Table of Contents

1..................... An Introductory Note  
   by Catherine Kapples

2..................... Finding Your Story  
   by Annie Epstein

3..................... The Colour of Gravity  
   by Faiyaz Islam

4..................... Gray Hairs and Gear Shifts  
   by Catherine Kapples

7..................... Tornado  
   by Laura Rosenthal

8..................... Yellowstone  
   by Jess Greenwald

10................... God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen  
   by Kyle Laurita-Bonometti

11................... Just Like You  
   by Stephan Cho

12................... Fatigue  
   by Kayla Turner

13................... Don’t Dream of Onions  
   by Laura Rosenthal

16................... Mobile Regional Airport, Gate #2, 3:37pm  
   by Catherine Kapples

17................... The First Lie  
   by Jacob Adamson

20................... Not At All Romantic Romantic  
   by Faiyaz Islam

21................... Francis, Never Frank, and His Ten Lives  
   by Catherine Kapples

23................... The Lost Art  
   by Madison McCleod

24................... And The Floodgates of Heaven Were Opened  
   by Julie Toich

26................... Interview with Lewis Robinson  
   by Jess Greenwald
Dear Reader,

We could not be more excited about our second issue of *Inklings*. Our weekly workshops allow writers to draft, adapt, and expand on pieces of creative writing over the course of the semester with the help of their fellow Inklings members. The peer-sharing process of reading and then commenting on other peoples’ pieces of writing in workshops allows for people from different creative backgrounds, poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, as well as people from different class years, to gain familiarity with their peers’ writing and to witness the transformation during the semester.

The consistent, prepared, and focused workshops create a close-knit community of writers across class years and majors to share our work with and present the opportunity for collaboration. Establishing this strong writing community enables us to feel comfortable reinventing our pieces throughout the workshops. Furthermore, examining others’ work and providing creative and critical responses not only helps the Inklings writer, but also the community of writers, for reading and discussing different genres, structures, styles, and narrative perspectives helps fellow members with their own drafts.

In addition to offering attentive and sensitive criticism of our peers’ work, workshops prompt writers to practice reading their work out loud in front of an audience. Although reading out loud can be intimidating, reading in front of club members provides a relaxed setting. Reading one’s work aloud each week is an invaluable opportunity to practice one’s pacing and comfortableness reading in front of others, but also serves as an effective revision strategy. Writers not only learn what doesn’t sound right in their draft, they also see their relationship to the writing and their personality reflected in the reading process. Some people have the tendency to become animated and speak with gestures while reading aloud, some revise as they read, and some don’t stop long enough for a breath. The collaborative nature of Inklings workshops allows writers to practice reading their own work, whether it is a first draft or a final version, out loud not just as a means of proofreading, but as an informal performance.

It is an honor to share the work of creative, attentive, and dedicated writers. The pieces in this magazine are the result of our spring semester’s work. Included in this issue are poems, personal essays, short stories, and selections from longer pieces. The extended edition of this issue is available on our blog, wed.colby.edu/inklingsmagazine.

We’d like to thank those who helped with *Inklings* throughout the spring semester. Specifically, thank you to our advisor Debra Spark, Colby’s Creative Writing Department, Student Government Association, and Colby Libraries and Digital Collections. Thank you to Lewis Robinson for sharing thoughtful advice in an interview. Finally, thank you to those who participated in our weekly workshops and contributed to the magazine this semester. Happy Reading!

Catherine Kapples
Finding Your Story

by Annie Epstein

Writing allows you the freedom to explore your emotions, your thoughts, and your voice. Writing is a process of unburdening yourself, a time to unpack all the jumbled feelings crowding your brain. Writing lets you express your truest self. Of course, you’re not really allowed to talk about death, since that’s become such a cliché, but who really needs to work through those issues anyway? Say your mom calls to tell you that your dog died unexpectedly while being boarded at PetSmart and your dad tells you all the gruesome details of the death, which included the dog’s lungs filling with blood and her collapsing to the ground with blood trickling from her nose. Don’t write about that because we don’t write about death. Otherwise, you should be free to be you. Okay, maybe don’t talk about that semester you spent abroad when you lived in Rome and ate some of the best food of your life, but also had to explain what being Jewish means to your roommates (both Italian and American). Abroad pieces are so overdone. Definitely don’t talk about how when you were there you had to deal with your low self-esteem because every walk down the street was a time to see and be seen, which meant constantly feeling vulnerable (and having to figure out if catcalls were offensive or flattering). You know, while we’re on the subject of sexuality, let’s just agree that you won’t write about first loves or heartbreak, even if you’re talking about never having had either of the two and that’s really what’s eating away at you. I think we can both agree that writing is a time to really be you, just don’t be a “you” that’s boring.
Hey there, darling.

You know what I think? I think that colour looks marvelous on you. Yeah, I do. It doesn’t stand out, per se, but it draws you in, like gravity. I’d say it was the colour of gravity. At least, in my opinion.

It’s not much like red, so quick and anxious, but relaxing; soothing. It makes me feel like I can let go, sink down to the depths of the ocean, which God reserves for his most mystical of creatures, such as yourself.

I don’t know that there is a name for that colour, but it looks to me like a rich variant of indigo. The fiery young students scoff at the mention of indigo, but not me. When the most esteemed Sir Isaac dignified the blend of colours in the rainbow with a set of names, I think he paid a tribute to God in naming indigo. Sure, they say there are only six basic colours in the spectrum, but Newton added another to make it a holy set of seven, to make the world work how he wanted it to, and I admire him for it. He didn’t choose any old colour neither, he chose the most beautiful of colours for the seventh, a sparkling star in a simple sky.

Even still, indigo literally pales in comparison; this colour is so vibrant, full of the stuff of life; indigo is old, antique, stuck in the past. A deposed queen, washed up and washed out; replaced by the sad majesty, the dutiful piety of this lively beauty.

It’s the colour of the night, and by that I don’t mean black, but the colour you’d see if the night were illuminated the way it stood. It creeps into your eyes when you’re on the verge of sleep, it’s backlighting the dream world you’ve travelled to. It tints your world if you stand too long in the shower, if you spend too long in your own head. It’s the colour of a night out, away from the day and away from those orange streetlights; in the dark corner of a bar, where you can sit and feel separate from the world. Relaxed; a lower wavelength than the world outside that moment in space and time. And yet, it is the colour of space and time itself. It’s so enticing… why? Why is there a gravity to it? It’s a dark colour, but it has a glow. You can have a bright, glowing red or green… This one is a contradiction in and of itself. It’s fascinating. It’s like a blacklight, an eerie contrast, light imbued into its natural opposite. The colour itself has that kind of gravity, it looks like it could pull all other light in, and yet it has an aura around it, like it could take in the whole world and comfort it…

I’m sorry miss, it seems I got a little carried away. Can I buy you a drink? [IM]
Gray Hairs and Gear Shifts

by Catherine Kapples

“You won’t believe this, you really won’t believe it, what I found today,” Lucy says without taking a breath. “Gray hair! And not just one. Multiple. Gray hairs. I just about died after I found a whole clump of them on my hairline. It’s awful, they’re so noticeable. I have, like, full-on gray hairs. I’m too young for this! I’m too young to start going gray. What am I gonna do?” Lucy whines into the phone. She pauses, taking a breath, but only for a couple of seconds before she continues, “Dad started going gray early, like really early, and now that’s gonna happen to me! Ugh I need to start dyeing my hair now,” she squeals.

Lucy has always been dramatic. And always speaks in an animated, high pitched tone on the phone, perhaps to make up for the fact that the person she’s talking to can’t see her hand gestures when she’s talking – the rapid back-and-forth waving motion of her right hand in between her chin and her collarbone or her two palms outstretched. She’s emotional. Maybe it’s the whole middle-child thing, her need for attention because she is smack-dab in the middle between her four siblings. With two older sisters and two younger brothers, Lucy has always felt the need to position herself as the “forgotten child,” to exaggerate the whole Middle Child Syndrome dilemma.

Her strong desire to try new things, to stand apart from her brothers and sisters, whether it be learning to play the flute when all her siblings played the piano, not signing up for her high school’s Model UN committee (because both her sisters had been on it) and participating in Model Congress instead, or as simple as eating unusual dishes, all started at a young age. At restaurants she would order dishes like Cajun Jambalaya or Grilled Fish Tacos with Chipotle-Lime Dressing off of the adult menu long before she was no longer eligible for most restaurants’ “kid’s” menu. Usually her adventurous palate (or lack thereof) ended with her eating half of their grilled cheeses or plain pasta with butter, but that never stopped Lucy.

“Seriously, this trip is going to be the death of me,” Lucy said two summers ago.

Before beginning a 2,794-mile bike trip across America coast to coast, from South Carolina to California, Lucy kept saying, “I am going to die. I am going to die.” A junior in high school at the time, Lucy signed up for a cycling trip that biked across mostly rural back roads and passed through small towns and bayous in the Deep South before crossing the rolling plains of the Texas hill country followed by a climb up the Rocky Mountains and Continental Divide. Lucy was not an avid biker, or even a biker at all before the trip, but she loved any activity that her siblings hadn’t ever tried.

After signing up for the trip she first had to purchase a bike. The bike that she rode 3.3 miles to Baskin Robins on Washington Street with her neighbors every spring (before she decided in 9th grade that biking to get ice cream was lame because she was in high school now) and to and from school in 5th grade on Fridays in May if it wasn’t raining, simply wouldn’t do. She needed a real bike, a cyclist’s bike. So she purchased an aluminum road bike that had a frameset that allowed for “both stiffness and flexibility” because that’s what Mike at the bike shop recommended and she didn’t know exactly which part of the bike he meant by frameset and she had too many questions to ask, so she didn’t. The bike had drop handlebars and down shifting gears, but she didn’t even know how to ride a bike without fixed gears and neither did anyone else in her family.
Fortunately she found an informative, 10:41 minute long YouTube video on “How to Use Shimano Road Bike Shift and Brake Levers” that demonstrated gearshifts in non-cyclist terms and worked just as well for her Trek 500 model.

After watching the video three more times she said, “What have I gotten myself into? I’m going to die.” But she was just being dramatic. By “die” she really meant, “not going to make it.” Or “I’m going to collapse before I reach Georgia or Arkansas or maybe Texas if I’m lucky” or “even with padded bike shorts and a soft gel saddle seat cover my butt will be paralyzed and hamstrings strained in the first 50 miles of the trip.” Or simply, “I’m going to fail and no one will care.”

She hadn’t ridden a bike in three years before she took her first 1.7-mile loop around the neighborhood on her new gray Trek 500. Her Apogee Adventures (a teen biking travel adventure trip) pre-departure training packet arrived two months before the start of the trip. It instructed that she “Be comfortable” (which translated into “you won’t die”) riding 40 miles at the very least in one day. But the lowest mileage day for their entire trip turned out to be 47 miles (a mere warm-up) on the very first day after their group of ten seventeen- and eighteen-year olds and two leaders arrived in Charleston.

Less than one month before the trip she still couldn’t stop her bike without falling over on the pavement as she dismounted. She still hadn’t been able to unclip from her right pedal fast enough. Her brothers would laugh whenever she told them she was going for a ride. “You’re still doing that?” they would joke. She would nod her head up and down exaggeratedly. Her friends would ask, “Why exactly did you decide to bike across the country again?” And Lucy, well, Lucy would just shrug. She knew it would sound crazy, her sudden interest (or lack of an interest) in biking, but whether she is complaining about gray hairs or deciding to bike across the country on a whim despite no prior cycling experience, Lucy has to make it dramatic.

“Ugh, I don’t even know,” she would respond to her friends’ questions. And then let out a hefty sigh, before remembering that it was so she didn’t have to do college things – school visits and admissions interviews – all summer long (which was in fact the main, the only, reason for that matter that she signed up for the 6 week long bike trip in the first place). Peddling on average 94 miles a day, 8 hours a day, 6 days a week for 6 weeks sounded much more appealing to her than writing (more like drafting) personal essays and being the only child at home, the only person for her mother and father to perplex over at the end of the day, their shared puzzle. Lucy knew that she caused more trouble for her parents than her two sisters had, and had more outbursts than her two brothers ever would, and so her college interviews and application essays would be scrutinized more closely by their two-person editorial review board than each of her brothers and sisters.

“This bike trip…I’m gonna die.”

They carried everything – their bagels and peanut butter and plastic bags of other non-perishable items and compressible sleeping bags and 4-person tents (even though they stopped unpacking them after their second night in Georgia because the rolling up process the next morning meant 15 minutes less of sleep). There was no van support. They were on their own – bandaging rashes and scrapes after falling, asking where the nearest bathroom was, filling Nalgene bottles and camelbacks, fixing patches, and changing tires. Before she arrived in South Carolina, Lucy didn’t know how to pump a tire, let alone how to inflate her bike tires by first half inflating the tire’s inner tube and then attaching it to the tire’s rim and then covering its shell with the outer tire’s tube and finally fully inflating the tube. The first time she got a flat was from a nail on Route 29 in La Grange, Georgia. It took her 30 minutes to change, but her last flat tire was on Route 10 near Thousand Palms, California and it took only 5 minutes to change.

She biked through more than 30 mile per hour headwinds and heavy rainstorms when I imagine she had to rely on picturing her brothers’ disbelief and showing off her four different shades of skin color and displaying her pronounced quadriceps and hamstrings to her friends to keep her legs pumping harder and harder, maintaining her average of 90 cycles per minute (except on the hills of course).
Inklings Literary Magazine

“Well, I survived,” said Lucy. She had just finished peddling in San Diego and had finally reached the Pacific Ocean. Diving in with her clothes and clipless pedal shoes still on, she was exhilarated. Wading in the hot, salty water, she reveled in her victory. She unscrewed the front tire of her bike and dipped it into the ocean before holding it above her head like an Olympic medal. She kissed it. Sure the trip taught her to tilt her head to the left when she was asking to use a gas station’s bathroom without having to buy something, to sprinkle baby powder on her grease stains, and how to accurately measure the distances between destinations on a map, but she is still dramatic.

Besides her interesting tan lines of white from her knuckles up to her wrists and her ankles down to her toes, she looked different when she returned. There were varying degrees of white lines zigzagged across her back because of sports bras and razor back tank tops and the top inch of her forehead that had been covered by her helmet was five shades lighter than the rest of her face. Draping the American flag as if it were a shawl on a chilly fall day around her shoulders as she waded in the Pacific, she somehow looked calm. Maybe it was the tan or maybe she was just still exhausted from those rolling inclines on the last leg of the trip. Maybe those climbs up the Sierra Nevada and long mileage days across cornfields in Mississippi had tested her mental toughness. And the need to be aware of her surroundings, safety, and basic survival at all times had outweighed her desire to stand out. Perhaps that most difficult climb, the 4,055 feet ascent in three hours up the Rockies gave her a stronger sense of self. The desire to follow through on her promises (well, really others’ expectations for her trip). When she had to keep her head down to concentrate on her balance because of the difficulty she had breathing due to utter exhaustion and the 33-mile per hour wind whipping past her.

* * *

“Ugh. I’m gonna die. I’m literally gonna die,” Lucy says. “These next ten days are horrible for me… I have a Spanish midterm on Wednesday and a theology paper due on Friday at midnight and a Stats exam on Monday… and that’s not even all of it… ugh… I just need it to be break again.”

A freshman in college, by “I’m gonna die” Lucy now means that she’s going not going to get more than five hours of sleep at night, will drink way too much black coffee (but not too much or else her mother would notice its stains on her teeth), and have perfectly shaped eyebrows from constantly smoothing them with her index finger when she is stressed.

“I don’t know how I’m gonna get through this hell week—so not what I pictured college would be like—I’ll have to get through it somehow, but I’m still gonna die.” [IM]
Tornado

She microwaves leftover Thai Red Curry for 10pm dinner finally alone. The spices make her tongue nervous. She chokes on an undercooked potato.

She sketches the Yellow Brick Road in the margins of a notebook. Her Emerald City resembles London too much. She checked online and found British Airways offers one-way for $400.

How much would hot air cost to fill a balloon for escape? Curry seeps through her paper plate, leaks a red ring on the plastic table. She waits for it to shimmer.

She's tired. She rests her head in the sauce, feels the spice drip down her skin but never touch her tongue. She seeks sustenance, and needs—She chucks the plate in the trash.

If she had the brain, the heart, the courage to click her heels together three times, she'd empty the fridge and find her way home.

by Laura Rosenthal
Yellowstone
by Jess Greenwald

A charcoal sky smudged with a burnt-match horizon, the air the color and thickness of cigarette smoke. Each dusty inhalation was a Herculean effort, you could feel the teeth of it in your throat, and it all tasted like old house fires, permanently. You got used to the ash in your mouth, caught under your fingernails, freckling hair like unblinking stars.

They remembered days of wet sunlight, of plastic voices on the telephone, of lemon-colored counters and scrambled eggs for breakfast, of robin-egg minivans and piano emanating from the living room. Those days were now just stories in tired voices, told to red-cheeked and wondering children.

In the beginning, they had thought the biggest problems were the fires and the ash and the thick smoke, the loss of the sun and—if you calculated—the imminent starvation of every living thing in the next seven years, the sandpaper plants and glassy-eyed animals, and, of course, corpses everywhere, open-eyed and unbreathing.

They were wrong, of course. The biggest problem was the Empty.

In the old days, a six-year old falling off a bike was commonplace; a quick stop to a doctor and a hot-pink cast later, the kid was fine.

But now it was a new era, and it was no longer a place of hospitals and doctors and nurses and flu shots and police stations and fire trucks and people telling other people what to do, the right way to act, and who to call in an emergency.

Now we were on our own.

Penny McGouch lived with her older sister, Melissa McGouch. They both were covered in freckles like tiny constellations drawn on paper skin, and had an affinity for Lucky Charms cereal, which they hoarded. In the old days, Penny had worn glasses, but now they were lost and there were no longer places to find the right prescription for glasses. She also still had her teal-colored braces, because there were also no longer orthodontists to remove braces. In the old days, Penny had been in ninth grade, Melissa in eleventh. Both their parents were dead, burned in one of the early fires, or perhaps buried in one of the rubble avalanches. Melissa tried her best to take care of Penny. On March 24th, Penny began to develop an agonizing pain in her abdomen. Panicked, Melissa consulted the many books and encyclopedias still preserved in the house they had found and lived in. In the end, she realized that Penny was having appendicitis, and that she was going to die. Of course, there were no hospitals or doctors or anything like that, and as Penny lay there dying in agonizing pain, white as a corpse, Melissa knew she had to do something. She found one of the long knives in the kitchen for cutting steak and sterilized it with a match.

Emily Robinson was a tall woman with a brass voice and copper hair, who liked listening to Carole King soundtracks on old iPods and Walkmans she found among the wreckage. She lived alone, surviving on all the canned
food she had collected. Her favorite was canned peaches, but canned peaches were a rare commodity. On August 2nd, two men came to her house to rob and rape her. Emily noticed them outside, then reached for the shotgun on the counter she had found a few months ago, but still wasn’t sure how to work. When the men kicked down her door, she pointed the gun at one and pulled the trigger. Unfortunately, she had loaded it with the incorrect kind of ammunition, and it promptly exploded in her hands, killing her instantly.

Henry Greene was six. Before the Bad Stuff, he had lived with his mommy, his daddy, his teenage sister Chrissy, and their cat, Misty. After the Bad Stuff, Mommy and Daddy had gone on vacation, according to Chrissy, and probably would not be back for a long, long time. Chrissy had taken care of him for a while, but one morning in June he happened upon her hanging from the bar in her closet, strangely enough. She wouldn’t answer him, so he took care of himself for a few days, eating the canned baked beans in the pantry. After a few days, though, Chrissy began to smell (it was very hot too) so he decided to leave the house. He set off in the insipid heat and yellow-black sky, dry and ashy. He walked for a long time, occasionally discovering dead people, but no live ones. Eventually, he came across some bright orange and yellow plastic signs with messages in capital letters. **CONSTRUCTION, CAUTION…**what did that mean? Henry had just learned to read in school before the Bad Stuff, but he wasn’t sure what that long word meant, all those familiar letters strung together in unfamiliar incoherency, like a mis-beaded pearl necklace. He kept walking through the yellow signs, and eventually fell into a long cement hole in the ground, breaking both legs. No one heard his screams, or came to his rescue.

George Bass had slicked gray hair and a large paunch. In the old days, he had enjoyed college football and Coors Lite. These days, he was no more than a desperate alcoholic, always searching the ruins of old places for booze, dodging robbers and anyone else who would want his fix. In his free time, he vandalized. Last Friday, he had carved “the world has gone to shit” on a burnt alleyway wall outside an antique shop with a penknife. On February 8th, he was quite cold, so he lit a fire in the old fireplace of the house he had found and fell asleep drinking an old dusty bottle of whiskey next to it. In minutes, the whole place was up in flames, not much of a surprise to the people who saw and simply watched.

Hank Isaacs was seventy-two. On April 17th, he went into cardiac arrest, but no one around knew CPR, or any first-aid for that matter.

Isabelle Norris was six months old when her parents were killed by robbers while searching for baby food at the nearby gas station. No one found her in her crib.

Jake Henry was attempting to fix a motorcycle—

Eliza Frank was riding a bike to the old grocery store—

Eddie Rhodes was smoking a cigarette—
They said he’s an insane man, so he’s insane, man. He drinks with an appetite, like his father did before him, and like fathers did before him. Beneath the overpass, he shouts at children he wishes he wasn’t. Whiskey is his best friend so he must be the dog. Together, they drink in the rusted Volvo out back he calls Mother. Brother, O Brother, Where art Thou? they chuckle, and sip down themselves until the rains come forth and they can imagine the windshield wipers whisking back and forth, back and forth, into infinity.

When he died, people were shocked, but not surprised. He was an insane man, they shrugged. Only Whiskey cried. Only Whiskey came to his funeral. Why, Oh why? Whiskey cried, and the officer who shot him shrugged. The jury was out. He was deaf, and he carried a pocket knife. At least he had Whiskey.

The eulogy only mentions the good times. It leaves out his churning gut and his hollow, pitted cheeks. Cheeks that he chewed at in the park while he watched the families, or beneath the overpass while he tried to sleep. It doesn’t mention what he said about carving wood. That it was like loving a woman. Maybe that’s because the women he loved twisted in their sleep. Maybe that’s because they cursed their fathers in the night and swore they’d never forgive him. It was all he could do to hold on.

Now he is dead; watch how husks of ash trees line the street—shaking in the wind, like he once did, beneath the overpass. [IM]
My father, he wanted to fly planes. He fixes them now. Or rather, he fixes the computers that fix the planes that fight the wars that killed the seed of a better man. I don’t remember what your father does anymore; all I saw from where I stood was the way you could only avert your eyes, as he built his false past and left the wounds you don’t fight anymore. With perfect clarity, I can recall how you kept that dull tool in your drawer, extreme ops with the Tanto blade; finally ready to go to war with the man who stole your past, and how you changed your mind.

We were fifteen and not in love when we shared stolen lies and next Thursday’s history exam. I wish the irony weren’t quite so obvious; that’d make it easier for me to write you into being. The slight swoop in your hair, the dreams in your eyes, I wish they didn’t exist, so right now, I could take credit for making you in my own image. And I wish your father weren’t quite so dramatic when he caught us together, some Paul Simon B-side playing as we realized our worth and something approximating love. More than anything else, right now, I wish I were the one who chose to make your father say, “he’s just a boy, he’s just a boy,” when you told me we could be together and alone, away from the charlatan who stole your past, that I could build his cries out of bridge and chorus. But for now, I’m no writer; I’m just a heartbroken loser with a broken past and no victories left to share.

Your father was right, by the way. I’m just a boy, as were you. I wish I could say that as I saw you the other day; that you certainly weren’t your father’s child, that you hadn’t stolen two oranges and a carton of iced tea from the corner store, that I’ve already forgotten the secondhand taste of my first Marlboros. I must confess: I know these things to be true. But I’m not made of stone, nor are you of ink and paper. I’m a boy, just like you, and we’re both foolish enough to try and guard ourselves from the truth. [im]
Fatigue

I’m too old for this
he says,
over coffee.

A scar on his cheek
the story of which
I’ve forgotten,
blurred together
among his other anecdotes.

In his head, he lives among
the highlight reels of high school football and
hazy recollections of rock and roll concerts.

Beauty
may be wasted on the young.
But beauty
is wasted
on him too.

At what point
do our parents
become
our burdens?

I’m too young for this,
I think,
over coffee.

by Kayla Turner
It was one of those nights where I was confused about whether my head or my heart was supposed to be beating. Probably because of the coffee. I was on the phone with my mom:

“I’m in big trouble,” I told her. I felt like I should’ve been able to hear her rolling her eyes at me, but she never rolls her eyes.

“Tell me your problems! I will fix them!” she cheered. Dad was at the gym and Jen was at dance, and Mom was too happy to deal with needs that didn’t belong to the dog.

“I don’t know what to write about for my essay and I don’t know what to do with my life,” I complained. Ah, the woes of a college senior.

“You don’t have to worry about the rest of your life right now,” she insisted, “just focus on your essay.” I was frustrated that she couldn’t see how the two things I named were really the same problem. “Hmm, okay. You should start with, ‘It was a dark and stormy night…’ Snoopy does that. He sits on top of his dog house and is supposed to be this prolific writer, but then he starts every story with, ‘It was a dark and stormy night…””

***

It was a dark and stormy night and I was imagining how nice it would feel to face plant into the transplant grass on the hill outside the library. I was thinking I’d try facedown snow angels, even though there was no snow. That’s probably why they had to replace the grass there anyway. Some college senior must have been having a hard time coming up with an essay topic and had a hangnail and ate pasta with no protein for the third night in a row and then slept for fourteen hours straight and figured the only thing to do at that point was make snowless angels in the wet grass. I wondered if she also considered how satisfying it would be to take a stack of ceramic plates and just smash them full force into a brick wall. I wonder if she also paused on the steps up the library, right next to that patch of grass so distinctly a different shade of green, and laughed out loud until she cried at how ridiculous she was acting. If she also tended to laugh and cry at the same time and sometimes not be sure whether she meant to laugh or cry in the first place. I wondered if she also could not figure out what to do with her life but was certain she needed to know by 4:00pm the next day when her essay was due. I thought about her and how much money it would cost to replace that patch of grass again, mumbled a quick, “pull yourself together,” and walked up the steps to the library.

***

“What are you writing about?” David asked as he walked over, taking a break from studying. I was demonstrating my inability to sit properly in a library chair: I had my knees swung over one arm and my head against the other, my laptop placed on my thighs. We’re in a creative writing class together, and he probably thought it was something I’d share with him later.

“I’m writing about how I want to be an onion picker,” I responded.

“Oh, that’s cool. You should totally do that. Why onions?”

“Because nobody likes onions,” I started to explain.

I don’t really know David, and I didn’t want to get into how I wanted to be an onion picker because I liked the way my memory of onion picking was sunburnt. As if the sky somehow reflected the deepening pink on my cheeks or the blonding hair around my face from the only time I’d ever been onion picking. It was on a farm in Israel, when my teen tour group was picking vegetables to donate to a soup kitchen. We hadn’t imagined they had soup kitchens in Israel. We didn’t think about anything except how we didn’t
miss America and how we didn’t mind the dirt under our fingernails or the sand in our boots. I liked onion picking because I liked pulling something up from the ground, and the irony in my excitement when I found the vegetable, only to realize it was an onion and nobody likes onions. I liked the looking, the hoping, even the way the stems cut my fingers.

I liked how I knew I shouldn’t take a bite, how when I did it burned hot in my mouth, as if it had come from much deeper in the earth than just a few inches, or maybe much closer to the sun. I liked how there seemed to be an infinite number of onions. Every time I bent close to the ground I spotted more bulbs.

“How ’bout a parfait? Everybody loves a parfait!” David imitated the Donkey from Shrek.

I frowned, even though I love Shrek.

“Nah, that’s cool though. I’m sure you’d make a great onion picker,” he said. And then he let me get back to my writing.

***

Charlie sat down in the chair across from me in the café that I’d migrated to for a midnight snack while continuing my work on my essay. He was a little late, although he said he would be, and I’d ordered mac ‘n cheese to share. I’d been speed-typing my essay, trying to write a full draft before 4:00pm the next day.

“What are you writing about?” Charlie asked, pulling his chair closer to mine and peering over my shoulder.

“How I want to be an onion picker,” I said, closing my laptop.

“You do not want to be an onion picker,” Charlie responded. I was a little surprised by how seriously he said it.

“Yes I do.” I have this tendency to believe strongly in whatever someone tells me is not true about myself. I stabbed the overcooked mac ‘n cheese shell with the plastic fork we were sharing.

“I bet you picture it as being a farmer with a small plot of land and a little farm stand out front. I can see that.” He smiled, probably imagining me the way I was when we first met: deeply tanned and sun-tinted hair after a summer of lifeguarding.

“No, I don’t want to be a farmer, I want to be an onion picker. Like picking onions in a field all day,” I insisted, envisioning sunburns and dirty fingernails.

“Do you really want to move every season?” He tried a different approach, knowing how stubborn I can be.

“I don’t want to be a migrant worker,” I admitted. “I just want to pick onions from a big field.”

He laughed and kissed my forehead. “Where does a field exist where onions grow all year round?”

***

I had this image in my mind that there’s a field that’s always growing onions—don’t onions grow year round? There’s a field in somewhere-that’s-warm that perpetually grows onions and I will work there and pick them and be happy, and at the end of the day I will come home to my house in 20-minutes-outside-of-Boston and we’ll watch reruns of “How I Met Your Mother” together.

I wasn’t sure how much water onions need to grow, but I knew that when I’m an onion farmer, it needs to be in an onion field in a hot place. Hot and dry because it needs to be a miracle that the onions are growing at all. It has to be a place where they can’t have water parks because it’s wasteful, where the women turn off the shower when they shave their legs or wash their hair, maybe even a place where the water tastes kind of chunky, like something other than water might be in it. For some reason, I feel like my onion field needs to be in South America, preferably Argentina. I’ll learn to speak Spanish and roll up the sleeves on my t-shirt so they’ll stay put.
But then I’ll remember that my t-shirts say things like “Hell on Hooves” and “Mule Mob! Code Blue!” because I got them from Colby College. And when my farmer friends ask me what “Code Blue” means, I’ll answer, “it means that I paid $60,000 a year for this shirt, and now that it’s sweat-stained, I better go get a job to pay for it.” So I’ll leave my onion field and take the cheapest flight to New York City, where I’ll live in a one-room apartment in Brooklyn that I can’t even afford and I’ll eat only Ramen and bagels because the Jewish feminist magazine I’m working for feeds me bagels at lunch and tells me I don’t have to be skinny. But I think they’ll complain that I reek of onions.

***

I blurted out to Charlie: “I just don’t want to be a lawyer.” And I meant it.

“The more you say that the more I think you’ll be a lawyer,” he responded.

The unfortunate truth is that I probably would make a great lawyer: I’ve been bred to be one. My dad is a lawyer, my mom is a lawyer; my brother, uncle, and two cousins are lawyers. We apply a statute of limitations to candy in the pantry—you have four days to eat your candy, but after that the statute expires and Dad gets the candy. I know to answer questions according to their exact phrasing. I can analyze writing not just because, I wanted to say, I have no idea what publishing is like and what if I can’t get a job in publishing and what if I hate the office and I swear if I have to buy coffee or post social media, I’d rather just be an onion picker. And I’m afraid of New York City because what if I get lost in those tall, tall buildings and I buy only Chanel and eat only salad or sushi and drink only coffee and see everything in black and white and bright lights?

“I don’t want to be a lawyer or an onion picker. I want to be a writer.” I looked at the ceiling when I told him, even though he already knew.

I looked at the ceiling instead of into his eyes because—unlike David, especially unlike myself—he took me seriously. Enough to tell me that I don’t want to be an onion picker when I’d spent all night writing wholeheartedly about how that’s the only thing I want to be. And thinking about how really I’d like to face-plant into wet grass and smash things. That doesn’t sound like someone who is ready to be anything except a college senior.

“Well then be a writer. Get a job in publishing and see other people writing and learn what it’s like to be a writer. Or just go be one, and understand that it’s not easy. You might invest a lot of time into something that won’t work out. You have to choose between going to law school and getting a job that will keep you comfortable and a job where you might not be comfortable. But if you want to be a writer, you have to try to make it work.”

That sounded so…grown up. Charlie had spent his night taking an exam and working on his honors thesis in Economics. And now he was offering logical, helpful advice. I pictured myself chopping onions that I had pulled up from the ground and remembered that onions would always make me cry. I pulled at the cheese stuck to the edges of the mac ‘n cheese tray.

It was 1:00am and the café was closing. Charlie walked home with me, and we laughed about how I’d argue the sky is purple if that’s how I felt one day, until we came to the part of the path where we had to walk separate ways. He kissed me goodnight and started up the hill to his apartment, but then called after me:

“Don’t go home and dream about onions. You need to have bigger dreams, Laura.”

So I went home and reminded myself that you just have to be writing to be a writer, and I rewrote my essay, beginning with the line: “It was a dark and stormy night…” [IM]
What're you doing? She frowns as if
I'm a loafer, a do-nothing, never-do-well,
or just a lazybones,
Coloring?
No ma'am. It's calculus, I say,
but she just stares at me, then at
the curves on my lined paper,
and then back at me
while sitting real tall,
stiff and straight,
as if she's a ballerina,
a panjandrum,
a painted horse in a parade,
a name in chalk unwilling to fade.

And I bet she's got a magniloquent,
old southern name,
like Clementine or Adelaide,
and I bet she won't bother asking for mine,
since to her I'm just some bum
scratching my initials on
the terminal's plastic armchair
and drawing curls
and shading in partial squares
with a blue ballpoint pen,
leaving my stain.

by Catherine Kapples
The First Lie

by Jacob Adamson

Deep in the Algor valley nestled between the Tigris and the Euphrates sometime between the discovery of fire and the invention of the wheel, an important discovery was made. This discovery is undoubtedly one of the most useful in human history. It is the tool of kings and religious leaders, as well as fathers and sons. Surely it can be said that every single human utilizes it to a varying degree in daily life. The effects of this invention throughout history indeed cannot be overstated. Given this incredible history, it is shocking that it has gone almost entirely unstudied by historians. The invention I am referring to is the invention of the lie.

Many many years ago, I began an inquiry into the origins of this human invention. I spent years searching for any document or book about its discovery. I was systematic in my search. I read books from Dewey Decimal 900 — History, geography, and auxiliary disciplines — to 999 — extraterrestrial worlds. I consulted professors in every major university. I went to every country in the world, from Algeria to Zimbabwe. Still, I found nothing but trial, tears, and trivialities.

I was on the verge of ending this search, until an unlikely encounter in a Baghdad market. I met a friendly looking merchant with a great curly beard and greater belly. I told him of my journey. He listened intently, smiling and nodding. When I finished he scratched his beard ponderously. “My friend,” he said in his playful Arabian accent, “I believe I have something which might aid you in your search.”

“I would be tremendously grateful if that were the case, but I believe that’s impossible.”

He then pulled out an intricately carved box from beneath the stall. “Now, my friend” he said to me, “I do not know very much about this item, but I do believe it is of incredible historical value. I have been waiting for an intelligent man such as yourself to examine it.”

He smiled, opening the box. Upon a velvet cushion sat a single dusty, ancient scroll.

I seized it greedily, only to discover that it was covered in unintelligible scribbles, a language that I did not recognize. Luckily, the vendors happened to know a man who could translate it, for a nominal fee.

So I found myself everyday as the sun rose over the sandy Baghdad city sitting on a pillow in Mr. Ghorbani’s humble apartment listening and writing as he read. At times he struggled to find the correct English translation for a word, but overall I was incredibly impressed with his mastery of this ancient dialect. Moreso I was impressed by the detail and humanity expressed in this ancient historical account. It took many weeks, and a substantial portion of my fortune, but I have here for you the reader what is the only known translation, the most accurate history, and the sum of all my endeavors: a true account of the invention of the lie.

“Oog did you remember to get kalugah berrys on way home?”

Now, this was the third time that week that Oog’s wife had asked to pick up the berries, but each time he’d forgotten.
On the day before last, which we would now call a Tuesday, Oog had intended to get the berries. He had been walking to the grove, but he was distracted. Oog had been walking in the tall grass close to the kalugah grove, when he came across his friend Tog. Tog was banging a rock and a stick together. The sound was so enthralling that a crowd began to form, gyrating their bodies in an awkward spasmodic way. They danced and grooved to the beat. Oog, excited, asked Tog, “What you have there?”

“Rock”, replied Tog.

The name stuck.

By the time Tog made his way home, he had forgotten all about the berries, but this story, he told his wife.

The next day Oog was walking the river again, when he plum forgot.

Today he’d heard the unmistakable sound of laughter in the river. He’d laid down on a small cliff that overlooked the water. There were Rah, Yak and Sheä. They were naked. Of course everyone went topless in those days. He’d lied there for a little longer than he should have until one of them screeched and pointed in Oog’s direction. Oog shot up like he’d just been shocked in the pecker.

The women then erupted in laughter upon seeing Oog’s wooden club standing at the ready. He’d run all the way back to his cave. This story, he could not tell his wife.


“Oog, this why I love you. Many hunter proud. Do not gather. We, do together. You hunt and gather. I gather and hunt. It good.” She gave him a kiss on the cheek and smiled revealing teeth as speckled as the leopard skin she wore. “Now, put berry in salad.”

“I don’t have them”

The cave felt familiar to Oog. There was straw bedding in the corner, and a portrait of him and his wife hunting on the wall. It was an anniversary present. Remains of a fire were at the mouth of the cave. Cooked bits of chicken lingered in the charcoal.

“Huh” replied Oog’s wife, “Ahooogah.”

Oog was unsure of what was happening, and scrambled to reply. As so often happens with lies, one followed another.

“Well, I picked them, then… then… saber tooth come. I fight, but run. Lost all berry.” This was not true.

“Big saber tooth come. Oog sure?”

“Yes,” said Oog.

And so Oog’s wife went and told all the other caves, becoming the second person to ever lie in the history of mankind, albeit, unintentionally. The other cave-dwellers, never knowing anyone to ever say anything but the truth, believed. They formed a hunting party to chase the nonexistent Saber-Tooth. At first Oog was reluctant to lead, as it would mean continuing to repeat his lie, but, with the pressure of the village neighbors at his back, he raised his club, the one made of real wood,

After all, he lacked the vocabulary to explain what he’d done. He hardly understood himself.

So the Neanderthals searched after the tiger until the sun was an angry red mole in the sky. They didn’t find him. When they were investigating the spot where the alleged attack occurred, some of the cave dwellers brought up questions. For instance: If there was a saber tooth tiger, why weren’t there any tracks on the ground. And, if Oog had been attacked by the saber tooth tiger, why didn’t he have a scratch on him. And moreover, why was there a saber tooth tiger here, when there hadn’t been one in this area since the last ice age, 250 years ago. Oog’s answers were as follows: The tiger was no larger than a dog. Oog was a very good fighter. Perhaps this was a new kind of tiger, a dog sized one that could survive in the heat.
He made up some intelligent sounding reasons for this, and scared the cave dwellers even more.

Word spread of Oog’s heroic deeds around the cooking fires. The Neanderthals and the Neader-dolls all wanted to hear more from the great warrior who’d fought off a tiger. Oog told and retold the story, inventing an increasingly elaborate course of events.

Oog found that each lie was easier than the last.

It was also incredibly enjoyable. He’d never had such a captivated audience. Normally when Oog would tell some humdrum story the other Neanderthals would look at him disinterestedly until he finished, whereupon they’d tell him, “That wasn’t very interesting.”

They hadn’t learned to lie yet.

Now when one of them told a story he would smile and say, “how interesting” or “tell me more.” He became terribly charming.

A sort of small cult began to form around Oog. They gathered around a large limestone boulder in the village center to listen intently to his inventive-ly heroic exapedes about the tiger. He invented new and fanciful lies about how he had fought it off with his bare hands and had saved a woman from a near by village from the tiger – a woman who was quite a looker as well. They oohed and ahhed at his tales.

Then one day Oog mentioned that Ogh had also seen the tiger on the very same day, but had run away like a coward. This untruth upset Ogh very much. He grabbed Oog by his deerskin collar and pulled their faces together. From here Oog could see the bits of rotting old flesh in Ogh’s teeth. His breath smelled like the rancid peaches in Oog’s rubbish heap.

“I not run from Tiger!” yelled Ogh.

Oog was nervous. He had been challenged for his lies before, but never so directly, and it had always been easy to come up with another lie.

“Ugh” cried Oog.

“What?” Ogh asked.

Oog seized this opportunity in a moment of brilliance “Ugh, Ugh, I said ugh, not Ogh. Ugh run from Tiger.”

Ogh relaxed a bit, relieved he was not the object of ridicule for something he had no part in. “Who Ugh,” asked Ogh.

“Ugh from other village, Ogh probably never heard of,” said Oog.

This answer satisfied Ogh.

The next day he was with his wife. “Darling you are the love of my life. You are like a cool splash of water on a summer day. You are the first bite of fresh fruit. You are like big boulder that falls off cliff face and crushes tiger just in time. You are like–”

“Wait, where are you going!” I asked.

“I must go, my flight leaves in an hour,” Mr. Ghorbani said.

I rose from my pillow, anger rising. “So you’re just going to leave me here, never knowing what happens to Oog, not really sure what the point of the story was, what lessons are to be learned, what great truths hide in the annals of history. I must say I feel quite cheated.”

Mr. Ghorbani grappled with his conscience for a moment. “Okay, because we are friends, I’ll give you a quick summary of rest.” He glanced rapidly at the old manuscript before him and I readied my pen, desperate to get every last word. [im]

[continued on the Inklings blog]
I always thought I was a romantic, y’know? Not that I was romantic, meaning I was actually good at any of that kind of thing. A romantic, in the old world European sense meaning I saw things as better than they were. In this case, I am still talking about love. I remember my time with her in a romantic way, not that either of us were being romantic but that my remembering was romantic.

What am I talking about?

What I mean is I really liked this girl and I was no good at being romantic, but I have a romantic memory of whatever it is that I did in place of romance. She was a friend, and every once in a while I would decide I was starting to like her in a romantic sense. I would start noticing more of the things she did, pay attention to the details in the way she moved or the things she said or what she might have been thinking about when I wasn't around. I’d try to decipher what she really meant by certain things and whether or not she was trying to get me to read between the lines. I thought about what she thought of me, what all other people think of me. I forced myself to look at myself through other people's eyes, through her eyes, and I know I just couldn't do it. I know I couldn't because sometimes she would tell me about times she thought of me when I wasn't around, and those perceptions were just so different from how I saw her seeing me, how I guess I see myself.

She became a romantic figure; not in the sense that she was romancing me, or that I was romancing her but that I had idealized her. There was a romantic version of her in my head thinking of me and doing all the actual things she did but it wasn’t her. The romantic was in my head, and not in her. I would, every once in a while, decide I really liked his girl, and I would end up talking to her a lot and remembering once again that I actually didn’t like her at all. Reality would slap me in the face the way it always does. I was one of those characters in old world tragic romance novels, the ones that aren’t about two romantic people romancing each other and then tragically being kept apart, but of unrequited love. I was that poor sap who fell in love with someone who wasn’t really there, who fell in love with romance. She was not the one I fell in love with, but she was, it was her but not her in her own head but in mine. I fell in love with exactly what I thought I would fall in love with and it worked. Great. Only I fell in love with the romantic in my head, and the romantic that I wasn’t couldn’t be romantic out in the real world.

This would happen all the time, this cycle of wondering whether or not I was starting to like this girl and then distracting myself with this romantic version of her until I could get romantically frustrated and upset with the non-romantic real life person who had her own mind that actually had its own perceptions and not just mine put into another mind and tweaked to seem attractive to my untweeked mind. Her real life personality and behaviours would slap me in the face the way they always did. I would be right back where I started and ready to start all over again. Everyone’s real non-romantic versions would slap me in the face and I would be left alone, the unrequited not at all romantic romantic. She didn’t have to deal with the turmoil going on in my mind, she didn’t have my mind and didn’t know what was going on in mine; sometimes I would seem more interested in being around her, talk to her more than usual and sometimes less than usual, distant even, and she wouldn't even need to be a part of the roller-coaster relationship I had with her. I was the old world type of romantic, falling in love with myself over and over again until I remembered that I would always hate myself. [im]
Francis, Never Frank, and His Ten Lives

by Catherine Kapples

There are sixty-six direct descendants of Francis Coleman Sartor dispersed across the continental United States, who knowingly or unknowingly uphold his legacy despite not having him for very long or not having him at all. But there are pieces of Francis, never Frank, in all of us. And as his children, Chip, Fred, Patrick, Tommy, S.J., Cole, Hill, Diane and I, have passed our Francisisms, our use of “hit the head,” our strong dislike of Brussel sprouts, our love of turbulence and flips and the Tower of Terror, our stories about the ghosts that tap on the walls and make the Spanish moss sway in the trees, to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren he never met and never will.

We live in twenty-seven states; more of us live in Georgia than any other state, but no one lives in the Dakotas or Alaska or Montana or Kansas or Kentucky. Several of us live in the states that were part of the thirteen original colonies, but some of us live in states that joined the union most recently in the twentieth century: Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Hawaii. Several of us live on streets and boulevards and lanes named after historical figures: Cervantes, Washington, Eisenhower, Sequoyah, Sam Houston, de Soto, Andrew Pickens, Stephen Mallory. Most of us live less than an hour drive from the shore.

Several of us have his light blue eyes so our mother used to lather zinc oxide underneath them in two straight lines, like football players’ eye black grease, to prevent the sun from reflecting off of our pale eyes onto our paler skin and giving our under eyes and cheeks even more freckles. Several of us have his thick blonde hair that has become increasingly browner and grayer, as we have gotten older. Several of us have his patience. Several of us have his tidy handwriting and by the fourth grade could replicate his signature perfectly on all of our tests and quizzes that were below a B- and required a parent’s signature.

But one of us died.

Only one of Francis’ nine kids still lives in Florida, in the state that he grew up in and returned to after his first year of college, after World War II, after his last year of college, after becoming a Blue Angel, for his sister Susie Bell’s debutante ball, for his cousin Bobby’s wedding on the beach, for his grandfather’s funeral, to serve in Mary Alice’s royal court in the Mardi Gras parade, to build a home for his high school sweetheart and their expanding family on the inlet in Pensacola Bay. In the “upside of Florida,” where his family lived for four generations of Sartors in the city of five flags, with each flag representing the different times the Spanish Empire, French Empire, British Empire, United States of America, and briefly the Confederate States of America held control, and where Francis taught his children how to swim, which jellyfish were the stinging kind and which were the non-stinging kind, how to bait a crab trap without pinching your fingers on the wires, and how to use nail clippers and hot water to remove wood splinters from your toes and palms.

Of his nine children, my brothers and sisters and I, one of us is battling colon cancer; one of us is a retired U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander and a former Blue Angels flyer; one of us has five grandkids; one of us is a former professional windsurfer who has won a Professional Windsurfers Association Excellence Award and now lives in Maui; one of us is allergic to raw carrots; one of us dyes her graying head a honey blonde hue; one of us buys and sells rural real estate in Wyoming and Colorado; one of us believes in Bigfoot; one of us is writing a screenplay about the annual Newport Folk Festival; one of us has died.
One of us worked as a primatologist for thirteen years with Jane Goodall in Kenya; one of us walked our sister down the aisle; one of us had stage three melanoma, but caught it before it progressed to stage four; one of us fell in love with a boy from Sydney who pumped gas at the Shoreline Marina and taught six and seven year olds how to sail a Sunfish; one of us is addicted to painkillers; one of us decided to go by his middle name in college, so now more people call him Huck than Coleman; one of us cut his face the first time he shaved; one of us failed Algebra I in ninth grade and had to repeat it; one of us married the girl who used to sell the most Girl Scout cookies on all of Cervantes Street; one of us has died.

One of us revoked her lifetime membership to the Daughters of the American Revolution that her grandmother had given her a lifetime membership to; one of us is dyslexic; one of us got married under a tent on the beach of Little Dix’s Bay; one of us had a crush on his sixth-grade English teacher, Ms. Bateman; one of us wrestled all four years at Ole Miss; one of us makes peach cobbler every Christmas; one of us is looking for her third husband on FarmersOnly.com; one of us went to law school for a semester before dropping out; one of us doesn’t eat red meat or lobster or anything with cream; one of us has died.

One of us has two kids even though she wanted more because her youngest was born six weeks early and almost died from Neonatal infections four times before she was a month old; one of us has nine fake teeth; one of us dated a girl named Wheeler from Birmingham who had three last names in her full name and a twin brother named Wagner; one of us runs four miles every morning before having a glass of orange juice and a bowl of grits and sausage; one of us has a long scar above his left eyebrow from his brother’s pitching wedge; one of us is afraid of flying in small planes and won’t fly in anything smaller than a twin-engine turboprop; one of us has high-blood pressure; one of us got fired from his job at the Buggy Works when it was bought out by Chevy; one of us can’t see reds or greens after he had an infection in his brain and was in a coma for four days; one of us is a Louisiana state representative; one of us has died.

All of us miss Francis—Dad, Pops, Daddio—who told us stories about catching small snapper fish and putting them in the piles of clothes on his sisters’ bedroom floors and hiding quarters in the mouth of the mounted blue marlin that hung above the fireplace in his parents’ family room when he was a boy. Probably as an adult Francis preferred the salt of the bay and the soft sway of the waves to chlorine of the pool and the bounce of the diving board, as I do now. Probably, on a morning of constant rain, he went through the stacks of paper underneath his bed and flipped through his school notes until he reached his pile of report cards, but he knew that his satisfactory in spelling and in social studies and his unsatisfactory in arithmetic in eighth-grade, would not be his legacy.

His legacy is serving as a Captain in the U.S. Navy and a left wing Blue Angel, having more than nine lives in successfully flying Hornet jets and landing and taking off on runways of less than a thousand feet on an aircraft carrier in World War II, ejections, engine flameouts, and mid-air collisions during Blue Angels’ practices, Chip’s expulsion from high school, Pat’s teenage years of angst, S.J.’s immune disease, five kids under the age of eight with chickenpox one June, but not surviving cancer, since, tragically, unbelievably, one of us has died.

One of us has died, but his spirit lives on in 27 states, in the city of 5 flags, in his 9 children, Chip, Fred, Patrick, Thomas, S.J., Cole, Hill, Diane, and me, Frances with an e. [IM]
Dear Jason,

The bus is cold. I’m drawing figures in the frost on the window next to me. I can’t seem to get the slope of your nose quite right though. I know it would’ve been more poetic or something to leave a letter on the bedside table as a goodbye but I just couldn’t. I didn’t want to imagine what your face would look like when you found it. I think it would look something like this drawing. My fingers are cold from the swirls I’ve made on the window around my portrait of you. I scraped some of the ice with my nails to add detail.

I think it’s better that you’ll get this in the mail. I always loved getting mail as a kid; pressing my fingers against the indents the writing left and enjoying a cool or colorful stamp. I can’t say goodbye just yet. I was never any good at saying goodbyes anyway, especially since the apartment was full of flowers and candles. Adding my letter to all that would’ve been too much, even for me.

I’m going to my mom’s in Hillsboro. At least it’ll be warm there. I won’t be able to draw in the windows. Please don’t come for me. It won’t be nearly as heroic as you think. I need time alone right now, after—well, you know. I need some time to process. I miss him so much.

My drawing is starting to dissolve. I guess the heating in this bus is starting to work so maybe I’ll be able to stop shivering. I know my writing will be hard to decipher since my fingers are still a little cold and the water left on my fingers from my drawing is starting to drip onto the page.

I think being alone will help. Will you let me think? I have so much to think about. We’ve had such beautiful times together. Will everything change now? Will I change? Do you know who I’ll become? Maybe this is our chance to get to know each other again now that this happened. Time to re-evaluate who we are and who we were. Maybe this is exactly what we need. I’m leaving my address on here for you to write back. Will you write? Please.

You know people used to write to each other all the time. People used to communicate this way. Crazy, right? Correspondence. Advice. Love letters. People used to write those. Have we ever written each other anything like that before? A love letter? I don’t know. Can we? Maybe that’s what we’re missing. Will you write me one? Maybe this isn’t the right time. Will you write one anyways?

The sky gets bluer the closer to the south this bus gets. The sunset runs orange, pink, and red. The colors are becoming more and more vibrant and vivid as they wink out into the night. I guess I’ll have to turn on a light to keep writing. The man sitting behind me is glaring now. He keeps on huffing and pulling his coat over his eyes. I’ll have to stop writing soon.

My phone is off. I’m sure by now you’ve tried texting and calling. I haven’t gotten them. I won’t be turning it on for a while.

What will I do without you? I guess it’s time for me to find out. I almost bought two bus tickets out of habit. I almost didn’t turn off my phone this time too. I miss you. You’ll write won’t you? Eventually? Please. I love you. I do. I’m sorry.

Love,
Evelyn
And the Floodgates of the Heavens Were Opened

by Julie Toich

Sixty-seven years she's lived in Basswood, Iowa, and every year for the past forty-four of them Ethel Croft has knitted a blanket and given it away. One for her mother, one for her father, one for each of her five siblings. One for her husband on his deathbed. One for Susan Carole, one for Scot-tie Fischer. One for Brigitte Salin, who first taught her how to knit when she spent a summer in Qué-bec back in '71. The others went to friends and lovers, neighbors and pastors and teachers. One went to the mailman. One went to a family who lost everything in a fire. The truth is, Ethel doesn't remember everyone on the list—and there was a list, lost in a ‘safe place’ that she hasn’t rediscovered in the past decade—but she knows that none of those blankets have made it to her own bed.

Forty-four blankets and none for herself, even though the old quilt on her bed is getting thin. Forty-four blankets and none for herself, even though the windows leak cold air in the winter that the heater can’t compensate for, and the bedroom gets cold. Forty-four blankets, and she decides the forty-fifth will belong to her.

“It’s about time,” she tells her sheep, who is the last of the old flock she and her husband, Henry, used to care for. The sheep bleats as Ethel stares up at the summer sky. “Blue,” she says, “and white and gray. Just like the sky. What do you think?” The sheep nibbles the grass in the pasture, and Ethel nods to herself.

She dyes the yarn by hand, yarn she made back when they had wool to spare. Lovely cerulean and powder blue, bleached white and gunmetal. She dries it on the clothesline, so that the wind will carry the smell of soil and grasses into the yarn.

Then she sits and knits a little bit every night for a week, starting with a large blue stripe as she hums to the oldies on the radio. Each day that week is sunny and cloudless, the skies stretching wide over the hills.

Then she knits a pale blue stripe, then a white one, and the skies change ac-cordingly, bursting with rain when she reaches the dark gray rows. On the darkest of the gunmetal days, she puts aside her knitting needles and stands in the storm as the fields fill with water and dirt turns to mud, which slides down the hillsides and pools murky and thick in depres-sions.

“It’s like in the Bible,” Patty Larson tells Ethel the next day when she goes visiting. There are four of them—Ethel, Patty, Patty’s husband Brian, and Ed Somers—sitting in the Larson living room and drinking tea.

“Storm like this will send the whole world to hell, you’ll see. And serves us right, too.”

“Good grief,” Ed says, putting his mug on the table. “My grandfather used to say the same thing. Just the same. And we’re still here. We’re still kicking. So don’t get worked up about a little rain.”

Ethel nods her agreement, and Brian slurps from his cup. “Checked the rain gauge this morning. Already got four inches in there.”
The gunmetal gray stripe is thick and beautiful, and Ethel pauses her knitting and looks at her friend, who has aged so much in the last decade, hair whitening and skin creasing. Her eyes are watery and dull.

Then she thinks of Henry and the bright blanket she knitted for his hospital bed, all yellows and greens like summer, the way his hands lay so limply against it like dead birds. In his last days, he told her he could see through to the other side, and he wept. “There’s nothing,” he said. “Nothing at all. It’s so, so beautiful.”

“Henry believed in many things,” Ethel says, “but never thought rainstorms were a sign of the end.”

“A good man, Henry,” Brian says, smiling. “Once, back in ‘82, he picked me up down at Dale’s in that old lemon of his when I got stranded there in a freak storm and we’re riding up Old Swallow Road, just the two of us, and—don’t you know it?—the car breaks down and then we’re both out stranded in the rain.”

“The only thing is, how are any of the crops going to grow like this?” Ed says.

Ethel starts a new row, fingers lingering over the lovely gray. Blue this time.

The storm clears, and the skies are empty of any clouds, deep blue at their highest point. The ground absorbs the standing water from the storm, draws it deep inside, and pushes out flowers and sprouts and green tendrils of life. Ethel sits by the window day after day and knits, watching the sheep graze in the pasture, watching the skies turn from dark blue to light blue to white, and pausing when it’s time to switch back to the gray yarn. Lacing the yarn through her fingers, she stares at the white sky, white as the last row she completed, and doesn’t start the next row.

“Tired already?” Ed says. He was just stopping by to help her fix the stubborn drawers in the kitchen that don’t open and close so well, but despite the drawers being fixed now, he’s still here, eating one of the apples from down cellar and watching her knit. She knows what it’s about. Ed, Patty, and Brian have been spending more time with her since Henry died. Checking in on her. She knows how these things go.

“No,” she says, “I just don’t think we need more rain yet.”

Ed laughs. “You can say that again. The fields are going to be wet for a long while.”

Putting her blanket aside with a sigh, Ethel keeps looking out the window at the sky and the patchwork fields. The Queen Anne’s Lace is growing now, white and delicate along the roadside and in the fields left fallow. “Funny how the moment you decide it’s time to do something for yourself, you start thinking of everyone else.”

“What’s that?” Ed says.

“I think I’ll make some hats and mittens.” When Ed just gives her a baffled look, she smiles back, gets up from her seat, and walks to her yarn basket. “For donating. It’s spring now, but it’ll be summer, then fall, and…” She has no real explanation for him.

“I thought you wanted to make yourself a blanket,” Ed says.

“Well, yes,” Ethel replies. “But…”

She looks at the white sky again. “I’ll save that project for a rainy day.”[11]
An Interview with Lewis Robinson

Lewis Robinson, who published his first book, Officer Friendly and Other Stories, in 2003, is a Visiting Assistant Professor of English/Creative Writing at Colby College this year. Before coming to Colby, Robinson taught creative writing at the Iowa Young Writer's Studio and then served as the Writer-in-Residence at Phillips Academy Andover. We reached out to him to ask him a few questions about his experiences as a writer and his advice about workshops and the creative writing process in general. Thank you to Jess Greenwald for interviewing Lewis Robinson, and thank you to Lewis Robinson for taking the time to answer our questions!

_Inklings Magazine:_ How did you get into Creative Writing?

_Lewis Robinson:_ Well, I was always a big reader, an introverted kid. I loved to escape into the world of books. I didn't really think about the author of these books as people until I read E.B. White's books, _Charlotte's Web_ and _Stuart Little_. I knew that he had spent some time in Maine (I was living in Maine at the time). And I sent him a letter, and he responded! So that was the first time I really thought _Oh, wow, this is actually something people do_. I still didn't think right away _This is what I want to be_, but it's when the possibility first existed for me. I started writing stories of my own in earnest in high school, and they weren't for a class. In college, I started to study fiction. I was studying the craft of it, and that's when I became obsessed, writing full-length stories on my own, and I had a great teacher there, this guy named Jay Parini, who is a poet and a biographer and a novelist, and he was really encouraging. He was the first person who said to me, _this is something you could and should keep doing_. That was extremely valuable to me, someone I liked who could recognize me like that.

_IM:_ Do you remember the first thing you ever wrote?

_LR:_ I remember things I wrote for school, and I still have some of them. In high school, I wrote a series of little vignettes about these kids who go on these adventures in this big yellow pickup truck, called the Hog. That was the first time that I really had fun with writing stories, episodes in a longer narrative. I remember writing a “Choose Your Own Adventure” story in fifth grade...but those things, I don't know. I don't see them as being connected to the work I do now as much. I was reading a lot of fantasy...I wrote a retelling of the Headless Horsemen.

_IM:_ Do you think Leo and Maizey [your kids] could be writers someday, too?

_LR:_ Yeah, I think they could! They both really like to work on projects on their own, and I think that's something a writer needs to really enjoy doing. To just find delight in your own work, challenging yourself, being gratified by the work that you do, writing for yourself, working on creative problems only you can solve that only you get gratification from, not being over-
dependent on outside validation. They like that, they like to work on things on their own, they can be pleased about something that no one else can be pleased by, which I think is key. I hope they find their own path, which could take many forms. It’s cool to see that they’re both very interested in stories... they’re both good storytellers, and they have fun with it. We do this thing at home called TMB, Type My Book. This means sitting with them on the couch and they’ll just tell a story, and you just transcribe it for them. I try to type as fast as they’re speaking, they love it. They like to rereading it later. It’s usually extremely surreal, they make a lot of weird, creative connections.

IM: At Colby you teach fiction writing classes, what other genres have you explored?

LR: I taught poetry at a prep school, which I loved. When I was in grad school, getting my MFA, most of my friends were poets, and I always loved reading poetry. I’ve written some poetry, even. I loved teaching poetry, because the way I approached it was doing the assignments with the students and I felt like I was learning alongside them. The question we kept asking the entire term was ’What is a poem?’ We were reading some great stuff that I had read over the years, revisiting it, and trying to figure out what makes it poetry, and how we might emulate that. It’s a good way to learn more about writing. I was lacking a little practical experience in the making of poems, but I loved teaching it, and learning poetry alongside them.

IM: In your opinion, how important are workshops for the writing process?

LR: Well, they’re not essential. But I think they can be really helpful in providing a writer with deadlines, and learning how to receive feedback. I think you can learn a lot by critiquing other people's writing, you can learn how to revise your own work. The author of a given piece may not necessarily be getting the “Big Solution” for revision, but they will probably be better equipped for it, from just that process—looking at things critically. So that's why I love it. And I just think they’re fun! [IM]
Special Thanks

Editor-in-Chief…………………………….. Laura Rosenthal
Club Director……………………………… Madison McLeod
Design and Layout Editors……………….. Catherine Kapples, Jess Greenwald,
                                      Laura Rosenthal
Cover Art…………………………………… Jess Greenwald
Logo …………………………………………. Wilder Davies
Blog Contributors……………………….. Jacob Adamson, Kevin Scott
Selection Committee…………………….. Catherine Kapples, Kyle Laurita-Bonometti,
                                      Madison McLeod, Laura Rosenthal