



2004 HIPPOCRENE



HIPPOCRENE

Washington University School of Medicine

HIPPOCRENE is a literary and art magazine by and for the students, faculty and staff of the Washington University School of Medicine. We accept submissions year-round, and publish roughly once per year. Issues are freely available to all current medical students, graduate students in the Division of Biology & Biomedical Sciences, and to many Medical School and Division faculty.

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Isaac by Gina Garvin
WUMS II

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Alley lit by Jason Hill
MSTP



Untitled
Oil on canvas

David Alvarado
Molecular Genetics

Tucker & Judith

Kate Schwetye, MA/MD

Tucker turned a corner as the gust blew past. Instinctively he blinked. *How acrid.* Neither cigarette nor cigar smoke, and far more pungent than the burning of ordinary leaves, this was not a smell he had encountered in Manhattan. It teased from his recollection a harsh, but not unexpected, disappointment. *Where have I known this before?* His steps quickened that they might drive the memory to surface. He would trace the path to its source.

The wind picked up just as he was hastened back to age twelve: sitting in the kitchen, listening to Judith. She detailed the bonfire from The Return of the Native, simmering cider as they spoke. "Tucker," Judith stated. "Do you think this is poetry or melodrama?" She flipped to her favorite passage and closed her eyes at parts she had memorized.

"Moreover to light a fire is the instinctive and resistant act of man when, at the winter ingress, the curfew is sounded throughout nature. It indicates a spontaneous, Promethean rebelliousness against the fiat that this recurrent season shall bring foul times, cold darkness, misery and death. Black chaos comes, and the fettered gods of the earth say, Let there be light.

"Hardy really wanted to be known as a poet," she said, shaking Jamaican allspice into the pot.

Tucker shivered in pure delight to picture the blaze. It roared and crackled, shooting sparks to make the furzcutters dance. Below, logs communed with one another as they fell to ashen piles. Above, flames leapt towards an otherwise utter blackness punctuated by a

thousand stars. Free of city lights, this sky was unworkable from the roof of their brownstone on West 94th.

Twenty years later, in the same darkness that befell the whole of the Northeast through blustery October twilight, the smell of burning recalled Judith reading Hardy aloud. Tucker toed the lip of an icy crevasse. His stomach turned in anticipation of his arrival. Soon he was nearly running. Strides struck pavement according to his old coach's mantra: "turnover, turnover, light on your feet, low to the ground. Use your arms, use your arms!" And there, as he forced himself to resist an urge to avert his eyes, was the door to #36 West 94th: ajar, motionless.

* * * *

Earlier that day he had been to the museum with a new girlfriend. He often went there to be alone among the crowds. He told Caroline - a writer herself - to bring along her notebook. They settled in the Far Eastern wing near a reconstructed teahouse. "What are you writing?" Tucker's girlfriend leaned over his shoulder. Her voice was partly absorbed by the murmur of the museum crowds, partly lost to the marble-bound space. Tucker's concentration was unbroken. She read what he wrote.

Once, Judith had been someone's muse. By chance she had slipped into the plane of focus for a lonely Swedish photographer: Erik, who was no more after a mere glimpse of the black-tressed Beatrice. The morning they met began in an ordinary way. As usual, sleep was ended by trucks and shouting outside her apartment on West 94th. *What a day!* She dressed quickly, leaving down her streaming hair. On a

whim she plucked a floppy violet hat off the coat stand. She had stolen it from the costume shop after the cast party for *Rhinoceros*.

Tucker was silent as she finished reading. He remained silent until they left the museum and returned to his apartment. She searched his face for an invitation to speak.

"Erik? I thought your father's name was Philip."

Tucker frowned. "It's a story. I don't know that there ever was an Erik. My mother lived in New York for several years before she met my father. She must have dated other men." He was barely breathing. In another life, his girlfriend thought Tucker would do well as a languid cat or a monk.

"How did you come up with the photographer?"

"Let me show you something," he said, and led her into his room.

* * * *

Judith's only child has posted the prints on his closet mirror that he might understand the once delicate nature of the mother's beauty. At twenty-five, she could silence a platform of railway commuters as easily as the maestro does the house at Lincoln Center. They had waited for her to breathe. She had startled strangers out of oblivion with expression distilled from raw emotion. No shadows yet reflected in the dark pools of irises, her orbits still impeccably buttressed by the high Polish cheekbones. The ballerina's figure intended its grace as she moved from exuberant to brooding in an instant and back again.

When he was writing, Tucker studied a close shot of her face. Her eyes were half-obscured by the sloping felt. He can see that she was thinking. Judith was always thinking. He drew courage from this observation.

* * * *

Judith had been working as a tour guide for Grayline. After Philip left, she was forced to find a job.

“Mother,” Tucker’s tone did not invite argument. “You must work.” Judith was pacing the kitchen. Her feet rustled the newspapers as she circled. “I saw some flyers you made the other day on the mail table. Are you thinking about teaching English as a Second Language?”

“Tucker, they cannot use me. I do *not* know how to work the computer, and everything is computer-based these days. I will tell you one thing: one hardly needs a computer to learn the English language! You need a living, breathing, English-speaking human across from you! I can do that. My college classmates always asked me to teach the review sessions. I would make an excellent tutor.” *Indeed*, he thinks. She was an editor before he was born.

“Mom, they didn’t offer you the job. Is that the case?”

Judith exhaled sharply. “Yes, that is the case. I did not get the job. Why, they didn’t say! We don’t have to learn English by computer. No one in the history of the English language absolutely needed to learn to speak by computer! It’s ridiculous. I do not understand these people.”

Much was incomprehensible to Judith. Tucker imagined her mind a cracked window, the shards of glass tethered to one another: not enough to reconstitute the unbroken pane, but

cohesive in its opacity. She did understand that she must work. “Ours is not to reason why,” she told herself.

“Mom, I know this is hard for you, but you’ve got to make a little money for yourself. Why don’t you try for the Grayline job? You’d be perfect for it. And no computers!”

Judith scheduled an interview at Grayline Bus Tours the next day and accepted the job after several days of deliberation.

Her task was to relate the history of Manhattan over two hours. The route traveled uptown on the East Side and downtown on the West. Grayline provided a script and its instruc-

tion manual for the tour guide: “it is important that you highlight the location of the Manhattan Indian *burial grounds*,” Judith read aloud to Tucker over the phone. He quipped back: “And don’t forget: let them get off the bus to roam *actual* sites of famous *murders*, and keep a close watch as they peer into the *homes of today’s hottest celebrities!*” They laughed.

Like most of what she read in those days, Judith found the script atrocious. “This is beyond banal. I can’t teach the history of Manhattan with this drivel!” She doctored it the night before or, more often,



Rack 'em
Acrylic on canvas

Rose Veile
Dept. of Human Genetics

extemporaneously. “My passengers deserve an accurate telling of the rise of the world’s greatest city.”

The day she was fired began with an argument at the intersection of Columbus and 76th. Judith had begun to deviate from the script. Eddie was driving that day. He had driven on her tours for several months now and knew that once she began to expound her theories, the whole mood would turn bizarre and even scary. Passengers complained, but Grayline couldn’t afford to replace its guides every six months.

It was October. They were headed downtown. From the top deck of the bus you could see twenty blocks. Judith spoke with an articulate rhythm in a tone colored with just enough emotion to make it real. “If you would please observe the rather haphazard distribution of structures over the height of 150 feet, that is 15 stories. It is a curious fact that in this city, where the price of ground per acre is an order of magnitude greater than virtually anywhere else in the country, that landowners should choose not to build a so-called skyscraper. Look ahead to downtown: one there, along this block, then one, two, three, six; across the street only two. We lack a pattern. Why?”

The passengers stared ahead in silence. Judith continued. “You must listen carefully to what I am about to say and not to repeat it to anyone. What I am about to tell you is privileged information, *if you know what I mean*, and you run a great risk to yourselves and others if you choose to share it. ‘Loose lips sink ships.’

“I have lived in Manhattan all my life. My husband bought and sold real estate for twenty years, and *I can tell you why there*

aren’t more skyscrapers, why we have these seemingly wasted properties. In the 1960s, the federal government corralled the people of the slums into underground caves, where they lived, worked, and bred for the government’s own purposes. To this day they have been kept. It is the truth, I have been to the caves and I verify that there is an entire population of the marginal, the destitute. The government pays those property owners to *hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil* and to keep their land clear of anything over ten stories.”

By now Judith was attempting to make eye contact, one by one, with each of the passen-

She latched onto Mr. Sykes by the arm. “Don’t move. I know you.” He wrenched out of her grip. By now, he was beginning to understand the gravity of the situation. “Ma’am, do you need a break? I’m sure the driver would stop for a moment.”

“Stop! What do you mean, stop? He is one of them!”

gers. Most were either too amused or too bewildered to respond. Some were merely annoyed at the waste of forty bucks. Eddie, the driver, shook his head. He hoped no one would challenge her.

“Excuse me, ma’am,” Arnold Sykes was touring on Grayline that day. Mr. Sykes was a civil engineer visiting the city from Fresno, California. Because he told the truth, he was quite good at his job. He earned respect, but not so much money. Three days earlier he had been commissioned by the California Seismic Safety Board by the Governor himself. He accepted this duty quite seriously, and read a great deal about the history of earthquakes in civilization and the evolution of building codes.

He had come specifically to Manhattan to observe firsthand the phenomenon that – although an island – the pattern of building reflected the distribution of enough bedrock to anchor the massive steel piles required of buildings over ten stories.

Judith shot him a curious glance. Ordinarily passengers weren’t as calm when they spoke to her.

“Excuse me, sir,” she echoed. “What is it?”

Mr. Sykes cleared his throat. “My understanding is that because only bedrock is able to anchor buildings over a certain height, its scarcity in certain locations prevents their construction.”

“Sir, do you challenge me? Is this a challenge? Thirty years ago we witnessed the exodus of poor people, the ghetto-dwellers, by the federal government. Where were you thirty years ago? Drinking poisoned water from the tap of your tract house and zapping brain cells under radiofrequency transmissions, I would fathom.”

The passengers sulked. Mr. Sykes was taken aback, but continued. California was full of aging radicals. He had not come across enough truly ill people to be able to tell the difference.

“I’m very sorry, ma’am.” Mr. Sykes used niceties when he couldn’t understand the social dynamics, even and especially when he did not feel particularly apologetic. “I serve on the Seismic Safety Commission in California, and I have been doing some research here which would suggest otherwise. Perhaps I could give you some references . . . you might be able to revise your tour.”

The others sighed at this pathetic attempt to reason with madness. His seatmate gave a little nudge. “What do you want from her, man? She’s crazy. Just don’t listen, let her do her thing.”

(continued on page 18)



Dilate
Oil on canvas

Dana Sacco
WUMS II

A Journey to the Laundromat

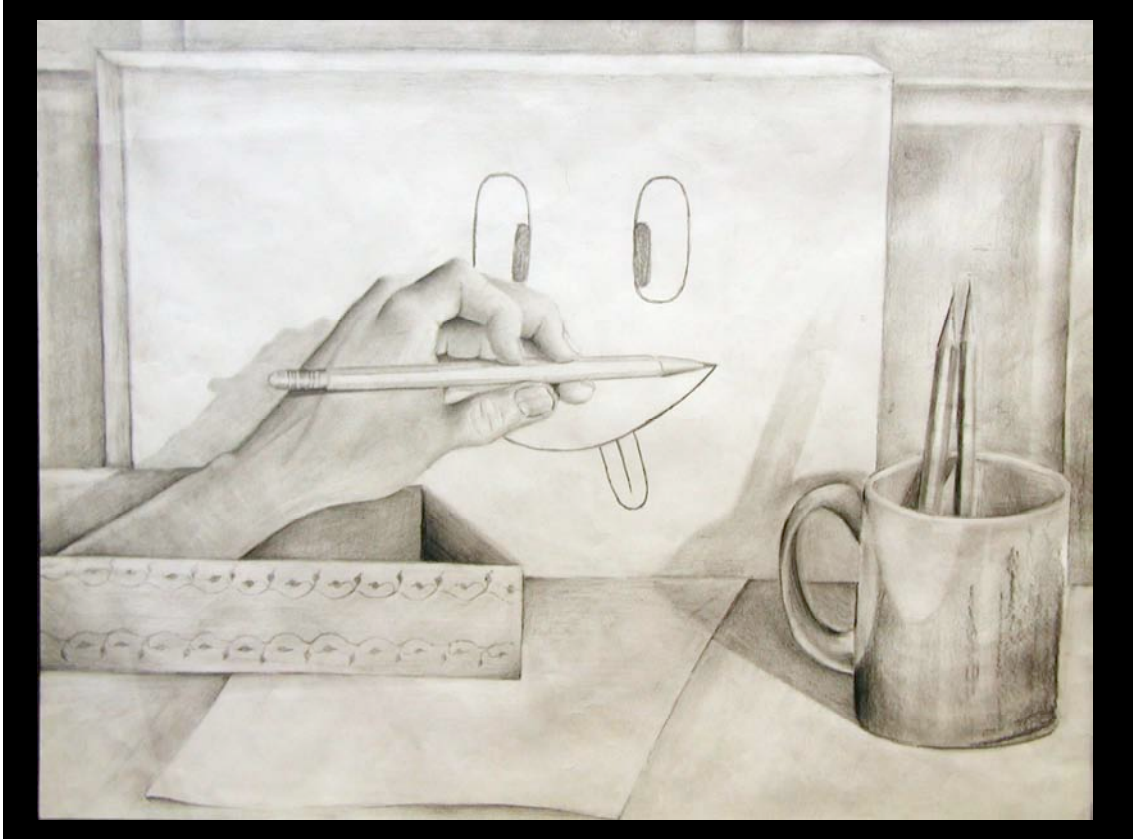
Christina Ahn, WUMS I

It is 1959. You stand in front of the sign in the hot Louisiana sun, and try to sound out the syllables as you squint through the condensation fogging up your thickly rimmed glasses. Eventually, you give up and rummage through your backpack for the tattered and well-marked English-Korean dictionary. “Laundromat,” you read in relief as you lift your big duffle bag stuffed with clothes with an audible grunt. You inwardly groan as you see two more signs, one with an arrow pointing inside and the other with an arrow curving around. With the dictionary’s help, you discover they read “white” and “colored” respectively. You don’t know that much about doing laundry, but you do remember how to separate your clothing. You enter the closest door and find an open machine. As you place your white clothing in it, you see a little girl with blond pigtails and brown freckles splayed across her nose who looks at you curiously as she plays with her dolls. She pulls at the edges of her eyes, making them thin and slanty as she giggles. You wonder if she has an eye irritation. While listening to the satisfactory hum of the washer starting, you glance around for an adjoining door to the colored washers. You realize that there isn’t one, and shaking your head over the inefficiency of the architecture, you exit the building and lug your bag to the other entrance. You see a dark woman with her coarse hair tied up in a blue handkerchief, humming to herself as she folds her clothes. She stops upon seeing you and stares at you without blinking. Trying to hide your discomfort, you hurriedly dump your colored laundry into the nearest available machine and flee the room. Outside, you take a deep breath and make a mental note to yourself to ask your new friend, Alex, if he knows of another Laundromat you can use. They can’t all be structured like this one. You rub your sore arms. You doubt you’ll be coming back to this one any time soon.



Untitled

Gina Garvin
WUMS II



Untitled
Graphite

David Alvarado
Molecular Genetics

English Essays

— after Rita Dove's *Sunday Greens*

I wish to see
pencil dancing.
I wish to finish
the essay. I wish
words pour out of
the pencil till the essay smells
like bread freshly from the oven. I wish

sentences to fill in
the blank. Thoughts wander
in the mind, nothing
but frustrations, all
with the fear
of an unfinished essay.

The brain dried
like a well without water,
while on the wall
the clock clicks on.
Pencil falls out of the hand and
the clutched pad.

I hunt, I ponder
the proper words for the essay.
Lost in thoughts,
and the time,
cold-hearted,
elapsing.

Xin Zhen
Molecular Genetics

Tree Dreams

Books on my shelf
are bird feeders for sparrows
that sleep in syllabi.
The pages taste
like crunchy leaves in autumn,
smell like old tree dreams.
The birds look for strong words
to carry away with them,
listen for bright bindings.
Danny stole a paperback
from the public library
in Oscoda.
That's what I told my friends
while we smoked cigarettes
on the elementary school roof
and chucked stones at squirrels.
Those long afternoons
were as fresh as mildew.
I dripped down the gutter,
soaked into the dusty baseball field,
kicked up grass clouds,
rained muddrops.

Someday I'll wash summer away,
with all the overdue books
and worn-out words.
Alone in the sleepy swings,
Danny and I drift up so high,
we have to swat the moon
before we can fall back down.
La lune, c'est tout ce que je connais.
The night opens its heavy windowpane,
and soft-winged sparrows flutter
up towards the stars.

Erica Freeman
WUMS IV



Metamorphosis

Stavros Bashiardes
Dept. of Genetics

The Patriarch

Wild animals

In western OK
Stallion donkeys often are
Used successf^ly to protect
Calves from coyote predator
(Motivation is obscure).

“As for speed and stamina, there is no one in the animal kingdom to match the wild ass as they are capable of marathon runs at a pace of about 24 km/h for as long as two hours, reaching a top speed of 70 km/h over short distances. The wild ass is a strong animal and a stallion will fight viciously for the possession of the mare in the mating season. The combatants rear up on their hindlegs, and kick and bite viciously. After mating one foal is born between July and September.” — *from a description of the Wild Ass Sanctuary, Dhrangadhra., India*

Autumn night

Fall night, winds blow brisk
O'er the plain of prairie grass.
Coyote howls pose risk,
Were it not for bites and kicks,
Compliments of Jack the Ass.

W. Thomas Thach

Dept. of Anatomy & Neurobiology

Lost love

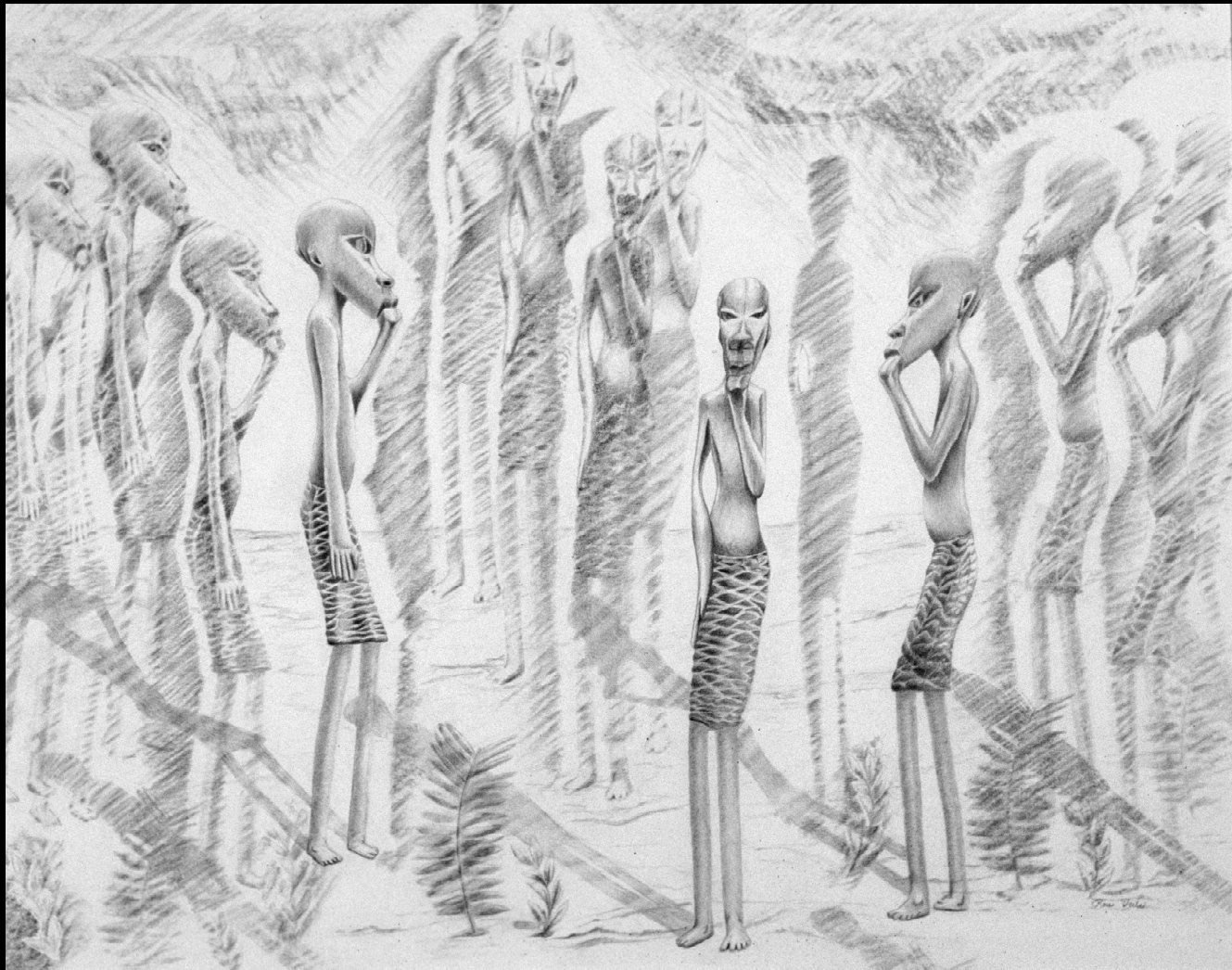
Why does a jack ass
Guard the herd of calves and cows?
Is it some love lost?
In his past some jenny ass?
Does he mourn a donkey lass?

Memory

When Jack sees a cow,
Does he see his Jenny?
In his mem'ry now,
Does she in his ass mind bray ?
Is his sleep to nightmares prey?

Passage of time

When Jack saves a calf,
Does he save a filial foal?
When he fights the wolf,
Does he insert in time's crawl
His predestined patriarch role?



Speak No Evil
Graphite

Rose Veille
Dept. of Human Genetics





"I hear you! You cannot let them continue to oppress the other half! You, yes you -" she gestured wildly at Mr. Sykes' seatmate - "why is it that Manhattan is so underdeveloped? You cannot explain! They have told you lies! Don't let them get into your head!"

By now, Judith was pacing the length of the bus. Several of the passengers squirmed in their seats, stealing glances towards the stairs and wondering what their tour guide might do if they tried to leave. "Eddie!" she cried out. "We must alert Eddie. Surely they have programmed this bus."

She latched onto Mr. Sykes by the arm. "Don't move. I know you." He wrenched out of her grip. By now, he grasped the gravity of the situation. "Ma'am, would you like to take a break? I'm sure the driver would stop for a moment."

"Stop! What do you mean, stop? He is one of them! We cannot ask anything of him, we cannot speak to him. We must wait and see where . . ." she trails off. "Where . . ."

Two burly brothers from Tennessee had been talking quietly about this strange woman. While Judith was attacking Mr. Sykes one had slipped down and described the scene to Eddie, who had radioed his supervisor at the Grayline office, who in turn called the nearest police station.

"This is not a matter for the law, sir."

"But she's attacked a passenger! Isn't that considered assault?"

"Wait a minute. She's attacked someone? How so?"

"I'm not sure, exactly . . . so I didn't see it for myself, Eddie's my driver and he -"

"Sir, if you are not an eyewitness I cannot send the police." The dispatch operator was

annoyed. She had more pressing crises to field; it was midday in Manhattan. "I'll put you through to the Department of Public Health, maybe they can assist you."

Eddie's supervisor feared for his own job. Eddie was right: he should have fired Judith at the first hint of trouble, but he hesitated. There would have to be a legal reason to fire her, and the suspicion of mental illness did not suffice. Assault, however, was different. *Click*. "Department of Public Health, how may I help you?" He intensified his original plea. "It's our tour guide, she's gone crazy - attacking passengers, threatening people. She's a threat to the public. I need some help here!" They agreed to send an officer to meet the bus downtown.

Eddie tried to be patient when his supervisor called back with the plan. "Why did you let her stay on? You knew she was crazy!" Just then he spotted the Health Department van and eased the Grayline up to the curb at Central Park West and 59th. *Here goes nothing*. "Uh, Judith, would you mind coming down here for a minute?" he called up to the top deck. Eddie motioned to the officer from the Health Department to approach using the back stairs.

Judith froze. "No one say a WORD." As the officer mounted the last step, stiffening at the sight of her wild black hair, Judith heard him gasp. She whirled about. "Alien!" she screamed, and lunged at him from ten feet away. Automatically, he moved to catch the 100-pound frame. She was surprisingly easy to carry down to the van.

Tucker was sketching when the phone rang that evening. He glanced at the caller ID: *Bellevue Hospital, New York, NY*. "Tucker?" cried her voice, small and far

away. "I need you."

* * * *

Tucker's girlfriend needed details. She was more a journalist than a *writer*, he thought. "Let's go by your old house." From his fourth-floor bedroom across Park Avenue, Tucker would gaze into the Metropolitan Museum of Art for hours. He wondered what it would be like to live there.

"The rhythm of our days," he recalled for her, "was driven by intellectual abstraction."

"And distraction?" she suggested.

Judith once assigned each of the children to have prepared a discussion of Dubliners over dinner. Tucker was in the ninth grade then. She was much brighter than any of his teachers. He didn't understand that her expectations for a boy of fourteen might be unreasonable; no adult had suggested this possibility to him. Nonetheless, he strove to meet her demands. This particular day, Judith began at noon cooking the corned beef, cabbage, potatoes and soda bread for an eight o'clock meal. Tucker walked six blocks to the city library. It contained a single, slim biography of Joyce in the Juvenile section. He devoured it like cotton candy, knowing it said nothing like what Judith wanted to hear. He dug furiously in his pocket for a quarter, heart pounding in his ears. The father of his one school friend taught literature at Columbia. Tucker rightly suspected that he would be happy to teach him about the author's life and works.

At seven-thirty he returned home, exhausted but armed with a thorough knowledge of James Joyce. To Judith's delight, her son entertained them throughout the night with an almost perfect recitation of his lesson from earlier that afternoon. However, it was

simply that: a recitation. Judith sensed his dispassion. It disappointed her. “You’ve nowhere to ground your trivia, Tucker. Where are you? Where do you stand, son?” *I did it for you. I thought it would make you happy.* For the longest time, Tucker hadn’t a clue why he so hated reading Joyce.

* * * *

When Tucker’s girlfriend wanted to know why Judith’s and not her photo was posted on his mirror, he explained: “These are the artifacts of Mother’s past. They help me understand her evolution.”

She nodded, eyes turned from his face. “What was it like?”

Tucker sighed. He could scarcely say the words, “my mother is sick.”

The one photo he kept of his father is a fuzzy image of Robert Redford in the film version of The Great Gatsby. He leans on his Dusenburg and wears a moleskin top hat. “A fake of a fake of a fake,” was scribbled on the back. “Tucker - age 7.”

“I knew she was sick two years after we married,” Philip told his son years later. He now earned his living as a professional gambler in Atlantic City.

“What happened? Couldn’t you do something about it?”

“Medication depressed her. She wasn’t herself. There were some bad side effects. Remember?”

“I remember you worked.”

“Tucker, I had no choice. We lost everything after the suit. She couldn’t handle it.”

“You let her quit.” *You didn’t care.*

He never called his father again. They spoke once more when Philip permitted a



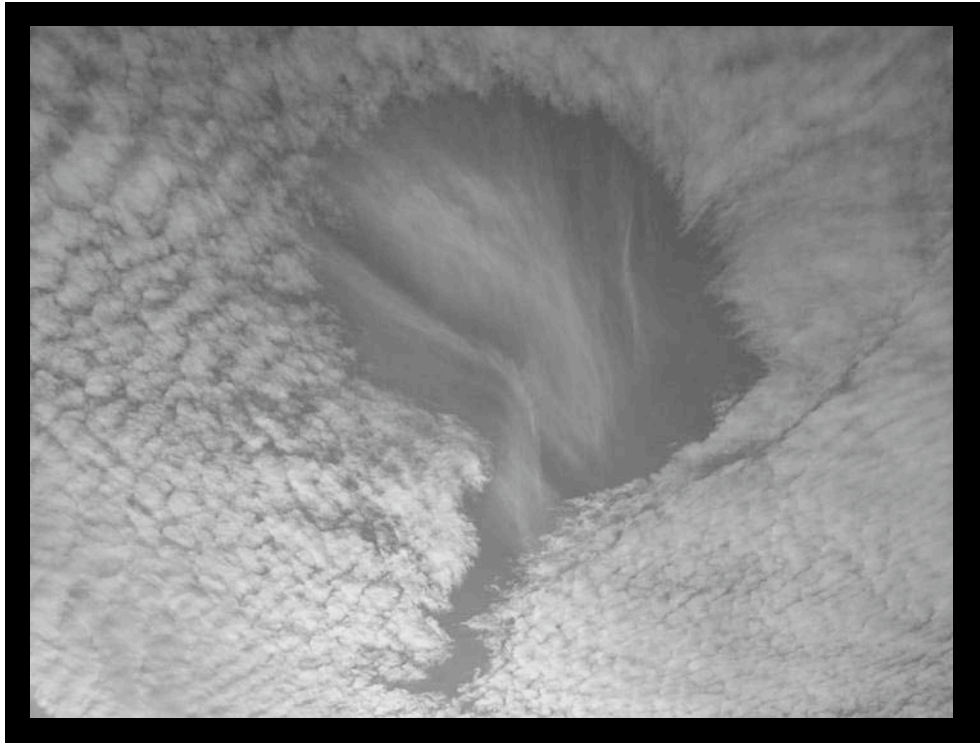
respite of vulnerability just long enough for him to dial the number from the house phone at the casino. “By the way,” he tossed out near the end of their conversation, “how is your mother doing?”

Tucker knew Philip would never return. His father didn’t deserve to ask such a question. *If he really cares, he’ll come to see for himself.*

“She’s fine,” he said before ending the call. *Come see for yourself;* her sixty-year-old appearance has grown outwardly theatrical. The once-silky black hair has frazzled to a lioness’ mane. The most expressive eyebrows seem to writhe under a force all their own as

she ruminates on Foucault and the day’s schedule.

He understood, in an intellectual sense, that she will be untouched. He continued to search. After ten years, even the most patient of teachers might weaken under the volatility that was Judith. For Tucker, however, this weakness was eccentric. He never felt the apathy that killed other people who cared for sick parents should they be too sensitive to the vacuum of gratitude. He never left her in the night. He never slammed the door in her face, though the hours-long rants could exhaust his defenses. During the more difficult periods he conjured demons of self-hatred



Cloud Games

Edward Esparza
MSTP

to sustain his concentration. On the contrary, he wanted to wrap his mother in layers of silk until the metamorphosis was over. *If it should ever be over.*

To see Judith the muse beside Judith the mother in later photos, he could appreciate how difficult it must have been to temper the youthful pride. When, he wondered, did such pride turn to mad arrogance? Trouble began beyond the horizon of the knowable past, long before his birth. It took its final shape one fall day.

* * * *

After Tucker left with that girl – *Caroline*, a sibylline name: carrion, char, charcoal – Judith called over to the Riverside Baptist Church to invite her friends to celebrate the completion of their new soup kitchen. Judith tossed aside her copy of *Tortilla Flat* and descended into the basement to fetch some red wine. She just recently found herself able to tolerate Steinbeck. She hoped Tucker wouldn't come back for a while. She had joined the gospel choir only two months ago, and gradually spent more and more of her time and money helping out Riverside Baptist.

Five of the choir members showed up at the door after a short while. "Welcome, welcome," exclaimed Judith as she flung open the door. "Please, do come in, make yourselves comfortable. Watch the newspapers." Clippings adorned the walls. Advertisements for book signings, literary reviews, and playbills lay scattered over a corner of the kitchen floor. Newsprint smeared the white plaster and white silk sofa. A violent barking shook the back window.

"Never mind, that's just Bella. Now, shall we celebrate? Please let's do share this wine,

there is plenty for all." Judith uncorked two of the bottles and began pouring into the plastic Dixie cups. "To what will we toast? Of course: to our new kitchen, that there might be fishes and loaves for the multitudes!" The guests nodded in agreement and sipped their wine.

"I want to tell you about my father. He was a fuse magnate. Magnanimous. A great soul." Little by little, Judith's face took on a strange and disturbing expression, her half-grimace a poor veil for vague terror. She began to speak in a low and unfamiliar tone.

"Consider, gentlemen, the simplicity of the physical fuse. A piece of ceramic. This ceramic has been entrusted an extraordinary task: to prevent the deadly electrical fires that begin at a single node in the reticulum of copper wires beneath the streetside brick veneer. As we all know, reasonable levels of current are conducted by a copper wire with little resistance. For example, when the entire current through the circuit is drawn by a single incandescent bulb. As more is demanded of the conduit, that is, as more lights and appliances are consumed, the copper resists the new load and generates heat energy. And as we waste energy in the form of heat, conductance suffers proportionally. We understand this phenomenon as 'overload.'"

"But wait!" an older man replied. Judith saw his skull opened to reveal a living brain, a mind breathing with ideas. He understood the mechanism of the fuse and is eager to question Judith's proposal. "Why do you need an extra device? Why not just alter the wires themselves, use another material that doesn't heat as easily, or insulate to accommodate higher levels of current? Then you wouldn't need an extra device."

Judith had already rehearsed her

response. She nods slowly, pauses and stares past her tribunal as if in deep consideration. "My dear fellow, you are correct in your assumption that resistance to overload is an intrinsic property of elemental copper. One could and some do alter the conducting material. Many smaller companies and lone electricians have attempted this solution, but it forces a compromise of the material's elegance. Remember, the very low resistance of elemental copper is contingent on a reasonable load of current. By altering the property of this material, you – in essence – throw the baby out with the bathwater."

His idea dismissed, the man turned silent. Judith was undaunted. Her voice crescendoed.

"Now, the copper itself never ignites. Indeed, the locus of fire is born as our overtaxed wire brushes a timber stud. This poor wire already glows red with heat energy and cannot help but singe the neighboring wood fiber. A singe becomes a small flame, a small flame becomes a large flame, a large flame replicates into a multitude of cooperative flame, unreachable in the hollow depths until they have consumed the core of the studs – collapsing the skeleton of our walls – and begin to lick the innermost layer of plaster. A house fire is underway.

"Thus, at the gate to every circuit must lie a fuse. It is the password, the fulcrum, the threshold between the permissible and the devastatingly unbridled current that generates enough heat to spark an uncontrollable fire. Without the fuse, the American landscape would remain as dark as it ever was."

She saw the young tenor from the third row crouching in the corner. A small rustling escaped into the space around him. "What are you doing?" she cried. "What have you

got in your hand?” Suddenly he sprung back with a yelp, clutching his wrist and waving the flaming sleeve above his head.

“Fire!” He ran to the kitchen to extinguish his jacket. The smell of burnt nylon was terrible. “Take off your jacket at once,” Judith ordered him. “I will not have it in my house. You are trying to send me a signal. I don’t know what it is but I banish it. Out, out!”

“Damned spot!” completed the older man. He sought recognition in her face.

“No!” Judith’s voice became shrill. “None of the doublespeak! You are not you, your voice is not your voice, I know that line.”

The guests were beginning to tire under the tension. “Judith,” the young tenor piped up, “can we take your dog for a walk? I think he needs to go out.”

“It’s not a dog, it’s Bella. *She* is not a dog. She is my companion. You see? She’s jealous of you all, she’s jealous that you get to be in here while she stays outside. I don’t know why I even let you in. You drink my wine, you make fires in my house. You have something against me! I think I’ll let Bella in and she’ll let me know whether you may stay or not.” Judith walked over to the back door and pressed her nose against the glass in a rather doglike manner. The Labrador, normally a lethargic creature, perked at his owner’s attention and began to scratch and paw at the screen. “I think she wants in,” she said. Her tone suggested triumph. She opened the door.

“Bella! Come in and tell me what you think of my guests.” The dog sauntered into the room, sniffed in the direction of the tenor’s burnt jacket, and trotted down the hall towards Judith’s bedroom. “There you have it. She says go. Go! You are no longer welcome.”

She opened the door to the hallway and motions for them to leave. Confused, the five

gathered their things and exit into darkness. They stumbled across down the front steps of the brownstone. The same forty-watt light bulb had remained in its socket, burnt-out, for ten years. No one had yet taken pains to change it.

* * * *

Tucker is a block from #36 West 94th. The burning deepens in harmony with his fear. *Please, please let it not be hers. Please.*

Almost there. How strange, the silence.

He cuts the corner of Columbus and 94th and breaks into a true sprint. His knees spring higher with each stride. He feels out of his own body. *This is unreal*, Tucker tells himself, and accelerates. Stops. The door to #36 West 94th? Ajar, motionless. *What else, Tucker? Look.*

Ahead, smoke billows from the first-floor window of the brownstone. It puffs in viscous cohesion. The column of gray ash tends to pull itself, however unwillingly, from inside her room.

Unable to face the horror of what he might find inside, Tucker marvels at the phenomenon before him. He finds it beautiful. He takes a breath and steps forward to enter.



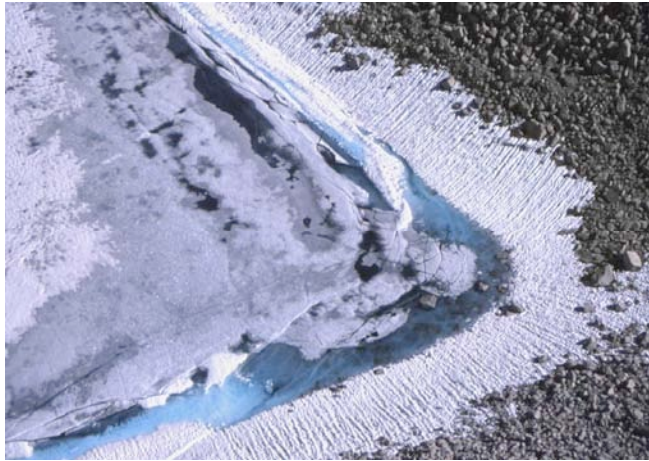
View from Eads Bridge

Karla Marz
Biochemistry

Animal Vegetable Mineral

There's a tadpole in my chest
A howly amphibian infant
Funny how these things can change
By the hour, minute, second.
Just grow your legs and get it over with,
Or don't,
I don't care,
Evolution is beyond me -
I'm not very good at classifying, you know,
My mind does not work in
Family, genus, species.
What does it mean to be of land or sea?
Why not be anything we want,
We can be
Animal, vegetable, mineral
Pigeons
Or
Styrofoam cups
Or
Celestial bodies
Or everything

Shana Kusin
WUMS II



Frozen Lake Near Mt. Russell



Ice Abstract I

Damon Vincent
Emergency Medicine



Metastasis
Oil on canvas

Karmella Haynes
Molecular Genetics

Clichés untold

Jason Hill, MSTP

Have you ever had a feeling stuck to the inside of your head? A thought trying to free itself. A thought that doesn't belong amidst all the order, the structure, the right angles and square projections of your mind. Beating around inside like a helpless ladybug accidentally caught in a strip of old flypaper left hanging on the front of your organized, labeled, meticulously clean pantry. An irrational emotion rationing off the rational thoughts you live by, leaving you this unbalanced ratio of senses.

I saw you, your splendor, your skin soft and tender, engendered in my mind thoughts of sweet September. This stranger, pretender, pretenses defend her, let me hold you together in my mind, surrender.

But no matter how much you will it, you just can't keep this damned ladybug still. She refuses to fit into the complacent background of your cerebral kitchen. She flaps and flails, makes ripples in the smooth waves of mental quiescence. She demands attention, like a hungry child pulling on his mothers faded apron. Pulling at the strings with such disdainful passion that it distorts the shape and integrity, the character and complacency of the fibers of the cloth itself.

Eyelids held in flutter, a hummingbird's lover, painted blue like an ocean to float in, get smothered. Warm waters, slow tides, surface ripples to ride, and abysmal abysses cold and deep down to hide, in the cool, in the dark, in the sleek bleak of stark raving mad for their part where we finish the things that we can't bare to start.

Because you can only pretend for so long that you don't hear it. That those old decorative pots hung on aged nails have always made noises. Always clattered and clinked and clanged against the wall. That the strings never hung loose, and the nagging child came with the apron. Eventually the nails will come free. Eventually the strings will break and the apron will fall to the floor in a crash of old decorative rattling. Eventually you will have to admit.....ladybugs.

Oh Siren, Osiris, Sphinx's gaze toward the Tigris. Your gaze cut right through me collect the pieces like Isis. My eyes they're in crisis, aesthetic conjunctivitis; you got under my skin and slid in like a virus. My words once tendentious (they) now sow the seeds, of pretentious disease, infectious with these passions non-prophetic, pathetic, poetically anti-septic, quarantined on my knees. Stay back I can't cage this, keep back I'm contagious, my God help me please.

And when you do admit you will see what lay behind those old copper pots still silently ringing on the floor. You will see the layers of old wallpaper, one smacked right on top of the next on top of the next. You will see the faded and clashing colors the changing lithographic styles and stencils that morphed through the years. You will see that small hole tunneling deep through layer after layer that let the damned ladybug fly in in the first place. And in the ensuing silence and solitude you will find momentary peace and fleeting purity. For you know your serenity is only a semi-colon; the rest of the sentence is already written in those layers of old clashing wallpaper.

I see the Death of my depth, but before I stand here bereft, I will take the soul route laid before me that's left. And so I'm quelling this yearning, I'm spurning the burning, I'm turning my head toward the light never learning that life's too profuse to preoccupy with false truth predilection recuses itself, same old bullshit excuse.

And so you paint the wall black as eclipsed day and sterile as anti-septic night. And in it you see no reflection of an old withered tree reaching out, but with roots too deep to let it grow anymore.

I Forgot to Remember

Love ephemeral
Spirits, faces, voices
Float in and out of my periphery
Some linger, leaving fingerprints on long forgotten days
Some touch lightly, then quickly disappear—
a foggy breath upon my windowed thoughts

And all the days I walk, as in a dream
At times a blind observer, detached and hovering, invisible
At times a vibrant body, impassioned with the light of life and pulsing
purple in the neon glow of sense

Blinking in and out of awareness
Dreams become memories
Memories become dreams
And reality is both

Sirens scream and tires squeal along the outskirts of my hearing
Torrid dreams of blood, betrayal, bitter hatred
Tear the darkness of life born to death—and therefore not quite living, yet
not vacant of existence
Touch, sensation, joy—all a transient fantasy

Is nothing real?
Spiritual unity—unending quest or fundamental truth?
Answer to a question never asked
Search for meaning non-extant

I feel for the light switch that was never there

Anna Woodbury
WUMS I



Catching Sundown

A. Burcu Babaoglan
Developmental Biology



Lindzy's Tongue

Robin Matlib
Molecular Genetics

Chili Hot Chocolate

Drop ruby chili peppers
Into a pan of boiling water.
Capsaicin fumes curl up to singe your throat,
Fill your eyes with surprise tears.
Let the hulls perk in their honey-hued liquid.
Melt the thick-tongued chocolate;
Draw curlicues with your spoon.
Infuse with chili-water and bring
To a bright simmer, with cinnamon.

There's fall spice in this early-dark evening:
Rotten leaves squish underfoot,
Smoke and wet wood season the breeze,
Fog drips amber from the streetlight.

This is a night to read a poem aloud
To let "menace" and "halcyon"
Drip languid over your tongue.
Sip chili hot chocolate.
Let pepper-zip nibble your lips,
Let cocoa form a slick film along the roof of your mouth.
Savor the unlikely burn
Where you also find sweetness.

Erica Freeman
WUMS IV

