

2015

Three Poems

Lucia T. Pasquale
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview>

Recommended Citation

Pasquale, Lucia T. (2015) "Three Poems," *Alcalá Review*: Vol. 1, Article 1.
Available at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview/vol1/iss1/1>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by Digital@USanDiego. It has been accepted for inclusion in Alcalá Review by an authorized administrator of Digital@USanDiego. For more information, please contact kriddle@sandiego.edu.

The Women of the Valley

The women of the valley have
 strong weathered hands
 brown weathered hands
 callused weathered hands.

The train rolls through the valley.
 Or it chugs.
 No. It heaves under its own weight.

The crops wait in
 meticulous rows
 calculated rows.

They make way for
 window seats
 reclining chairs
 more legroom than ever
 crossword puzzles
 coffee.

They call this the live/work dichotomy.

(What are bodies supposed to do anyway?)

The women of the hills are soft to touch.
They are plush and sometimes mistaken for fine upholstery.
Hospitality's body-double.
 They, too, have weathered hands.
 Round weathered hands.
 Curled, weathered hands.
 Tear-stained, weathered hands.
 Weathered. Hands.

Women speak the language of hands.

The language of tugging
 and weaving
 of threading together
 and of feeding.
They speak the language trains speak
 of pulling apart
 and bringing together.
 The language of movement.
The language of weight.

When you paint your walls with the eyes of women
do not forget their hands.
Do not forget to be touched,
to let the lines of their palms
press into the lines of your face,
one line
one harvest.

The Season of Sleep

I am old
and the winds of my days blow slow.

I remember my youth
and the woman with hands like tree bark-
one ring for every year of hammer and bone.

In those days I was blind.

Now I see
that the soil in the cracks of her palms
was not rot,
but gold.

Time buried in crevices of flesh:
Love-Stain.

Here I lie at the end of my days
and my hands, too, feel of bark,
my body, too, smells of dirt, and my hair,
a silver mass, a thinning stream.

I think back to when the wind was wild
and my body round-
round body and miles of flesh,
the bowl at the foot of my bed
brimming with ripened fruit.

Now the land where I am from is thirsty.
It is no longer the season of harvest,
but the season of sleep.

From Somewhere in the Middle

The fast thumping
wheel-turning-star-night
lulled me to sleep
after dusk fell like a stone,
and in the new morning
salty water rolled the sand from my lids. Bitter
because
Carole King,
the balmy air of way over yonder,
and the exact contradiction
that is your palms
plus my back.

And three thousand or so miles later
my eyes are dry
and a bit more wide
and my main gripe
is how inconsiderate time is for moving so fast -
for looking past all the bodies
slipping into shadows
cast by tall men
with green-eyed intentions.

(Numbers don't lie.)

If I have two hands, which I do,
then together we have four.
Yet I still manage to draw a blank

when asked the question:
With so many hands, how is it that
flesh is allowed to sink?

2015

Three Poems

Gabriella Sghia-Hughes
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview>

Recommended Citation

Sghia-Hughes, Gabriella (2015) "Three Poems," *Alcalá Review*: Vol. 1, Article 2.
Available at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview/vol1/iss1/2>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by Digital@USanDiego. It has been accepted for inclusion in Alcalá Review by an authorized administrator of Digital@USanDiego. For more information, please contact kriddle@sandiego.edu.

**Cropper Undergraduate Creative Writing Contest:
Poetry Submission (edited)**

by Gabriella Sghia-Hughes

The All-American Attic

Our family is a cracked attic, slapdash and drafty.
A breeze barrels through and we feel it, each only
in our joints. I am parallel to the beam of my brother.

My brother never beams. Sometimes he looks halfway
to self-satisfied, but then he opens his eyes and groans:
our family is a cracked attic, slapdash and drafty.

My mother disdains displays of affection. She blames
her mother. How many women precipitated the chill
in my joints? She hovers, polished shingles facing out.

My father is an idea. Through his lumber I see that
we should be solar panels and dug into the south side
of a hill instead of a cracked attic, slapdash and drafty.

When we invite a friend up the ladder, they compliment
our family's tree—until their radiant light throws into relief
our musty joints. Then they'll breathe carefully, suddenly

aware of our rotting, tenuous architecture. Carefully,
again, they recede. Their withdrawal hollows
our family's cracked attic once again. They do

not return because there are no renovations
or retrofits for this slapdash, undated model.
We cracked atop a home, drafting memories,
sharing a joint occupation, for a while.

Tramping Through the Woods Behind My House

age 7

I was Lewis and Clark a scientist
a wolf crooning to the pink autumn moon,
washed out in the bright sky grandiose trees
unappreciated outstanding I
was the world's greatest detective: the neighbor's
canoe filled with moldy maple leaves a
pristine, white skull iridescent dusty
black feathers a wily crow the fox's last
loose molars dangled from his jaw so light
a veterinarian I healed them
packed the holes in him with feathers took
him home fractured orbital foresaw his
collapse yellowed dust hidden beneath us
in the basement a shoebox a corner

age 21

I hike, now, in the small valleys. My house
cuts deep into the already cramped wild.
My holy skull long since tucked into a
detrital bed; I can't prove he was real.
Crows must have scavenged the carnivore's flesh.
Realism intrudes now, always. Even
in my unconscious. I dream of my dog,
dead a year, form faded, like his throat by
the end—irretrievable . I intend
to etch his paws into the gray matter
of my memory. He lopes up, gait perfect,
but I anticipate how I will fail
his shape. His bones too big, he overfills
my lap. I still stroke his too-large fox paws.

Unnaturally Selective Love

young me gave rare bear hugs like
I could transform the other person

into me, like I could absorb tiny,
discrete circles of their genome

if our membranes folded
together just right. says

a lot, friends say,
says priorities, says

disconnect, I say. says I
thought I was more cub

than kid. I would choke
my arms up around their ribs

and constrict
until one day

my dad said *too much*.
too strong. hurts.

but I was violent; I was
natural. A detritivore.

I scavenged my ancestors'
bodies so that I could live

to pass on the genes
that made me

love
so instinctually

I would kill.

2015

Birthright

Megan Huynh
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview>

Recommended Citation

Huynh, Megan (2015) "Birthright," *Alcalá Review*: Vol. 1, Article 3.
Available at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview/vol1/iss1/3>

This Non-Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by Digital@USanDiego. It has been accepted for inclusion in Alcalá Review by an authorized administrator of Digital@USanDiego. For more information, please contact kriddle@sandiego.edu.

Birthright

Grab a seat in a historic movie theatre --you know, the kind that shows screenings for older folks on a Tuesday night. Then watch pairs of them stroll their way through the aisles, while you sit silently avoiding conversation. You look at the time and sigh at the unpleasant fact that it will be ten more minutes until the show starts, so you practice the proverbial “social skills.” You make pleasant conversation with your professor and fellow classmates, who hope to score extra credit points watching a documentary about the Vietnam Wars. The lights dim, chat ceases and your introverted self is at ease.

You let yourself scale back for a few moments.

For twenty-one years, you were never able to answer follow-up questions about your parents’ lives prior to your birth. All you knew about them was what you saw—that was enough for you. Tell yourself that it’s not wholly your fault, your parents’ silence on anything concerning the Vietnam War has simplified your family’s history to the pieces others tell you: protests, fall of Saigon, communism, Ho Chi Minh, Kent State and President Johnson. You also borrow those vague notions of history when people ask. Unable to articulate your feelings then, feel uneasy that you are part of a generation that is under historical and cultural amnesia. Having lost their power to shock and horrify, the Vietnam War— the Holocaust, Hurricane Katrina, the Bosnian genocide, police brutality against blacks— have become lost in the cynicism and malaise of the modern consciousness. You grapple with the reality that stock phrases ranging from *c’est la vie* to *shit happens* impart the depressing truth of our society’s familiarity and apathy towards tragedy and loss.

But realize that this is not about a generation and its collective consciousness.

You like to talk about the ephemeral. You tell yourself--and others-- that you are proud of your identity as a Vietnamese woman, which will not be completely true because the things you

have not learned about your family's history make it difficult to feel good about their lives and sometimes yours. Feel honored when you tell others that your parents are immigrants. Strong yet meek people that they are, you make it your responsibility to tell the world about them. You tell people about the exhaustion from all the work they've done—squinting, bending over and standing on the farm and in a factory--and the years of work that still lay ahead. You want others to know that royalty runs through your parents' blood; that their genetic material is not of the conquered. That they are your king and queen, who built a kingdom for you to rest, play and learn in, while they were away fighting beasts that you couldn't see. That these boat refugees are a symbol of victory and determination in the face of great adversity. But you fail to fully understand the conditions and history that forced them to choose between swimming or sinking.

You try to extract any information from your parents about the Vietnam War, but get waylaid catering to the needs of your teenage self, in all of its self-absorbed normalcy. Promise yourself to do something about that. Three years into your college career you finally decide to come around, and register for a Vietnam Wars class. Your gut instinct says you won't gain much, except perhaps for some greater context to all the Sixties' political references. You need upper-division credits, anyways.

You are now back in that movie theater.

Even at your 5'3 height, you tower over your mother and often act as her protector, translator and navigator through both the invisible and discriminative dimensions of the immigrant experience. But seldom do you contextualize your parents' experiences within the larger narrative of the human condition and what violence can do to it; you settle on merely intellectualizing the pains of the lived experiences of refugees. Your everyday setting is then suddenly rendered volatile by video clips and images of people desperately climbing the American embassy walls to get to the helicopters; of people being left behind and families forced

to be separated; of the militarized state that South Vietnam becomes after communism took control; and of the thousands of individuals sailing on pernicious ocean conditions in tiny fishing boats. You do not see a hint of a thing resembling victory—not even escape. Because escaping does not mean surviving. You are forced into a private reconciling.

But realize that this is not about you.

Frustrated with habits that you saw as excessive materialism and prideful hang-ups, you distanced yourself from your oldest uncle and aunt. You soon understand that it is all they have to show for the war that stripped them of their everything and uprooted them from their home. Begin to have mixed sentiments about your country of residency being the same nation-state responsible for changing the course of your loved ones' lives. You call your mother one day after class to ask whether she would rather be back in Vietnam or remain in America. *Mom?* Listen to her silent response. Realize that dread has a taste.

Your mother tells you that she feels fortunate to live and raise her children in a non-communist country. She, too, prescribes to *it is what it is*, but never confuse it as acceptance to the unchangeable, by the fates that be, because your queen will always triumph over any hand of cards she is dealt. But your question still reminds her that the course of her life teetered, for over twenty years, between the domino theory and the ideology of revolution, eventually transporting her 8, 158 miles away from her home.

You ask your mother if you could accompany her to your uncle and aunt's house one day during winter break. Astonishment and questions quickly follow, but you eventually make your way there. You play your normal script of the polite guest, but stay removed from the conversation because you feel guilty for judging them before. Your mother continues to talk to them: dinner, work, latest family gossip, *Megan took a class on Vietnam this semester*. Your mouth goes dry, while you swear to yourself that there is such a thing as a mother's intuition.

Your aunt inquires about what you learned, and pressed into your static memory is the incarceration and torture of government and military personnel who were opposition to the communists. For the next hour, your body is at the service of an experience far bigger than yourself. You listen to your uncle detail the six years of his life in “reeducation camps,” suffering from intensive manual labor and torture, while your aunt narrates those same years raising five of your cousins on her own. You are quiet because, for all your empathy and sensitivity, you are unable to remain emotionally composed. For you those moments may have been about revelation but, for them, it was about recollection and recognition. Suddenly a mother’s intuition swoops in again, and she makes an excuse for a departure. You thank your aunt and uncle for their stories that begin to fill in the missing spaces to your history, and leave.

But realize that this is not about resolution. This is about the only birthright of our human condition: the right to be heard, so that no one else can tell your story for you.

2015

Hangman's Note

Matthew Hose
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview>

Recommended Citation

Hose, Matthew (2015) "Hangman's Note," *Alcalá Review*: Vol. 1, Article 4.
Available at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview/vol1/iss1/4>

This Non-Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by Digital@USanDiego. It has been accepted for inclusion in Alcalá Review by an authorized administrator of Digital@USanDiego. For more information, please contact kriddle@sandiego.edu.

Hangman's Note

The sound of a dozen people snoring filled the spacious, wood-floored room of the Chilean hostel, as I sat angry and drunk in an armchair scrawling a note on a pad from the bus station.

“The truth is that I’ve still wanted to be with you every second of my life these past four months. And that’s why I don’t want to talk to you for a while. I need to figure out how to live without you.”

I stuffed the note in my pocket and stumbled back into our shared room. I tripped over her packed bags and fell into the nearest bed.

“Who was the person you’ve hurt the most in the world?” Abi had asked me four months earlier as we sat on our patio. She slowly sipped a 40-ounce bottle of Quilmes beer, making a small sucking sound at the end of each sip and wincing slightly. All the Argentines raved about Quilmes, but it tasted about as unique as a Bud Light.

I fingered my brain’s filing cabinets for several minutes, searching for the answer. She never took her eyes off me, quiet and reflective. She wasn’t going to let me talk about anything else until I answered the question. Eventually I settled on my answer: I hurt a high school girlfriend who I dumped because she was too depressed and self-loathing for a 16-year-old boy with surging hormones to handle. Abi frowned, unimpressed with my answer. She wanted something more meaningful than a stupid high school girlfriend. She wanted something life-changing, something that had been stuck in the back of my head for years. But my answer was true: up until that point, I hadn’t cared about anyone enough in my life to really feel any debilitating remorse for hurting them.

We were in our first few weeks studying abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, getting our bearings in a new city where the people spoke the Spanish “L” with a *shuh* and sounded more Italian than the Mexican that I was used to. I did what I do whenever thrust into a new situation: I treated life like a book and turned my eyes downward, getting comfortable with my surroundings before I ventured into the realm of friend-making. I brought a tome of Argentine history with me on the flight, bending my back under the weight of hundreds of years of history. I spent time connecting the troubled history of Argentina I read about with what I was seeing day-to-day in the huge metropolis.

Abi, on the other hand, turned her eyes upward and focused in on every face she saw. She stopped by construction workers at night to ask them about their wives and kids. She could and would get every single cab driver, homeless person, or college student to pour out their life stories to her within five minutes. An auburn-haired girl with facial piercings, she had a radiance that everyone can see but no one can define. There was a certain curiosity and authenticity stamped on her face like a birthmark right below her big green eyes. As a hopeful journalist, I was immensely jealous and astonished at her ability to conduct life like it was one seamless interview. In a lot of ways, we were similar in that curiosity about other humans, except that I was too afraid of other people to ask the questions that rolled off her tongue like the Argentine *er-re*.

We were living together at a house in the Palermo District, a hip area with bar-staurants that liked to serve appetizers instead of entrees, cocktails instead of beers, and American girls instead of American guys. There were twelve other housemates – almost all students from the states – and one house mom named Elda who spent her entire waking life smoking cigarettes, cooking us dinner, and talking to her pet schnauzer. In the beginning I mostly kept my mouth

shut at the rowdy dinner table filled with university students drinking too much wine. I felt the familiar, awkward feeling that I've always gotten when shoved into a new place with entirely new people.

Needless to say, small talk has never been my thing. I have always preferred small conversations with one or two people over a couple of beers rather than big parties with a bunch of nameless bodies. The only problem is that college students studying abroad don't really want to do anything but go out to clubs and bars.

Abi was something different. When we sat around the house getting to know our housemates, sometimes I could tell she got just as bored with all the small talk as I did. But while I'd just throw on my headphones and listen to *Radiohead* whenever I was tired of it, she was good at hiding her boredom. She'd listen attentively and ask the right questions. But it was always obvious to me that she wanted to dive head-first into people's brains rather than dipping her feet.

Soon into our time in Argentina, Abi and I came up with an anti-small-talk game. It was one of those dreary, rainy, cold days that beg for sheet forts to be built and for hot chocolate to be drunk. All that I had to entertain us was a hangman app that I had downloaded from a car trip several months ago. To conquer the monotony, we decided to up the ante. For every five points that one of us got in hangman, we decided, we could ask the other any question we wanted, and they had to answer. The questions were never easy.

"What do you fear most about your future?" we both asked each other. "What do you want your children's names to be?" "Would you want to survive until 90 if all of your friends were dead?" "What's the most hatred you've felt for someone?"

We were hooked. Within days, hangman itself didn't even matter. It was just a benchmark for when the next one of us would get to ask a question. We sat next to each other in class and scrawled ideas for our next questions in each other's notebooks. We'd come home and sit in the living room with our friends, but we'd look at each other with a knowing glance and wait for the right time to excuse ourselves and go answer a new question. We'd sit and play hangman in the park, each racking up so many questions that we lost count. We'd spend hours at a time trying to come up with the best answer, and then we would convene on the patio or on the rooftop to discuss them over some beers and some cigarettes for her. Those nights almost always led to several hours' worth of conversation, and there were some nights that we got so caught up in it that our friends would go out to the clubs without us.

The main thing that made it work was that we were so totally invested in it that I knew she was never going to tell me a lie, and she knew that I'd spend all day if necessary to come up with the right answer to a question.

Eventually I started to want something else. I knew I felt something deeper than that friendship, but she had never been in a real relationship before. I was scared and unable to form spoken words with my applesauce mouth. So I decided to write her a note one day at our house, spilling my guts into it and telling her that I wanted to be with her. I wrote that she was the best thing that ever happened to me, that she was irreplaceable. I wrote it once, and then I threw it away and wrote it again. It had to be perfect.

I walked from my room up a seemingly endless set of stairs to secretly deliver it to her room while she was in the shower. I gently placed the note on her pillow and left. For the next hour, I sat in my room, my heart pounding as I tried to listen to music to calm myself. Had she

looked at it yet? It had been too long already, she must have just torn it up and thrown it in the garbage.

Finally, she gently knocked on my door and came in. I turned, pulled out my headphones and said, “what’s up,” all cool-cat like I didn’t know what she was there for. She knew it was a sham and called me over to the bed, saying she wanted to talk to me. We sat down, her hair still sopping wet from the shower as she rubbed her hands nervously on her legs. I felt like she was looking at me like I was a sick puppy in need of care. I looked away, knowing what was coming.

“I’m sorry, but I just can’t do this right now. You’re one of my best friends, and I just don’t want to change that.”

I immediately spat out an apology. *Why?* I asked myself. *I did nothing wrong. I told my feelings to the girl I liked, and she rejected me.* Still, I apologized, and I tried to brush it off, to make it seem like it wasn’t a big deal, like I had just lost a little league baseball game but was still going to get pizza afterwards so it’s-all-good. She didn’t buy it.

After that day I felt like we could never go back to those easier days, when the questions were all that mattered. I knew this would be looming over our heads. She’d bested me; I came out looking like a sick dog and she came out on top.

For the next few months, the questions still continued, but my heart wasn’t as in them as before. I’d see her occasionally come home with other guys. My blood boiled and I tensed up when something went wrong with one of them and she came to me to comfort her. But I could never say anything: all that I needed and wanted to say was written on that one note, and she rejected it with a thank-you-very-much-but-no.

So that was why, months later, I sat in a Chilean hostel, half-drunk and full-angry, writing an almost illegible note at 3 a.m. the night before Abi would leave to catch her flight

home. It was now or never; after the next morning I wouldn't see her for at least two more months. I finished the note, and it was everything I wanted it to be: it was mad, it was sad, it was nice, and, most of all it said that we couldn't be friends anymore. I couldn't handle it. I was done. She and the rest of my friends slept gently in the other room, and I contemplated.

Should I send it to her? Will it hurt her more than I hope to? I had so many things to express, but I just didn't want them to come off wrong in the note. No, I need to do this for myself, to relearn how to live on my own. But am I ready to give up a friendship because of my selfishness? What if we were never even meant to be in a relationship, and were just best friends? What if, like everything else, it's all been in my head? I fell into bed to sleep it over.

The next morning, I got up before everyone else and went over to her packed suitcase. I opened it up, put the letter on top of her clothes, and resealed it. I went for a walk around a park, doing anything to clear my head. When I got back, Abi was ready to leave. I could tell by the smile on her face when she saw me that she hadn't seen the note. She ran up and hugged me for several minutes, her hands clutching at the back of my shirt. I loosely wrapped my hands around her and put my chin on her forehead. I had already said everything I wanted to say; she just didn't know it yet. She left, her suitcase still sealed, still crying. It's all for the best, I told myself. I had already made up my mind, and I didn't want to have to talk to her about it and face her crying even more. For once, things were going to be on my terms. It would be at least two months until the next time I would have to see her, and I was already dreading the awkward reunion we would have as we passed by each other at USD.

Several weeks later, I sat in my room in New Orleans on my laptop, my lymph nodes enflamed with mono. In the past few weeks, I had visited Lima, I had hiked Machu Picchu by

myself, I had ridden bikes down the Andean mountainside. I had had fluent conversations in Spanish with local Peruvians about everything from politics to death. I hadn't talked to Abi for three weeks. But still, for the hundredth time since I left Chile, I checked my email to see if her name popped up, to see if time made her realize that she felt the same way that I still did. I started to type an "A" in the recipient box. Her name was the first to show up. I clicked on it and started typing symbols. *Am I really about to undo everything that I just did? Was this whole fiasco for nothing?* I shut my brain off and hit send, shooting off a blank hangman puzzle.

She responded three minutes later with a single letter: "E."

2015

My Baby Rexi

Dylan Macdonald
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview>

Recommended Citation

Macdonald, Dylan (2015) "My Baby Rexi," *Alcalá Review*: Vol. 1, Article 5.
Available at: <http://digital.sandiego.edu/alcalareview/vol1/iss1/5>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by Digital@USanDiego. It has been accepted for inclusion in Alcalá Review by an authorized administrator of Digital@USanDiego. For more information, please contact kriddle@sandiego.edu.

My Baby Rexi

*

Someone has stolen my Baby Rexi

*

I'm not simple.

A lot of people here are at the Antioch Assisted Living Community are. They are either simple or just too old to take care of themselves. But according to Coach Clarence I don't belong in either group.

"I don't even know what you're doing here, kid." He'll say.

Coach Clarence always calls me kid, even though I'm eight years older than him. I don't mind though. He's much taller than me, and it would feel wrong for me to call him "kid". Once I asked him why he was called a coach, and he said that was a good question.

"I went to school a lot of years, and got a lot of titles, but they never called me coach until I showed up here at Antioch, kid."

I think Coach Clarence likes me. I help him carry the trays in after lunch. Most people here don't care to be helpful, but I figure the coaches do so much for us, that the least we can do is help out every once and a while. I don't blame the others though. They are simple after all.

I'm not simple.

*

Antioch is a good place. I've been here for 5 years, and already it's so much better than Fairmont. I have my own room, and it comes with a TV. I almost got my TV taken away once. I gave \$300 dollars to a man on a commercial who said he was doing God's work here on earth. But I only had \$300, and I guess it turned out I needed the money more than he did. The floors in the hall, outside my room, are carpeted. The cafeteria has a black and white checkered linoleum

floor. I try to only step in the black squares. I don't think anything would happen to me if I stepped in a white one, I just think it's a funny thing to try.

Everyone can talk here. Apparently that's very important.

"You know what dumb means, kid?"

"Yeah."

"It means you can't talk."

"Dumb?"

"Yes. It means you can't say a word. Nobody here is dumb."

I didn't call anybody dumb.

"At the other place I work there are plenty of people who can't talk. And there are plenty of people who can't stop talking. It's real different there. Antioch is a good place. Remember that, kid"

There is no violence at Antioch either. That's also important. We haven't had a case of violence in eight years, according to the black plaque with the golden letters outside the main entrance. I asked Coach Clarence once if the letters were made of real gold and he said no. Isn't it interesting that there are two things in the world that look just like real gold: Real gold being one of them, and the stuff they use to write on black plaques being the other.

I saw real gold at the beach once.

Jules was still here, which means it must have been a long time ago. But a big bus came. A black bus, with red seats. And every seat had a seatbelt, but for some reason no one concerned themselves with buckling up. I didn't either. We got to pick who we sat with that day, and I sat with Jules.

We were all waiting for Jason to put on his socks. The coaches had told him maybe twenty-five times to hurry, but Jason was real slow. And when I went to see what was going on, there was Jason, standing in the middle of the cafeteria in his bare feet. He looked like a chess piece, standing there in the center of a black square, on Antioch's black and white checkered floor.

I helped him put on his socks. I hated it, because Jason's feet smelled like old tomato soup. Plus his arches were real high, and his socks were real small, so it was hard to pull them over his feet. But Jules really wanted to go to the beach, so I helped. It was worth it even though my hands smelled like old tomato soup all day.

I remember Jules threw an old plastic water bottle into the ocean, time and time again. No matter how far she threw it, it would always return to her. A man with a metal detector walked by us, and found gold under the sand. I saw it for a second, but he scooped it up quickly and hurried away. So I just watched the bottle instead. It moved like a garden snake in quick sand, gliding along the surface just quick enough never to sink. Jules wasn't simple either.

I told Coach Clarence about the gold, and he said he'd never even seen real gold. I think he likes me. He's the one who told me to write this. He said if I wrote down my story maybe someone would read it, and then if they saw my Baby Rexi they would know to return him to me. He said I needed to write everything I remembered.

*

When I was very young, Mum taught me to help. She told me to always say please and to always say thank you. Jules and I taught Rexi the same thing. He is the most polite baby in the whole world.

40 years ago I was just a baby. And the first thing I remember is this blaring music. It filled my head. I don't remember the song. It might have been *Maxwell's Silver Hammer*. But it just filled my head, and Mum said she never should have played me that music.

*

Fifteen years ago I was in Alcoholics Anonymous. I don't think this is important, but Coach Clarence said I needed to include everything. I went every Thursday, and it was run by a man named Mr. Arnold Pet. He didn't like to be called Mr. Pet, but we couldn't just call him Arnold either, so we had to call him Mr. Arnold Pet.

Mr. Arnold Pet had been an alcoholic for 45 years, but hadn't had a drink in 30. He didn't seem much like an alcoholic to me, but he sat there every Thursday, just like the rest of us. He always wore a buttoned down shirt, underneath a sweatshirt, so you could just see the collar. It felt like he was tricking us in some way.

I met my best friend at AA. His name was Marcus, and he was much taller than me. He had long hair, and a beard, and looked sort of like a strange version of Jesus. He was thin too, but he always wore blue jeans and a white T-shirt.

"I've been sober for 30 years" Marcus impersonated Mr. Arnold Pet any time he left the room, to the delight of the whole crowd. "Can I freshen anyone's cucumber water during the break?"

My favorite part of AA was getting to see Marcus's impression. And most Thursday's after the meeting he and I would hang out and tell stories in the lobby.

"You know why I always wear close-toed shoes?" He asked me once.

"Why?"

“Because a little garden snake bit my dad. Right on his big toe. Those little bastards are fast, and you never can see them coming. And they could be anywhere.”

Marcus was right of course. There is no need to risk getting bit for no reason by a snake. I prefer walking in the grass though, even with my shoes on. There are fewer people walking in the grass.

When I first met Coach Clarence he would always say

“Show me your friends, and I’ll show you your future.”

So I showed him an old picture of Marcus. It’s strange I haven’t seen him in 15 years now. I hoped coach Clarence would notice his resemblance to Jesus.

“What’s this?”

“This is Marcus.”

“I mean why are you showing me this?”

“Because he is my friend.”

“Well that’s good, kid. It’s good to have friends.”

“You said to show you our friends.”

“Oh.” Coach Clarence laughed right out loud. It may be the only time I have ever seen his teeth. They were pure white. “That’s just a saying, kid. It just means to try and surround yourself with the right types of people”

“Well Marcus was a good guy.”

“Well, then you’ve probably got a bright future, kid”

Coach Clarence always calls me kid.

*

“**Rexi** wants seconds, please!”

“He can’t have seconds! He just ate dinner and dessert!”

“He just wants more dessert, he says!”

“He didn’t even eat his carrots!”

Carrots suck!

“Woah, did you hear that? Rexi said that carrots suck!”

“He shouldn’t know that word”

“He learnt it from YOU!”

“He did not.”

I learnt it from you mumma!

“See!”

Jules laughed. We all laughed.

*

“**He** just wants attention.” Chuck told Mum.

Chuck’s my brother, and is a TV actor. He was visiting from Los Angeles at the time. He had already been in about five Television shows, and he would always get me a shirt from each show he was on. I know Mum loves me a lot, but I could tell she would listened to Chuck in a different way than she listened to me. For me she listens just to listen, but with Chuck, she listens to act. I’m all right with that, though. Chuck is real smart.

“But he’s been going every Thursday.”

Mum, me, Chuck, and Mr. Arnold Pet all sat in a small room together. This was an important day for me, because it was the day I went to Fairmont.

“Do you think your son is an Alchohaulic, mam?” Mr. Arnold Pet seemed to have some strange satisfaction in his lips as he said these words. I felt like I was in trouble.

“No.” I have never seen my mother cry. I still haven’t, but she looked pretty close in that small room.

“He just wants attention.” Chuck said again.

“Are you an Alcoholic, dear?”

My mother’s eyes looked so blue that day. They were almost a different color. Usually they were light, like the sky, but they seemed almost royal that day. My mother had blue eyes and my father had brown eyes. But both me and chuck got blue eyes, which apparently is rare. If one of your parents has brown eyes, and the other has blue eyes, there is a $\frac{3}{4}$ chance you’ll have brown eyes. Both me and Chuck beat the odds. Although chuck does have one streak of brown through his left eye. Somewhere I read, you should never write about eyes. I don’t remember why.

“I don’t know Mum. I do drink.”

“Your not an Alcoholic.” Chuck seemed so sure

“I don’t know Mum. But that would be a good thing though, right? Wouldn’t it would be good if I wasn’t an alcoholic?”

Her eyes were almost an entirely different color that day.

*

I got Rexi for Jules.

We had been together a year, and I knew what I needed to get her.

The first time I ever slept in the same bed as Jules, we stayed up all night. I knew right away that I loved her. We told one another everything. We talked about our parents, and how we ended up at Antioch. I told her how Chuck was on TV. And she told me that her father had played minor league baseball. But after about 4 hours of talking, we got real sleepy. There was a

break in the conversation for about thirty minutes. I remember because I heard music playing off somewhere in the background. I couldn't place what song it was. Usually I can.

"You know what I always wanted when I was a girl?"

"What?"

"A baby Dinosaur."

He was sitting on my pillow the first time Jules saw him. She loved him instantly, and she hugged him. He was so little back then. He was our baby.

*

"I miss Jules."

"Jules just didn't need to be here anymore, kid."

"Do you think she'll ever come back?"

"I don't think so."

Jules moved to Maine, to live with her mother three years ago.

*

You should never live in the moment.

That's what Fairmont was like, for me. Well I guess that's what Olanzapine was like. All you had was the moment. There was no time really. I guess I was on it for ten years, but I really couldn't tell you. I smoked non-stop back then. I just liked watching the ember move down the cigarette. It was the only way I could tell time was passing.

Mum said she didn't like the way I was on the Olanzapine. She said I wasn't happy. Even Chuck said it was a mistake. Chuck always said I had a good memory, too.

“He’s got one of those freak memories. Like he’ll remember the name of the dog of the man who lived across the street when we were eight. Or the song that was playing in the car during some long drive on some nothing day.” He told my Mum.

But apparently on the Olanzapine it was like I couldn’t even remember what I had just said. Which would make sense, because I couldn’t even remember what I had just thought. Every thought was sort of endless, like a loop that kept going and going, and by the end of it you couldn’t even remember how the thought had started.

*

I would like you to stay please, mumma.

“Rexi. Stop.”

I would like you to stay please, mumma.

“Rexi. Can we just not talk about that for a second? I would like to just be with you two for a moment, and not think about that.”

I would like you to stay please.

*

Coach Clarence says he’s from Iowa. He played soccer all through high school, until he tore his ACL. Then he became a doctor. He went to college, and graduate school, all in Iowa. But when he was 30 he moved here. He’s lived here for 4 years, and he’s never once gone back to Iowa.

“Put a lot in the story, kid.”

“Why?”

“Because the more you put in the story, the more likely it will be that you can get Rexi back”

“Do you think Jason stole Rexi?”

“No kid.”

“But you do think Rexi was stolen, right?”

“I just think maybe if he was, and the person who took him knew how much you missed him, they might give him back.”

“Can’t I just say that I miss my baby Rexi?”

“Please, just trust me on this one, kid.”

Coach Clarence always called me kid.

*

If anyone has seen my baby Rexi, please return him to me. He is tiny. He has small arms, and sharp teeth. He will sometimes eat two or three helpings of food. He loves chocolate especially, but it keeps him up at night. He’s five years old, which is ten to us. But he is still tiny. Rexi never grew, because he’s still just a baby. He was given to me by Jules, who I love. He’s good natured and polite. But he’s young, so he doesn’t know everything yet. I miss him and I’d like him back please.