# Wisteria



**Spring 2016** 

## TO PRESIDENT CHAPDELAINE

Jake Rogers

Welcome to our happy home, where tolerance and wisdom grow, a place where both these flowers bloom as leaves fall to an autumn tune. Here, the descending summer sun means that we have just begun again to craft and build ourselves and do our best to do it well. So it is for us, and you, to make the most of minutes few; to grow our gardens full and lush until we move on when we must. But for every year that we return, lead us all to love, and learn, and we will do the same in turn.

## Wisteria Literary Magazine

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Wisteria features Centaur, Avenir Next LT Pro, and Blessed Day typefaces.

The front cover image is Flower Path and the back cover image is

BLOSSOMS, both by Layne Sheehan.

These are the first and last published words I'll have in this magazine after four years of working on it, so I guess I had better make them count. Wisteria never felt like a job or a chore to me— it always felt like home. It was the first place on campus where I felt like I actually belonged, and I don't think I can ever thank Lloyd and Iris enough for dragging me into this dysfunctional little family. I loved every second of it.

I can't really ever express how grateful I am to everyone who helped me out this year to make this fantastic magazine happen. To everyone on staff—from our lovely managers to my assistant editors to everyone who took the time to review submissions—to the amazingly patient Dr. Gottfried, to everyone at Hood who submitted art in the first place, to everyone reading this—Thank you.

You're the true champions here. Really, I'm just the person who sends out millions of annoying texts and emails.

I hope you take the time to enjoy this issue of Wisteria. Thank you,

#### Alex Burns

Wisteria is the Hood College creative arts journal, made solely by the student body. Submissions are collected twice a year, reviewed in an unbiased manner and then formatted.

#### TABULA RASA

#### Taylor Ann Polito

Fog seizes my repose

slinking meticulously through the crevices and leaks of marrow in bones so jaded -

I have become disturbingly infinite beneath the devil in the details of your body, the ugliest candid of paternal dysfunction.

Your sin devotes itself to my skin.

I feel it hard in meek, microscopic paradoxes:

the intensity softening, with the moon wading along cool blue ocean-capes,

laughter of kindling on hot chocolate right-nights,

ivory dresses, and pride.

Strengthening, with the tidings and vignettes cradled within wooden patchwork,

the droning of words tense against the universe,

the misuse of misguided souls.

Overtaking, with the footsteps rhythm unpredictable against mahogany.

Did you think I would forget:

crystal blue bloodshot eyes, loose motion unending, eyes averted — shadows churning against sun-bleached walls?

The blinds wide open cold December night, falling to the ground with ease.

You transform now in recess: booming in every white noise humming a melody so cloying — so condescending

entwining rhythmically with the residuals of a soft heart made hard.

You are unrelenting.

And I –

gripping sheets striped pink with palm trees, anything to distract from the movement – I

am unforgiving.

You will not possess me.

You will not destroy me.

And I will never remember what I choose to forget.



## THE BAILOUT, SEPTEMBER 2008

#### Brittany Whitham

Another dinner in my office.

"Do you have to work tonight again?"

I've got work to do. The market isn't going to take care of itself.

"Did you hear me?"

Maddie looks just like her mother. So beautiful. But where are my features? Does Maddie even have my features or are those someone else's? What did my wife's gym trainer look like back then?

"Here's your dinner, Dad."

<u>Paternitytests.com</u>. How the hell could this cost \$200? Maddie is a spitting image of her. But where am I in all this? Where's that picture frame of the four of us? Maddie's nose is different, but it's not mine. Same with her eyes—her beautiful hazel eyes. Do they know they're beautiful? My wife definitely doesn't need anyone else telling her she's beautiful. I bet she gets enough of that already.

Do they really expect anyone to pay \$200 to raise a family of their own with the current market trends? I guess Pops could always help me pay for it, but then I'd have to tell him why. Just shake it off. It is what it is. Where was I? The damn portfolio.

2:00 am already. Holy shit, does anyone ever use these couches? I don't think those expensive throw pillows have moved in months. I hate the smell of that dog. Were those footsteps or the microwave rattling? Shit, she's up.

"Are you coming to bed soon?"

"I'm going to eat this first."

"You know, it would be nice if you ate with the kids every now and then. They miss you."

Beep. Beep. Beep.

"Matthew was talking at dinner about a new friend he met at school, and Maddie's grades are slipping again."

Where do we put the forks again? Did I leave one in my office?

"... listening? ... care anymore... cookies... Goodnight."

The knives are somewhere around here. The chicken's still tender and matches the rice's spices perfectly. Despite it all, her cooking still trumps my mother's. I wish things could be like they once were. The cookies still taste the same, though. I think she's back in bed. She's upset, but that's easy to shake off. It is what it is. Maybe I'll just sleep in the guest room tonight; it's closer to my desk down here anyway.

Beep. Beep. Cold showers are the best way to wake up, but I wish she wouldn't use the hot water



every morning. Remember when we used to shower together? Good, she put my breakfast in a bag again. She just expects me to be running late now? Oh well, just shake it off. It is what it is. The stocks are supposed to come up today, and I placed my final trade in last night. This is what we've been waiting for.

"You're sixteen minutes late again, Johnson. What is it going to take to get you here on time? A shift change? You know the janitors could use some help at night. Maybe it'll do you some good."

"But, sir, I have a family."

"Well they are obviously a major distraction for you. If you want to keep your job, I suggest rearranging your priorities." Yes, your divorce was the best thing that ever happened to you, but just get off my ass. It is what it is.

"I'll take that into consideration, sir. Did you see the portfolio from last month? The revenue increased by

5% with quarterly dividends also on the rise."

"It could always be better, Johnson." Finally, he's leaving. "... not good enough."

My Pops used to say that. Still fucking does. I'm the only one of my siblings actually using the degree he paid for, though. He sure does bring up that debt a lot. At least I'm not still living at home. My idiot brother couldn't provide for a family if he tried, but how could Mother ever turn away her precious baby?

9:30 a.m. Chaos.

"How was work today, honey?"

The news surely should've given her a clue as to how work was today, honey. She could just Google that. There's no use in talking about it now. Maybe it'll get better tomorrow. Just shake it off. It is what it is.

"Here's your dinner, Dad."

What was left of the market? Every stock needed to be checked, every portfolio.

"Um, Dad? I met a new friend yesterday; did you hear about that? He's gonna come over to play catch sometime... And um, well... I was wondering if you and I could practice sometime?"

There's not enough time in the day.

"And I'm goin' to try out for the wrestling team next year. Pappy thinks I could get pretty good."

You know what? I think Pappy still owes us money. I'll have to talk to her about getting her dad to pay us back. If only the stock exchange were open 24/7, then we might be able to have enough money to make it to tomorrow.

"I love you, Dad."

Love. Working my ass off to give this family a good life. That's love, and money runs the world. It runs my family too. They don't appreciate the work I do for them. It's all for them anyway. How come none of them see that? Now where was I? Just shake it off. It is what it is.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Another cold shower. This one has to be quicker. I'll leave early today. I've got to be prepared for anything. I'll just get some coffee at the office.

It's only 7:49! How is the parking lot full already? Was I actually supposed to get here earlier?

"Hey, Johnson. Did you hear the news?"

"You mean the DOW at the end of yesterday? Of course, Jerry. Don't be stupid."

"No, I think the government is going to do something big today. The boss suggested we personally invest in AIG."

"Alright, thanks for the heads up. I'll look into it."

How much do we have left? Only 40,000 of the original I00,000. She has no idea that I put our retirements in here, but she wouldn't be smart enough to know what to do with it anyway. This one is worth the risk. I'll trade it first off. Jerry has always been smart.

9:30 a.m. Chaos.

"Hey, honey. The market crash is all over the news. Are you doing okay? Luckily we didn't have our stuff invested with AIG right? ... Do you think we could eat dinner together tonight? As a family? Maybe it'll help ease your stress."

The office door creaks when it closes. I should put some grease on that. Lots of work needs to be done to the yard. The front door should probably be repainted. Would realtors say we needed new furniture? We would definitely have to get rid of that dog smell.

"You work late and never talk to the kids anymore. Do you even know Maddie is being considered for Special Education services? I've been to three ..."

How much is that going to cost? Will more doctors' visits be required? Those fucking insurance companies.

"We wanted to get you something special for your birthday tomorrow."

Is she seriously spending more money at a time like this?

"If you start helping with driving the kids... go to the gym again."

Stop it. Just stop. Why can't you just see that I'm trying to provide? Is Maddie even mine? She couldn't be if Special Ed. is being considered. Who's the father?

"Honey stop. That hurts. John!"

Nothing can hurt more than how she's hurt me. No one could ever love her like I do. Do you think money grows on trees? I've done too much to watch you throw it away with another gym trainer! Just shake it off. It is what it is.

How did Matthew get into my office again? Stupid kid. He's just as bad as his mother. Where's Pappy to save you now? Your mother isn't worth this hassle so stop trying. Just shake it off. It is what it is.

And look at Maddie! She looks nothing like me. Has it been going on for ten years? That's how old she is, right? Look at her nose! It's not mine, and it's not yours. Whose the hell is it? She's not mine! I can't do this anymore! Just shake it off. It is what it is.

Okay, this letter opener needs to be cleaned. I wonder if there are coupons for realtors? And how are we going to get that dog smell out of the carpet? What's that noise?

"Sir, step away from the bodies."

"You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford..."

I wonder if they'll let me check my portfolio. I hope she cleans up the house by the time I get home. Work tomorrow is going to be rough. Maybe I can quit. I'm smart enough to start my own company.

"Homicides..."

Just shake it off. It is what it is.

## **DOUCHE CANOE**

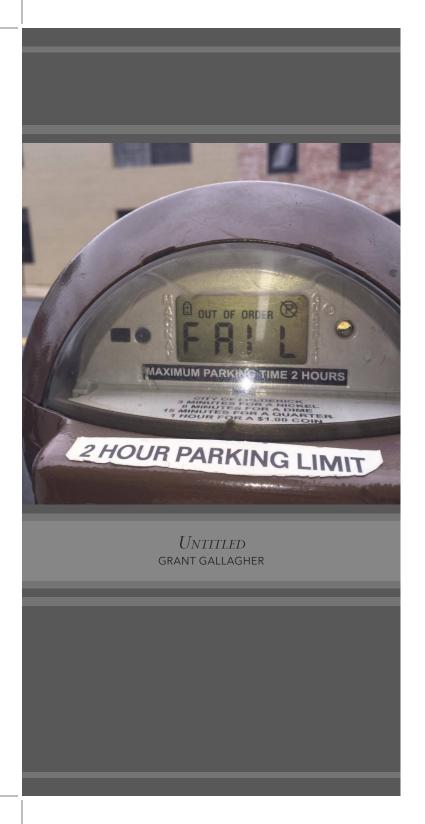
#### Laura Shriver

You dream you are in a canoe paddling, only darkness above, the water becomes more and more treacherous as it carries you into the unknown (who the fuck knows?) sloshing about, smelling like... flowers? You see small fish, maybe piranhas, gather around your makeshift boat, as they nibble away at the seamsbut no, they are not piranhas, they are small dicks. Small dicks dicking around like they belong there. Like you don't.

You try to fight off the dicks with your paddle but as you thrash around, some of the water gets into the canoe— it isn't water at all, but feminine sanitary solution. Don't ask yourself why you know this, it's a dream, remember.

— Damn it, your shoes. Your brand new fucking shoes.

That's what you get for paddling a douche canoe.



#### **EVENT HORIZON**

#### CARLY BERKOWITZ

Cellophane smiles pressed tight over mouths,
to seal in the freshness.
Ah, the life of a student!
I part hope,
2 parts equal despair, and stress.
Tell me that one again about the bright future,
and the sunglasses?

They've been whispering lies to me since I was a little girl.

Like that old joke about being good, and covering up, and being quiet, and little slips of paper, written by my elders and betters, are the keys to MY kingdom of heaven.

Make up a new one, about how I'll never be happy, never succeed, never make the cut, without your validation hanging on my wall.

Promise me a future of more than just paycheck to paycheck civil liberties.

Promise me a tomorrow more than just a repeat of today.

Promise me a grip, because I'm losing mine.

no old scars.

## A LETTER FROM MY OLD DOG

#### EILEEN RUDNICK

"Woof! I mean Dear best buddy, I never told you I was grateful. You chose me from all my barking cousins in the shelter. scooped me from the concrete floor. pressed me against your warm body. I heard your heart beating and whiffed your scent covering my puppy smell. I fell in love—you were mine.

Days followed months
followed years.
We worked we played
we walked we went riding
we bonded, devoted.
No worries—time stopped.

Now I'm old, older than you. Time will stop for real for me tonight. See my limp, feel

the lump beside my
hip. I hurt. I'm
scared, but mostly
I have to find
a way to say
thank you. Thank you
for loving me when
I peed on the rug
when I drank your
coffee and made
you walk me in rainstorms.

Do you feel it?
I'm going now...
licking
the tears from your
face on my snout
Goodbye..."

She loved me, she left me but she taught me:
Love without strings.
Give without fear.
Live energetically.
Die dreamily.

Blossoms layne sheehan



## UNTITLED ABBEY MCALISTER



## **FISHLESS** JAKE ROGERS

There used to be a bridge here. The gray river is unforgiving, golden fish fly by

like sushi-still frames of memory There is no one to hear his tune. in the restless footage of our lives.

A young man in a fisherman's hat on both sides of the river. sits crosslegged holding a pole on silky black rocks;

there used to be a bridge here but he has had to adjust. He hums to himself.

The delicious fish escape him as the sun goes down

There used to be a bridge here, but the river just keeps on running.

### "LOVE THY NEIGHBOR..."

(MARK 12: 3-31)

#### EILEEN RUDNICK

She called me over as neighbors do to watch her dog. She had to go to the hospital not for her but for him her last, her only son the other gone to cancer some thirty years before. They found it in his bone broke his arm in basic training. Cancer took her boys' father too. Does alcoholism cause cancer? I sent her to her boy with hugs, with prayers, certain it would be okay because we said so we said so, we said so... I walked the dogs mine and hers I paced the rooms hers not mine Leukemia's curable, I read online. She calls to tell me. His doctor's scared. "Should I take him off life-support?" she asks me. The living will says she must.

### **SOMEWHERE IN TIME**

JAKE ROGERS

a small, smiling,
blonde-haired boy
sways back and forth
in a laundry basket,
pretending it's a pirate ship.
The plastic basket
cannot bear the force
of his imagination
and suddenly it snaps.
His weight takes him
through the starboard side
and his skull smacks directly
into an adjacent radiator
and cracks open.

This boy is only a memory now; a combination of words that produce an image in the mind, intangible to the physical world where you find this.

Cut my hair short enough and you could still see the scar on my scalp

## **DEPRESSION**CARLY BERKOWITZ

Criss-cross cuts behind doors, long barred. Every morning stared-down takes so much heart, And saying "no reason" heals no old scars.

Each night, hollow aches accompany the stars, wanting just to sleep, the soul to depart.
Criss-cross cuts behind doors, long barred.

Each day, false smiles, preserved in small jars, while people passing are distant, apart. And saying "no reason" heals no old scars.

Echoes of life, passing faces and cars, livid ghosts in a dream, playing their part. Criss-cross cuts behind doors, long barred.

I'm told to move on, drop old repertoires, too good for this pain, too clever, too smart. But saying "no reason" heals no old scars.

A skulking, ever-presence, never far, digging in deep, cutting into my heart, Criss-cross cuts behind doors, long barred. And saying "no reason" heals no old scars.



THE LIGHT OF MUSIC
ABBEY MCALISTER

### THERE'S A CERTAIN SHADE OF SPITE

#### CARMELITA UGARTE

There's a certain Shade of spite Silent Corpuscles— That duplicate, like the Fall Of Subconscious Drops—

Black-and-blue Faults, mark Us— We feel no breath, But internal sentiment, Where the Judgments, Live—

All may see it—Zhe—She—You
All may hear it—Them—Ella—
Tú
I wonder—Can We relate?
Let Me attempt to replicate—

"Why did you adorn" him?
Was it because—
The Mind does not require the
Eye
To answer—Wherefore when He
appeared
You could not keep Your face.

Because He knew—but You did not— And We knew not—but The Wisdom surpassed — Wherefore birthed Epiphany

The dirty thunderstorm—never asked a stomach
Wherefore it knot—when He reaped—
Because He knew it could not speak—
And reactions not restrained—
—Of Exchange—
They'd be—admired by inquisitive Folk—

The medusan—Sire—compellethed You—Because He's man-of-war—and I foresaw—Now You may discern the truth—"Why did you adorn" him?
We are marked—one and the same
A shared experience—rewritten and performed
Tell Me—Was it Spite You felt—soon after?—We can relate

### **SOUL-SEARCHING**

#### KURT STEVENS SORSDAL

Lady Lamia collected all her bones

With a quiet thrill

When Lord Sven found them

Carefully wrapped in toilet tissue

She blushed and dared speak

Why the rejection

What is the issue

I love things stone and still

Death is the only perfection

Horrified, Lord Sven interrupted

With a shake and a shriek

No brain in your brain pan

No heart in your heart cavity

No soul in your soul-search

Just bones here, there, everywhere

You are wrong

Lady Lamia cried

No linen in the linen closet

No china in the china cabinet

No medicine in the medicine chest

It is the same song

Bones inside me

Bones outside me

I feel best with a lot of bones beside me

Stupefied, Lord Sven fell to his knees

Praying aloud

Dear Lord please

What next

Lady Lamia spat so proud

Coccyx

Then I will own all bone

The maxilla

The scapula

The carpus

The femur

The tibia

There is no other one I have not nabbed

With that she grabbed a sharpened aitch bone

And stabbed Lord Sven

Past his breast bone

She flushed the flesh

And scrubbed the blood

Until the bone shone

She spread Perfect Sven Across her bed And as she admired him A song came into her head And out of her grin

No brain in your brain pan
No heart in your heart cavity
No soul in your soul-search
Just bones here, there, everywhere
No linen in the linen closet
No china in the china cabinet
No medicine in the medicine chest
It is the same song
Bones inside me
Bones outside me
I feel best with a lot of bones beside me

## **INSOMNIA**

#### Logan Samuels

Hills swallow the sun and I sit by the window, Waiting for the moon to come, waiting for stars. My head on my pillow, eyelids shut tight, There's hope for a sprinkle of sand for sleep.

But now the moon shines, suspended and still, And I lay there steady, my eyes on the ceiling. Insomnia smirks and chuckles once more, Just as he does every single night.

Bitterness creeps into my arteries and vains, Anger rushing to my heart and my head. No resolve and no rest, no end to the day. Not a moment to forget, heal or disappear.

But then again, how much time does sleep waste? We who lie awake to dream are the true dreamers. Time is appreciated more, breaks are needed less. We trade our beauty sleep for our beautiful lives.



Parrot uniqua ugorji

## NATURAL ART IMITATION FORM OF "MAKESHIFT" BY CATHERINE BOWMAN

#### LAURA SHRIVER

Whispering sea-banks, rich blues and wisps of white foam crashing, still against the stones-- the edge of the Earth. The brushstrokes are dimensional up against the canvas, and yet remind the onlooker that the scene is just a painting on a wall in a frame. Imagine a painting framed on a wall-- can you see the scene? Does it remind you, onlooker, that the canvas resists the painter and paintbrush, every stroke struggling to create dimension between the edge of the Earth and stones below, still against the canvas as it crashes, thrown into the blue hues of the sea-banks just below the painter's window?

#### **NEAP TIDE ECHO**

#### KURT STEVENS SORSDAL

HERE IS A RELATIONSHIP SELDOM CONSIDERED BY THE AVERAGE PERSON. OUR MAN knew little of his higher self at first. They eventually befriended in a moment of lowered self-esteem when the man's energy was ebbing and his will was waning, when the higher hooked the lower in a last breath and brought the man up for air.

He had lost his romance for misadventure and began to board railcars clearly marked Neap Tide Echo. The higher encouraged the lower to take the steps one at a time; up, not down. The man sat determined in a seat facing forward, aligned with his direction and comfortable with the destination whatever might lie ahead, for he was sure the vehicle would not derail, not during this particular excursion. He knew there would be many unwanted stops along the way, some that would seem to stall and stagnate interminably, potentially threatening his steady progress, and some that let on distracting deviants, yet he knew as well that Neap Tide Echo was waiting for him all the while anyway.

He was not going to arrive at the time he expected. He had thought, I'd like to be early, never having been on time journeys prior. Certain milestones were delayed this trip. Some sort of burden was not removed until Upper Hansomer, instead of earlier at Humleyton. Indeed, there was even a purposeless wait later at Palmary Lathe, where nothing got on or off - just a lot of flashing lights and false starts, but it was at this station that he began to write his higher self, that they officially became a man of letters, keeping in touch when life wasn't busy interrupting.

At the latest stop, why...what misfit character boarded and sat right beside him? He mentally protested. Looking out the railcar window opposite, the man saw they were in South E. Moor Pied, the railway station a stony gray structure overtaken by what appeared to be a sickly green monstrosity of collective molds and mildews. Our man quickly grabbed the current copy of *With the Times* that someone had previously stuffed between the wall and his seat. He pretended to enjoy an in-depth article about love plus ones and zeroes entitled "Mastering Your Bachelorhood Ever So Electronically."

This strange creature seated stiffly next to him: how could he not have noticed its mere sight or sound on entering and sitting, nor noticed the earthy elemental scent now permeating the entire railcar? Its sight was not merely an apparition unseen in the partitioning Plexiglas reflection across from them,

but a dense physical obtrusion upon the man's psyche, and the stench of its condition was intolerable, inhumane. It gnawed at him demonically. And it uttered something unintelligible.

"Did you speak?" the man asked.

"It stinks," it replied.

"You are aware of the odor then?" the man inquired.

"Thus far, however insensible we may be at times, we are never without sense," was the thing's answer.

"How would your sense of smell describe the odor?"

"The stink of a skunk."

"Well, I smell a rat."

"The stench of fear."

"The stench of an opportunist."

As they were equally insulted, the dialogue ceased.

The creature could see for itself the man's doctoring mind was ripe with fear and reeked of insensibility. Although they shared the likeness of a balding, bulky personage with gibbous eyes deadened by inertia, their disagreements spoke volumes concerning each as other.

Upon reflection, the man tried to understand how one might describe his own personal odor as skunky. The nose might note skunk-like concentrations, yet perception saw pure rat molecules, organized and offensive, ready to assault if necessary. These would not jump about the train tracks to individually self-destruct, but gathering together, overwhelm the whole, engine and all. This imaginative appetite for an unbroken creation far outweighed the matter in hand, such as their present expedition, perhaps travelling peacefully together.

As they were equally disengaged, their conversation continued.

"Do you, on one level, seeing with the mind's eye, so to speak, conceive a skunk when inhaling?" the man queried.

"There is an unfortunate black and white predominance. Nothing more," it answered.

"Rats come in black. Or white."

"Come to think of it, they merge now and again. Gray. Shapeless."

"I dream in color. Once, there was a black and white dream. In a graveyard. I was just an eye, envisioning a person walking. The person was in color, everything else was still black and white."

"Me too. Dream in color that is. For the most part."

Out of nowhere, a third voice sprung up, "Myself, my dreams are not only in color, but four-dimensional, the outcomes of which are completely under my control."

Dreaming, they arrived at Neap Tide Echo precisely on time and all in one piece.



REFLECTIONS MEGAN POOLE

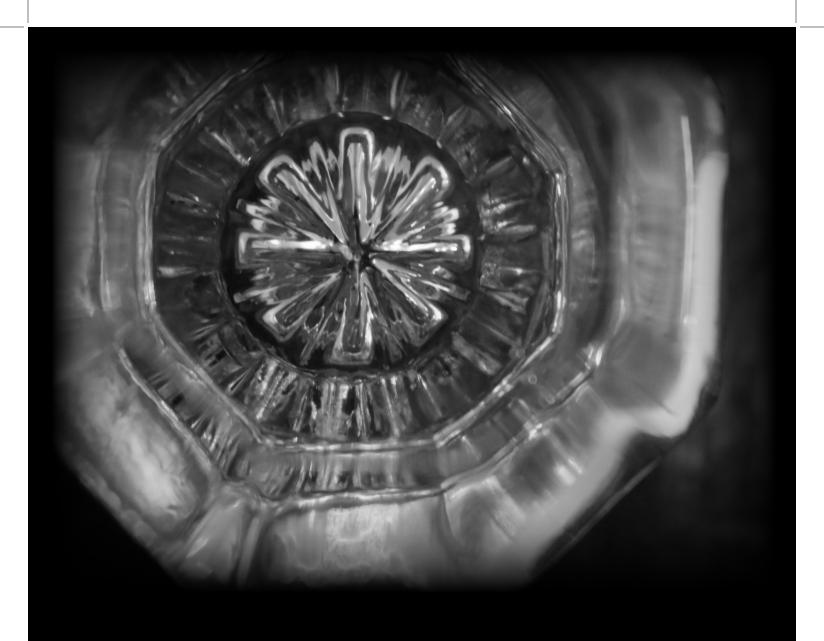
## **CHIMERA**

#### EILEEN RUDNICK

Take my hand and don't let go. I've been away and need to know. Is this real, or is it not? Am I here and just forgot? You have questions I can't answer. How do I feel? I don't know. I'm not myself, and I know why. A stranger's here since I died.



THE GIRL BROKEN INTO PIECES
DANA LAFORCE



Cambridge, MD Image I justin fox

## FIRST NOVEL ELIZABETH JOHNSON

Meticulous punctuation – To understand and be supported

Love would last forever

Like the clunk of the thick book Deep green with shades of blue

> Night and day A life yet to come

Everything, but nothing at all

A can of gasoline and a match I am terrified



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THE BAILOUT, SEPTEMBER 2008 - Brittany Whitham

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