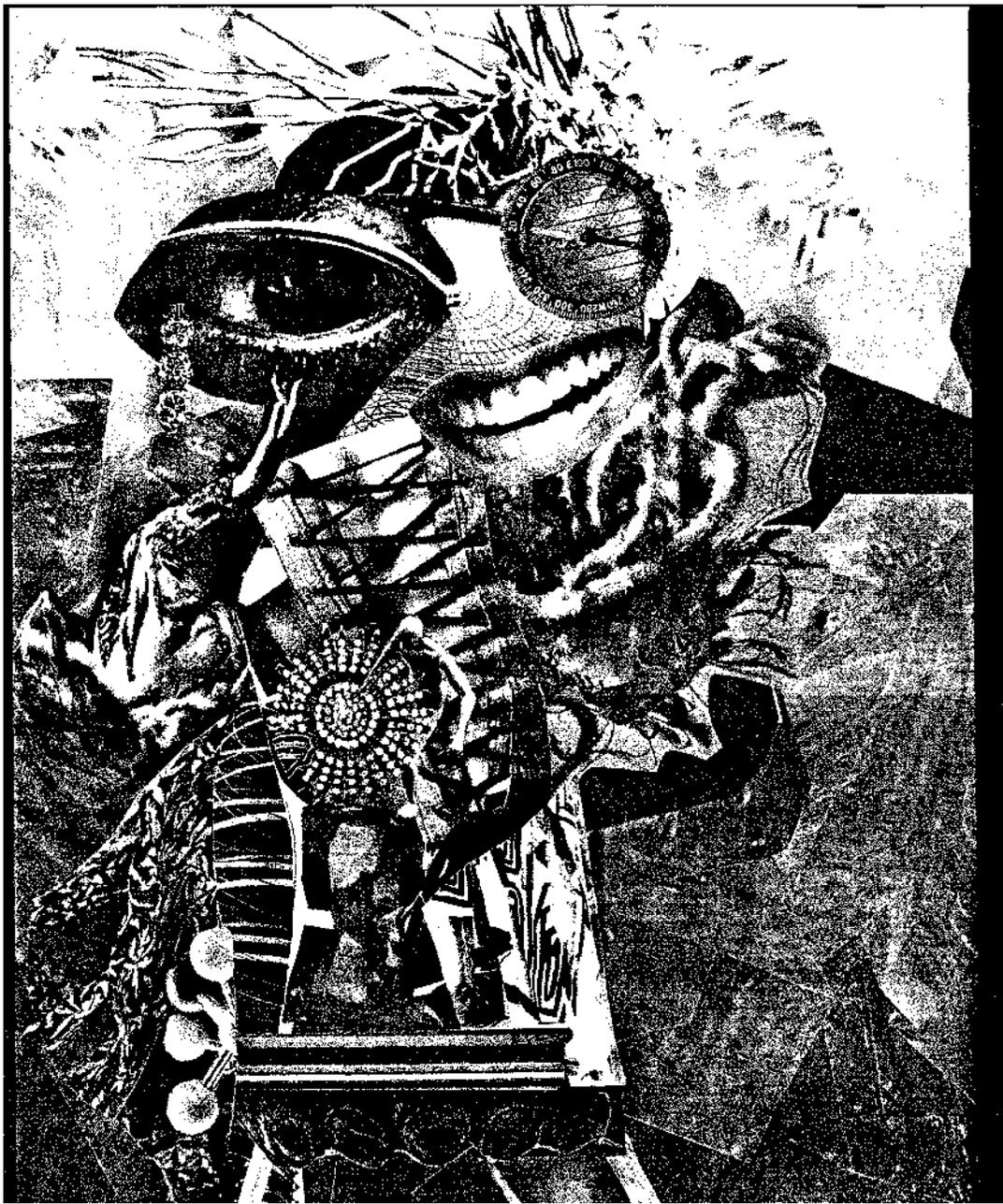


# The Forum

ART & NON-FICTION LITERATURE



# The Forum

ART & NON-FICTION LITERATURE

Volume XXVI

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# Contents

## ESSAYS

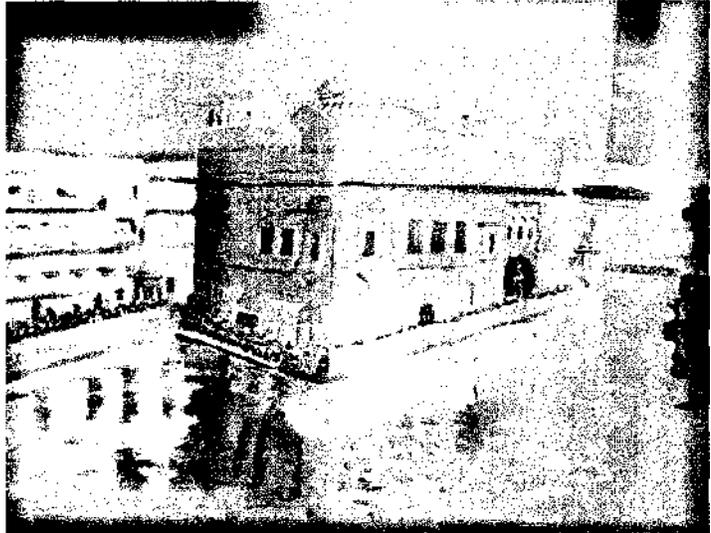
- The Old World Under Siege by Progression/ Nicholas Bagg 5  
Art of Living: Give & Take/ Bailey Borzecki 9  
Bipolar/ Emily Shenk 13  
Steamed Crabs/ Maria Linz 19  
Escaping the Street/ Tim Sablik 23  
Room to Draw/ Lauren Bivona 30  
Overcoming Fear and Shame: My Short Experience with  
Bipolar Disease/ Laura Eldridge 33  
What a Production!/ Moira Jones 44  
Running Out of Water/ Jenny McCarthy 50  
New York Nostalgia/ Taylor Calderone 57

## ARTWORK

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Brian Benesch / 5     | Monika Skwarkicka / 32 |
| Stacy Welch / 8       | John Kline / 40, 41    |
| Danny Lucas / 13      | Keri Smotrich / 44     |
| Lindsay Murphy / 19   | Andrea Giese / 49      |
| Kara Sposato / 22, 60 | Marissa Sondo / 49     |
| Talia Neri / 29       | Erik Schmitz / 57      |
| Erin Lawrence / 30    | Laura Sabin / 61       |

# The Old World Under Siege by Progression

Nicholas Bagg



*"The skylines lit up at dead of night, the air-conditioning systems cooling empty hotels in the desert, and artificial light in the middle of the day all have something both demented and admirable about them: the mindless luxury of a rich civilization, and yet of a civilization perhaps as scared to see the lights go out as was the hunter in his primitive night."*

*- Jean Baudrillard*

For a city and a people who had an illustrious and storied history, these invaders were not welcome. Built upon a small hill and flowing down to the ocean, this city could have been named Constantinople or Baghdad or Prague or Delhi, or any of the other beautiful, ancient cities. The city was from a time before now, when things were different, where life moved much slower. It was made up of marketplaces, cozy corners and small courtyards. It had laws and libraries, halls and hotels, stock-rooms and shops. It had contractors who constructed huge beautiful buildings with high ceilings and immense columns, carvings and statues. Its people had culture and lives, delicious food and well written books. They lived in small tasteful houses with large families. When doing things, they did them right; they put effort into everything they did and were very proud of all they accomplished. These people worked hard on

a project until completion and then moved onto the next project. They were a peaceful people, more interested in tending to their families and community than becoming better than their next door neighbors.

Even with all these advancements, the invaders thought they could run things better and more efficiently; they had all the might, so they must have all the intelligence. A city of old, the people respected its police force and army, respected its government. Refusing to just turn over the city and its riches to the so-called more technologically advanced people, they were given an ultimatum: surrender or be wiped out. But these people liked their old ways, they liked how things were. They did not want to switch over to the new ways. And so, they decided that instead of just turning over their mature city to the comparatively young aggressors, they would battle to save their beloved homes.

As promised, the bombs fell from the sky. Down, down they came, crashing into the city's municipal buildings, the power plants, the water processing facilities, the phone companies. The helicopters landed all over the city, dropping off elite forces to assassinate politicians, poison food and water supplies, and spread propaganda about the unavoidable fall of the city; tanks and other fighting vehicles surrounded the city walls. The commanders of the technologically advanced army pounded the city with tank fire, long range weapons and more bombs. They knew preserving civilian lives and entering the city would be a costly task, both man and money-wise.

The senate who ran the city knew fighting was a hopeless task, but they geared up for it anyways. Their anti-aircraft weapons had brought down several planes, but without an air force, they could not gain any superiority over the skies. Their food supplies had been cut off when the approaching armies had ravaged the surrounding villages. Although they secretly held out hope for help from the surrounding nations, they finally realized they had indeed been replaced by something better, something more complex. The way of life they led no longer applied in the new fast paced world. Knowing there was no way this city would be preserved, they vowed to fight hard in order to be remembered.

With a little more than a million residents, they knew there was a possibility they could put a dent in the invading force. These invaders were smug, arrogant and overbearing. They sent a force expecting the city's inhabitants to roll over and accept the better ways. The senate wondered why the invaders did not respect other ways of life. Why did they feel they needed to bring in a new wave of ideologies, a new way of life? Why did everything need to be brought up to speed? Why did there need to be so much competition, so much replacement? They had watched

this happen in many other places, all over the world. Even the force that sought to stomp them out was the replacement for a similar, but slightly slower moving army. The previous army's time had come and gone so quickly. How long would it be before this newer and better force would be replaced by an even newer and better one? With this in mind, they quickly began to set up their defenses. They knew it was only a matter of time, but their pride as a people required them to hold out.

To cut costs and make updating easier, the invading army knew they would have to seize the main financial institutions, the main government facilities, the police stations and the army offices. They decided the most efficient way would be to enter the city at three points and storm to the city center. Once they took control of the ancient town hall, they reasoned, the people would be forced to surrender, for they had so much hope and heart and love locked in this one building. This building would be their key to the city.

The tanks rolled in at a quarter past four, crushing everything in their path. The sun rested in the corner of the sky as they drove down the quaint cobblestone streets, slowly progressing towards the central city square. More helicopters strategically dropped troops around the city; they claimed buildings, paving the way for the final blitz on the center of the city. The defenders had tanks as well, but like everything else they had, it was not as advanced as the trespassers', and so they stood no chance. To the city square they retreated, preparing for a final stand.

The final battle in the center of the city was nothing spectacular. It would be excellent to say the defenders had a secret weapon they unleashed and won back their city and good triumphed over evil. Unfortunately, this was not the case. There was no awesome comeback, no one man that took control and drove out these prowlers. No, the defenses were broken, the senate was broken. Smoke billowed into the air from the burned out tanks, the burned out defensive carriers, and the burned people. The entire defensive army was ravaged. Once the city was deemed secure, the general of the now occupying army climbed the steps and met with a senate, receiving their official surrender.

This general claimed this was the dawn of a new age, a more prosperous time for everyone, including the recently liberated city's occupants. The streets were empty, the fighting over. The aged city had grown tired of all the fighting and her defenses had fallen. The general and his superiors brought in outside contractors and investors to bring the city back to life. The old and now crumbled buildings were taken down with massive cranes and lumbering bulldozers. The town's citizens peaked out their windows, watching as their old way of life was now replaced by a

better one. New businesses and restaurants and shops were put in. Modern architecture replaced their classical. There was a television in every living room, a computer on every desk, a cell phone on every belt. The city was flooded with outside goods and new production expectations. The senate and the generals of the defensive armies were put on trial and convicted of throwing a wrench into the progressive machine.

Years later, a family was relaxing in front of their newly purchased, imported flat screen television. The next story on the news show everyone watched in

town was about their governing authority attempting to bring more countries up to date. Why, they thought, wouldn't these backwards people just get with the times and see how great their lives could be? These new and improved ways were far better than the old ones, they knew. However, the eldest member of the family, who everyone thought was a little distraught, knew that they were just watching a cycle of competition and rapid replacement,



one that would never end. The young always craved the biggest and best of everything and kept the cycle chugging along, never seeing anything wrong with it. This old man knew the terrors that were caused by such quick progression; he had learned throughout his life that he needed to slow down and smell the roses, that not everything was about the items he owned, but about the things he experienced. He only wished that somehow the labor force and younger voters in his society could realize the same before it was too late for them.

# Art of Living: Give and Take

Bailey E. Borzecki

*"That the sea-wave, as it surges with complex eddies, flowing and ebbing, should fit with such perfect adjustment to the rock-surface of the cliff is one of the most inevitable of natural things; so inevitable and so natural, that it would seem foolish to question why or how such close reciprocal adjustment is accomplished."*

*--E.L. Grant Watson*

Closing the door of my car, I let out a sigh of hot air. The white steam evaporated against the dark night air, and I started to walk towards my apartment. Another late weekend night, another similar ending, another day on the calendar to cross off. It seems that, once you get into a routine, days overlap and you can't distinguish between this Friday and that Saturday. I shivered as my sandals splashed through the small remaining puddles on the asphalt, displacing the water into tiny drops. A bluish glow seemed to emanate from the droplets. They were reflecting light. I looked up, awkwardly tilting my head skywards. My breath caught as I realized where the light was coming from. The sky resembled navy-colored satin; its richness almost seemed tactile. Stars bigger and brighter than any I had seen hung precisely in the clear air.

Several storms had passed through earlier during the afternoon, taking every cloud in the sky and leaving wet grass. I looked up and thought I could see past the stars and deeper into the night than I had ever seen before. I sat down on the cold sidewalk and rested on my elbows, just watching. The cold smelled like the woody smoke of a campfire and I could feel the seasons change right there. I could feel the leaves drying and changing color, falling like the rain that had soaked the earth that afternoon. The scent of the air was like a photograph that is lost but resurfaces unexpectedly, a reminder of a past moment and a glimpse into what will eventually come to be.

I looked down at my frozen toes and at my left foot. The familiar

blue pattern glowed under the light of the stars. Four bigger stars with seven points and one smaller one tucked in between with five points. The five brightest stars of the constellation "Southern Cross" are found in the southern hemisphere, though in the northern hemisphere they are tattooed in fading blue ink on the top of my numb foot. I wiggled my toes, hoping to get the blood flowing back. The rain started to fall around me, and I closed my eyes and breathed in.

The weather was almost identical the day we drove along the Great Ocean Road in August 2003. I never thought I would spend my twentieth birthday in Australia, but there I was, starting my twentieth year on earth in a place I wouldn't have expected to be. The Australian sky was a thick layer of dull gray, and it would open up every now and then and shed some water weight. We rode on a bus for about three hours, around cliffs jutting out over the agitated ocean that smashed methodically against the beaches. Mostly everyone slept, but I kept a small meteorologist-like eye on the intervals of rain. The slick roads were threatening, especially around the tight curves up along the coast, so my chest would tighten every time the rain grew heavier.

The bus stopped on one side of a highway, and we ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. The guide then simply pointed in the direction across the highway and we started to walk. And then it was one of those moments that you think will never happen, but the gray slabs of nebulous started to move and open up, and a sky crept out that was the most perfect shade of blue. The clouds that framed it were as white as snow, and I felt like I was looking at a photograph that had been altered, because I didn't think nature really allowed for this kind of flawlessness.

We reached the other side of the highway and approached the edge of one of the viewing lookout points. I stepped cautiously, conscious of slipping and crashing over the cliff to a bloody death. I looked out and saw sand-colored stone giants. Stone giants just wading in the surf. They were separate from the huge cliff we were standing on. Twelve of them lined the coast as I looked to my left and right. Each one was distinct and different from the others, but they all stood tall and powerful. The waves crashed into them, flowed around their edges and settled into foam on the beach. For about one hundred meters out, past the rocks, the water was bubbling and white, steaming and churning, recycling itself as the tide arrived and retreated. The water past the rocks was a deep turquoise, but not the kind of turquoise you'd expect to see in the Caribbean or somewhere tropical. Unique to its location, it was Great Ocean Road-turquoise. The color of the water and the sky touched at some points where the clouds left gaps, and they blended so that you

couldn't tell where the water began and the sky ended.

I finally realized I hadn't breathed for quite some time, so I let out the air I had been holding in my chest and then deeply inhaled the salty, rainy air. The cold was so poignant that it felt like it was winter. I stood at various viewing points for hours, just watching the waves build up, crash into the rock and recede back again. The waves were responsible for the twelve stones, or Twelve Apostles as most people recognize them. The Apostles had their beginnings up to 20 million years ago with the forces of nature attacking the soft limestone of the Port Campbell cliffs. The limestone was created through the build up of skeletons of marine creatures on the sea floor. As the sea retreated, the limestone was exposed. The relentless, stormy Southern Ocean and blasting winds gradually eroded the softer limestone, forming caves in the cliffs. The caves eventually became arches and when they collapsed, rock islands up to 45 meters high were left isolated from the shore. The dramatic and imposing limestone cliffs that are the backdrop to the Apostles tower up to 70 meters, while the tallest of the rock stacks is around 45 meters high.

The ebb and flow, the break and crash of each wave against the tall rocks mesmerized me. I think I was unconsciously waiting to see a piece of the rock break off, erode, deteriorate, so that I could say I watched nature in motion. I watched natural history in the present tense. The power of the waves both excited and frightened me. The beauty and the danger were tied inextricably inside my body and mind.

We climbed down in between the cliffs, and the wind had picked up, whipping the orange sand against our faces and in between our clothes. Dropping down seventy meters we stepped into an inlet. The waves were much closer now, more imposing as they beat against the rocks. From the ground, they seemed much higher and foamier. I could hear the salt sizzle as it smashed into the limestone. I convinced myself I could hear it crackle on the rocks the way oil burns up in a hot pan. A damp cave had been carved out in the inlet underneath the cliffs, and the more daring of my comrades decided to explore its black nothingness. I waded in a few steps and returned back to sit on the beach and watch the waves come rushing in, filling in all of the gaps between the rocks and the cliffs. I preferred the visible: the blazing hues of the sky and the ocean and the sand.

The group had started to retreat back to the buses. Three hours worth of twenty-five pictures of the same rock had depleted energies and memory cards. I straggled behind, finding a quiet spot to watch the sun begin its descent and the waves continue their struggle against the mighty

rocks. There was a calmness, a tranquility that came over me as I sat and let my eyes fix on the slow but powerful water. The colors started to blend, and my eyes watered as the cold wind ravaged my face. I watched the Apostles and tried to imagine their slow formation, but I couldn't. I couldn't begin to understand two million years' worth of nature at work. But I did understand that the change that was happening, however slow, was happening. That change is inevitable. I looked into the sun and knew that in a year I would be looking at the same sun from the other side of the world. I knew that nothing lasts forever, that the time in Australia was precious, and that I had to appreciate everything while I was there.

Back in Baltimore, a little over a year since I left the Twelve Apostles to continue their stoic stances, I looked up at those stars. They were the color of the sky that day on the Great Ocean Road, and feeling the wet rain against my face, I knew that my life was going to change again very soon. Another phase of my life, another trip was ending. But I shouldn't be sad, and I shouldn't worry. E.L. Grant Watson said: "As the waves pass and change, and appear to come again and again to change, they present conflict and adjustment, a duality forming a unity, and a unity, flowing and changing into a manifold destiny." Change intercepts itself. It can be expected or not, but nature allows it to happen so that "what once was" and "what will soon be" crash and diffuse into each other creating "what is." It is a condition of all things natural that we are able to adjust to the things that happen to us. We have the capacity to yield.

The waves that crash against the cliffs and the Twelve Apostles are an ongoing process, a give and take from wave to rock. The phases of one's life are quite like the sand and surf. I know that in a few months I will be out on my own, a change I may or may not be ready for, but I find comfort in the fact that no matter what happens, I will find the calm between the "conflict and adjustment" of my natural life.

# Bipolar

Emily Shenk



*"Difficulties show men what they are. In case of any difficulty remember that God has pitted you against a rough antagonist that you may be a conqueror, and this cannot be without toil."*

*-- Epictetus*

I can't remember the first time my mother was admitted to a mental ward. I'm told it was 1985. I was two, she was thirty one. My father was away on business, and my mother had gotten scared; she was feeling different than usual, thinking in ways she hadn't before. My grandmother came to watch me, and my father arrived home to find his world changed. My mother was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is believed to be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain that promotes extremely high and low moods. A person with bipolar disorder experiences periods of mania, an extremely elevated state, and depression, an often debilitating period of sadness. About 2.3 million American adults, more than one percent of the population, have bipolar disorder. The illness tends to run in families, and is seen equally among men and women. Bipolar disorder can result in job loss, ruined relationships, and even death. Twenty

percent of those with the illness commit suicide, making bipolar disorder one of the most dangerous mental illnesses.

It is no surprise that my mother is an artist. Many recent studies have found a strong link between bipolar disorder and the creative mind. Drawing from personal writings and historical accounts, famous artists and great thinkers like Virginia Woolf, Vincent Van Gogh, Napoleon Bonaparte, Winston Churchill, Edgar Allen Poe, Lord Byron, Abraham Lincoln, and George Frederick Handel all had bipolar disorder.

My mother was fortunate; her first episode was mild enough that she was able to recognize something was wrong and seek help herself. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, bipolar disorder is seen in children, but tends to develop sometime between late adolescence and early adulthood. Some patients even exhibit their first signs of bipolar disorder later in life. Often, each episode tends to be worse than those that precede it. Those with bipolar are frequently unable to see what is happening, and, due to lack of knowledge about the subject, family members often do not know what to do.

"I hope that [my audience] thinks more about their lives and feels a sense of hope that it can change and can get better," said Ross Szabo, director of youth outreach for the National Mental Health Awareness Campaign. Szabo speaks to more than 85,000 people a year about mental illnesses, including his own battle with bipolar disorder, in an effort to get people, especially youth, talking about their problems and seeking help. He stresses that, though bipolar disorder is not yet curable, there are ways to manage it. However, it is a lifelong struggle for many to stay well.

After several weeks in the hospital and several months at home and on medication, my mother was more like herself. From that time until 1994, she remained a stable and wonderful mother. Then she again became manic. As a sixth grader, I can remember her sitting in the dining room and writing letters to Elton John, whom she believed to be her relative. She was energetic and upbeat, but sometimes awful and angry. I knew that something was happening, but was too young to really understand it. Just as my father was preparing to take her into the hospital, she became utterly depressed. He could handle her when she was depressed—she didn't have grandiose ideas or go running off without telling anyone. She stayed in her room all day. Eventually, she stabilized without having to return to the hospital.

Mania exhibits itself differently in different people. The National Institute of Mental Health explains that some may only experience hypomania, a milder form of mania, before slipping into a state of depression. Others may elevate into severe mania. A manic episode can be diagnosed if multiple signs of mania continue more or less constantly for one week or more. Symptoms of mania include increased activity, euphoric mood, extreme irritability, racing thoughts, little sleep, excessive spending, sexual promiscuity, and abuse of drugs and alcohol. Those with bipolar disorder have a drug and alcohol abuse rate three times higher than the average. In her memoir about her battle with bipolar disorder, *An Unquiet Mind*, Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison details her actions while manic: "Almost everything was done in excess: instead of buying one Beethoven Symphony, I would buy nine; instead of enrolling in five classes, I would enroll in seven; instead of buying two tickets for a concert I would buy eight or ten." Those with bipolar often go into debt as a result of their manic spending sprees.

This past June, my mother started buying things for a short trip to the Dominican Republic. Too many things—several bathing suits, jewelry, dresses—all things that she already had and certainly didn't need for a few days away. By the time she was completely manic, she was staying up all night, ordering things from QVC and bidding on items on eBay. We didn't know about many of her purchases until she had been admitted to Lancaster Regional's Behavioral Unit. Packages came unexpectedly, sometimes addressed to Mrs. Monica, the last name she had taken when she ordered them.

She was very persuasive. Once she returned home from the hospital and was deemed unable to drive, she would convince me that she absolutely had to have a black turtleneck and a pair of black shoes. I took her to the mall, left her for a few minutes, and returned to find a pile of clothing—including several turtlenecks—in her arms.

A depressive episode can be diagnosed if multiple signs of depression continue more or less constantly for two weeks or more. People that spend money while manic often deal with bills once they are depressed, making life seem even more unbearable. Symptoms of depression include feelings of hopelessness or guilt, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, fatigue, abnormal sleeping habits, change in appetite, and thoughts of death or suicide.

People with bipolar disorder may also experience psychotic symptoms, such as hallucinations and delusions. These may cause a person to believe that they are seeing or hearing things that are not actually there, or that they have done something they did not do or become someone that they are not. In her most severe manic states, my mother has often had delusions about her relationship with God and other religious figures.

When her most recent manic episode began, my mother would stay up all night, pacing around the house or watching television. Sometimes, if my brother or I were still awake, she would start talking to us, always in a whisper, about what God had told her. One night, as we began to understand how serious things were becoming, my teenage brother had a few friends stay at our house. At 2am, they were still awake and hanging out in the basement. My mother came downstairs and started talking to them about God and the second coming. She told them why the second Christ would have to be a woman, and that, by her calculations, would have been born in the early 1950s. My brother, knowing my mother was born in 1954, put things together and asked nervously if she was implying that she was the second Christ. She smirked.

There are several types of bipolar disorder, and within these categories the disorder affects each individual differently. People with bipolar I disorder experience recurrent episodes of mania and depression, while those with bipolar II disorder cycle between hypomania and depression. Rapid-cycling bipolar disorder is diagnosed when a person has four or more episodes in a 12-month period (though episodes may cycle much quicker, sometimes within the same day).

Often, close family or friends are essential to the recovery of a person dealing with bipolar disorder. It is difficult for people, especially in a manic state, to acknowledge that there is a problem and seek help. "Diagnosis is just the tip of the iceberg," Szabo said. Without a continued program of medication and therapy, few will improve. Most people do best with a combination of medication and psychotherapy. Medication is a necessary and undeniable step in recovery for those with severe bipolar disorder. Because it is a genetic illness, without medication, most people experience more and more episodes of mania and depression. As Jamison explains in her memoirs, "it is an illness that is biological in its origins, yet one that feels psychological in the experience of it." Psychotherapy ("talk" therapy) helps patients understand how and why they feel as they do, and helps them cope with the normal ups and downs that everyone

goes through once they are stable. "There are really three main types of psychotherapy that seem to be most useful in conjunction with medication—cognitive behavior therapy, family-focused educational therapy, and interpersonal and social rhythm therapy," said Lauren Alloy, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Temple University.

Though medication is a very effective means of treatment for those with the disorder, there are several troublesome issues surrounding it. Since lithium, the first mood stabilizer, was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1970, a variety of newer medications have been developed. "Part of that is research and part of that is because there's money in it," Szabo said. "The message of accountability and awareness isn't getting out there." Because not all people with bipolar disorder have the same symptoms or have it to the same degree of severity, finding the right medication or combination of medications, can take a long time.

Once the types of medications are established, the doses may need to be altered, since there are often strong side effects. Jamison, who spent several years on a high dose of lithium, explains what it was like to lower her lithium dosage after years of frustrating side effects: "It was as though I had taken bandages off my eyes after many years of partial blindness.... I realized that my steps were literally bouncier than they had been and that I was taking in sights and sounds that previously had been filtered through thick layers of gauze....I felt more energetic and alive. Most significant, I could once again read without effort."

"Emotions feel enormous," said Maurice Bernard when discussing mania on a recent episode of Oprah. "You can run a marathon, you can conquer the world." Bernard, who plays Sonny on General Hospital, decided to stop taking medication for bipolar disorder early in his career. Just weeks later, he began to blur the lines between himself and his character. He became violent, and threatened to kill his wife and other family members.

Though most people with bipolar disorder fully understand that stopping their medication can have disastrous consequences, they often have trouble continuing their regimen. Once they are on medication and have not had an episode for a long period of time, they feel like they are no longer at risk for manic-depressive episodes and stop taking their medication. This is often shortly followed by an episode. The actions associated with the illness during struggles with medication, as well as the side effects of

medication, can often cause people to feel or look physically older than their actual age.

When my father thought my mother was showing signs of improvement this September, he went on a brief business trip. The day he left, my mother took his classic Oldsmobile convertible, drove to visit my grandmother, and crashed head-on into a telephone pole. Fortunately, she was not severely injured. People at the scene said she was obviously manic and difficult to control. My mother says that the breaks were not working, though police found no such evidence.

Hershey Medical Center insisted that my mother be transported to Philhaven, a behavioral healthcare facility. When I came home from college that weekend to visit her there, she was walking with a cane. Her glasses were taped together in the middle, sitting on the injured bridge of her nose. The white of her right eye was now completely red, making the green flecks of her iris brighter and more brilliant than they had ever been. She had gained weight already, as often happened when she was in the hospital, due to changing medications and food. She chattered happily about how a woman, another patient, had covered the large, discolored bruises surrounding her eye sockets and sinking down to her cheekbones with makeup. I wondered what her face would look like without it.

Though societal attitudes and practices regarding the mentally ill have improved over the past several centuries, the world we live in today still places a stigma on the mentally ill. Due in part to brain research concerning mental illness that began in the 1980s and has expanded greatly since, there is more medical information known about mental illness. Though the medical world may be better equipped to understand and deal with mental illness, the general population does not always have the knowledge to accept those with mental disorders. "Society needs to help others feel more comfortable talking about their individual differences in thoughts, feelings, and emotions," said Szabo. "If [those with mental disorders] cannot talk about it, they aren't going to be able to understand a huge side of themselves." By talking about mental illness and getting information out about symptoms and treatment, a greater understanding of specific illnesses, like bipolar disorder, can develop.

# Steamed Crabs

Maria Linz



*"When Time who steals our years away  
Shall steal our pleasures too,  
The mem 'ry of the past will stay,  
And half our joys renew."  
- Thomas Moore,*

Take mostly German, a little Irish, a smidgen of Dutch and a dash of West Virginian and bam — there you go: a wonderful combination of Hillbillies wearing wooden shoes, eating bratwurst and sipping on a perfectly poured pint of Guinness around a red and white checkered picnic table overlooking a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay.

My heritage is somewhat of a stolen identity. When my grandmother was a toddler in western Germany, her au pair kidnapped her and brought her to West Virginia. Years later, she was discovered. Having already grown up accustomed to her new family, she chose to remain with her new parents. Without a distinctive German influence, except for her blood, my grandmother was a plush piece of cotton absorbing the culture

around her. After moving to Maryland, she soon became a native: picking fresh black-eyed-susans under a white oak tree, watching orioles coast over the water at the Inner Harbor, and devouring rockfish and steamed blue crabs at a seafood smorgasbord.

My grandmother married a pure-blood, born and raised Marylander. Settling into the Maryland way, my grandparents bought a house on Middle River. The small summer home on the water was my favorite place to go as a child. It was always the setting of post church gatherings and family functions. Every Fourth of July, all of the extended family would gather at the Shore to enjoy a great feast - steamed crabs. My great Uncle Hen - a balding short, fat man ~ was the cook of the day since steamed crabs were his annual specialty. After steaming, they emerged from a juiced soaked brown paper bag, dumped hastily onto the comic section of week old newspapers and devoured. I could smell their fragrance even before the bag was opened. Salt dripped in the humid air that lingered above the mound of steaming crustaceans. Not only is the taste of the crabs a delicacy, but the pure activity of eating them is almost as important.

I picked up an orangey red crab by its claw, his body dangling from its appendage. Within seconds, mallets were pounding the shells in an intense race for pure ecstasy like a woodpecker searching for the tastiest worm. I broke off every leg, dragging from its torso tidbits of stringy white flesh. After all the appendages were removed, I cracked open its middle, divided it into sections, and began my excavation on the succulent creature covered in a thick layer of steaming Old Bay. I dug my fingers into the small sections of the torso, digging out clumps of warm silky flesh. The much anticipated lump of meat stood exposed on my finger: soft and smooth, it slid on my tongue. The tender, sweet meat melted like butter on my tongue and left a splash of saltiness lingering. Pure ecstasy took over as I ate every sliver of meat, cracking open the crunchy shell and stripping its casing of all of its tasty goodness. My fingers, covered in red speckled seasonings, stung with battle wounds from the crabs' defensive sharp claws and slivers of shells. Round, hard balls of pepper burst under the weight of my crushing teeth, crumbling and sending fiery sparks of spice showering over my tongue. Subtle hints of ginger and paprika waved over the fireworks, extinguishing them in a drenching coat of crunchy salt crystals. The small thin shells wedged themselves into crevices between my teeth like popcorn kernels, leaving a trail of metallic blood swimming through my mouth. Some of the shells that managed to find their way into the mouths of hungry children flew through the air like kamikaze pilots ~ randomly hitting oblivious targets.

Although many non-Marylanders despise the sweet yet saltiness of these ocean creatures, the experience is worthy of a dive. Cooking these wonderful crustaceans is best done on the east coast (preferably in Maryland) and done in a careful manner. To reconstruct one of these amazing feasts one will need:

- A fat male relative wearing a dirty white apron and paint splattered jeans
- A humid 90 degree day in July
- A picnic table covered in a semi-plastic/paper tablecloth (design of your choice) and covered in any section (avoid obituaries) of old newspapers
- A large steamer pot
- 3 cups beer (or water)
- 1/2 cup Old Bay seafood seasoning
- 1/2 cup salt
- 3 cups white vinegar
- 3 dozen live Maryland Blue hard-shelled crabs

Fill steamer pot with 1 part water and 1 part white vinegar. Heat on high until the liquid comes to a full, rolling boil.

Add live hard-shell crabs to the steaming rack sprinkling each layer generously with the dry seasoning mix.

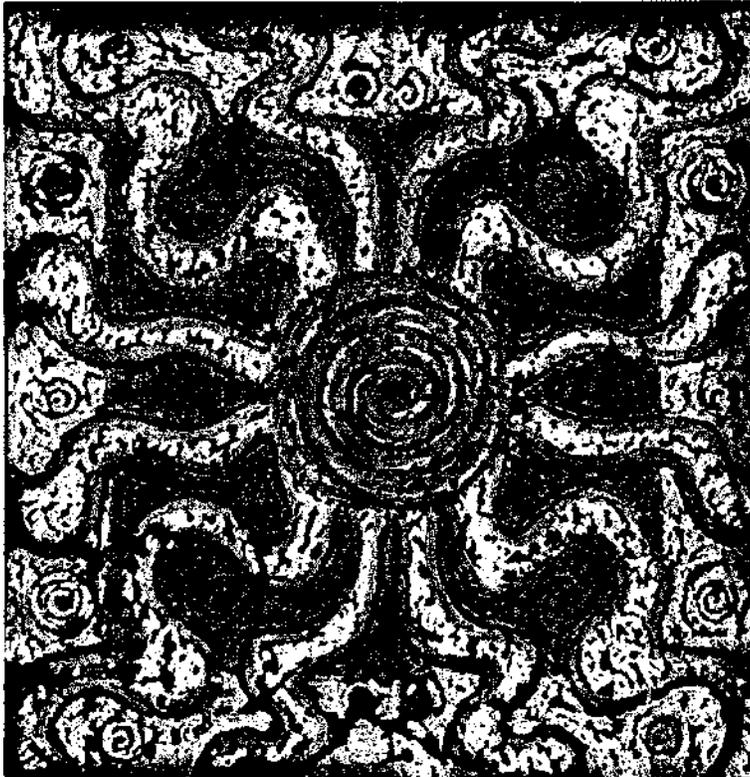
Cover and wait for about 10 minutes, for wisps of steam to escape from under lid.

Continue cooking over high heat for an additional 20-30 minutes until crab shells turn bright orange. If shells are dark red or have reddish-green patches, then the crabs are not yet fully cooked.

Place in a large brown paper bag (for authenticity) and serve hot.

The uniqueness of eating Maryland crabs: the difficulty in extracting meat from small crevices and its one of a kind taste may not be appealing to everyone; yet to the ones who relish in its striking flavor and marvel in its difficulty, think it's truly an experience that should be repeated. Growing up in different places with different cultures, many may find the act of eating a crab offensive and disgusting. Cooking a living creature in a pot of boiling water may appear inhumane (lobsters actually scream when cooked). They revolt at the thought of disassembling

an animal by ripping apart each of its extremities, cracking its structure to dissect and remove its lungs and intestines, its fat and body fluids splattering as the vulture tears away at its inedible body parts to devour its boiled flesh. The sinewy texture, the ocean smell, and the overbearing mutilation inflicted upon them, causes many people's gag reflex to suddenly jolt due to the lack of exposure to them as children. Crabs are



best to be introduced to as a child. Most individuals whose first introduction to crabs is after childhood tend to dislike them. Then there are also the people who just outright dislike all seafood: the texture, the smell, the taste. Yet to the gracious ones who go to many lengths: waiting for their season, driving many miles, and paying outrageous amounts of money to consume a lowly crustacean: to a true Marylander, the experience is priceless.

# Escaping the Street

Tim Sablik



*"The city is loveliest when the sweet death racket begins. Her own life lived in defiance of nature, her electricity, her frigidaires, her soundproof walls, the glint of lacquered nails, the plumes that wave across the corrugated sky. Here in the coffin depths grow the everlasting flowers sent by telegraph." -Henry Miller*

"I've been training on the treadmill," the girl in the row ahead of me says. My attention wandering as I wait for the award ceremony to begin, I shift my posture in the black chair, adjusting my shirt collar, my eyes flitting around the rows of identical chairs situated in the brightly lit McGuire Hall at Loyola College. The girl in front of me has turned around to chat with her parents sitting two rows back. "I want to run outside, but around here everywhere you go there's sidewalk." It's true, I think. I was made aware of this fact the week before, when I had stepped out to take a walk around campus. Loyola is surrounded by breathtaking woods, but every time a car flies past me on the sidewalk I am reminded that the tranquil groves of trees I see are just a façade placed over the racing heart of the city.

Dallett Fuguet is not a name that readily comes to mind

when discussing photography and art. Yet amid hundreds of examples from more famous photographers featured in the musty anthologies at the library, his obscure picture is the one that catches my attention and holds it to the black-and-white depiction on the page.

I am filled with the nagging feeling that something is not right with the image. Covered in a blanket of pure white snow, a hillside winds along the bottom half of the frame while a busy urban street stretches out below. Looking into two worlds that seem at once incompatible and yet occupy the same space, I notice a striking dichotomy that catches and holds my attention fast. Skeletal trunks and branches of hibernating trees poke through the frozen ground on the hillside at odd angles, looking naked and dead in the blank landscape and creating a scene of quiet peace that no living creature disturbs. Yet just over the ridge, a uniform row of early twentieth century buildings line both sides of a wide street and vanish into the horizon. Carts, early models of automobiles, and throngs of people go about their business on the busy, snow-spotted thoroughfare below. It is the contrast of these two images that the photographer artfully creates which makes such an impression on me: the contrast of quiet nature, and busy urban street.

The more I look at and think about the image, the more strange it appears to me. It is something you would never expect to see in today's world: a barren hillside overlooking a city like New York or Baltimore. No, every scrap of available land is paved over to make room for the growing urban jungle.

I look at the title of the photograph: The Street. Not particularly imaginative, but I am halted again by something contrary to my expectations. In fact, it isn't the street that is the focus of this photograph at all: the cityscape and street are in the background, faded and almost out of sight. What is most readily apparent about this picture is the snow-covered hillside dotted with trees where the photographer was standing with his camera looking down over the urban scene. An odd choice, because Mr. Fuguet could have certainly only included the city street in his picture if that was his goal. He could have simply stood on street level and taken the photograph, or even on the roof of a building looking down, or on

the edge of the hillside, just including the city in the picture.

Dallet Fuguet is an artist, so I can be relatively certain that his choice of the title was deliberate. He was part of the American photographer, Alfred Stieglitz's movement to explore photography as a formal art form, rather than just a science (Peterson 9-18). As I stare at the faded, black-and-white print, I am intrigued by its inherent contradictions: between nature and the city, between the title and the content. The Street. Fuguet could have named his work, "The Boulevard," which connotes a pleasant image of a rural, tree-lined path: man's creation coexisting with nature, as it appears in the picture. However, he chose The Street, which has a much different meaning. One thinks of a manmade construction surrounded by more manmade structures. A thoroughfare for business only: cold, impersonal, and unforgiving.

I am further intrigued by this contradiction because, having spent most of my life in the quaint rural setting of Roanoke County, Virginia, I don't have much experience with cities. As a child, I would go romping through the woods in my backyard. When I passed from the orderly, cut lawn of my yard into the lush green foliage of the woods, I could believe for a moment that I had stepped back in time. I was in a world apart from civilization; the trees stretching up to the sky and the dry leaves crunching under my feet enveloped me in a feeling of timelessness that I did not get from the sight of brick buildings or the sound of my shoes clapping on pavement. But this only lasted for a moment. I had only to take a short walk down the winding dirt path before I could see the roofs and chimneys of other houses poking over the treetops, a stark reminder of the modernity I had just escaped.

My first real city experience came at age 13 when I went with my Dad and my sister to visit my brother, Filip, at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. Arriving late at night, tired and hungry, we went into the Harbor district to get dinner. I had never seen so much activity in my life. The streets and sidewalks, awash with crowds of people moving with purpose, were illuminated by the yellow glare of street lamps and the piercing red of car taillights coasting by on the black streets.

"How're you doing tonight," a strange man in a large overcoat ad-

dresses us as we cross the street.

"We're fine, thanks," Filip replies calmly, avoiding eye contact and continuing to walk on his way. Shrugged aside, the man continues to stand by the street, approaching other people as they cross.

"Are you scared of living here?" I ask Filip after we are a few blocks away.

"Nah," he says. "The city's great, there's a lot of opportunity here and places to see. You just have to be careful and be smart."

A lecture from my mom about not talking to strangers pops into my head. I never had to really worry about that when I was growing up, but the city was full of strange faces. There was constant motion and activity, even after the sun had long gone down. I wondered how anyone could live in this constant, pulsing environment. At home I could simply walk into a wooded grove to get away from the rush of life, or look up into the starry night sky and lose myself for a moment in the vastness of space. Here the night sky was a deep blue washed over by a dull pink glow; only the moon pierced this velvet cover, no other light in the sky could outshine those the city dwellers had built. And the people had built their own sanctuaries, gazing purposefully ahead or engaged in private conversation, shutting out the outside world with polite indifference. Suddenly, I broke into a violent fit of sneezing.

"Spring allergies," I say, immediately struck by the irony in this. I am reacting to nature even though it is no where to be found.

I turn back to the photograph and wonder if the people scurrying along the busy street ever looked around and suddenly realized that the urban world had displaced the natural one. At the turn of the 20th century, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing. Population boomed as the cities swelled to accommodate growing businesses and the people who worked in them. By 1900, three cities had over a million residents ("United States (History)," Encarta). Did these people, many of them immigrants who had left their countryside for economic promise in America, begin to feel defined by the streets that they lived on and the jobs they worked? Did they see the pulse of industry quickening, the urban landscape

burgeoning without any end in sight, systematically pushing aside the surrounding hills and valleys to make room for the ever-lengthening streets? Or perhaps they were too much in awe of the new advances in science and technology, the miracle of industry, to notice what was missing. As it became harder and harder to find a place detached from the urban heart, they focused their attention on constant activity to fill the void.

My Dad grew up in the Polish city Katowice, but from the stories he tells me about his childhood I would never guess that. He was able to get away from the busy industrial center and go climbing in the Tatra Mountains. I've never seen them in person, but from the way my Dad describes them, I can see in my mind's eye ancient craggy spires over which many generations have passed and yet still have never truly tamed.

"When I was your age," he tells me, "my brothers and I went hiking through the mountains. We went with some friends and stayed in a cottage with the highlanders who lived there. In the morning, I can still remember the breakfast we had: just a loaf of fresh bread with a little cheese as we sat breathing in the mountain air and watching the sun rise over the cliffs."

"We should go someday, Dad," I grin, always interested to hear stories about his younger days. However, even as I say this a nagging thought troubles me: would these scenic locations still look the same today? I can't help but wonder if the fields and mountains my father visited years ago are now crossed with highways and telephone lines or dotted with hotels and convenience stores. Would it still be possible to sever that connection to civilization and just exist in nature?

People often talk of "getting away from it all." They pack their bags and drive down to the beach, or a state park, or maybe even the nearest zoo. Ironically, even these escapist destinations themselves are constructed by us. Nobody spends their summer vacation on a rocky waterfront with only the seagulls and crabs as company. We drive down to a beach resort, stay in a beautiful beach house in an orderly neighborhood, and walk down the paved path to the beach which is dotted with hundreds of other city dwellers who had the same idea.

When my family first arrives at our rented beach house, we take a few minutes to look around, admiring the new surroundings. We examine all the rooms and excitedly take a flurry of snapshots to document the event. Once we have settled in, my sister calls her friends on the phone, my brother pulls out the latest book he is reading, and I flip on the TV and channel surf. Business as usual, just in a different setting. We drove several hundred miles for a brief distraction, before tapping ourselves back into the urban vein.

We create distractions like this in big cities as well. We build parks, which serve as a finger of the Earth poking through the stone crust of industry. It's as if while living embraced by the cold steel and smooth glass of high rises, we have to stop and consider the occasional hint of green on a budding tree or we'll be tormented by the pain of something missing in our lives. In a way, the Industrial Revolution never ended. We continue to improve technology, making everything faster, better, more efficient. Cities grow and the pace of industry quickens by the second. Few people have the time for long excursions into natural surroundings. Being reminded of nature suffices to reach that primal connection and keep ourselves sane. For most of us, our vacations take us to a "pseudo-nature," which we view for about five minutes before getting bored and moving onto something new. We are people of the street and we are called to be in constant motion connected through our technology to the world we have built.

It isn't nostalgia that strikes me as I look at *The Street*. I am not compelled to rush off and join environmental activists and protest the evils of technology. Rather I am struck by awareness. I am made aware of a tradeoff that our society has come to accept. When I sit at my computer, connected to the Internet and all the technology and human achievement it represents, I have a world of knowledge at my fingertips. More information than I ever could know, or would ever want to know. I can do things faster than previous generations, building on past accomplishments to become quicker and more efficient. At the same time, I am in an almost constant state of anxiety from being connected to this rapidly changing and constantly moving world. I am made aware of this when I take a moment to watch the sun filter through the emerald

canopy of a sprawling oak tree and am filled for an instant with a feeling of peace and serenity. I am very suddenly and briefly disconnected from the urban pulse and returned to a state of childhood when my only concern was what lay beyond the next grove of trees in my backyard. It is the same feeling I get when I gaze at the old photograph and see the pure, white calm of nature laid side by side with the furious motion of the city.

When I first returned home from college in Baltimore, I remember standing out in the cold November night air gazing up at the starlit sky. As a boy I never dreamed I would be comfortable in the city. But over time I had learned to adapt and busied myself with class work and meeting new friends, beginning to feel comfortable with the pace of my new life.

Seeing the stars clearly again for the first time in months, free from the shroud of the city, I get that increasingly elusive feeling of peace that I didn't know I was missing. The serenity is marred by a twinge of regret. It is the knowledge that this feeling cannot last, and while I am resigned to let it go, some part of me wishes it would remain. This is something I think Mr. Fuguet must have felt as well. He named his picture *The Street*, even though Nature is in the foreground. I think he saw the changes that were coming. The street moves unerringly towards us and, like it or not, we have made our decision. *The Street* has become our reality, and it is only in brief glimpses that we can escape to a time when we didn't have to escape at all.

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# Room to Draw

Lauren Bivona



*"But one of the attributes of love, like art, is to bring harmony and order out of chaos, to introduce meaning and affect where before there was none, to give rhythmic variations, highs and lows to a landscape that was previously flat." — Molly Haskell*

"No need for these anymore," I thought as I threw away the box of crayons that had found a comfortable place in my desk drawer for years. As I prepared for high school, I placed my childhood on a shelf, determined to begin my new life as an adult. However, on September 11th, 2001, my three-year-old neighbor reminded me of the importance of childhood, and, since then, I have acquired a shiny, new box of crayons. Once again, I draw childhood pictures, for I am unready and unwilling to store childhood away; it must coexist with adulthood. A child's perspective, in all its simplicity, oftentimes possesses the clarity and purity needed to inspire goodness in a time of darkness.

On September 11th, 2001, Morgan lost her uncle. In an effort to help Morgan's family, I assumed the role of Morgan's caregiver and protector. Believing that Morgan, with all of her

innocence, should be sheltered from the physical and emotional destruction of the day, I hid her from her family's heartache the best I could—disguising the day with typical childhood games, crafts, and movies. Morgan, however, was much more aware of her family's emotions than I had originally perceived. Outside, the world grieved for the loss of my neighbor. Inside, amongst the mess of glue and macaroni, Morgan took a crayon, and taught me how to draw the cure to an aching heart.

"I am making this picture for Mommy because she's really sad and I know that if I make this for her she will be happy," said Morgan with conviction. In my basement, Morgan confidently drafted the solution to all of her family's problems. Determined to erase the fear and desolation from her mother's face, Morgan glued macaroni to a piece of black construction paper because she knew that she possessed the power to make her mother smile. It was later, when her parents explained that the firemen could not find her Uncle Dennis's body in the city, that Morgan told her parents that all three of them should go to the city with a broom and sweep through the mess until they found him. That day, although I believed I was the adult figure and, therefore, the wise one, Morgan was the true teacher. She taught me the power of a crayon—the tool that brings childhood's pure intentions to fruition. While the adults dealt with the complex emotions of grief, anger, and fear, Morgan saw a sadness that only she could correct. On a day as dark as September 11th, it was only a child's heartfelt smile, hug, and drawing that could bring some light.

Throughout the months that ensued, I forgot the lesson that Morgan taught me. In darkness, I grieved for the loss of her Uncle Dennis and the loss of his family's vigor. My writing—my journal, my school papers, my poetry—all reflected my distress as I saw the role models in my life slowly losing their defining qualities: ambition, cheerfulness, optimism. So, finally, I let the memory of Morgan's actions on September 11th teach me once more, and, following her lead, I abandoned my grief in search of a crayon.

I no longer disregard childhood. Instead, I now sit next to Morgan and draw pictures of the better things in life. I look to childhood for the answers to my questions, and I appreciate every

crayon in my new, shiny box, from "Razzmatazz Red" to "Fuzzy Wuzzy Brown." Morgan has shown me that childhood is of no use if stored away on a shelf. Childhood must be torn around the edges, marked up, written on, and, most of all, cherished. I love my childhood—I cherish it—for it has a logic of its own, an innocence that needs to be preserved forever. Childhood does not



register impossibility; to a child, a drawing can replace grief and a broom can replace a feeling of uselessness. Childhood cannot be told no; it will find healing, joy, and love in all it touches...even in a Crayola box. Now, in honor of a small, grieving girl, I refuse to stow childhood away in the attic; and, crayon in hand, I vow to always find room in the margins of childhood to draw.

# Overcoming Fear and Shame: My Short Experience with Bipolar Disorder

Laura Eldridge

*"LIFE has dark secrets; and the hearts are few  
That treasure not some sorrow from the world—  
A sorrow silent, gloomy, and unknown,  
Yet colouring the future from the past.  
We see the eye subdued, the practised smile,  
The word well weighed before it pass the lip,  
And know not of the misery within:  
Yet there it works incessantly, and fears  
The time to come; for time is terrible,  
Avenging, and betraying." -Letitia Elizabeth Landon*

My family has a room in our house we call our "back-part-of-the-basement." It is, quite literally, the back part of our basement, but a separate multi-purpose room unto itself, used for laundry, storage, scattered chaos, and family shame. An abominable dreariness lingers in this large room, mixing with the smell of must and mold. Exposed light bulbs create harsh shadows on dusty bikes, cold metal tools, and eerie cobwebs. Zipped up in cloth cases, old dresses and once-beautiful dress coats hang from the laundry lines like dead bodies, noosed long ago. It is the embarrassing part of our otherwise well-polished household that we try to hide from everyone else.

There is a door separating our bright, tidy blue basement from "the back part." We keep it shut tight when guests come over, the pretty painted white side covering the ugly reality within.

My Dad and I are a lot alike. For one thing, we both love food. So when we strolled into the local bakery that day for the

zillionth time, we were both excited by the familiar aroma of breads and pastries. The small shop was bathed in a spectrum of browns—woody tans, vibrant cocoas, the bread, the hardwood floor, the coffee, the skin of the aproned workers behind the counter. I was nine or so. A sign had been posted on the front window, to the right of the door: We now have doughnuts! Well big deal, we always get the cinnamon rolls and that wasn't going to change. So I guess it was simply the principle of it that made my Dad blow up at the meek Hispanic lady trying to serve him. He was yelling so loudly that everyone in the store could hear him. His moustache quivered, his face turned red. And it seemed to me that he was making a big deal out of nothing.

"Where are the doughnuts? Aren't you advertising that you sell doughnuts?? That's poor business! Lemme talk to your manager...yeah, NOW."

I was horribly embarrassed. Who was this man? My father was always mild, soft-spoken, and funny. I was angry at him for being someone else all the sudden.

So, like a good 9-year-old, I told on him to my Mom when we returned home with our four cinnamon rolls. That was the first time that I heard the term "manic depressive."

"Honey, your father is manic depressive. That means that sometimes he's really sad, sometimes he's really mad, or really happy. He'll feel better soon, don't worry."

That overly simplified explanation of bipolar disorder seemed to be suitable for me, considering how young I was. It wasn't until ten years later that I really understood the high mood, exaggerated sense of self-importance, paranoia, delusions, and racing thoughts of mania; and the pain and despair, anxiety, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts of depression.

Years later, I found out that this doughnut incident happened during my Dad's transitional period between two medications to treat the disease. He was "unstable" to some degree, but hardly so in comparison to his state during the twenty years he spent living with his manic depressive illness untreated, without the right medication to control it.

I never experienced the full extent of his manic anger that

my Mom has hinted at, but has never really talked about. I never saw my Dad the time when he was so depressed that he couldn't get out of bed and a psychiatrist had to come to his bedside. And I never saw him borderline psychotic—the way he saw me during my first visit to a psychiatrist.

I sat there on the very edge of the tan leather couch, arms flailing, voice excited—nearly yelling—talking at the speed of my racing thoughts. Bipolar disorder is hereditary, and I was discovering at this point at the end of my Freshman year of college that my Dad and I are more alike than I realized.

"Is there a reason why you aren't looking at me?" Dr. Licata calmly asked.

Well, there were many reasons. I felt threatened by him because I thought he was judging me, that he didn't get it, that he was blind to the fact that I was a GENIUS, that he thought I was crazy, that he was actually crazy.

And then there was the claustrophobia. He sat calmly, legs crossed, hands folded, about eight feet in front of me. His eyes, watching me, were far too close, too intrusive. His large office seemed to be getting smaller, as if the walls were pushing in on my brain with a threatening persistence, trying to collapse it completely with pressure and malice.

In retrospect, I know that I was in a severely manic state in Dr. Licata's office. It's strange: I remember feeling these confused emotions and thinking these grandiose thoughts, but it doesn't seem like that person was really me, though I remember living in her and seeing the world through her eyes. A barrage of thoughts seemed to come from somewhere else, outside of me. They hit me like bullets out of a machine gun, one after the other with overwhelming speed. Some were logical, many were delusional.

I've always been fascinated by hidden parallels in ideas, literature, history. I'm quite good at finding them actually. So, in my mania, everything that I encountered paralleled to me in some way. I was taking a class on the Theology of St. Augustine at the time and it had struck me suddenly how closely my life resembled his. I identified with this fourth century theologian so strongly that I thought I might be a reincarnation of him.

I told Dr. Licata about this and then revealed to him that I was the perfect child, born of parents that were a perfect match. Yes, I truly believed I was perfect, made like Jesus. Perhaps more perfectly the embodiment of insanity, but if you told me that at the time I would have seen you as evil, against me, inferior. I would have said you just didn't get it, you didn't understand God or the secrets of the universe or absolute Truth. Had I known that I would later be saying the things I am now, I would have been totally devastated knowing that society would manage to brainwash me again. And suddenly my emotions would have spiraled down to depression.

In women, bipolar disorder usually manifests itself in depression first. I was depressed in high school, and I saw a doctor who wrote me a prescription for Zoloft—50 mg a day. I was relieved, because I hoped that maybe it was this simple: just one small pill, a swig of water, and BOOM, problems solved. That, of course, wasn't the case. Nothing concrete was resolved, but the Zoloft allowed me to ignore my depression, suppress it, and reinvent myself in the process. But even with the anti-depressant and my denial, it was still there.

So often when I was depressed, anchored deep in a reality I hated, I wished to vanish from this world, from everyone's memory. I imagined sinking. Sinking beneath the earth, into the mud, down to the center, leaving this world behind. It was as if my wish was cruelly fulfilled as soon as mania hit like a meteor, and reality dissipated around it like a cloud of debris.

Armed with a journal and a pen, I sat facing the large window in my dorm lounge, watching the gray-blue dawn quietly creep upon Baltimore. I was unaware that it would only be a few days until my parents would pick me up and I would go to the psychiatrist. I was furiously scribbling my disjointed manic thoughts until I dropped the pen and slammed my journal shut, suddenly infused with a fresh shot of paranoia and dread. Slowly, I held up my left hand against the window and turned it palm to back, back to palm. It was shaking. In my mind, it appeared translucent. I thought I could see through it, past the glass, to the cars zooming by on the street. Horror gripped me as I realized I was fading.

Just as I had wished for, the reality I hated in my depression was finally slipping away from me. But now I was terrified and wanted it back.

Mania was not always so scary—sometimes it was blissful ecstasy. That is how I first experienced it early in the second semester of my Freshman year of college. It was the polar opposite of the depression that had become so familiar to me. I remember the feeling of euphoria most vividly walking across campus. I walked with unshakable confidence in a world where I was the center and everything else was just beautiful and perfectly clear. I looked around at the inferior college students and wanted to help them, to liberate them to become like me. It sounds like a cliché exaggeration to say nothing could get me down, but it was true. I was so high, I was untouchable.

"CLARITY," I wrote in voluptuous cursive letters across an entire page of my journal. My depression had finally subsided, and all I had done was ignore as best I could. I had been waiting for so long for my problems to dissolve, and I thought they finally had, without the help of any pills. I knew that this state of clarity was a permanent reality for me. But since our realities are the way our brains perceive the world, "reality" is a confusing word to someone who has a brain disease.

During the summer when my sister and I were young, we would go into the-back-part-of-the-basement and grab the big yellow boxes of thick powdery sidewalk chalk, so thick my sister and I could barely hold a piece in our tiny hands. The asphalt on our driveway was ugly and black. We knelt and drew, grinding the chalk's powder onto the hot surface. We drew yellows, blues, greens, and pinks on top of it, making it pretty. Scribbles, rainbows, pots of gold, clouds, animals, silly messages, and our names written a thousand times—it all covered the once-dull asphalt in beautiful chaos, at least until the afternoon thundershower.

The good symptoms of mania that I experienced disguised the world in a mask of perfection. Whatever I tried to look at was covered by blinding, beautiful, deceptive colors. My roommate situation had been awful all semester, but when I was manic, I no longer felt the ugly tension that existed between her and me. And

then it rained, the beautiful illusions washing away. Before escalating to a paranoid mania, I crashed back down to my normal depressive state like I was coming down off of some illegal stimulant or a hallucinogen—except my genetic mutation isn't illegal and I wasn't prepared for the change.

For twenty years my Dad searched for something to make him "normal." He finally found it in 1986, two years after I was born: LITHIUM, his holy grail, or LI2CO3, a combination of lithium, carbon, and oxygen to form lithium carbonate. It's a surprisingly simple salt, but it often works wonders for bipolar patients. Since bipolar disorder is genetic, often a treatment that is effective with one family member will be effective with another. So I cheated, and just mooched off my Dad's holy grail: I was prescribed lithium the same day I was diagnosed bipolar.

I think about these twenty years of anguish, about my Dad's long struggles living through severe ups and downs, how he would have given anything for the right medication. And how his parents wouldn't let him leave college mid semester when things were really bad, yet my Mom and Dad drove to Baltimore to pick me up the second they got a call from my friend saying something was seriously wrong with me. I think about how I didn't have to suffer like he did, how he probably would have rather had it be him than me. And how lucky I am...

Let me confess here that I am an ungrateful selfish brat. In December of 2003, I consciously neglected taking my precious medication that I was lucky enough to get within six years of the beginning of my depression; and within only four months of the onset of my more severe bipolar symptoms. I've never been one for authority, so it wasn't difficult for me to override my doctor's authority and control my medication as I willed it. You see, lithium suppresses mania—including the good kind. I practically stopped taking those little white pills only seven months after my diagnosis because I longed for the creative urge that boiled in me during my euphoric manic episodes from several months prior. The horribly dull state of stability I was experiencing lacked such vibrancy.

My cousin is bipolar as well, and she recommended that I read *Touched With Fire: Manic Depressive Illness and Artistic*

*Temperament* by Kay Redfield Jamison. This was a dangerous idea. Jamison discusses the relationship between artistic creativity and manic depression, and since I am both a visual artist and a writer, I naturally found this interesting. I understood the connection: When I had been manic or depressed, all I wanted to do was create. Pastels scattered on my dorm room floor, pages of my journal ached with feeling, imagery, insight. I had so much to say that I wrote pages upon pages of incomplete ideas and abbreviated words in large messy handwriting. Frantic lines drawn in my sketchbook cut deep into the paper, as if the pressure of my pencil would ease the pain. I pressed so hard that I imprinted the next page with indented scars. I can now run my finger over its back and read my pain like Braille. At the time I read this book, I had noticed that that desire to express my creativity had weakened. Writing in my journal began to seem like a chore.

It was the Appendix that got me. In the back of Jamison's book I found a list of great artists who had bipolar disorder, just like me: Georgia O'Keeffe, Van Gogh, Virginia Wolfe, Walt Whitman, Schumann, Hemmingway. A bit of fear rose in me. Would this state of stagnant passionless "normalcy" ruin my creativity? I told myself no, and shut the book. It wasn't until later that I realized that that fear unconsciously became the little devil on my shoulder tempting me to experiment with the medication. (Did I mention that of those six artists I mentioned, four of them committed suicide?)

So I took less lithium, hoping to maybe feel a creative mania again. A full relapse resulted. And instead of experiencing the euphoric mania or creativity that I missed, a paralyzing state of depression hit. I wrote in my journal:

*Jan 14 2004. Depression. It's hard for me to do anything right now. Lifting a pen, getting up. It all feels so forced. But I need to do these things, I think. Otherwise I'll drown in my self-pity—sprawled out on my bed. Feeling like I want to escape—become a nomad in Africa.*

The pain was great, but for the first time, I wasn't overcome with despair or self-pity. I didn't want to deny or hate my depression, as I had been accustomed to doing for so long. Since





high school. It seemed that I entered my pain from a different place—and saw it differently. It was tender and sore, and beautiful. I would feel the pain of others poke at my own wounds and hurt more deeply because they were so fresh and open—tough scar tissue had not yet grown over them. I felt connected, and not so alone.

"You had it easy," my Dad says. I nod knowingly, and secretly wish that wasn't so. Perhaps then I would have greater wisdom—or at least more profound experiences and a better story, like Kay Redfield Jamison, who wrote a compelling memoir on her grueling battle with the disease. Or my Father, who continues to give me his story one puzzle piece at a time. Or my Grandmother, who quietly lived with the gene for bipolar disorder that both I and my Father would someday inherit.

"She hid it well," my Dad has said. "Back then, you couldn't talk about that stuff at all."

Psychosis, hallucinations, suicide attempts, hospitalizations—things that people like them had to deal with and I never did. I suppose I should feel grateful, but in my mind, their experiences are worth far more than my own.

Dr. Jamison, my Father, and my Grandmother—they're all significantly older than me, and I was fortunate enough to develop the disorder at a time when medications are readily available and science is slowly teaching people that the brain is just another organ that can be affected by genetic disease. I don't know how my Grandmother could have lived in silence, without help. Though things are better, the same problems still exist: out of the 20% of youth suffering from a mental illness, 80% don't seek help. Like my Grandmother, these contemporary youth hide their pain out of fear of rejection. Like myself in the early days of my depression, they are afraid of their emotions, thoughts, feelings. And shameful of the biological malfunction they see as a personal weakness.

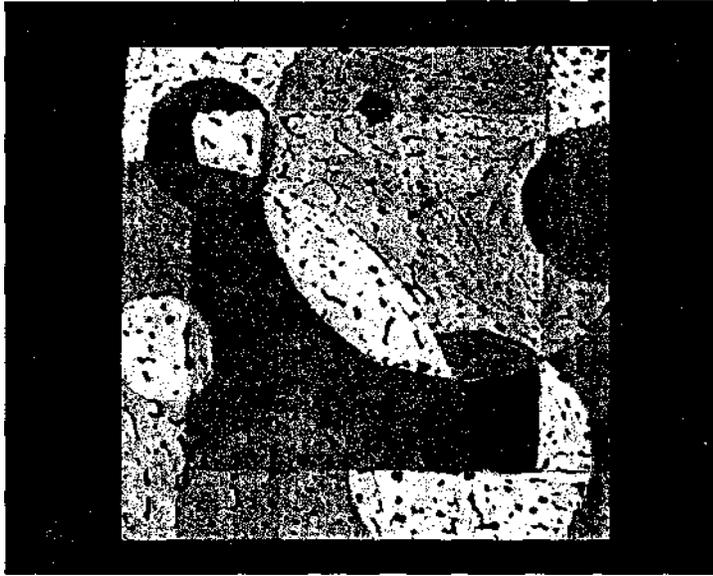
Our back-part-of-the-basement has its beauty. It is probably doomed to be cluttered as long as we're living there, but that's okay. The house has been in our family ever since it was built for my Mom and her parents and sisters. Our family likes to save things back there—old Disney movies, furniture that used to be in our living room when my Mom was a little girl, preschool books

and sample projects from when my Mom used to teach preschool, my sister's rusty old bike. And my Dad's tool bench is back there. It's so old the paint is chipping and the drawers always get stuck. The room just wouldn't be the same if it looked like the rooms we're proud to show to strangers. We wouldn't be the same if it weren't for all the wonderful treasures back there.

Up until very recently, I have recalled that negative image of sinking beneath the earth to disappear forever every time I thought about the embarrassments and pain that have accompanied my disorder. The other day I was reading a page in my journal that I obviously wrote when I was really manic, and I imagined sinking—but this time it was different. It was an image of me sinking into a comfortable chair, already a little molded to my body's shape, and just resting. There was no need to hide this time.

# What A Production!

Moira Jones



*To live is so startling it leaves little time for anything else.*  
- Emily Dickinson

I am sitting on an uncomfortable chair outside the production office in the arena, waiting for my next run. Lydia, the wardrobe manager, comes out and tells me that I need to go pick up Simon and Garfunkels' dry-cleaning—outfits they are wearing at their concert that evening.

"There should be seven in all. Make sure you count them once or twice because those people working there don't seem to know what they are doing," Lydia tells me with a wink.

As I walk from backstage up the hill to where Big Red, the 15-passenger van I get to drive around, is parked, I realize how exhausted I am already. It is 2:30 in the afternoon and I have been running around since 6:30AM. I drive to pick up the precious dry-cleaning and imagine all the wonderful selections there will be for lunch today, since Simon and Garfunkel bring their own catering

chefs. I could not have even anticipated how crazy working that concert would be, but that is how the concert production industry is--completely different every show, and completely unpredictable.

Most people think when they go to a concert that there is very little preparation besides lighting, sound, and artist sound checks. Working as a backstage runner this summer allowed me to realize how much work really goes into concert production. Concert production is the relationship between the tour and the venue to make sure that all needs and wants are satisfied and that the show runs smoothly. As a runner, I was important to concert production because my job was to go out and get whatever the tour wanted me to get. The production manager for the artists would give me "float," which is money that I have to manage and spend on their requests. I've been sent out to retrieve things such as drum carpet, cigarettes, a butane powered soldering tool, and even a fart machine for the son of one of the Offspring members. I decided to go to Home Depot for the butane powered soldering tool because the employees dressed in the sickening orange aprons are always eager to help. The first guy I asked had no idea what the tool was, but six employees and twenty minutes later, it had been located. The quest for obscure and not so obscure items that the tour needs is a fundamental role of being a runner. Running is only one of the major jobs in concert production—another important job is that of the promoter, or in house production manager, who organizes all the details about a show.

I know two concert production experts—my boss from this summer, Michael Lamanna, as well as another production guy for Clear Channel, Gary Hinston. Both of these men have helped me dispel my belief that concert production was a simple operation. I had no idea there was so much preparation even before the day of the show. Both Michael and Gary would speak to the production manager of the band 1-4 weeks before the show. They go through specifics like "stage size, seating arrangement, truck/bus parking, stagehand cost...catering info-menus for the day, artists' dressing room needs, security issues for the show..." says Gary.

All of this information is vital to concert production. The catering staff must prepare something that the artist likes to eat,

there must be enough stagehands to set up the equipment that the band hauls with them from city to city, and there must be discussions about needs and wants of the artist in terms of what the venue can provide for them. This is why Simon and Garfunkel had their own chef. Details like this are arranged weeks in advance between the promoter (Michael and Gary) and the production manager from the tour.

When I returned from the dry-cleaning run, the production manager named Amber looked at me with a concerned face.

"Moir, it is 3:30. Have you eaten lunch yet?" she asked, sounding worried that I was wearing myself out too quickly.

I told her no, and she directed me to go eat and come back when I was done so I could—SURPRISE—go on another run. When I went over to the catering area I saw a great assortment of food. I chose Thai noodles with spicy peanut sauce and shrimp, as well as tofu stir-fry. Both selections were exquisite. Most artists cannot afford to bring their own catering chefs with them, but those that do satisfy everyone who works backstage. Usually the venue provides a catering group for the artist, and they are not what one would classify as "delicious." I was overjoyed that I did not have to eat catfish again—the same dinner that the usual catering group prepared on the day of a concert. Some of the other artists besides Simon and Garfunkel that bring their own catering chefs are Jimmy Buffet and Dave Matthews—two other big name tours.

Many artists tour with Clear Channel Entertainment because it owns (or monopolizes) many of the venues in the country and abroad. In fact, according to a Hoovers.com article about Clear Channel, "Clear Channel Entertainment (CCE) holds center stage as the world's largest producer and promoter of live entertainment. A subsidiary of radio giant Clear Channel Communications, the company owns, leases, or exclusively books more than 125 venues in North and South America and Europe. It produces concerts, touring Broadway shows, and sports events. Annually, about 69 million people attend the company's 32,000 events. In addition, CCE provides sports marketing and talent representation services through the SFX Sports Group, CCE has spent nearly \$2 billion on acquisitions (Pace Entertainment, Livent), almost single-handedly

consolidating the live entertainment industry."

With such a huge corporation running the majority of live concerts in the country, they want to make sure that they have a good reputation and that each venue is profitable. That is why on the day of the show so much goes into making the whole production a success. Gary talked about the long hours worked on the day of the show. He would be the first to arrive at the venue (usually around 7 AM) and the last to leave (typically 2 AM). He noted an important point about the show running smoothly—giving off good impressions to the tour so working together will be easy. "Between 7 AM and 10 AM is the most important time of the day...if things are good with the catering, stagehands, dressing rooms, runners, and parking, the rest of the day kinda flows."

Luckily at Simon and Garfunkel, the production manager and people from the tour group were very understanding when things did not go as planned. Around 4:30 that day, I was backing Big Red out of the parking space, trying to maneuver my way around the corner to go on a run to the bank when I backed up too much and tapped a stagehand's Cadillac behind me. He began cursing at Julie (the other runner) and me, saying that his Cadillac needed a new paint job (even though the mark was smaller than the circumference of a golf ball). Michael had to stop doing his job at the time and settle our dispute, which I was thankful for because I find it hard not to have a temper with macho men.

All of the drama that the "accident" caused took a little over an hour. In that hour, Michael was supposed to be helping to set up security for the show and I was supposed to be taking the bus drivers to the hotel and going to Radio Shack for a certain kind of sound cable. To make matters worse, after I dropped off the bus drivers and was on my way to get the cable, I hit rush hour traffic going into the tunnel. Once I arrived at Radio Shack twenty minutes later, they did not even have the cable! Luckily, the clerk was fairly helpful and suggested I try another Radio Shack—thirty minutes away. A smart runner would have called the store to make sure that they had the cable, but smart runner I was not. When I got to Radio Shack #2 and they did not carry the sound cable either, I called Amber in a state of frustration.

"Amber, I have been to two Radio Shacks, none of them have the cable or know where it would be carried. Do the sound guys have any idea where I could find it?"

"Actually Moira, don't worry about the sound cable. We don't need it for our show tonight, they might need it for tomorrow's show but I'll just have tomorrow's runner in Buffalo get it. If you just wanna head back now, I think some stagehands want to go back to the Marriot," Amber replied.

Completely flustered and at the brink of temporary insanity, I sped back to the arena. I had to remind myself that Amber was being very flexible with me since things had not exactly been going as planned. Other tour managers would make me stay out until I found the particular cable, but at least Amber put me out of my cable-searching misery. Flexibility is vital to concert production, but is a quality that very few tour groups have.

Whenever people found out my job for the summer, they always had a request to come to work with me one day and meet their favorite artist or for me to get them an autograph. They thought that because I worked backstage, I could put them into contact with the artist and make backstage magic happen, but I couldn't. Michael and Gary talked about the many myths of concert production and are always trying to dispel the idea that its one big backstage party. "The biggest myth is that there's always some wild action backstage but sadly, there never is," Michael commented.

Gary mentioned that the biggest misconception is, "I do it because I love to meet the artists and watch the shows...NOT!"

Although I think that it is true that backstage production usually is far from glamorous and does not entail hanging out with the artist, everyone has one or two exciting experiences meeting an artist or seeing a spectacular show.

A man with vibrant curly hair and a goofy smile emerges from the dressing room hallway, followed by a tiny guy wearing a dark baseball cap. Both look like dolls, with powder caked over their faces, bright pink blush, and dark eye shadow on. I start up Big Red for the 800th time that day as the two men get in, along with an entourage of 4 or 5 others.

"Hi! What's your name, gracious driver?" the curly haired man asks.

"I'm Moira. Nice to meet you. Should I stay directly behind the police escort?" I nervously inquire, as I put my foot on the gas and gun Big Red up the backstage slope.

"Well Moira, my name is Artie and this is Paul. That's Dave, Keith, Gerry, and Sarah. Yeah, stay right behind them—the traffic will move for you," Mr. Art Garfunkel, music legend, replies.

I stay as close as possible to the escort, nearly bumping into cars while trying to weave through the traffic. When I reach our destination—the gate on the other side of the arena where the buses are parked—Garfunkel jokingly asks if I will be accompanying them to Buffalo the next day since I was such a great drive. I told him, "As long as you can get me back here by Friday for Aerosmith!"

Paul Simon steps out of the van, shakes my hand, and says, "Hey Moira, tell Steven Tyler I say 'Hi.' What a great guy."



# Running Out Of Water

Jenny McCarthy



*"In the midst of this great, this astonishing equipoise, Man struggles and lives." -Hector St. John de Crevecoeur*

The early evening is relinquishing some of the heat of the late summer day. We have hiked six miles to climb at Crescent Rock, Virginia, just over the West Virginia line, and now Derek, John, and I are coiling florescent ropes and daisy chaining webbing at its heights. The group we have led here is stretched out on their stomachs at the cliff's edge, half watching our efforts, but mostly admiring the still, verdant mat of treetops stretching for miles 80 feet below.

With steel carabineers locked and looped like a sash across my chest, a rope in one arm and helmet, harness, and climbing shoes hanging from the other, I follow tonight's backcountry chefs, Ryan and Eric, back to camp to supervise the creation of our dinner of Ramen noodles.

Searching camp for the water we'll need to make soup for

eleven people, I realize that our supply has reached a dangerous low. We last filled our bottles at a spring less than five hours ago, but the day has been hot and we have hiked and climbed a cliff face in that time. As the leader, I carry almost three liters of water with me despite the burden of their weight—the most common cause of illness in the back country is dehydration, and my medical training and experience has taught me how deadly a lack of water can be.

Luckily, we still have enough water for everyone to go to bed hydrated and make our long-awaited dinner, thanks to a few extra liters we've found among the packs. I help the boys fill a large pot and light the gas-burning camp stove, warning them to keep an eye on it—the stove is a tiny tripod that tends to tip under heavy loads, especially under conditions where it stands as it is now—on a bed of pine needles and dead leaves. I retire to my camp chair and watch Ryan and Eric rip open packets of noodles and flavored powder, organizing them into piles in the kitchen area we have roped off.

Disaster strikes.

With a defiant clang, the neglected pot tips over, sending boiling water splashing onto Ryan's hiking boots and causing both cooks to leap back instinctively. I rush over to help but the damage has been done—our dinner plans have been prematurely extinguished. I manage to re-light the damp stove, but we are forced to pour a few more precious liters of water into the empty pot. I am instantly, painfully aware that this tiny setback to dinner is a larger problem in disguise.

Leadership is a problematic responsibility. A leader needs confidence, a plan, and sometimes (though never easily admitted), help. There are things we simply cannot survive without even armed with itineraries and experience—things like water, food, and shelter. Every plan has to incorporate all the curveballs that can be anticipated in any given situation—no light task for even the most capable of guides. In the great outdoors, however, the greatest antagonist to every plan is nature herself, and no matter how thorough a plan, it is nearly impossible to reckon with a force of that magnitude.

Nature is something that has to be respected, and I think

respect implies some degree of fear. Being unprepared in the wild is a frightening thing—it wields death in ways we are not accustomed to in a civilized world: bodily injury, starvation, dehydration, and exposure. The danger often lies in the fact that preparedness is not always something that can be gauged. I could not have foreseen every factor in the chain of events that had brought me and those I am responsible for to this moment. I anticipated elevated water consumption due to the summer heat, but not the accidental waste of the last crucial amount at the end of the day, and as I had allowed my group to choose the location of the trip hours before its commencement, I hadn't been sure where we would end up camping.

As it happened, we had found a site directly on top of Crescent Rock—a jumping off point for winds that is a nightmare in a lightning storm, but paradise on a balmy August night. Yet, it is situated almost two miles away from a water source going either direction on the trail, which meant a descent and then strenuous re-ascent of the cliff from either the North or South. Laden with twenty-two liters of water, which weighs in at nearly fifty pounds, this is no small feat. Besides, night was falling, and everyone was low on energy, meaning that dinner had to be served before any kind of mission for water could be undertaken.

After a dinner under the stars, the rest of the group is idling on the cliff top, blissfully ignorant of our predicament. My co-leader Derek and I confer and decide that we have to get water tonight, given our plans to climb all day tomorrow under another merciless sun. One of us has to go, and I volunteer, but understand my own limitations in that I alone cannot carry as much water as the group needs for the distance uphill I'll have to carry it. This means I'll have to recruit a water party to hike in the dark in hopes of finding the spring that is designated just off the Appalachian Trail map.

There are reasons why I wouldn't normally hike in the dark. My group is inexperienced, and navigation is far more difficult with landmarks shrouded in blackness. Things like compasses are more difficult to use, and to see the path ahead requires reliance on a headlamp's small circle of light. Also, many people

(including rugged outdoorsy types) are afraid of the dark, and this fear is magnified by vast, silent forests with the potential to contain anything from vicious rodents to the Devil himself. Potential for injury skyrockets. Yet tonight I have no choice.

As I wait for Jess, Eric, Brigid, and Angie, my designated helpers, to finish collecting all of the water bottles from their nests in backpacks and climbing ropes, I stand in the middle of the Appalachian Trail, this well-traveled legend of a North-American footpath, and contemplate the power of nature to confound.

I am an educated and experienced wilderness guide. I know how to run a trip safely and smoothly. I am a Wilderness First Responder trained in the art of making splints for broken bones with sticks and t-shirts. But for every ounce of thought that goes into every journey into the backcountry I make, I cannot help but wonder if I am ever truly prepared to take on nature, a force with infinite potential for destruction.

We as human beings cloak our vulnerability in the trappings of our civilization: fabrics that trap heat and wick away moisture from our bodies, houses that are temperature controlled and shield us from the elements, grocery stores stocked with everything we need to sustain ourselves, sun block to protect our delicate skin from burns. Yet, remove us from "civilization" and rob us of a staple of our very existence, water, and we are a different creature—at the mercy of the forces around us and the small devices we've been able to take with us.

What we often forget, swathed in these comforts, is that the human body is breakable—that life is a fragile, precious thing. Lack of exposure could cause one to forget the effect of heat and cold on our hairless extremities, and the basic things the body craves and collapses for when deprived of them. Scientific theory suggests that our intellectual capability is no evolutionary accident, but that we are in fact a physically unimpressive creature as compared to others that are part of earth's biosphere. We are armed with our wiles—reason, judgment, and foresight, and compelled by necessity to protect ourselves accordingly.

The adaptations we have made and the civilization we have built obscure for us the fact that there are different guidelines and

laws that govern the wild. Certain practices and modes of thinking are not acceptable elsewhere. My medical training is invalid unless I am an hour away from what we define as civilization because there are desperate procedures we might use to prolong a threatened life that are rendered obsolete by the more trusted work of machines. Nature is an altogether different, breathing entity, and what parts of it we have left alone are truly separate in many ways from our ordinary lives, requiring us to use our mental faculties not to simply exist, but to improvise and overcome, and therefore hopefully endure.

When Robert Falcon Scott decided set out across Antarctica to lead his fateful Terra Nova expedition for the pole in the early twentieth century, he fashioned an elaborate plan to ensure his success. Yet, beset by cruel weather and the searing cold of the South Pole, the failure of pack animals, and ultimately, the frailty of human life, he and the two that remained of his five-man expedition party succumbed to the will of nature just eleven miles away from the next supply depot. The act of setting out into the wilderness implies a hazard that no amount of planning and expectation can debase. Robert Falcon Scott, a dedicated explorer who understood his adversary, lost the battle against an unforgiving continent. As he wrote from his icy tomb in his final message to the public:

*We took risks, we knew we took them; things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint, but bow to the will of Providence, determined still to do our best to the last...Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale...*

The agenda of the wild does not account for our activity within it. A place as cruel as frozen Antarctica or as mild as Crescent Rock does not cache food or well up with springs in places convenient for those who would explore it. We must bring our own sustenance, or else be prepared to struggle in its name. In setting out into the wilderness, both kinds of preparedness are implicit in the decision: to enjoy the kingdom one must be ready for its perils with initially the body, but ultimately the mind.

As we set off on the trail, heading South, I hope that I am worthy of this challenge, for riding on my ability to guide is more than self-preservation. We are moving downhill, but the going is rough. Large rocks jut upwards from the ground, and the trees are looming shadows on either side of the trail as it twists down the mountain-side. My senses are on high alert in the darkness, searching out any sign of a water source: damp ground, a stream running across the path, or a musical trickling of water on the move.

Once half an hour has passed, we stop several times to debate the futility of this search. There is a good possibility that the spring indicated on our map has dried up in the drought, and the next possible source, a stream, may be another few miles away. By this time, something about the quest has touched the wills of my inexperienced hikers; the urgency of it has communicated itself, and my thoughts, to a degree, seem to have infected the party. We decide, ultimately, to push on a little further through the night, struggling to stay ahead of time and our own fatigue.

When we reach a bend in the path where the trail blazes shade from white to blue, we know we have found salvation, and it is, true to our map, in the form of a spring bubbling gently from the ground. It forms small puddles in the rocks and dead leaves of the forest floor, and is only identifiable as a spring because it has been a long time since the last rainfall that might make similar puddles, and when we pump water into our bottles with a purifier the level of these puddles do not change. We take turns at the purifiers—pumping the water is an exhausting task to our already overworked bodies, but we persist with a sense of a greater good.

Our packs now heavy with water, we gaze up the hill, aware that our physical journey is only half complete. On the way down I led the group, but for the reasons of keeping a steady light from my brighter headlamp on path, and trust in my ability to assess the signs of water that an untrained eye might overlook. The way back will be different. Night is at its deepest, and I realize that the same motivation that carried us down the trail must carry us swiftly home. My group gives me their confidence to choose the speed of our ascent, and I set a fast pace, aware of the creatures of the night tramping through the bushes and trees around us, and conscious

of the worry that must be mounting in the rest of the group—we have been gone for over an hour.

Our sense of purpose seems to propel us up the steepness of the mountain, and we arrive flushed and tired, but accomplished, in half the time it took us to find the spring. We are greeted with enthusiastic gratitude as we drop our packs and throw ourselves down onto the rocks. Everyone grabs for a water bottle, having realized their need for it in our absence, and proclaims it the sweetest



water they have ever tasted. Looking at the glowing faces of my party and taking a long sip from my own bottle, I have to agree. I do not consider our success a triumph over Nature, nor do I view it as a concession on her part. Every living thing is not, I don't think, in constant struggle for dominion. Forces of nature, which Robert Falcon Scott characterized as the "will of Providence", simply are. They do not assert themselves on us as much as they ignore us—remaining indifferent to our desires and needs. For all our small technologies and "higher intelligence", we are still a lesser force because we are not the world, but living in it. By locating the water I needed for my group's well being, I did not conquer or win a victory in the wild world, but accomplished what we as humans can only hope to do in the face of challenge by a worthy adversary, and what Scott could not do in the Antarctic—I took my risks, and I survived.

# New York Nostalgia

Taylor Calderone

*"A city is the pulsating product of the human hand and mind, reflecting man's history, his struggle for freedom, creativity, genius-and his selfishness and errors." -Charles Abramsrien*

Life there emanates from some mystery location. Everyone feels it but few stop to think where it comes from; those who do, spend a few minutes pondering the idea and brush it off as a question with no specific answer. So many squish themselves and their few belongings into one-bedroom apartments, the plaster peeling off the walls and the toilets constantly overflowing; apartments that they would consider horrendous if they weren't where they are. Others sit through traffic jams that require an hour to move two miles, just so they can spend their 8-hour work day in this land of opportunities. They may have a cubicle the size of a dog pen, but they don't seem to mind. They walk outside and they get that jolt of energy, not from the espresso shot from the Starbucks on the corner, but because they're living, they're breathing, and they're absorbing New York City.

New York makes the people and the people make New York. The City doesn't just live off of the people—the life is on the pavement of the streets themselves, inside the buildings, on the push-carts, within the hole-in-the-wall pizza joints. Life seeps from the gutter. From here, the people become who they are, and it means something to be a New Yorker.

I absorbed this inherent life for the first time not from a childhood experience growing up in the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, or even from a weekend trip away from a house in New Jersey. I'm not a true New Yorker—I wasn't born there, nor have I ever lived there. My longest stay in the Big Apple was a measly month. My dad's family is from Brooklyn, and this bloodline is the only defensible relation that I have to the City. I grew up in Reno, Nevada, possibly the furthest cultural distance from New York that you can get. Home for me is a house, white wooden panels with

blue trim, a window over the garage. The only noise I get from upstairs is from my mom, my dad, or my dog walking around on the carpet, not from the loud neighbors upstairs. I open my front door and see the house across the street. There are only fleeting moments when I see someone else, otherwise garage doors only open to spit out a car or provide convenience for Sunday afternoon yard work. I don't walk out to buy fruit from the vendor on the corner; I don't get a bagful full of chocolate-covered malt balls from the candy store owner named Manush who's two blocks down the street; I don't open my front door and simultaneously see familiar faces and strangers whom I will never see again. I have nothing more than a dream life there. Maybe this makes my passion nothing like that of "real" New Yorkers, but maybe this makes my love stronger because I know what is lost in me when I'm not there.

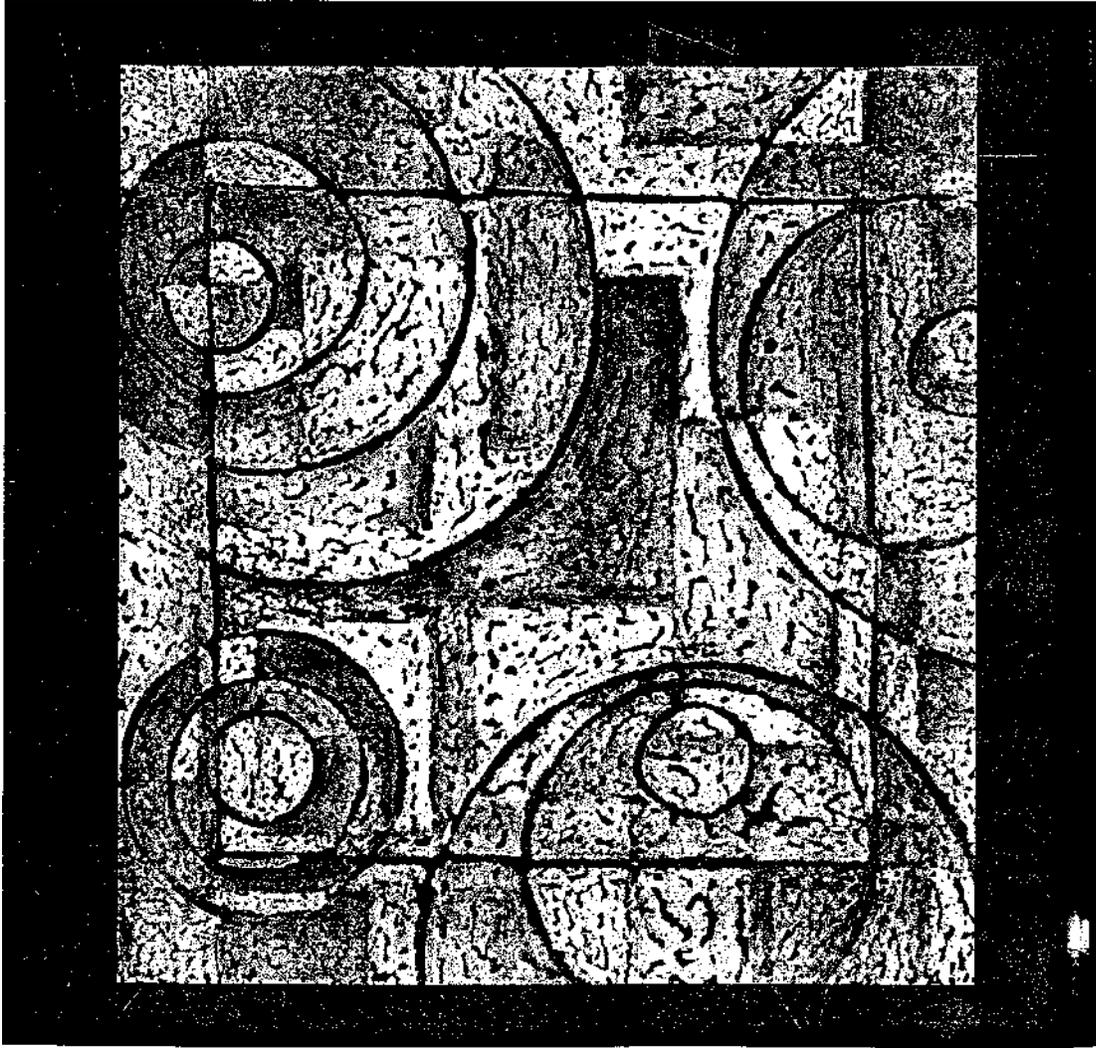
I'm not attracted to the City like a moth to a flame. The glitter of Times Square, the spotlights of Broadway, the dollar signs that adorn Fifth Avenue all possess a certain thrill in themselves that justify the tourists' interest. These are all just the stereotypical aspects that will be recorded in books that you can buy off the bargain bookshelves at Barnes and Noble. I can't say I've never been the tourist with a camera, but I've done this once, and I don't need film anymore. The essence of New York can no longer be represented by color prints on glossy paper. Even the sewer smell creates a different aura than any other city: it's not the filth of the slum, it's just New York, and some sick part of me likes the disgusting smell when I'm there.

The real New York, for me, comes through the parts of the City that don't make it onto postcards sold in corner drug stores or overpriced airport shops. If you take the time to walk through the City, you can find these little secrets. An idea of non-stop schedules and fast-paced people pervades the image of New York. I'm not going to deny that this exists. Nameless faces with eyes scurrying across a newspaper page race down the subway stairs. Black or tan overcoats on faceless people brush against my sleeve. Sometimes I think the overcoat noticed me more than the person did. Chances are, this is probably true. No one cares who you are, and you shouldn't notice anything about this person except that the

caring overcoat belongs to a New Yorker. This City thrives on busy schedules, but it does have time for you, if you have time for yourself. Look around, listen, and release time from the grip of your fists—yes, from the grip that's making your knuckles turn white. Don't walk anywhere in particular—keep the destination a secret from yourself, and surprise yourself when you get there. For once, feel like you don't have to be anywhere at any particular time, and then you'll find the real aspects of New York, the breath of it, not the pieces that make it to the postcards.

New York has five thousand liters of life squeezed into a twenty-ounce container. The young, experimental businessmen of Wall Street are pushed up against old grandparents who have been in the same apartment in the Village since they moved from Italy. There's no room for anyone already there, yet more are always welcome. The apartment buildings themselves open their doors like old, fat, Italian grandmothers spreading their arms to their rosy-cheeked grandchildren. You can walk in New York, walk anywhere. The city hasn't spread out like every other American city; it's only gotten taller. Buildings tower over you and watch you as you walk down 5th Avenue, then 6th. They watch as mothers send their reluctant boys out to buy more milk from the corner market. They watch as the graduate student walks to his job as a bus boy at the restaurant three blocks from his apartment, just so he can put a few extra dollar bills in his wallet. The City holds its people in its embrace, and it loses no one. Every other town has lost parts of its population to the expanding suburbia that is spreading out like an octopus' tentacles around the main body, and the blood of life begins to lose its heat as it spreads to the extremities. New York doesn't have this problem. Its power is in the fact that the City itself is the pulsing heart, and you never have to leave its energy to get anywhere.

There's a certain constancy in New York that the outward growth of other city's has lost. The corner market that today's boy shuffles off to with a grocery list scrawled by his mother is the same market that a young boy in knee-high socks dragged his feet to in April of 1903. Each apartment has countless stories of its occupants to tell—stories of the struggling dancer who





came to "make it" on Broadway and lived off of canned soup and boxed meals because that was all she could afford, stories of the six graduate students who somehow crammed themselves into the apartment's one-person space just so they could go to school and still be able to eat, stories of the fifty-year-old bachelor who despite denying that he didn't have time for anyone else somehow found his heart stolen that night he went for yet another drink at the corner bar. The dent in the plaster made by Mr. Barcolo the night he got angry at the landlord and threw the jar at the wall in 1986 is still there, and Janice, the divorced woman who now rents that apartment, lies in bed at night and makes up stories about the origins of the mark. This ongoing vitality that is etched into the buildings themselves keeps the City alive. Nothing is mutable; everything is preserved in some way and therefore everlasting.

The life that is etched into the buildings seeps into the people who open their doors or even walk under their shadows, and this life makes its people not just people who are from New York, but true New Yorkers.

\* \* \*

*The buildings' breath is exhaled by the old man selling shaved ice, not the crushed ice out of the snow cone machine, but the real, wet shavings scraped off a block of ice. It is exhaled through the smiles of the boys playing stickball in the street in those back neighborhoods in Greenwich Village.*

*An old grandmother, her elbows resting on a faded green embroidered pillow, left over from the early sixties, leans out of her window and yells at her grandson to get inside, the macaroni is ready.*

*A group of high school boys, trying to create an aura of boiling over confidence, dribble worn leather basketballs behind a chain-linked fence on 38th St. A girl, brunette, petite, walks by with a too-good-for-anyone strut. The boys pretend not to notice, and she pretends not to notice them.*

*A middle-aged man in a torn short-sleeved t-shirt dips his metal tongs into the hot water to pull out a loved Sabrett hot*

*dog for the business man catching a quick snack. The business-man makes sure not to look at the grayish, steamy, stagnant water that the hot dogs have been soaking in for an unknown amount of time—they'll taste better that way. The skin makes a "snap" as his teeth bite into the meat, and he knows that this guy is selling a real New York hot dog.*

*Johnny, a young Italian boy, dark skin and tousled hair, tight white t-shirt that shows off his biceps and accentuates the shine of the sweat on his arms, stands inside the window on the pizza joint on 6th Avenue and throws freshly made pizza dough up in the air, adding a spin or two with each toss. His father, working at the oven in the back, yells, "Johnny, you've tossed that dough fifteen times. I know you're watching that girl in the mini-skirt on the corner out there; showin' off for the ladies. We've got customers waitin' here. Peel your eyes off her legs and glue them to the pepperoni!" Johnny drops his gaze, mutters something under his breath, and sets the dough down. The girl hurries down the subway steps, managing her high-heeled, knee-high boots as if they were a part of her body.*

*A street performer on the corner fights for space with the nuts vendor. A hat sits out in front of him, a few shiny coins dotting the inside. A guitar rests against his knees, and his fingers, calloused and weathered, play upon the strings like a puppy's paws exploring the dirt, curious yet purposeful. The nuts vendor leans against his stand; the sweet, candied smell of roasted peanuts and cashews rises into the air and tickles the noses of those at least a block away in every direction. The smell is familiar, like home cooking, or fireplaces in the Christmas season, and it provides surprising warmth to a cold body. The vendor passes a little clear paper bag with "Nuts 4 Nuts" written in yellow letters to a smiling young girl as her father passes over a few dollar bills. She clutches the bag with tiny fingers and opens it guiltily, as if the nuts are too delectable for her father to actually let her eat them.*

*A taxi driver speeds by, and the wind from the passing cab ruffles the skirt of the girl's Sunday dress. He yells an obscenity from the window; the girl blushes, but the hidden side of her is secretly glad that she heard such a word. Her innocence slightly*

*chips away. The cabby shakes his fist out the window at a passing driver and darts across to another lane. He screeches to a halt at a red light as a spew of people flows from the sidewalk onto the crosswalk as if a dam has been broken. As soon as the light turns green a burst of horns explodes up and down the block-long line of cars. People on the busy sidewalks don't notice the sound; it's just part of the constant heartbeat that pulses inside people's ears all day, everyday.*

\* \* \*

There's a New York pride that I want the right to feel. It saturates every nook and cranny of every building, every street corner, and every smile. As these people walk down the street, they don't acknowledge each other except for a silent nod that says, "We're here, and we're the luckiest damn people on this earth." The pride is hated by the rest of the world because they hardly get acknowledged in the "big picture." To New Yorkers, the "big picture" consists of about three-quarters New York and one-quarter everyone else. Maybe they have the right to this, though, because in terms of power, in terms of energy, in terms of get-your-feet-wet, get-mud-under-your-fingernails life, New York has it all, and the rest of us just get the overflow.

I don't want the overflow anymore. I want to be there, to stand on the streets, to breathe in the smells, to absorb the energy, to hear the noise, to grab the life in my fists. I have a strange nostalgia for a place I can't even call home, and I'm jealous of people I've never even seen. I'm gripping my memories in my hands, and I'm not letting them slip through my fingers. The pictures in my mind give me more than the tangible ones on my wall; with these I can sometimes conjure up the smells of the street and feel the wind created by a passing taxi. I want to be a real New Yorker, not just a wishful onlooker who admires from the cliff of her imagination. Unfortunately for now, I'll have to stay on that cliff and yell my love from a distance. Maybe someone will hear the echoes.

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