinging ‘em before she was two.” Apparently my mother had been given a doll and buggy to play with. She loved to push the buggy up and
down the driveway, all the while swinging her hips back and forth. Grandma said, “If music played, Lynne’s hips were a-swingin’ in perfect rhythm.” Grandma used to tease her that the reason her hips were so large was because she had been exercising them for so long.

IV

My hip was hit by a car once. The sidewalks are abnormally small in Portugal and, thanks to the local cuisine, my hips were wider than they ought to have been. I was on an eastward hip-swing toward the street just as a BMW passed. The left-side-view mirror hit my right hip so hard that I had a bruise for three weeks. My sisters love that story. Margie said, “Only you, Jackie! That could only happen to you!”

V

I was at a mall in Nashville, Tennessee, with my friend Shara. We were walking aimlessly around the place when we passed a group of gangstas complete with oversized gold chains, pointlessly large t-shirts, and pants down to their knees. At my approach they stopped and stared. I was a little uncomfortable and I glanced back
over my shoulder to see if they were still staring as I walked away. They certainly were. The entire group did a full one-eighty to watch my retreat. One of them yelled, “Shake it! Shake it! Shake it!” Oh, dear.

VI

There was a permanent path in the grass around my grandparent’s yard from my mother’s jogging. At sixteen she had hoped to trim down her hips and lose some weight. Her star quarterback teenage brother volunteered to be her trainer and decided to use some of the same techniques he used: several shoulder-weighted knee-bends and hours of jogging a day. My uncle, Doug, recalled, “After all was said and done, she had these huge, masculine muscles and she was so toned in her legs.” She was less than pleased with the outcome, her new muscle weighing more than fat and her muscular, toned legs actually looking larger than when she began. Doug never let her live it down.

VII

My family and I were seated in one of the long pews of the chapel. (There are now twelve of us, adding my stepmother and two more boys.) I
was at one end of the bench and my twelve-year-old sister, Jeralyn, was at the other. I looked over toward my family members and I noticed that they were passing a piece of paper down the row. One by one they would get the paper, look it over, fruitlessly attempt to control their outbursts of laughter, and then pass it on. It finally reached me and I discovered that Jeralyn had drawn a picture of me and shared it. My sister is a talented artist, and in the drawing I had a small head, small shoulders, a small waist and small feet. My hips, on the other hand, spanned the entire eleven inches of the page. On top of my hips was laid out a luxurious feast complete with ornate goblets, champagne flutes, a turkey with stuffing, and several flavors of pudding.

**VIII**

I went to a night club in Machava with some of the locals. I hadn’t been there long when a Mozambican soap star singled me out. He danced five straight dances with me and then asked to speak to me outside. I was polite and accepted the invitation to go talk. He then delivered a drawn out and dramatic monologue about how it was love at first sight, how his mother and grandmother would never approve of his “being in love
with” a white girl and there was even a lengthy section about race relations in Mozambique. All the while people were passing us on their way to the dance floor and telling him how much they enjoy his work on Almas de Paixão (Souls of Passion). Suddenly he placed his hands on both of my hip bones, uncomfortably low, pretty much grabbing my butt as well, and said, “We African men like our women just like this,” pulling me toward him. He went in for a kiss but I escaped and joined my friends back on the dance floor. He continued his advances throughout the evening and wanted to take me back outside to continue our love scene, but I didn’t fall for that again.

IX
My mother was performing in Kimberly, South Africa with BYU’s Sounds of Freedom, now known as the Young Ambassadors. For the first number the girls wore slacks. The second number meant running offstage for a quick change into a knee-length skirt and back on again. Mom wore a body-shaper from high waist to mid-calf while in her slacks to trim down her hips. When she ran off stage to change into her skirt, she forgot to remove the body-shaper when she removed her slacks. She ran back on stage and someone snapped a picture
of her looking out of place, being the only one wearing bright white, silky bloomers. When she realized her mistake, she danced her way back-stage, ripped them off, and danced back on without missing a beat. It was her most embarrassing moment and the photographer had it made into an eight-by-ten. She hated that picture. I feel your pain, Mom.

X

I was crossing Yamhill Street, just in front of the Pioneer Courthouse Square mall in downtown Portland. A man dressed in head-to-toe Trailblazer paraphernalia looked me up and down, held up an open palm and said, “All right! High five for big hips. Nice and full.” I paused for a split second and thought, “I got it from my mama.” I gave him the high five.
Poor Napoleon. I imagine him sitting under a tent on a field in Belgium, lugubriously stroking his sun-burned widow's peak, picking, perhaps, at a pair of Corsican sausages from a lunch his mother sent, quietly prognosticating fifty thousand deaths. No one has ever been so alone.

Included, of course, in this lunch were three truffles *a la cendre* and a note that said, "I love you. Please come right home after the war."

In the camp, horses' hind quarters shone like a woman's clean hair. At night, the moonlight leaks onto tables full of maps, papers full of plans, and white hands scrubbing cannons.

Considering his red-cheeked Josephine, that scratchy cot in Belgium is not where I'd have been. War must be unfathomable in itchy socks!

That one summer day when I marched drowsily up and down the lawn, waiting for the onion slices to come off the barbeque, tossing
Sean a can of cold cream soda, I imagined that these imaginings would somehow keep the wide net of human activity miraculously untangled and nick-free. But it was Saturday, so we just sat there. In our lawn chairs. Belching out the taste of burnt meat. We waited for the sun to go down and the moon to come up, and when the crickets came out, we went in.

Sean says life is a rabble of butterflies blindly slapping each other on their way to Mexico year after miraculous-accidental year. Which is exactly what Napoleon thinks it is not, pouring over his maps, making his plans, abandoning Moscow. And I have to laugh because of course Sean wins. Of course this isn’t our last barbeque and of course it is.
INTERVIEWS
Inscape Staff and Featured Authors

Every Friday afternoon in the Harold B. Lee Library, writers from all over the country come and share their work with BYU students. The following is a collection of writerly wisdom and insight shared by the authors with the editors of Inscape.

Where the Muse Hides

JOHN BENNION

[Inspiration comes] from my head. I write mostly about introspective or meditative people, like me. I watch plays and read books and get ideas from them.

MELANIE RAE THON

I am inspired by so many things art, dance, music, swallows, clouds, wolves, mountains, my
brother washing the wounds on my father’s feet, ants carrying pink petals. The whole world offers itself to us; the sources of inspiration are endless.

[Research] is an essential part of the process. I never know what I’ll discover. . . . I can’t write about a child with cancer unless I learn about his suffering, the progression of the disease, the side effects of chemo and radiation. I can’t render his sister’s grief unless I explore what it would mean to give someone I love my own marrow—and then watch him die, and believe I had failed. . . . For me, research is a path, a way to deepen compassion and awaken the senses. My hope is that this awareness will change the way I live in the world.

Cassie Keller Cole

Inspiration is difficult to quantify, if it is even possible. To me the idea of “more” inspiration is how much a person is willing to stretch him/herself. Inspiration is a matter of being aware, curious, interested, and eager to learn. Inspiration, I find, is received from practice. If I hadn’t been a writer while I was single, I doubt I would have transformed into a writer when I married [my husband].

Brian Doyle

This is one of the great lessons of life, I think, ’cause whatever you think you’re sure of,
you’re wrong. You’re young, but when you get older you realize that all the things that you were absolutely sure of were wrong—you’re an idiot. You know, be open. And the essay is open to all kinds of oddness. Like, I wrote a book about a year in a vineyard and I got really absorbed by the animals. It all began with one question. I asked this one guy, “Tell me about the natural history of the vineyard.” Animals and birds and plants and insects and funguses and all. Off he goes. So I got really absorbed by it. There’s a whole chunk of the book devoted to the animals.

I asked a guy who was about to die, “What mattered in your life?” And he began to answer me in the most subtle and amazing ways: folding laundry hot from the dryer, cobblers and tailors, the way horses smelled in spring, postcards on which people have written so much that they can barely squeeze in the signature. The tiniest things. This ends up just being a list, but to me it’s an essay.

Genre Appeal

Doug Thayer

I think writing a short story or fiction is much more challenging for me than memoir. It just flowed. I wrote that [Hooligan] in six months.
There’s no plot; there’s a tone. But that’s automatic. I happened to be kind of ironic, that wasn’t hard. Point of view is a little different because it’s a memoir of a group of boys. So its narrative voice is often first person plural rather than first person singular. And I was very interested in the whole idea of time and place.

Cassie Keller Cole

Until recently, I have always considered myself a poet. Now I’m satisfied being a writer.

I have shelves of journals and notebooks, shelves of loose leaf paper and someday my house will probably burn because of their brittle sentimentality—but I keep them because they remind me to continue writing. My first journal was dictated to my mom because I didn’t know the alphabet completely. My parents have scraps of my “stories” that are just scribbles. Writing has always been an essential part of me; it is part of being alive for me, like worship, hope, water, prayer.

Scott Hatch

I cross-pollinate from a lot of genres. Of course, I think creative nonfiction, to me, is essential to the poem because of the way it captures dramatic art, which you also get in fiction, but also it captures the immediate personal experience
in ways very similar to the way the lyrical poem and the narrative poem captures those things. So a lot of what I steal from is fiction and creative nonfiction.

**Brian Doyle**

A lot of what you’re digging into now, especially as editors, is “what’s the form?” Who cares? The one distinction that you make is “is it true or not?”

And you can play with truth.

Often, an essay is improved by leaving things out. Age teaches you nothing, but experience teaches you sometimes what not to write. A great essay sometimes has holes in it for the reader to jump across—one of the beauties of the mosaic essay. One of the pieces in *Inscape* was a mosaic essay. Birth: blah, blah, blah, Cherries: blah, blah, blah. You know what I mean? But that kind of thing is fun because how many of those pieces fit together? Ideally, if it’s really well done, then the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. It has an extra resonance. Journalism doesn’t have that, but essays do.

**Kimberly Heuston**

Katherine Paterson said once that she writes historical fiction because it helps establish the plot-line, and I would have to agree. I like hav-
ing pre-existing characters, settings, and events to help me imagine my way into another way of being. And I think the ridiculous amount of research that I do pays off in another way, as well. I hope that the problems that my characters face and the strategies they use to solve them are, by and large, appropriate to the time and place in which they find themselves.

The Writing Process

Cassie Keller Cole

Much of the “process” is the motion of the pen on the page, the words on the screen, the daily commitment to writing. Once I fill a notebook I search through it to see if there is anything worth expanding, and if there are strands of sentences or images, I play around with them until they become meaningful or are worn out. Often I have an idea of what I want to write, I research, clarify in my mind, write. Then I go back and back to edit. I read it out loud about eight hundred times. Then I edit again.

John Bennion

Mostly the change in my novel was cutting it back. I had to cut it by 40 percent after it was accepted.
Kimberly Heuston

I was unpacking some boxes in the garage after a move and came across an old notebook and sat down and wrote a poem, the burden of which was that I thought I had a good poem in me somewhere, but it showed absolutely no signs of emerging anytime soon. It was another ten years before I began to write seriously. It would be surprising if my books did not in some way reflect the fact that their author has lived a rich—or at least complicated—life. . . . Every artist has to serve an apprenticeship of one kind or another. It just so happened that my junk miles were spent editing other people’s writing instead of my own.

Christine Allen-Yazzie

The best way to learn to write is to read a lot and to read broadly. When you read, you pick up a lot of information unconsciously; you learn about pacing, narrative possibilities, different kinds of voices.

Revise your work, but don’t overpolish: the world has rough edges and imperfections, and the readers need to experience that to feel convinced of the story.
Poets on Poetry

Daniel Rzicznek

Never call yourself a poet. Let someone else label you that. Because otherwise it’s like, “I will be a poet!” It’s a little pretentious and you gotta earn the name.

To get poetry back to the masses and back to students and sort of beyond, we have to demystify this whole idea that you need a degree to understand contemporary poetry. It’s just as enjoyable as a piece of art hanging on a wall or a short story you’ve read or an essayist you appreciate. I think it’s more of a mindset and demystifying the whole poetry as an academic pursuit. And really it’s never been like that for me. I did a Masters to study with a specific person and the Masters doesn’t entitle me anything. It doesn’t mean I know more about poetry than anyone, than either of you here or any random person on the street.

Scott Hatch

Poetry is the lyrical language in which narrative shape is executed.

Mary Hedengren

It’s easier to admit that you go to Star Trek conventions than let average people know you
write poetry—because there is a lot of bad poetry out there. It’s so “easy” to write poetry that everyone does it and so “difficult” to read that no one does that. I, too, you know, used to slog through submissions at Inscape. There is no incentive to write poetry. You don’t get boys doing it (although some boys claim they can get girls with poetry); you don’t make money with it; it doesn’t make you popular—even if you’re top of your game there will probably be only a handful of people who care about what you’re writing and many of them with be interested only because, frankly, they wish they were at the top instead of you. I don’t know this because I’m at the top—I know this because I’ve felt this way about those up there.

So why do I do it? I like words and I like images and I like poetry. I like the neat little bundles that I can tie things all up in and those little bundles are so portable. I can carry a poem around in my head a lot easier than a personal essay or a novel. Sometimes those ideas end up back in essays or short stories, but usually they fit best in the highly concentrated form of a poem. In the end, that’s why I write poetry: it’s a surprisingly efficient way to figure out the world.

Dixie Partridge

I seldom make a conscious effort to bring religious beliefs into my poetry... I believe spiri-
tual things are a natural part of life, and I think that they are strongly at the root of some of my writing. Subtlety in such things has worked more effectively for me.

Words of Advice

JOHN BENNION

Write a certain number of hours a day and read everything in your genre. Plenty of people think of themselves as writers but they don’t have regular habits of writing and reading.

BRIAN DOYLE

You just start. That’s the thing I really want to say, to young people especially. Never sit down to write an essay. Never. Never sit down to write literature. Never sit down being sure of what you’re writing, just sit down to tell a story. Sit down and start. Ninety-nine percent of it is getting your butt in the chair, and then you just sort of play. See what happens. Write it down and then, you know, if one thing leads to another, maybe there’s an essay growing there. Or, if it’s short . . . sometimes it just is what it is. It’s a little thing; it’s a proem.

CHRISTINE ALLEN-YAZZIE

Good writing is all about empathy. . . . [François Camoin] taught me that my artistic choices
didn’t have to revolve around plot. He helped me reverse a bad habit toward sentimentality, symbolism, and psychoanalysis in fiction—all of which mean to simplify and categorize people.

**DOUG THAYER**

The students in high school have read poetry, fiction, and plays. They haven’t read essays, they don’t know how to read argument or exposition. And so I try to teach them a technique of how to read it. They just don’t know how to approach an essay. They don’t know how to look for repetition; they don’t know how to look for ideas, that is, for the controlling idea. They don’t know how to move up and down the ladder of abstraction. . . . They don’t know how to think inductively, I mean intentionally. They do it, but they don’t know what they’re doing. Writing is a skill. It’s something you learn how to do. I realize that people have what I call aptitude. I don’t believe much in talent. I’ve had too many “talented” students who aren’t worth much. They just aren’t willing to work hard. . . . Good writing takes a lot of hard work. I think that it means draft after draft after draft. I realize that it’s possible to sit down in one fell swoop and maybe write a good essay or maybe an acceptable short story, but you can’t do it over and over again.
MARY HEDENGREN

[I] recommend attending the reading series at the library and any chance you have to be exposed to new authors and new ideas. Go to devotional. Visit the International Cinema. Be involved. A university is more like an intellectual gym than a high school—it’s entirely up to you to take advantage of all of the resources that are available.

DOUG THAYER

I just want my reader to feel, to see, to hear the experience. A good short story is an experience; or a novel. . . . It’s just hard to describe things so that the reader feels them, sees them, hears them, touches them. You’ve got to stay way down on the ladder of abstraction, stay in a concrete sense.

DIXIE PARTRIDGE

Don’t leave your beliefs and your culture out of your writing, any more than you would leave out the landscapes and personal experiences from childhood onward. I’ve looked with interest at some of the great writing that has come out of the Jewish community, and the Catholic. That which is great from such writers includes a good deal of their culture and belief, but the writing
and presentation skills are what make it great, not the culture or beliefs by themselves. The skills, commitment, and developed, focused talent are what builds the fine literature out of the culture or background in which it is rooted.
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Jan. 11
Jan. 18
Jan. 25
Feb. 1
Feb. 8
Feb. 15
Feb. 22
Feb. 29
Mar. 7
Mar. 14
Mar. 21
Mar. 28

Class introduction
Dean Hughes
Linda Gregerson
Eric Eliason
Michael Sowder
Gail Carson Levine
Bruce Jorgensen
Billy Collins [reading to be in the
Joseph Smith Auditorium]
Todd Petersen
Paisley Rekdal
Graduate Students
Tribute to Leslie Norris
My initial reaction to this book was an extremely critical one. On the very first page, the death of a classmate is presented in a way that seems almost gratuitous, coming and going without explanation or any real connection to what comes before or after. Occasionally descriptions or ideas are repeated in the book almost word for word, giving the impression that you have read something before (because you have), and Thayer’s writing style first struck me as syntactically difficult. However, I soon found myself appreciating his style, and by the time I was halfway through I would have recommended the book without hesitation.

_Hooligan_ is written as a memoir of Thayer’s youth, growing up in Provo during the Depression and Second World War. As the novel develops, I
found that it was not just the author’s story, but that of a town, a time, and a way of life. The book has no real plot, roughly following the progression of years in Thayer’s life. Rather, it paints a wonderfully vivid portrait through detailed descriptions of everyday events, all presented from the perspective and with the practical understanding of a young boy. Along that same idea, I came to appreciate the fact that seemingly important life events, such as his parents’ divorce, were not dealt with on any deep or profound level. While tragedy does shape an individual, everyone has to live life from one day to the next, and for me that aspect made the writing come alive more than anything else. Having now read the book two times through, I feel as though I remember
Thayer's childhood better than my own.

Before first opening the book, my primary qualm was the responsibility that I felt Thayer assumed for himself by adding "A Mormon Boyhood" to the title of his book. To me, that indicates that something should be said from a Mormon perspective to make the fact worth mentioning. In that qualm I feel at least partially vindicated, as little in the book seems remarkable to a Mormon childhood. However, it seemed the book was not about saying something so much as sharing something, and in that I believe that Thayer could not have done a better job.
LANCE LARSEN'S
IN ALL THEIR AN

When you read this book (because I’m assuming at this point you will; you’ve gotten past the title, know it’s a book of poetry, and are still reading, after all), you will peek into spheres both cosmic and embarrassingly intimate. Larsen has obsessions that will probably possess you as well for a time: for example, he fixates on the idea of translation, taking it beyond linguistic conversion to apply to people, bodies that, together with nouns, “quiver to be translated.” He has a passion for strange animals and their remains, which feels at once like strange morbidity and sympathy. He casually and repeatedly applies words that you probably didn’t know existed or could be used the way he uses them (who knew that “to gentle” was a verb?); words that will stick as awkward recruits to
IMAL BRILLIANCE

Reviewed by Chris Straubhaar

your vocabulary, refusing to be forgotten by sheer virtue of their odd grace. “Planaria,” for example, will remain with you, perhaps haunting your dreams. His explorations with words do not, however, necessarily make him a meta-poet, and thus he frees himself of the vice that so many poets fall into: writing poetry about poetry which only poets will read, relate to, or care about. His work feels genuinely inclusive and universally approachable—beautiful enough that even those who don’t normally seek out poetry would find themselves drawn back for more.

Needless to say, I think this is a great book. From the first taloned talisman to the final haunting vineyard, he draws parallels between beautifully macabre images and vast mythologies, between
the mundane and the supernal. He pulls aside a curtain to a familiar yet alien space and, with a single word or with an entire poem, makes connections that shouldn’t make sense yet uncannily do and are all the more curious and charming for it. He applies a beautiful art of description, using unusual or unfit words and shifting them to fit until we readers begin to think using his language and logic.

He’s also not afraid to take us further into his personal life than might be comfortable for either party, and we get from this a sense of poetic honesty—that nothing is ignored and nothing is safe, that everything can be viewed with a poetic eye. This helps the reader take the oddities he introduces on faith and believe in the world he presents us, as well as accept his new viewpoints into the mundane.

In order to be completely honest, however, I must admit that there are some points at which his poeticism prods the edges of being vague or indecipherable. Some symbols or allusions are hard to understand, if there is even a deeper meaning to understand. These are poems that take some work and don’t yield all their secrets up immediately. This doesn’t have to be bad, though, and if you are willing to put in the effort to squeeze
more out of them, those secrets lie waiting. And there’s enough that’s readily comprehensible and compelling to be quite enjoyable and even entice you on to deeper readings.

Finally, they are simply beautiful poems. His language looks and sounds good, rolling along the page and down your tongue. His subjects are pleasantly varied, and he addresses several difficult areas with remarkable skill, managing to keep his religious poetry, for example, powerful but not trite. I felt that his poems earned the emotions they evoked. I was inspired, and while reading his poetry I felt the urge to resume the attempt to write poetry of my own. I believe this book will have a similarly inspiring or pleasing effect on any reader and thoroughly recommend it.
*The Miracle Life* of Edgar Mint begins when seven-year-old Edgar gets his head stuck under a mail truck’s rear tire. From there, things pretty much go downhill. With his single, drunk mother unreachable in California and his grandmother thrown into a mental institution, little Edgar is left to fend for himself. His life meanders slowly through different phases while a few things remain constant: his miraculous recoveries from various injuries, the inexplicable presence of the doctor who saved his life, and Edgar’s concern with finding the mailman who ran him over and assumed Edgar died in the accident.

As Edgar’s life progresses, each new location is a little more disturbing than the last, and you quickly realize that this is not going to end like a made-for-TV movie. Scenes of graphic violence
E OF EDGAR MINT

Reviewed by Janay E. Garrett

between school boys are so constant and terrifying that even after putting down the novel, you find yourself eyeing the people around you, waiting to see which one is going to jump you first. Freshman hazing has never looked so tame in comparison, and readers should be prepared for some graphic content.

What is surprising is that throughout the succession of tragic events there are moments of pure hilarity that make you laugh out loud then stop and wonder what kind of a person laughs at such tragedy. It's impossible to ignore the absurdity of Edgar's situations, and yet you find yourself hoping for redemption—hoping that in some way all of the horrible things that have happened will be smoothed out and Edgar will remain in your mind as the sweet, innocent miracle boy who
managed to overcome all obstacles with his dignity intact. If that’s what you’re looking for, then this novel isn’t for you.

What this novel does do spectacularly is hook the reader into the story without much of a driving plot and manage to pull things together in a way that is simultaneously surprising and satisfying, making you wonder why you didn’t see it coming. It’s exactly the kind of ending that makes readers finish the last paragraph and sigh out loud, “oh, that was good,” then wonder how halfway through they were ready to put the book back on the shelf.

One of the more amusing aspects of the novel is the narrator’s ability to personalize an event by switching between first and third person, frequently referring to himself as “little Edgar” and “poor Edgar.” What’s so endearing is the way this makes you feel like you’re sitting in a room with grown-up Edgar, reminiscing about the old days and sipping lemonade as you rock together in your chairs.

It’s not a novel for the faint of heart. Emotionally it pulls you in directions that you may never have contemplated before; it will thrill you and disgust you at the same time. Be prepared to hate it. But keep reading till you don’t—it’s worth it.
CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

HOLLY BAKER
Holly is from West Lafayette, Indiana, and she’s double majoring in English language and linguistics. She’s also minoring in editing. She will graduate this coming April. She has been a closet writer since the third grade and this is her first publication.

ASHLEY MAE CHRISTENSEN
Ashley Mae Christensen is from Provo, Utah. She is getting a BFA in painting and drawing, and a minor in English. She served a mission in Uruguay. She is currently the co-director of a local not-for-profit contemporary gallery in Provo, Gallery One Ten. It is a space which promotes symbiotic community involvement in the arts, including poetry readings, lectures, local markets and workshops, urban art projects, etc. She doesn’t yet know what she plans on doing with her life, but something good. She is currently working on a project interviewing poets from Central America. She plans on grad school and hopefully making the world a better place.

JACKIE DONKIN
Jackie Donkin is from Portland, Oregon. She comes from a family of ten kids, six boys and four girls, and is the oldest girl. She has her associate’s in vocal performance and is about to graduate with a BA in English and a minor in Portuguese. She served a mission in Porto, Portugal, and studied abroad in Brazil and Mozambique.
Lia Farnsworth
Lia Kim Farnsworth is from Salt Lake City, Utah. She is double majoring in Physiology and Developmental Biology and Visual Arts: Painting/Drawing. She got into art for the first time last year when she decided against medical school and chose to dive into something entirely new and different instead. She hopes to attend graduate school, probably in art, and to remain close to the art industry afterwards.

Lina Maria Ferreira Cabeza-Vanegas
Lina is short, Colombian, and madly in love with her editor. She has three New Year’s resolutions: kill a man, hide the body, learn not to write incriminating bios. Also, she has one extra bone in her right foot, is lacking a ligament in her left knee, and has suffered approximately sixteen concussions in the last five years.

Hollis R. Hunt
Hollis R. Hunt was born in Salt Lake City, Utah. He grew up in Alaska and Utah, worked on a cattle ranch for several years as a teenager, and served a Lao- and Khmer-speaking mission in Fresno, California, for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Following his mission, he graduated from BYU with a BA in Asian Studies and a minor in physics. After working several years as a court interpreter, he attended law school at BYU and received his JD. He now works as an attorney in the State of Utah and is pursuing a PhD in Clinical Psychology and a graduate minor in music (vocal performance) at BYU. He is a past winner of the graduate division of the Hart-Larson Poetry Contest (2006).
KEVIN HAWKINS

Kevin Hawkins was born and raised. This happened in Las Vegas, Nevada, and he has spent the last six years of his life trying to graduate from BYU. He will soon complete a degree in English, after which he will pursue a master’s in architecture from the University of Texas, or any school that will accept him. This is his first published piece of fiction.

MARY HEDENGREN

Mary Hedengren is a senior from Provo, Utah. Her works have appeared in The Deseret News, Inscaple, The Collegiate Post, Segullah, and The Restored Gospel and Applied Christianity. She has received Mayhew prizes twice for her poetry. She welcomes comments to her poetry at mary.hedengren@gmail.com.

MICHAEL LAVERS

Michael Lavers is from Edmonton Alberta, Canada, and is the winner of the 2007 Vera Hinckley Mayhew Poetry Contest at BYU. Michael is pursuing a double major in English and Russian, and after graduation plans to pursue an MFA degree in creative writing. His first published poem is forthcoming in Tar River Poetry.

MINDY LUKENS

Mindy Lukens graduated from BYU in English and editing and is from a suburb of Los Angeles, California. The idea that someone could write a child’s book consisting of five words and become successful has been her driving force in believing she is capable of pursuing a career in writing.
Since that realization hit, she has been writing nonstop and hoping others will understand it.

**SEAN JOHNSON**

Sean Johnson, a senior from Portland, Oregon, has published his poems and prose in the *American River Review* and *Inscape*. An English major, he is the recipient of an Academy of American Poets College Prize, a few Mayhew prizes, and a grant from the Office of Research and Creative Activities. He is currently writing an honors thesis that explores Emily Dickinson's influence on four contemporary poets, including John Ashbery and Mark Strand.

**MARIA MERGER**

Maria was raised in the friendly, accent-free town of Lawrenceville, Georgia. She started to get involved in art when she was twelve, after having obtained a limited edition of Adobe Photoshop. She continued to pursue art as a hobby for the next six years, until she realized that she really loved art (and being an artist) and decided to make the rest of her worldly years revolve around its colorful splendidness. Currently, Maria is in the arduous process of becoming an illustration major at BYU. That means that when she graduates, she is going to be one of the people who create the pretty drawings and paintings that decorate novels, posters, children's books, medical books, text books, bedrooms, and so on and so forth. Before she kicks the bucket, Maria hopes to write and illustrate her own stories, both for children and for adults. Maria currently resides in student housing with her three roommates and their pet, Joel.
JAMES PHILLIPS
James Phillips lives in Orem with his wife and three children and is a graduate student in mass communications. He has lived in Washington, Arizona, Oregon, Montana, New York, Hawaii and Japan (where he served a mission). He eventually hopes to teach, but what and where and whom he cannot say. His previous publications are limited to a weekly humor column in a local newspaper while a high school senior, and a co-authored article to be published this winter in the *Newspaper Research Journal*. This is his first published poem. It was written one day while he was working as a flower delivery driver.

CHRIS PURDIE
Chris Purdie is a Utah native who has been studying and producing art, both as a musician and a visual artist, all of his life. Purdie began his formal art education at Utah Valley State College where he received his associate's degree. He is currently attending Brigham Young University to obtain his BFA. After graduate school Chris plans to establish a professional studio practice and teach art at the university level. Purdie's work demonstrates his ongoing exploration of materials, techniques, and concepts. His artwork has been featured in a variety of group and solo exhibitions.

SKOTICUS
Skoticus is a native of San Diego, California, though he has also lived in Northern California; Tucson, Arizona; and other parts of Southern California. He is a senior majoring in Leisure Services Management. His short story “The Sinking of the Mirandas” was published in the Winter 2007 issue of *Inscape*. 
SAM THAYN

Samuel Adrian Thayn was born and raised in American Fork. He has wanted to be a writer from his first days, filling notebooks with tales of time travel and dashing detectives. Since his return from the fall-leaf-framed East Coast, however, Sam has written only about love and heartbreak. He frequently dreams of sublime settings and colorful characters and forgets them on his way to the bathroom every morning. Nervous about poetry and self-conscious about prose, Sam hopes to write the next great American novel.

JOHNNA THOMPSON

Johnna Thompson enjoys writing about her family. "I Promised the Clouds a Wedding" is about her grandmother who lived through the Oklahoma Dust Bowl in the 1930s. This is Johnna's first time being published in *Inscape*, and it is also her first attempt at writing prose poetry.
SUBMISSION INFORMATION

INSCAPE is a student-run journal that publishes students’ creative writing. We welcome submissions in the first half of fall and winter semesters.

SUBMISSIONS MUST BE e-mailed as Word attachments to inscapebyu@gmail.com. In the body of the email please include the following information: author’s name, phone number, address, and e-mail address, as well as the title of the work and its genre (short fiction, poetry, nonfiction, drama).

ART SUBMISSIONS MUST be submitted on a CD or through e-mail, scanned at 300 DPI or higher, and saved as a TIFF image. Art submissions may include photography, paintings, drawings, digital art, etc.

AUTHORS/ARTISTS WILL be notified of the staff’s decision concerning their submission by the end of the semester.

EMAIL ALL QUESTIONS about guidelines to inscapebyu@gmail.com.