

Beside

The Point

Volume 3 Issue 2
September 2010



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Editorial

YOU ARE HOLDING in your hands a copy of the inaugural print edition of *Beside the Point*, the literary anthology produced in conjunction with the English Department of Camosun College. Initially conceived as a strictly online journal, the *Beside the Point* editorial staff made the decision to begin publishing a physical, tactile edition. Debuting a print publication in a digital world? You might find yourself asking, "Is that a wise choice?"

The changing complexion of the publishing industry has developed into a market where eBook readers are gaining a healthy share alongside increasingly anachronistic paper-based products. Doom and gloom prognosticators have already begun to wring their hands over the "impending" demise of William Caxton's creation.

Why then is this the perfect climate for *BtP* to enter the publishing fray? Simple. At *BtP* we not only love our fiction, non-fiction, poetry and drama, but we also love the aesthetic value of these media. Who among us has not been inclined to buy an unfamiliar book simply because of the colours and/or font on the spine? Or invested time and money into reading something because of an arresting photograph or a bold print on the cover? (Call that the National Geographic-syndrome.) There is something to be said about the weight and feel of a book, or a journal, of how it fits so perfectly into your hands and lures you into its papery and illusory world. Let's see Kindle™ replicate that.

As much as we value words, the imagery and the emotional content within the pages of a book, journal, a magazine or newspaper, we also greatly value the principles of design. And if there is anything better than a good book, it is a good book that has as well the weight and feel to it that evokes our desires, pricks our imagination and compels us to read. With that in mind, the *BtP* board put its passions and minds together to construct and design this, the first in what we hope will be a long and glorious tradition of *BtP* physical edition.

Are we trendsetters? Hardly. Nor are we lemmings, hurtling ourselves off the cliffs of technological advancement into oblivion. Deciding to publish a print edition, in this era where “downloadable” more often than not translates as “disposable,” is our way of keeping the print tradition alive and relevant.

Enjoy!

Jason Motz

And the *Beside the Point* Editorial staff.



Cityscape — Aaron Alexander Geeraert





Bhil house — Joseph Hoh



Homeless — James Roney



FICTION

Everybody knew about Cyrus. He was a lifer in the ambulance service – he'd been there since before Donny's first day on the job. However, after half a career of seeing things even a person with a vast vocabulary would simply describe as 'fucked up', one day he just snapped.

- Cyrus the Psycho

By Kim Fissel

Cyrus the Psycho

By Kim Fissel

IT HAD BEEN a hard morning for Donny. He'd been woken up at four a.m. by a fourteen-month-old screaming for her bottle. Instead of padding down the hallway herself, his wife Joy shoved him out of bed, mumbling about it being 'his turn.' So he stumbled into the kitchen, grabbed a bottle out of the fridge and warmed it in the microwave, then headed off for Nicole's crib.

He cracked open the door, muttering a prayer under his breath that Marion hadn't woken up. As the light from the hallway wandered across the room, Marion sat up in bed, with a gentle smile on her sweet three-year-old face.

"Go back to bed, honey, it's too early to be awake yet," he said. Truer words were never spoken.

Marion shook her curly-haired head and chewed on her teddy bear's ear. In the crib beside her, Nicole screeched like a banshee. Donny scooped her up, cradling her in his arms and stuffing the bottle into her screaming maw.

As Nicole finished the bottle, dawn began to peer into the girls' bedroom, and Donny could feel Marion's gaze wavering. Finished with Nicole, he laid her back in the crib and returned to Joy, who in his absence had spread across the bed, the blankets and sheets conspiring to hide her seven-month pregnant girth from view.

Shuffling across the rug he gently slid into bed, tugging the blankets and Joy towards him. She mumbled in her sleep and her arm fell over his chest where it belonged. The morning light began to filter in through the drapes, but it held no sway on Donny, who drifted back to sleep.

In the kitchen Joy bounced Nicole on her hip while Marion threw her blue plastic plate to the floor. A red cup and green cutlery quickly followed. The telephone rang a few times before Joy could get to it.

"Yes? Hello?" Joy said as she used her free hand to scramble Don's eggs.

"Oh, hey Joy, is Don there?" It was John, Donny's boss. "We... kinda need him to come in today." He sounded apologetic, at least. The family had plans for the day; they were going to the park. Joy weighed the possibility of simply telling John 'no,' but he wouldn't be calling unless it was important.

With a sigh she said, "Sure, John, one sec." She turned to go wake Donny, but saw him instead pick up the phone in the bedroom.

"Hello? John, that you?" Don's voice was hazy with sleep, and Joy could

hear his hesitation. She hung up and went back to the frying pan, now belching black smoke.

"I know Don, I know, but I've called everyone. No one will work with him, and I can't put him out just by himself, and there's no way in Hell I'm keeping him here at the station," a wheedling tone had crept into John's voice, "so what am I supposed to do, huh? Assign him to do triage at Burnaby General? The nurses will toss him out in a heartbeat. Hell, they might just have him committed again!"

"You're actually asking me to volunteer to work with Cyrus the damn Psycho? The guy is insane! With that damn piece of paper of his. *'How do you know you're sane?'* Know what I said, John? After an hour? I don't damn well know! Then he pulls out that damn piece of paper and shows me that he's 'sane'! Bull! There's no way, John, no damn way!" Donny shuddered at the idea. The Psycho burned through partners faster than any other paramedic in the service.

"Listen, Don, you're the last one on the list and you'll get time-and-a-half for it if you do this. I just have no one else to assign and no other choice, I'm backed into a corner here, man." A siren screeched in the background over the phone. "Don? Will ya do it, Don? How about double time? Look, I'm screwed if you say no!" John's panic tore Donny away from the pleasant dream of sleep.

He sighed. "Fine, John, you got me. You owe me huge for this." He stretched his neck and rotated his shoulders against the hard wood headboard. John wouldn't offer double time unless he was completely screwed, and it would definitely help with the new fridge.

"Your shift starts in forty-five so get your ass in gear!" John bellowed across the phone line as yet another siren started up in the background. "And Don? Thanks."

Donny lumbered into the kitchen to find slightly burned scrambled eggs, warmed bread masquerading as toast, and cold coffee waiting for him. Kissing Joy's cheek as he passed her, he sat down across from Marion, who was squirming in her high chair.

"Are you going in?" Joy asked. She settled into the seat beside him, and started feeding Nicole.

"It's kind of an emergency," Don grunted, covering his eggs in ketchup while munching on a slice of pseudo toast.

"You're a paramedic," she said with a smile, "if it's not an emergency then you're out of a job."

They both chuckled at the thought.

"He said that he'd make it double time."

She looked up. A grin appeared on her face as she began calculating the amount they could put towards a new fridge. Donny grinned smugly at Marion who smiled bewitchingly at her father. The thought of his shift with

the Psycho made him sigh and his grin dissolve.

"What's wrong?"

"My shift is with Cyrus the Psycho," Donny grumbled, pushing his remaining eggs about with the pseudo-toast.

"You've survived it before," Joy offered gently, tilting Nicole's head slightly.

"I know. It's just...the guy is fu-" Joy skewered him with a warning look. "I mean he's unbalanced, he's nuts, he's...he makes me worry about my future if I stay with it like he has."

She smiled, and kissed his forehead as he rose from his chair.

Donny had a quick shower, and then rushed for the door in his unwashed uniform. The wrinkles from the laundry bin were very evident, as was that worn-for-one-shift-too-many smell.

Traffic across town to the station wasn't as bad as it could have been on a nice sunny Saturday, but he was still fifteen minutes late getting in. Donny wondered if this might be an omen as to how the day with the Psycho would go.

He found the station's madman in unit 398, reading a newspaper article on a local town meeting. Donny caught a glimpse of the title as Cyrus tossed it onto the dashboard.

"Hey, Cyrus, looks like Gerry called in sick so I'm riding with you today." Donny held out his hand, thinking it didn't hurt to be nice to the crazy bastard as they were stuck together.

Cyrus gave him a vacant look. It made him feel like Cyrus was picturing what he would look like without his skin on. Donny shuddered and he fought to keep his face friendly.

Everybody knew about Cyrus. He was a lifer in the ambulance service — he'd been there since before Donny's first day on the job. However, after half a career of seeing things even a person with a vast vocabulary would simply describe as 'fucked up', one day he just snapped. He was out on a call when he just lost it. His patient was sent to Vancouver General, he was sent to Riverview. Eventually they released him, but it was around the same time that budget cuts were happening across the board. They were kicking out all but the 'critical need' patients just to save a little money. So no one really knew whether the guy was sane or just sane *enough*. As a result, he carried around a little piece of paper that stated, for the record, how he was 'Successfully rehabilitated and deemed fit for reintroduction to society'. He carried it in his wallet and showed it to just about everyone he met after asking them how they knew they were sane.

Cyrus grinned at him, his face shifting so quickly that Donny jumped back in surprise. Cyrus grabbed his hand and shook it.

"Heya partner, ready to go out and save some lives?"

"Sure, sure let's go, huh?" Donny muttered as he stepped up into the ambulance, sitting as far from Cyrus as possible, unconsciously of course.

The first few hours of the shift were as peaceful and quiet as one could expect for a spring Saturday in Vancouver. They dealt with the usual: broken bones, lacerations, and heart attack calls, nothing serious or strange. To the untrained eye Cyrus seemed competent, professional and... well... sane. It wasn't until they stopped for lunch, Chinese takeout, that the shift started to get weird. A call came over the radio just as they were served their wonton soup.

It was a jumper on PCP who believed he could fly and was determined to prove it. He stepped off the edge just as they arrived, landing a few feet away from the unit. Depending on how you wanted to spin it, he was a lucky son of a bitch. The building wasn't high enough for the landing to kill him, but just high enough to shatter a bone or two. Which is why he was able to get up on his broken leg and try again. Donny took a hit to the jaw from the idiot and Cyrus had to wrestle him onto the stretcher while Donny tied him onto it. The guy was biting and cursing, screaming that he could fly, let him fly! He was Superman, motherfucker!

"Too bad downtown is a no-fly-zone, pal," Cyrus serenely said to him. "But HeliJet tickets are \$149, and they'll fly you all the way to Victoria if you want."

Another call ended with them getting a police escort to the hospital, and left two very unimpressed ER nurses with a Hell's Angel sloshed on morphine and considering a career change. The Angel and the Psycho had a long and engaging talk while Donny weaved in and out of traffic. He was thinking of becoming an ambulance driver. Cyrus was thinking about becoming a biker. Returning to clean out the back of the unit, Donny was feeling fairly relaxed. So far, so good.

He could still see their jumper through the hospital's sliding glass doors, strapped down the gurney in the packed ER waiting for a bed to open up.

"You know that guy was nuts! I mean—" Donny froze. Cyrus was staring out the back of the ambulance, a dazed look on his face. "That is, I mean, uh, he was a little whacked out on drugs, eh?"

Cyrus turned his head towards him slowly, eyes unfocused. Donny shivered. It felt like his skin was trying to crawl around from back to front.

"Huh?" Cyrus just looked through him. He sat stiffly in the back of the van while Donny scrubbed the blood out of the stretcher's vinyl. The biker had taken a knife to the abdomen. It nicked an artery, and he had nearly bled out on the way to VGH.

"Nothing." Donny finished his cleaning and scurried out of the back of the ambulance, dragging his mop and bloody water bucket behind him.

Donny's stomach growled as they pulled away from VGH. He opened his mouth to suggest they hit up a drive-in White Spot nearby for dinner, but was cut off by Dispatch. They had another call, a lady off her meds needing

to be admitted for MO — mental observation. Her neighbours wanted the cops to take her to the hospital, which meant the cops wanted the paramedics to take her to the hospital. Donny grumbled, flipping on the lights and sirens. The pecking order was such a wonderful thing.

Driving to East Hastings, Donny thought of his girls at home, waiting for him. He hated coming to this neighbourhood full of drug houses. Too many bad calls for the service. Too many calls gone bad. The local station house had gotten t-shirts made up saying “Knife and Gun Club,” as that’s what they collected off most of their calls. They pulled up to the curb in front of a rundown apartment building. Broken windows decorated the front of it. They hopped out, pulling the stretcher clumsily, and rounded the cop cruiser that was waiting for them. Inside the entrance hall, a uniform fidgeted, shifting nervously and finally waving as he saw them approach.

“Hey, what took so long? We’ve been waiting for you,” the rookie barked at them. He called over the radio to his partner: the paramedics had finally shown up.

“Whadad they do? Stop for some fuckin White Spot on the way over?” was the garbled reply over the speakers.

“How I wish,” Donny said as he shoved the stretcher past the rookie.

The elevator didn’t work, so they had to haul the stretcher up all five flights of stairs. The young cop nipped at their heels, pestering them to hurry up as they summited each landing.

Donny was puffing with serious effort, while Cyrus merely smiled serenely, lumbering along effortlessly, when they finally came to 5D. Even with the door closed, Donny could hear a loud argument going on. The noise only got more intense as the rookie opened the door, revealing a shiny silver room inside.

Everything was covered in tinfoil: the walls, the furniture, the windows, even the multitude of cats that wandered around the place had tiny tin foil hats taped onto their heads. The room was illuminated by a lone industrial florescent light fixture, secured to the ceiling with duct tape. In the middle of all this was a tiny little old woman screeching, much like Nicole had, at a very weary looking sergeant.

“If I leave my house they’ll get me! How can you ask me to do that? If I leave who will take care of my babies? They don’t like their hats, and take them off,” she screamed at the poor sergeant. “You can’t let them take the hats off because if you do the microwaves get into your brain and then they can do all kinds of things to you without you knowing. Lulu took hers off once and she brought back a BIRD! She never brings back birds!”

The woman was an MO, obviously, and belonged in Riverview, just like all the other looney toons, and by the look on the young cop’s face, he agreed. Donny wondered why they hadn’t just picked her up and dragged her out of the cave-like apartment. She couldn’t weigh more than a hundred pounds and was definitely compact enough.

Cyrus was grinning like he’d been lobotomized and stepped between

the sergeant and the crazy cat lady. The sergeant shot an angry look at Cyrus' back before skewering Donny with a similar glare. Donny could only manage a helpless shrug in return.

"Who will get you, ma'am?" Cyrus asked. Just like with the biker, he appeared to be genuinely interested, and stooped to pick up a cat to stroke, careful to not jostle the tinfoil hat.

"The television makers, they are beaming signals into people's heads and doing all kinds of things to their minds while they're unaware of it!"

"Well, ma'am," Cyrus started.

"Ma'am! How old do you think I am?"

Cyrus chuckled and nodded. "Well, miss, your neighbours down the hall are worried that you're sick. They think your tinfoil wall has a crack in it and they want the doctors to check you over, just to be sure that your brain is okay."

Donny couldn't help but marvel at this man, who had been committed, now speaking to a woman who should be committed. He seemed completely genuine and sincere, perhaps even sane. She took Cyrus to show him some of her hand-written essays on the science of beaming messages into people's brains, written on toilet paper of course, before leading him around the apartment to check the walls for cracks, leaving Donny with two not-very-amused cops.

"That's Cyrus the Psycho isn't it?" Rumbled the older officer, a contemptuous sneer parked on his ugly mug. "I thought he was a myth, something you guys made up to scare the shit outta newbies. So all that shit's true then? I don't see why you guys let him out in public. I mean the guy is nuts, isn't he?"

Donny was torn; he knew Cyrus was crazy but he didn't like the tone of voice the guy used when he said 'you guys.' He just shrugged again and stooped to pet a cat that wandered by. The crazy duo returned from the kitchen with a fresh roll of tinfoil. When they crossed into the room, their conversation dropped to a murmur, and the lady drew in closer to Cyrus. She went to the table and began folding tinfoil into four makeshift hats, which she passed to Cyrus. Smiling at her, he put on one and then passed the rest to Donny and the cops.

"What the fuck am I supposed to do with this?" asked the rookie, watching his sergeant closely as the older man inspected the hat.

"Well, Rosie here said she'd go with us to the hospital with us but she wants to be sure we're safe, so we'll all wear these hats, okay?" Cyrus smiled benevolently at everyone. He turned and took Rosie by the hand and guided her to the door, bypassing the stretcher altogether.

The cops looked at Donny with mouths agape. Donny secured his hat and began trying to awkwardly push the stretcher back down the hallway towards the stairs.

After they'd swept the apartment and took statements from the neighbours the cops followed them down, wearing their own hats, and helped

Donny with the stretcher. Rosie waited regally in the ambulance. Cyrus sat with her with her and chatted. He was positively beaming. They managed to get her to the hospital without incident, and they handed her over to the diligently haggard ER nurse, who didn't even blink an eye at the tinfoil hats. As soon as she was out of sight, Donny and the two cops removed their hats. Cyrus, however, wore his for the rest of the day, garnering odd stares from all he met.

They wheeled the jumper out of the ER while Donny and Cyrus were doing turnaround work on the ambulance. Cyrus waved to him. The jumper gave him the finger, and then he disappeared into the back of an ambulance headed to Riverview.

"You know, Donny," Cyrus said, "I think that guy might have been unbalanced mentally."

When quitting time finally rolled around, Donny almost fell out of the ambulance, tired and tense from spending all day with Cyrus the Psycho. Of course, it wasn't as bad as he'd figured it would be, but he was more than ready to go home and see his girls. As he staggered towards his locker to grab his jacket and keys, the folded up tinfoil hat fell out of his pocket and rattled gently on the cement floor. He smiled as he bent to retrieve it. His back ached from too much lifting over the day when he stood back up. A hand slapped him on the back and he froze. He spun around and there was Cyrus with a blank look on his face.

"We should do this again some time," Cyrus said, then turned and walked away. He stopped after a few steps, turned on his heel and said, "Not that I want anything bad to happen to Gerry, though. We've got a good system, him and me. ... You seemed a bit stiff today, though. I don't know what John offered you to ride with me, but you should try to argue some vacation time out of him..." And with that, he walked out to the curb, lumbered down the street, tinfoil hat still perched jauntily atop his crazed head.

"Good job today, Don, I really do owe you!" John crowed, a cloud of cigarette smoke surrounding him as always. "Really, you're a life saver. Good to see you survived the Psycho."

"You know, he's not too bad, just weird as hell," Donny said with a smile. He fingered the tinfoil hat in his hand and wondered how Rosie was doing.



It Might Rain

By Colin Hender

FOLLOWING SOMEONE IS always done best in the rain, at night, in a big city. I have followed her for ten nights. Each night, my tracking skills and pursuer's intuition have gotten better, more precise. She goes to the same place. She hasn't suspected being tailed nor has she recognized me. I dart behind food vendors and phone booths. I change umbrellas regularly. I wear another man's raincoat and have often donned dark glasses, even at night. She goes to the same place. She is my wife and she hasn't suspected a thing.

It is summer and it has rained almost every day this month. Tokyo is wet and hot. This weather isn't unusual but provides news anchors and office workers a go-to topic to yak about. It is my birthday and there is a cake in our freezer. I asked for no presents and my wife Yumi has consented to cooking my favourite food, sukiyaki. Yumi is a beautiful woman and an accomplished chef. With respect to these attributes, she is an ideal wife. I keep cool by the window and smoke cigarettes. I haven't been to work for a week. I tell Yumi that things are slow at the office. I say that I am on call. My employers have already sent me my severance pay, at my request.

Standing in the pouring rain for an hour and a half does nothing to quench a man's thirst. I don't drink too much when I follow Yumi. I don't want to attract the attention of beat cops or hotel staff. They don't like people loitering and getting drunk in plain view. They especially wouldn't want the general public to see a foreign man in disheveled clothes lingering outside of their high profile hotel. I drink later in a yaki-tori joint around the corner. I stand and drink and write notes to myself in a damp book. I write Yumi's maiden name in black running ink and then crumple the page in my fist.

The Fujimori Grand is more expensive than it needs to be. It's one of those hotels that are only considered posh and classy because of the outlandish cost of a night's stay. It has two five-star restaurants that garnish salads with gold. It has a famous hair salon patronized by famous people who feel better about their looks by coughing up a lot of dough. It has a spa that charges ¥8,000 for the experience of having real river clay thrown in your face. It has a pharmacy and a full medical clinic that cater to the needs of visiting movie stars and foreigners with cash, both types of people I tend to dislike. It has lobby staff that greets guests with low bows. It has a back door: a service entrance that is

unguarded by the low-bowing lobby staff. The Fujimori Grand is a damned expensive hotel. My wife would love it.

I started following Yumi after I had the first in a series of recurring and disturbing dreams. In these dreams I am eating iced cream but I can't distinguish the flavour. When I get to the bottom of the cone I find a severed human hand. It has my wife's wedding ring on one of the bloody fingers but it is obviously not her hand. It is a man's hand. In this dream, I get an overwhelming feeling that the owner of this hand has stolen my wife. I tried analyzing this until it made sense. I couldn't do it. I tried working through it until the negativity and anxiety were gone. I couldn't. Freud and Jung had little to offer me on the subject. I poured over their tomes, put myself on their couches, to no satisfactory result. This dream image coupled with the 'I'll be home late again tonight' clichés -- I had to rule out the impossibilities. I was unable to shake the nasty feeling that my sweet wife was unfaithful. I psychologically painted myself into a corner and had nowhere to go but into the dream. I had to give in to obsession. I had to follow Yumi.

I set the table. There is enough time in my day to really do a good job of it, too. I buy flowers and a vase for the centrepiece. I light candles. I move the little dining table into the centre of the living room and put some summery jazz on the stereo. Brubeck won't do. Too autumnal. I choose something more Afro-Cuban. I am preparing, but not for my birthday dinner. I am going to come clean and confront Yumi after all these days of...

My wife is short and easy to lose in a crowd. Tokyo is made of crowds. If I lose sight of her I simply go to where she ought to appear next. This always works. When she leaves her office I am across the street in a phone booth. When she gets on the train I am in the next car, looking through the rickety steel and filthy glass door that divides the commuter-train cars. She walks alone. All six nights, she has walked alone. She goes to the hotel and remains for about ninety minutes while I feign reading a newspaper. It is in Japanese and I can't understand ninety percent of the contents. When she leaves, the awkwardly polite staff call her a taxi. I go home by train, which is faster. I dry off and put on my housecoat. She suspects nothing.



Dinner is fabulous. When Yumi makes sukiyaki I feel so lucky to be a married man. We have a good conversation. We do not mention the hot, wet weather. We do not make small talk like co-workers or old ladies at the vegetable market. We talk about our future. We speak of the days when we were dating and we would spend hours discussing our hopes for a country house and kids. We make espressos together using the multi-function coffee maker we had received as a wedding gift but whose multifunctions we had yet to explore. We make each other laugh.

She is leaving the hotel. She has a paper bag from the over-priced pharmacy. I cringe at what lurid reasons she needs the lurid products that they sell to the rich and promiscuous. I will confront her. Not today, but soon. She has broken my life.

Nobody really likes birthday cake. You eat half of a piece and wish you had only cut half of a piece. Yumi and I sit on the couch and share a cigarette. Both of us want the other to quit. She tells me she will, soon. I have something to say. So does she. My memory is bleeding into the present. I love and hate at the same time. Tears form in the corners of her soft black eyes. Yumi, like me, has something eating her insides. We have had a great dinner. I have a present for her. It is my birthday, and I have a present for Yumi.

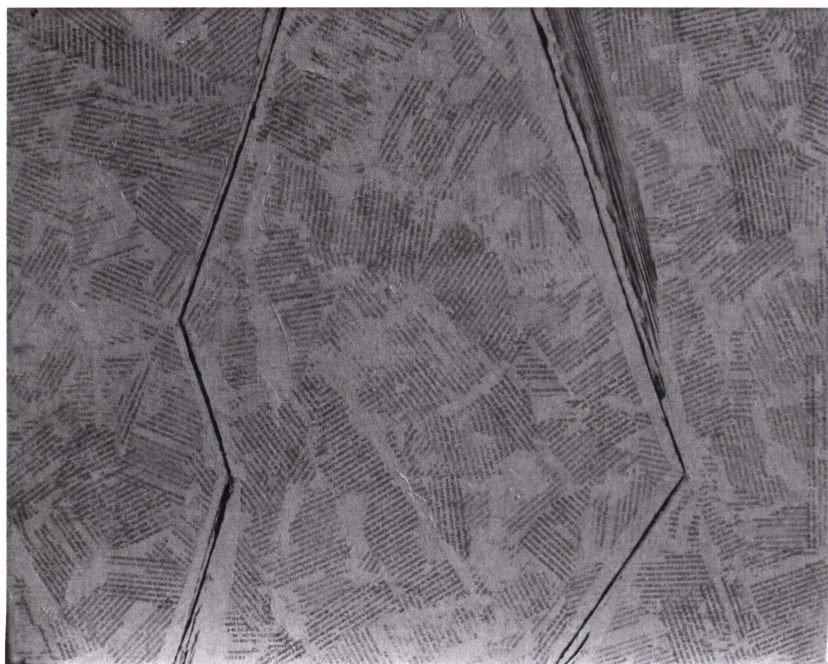
The hotel workers greet me with reluctant civility. I am a foreigner and they treat me as such but their faces and expression show their question as to my rough-hewn presence in the lobby. I nod and act nonchalant. I head to the spa with the precision of a smart bomb and continue to nod so as to placate the attending staff. I know what to buy: something gift-y and feminine. It feels like I am spray-painting my name on her existence, here in this hotel. I buy a wrapped up gift pack that probably pleases people who care about or buy this stuff. It consists of shampoos and soaps and face creams and the like. I just want her to know. I want her to understand that I KNOW.



Ending a marriage is always done best on a full stomach. I feel calm and empty as I give Yumi her gift. When she sees it she closes her eyes. We both know what this present means. I get a sick feeling of relief. I feel proud that I was able to keep quiet for so long, and throughout dinner. I can stop now. I will not follow her again. She says something like 'How long have you known?' Or 'How did you know?' I don't answer. I am standing and I feel the muscles in my jaw and neck tightening, squeezing. I will not ask the questions that will grind in my brain for the rest of my life. Why? Who? Did I do something wrong? I will walk out of the apartment and into the night. She will not follow me to the door. *It might rain.*

Photos by Colin Hender





Untitled — Jeremy Myhr



Run Yellow Run — Ghengis Shawn



POETRY

*Five dollars a day! A blind man can't see colour
he'd pay five dollars a day to see colour!
Wouldn't you?*

- The Informercial Man Talks Himself to Sleep
By Tom Fowler

The Infomercial Man

By Tom Fowler

THE INFOMERCIAL MAN TALKS HIMSELF TO SLEEP

by repeating his sales pitch:

"... utterly, utterly dead,
half-eaten flesh wet with spit,
bleeding like in the pictures.
Trust the reality of the image, reality!
Amusing true imago. Broken
images play in reverse.
Holes suck blood. Squish closed.

The mind makes the picture real!
The mind makes a heaven of Hell!
Nice, nice, very nice!

Fingers and string twisting knots
keep looking
keep looking
we have truth if you want it!
There's a damn cat in the damn
cradle!
Five dollars a day! A blind man can't
see colour
he'd pay five dollars a day to see
colour!
Wouldn't you?

Express your love of novelty!
Please select from our catalogue,
a sparkling selection of novelties
necessary
for survival in the 21st century:

a book of bedtime stories
for space alien children
from beyond the grave
a desire to immanentize the eschaton
by saturating the world with novelty
a papier-mâché mask of stern
confidence
for the transhuman singularity

a pocket thesaurus to impress your
friends
with phrases like "immanentize the
eschaton"
a hearty selection of drugs, firearms,
explosives
and an active imagination
for when the singularity comes
time ends and all things that can and
can't exist
meld into a psycho-real rusted
sunflower thunderstorm
a genuine diamond-feathered
spiritual experience
with extra Internet sauce

but if there's no damn cat
and the singularity never comes,
you'll pass the time faster
with these necessary novelties . . ."

Well, It Runs in the Family

A Rondeau Series By Leila Farley

I. THE GENETICS OF POVERTY

Poverty is a part of their family name
each daughter penniless just the same
empty Russian dolls in a row
dream of bread dream of snow
dream of belly-sisters they can blame

for leaving the womb for leading to shame
they remember the row and every last game
they remember the plans the attempts to go
but poverty was their family name

they have no where to go; no thing to claim
they'll never see France: how it whispers their names
it beckons their eyes white light to a doe
it rushes closer. Damning noise deepened glow
Swerves away, uncaring, fate's unfaltering aim
leaves poverty--a part of their family, and name

II. THE SISTER I ONCE THOUGHT YOU WERE

Little Sister wake up you haven't even tried
You aren't in Iraq you aren't some child bride
Stuck with that loser, no money and why?
He can't buy food; he can get high
He said he loved you? Well I think he lied

Why aren't you in school don't you have any pride?
You need a role model or some kind of guide
No words left I can't help but sigh
Little Sister wake up you haven't even tried

Sure, our wishes and wants were sometimes denied
Sometimes we weren't picked, just left on the side
You were always different. Slow and shy

Clinging in terror to our mother's thigh
Little Sister, I worry, you're starting to slide
Little Sister wake up you haven't even tried



III. MOTHER LONG AGO (OR THE IRONY OF EXPECTING)

First child, that child
first looked and smiled
then bit
and Split
me like a cherry. Reviled.

Couldn't they be sweetly mild?
Scream, feral, see their eyes are wild
They hit
the next child, nearest child

Out the womb they filed
Body is old, kitchen retiled
life's joke. What wit
has aged me? Oh...Sssshit,
again the body has beguiled
But this child is the *last* child

IV. DAUGHTER'S FIRST...FEAR

At eight, daughter, you forgot how to sleep.
Stared into a blackness only eyelid deep
and realized the very deaths of all.
Each sister, each unsmiling frozen doll
and even the immortal counting sheep

became bubonic, infected, unable to leap.
You felt the sickness and lymph begin to seep
from under peeling paper roses on the wall.
At eight, my daughter, you refused to sleep.

It was not dark enough for you to keep
still in bed. Corpses are unmoved. Dirt is deep
and has burrows in which you are bound to fall.
You'd be chased by demons, who'd hear you call?
So on cold toes to our door you'd carefully creep.
To relearn, once again, what it looked like to sleep.

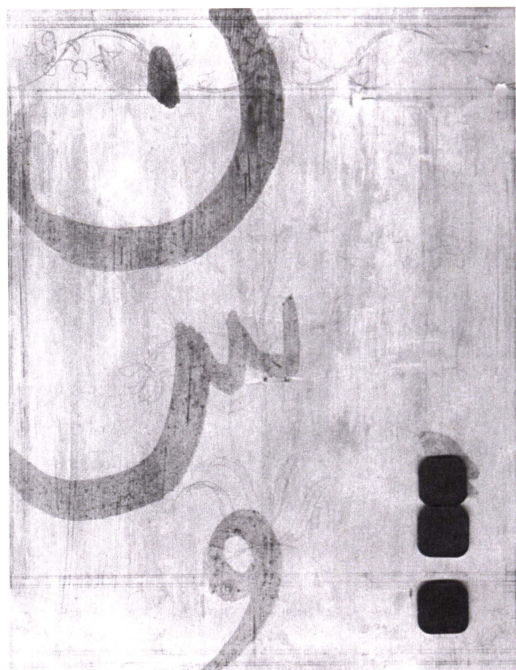


V. ALL FAMILIES CAN END

In a week, they say, Father will be dead
Now he empties all words from his head
And asks you where the apples are
He was just putting the box into the car
To bring to you, to make sure you're well fed

And he wants to know if he locked up the shed
While they dress his body with salt and bread
He wants to go home but 'That's too far,'
they say. In a week Father will be dead.

You can't imagine him gone or out of this bed
If you could buy some religion or have yourself bled
And let the cuts never scar.
But there's no wish and no star.
Can you hear words that they have just said?
Became weak....your father is...dead.



THE HURRICANE

By Andrew Brimmell

*But now every house
looks the same
Even our neighbour's
(goddamn hippies)
Their shed in our yard
our dog in their tree*





November Music

and other poems

By Tris Pargeter

Near Sight

Sometimes, with mascara
Wand in hand,
I catch my own eye,
And have a moment with myself
As calm, blue-edged orb.

But then, close up, intent on
Applying dark potion
To the fringe with rare,
Myopic acuity,
I sense myself as
Trembling, black portal.

Convergence

Charged and fresh,
I stood this morning by the big picture window,
Absorbed in retelling a soldier's gory account
Just heard on the CBC,
And was at such a comfortable remove
That I could titillate my husband with,
"Apparently both femoral arteries were spurting blood."

Suddenly, we were snapped out of our macabre musing
By a blunt thud and the flash
Of a small bird shooting straight into the glass, with all it possessed.
We rushed to the window and looked down with dread
At the pale concrete below,
Where a dapper, beloved chickadee lay with tidy little spasms
Followed by a small, vivid spot, then a dreaded, tiny stillness.
The freshness of the red, and of dead,
And our grief.



Motherloss

Muffled poignancy.
Drawn fledgling and mortified
Into the end of the world,
Into the spotlight of Judgment Day,
An outline created of pathos
And tragedy instilled to this day.
It decimated our only little youth,
Personalities formed by grief.
We were green and stripped down early,
Cataclysm, not time, the thief...
Our spread-out child's view of the world altered,
Now whirled around us, hurled right HERE,
We felt plucked out, dismembered, peered at and cut loose,
Were curiosities and squirming little dears.

It ensured that we'd continue to see ourselves
As flayed, insubstantial beings,
With unformed stick legs, nodules of knees,
And hot, blinking eyes, always seeing.
Cut off from the mother ship, despised,
Stunted, with fear now always,
Of being.

Dim memories now, more a blurry presence,
Guilt at this; she was a person?
Made of warm chest and centre;
A magnet that drew all our limbs together,
Defined all our disparate "I's".
No one speaks of her now.
She just flutters on within us, from our depths,
Is a wash of feeling, like color of ever-deepening hue.
We sense her and hold her just beneath our voices now,
In our womanly smiles; behind opaque, knowing eyes,
Are seasoned veterans of her lot;
Movers among men and children, we do,
And are more queens.
But moving tall and watchfully, a bit out of step.
There's no one in front, just a freeze-dried centre of death,
That has made us clumsy inside, three little girls,
Shocked
With precocious knowledge of the end of the world.

Motherhood

Last summer at Willows Beach,
I saw the same large, fledgling gull,
Shadowing another,
And immediately thought,
It has to be his mother.
(What else explains that locked-in dance
That's pure, natural happenstance?)

With a metronomic Breep...Breep...Breep,
Like a back-up signal on the beach,
I watched the plaintive but insistent bird,
Ungainly tottering after sleek mother ahead.
All summer this disturbing parade
Kept appearing everywhere;
Heralded always by the Breep...Breep...Breep..
On the road, in the water, even perched on a fence,
Offspring had become hulking nemesis.

She was smaller and quieter and whiter and tidier,
And although she could, and did, escape
By flying briefly,
She seemed drawn back to the crowd,
The simple comfort of being among,
Like other harried mothers I have seen,
Who just needed to be seen,
To have their sacrifice witnessed,
The baffled, mute enormity of it.

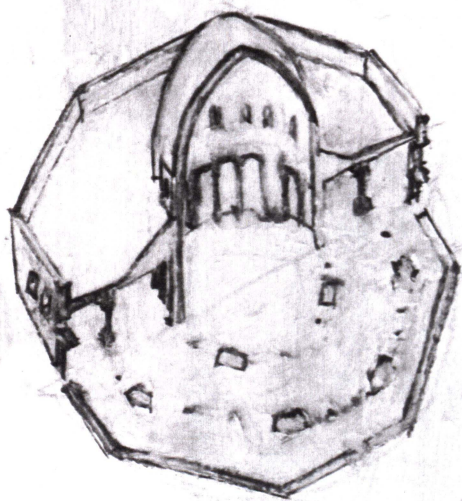
Animus

Yours will always be the little love
That waits on teasing little girls.
Such a common phenomenon for one who wears
The smoothe man-mask of superiority,
Class, and upright bearing: a professional
Wielder of the prep-school façade,
That just announces the acquired capability for
Complex Artifice,
Inteligent, Classic Cruelty,
And Refined Deceit.
Performed with such strategically
Presented nuances of
Sensitivity,
And Brave, Appealing Vulnerability,
That a woman dismisses all other signs,
Like the weak chin and persistently boyish features.
Like the intensely private, excluding gleam she has seen
In his eyes.
That reminds her of a trapped, angry, but utterly willful
Animal.

November Music

A riot of birds chatting noisily
In the towering row of spruce,
Pulls me into April blue sky felicity,
In spite of the ice planet Hoth reality.
That cacophony of live,
Jumbled, blurry trilling,
Nudges a pure, quiet joy in me,
And in November, especially.
Sound and life in unison, overhead,
Plays my all season spirit.
And Winter isn't really coming. Is it?
How could anything really freeze in the midst of
Music? And such a wild piece?
And so what if it does?
There will still be that glorious, burbling, incorrigibility,
In the solemn row of towering spruce.





2 3130N 34
1 3300N 65

Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem — Joseph Hoh



Vacant — Mateusz Lewczuk



Creative non-FICTION

*Car doors slammed shut. Our breath was
cloudy and the snow squeaked beneath
our boots when we finally escaped from the
vehicle and trudged through the parking lot
into the police station.*

- Christmas Should be the Kingdom
By HR McNeil

Christmas Should be the Kingdom

By HR McNeil

Part One

IF CHILDHOOD IS the kingdom where nobody dies, then Christmas should be the season where nobody rapes.

December makes me uneasy. The decorations, the trees, and especially the lights, sincerely bother me. They didn't used to. As a kid, even after debunking the Santa Claus conspiracy, I loved gearing up for the holidays. My mom had to work hard to keep the three-piece plastic tree in the basement until November came and went. Then the first of December was greeted with a flurry of construction in the centre of the living room. One of my parents would struggle to string the lights and reattach the artificial limbs, which had broken off throughout that year, onto the trunk. I would hang each of the hundreds of tacky, sentimental decorations with undeserved precision, but, no matter how hard the McNeil family tried, the tree would always appear to be in the advanced state of disrepair normally reserved for aging pop stars. Regardless, the tree was unifying and meaningful, and when you plugged it into the wall it glowed. That was the point of a Christmas tree, so I was always deeply satisfied.

There was a feeling in the air that came only in December and made my body weightless. Now that same air makes me nervous; I feel as if there is a creature inside me, with claws, pulling my stomach in on itself. As an adult, Christmas makes me feel bad in countless ways, but worst of all, December makes me feel guilty.

I was lying on my best friend's floor the first time I recognized this feeling as guilt. We were both thirteen, but the room looked like a baby girl's nursery, with white walls, white bedding, and delicate teddy bear ornaments resting on a pale wood dresser. I wasn't sure whether or not Cloe was awake. She was just a lump under a white lace blanket. We had gotten in at 5 a.m., and it felt like decades had passed since. She must have been exhausted (we both were), but if she was sleeping I didn't understand how. Either way, awake or not, I didn't have anything left to say. The room was dark, quiet, and full of horribly still air. I didn't want to think about what had happened to bring me there, and my only distractions were the slight smell of pine leaking from the furniture and the twisting, clenching pain in my gut.

Once the lights were strung, and the ornaments were hung, my dad would

me to the top of the tree to place the angel. It was a Christmas photo-op that I delighted in. My small body would dangle helplessly above him, but I felt safe. I loved the ritual, but I hated being let down.

The night I slept on Cloe's floor was four days before Christmas. I didn't have any of my things there — when we arrived hours before we were still wearing our pajamas. My mom drove us the twenty minutes into town in the dark, through light, drifting snow that was captured and bleached in the car's headlights. She dropped us off at Cloe's impeccable suburban house. Then, after a brief pause to get dressed, find their keys, and start their van, Cloe, her parents, and I left again. The awkward tension was suffocating, and even when a passenger offered a solemn sentence or two, the words danced over the thick air, and evaporated, unable to penetrate it.

Car doors slammed shut. Our breath was cloudy and the snow squeaked beneath our boots when we finally escaped from the vehicle and trudged through the parking lot into the police station.

Part Two

CLOE WAS INTERVIEWED first. Her mother, Karen, her father, Greg, and I settled into the waiting room. It was really just the entrance, so we sat in a row of old, plastic chairs facing the opposite wall. The tension had followed us in from the van, and we were all silent until Karen put down her book, the latest from Oprah's club, and spoke. She was direct. She told me, directly, that I wasn't my father. That statement threw me way off. Would people think I was like my dad? Was I like my dad? After a wave of panic I acknowledged her, but wished she would stop trying to help. Any sympathy they gave made me feel worse. Karen told a story about her father and some family battle over a grandparent's inheritance, concluding that she would hate to be confused with her dad. Her suggestion was infuriating. A fight over some stale savings account wouldn't send your daughter and her best friend to a police station at three thirty in the morning to give statements. No one wakes up in the middle of the night, sobbing and gasping for breath, thinking her stomach is going to cave in, over a financial dispute. When Cloe came back, it was my turn.

The lights were bright in the small room, just like they are on TV, but the rest was much more mundane. The lanky, blonde police officer sat behind a cluttered desk. There were dented filing cabinets and colourful display materials clumped together in the corners. He didn't grill me, wander around the room, or try to seem intimidating. He didn't offer much sympathy either. There was no TV cop in that room, just a man working the late shift, probably eager to go home to his family to make gingerbread or wrap presents. He pointed to the camera mounted in the corner on the ceiling, then told me to start from the beginning.

Cloe was going to spend the night at my house. We made pizza, we talked about school and boys, and she even borrowed my pajama bottoms. We had

done this so many times it had become routine. The officer interrupted me to ask more about the pajama pants. It caught me off guard. They were moss green, thin cotton with a small leaf pattern and a drawstring. She wore them when we slept in the living room. After Cloe and I finished a particularly philosophical conversation, she fell asleep quickly on the long, flat couch under the window. On the other side of the room, I tossed and turned and fought to keep from sinking between overstuffed, velvet cushions.

I woke up, squished in the couch, to the sound of soft talking. When had initially fallen asleep, my mom had already been in bed and my dad still at a Christmas party. My eyes opened and scanned the room. There was a rocking chair obstructing my view of Cloe, but I didn't move to see her, knowing I would knock one of the bottom cushions out from under me. With nothing else to look for, my eyes focused onto the Christmas tree which shone at my feet while I tried to make out the words being mumbled. I was too groggy to focus for long it was hard to tell if one or two people were talking, and the more I listened the more I heard from Cloe. It didn't seem right, but it seemed almost logical that Cloe was talking in her sleep.

I didn't go with my instinct, I didn't move or speak, I just listened. I ignored my suspicion that something was wrong. I just lay there while the glowing reds, green, and yellows in the tree blurred together. By the time I heard a definitive man's voice my eyes were unfocused and I was looking through the Christmas tree, not at it. My dad was talking to Cloe, and that made me more uncomfortable than the couch's spring which pressed into my side. There was no way to justify my heavy pulse, sweaty hands, and wide eyes, so when I was about to jump up, I decided against it, convinced my nervousness was a creation of the thirteen-year-old girl's perpetual quest for drama. I didn't get up to interfere until Cloe's voice became higher and louder.

The police officer looked up from his desk. His interest had finally been piqued again when I told him I moved from the couch. He didn't want to hear a kid justify her hesitation; he wanted to hear about the tangible evidence. However, at that point the interview was less about proving to a court that my father was guilty: he did that well enough himself. It was about proving to myself that I wasn't.

When I got off the couch, my dad was crouched beside Cloe. My eyes adjusted to the darkness in time to see him pull his hand off her thigh, teeter for a moment, then regain his balance and whip his head around. Someone said something about getting a glass of water from the bathroom; it took a minute for me to recognize the voice as my own. By the the time I did, I had already dragged Cloe out of the room. The sliding door made a pathetic thud, which was disappointing considering how hard I had slammed it. The two of us stood a foot apart in front of the washing machine. There, Cloe confirmed my worst assumption.

With my arm around her, we marched back through the living room, past the couches, to my mom's bedroom to wake her. We moved quickly, in unison, but I consciously planted my foot with each step to keep from

running. It was as if I expected him to jump out from a shadow, like we were in a carnival's haunted house. He didn't jump out. I saw my dad for the last time, drunk, absently peering into the fridge beside a large, thin window that led to the deck. Even after leaving that house, I still fantasize about pushing him through the glass and into the dark.

The cop seemed vaguely satisfied with my answers and asked if that was everything I could remember. I added another piece to the story before I left. When Cloe and I waited outside my house in the dark, and the cold, and the slow motion snowfall, she told me that my dad had repeatedly asked her to "just open her legs," and each time she refused. That phrase still sends the creature in my stomach into a frenzy.

Part Three

TWO DAYS AFTER I had slept on Cloe's floor, two days before Christmas, and two months before his trial, my dad killed himself. My mom found him in the basement. When she climbed the stairs, and told me with a forced calmness, I spun around and tried to run, but my body turned into a sand bag. I crashed on the floor a metre from the base of the tree, which already had a couple of small gifts from distant relatives placed underneath it.

There wasn't much time between the ambulance call and our leaving the house. Less than an hour had passed when we got to a family friend's home down the road where we stayed until my grandma and uncle got to town. The police contacted Cloe's family, and her dad in turn called my neighbour. Greg was Cloe's family's grief spokesperson because his first wife had died of breast cancer. He spoke to my mom for a while. I sat beside her, but was surprised when the phone was pushed to my ear. A soft, frail voice that belonged to Cloe murmured "Hi Heather." After I responded in an equally uncomfortable tone, she told me she was sorry about my dad. Her voice was so high and hesitant that the sentence cut through me. There wasn't much more to the conversation, but the guilt stung my skin, blurred my vision, and rang in my ears. Cloe shouldn't have been apologizing to me, I should still have been apologizing to her the way that I had with such frequency and desperation two days prior.

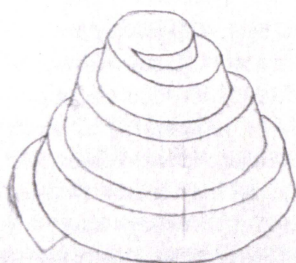
December still makes me feel uneasy, like something horrible and life altering is about to happen, and Christmas lights make me feel guilty.

However, on Christmas day when I was thirteen, just after my dad's mother and brother left our house, my mom and I broke our plastic Christmas tree into dozens of pieces and left it at the end of our driveway with the trash. That was the first time I didn't feel terrible for not investigating the mumbling sooner, and it was the first time I was able to blame the worst days of my life on something other than myself.

I blamed the lights, I blamed scotch, blamed Christmas, but I mostly blamed my father for letting me down when I should have been able to trust him.

This is a true story based on actual events. The names of the persons involved have been changed for their protection, and the author is writing under a pseudonym.

If you wish to help other victims of sexual abuse, please contact the Victoria Womens Sexual Assault Center. Visit <http://www.vwsac.com> for more information.



The Holy Path

By Eva Masek Graham

THE WOMAN WHO married my father, Glenn Wallace Graham, when I was seventeen years old would have you believe that he is an angel. She writes stories about their life together and shares them with people across the country through Internet blogging and Christian magazines. In her stories he is analogous to Jesus. In her stories he is a pure soul struggling with a bitter world full of cruel challenges and daughters who don't call on birthdays. He is perfect, a beacon of good Christian values, a master carpenter who is simply misunderstood for his attempts at perfection by people who are either too lazy or too inept to strive for the same. In her stories he is always punctual, sober and kind.

Reading her stories, I find it hard to believe Celice ever met my dad.

The memories I have of my father are so far from who she represents him as that I cannot reconcile the two. While Celice talks about him coming into her life and re-creating it in gilded gold, I remember him stumbling around setting fire to mine with the ends of his lit cigarettes. While Celice talks about his enduring faithfulness to his family and his Christian values, I remember him showing up hours late, if at all, to pick up my sister and me for our weekends together. If he wasn't drunk when he came to get us, it wouldn't take him long to become so. I remember him putting us in front of the TV Friday nights and not reclaiming us until Sunday evening, when he would drive us home. I remember his sleeps like comas, sleeps I would sit on his chest and ball my small hands up and pound him out of. I would pry his eyes open and force him to see me there. He would take my sister and me to the beach with his dog, or swimming, or ice skating, but even in these times he was high-strung. He would get angry at us for not getting his jokes, or for being hungry while we were in the middle of a hike. In my memories of those weekends, the times of playing in the yard, eating steak and potatoes and sitting in the truck listening to The Vinyl Cafe on Sunday afternoons are far outweighed by memories of dirty bed sheets, smoky house parties and the nearly empty refrigerator. The refrigerator in which the only constant was the birthday cake my sister and I spent hours making for him, the cake he never ate, the cake which stared at us from the freezer, untouched, for two whole years.

These weekend visits were mandatory. I would protest, kick my feet and yell when we had to go. I came to expect and almost accept the disappointment of the visits. My sister, Mara, however, looked forward to them every week. Whenever I tried to complain to our mother, express my rage and hatred of these times, Mara would defend him staunchly. She claimed to love him; she

professed what a good guy he was and how hard it must be for him to only see us part time. Think of his turmoil. Think of his strife. Think of ours, I would retort. In the long run, my mother always said, it will be better for you to have known your father, for better or for worse. The debate as to the merit of “daddy time” lasted until I was eleven years old, when I found a large Ziploc bag full of white powder and three capped syringes in his bathroom cupboard while looking for the hairbrush.

I didn't see my father for two and a half years after that. We talked on the phone occasionally when he would call the apartment, drunk, either ranting or raving at my abandonment of him or blubbering teary apologies at his betrayal of me. I never knew, when I talked to him, which one I would get. I am still not sure which one was truly him. To this day I don't know which one I loathed more.

After I got kicked out of my mom's house at fourteen, I went to live with him. By that age I was reclusive, moody and pierced. I wore torn jeans with band t-shirts, died my hair green and smoked cigarettes. I was nothing like the little girl he remembered. He was drunk, proud and unforgiving, exactly as I remembered him. I would sit in my room, smoking joints and he would sit in the living room drinking, each of us trying to block out how much we disappointed the other. On the days that we weren't avoiding each other, we would sit in the living room and listen to old vinyl of The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd and Meatloaf. We bonded over toasted tomato sandwiches and beers. Other days, he would buy large bottles of whiskey and drink alone, marking the bottle after each swig. Inevitably, part way through the night he would stop marking, forget how much he had drank and come to my room to smell my breath, shouting at me for stealing his booze. Through the stench of his own breath, my mouth always smelt of alcohol. Everything we owned smelt of booze, smoke, dog and weed.

Gradually, the situation got worse. His drinking accelerated and he stopped buying groceries. He tried to tell me that at fifteen I should be working and buying my own food. I started holding large amounts of drugs for friends and some days I would come home to my dad sitting in the living room, high on mushrooms or ecstasy he had found under my bed. When I tried to explain that he was ruining my income, stealing from people who had trusted me, he would get volatile. He tried to tell me I owed him a cut for keeping it in his house. I tried to explain that not even I got a cut of the drugs, but the cash I got was buying food for him too. When a bag of hallucinogenic mushrooms came back an eighth short and I lost the gig, I moved out.

The next time I saw my dad, two years later, he announced his engagement to Celice. He had given up the heritage flat and sent our dog to a farm in Duncan to move in with Celice. All of the belongings I had left behind he dumped in the big green garbage bin at the new apartment. He quit his carpentry job, pawned his tools and became a born-again Christian. They were married in a small white church in Sydney on April 17, 2004. One of the few photos I have left of him is one taken in their kitchen before the ceremony.



The same kitchen where he and his wife-to-be cooked steak and potatoes; drank straight vodka and red wine every night. In the picture he is standing, but on that day he leaned on a cane and Celice held him up at the altar. They were wed short-form in front of less than a dozen people. He went straight from altar to hospital bed. Instead of a reception, we spent five hours waiting in the hospital to find out my dad had Hepatitis C.

The next — and last — two years of his life, my father was in and out of the ER with seizures, black outs, stomach pains, and delirium. Test after test was done, but after the first diagnosis of Hepatitis C, he refused to sign the waiver allowing the doctors to tell my sister and me anything about his condition. As his sole guardian, Celice was informed of all the medical diagnoses, but she frequently burst into bouts of tears so violent that words could not penetrate.

At first, I went every time he was in. I would find my way to his room, pensive and alert. I would go ready with powerful end-of-life speeches, rehearsed final words to my dying father. I imagined it, him lying ill but alert, rousing from his sweaty sleep to whisper his final words to his daughter. He would apologize and I would hush him: "No Dad, it's okay, I forgive you." He would cry. I would cry. He would say he loved me, tell me I was beautiful without covering my piercings. We would sit, holding hands until he fell asleep again, everything passed on and forgiven.

In reality, more often than not he would be delusional. He rarely recognized me, and when he did he would confuse me with my twelve-year-old self. He would never apologize, he wouldn't even listen to me speak. Sometimes, due to the fact that he would often try to run away, he would be strapped to the bed. Drip tubes of IVs reaching out of his arms and tubes running under his bed clothes, collecting urine from him and gathering it at the foot of the bed where I stood. His eyes turned red and puffy, his muscle wasted away.

After a while I just stopped going.

The last time I saw my dad alive was the summer before his death. He and Celice took me out to lunch to celebrate my graduation from high school. They took me to the Carriage House pub where dad had built the extended patio and knew the owner. He also apparently knew all of the slim, female waitresses well enough for them to stroke his hair when he talked to them. Celice fingered her cross and chattered at me from across the table.

"We've come here a lot. Isn't it wonderful. Look how many people love your father, honey. He built that patio, you know. Isn't it lovely." Dad simply smiled at me, his eyes watery and pink. I pushed little bits of meat around my plate. Dad coughed blood into his napkin and watched me slide mouthfuls of shepherd's pie past my lips.

"I'm fine," he said, between coughing fits which shake the table and turn waitresses' heads away.

"Glenn has been seeing doctors, but they're all quacks," Celice piped up, his vernacular leaking into her speech. "He's in perfect physical health, he just gets these terrible stomach aches every now and again. They want to do more liver tests, but last time they did they just gave him a bunch of meds and sent

him home.”

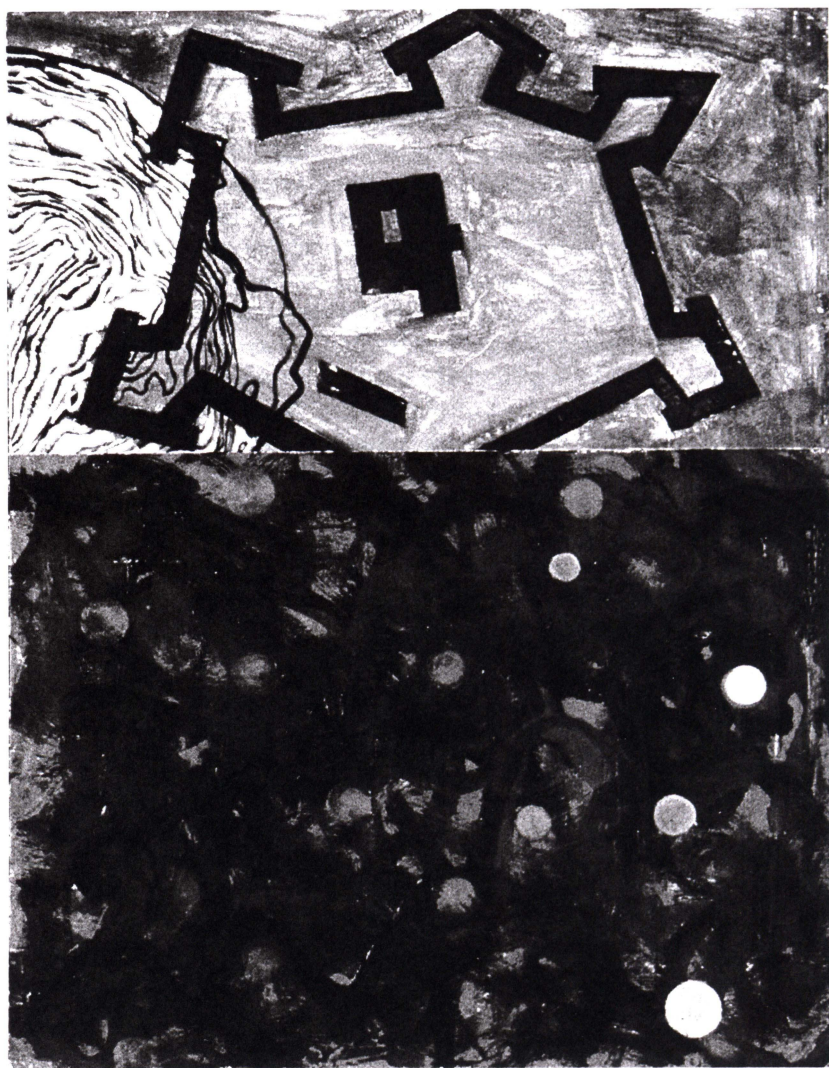
Throughout the meal, Glenn drinks Greyhounds. It is the first time I’ve ever seen him drink them, but Celice tells me they’ve always been his favorite.

When dad died, Celice drank herself into a coma so deep we didn’t even bring her to see the body before it was cremated. Family members who hadn’t talked to each other in years sat, silent, in the rose-coloured waiting room at the funeral home, each holding their breath for a turn in the small blue room. I was first. Staring at the body, I was struck by how the man in front of me was nothing like my memory of him. His bloated face contrasted with the frail body that seemed to swim in the plaid flannel he was dressed in, his wedding shirt. I felt astoundingly comfortable, alone with a body in a heavily perfumed room, surrounded by large bouquets of dusty silk flowers, more comfortable than I ever had in his living presence. I had, as usual, prepared a speech, but this time I didn’t even try to voice it. Instead, I closed the bible that lay open and pulled the lids down over his eyes. I didn’t want my sister to see their jaundice. “See ya buddy,” I choked, slapping his shoulder.

Celice started writing memoirs six months or so after he passed. She signs them “Celice Jacobs Graham” and includes psalms from the bible at the end of each one. She waves the banner of his name as a beacon for others to follow because she believed in who he was, in who she saw he was. She can only see the loving, dying husband he was to her. I, however, only hold on to his name to remind me of the roads not to walk in life, the paths with holes.

The names of the persons described in this story (including the author) have been changed for their protection.





Emperor's Tomb — Joseph Hoh



Raven — Aaron Alexander Geeraert
Portions of this image have been digitally reconstructed.



DRAMA

BRIGITTE: Have you ever met someone online before?

NATALIE: No. No, I prefer not to be charged monthly for being single.

*- Antisocial Social People
By Devon Wells*

Antisocial Social People

A Screenplay By Devon Wells

Cast of Characters:

NATALIE GREYSON
BRIT
NATHAN
IPHONE GUY
BRYAN
BLACKBERRY GIRL#1
POOL DUDE#1
POOL DUDE#2
BLACKBERRY GIRL#2
KENDRA
BLACKBERRY GIRL#3
KISSING GIRL
MANDY
TAMMY
BRIGITTE BARNES
KYLE MONTY
BLACKBERRY GUY
SAM
CAM HARTLEY

FADE IN:

EXT. LARGE HOUSE ON TOP OF A HILL – NIGHT

A modern house sits atop a hill surrounded by cars and trucks. The front porch is lit with patio lights. Silhouettes of people can be seen in the houses windows. Some windows have the drapes pulled down while other windows are exposed and people can be seen inside. People sit outside the house drinking and socialising. Everyone is holding CELL PHONES (either an IPHONE or a BLACKBERRY) in their hands. Some people are texting while others look at their CELL PHONES repeatedly in mid conversation.

NATALIE GREYSON, 23 years old, walks toward the house passing people and not acknowledging any of them. A few people look at her but they ignore her as well. She walks up the steps and opens the front door to the house where loud music escapes the confines of the house and onto the porch. She steps forward.

INT. ENTRYWAY OF HOUSE – NIGHT

People crowd the entryway as they speak loudly, operating their CELL PHONES. Some are bouncing (dancing) to the loud music. NATALIE looks around the entryway to see a set of stairs going up the left side of the wall to the second story of the house. To her left is the living room and directly in front of her is the kitchen. NATALIE approaches a young blonde woman, BRIT, who is texting on her phone.

NATALIE (yelling): Excuse me!

NATALIE is confused and uneasy in new situations but overall, confident in her demeanour. She has long dark brown hair, is slender, pretty, but not overly so. She wears lightweight clothing giving the impression that it's summer.

BRIT continues operating her IPHONE, ignoring NATALIE.

NATALIE (yelling): Excuse me, I'm sorry to bother you but I was wondering if you could help me?

BRIT looks up from her phone to see NATALIE in front of her. Both women will speak loudly with one another in order to be heard over the loud music.

BRIT: Can I help you?

NATALIE: Yeah, I'm looking for Cam Hartley. Have you seen him?

BRIT: No, I haven't. I can text him for you if you want.

NATALIE: He doesn't have a cell phone anymore.

BRIT: Why?

A young man, NATHAN, approaches NATALIE and BRIT. BRIT continues to look at her IPHONE, touching the screen, and giggles at messages she's received. NATHAN is holding his IPHONE in front of BRIT and is showing her something.

NATHAN: Hey Brit, did you hear about this new iPhone app called Mirror Mode?

BRIT: No.

BRIT continues to look at the screen of her IPHONE. NATHAN further shoves the IPHONE in front of her, getting her attention. Her wandering eyes emerge from her own phone and find their way onto Nathan's.

NATHAN: Check this out.

NATHAN taps the screen of his IPHONE, very impressed with himself, while BRIT stares at it, confused. NATALIE looks in curiosity.

BRIT: Nathan, what is that?

NATHAN: It's called Mirror Mode. It turns your screen into a mirror. It's so you can snort cocaine off your iPhone screen.

NATALIE is shocked by NATHAN's blatant appreciation for narcotics usage and turns to walk into the living room. BRIT looks at NATHAN with a confused expression, then stares back at the IPHONE screen.

BRIT: Oh My God... (pause) That is awesome. What's it called?

BRIT goes back to her phone touching the screen as if to look for this IPHONE application, while NATHAN helps her.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT



NATALIE squeezes through some people into the living room. She sees an overly trendy young guy sitting on the couch with his IPHONE. NATALIE sits down next to him, leaving a generous gap between them.

VOICE (O.S.) (yelling): Someone turn the fucking music down!

The music gets quieter, quiet enough to have a conversation. IPHONE GUY sits with his device close to his face. NATALIE sits there feeling awkward and out of place, waiting for her friend. She turns her head to IPHONE GUY to start a conversation.

NATALIE: Hi there!

IPHONE GUY hardly acknowledges NATALIE as he does a half wave with his hand and makes an inaudible sound.

NATALIE: Sorry?

IPHONE GUY: Dude, shut up a minute—

IPHONE GUY stares at his screen. A big smile appears on his face and he starts to nod his head. NATALIE is insulted by being told to shut up and for being called a dude.

IPHONE GUY: Fuck yes!

IPHONE GUY clenches his fist and punches the air. He leans in to NATALIE showing her the screen on his phone.

IPHONE GUY: Check this out, man!

NATALIE looks at the screen and pulls back almost immediately.

NATALIE: Okay, so those are boobs.

IPHONE GUY looks at NATALIE with a shocked expression on his face and holds the IPHONE to his chest.

IPHONE GUY: Wait, you're not my friend. Where's Bryan?

NATALIE: I don't know!

BRYAN walks into view from behind the couch holding two red cups of beer. He hands one cup to IPHONE GUY.

BRYAN: Dude, you still sexting that girl?

IPHONE GUY ignores his mix up with NATALIE and shows BRYAN the picture of the boobs on his phone.

IPHONE GUY: Hell yes, I am. Look at these.

BRYAN: Fucking sweet dude! Yes!

BRYAN looks over at NATALIE as she continues to sit awkwardly.

BRYAN: Those yours? They're very nice.

NATALIE: No!

BRYAN takes a sip of his beer while looking at NATALIE's chest.

BRYAN: What's your number?

NATALIE gets up from the couch and leaves. BRYAN watches her walk away holding his free hand out as if to say 'what did I do?' IPHONE GUY nudges his shoulder in excitement and shows him the new image on the screen.

IPHONE GUY: Look at this one.

BRYAN: Pussy!

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

NATALIE walks into the kitchen from the living room. The kitchen is spacious and white and full of people. A girl to her right talks on her BLACKBERRY rather obnoxiously.

BLACKBERRY GIRL#1 (obnoxious): Oh my God. No way. He did not say that! (pause) No way. (pause) Was he serious or was he joking? (pause) I mean, did his text sound legitimate or was he kidding around? (pause) Okay, let me read it. Where are you? (pause) The kitchen? I'm in the kitchen too! But where are you? (pause) The sink? Oh my God I am like two steps away from there.

The BLACKBERRY GIRL#1 looks around the kitchen, as does NATALIE (subtly) and another girl, very close in proximity and beside the sink, waves at her. BLACKBERRY GIRL#1 waves back.



BLACKBERRY GIRL#1: I see you. I'm on my way over.

BLACKBERRY GIRL#1 walks toward the sink still talking on the BLACKBERRY as she makes her way to her friend. NATALIE considers the situation and starts to look at everyone in the room more closely. Everyone has at least an IPHONE or a BLACKBERRY and is texting, surfing the net and mildly conversing. NATALIE feels a vibration in her pocket and reaches in to grab her ordinary, boring, mundane flip phone, the MOTOROLA. She turns her back to the entrance of the living room and opens her phone to see she has a TEXT MESSAGE. The MOTOROLA acts as its own character, but has no voice. Every time NATALIE receives a TEXT MESSAGE the MOTOROLA screen is viewed.

MOTOROLA: Y R U HERE? U DO NOT FIT IN.

NATALIE stares at her screen and is confused. She turns back around into the kitchen to look at everyone at the party. Looking to see if she recognizes anyone, NATALIE notices nobody. NATALIE looks back down to her screen and selects reply. The REPLY on the MOTOROLA screen flashes when NATALIE selects that option. NATALIE types back to the anonymous sender.

NATALIE (texting): WHO ARE YOU?

NATALIE selects the send option. Much like when the REPLY flashes, the SEND also flashes when NATALIE selects that option. A reply comes back right away.

MOTOROLA: I M UR PHONE. STUPID.

NATALIE scoffs at her phone then looks around the room again to see if anyone is messing with her. NATALIE still sees no one she recognizes. NATALIE selects reply again and begins to type.

NATALIE (texting): FUCK YOU. BITCH.

NATALIE selects send. NATALIE closes her phone and puts it in her pocket. She walks across the kitchen, past the exit into the entryway and into another exit just beside it.

CUT TO:

INT. GAMES ROOM – NIGHT

NATALIE walks into a games room . A large pool table sits in the middle of the room. People sit on the edge of the pool table and others huddle in small

small groups conversing and holding their IPHONES and BLACKBERRIES.

POOL DUDE#1: Yo, did you know you can get that pool game on your iPhone?

POOL DUDE#2: Hell yeah. I love that app.

POOL DUDE#1: Dude! You want to connect and play online with me?

POOL DUDE#2: Yeah man, for sure.

NATALIE (to herself): What is wrong with these people?

NATALIE leans up against the wall beside the entrance to the kitchen. She stares at the people in the room seeing if there is anyone that is alone she can talk to. Three girls in the corner tap away at their BLACKBERRIES. Their BLACKBERRIES make repeated clicking sounds. NATALIE looks over at them.

BLACKBERRY GIRL#2 (disgusted): KENDRA! Are you stupid?

KENDRA: What?

BLACKBERRY GIRL#2: I just read what you posted on Twitter.

BLACKBERRY GIRL#3: What did she put?

BLACKBERRY GIRL#3 madly clicks away at her BLACKBERRY obviously searching for KENDRA's Twitter page. She stops and begins to read out loud when she finds it.

BLACKBERRY GIRL#3 (reading voice): *Does anyone know of a liquid concoction that has the same effect as the morning-after pill?* (pause, then continues in a disgusted tone) What the hell, Kendra?

KENDRA: I'm curious ok. I can't afford any pills right now. This is something I need to know.

BLACKBERRY GIRL#3: If that sort of thing did exist, you would destroy your insides.

KENDRA: Whatever. I'm 22 years old, my main concern is my ability to get drunk as fuck and to get fucked without consequence.



The two BLACKBERRY GIRLS including NATALIE look at this girl with appalled expressions on their faces. BLACKBERRY GIRL#3 looks back at her screen.

BLACKBERRY GIRL#2 (surprised): Hey, @Sashasash replied with: *'Try Youtube. There is a tutorial on there for that sort of thing. Worked for me.'*

The three girls all look at each other curiously. There is a slight pause.

BLACKBERRY GIRL#2: Let's check it out.

The three girls start to madly click away on their BLACKBERRIES again. NATALIE, disturbed and offended, exits the games room back into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

NATALIE feels a vibration (vibration noise is heard) in her pocket again and brings out her MOTOROLA. She opens it and looks at the screen.

MOTOROLA: NO 1 HERE LIKES U.

NATALIE stares at her phone angrily.

NATALIE: What the hell?

NATALIE selects REPLY and begins to type.

NATALIE (texting): LEAVE ME ALONE.

NATALIE selects SEND then receives a reply right after.

MOTOROLA: I CANT. I M UR PHONE. U R NOT COOL.

NATALIE closes her phone and holds it in her hand. She exits the kitchen into the entryway where she first entered the house.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

NATALIE walks down the entryway which has fewer people in it now. A man and a woman make out up against the wall. The man looks at his

BLACKBERRY while he kisses the girl and moves his thumb along the key pad. He is obviously, at the same time, texting while being intimate with this woman. NATALIE grows increasingly irritated by everyone and their IPHONES and BLACKBERRIES. Her phone vibrates again (vibration noise is heard) and she stops. She stares at her phone with hatred, contemplating whether to open it or not. She flips it open and reads the screen.

MOTOROLA: UR PHONE IS LAME. NO 1 WANTS 2 TXT 2 SOME1 WITH A LAME PHONE. U SUCK, U HAVE NO FRIENDS.

NATALIE shakes her fist holding her phone.

NATALIE: Motherfucker!

The couple stops kissing and stare at NATALIE.

KISSING GIRL: Boy troubles, sweetie?

NATALIE: No. Phone troubles.

The couple disregard NATALIE as they stare into each other's eyes and continue to kiss, the man raises his BLACKBERRY to eye level and begins texting again. NATALIE walks forward toward the doorway when two girls, TAMMY and MANDY, appear from the entryway at the bottom of the stairs. They bicker at one another and stop when they see NATALIE.

MANDY: Excuse me.

She looks to her friend.

MANDY: We'll ask her to settle this for us.

They both look to NATALIE.

MANDY: We would like your opinion on something.

NATALIE: You want what?

MANDY: Your opinion.

TAMMY: Yeah, we're doing a consensus with as many people as possible.

MANDY: Then we are tallying up our findings onto our iPhones.

TAMMY (bitchy): Or Blackberries. Cause not everyone has an iPhone.

MANDY: That is correct. For some strange reason.

NATALIE: I can probably guess, but what do you want to know?

MANDY: Which do you prefer? iPhones—

TAMMY: Or Blackberries?

NATALIE: Blackberries.

MANDY: WHAT?!

TAMMY: See I told you—

NATALIE: Blackberries taste better.

The girls look at NATALIE as if she's stupid.

MANDY: Excuse me?

TAMMY: You don't eat Blackberries.

NATALIE: Well...yes, you do, if it's a fruit. But I was making a joke.

TAMMY: I don't get it.

MANDY (looking at her friend): Oh My God. You are so stupid. (looking at Natalie) But seriously, what do you prefer?

NATALIE: I don't have a preference.

TAMMY: How can you not have a preference?

NATALIE: They're both the same. They're just phones. They perform the same function, they do mostly the same thing. Can't you just be happy with what you have? Do you really need to turn this into a competition? What happens when you have completed your CENSUS? Do you pit everyone against each other and have an all out tech war? And losers end up in some sort of Cellhole where they battle it out to the death with their iPhones or their Blackberries? Then the reigning champions are hailed and celebrated because they're Kings of superior technology, when in hindsight you are arguing about something that goes like this, 'Ring ring' (pause) 'Hello?' Oh, it's a PHONE!! Just create a Facebook Event about it, I'm sure everyone will show up.

MANDY: ...You obviously don't have either.

TAMMY (condescendingly): Yeah, what do you have?

NATALIE holds up her MOTOROLA to the girls, making sure the logo and the front of the phone faces them. The girls start laughing when they see the pathetic MOTOROLA in NATALIE's hand.

MANDY (giggling): Motorola? Oh my god. Who even has those anymore?

TAMMY (giggling): Motorolas are like the MySpace of cell phones. No one uses either anymore. They're done.

The girls continue to laugh as NATALIE rolls her eyes.

MANDY: Get it? It's a joke.

TAMMY: Did you see that small screen of hers? It said she had one new message. That is just too cute.

NATALIE walks passed them and walks out the front door onto the porch.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT PORCH – NIGHT

NATALIE looks at her phone to see that she does in fact have one new message. She raises the MOTOROLA to her face giving it an evil stare. She flips open the phone and reads the screen.

MOTOROLA: SEE. NO 1 LIKES U. I BET THAT HURT. U R IRRELEVANT, JUST LIKE ME.

NATALIE selects reply and begins typing.

NATALIE (texting): YOU ARE PISSING ME OFF! LEAVE ME ALONE!!!!

The phone instantly responds to NATALIE's message.

MOTOROLA: LOOK AROUND U. EVERY 1 IS THE SAME. EXCEPT 4 U.

Another message sends and appears on the screen.

MOTOROLA: U R NOT WANTED AMONG THESE PPL. THEY R NOT UR KIND. 2 B ACCEPTED U MUST CONFORM. STUPID.

MOTOROLA: U R NOT WANTED AMONG THESE PPL. THEY R NOT UR KIND. 2 B ACCEPTED U MUST CONFORM. STUPID.

NATALIE shuts her MOTOROLA in frustration and annoyance. She stares back into the house to see people all on their similar devices in the entryway and through the doorway of the kitchen. The kissing couple both text while they kiss. The people in the kitchen all share a camaraderie with their high-tech phones. Everyone is bonding and connecting through technological possessions. NATALIE turns back to stare out at the people who converse outside to see the very same thing. A girl, BRIGITTE, walks up the front steps toward NATALIE. She smiles at her when they make eye contact and NATALIE gives her a half smirk. The girl stops in front of NATALIE and looks at the end of the porch. NATALIE follows her gaze to see a guy, KYLE, sitting on a patio chair looking at his IPHONE screen.

BRIGITTE: I'm really nervous right now.

NATALIE is somewhat caught off guard that someone is initiating a conversation with her.

NATALIE (surprised): What? Sorry.

BRIGITTE: Oh, I apologize if I caught you off guard.

NATALIE: No, it's ok. Don't worry about it. What did you say before though?

BRIGITTE: I'm really nervous.

NATALIE: How come?

BRIGITTE points to KYLE and NATALIE stares.

BRIGITTE: That guy over there. Um. KYLE. He asked me to be his girlfriend.

NATALIE: Oh yeah?

BRIGITTE: Yeah. I'm going to talk to him. And I'm feeling really uneasy about it.

NATALIE: What are you going to say?

BRIGITTE: Oh um, uh... (stutters) Oh my, I'm too nervous to even say it to a stranger.

BRIGITTE giggles nervously.

NATALIE: I'm Natalie if that helps.

BRIGITTE: Hi, I'm Brigitte. Do you mind if I just stand here. And, um, talk to you till I get the courage to approach him?

NATALIE feels positive about this encounter and gives the girl a genuine smile.

NATALIE: Sure, no problem. You're the first person I've had a decent conversation with so far tonight.

BRIGITTE: Really? But there's so many people here.

NATALIE: Physically maybe, certainly not mentally.

BRIGITTE: What?

NATALIE: Oh, no they just, um, it. They... They all seem a little preoccupied. And annoying. No offence.

BRIGITTE: None taken. I don't know anyone here either.

NATALIE: Oh, Heh. Except for Kyle...right?

BRIGITTE: Sort of.

NATALIE: Sort of?

BRIGITTE: This is actually our first time meeting.

NATALIE: What?

BRIGITTE: We met online. Um, on a dating site. And we've been talking on MSN. And sending messages over Facebook for weeks.

NATALIE: ...And you're just meeting him now? Answering whether you're going to be his girlfriend or not?

BRIGITTE: Yeah, it's a bit exciting.

NATALIE (rudely): How? How is that possibly exciting?

BRIGITTE: It's The First Meet! It's nerve wracking. And gives me butterflies. But I'm excited. I know who he really is. And now I get to meet that person.



NATALIE: ...Okay...

BRIGITTE: Have you ever met someone online before?

NATALIE: No. No, I prefer not to be charged monthly for being single.

BRIGITTE: Oh. Well, it's quite the experience. (pause) Thank you for the talk. I think I'm ready for this. Wish me luck.

BRIGITTE walks towards KYLE as NATALIE watches the outcome.

NATALIE (to herself): Yeah. No.

NATALIE's phone vibrates (vibration noise is heard) and she opens the screen preparing for the insult that awaits.

MOTOROLA: LOSER.

NATALIE closes the phone hard and squeezes the phone in her hand.
NATALIE looks over to BRIGITTE who stands in front of KYLE.

BRIGITTE: Kyle?

KYLE looks up from his IPHONE and sees BRIGITTE. He takes a deep breath and corrects his posture and smiles awkwardly.

KYLE: Hey, 'sup?

BRIGITTE: Um, so I read that Facebook message you left me earlier.

KYLE nods his head.

KYLE: Yeah.

BRIGITTE: Yeah, and um... I really liked it.

KYLE (smiling): Yeah?

BRIGITTE: Yeah. You really kind of touched me with those things that you said. I mean, the part where you said that you and I had a connection you had never experienced before. I feel that too.

KYLE: Yeah?

BRIGITTE: And when you said you think about us at night in your bed

before you go to sleep. And, we're snuggling and holding each other and you want to give me gentle pecks on my neck. And when you said you dream about me. I really liked that.

KYLE: Yeah?

NATALIE looks at them in disbelief.

NATALIE (to herself): Oh God.

BRIGITTE: I can totally picture that and not be creeped out by it. Because I feel like I know you. And that you know me too. The part where you said we're like the greatest love story that's yet to be told got me really excited.

NATALIE stares at them unimpressed with her arms folded across her chest.

NATALIE (to herself): Jesus Christ.

KYLE: Yeah?

BRIGITTE: Yeah. And you have such a way with words that your compliments blew me away. I didn't even think you were talking to me when I first read them. But you were, they were for me. I've never felt so special like that in my life.

KYLE: Yeah?

BRIGITTE: Yeah. So, to answer your question and the reason I showed up tonight... is so I can say... Yes, Kyle Monty, you can change your Facebook relationship status to *in a relationship with Brigitte Barnes*.

KYLE (smiles and nods): Sweet.

BRIGITTE bends down to kiss him and he pulls her onto his lap. NATALIE stares at them with her jaw open and she is disgusted.

BRIGITTE: Wait... do you want to change your status now? I have my iPhone, we can both do it together.

KYLE nods with a grin.

KYLE: Yeah.

NATALIE storms towards the two of them.

NATALIE: Ok, I'm pretty sure I just threw up a little in my mouth. You can't do that! You can't start a relationship by meeting each other for the first time and just deciding to be together just like that. Because of what? Some stupid messages over the internet? People don't do that! There is a process to this. You need to date, actually physically date. Get to know each other in person. You need to meet in person, because they could be 40 lbs heavier, or covered in blemishes that can be fixed up in pictures, or they could have no hair, or they could have no legs, or they could be psycho and you wouldn't know because you just jumped into things. I'm not saying there is anything wrong with any of those characteristics — except being psycho — but take into account that people on the internet are frauds! How do you know he doesn't just want a piece of ass?

BRIGITTE: Because we just updated our relationship status.

NATALIE: Excuse me.

Feeling frustrated, NATALIE walks away. TAMMY and MANDY exit the house and walk down the steps while NATALIE walks toward the front door.

TAMMY (O.S.): Hey, you guys, we're doing a consensus we need your opinions.

NATALIE's phone vibrates again (vibration noise is heard). She stops and stares at the MOTOROLA. She gently opens the MOTOROLA and reads the screen.

MOTOROLA: U SUCK.

NATALIE (yelling at the phone): No, you suck! You suck whoever you are!

MOTOROLA: I M UR PHONE. DUMBASS.

NATALIE screams in aggravation, closes the phone, and throws it off the porch into the front lawn. BRIGITTE and KYLE stare at her awkwardly and NATALIE quickly storms back into the house.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRYWAY – NIGHT

NATALIE enters the entryway breathing heavily and not sure what to do. Two guys walk down the entryway toward her. One stops and looks at the screen of his BLACKBERRY and looks shocked and disgusted.

BLACKBERRY GUY (disturbed): Sam. We gotta find Glenn. He is fuckin wasted and doing something he's going to regret later.

SAM: Why? What's going on? What'd he say?

BLACKBERRY GUY: He said anal has never felt so good.

SAM: As in giving?

BLACKBERRY GUY: No, Dude. *Receiving*.

SAM: What? How do you know?

BLACKBERRY GUY: He sent a picture.

BLACKBERRY GUY waves his phone in front of SAM's face.

SAM: Heh, guess he finally figured out he's gay. It's about time. Seems the whole damn world knew except him.

BLACKBERRY GUY: Dude, I didn't know. How do you know?

SAM: He sucked my dick once when we were drunk.

BLACKBERRY GUY: The fuck, dude?

SAM: What? It's not gay. I didn't do it to him... I don't think...

BLACKBERRY GUY: You don't think?

SAM: Dude, I was totally wasted. Shit happens... (worried) Uh oh, dude, does this make me gay?

BLACKBERRY GUY: How about we ask everyone their opinion on the subject? I'll send out a mass text for ya.

SAM: No, dude. Don't.

The two guys walk passed NATALIE. BLACKBERRY GUY starts to text on his phone while the other guy tries to take it from his hand. BLACKBERRY GUY starts to say out loud what he is typing.

BLACKBERRY GUY: *Sam sucked Glenn's cock. Does this make him gay?*

SAM: Fuck you, dude. I said I don't think I did.



BLACKBERRY GUY: Aaaaand – Send.

SAM: You asshole!

The two guys exit into the living room. Annoyed and frustrated, NATALIE shakes her head.

NATALIE (to herself): I'm out of here.

NATALIE turns around to see TAMMY and MANDY approach her.

TAMMY: Here Motorola-MySpace-Girl. I think you hurled this at me from the porch.

TAMMY holds out the MOTOROLA to NATALIE. NATALIE stares at it hatefully.

MANDY: We were going to spare you the embarrassing torture of having that thing, but we noticed you have a message. You probably need it.

TAMMY: Again, adorable. So we thought we'd return it. Have fun living your life from 4 years ago. And you're welcome!

NATALIE hesitantly takes the MOTOROLA. TAMMY and MANDY turn and walk into the living room. NATALIE stares at the phone. She closes her eyes and flips the MOTOROLA open. She opens her eyes and then reads.

MOTOROLA: U CANT GET RID OF ME. NOT WHILE U R STILL A LOSER.

NATALIE's face cringes at the phone and begins to text furiously on the keypad. As NATALIE's finger hits the keys the screen keeps flashing new messages at her preventing her from sending a message.

MOTOROLA: U CANT (flash) CONTROL (flash) ME (flash) I CONTROL U. (flash) LOSER. (flash) CONFORM. (flash) CONFORM! (flash) CONFOOOOORM!!!!

NATALIE looks at the screen bewildered and kind of scared of not having any control over her phone.

NATALIE: Wh...what is this?

MOTOROLA: LOOK 2 UR LEFT.

NATALIE hesitantly looks to her left to see a vase with a bouquet of flowers inside of it sitting on a small brown table.

NATALIE (smiling): Oh, Aw.

The MOTOROLA vibrates and NATALIE looks at the screen.

MOTOROLA: LOOK DOWN. DICK FACE.

NATALIE looks at the top of the table to see an IPHONE sitting next to the vase. NATALIE stares at the unclaimed IPHONE and looks around the entryway to see if it belongs to anyone. NATALIE notices she is now alone in the entryway with the MOTOROLA.

MOTOROLA: ITS URS STUPID. TAKE IT. CONFORM.

NATALIE stares at the IPHONE as its screen lights up on its own. NATALIE gets closer to stare at it. The IPHONE's screen acts the same way as MOTOROLA (i.e. no voice).

IPHONE: HELLO NATALIE. (flash) I AM YOURS IF YOU WILL TAKE ME.
(flash) I WILL BE KIND TO YOU. (flash) I WILL MAKE YOU POPULAR.
(flash) TAKE ME NATALIE. (flash) TAKE ME!!

The MOTOROLA vibrates and NATALIE looks at its screen.

MOTOROLA: DO IT. TAKE IT.

The IPHONE then vibrates and NATALIE stares at it.

IPHONE: TAKE ME!!

MOTOROLA vibrates. NATALIE stares at it.

MOTOROLA: TAKE IT!!

IPHONE vibrates. NATALIE stares at it.

IPHONE: TAKE ME!!

MOTOROLA vibrates. NATALIE stares at it.

MOTOROLA: TAKE IT!!



IPHONE vibrates. NATALIE stares at it.

IPHONE: TAKE ME!!

NATALIE stands there confused and overwhelmed as both the MOTOROLA and the IPHONE constantly vibrate. NATALIE closes her MOTOROLA. In a panic, she reaches her hand out to grab the IPHONE. She slowly inches closer to the IPHONE.

IPHONE: YES. YES. DO IT. TAKE ME NATALIE. (flash) I AM YOURS.

NATALIE gets closer to touching the IPHONE. Her fingers almost grasp it.

CAM (O.S.): Hey Natalie! I'm glad you made it.

Hearing the familiar voice NATALIE stops and looks up to see CAM HARTLEY.

NATALIE: Cam!

CAM HARTLEY, 24 years old, short brown hair, is attractive, personable and friendly.

CAM: Sorry I'm late. Huge accident on the highway, got stuck in traffic. Hope you haven't been here too long.

NATALIE (flustered): Oh, um, no, uh, I don't think so. Um, you know what, doesn't matter. You're here now. That's great.

CAM: You want a drink?

NATALIE: I would love one.

CAM: Awesome. I'll meet ya in the living room?

NATALIE: Yeah. I'll be right there.

CAM smiles at NATALIE and she smiles back. He walks by her and disappears into the kitchen. Her MOTOROLA vibrates again. Annoyed, she flips open the phone.

MOTOROLA: GRAB THE IPHONE U IDIOT.

NATALIE shakes her head as she stares at the MOTOROLA in disdain.

NATALIE: You know what? Fuck you. You're just a flip phone that no one cares about anymore. I'm done with this and done with you. Go hang out with whatever brand of phone kids aren't using these days. I'm sure you'll find you have a lot in common.

NATALIE wraps her hands around the MOTOROLA as it vibrates rapidly. NATALIE breaks the cell phone in half. She drops it on the floor and kicks the pieces under the table. The IPHONE starts to vibrate and NATALIE looks at the screen.

IPHONE: NOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!

NATALIE walks away from the IPHONE and into the living room.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

NATALIE sees CAM enter the living room from the kitchen entrance holding two red cups. CAM walks towards NATALIE and gives her a cup. NATALIE and CAM take a sip of their drinks and sit in two chairs across from the couch where the IPHONE GUY sits.

CAM: So, how's your night been so far?

NATALIE: Um. Interesting. Can I ask you something?

CAM: Yeah, sure.

NATALIE: Why don't you have a cell phone?

CAM: I did. I had a Nokia but I think it called me a loser. I don't use it anymore.

NATALIE: I think I know how you feel.

CAM looks at NATALIE and smiles, NATALIE smiles back and they both sip their drinks.

CAM: Have you met Glenn yet? I want to introduce you to him. This is his house.

NATALIE (sheepish, almost giggling): I think Glenn's incredibly busy at the moment.



CAM: Oh. Ok. Have you met anyone else then?

NATALIE: Um, somewhat. There's no one I really clicked with though.

CAM: Ah. Yeah, I'm not surprised.

NATALIE: Your friends seem to be antisocial social people.

CAM: Yeah, they are, that's why I invited you. You're nothing like these people.

NATALIE: Good.

They smile at each other again and continue to converse. Around the living room people mildly interact with each other, text on their phones, show others what is on their phones screens and continue to be antisocial social people. The music plays and someone decides to turn it up louder. After a few seconds of louder music the lights go out and the music stops. Everyone gasps at the sudden intrusion of darkness. The room is lit up by the screens of IPHONES and BLACKBERRYs. In complete silence people start to hide their glowing screens with their hands, or hold the screens toward their bodies. The partiers look at one another in the dark feeling exposed and expressing their sudden embarrassment. Without the music or the lighting to hide their antisocial sociality, people start trying to have a conversation. window concealing their glowing screens.

TAMMY: Um, uh... Uh... So, um.

SAM: Hi. Or, no, Hello. Err. What's um... I'm Sam!

TAMMY: The gay guy?

SAM: What? No! Maybe.

IPHONE GUY stares back down at his IPHONE and starts to text on the screen. Viewing his screen we see he types 'POWER IS OUT' and sends it out as a mass text. Everyone in the room's IPHONE or BLACKBERRY vibrates or makes ringtone noises. They all awkwardly look at the message they just received.

VOICE (O.S.) (yelling): OKAY, who's the stupid bitch that just texted me saying the power is out?

FADE OUT:

THE END.



Photos by Adam Wilson



CONTRIBUTORS

• **ANDREW BRIMMELL** has just started writing this year. His main interest is fiction.

• **LEILA FARLEY's** poetry has been published in *Ms. Guided* and *Paper Shell* (a UBCO anthology). She is a part-time student at Camosun studying anything that inspires her to write.

• **KIM FISSEL** is working towards an English degree so that she can teach high school English (as everyone knows that most authors don't get to write full time). She has been writing stories for as long as she can remember, but the legible ones only since grade 3.

• **TOM FOWLER** is currently studying English and Creative Writing at Camosun. He sometimes performs at Tongues of Fire, a local poetry reading at the Solstice Cafe, after drinking enough caffeine to give his cat a heart attack. The cat doesn't get any caffeine, so it's okay.

• **COLIN HENDER** is currently a Camosun College student with a bent towards Anthropology, specifically Archaeology. Colin lives in a small, quiet apartment with his small, quiet family, consisting of his partner Minako, daughter Myra and cat Ilsa.

• **EVA MASEK GRAHAM** (pseudonym) feels deeply connected with the landscape of Victoria (where she grew up). She has tried many things and had many adventures including being an assistant wine maker, hitchhiking across Canada, painting, and volunteering to do just about anything.

• **HR MCNEIL** (pseudonym) from the Bulkley Valley in Northern BC and is a student of English and Political Science at Camosun College. She aims to help readers understand the profound impact sexual assault has victims and believes that no survivor should feel silenced.

• **TRIS PARGETER** is a 57-year-old woman who just moved to Victoria (via Comox for four years) last summer, and since she is from Alberta originally, she has found the West Coast to be a real adjustment. She is a lover of words and authentic expression.

• **DEVON WELLS** is currently taking the Associate of Arts Degree in Creative Writing at Camosun College. He was born and raised on Vancouver Island and is a proud island boy. He mostly writes fiction and short fiction, and occasionally dabbles in drama.

EDITORS

• **DYANNA COPE** is a second year Writing student at the University of Victoria and a barista for a small cafe in downtown Victoria, allowing her to indulge in both her passions.

• **MELISSA HUDSON** currently works as a freelance writer. She is planning on writing children's books and perhaps a few a coffee table books. She graduated from the University of Victoria in 2010, with a BA in English and a minor in Professional Writing.

• **JASON MOTZ** attends the University of Victoria. As a freelance writer, he has been published in *Nexus*, *Martlet*, *Over the Edge*, and *Triathlon Canada*. He is currently working on a book about the history of Australian rock and punk music.

• **J. IRIBARNE** teaches at Camosun College where she enjoys working with emerging writers and editors.

• **LEILA FARLEY's** poetry has been published in *Ms. Guided* and *Paper Shell* (a UBCO anthology). She is a part-time student at Camosun studying anything that inspires her to write.

• **NANCY MACWHIRTER** is double majoring in Anthropology and English, which gives her a unique perspective on the creation of literature and its reception by audiences. She believes that art is a necessary human endeavour and should be accessible to everyone and anyone.

• **ADAM WILSON** has been on the editorial board of *Beside the Point* for the last three years and is an English major at Camosun College. In addition to editing, he also put in many late nights (and early mornings) coordinating the design of this issue.

• **DEBBIE GASCOYNE** has never grown out of reading children's books and playing in the garden and is shocked to discover that she has been teaching at Camosun College for nearly twenty years. When not teaching, she can usually be found with her dogs and her camera.

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

• AARON ALEXANDER

GEERAERT is a wandering artist specializing in digital media, drawing, painting and sculpture. Aaron mastered his software tools via long hours in dark rooms with caffeine and loud music. Projections of his artwork decorated the sides of various buildings in downtown Vancouver during the 2010 Winter Olympics.

• **MATEUSZ LEWCZUK** moved from Poland when he was 8 and now lives in Victoria. He enjoys making goulash from many different meats.

• **JAMES RONEY**'s most recent artwork works the performing arts of dance and theatrics into the bold wilderness of BC. It explores the dynamic human body as it follows the direction of a mind lost in the game of experience. In April 2010, James graduated from the University of Victoria with a BA in philosophy and writing. As summer passes, he lives for the time spent skimboarding Victoria's beaches and practicing judo – two pastimes which influence his eye for bodies in motion.

• **JOSEPH HOH**'s experience has been wide and varied since emigrating to Canada from Malaysia. His BFA (Honours) is from Windsor and MFA from the University of Victoria. He has taught at Camosun College since 2000, where he is the Chair of Visual Arts. In that time he has shown his work across North America from Staten Island to Victoria. He continues to be fascinated by the mixing and clashes of East and West, and finds great pleasure in the search for that "third space" in his own work and that of others.

• **JEREMY MYHR** elected not to provide any biographical information.

• **GHENGIS SHAWN** is a working artist in Victoria. He has been tattooing professionally for about two years, now full-time at Ascension Studios in Victoria, where he works with all elements of tattooing. He also enjoys painting large-scale canvas works, using light brush strokes and heavy colour patterns; most of these paintings are influenced by an interest in graffiti.

ARTISTS' WEBSITES:

Aaron Alexander Geeraert: <http://aarongeeraert.com>

Joseph Hoh: <http://camosun.ca/learn/programs/visart/hoh.html>

Ghengis Shawn: <http://shawnpa.blogspot.com/>

Contribute to *Beside the Point*!

- Send fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, or drama
- Send artwork or photography for use on our web site or in print
- Contact an editor if you have an idea for an interview or feature article
- Join our editorial committee
- Send us a book for review (we cannot guarantee a review in every case)

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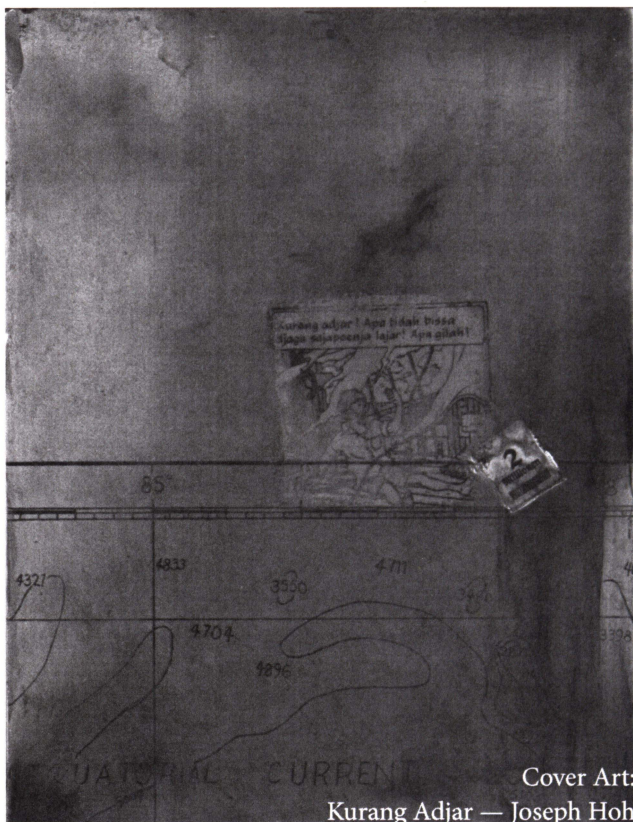
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SPECIAL THANKS

The editors of *Beside the Point* would like to thank all our contributors, artists, and readers without whose support we would never have even made it this far. We would also like to thank everyone who submitted work to *Beside the Point* over the last four years regardless of whether it was accepted or not. Your support and participation makes it all worth it. We hope that you continue to support us with your submissions to and readership of *Beside the Point* as we move forward into the future.

We would also like to thank all of our family, friends, and professional colleagues, of whom there are too many to name in the tiny space available on this final page. Thank you for your support, patience, encouragement and faith – we hope we haven't let you down. Thanks as well to the Black Stilt and Solstice cafés for hosting our various readings and launch events.

We hope you've enjoyed this first ever print edition of *Beside the Point*. If not, then we're sure we can think of ways to improve, but that will be for next time. As of now, however, that's all... beside the point.

— Adam R. Wilson



Writing from **ALL** directions.

“*Beside the Point:*”

not pertinent to the matter under consideration.

See also digressive, extraneous, immaterial,
impertinent, tangential.

Featuring the writing of

Kim Fissel
Colin Hender
HR McNeil
Eva Masek Graham
Devon Wells
Tris Pargeter
Leila Farley
Tom Fowler
Andrew Brimmell
... and others

