

Mike Sauve is unable to do a whole lot of things.

Dragonet

Issue No. 8

Andy Sinclair would love to take you into an airplane bathroom for some Daytime Fun.

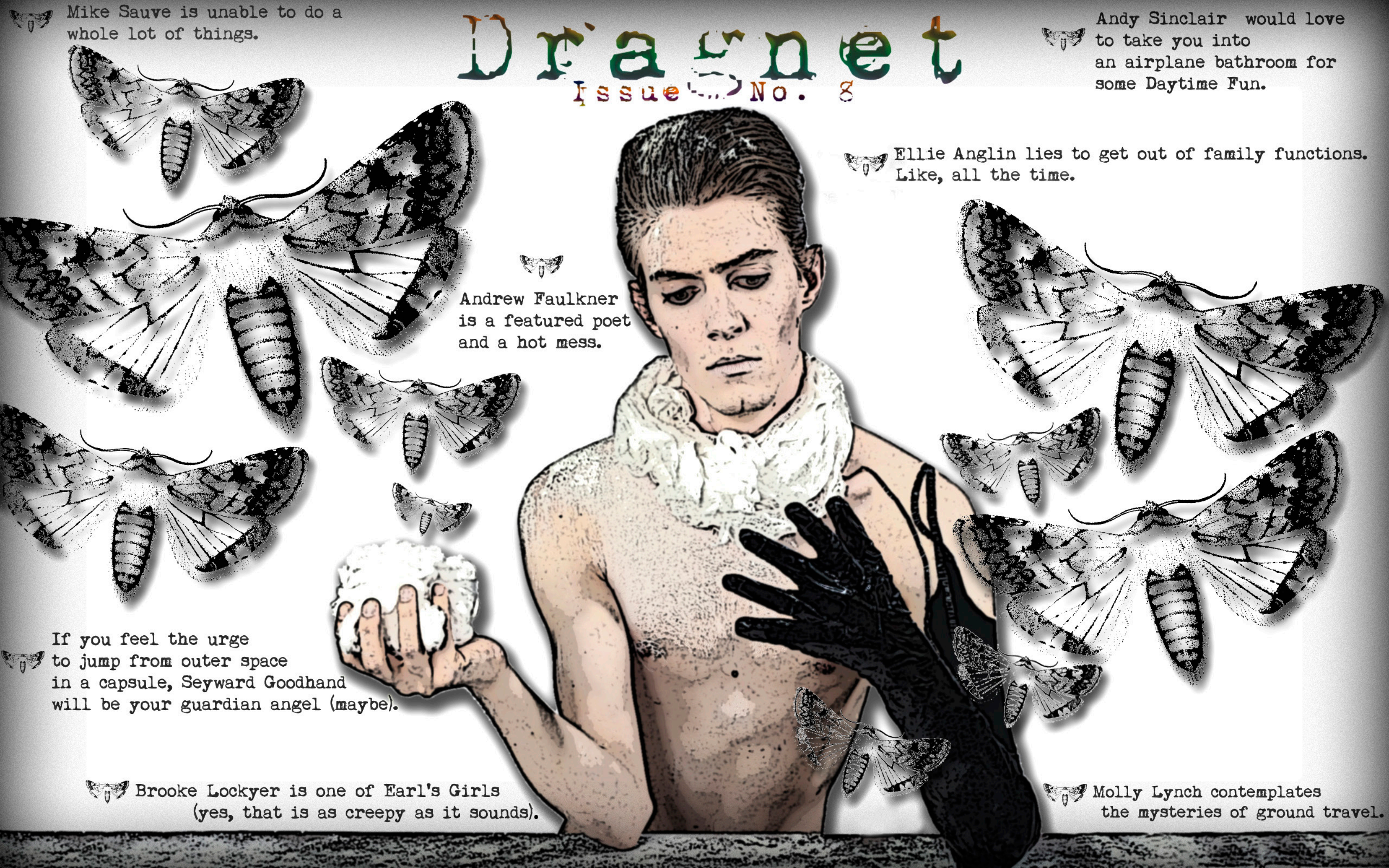
Ellie Anglin lies to get out of family functions. Like, all the time.

Andrew Faulkner is a featured poet and a hot mess.

If you feel the urge to jump from outer space in a capsule, Seyward Goodhand will be your guardian angel (maybe).

Brooke Lockyer is one of Earl's Girls (yes, that is as creepy as it sounds).

Molly Lynch contemplates the mysteries of ground travel.



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EDITORS' LETTER

by Suzannah Showler

Dear Friends,

I recently met a human who was just one day old. She didn't say much, but her dad said something really great: he pointed out how, what with literally everything we take for granted being new to her and all, she (Ruby Evangeline Widdicombe Peters) had only seen colour for about twenty-four hours. "Psychedelic drugs have nothing on being a newborn," he (Michael Peters) said.

If I were Rob Brezsny and writing my North American-syndicated Free Will

Astrology column, I would urge you to take a moment, Capricorn/Aries/Virgo or what have you, and approach your life this week as though you'd never seen colour before, to be stupefied with wonder, to allow your own newness to make you just a little cataplectic.

As I'm not Rob Brezsny (he must make a lot of money) and have no communion whatsoever with the stars, I can't in good conscience urge you to approach your life this way. I can, however, suggest that you carry some tripped-out newbornness with you into this issue of *Dragnet*.

Try to remember how completely mad it is

that plane travel is even a thing, and we bend time to make it work (Molly Lynch); how if you go a little higher, someone can actually fall to earth from space (Seyward Goodhand); how if you went a little higher than that, you could have a hotel on the moon

"Psychedelic drugs have nothing on being a newborn"

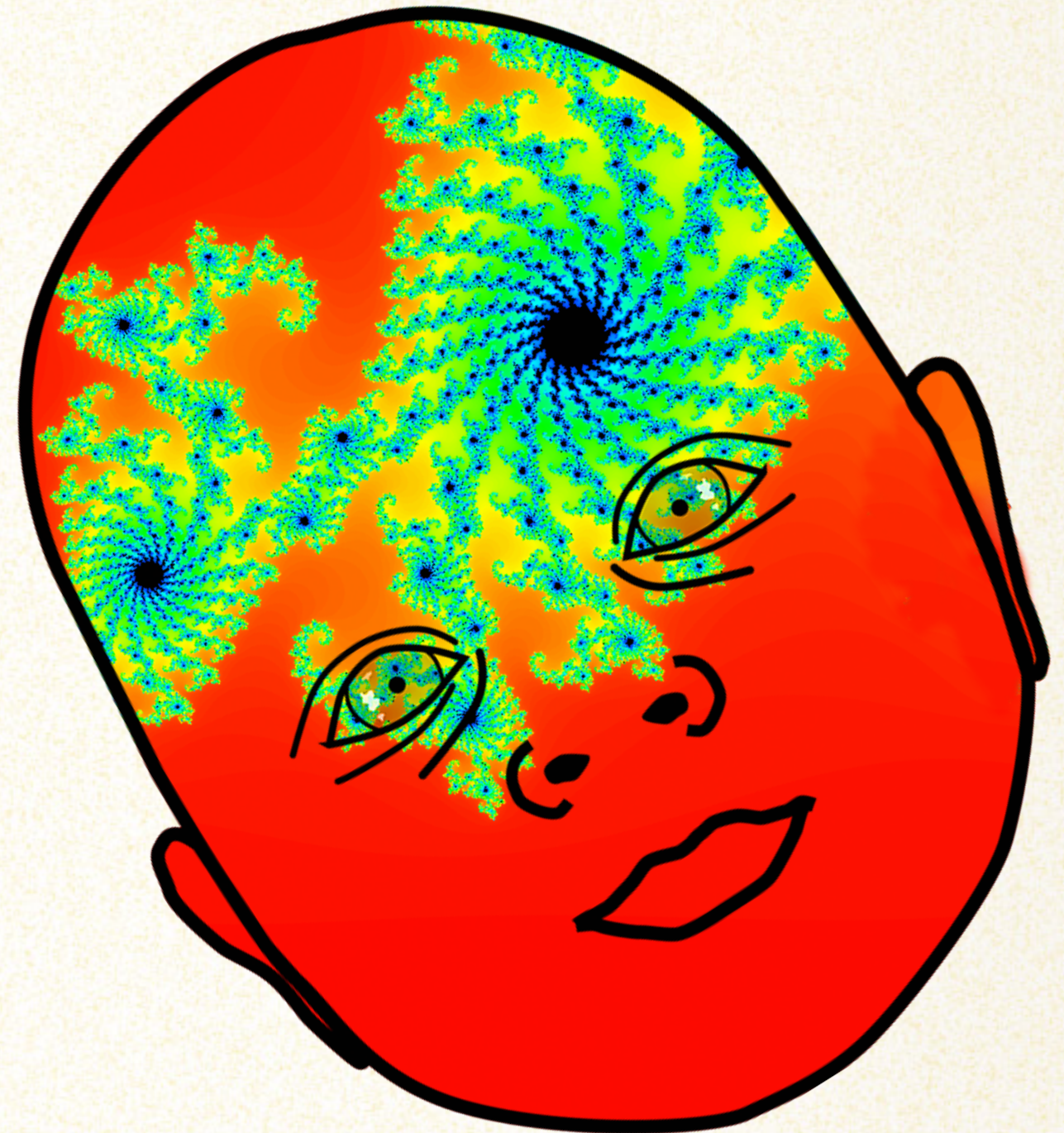
(Curtis Edmonds). Try to keep at the forefront of your eyeballs the impossibly lucky mess of humans interacting with other humans: fucking one another (Andy Sinclair); not fucking one another but thinking about

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it (Mike Sauve); being coached (Brooke Lockyer); getting home at the end of nights in cities (Nicole Baute). Keep at the ready your appreciation for these miracles: shitting at your place of work (Michelle Winters); speaking to the dead (Ellie Anglin); seeing beauty through a hangover (Andrew Faulkner).

Now, I'm not as new to anything as Ruby Peters is, but I am—in the generic way we not-newborns throw this word around—new to *Dragnet*. Thanks for having me. Thanks for reading. Thanks for letting me be amazed with you.

Suzannah,
Poetry Editor



FELIX
BAUMGARTNER'S
GUARDIAN
ANGEL

by Seyward Goodhand

I HATE YOUR ambition, Felix. I hate that on the blank line next to “career,” you write “daredevil.” I hate that your father is a carpenter, which has led you to make personal comparisons between yourself and Christ. I hate that in an interview, you advocated “a moderate dictatorship led by experienced personalities coming from the private economy.” I wish I weren’t your guardian

angel. But up we go, eh, Felix? Up to space we go, pulled by a balloon.

There you are waving goodbye to the cameras. You’re thinking of the love you didn’t make last night to your fiancée, Nicole Oetl, Miss Lower Austria 2006. You’re imagining

I hate that your father is a carpenter, which has led you to make personal comparisons between yourself and Christ.

the libidinal energy you didn’t expend fusing at a spot in the centre of your pelvis. You envision it flaring across your chest and firming into armor. You feel that by not making love

to Nicole but instead hovering your hands over her womb while gazing existentially into her eyes, you made her want your return so badly that now her want is just another force in your arsenal of stocked forces.

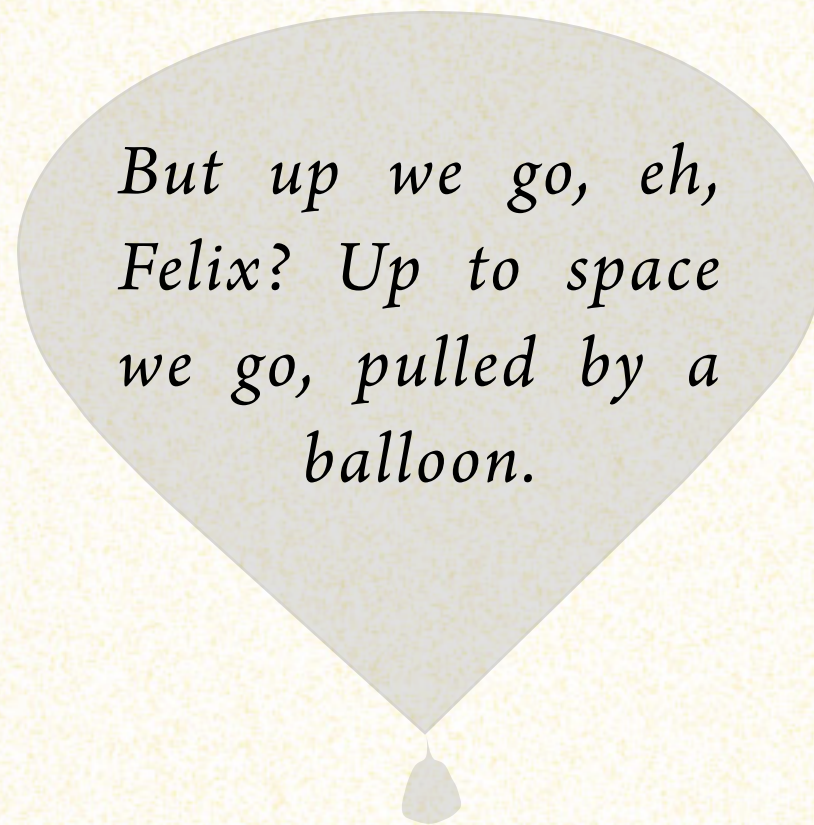
Now you’re sitting in the capsule. The door

is shut. Your knees are at your chest. Do you think it’s comfortable squeezing behind you in a floating capsule, Felix? It is not. You take your sweet time responding to Joe Kittinger,

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Capsule Communicator. You're competitive because Joe holds the world record for this jump. In 1960 Joe leapt from 107,800 feet and accelerated through a free fall that lasted four minutes and thirty-six seconds. Joe Kittinger is an eighty-four-year-old ex-prisoner of a North Vietnamese war camp who only wants the best for you. But you'll make him wait. You imagine that you can transmogrify into an indestructible god-substance if you direct all of humanity's energy toward yourself.

Get this, Felix. Some people want you to die today. They aren't all conscious of it. Your mother, Eva, is not consciously willing you to die. But if you died, she could go home to Austria with the glorious tale of your tragic



ascent and the pain she's suffering right now on your behalf, and her pride at being watched by millions of people, which makes her feel insincere, would end.

"Everything is in the green. Doing great," says Joe Kittinger.

We are 60,229 feet above earth. It is minute 59:59 of your ascent. I have just projected

an astral stream through the opaque surface of your pressurized mask. Why did I do it? There are limits, Felix, to what you should see and do and understand. I want Joe Kittinger to cancel the operation. You radio Joe to tell him everything is not in the green; your visor is fogging up when you breathe. Everyone worries that your helmet is cracked. If it is, the blood will boil in your head as soon as you exit the capsule. Off-camera, you tell Joe, "Let's continue. God is on my side."

Felix, you just broke the record for highest manned balloon flight at 114,038 feet. Good for you. Now the balloon is higher than your original target height and we're still climbing at a thousand feet per second. Joe Kittinger is

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running through your checklist. He is saying, “I need you to respond to my commands. From now on it gets really serious, Felix.”

You don’t respond because I have wrapped my ethereal body around your head and am begging you telepathically, “Please don’t open the door.”

What if the black of space is a curtain protecting us from the blazing face of God and the stars are holes in the curtain?

The door opens. You press the button that moves your seat forward. Now your legs are outside the capsule on the jumping platform.

You stand. Joe Kittinger says, “Felix, jump. Felix, you have to jump.” Felix, are we up here looking down or down there in an arctic region gazing up at solar storms? What if the black of space is a curtain protecting us from the blazing face of God and the stars are holes in the curtain? But no, *this* is God, these

green and blue auras and the earth curving backwards over her axis, spinning through pure inhumanity. Do you know what you are

telecasting to the world, Felix? That God exists but he’s only as high as the highest living thing, which right now is you, Felix. Felix, I’m sorry you can’t see this because I fogged up your mask.

“Into my father’s arms,” you yell.

I am with you, Felix. I will rock you in waves until you come out of your spin. Do you hear that, Felix? Your heart makes a noise in space one thousand metres behind us. Felix, right now you have no features or family or mean politics or pride. Felix, humanity exists, it’s happening right now below us. Felix, you beautiful spark, you spinning shard of star. How did this happen?

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ZEITGEBAR

by Molly Lynch

WHEN SHE flew at night and the cabin lights were shut off due to federal regulation, when her passengers were mollified at last in efforts at sleep and Johnnie Walker torpor, when in flashing rows, action-film heroes leapt mutely from steel ledges and crashed through glass, high above ground, she would sit in a darkened rear seat, touch the touchscreen and watch the portal that showed Earth from above: the curved arctic edge.

She grew familiar with the gravels and

mucks of the sky. Sometimes her vehicle skated. Sometimes it slogged, paddling hard against cloud caps. She learned that an aeroplane is in fact a hybrid bicycle-submarine, swim-riding over potholes and ruts. One time her pod bottomed out so deep and sudden that heads knocked overhead lights and lapped babies lifted off. Passengers of aeroplanes, more than any other type of carrier, do not like to be unsettled. That angry handful were duly compensated with more of the same: redeemable vouchers to fly anywhere.

Grounded in Los Cabos she was put up for two nights at an all-inclusive resort. Homeless in shades, she lay in watch at her

passengers' poolside. It was around then that she grew uncertain of the destination of holidays. She saw vacations completed in a single day's work: from Chicago to Antigua and back—outbound passengers pale and giddy; northbound red and sedate. Tropical effects appeared to be instant, as though a holiday was a pill you could swallow.

Then, for one hundred and fifty-two hours all she witnessed was the world unlit. She arrived in Istanbul from Athens at twenty-one-thirteen and boarded a west-bound flight to Belgrade. Off-duty but sky-born in an executive-class recliner, she fought the clock all the way to Reykjavík, where she turned and flowed back with the

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night tide. Wheels touched down in Addis Ababa as four a.m. was striking.

During her training, in which she had been living on complimentary sesame buns, in which she learned about federal reg-

ulations, learned how to press the brake on the meal cart, she had also been schooled in the magic of zeitgeber. The Inter Air training manual advanced a philosophy: it isn't just clocks that keep time, they posited. It was her job as their attendant to become time's carrier. Beware, they warned, of signs and symptoms of its loss.

Do you feel that you have become the

crippling runways, do you feel borne? That you can finally breathe again? When you try to sleep, do you hear a sound like a clock unwinding? Crickets on a summer night? Mind your inner rhythm! Do not, they warned, be tempted by the silk and silence of night.

She sees a reflection of her face, transposed broken pavement, by a passing goat-herd and racing lights. A Toyota van-taxi takes her to the Hotel Addis. She knows she won't sleep and so sits at the small bar where an Italian tells the story of a bus accident in the mountains. She drinks beer, and like one from another planet, contemplates the mysteries of ground travel.

She knows she won't sleep and so sits at the small bar where an Italian tells the story of a bus accident in the mountains.

bottom-feeder, racing to a sea floor to refuel before returning to the drifting place? In the bellies of our great white whales, our seven-seven-sevens, ascending from

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CORE
COMPETENCIES

by Mike Sauve

UNABLE TO catch fly balls in the outfield. Unable to form a successful tag team that gets a big push of 21–1 due to my poor cardio. Unable to maintain job as an HMV salesperson because of people not buying CDs and so HMV dying. Unable to woo a high-estrogen dynamo because of my unfortunate reputation of “weird”/“scary.” Unable to perform sit-ups due to pain perceived to be located in the pancreas. Unable to scale

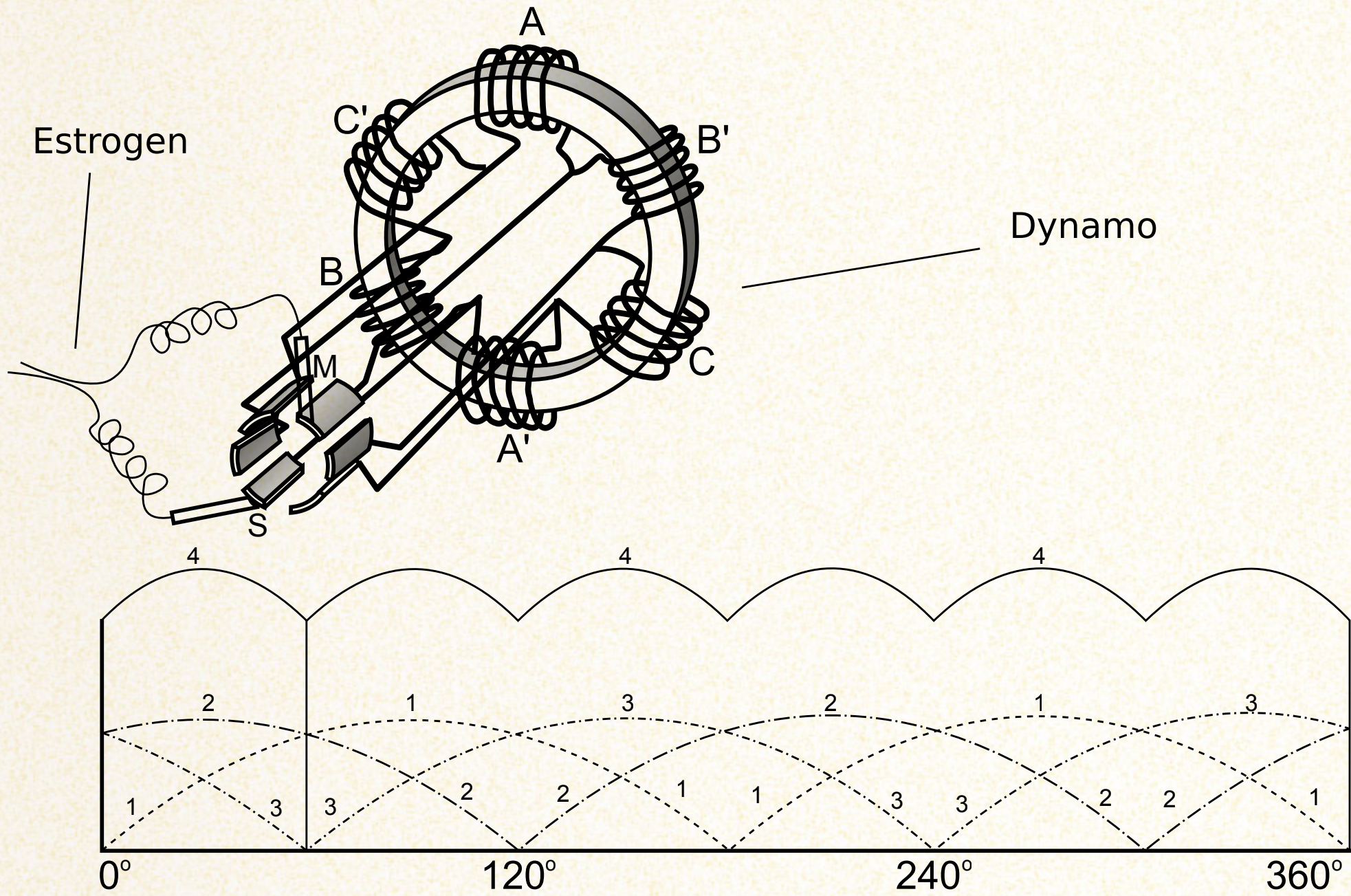
Mount Kilimanjaro as once hoped due to previously mentioned windedness and pancreas pain. Somewhat exultant while hungover, however, sometimes. Weary of hospitalizations, largely pancreatic in origin. Symptoms described as “minor cramping” by somewhat dismissive physicians. Unable to sell feature news story on epileptic stripper disowned by her devout religious family because it is sad but not in an interesting-enough way. Unable to love anyone like I loved when younger, because I feel less now, except in the pancreas. Unable to replace my copy of *John Wesley Harding* on vinyl, which copy I wrecked

through reckless handling. Unable to advance in the Freemasons. Unable to stop watching Sandy Hook conspiracy content, James Holmes conspiracy content, Sikh Temple conspiracy content. 9/11 conspiracy content being something of a snooze at

*I feel less now, except in
the pancreas.*

this point in time. Unable to remain faithful to loved ones, due to selfishness. Unable to sleep well due to poor circulation and desired position of arm above head, beneath pillow. Unable to launch music career because of playing no instruments

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and singing in a way that induces cringing. Unable to breathe fresh night air of youth because of air being not so fresh anymore and youth more or less extinguished now. A fan of jazz, but unable to differentiate between even the most obvious players like John Coltrane or Charles Mingus. Unable to keep cynic hatred in check w/r/t disbursement of grant money to low-quality Canadian films like *Score: A Hockey Musical*, the way young male dopes with MMA merchandise for shirts get to sleep with pretty young women and I more or less don't, and also the success of Lena Dunham, whom I resent for complex reasons I don't want to consider or think about.

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DAYTIME FUN

by Andy Sinclair

WHEN I was eighteen and came out to my mother she just wept and I was so hurt and confused because I thought she'd loved me unconditionally. Later she said, "Oh, honey, of course I do, did you really think I didn't? I just didn't want you to have a hard life." And I think I have so much love to give but can you imagine how she feels? To be that crushed, that someone you care for might be *lonely*. And my life's been full of sex and dancing and nobody ever looks into my eyes when he's

fucking me and I kiss about one guy a year and I get it now.

When I'm on a plane I pee in the sink. I'm tall and have a bad back and the cumulative effects of scrunching my neck and stooping against the curved fuselage to reach the toilet is too much. Have you heard of the drip, drip effect? It doesn't seem bad but then one day the floor collapses from underneath you. I used to jerk off in public washrooms all the time but now I prefer to come in a guy's face. For a while I stopped masturbating altogether; I had this sadness and terrible sorrow that burned through my body and made me cry a lot. It was the end-tailings of falling for some guy I was sleeping with who had a

boyfriend and he said he got scared and I had to honour that!

After the dude with the boyfriend and I parted ways, I swore off attached men. But then one sun-stained evening, stoned and glowing and calm on the ferry back from Hanlan's, I met Dillon. He had this chiselled body and golden skin and it was a rush to stare him down. When we got off the boat I said do you want to come over and hang and he said he couldn't get away tonight and that's when I knew I was going to be breaking my new rule.

We exchanged numbers and he said he had an understanding but I knew it wasn't as open as he made it out to be...

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I'm into daytime fun, he texted.

So he comes over sometimes in the morning. Do they not need him at his office? He must have a lot of minions. He parks his Volvo in the visitor space and heads on up and when I'm fucking him he says you can do anything you want. You can fill and stretch my holes and send me out wrecked.

Dillon doesn't kiss either but in my empty grimy bathtub I pee all over his kneeling body and he looks up at me with clear-eyed submission. I cup the back of his head with my hand and stare back and this is our connection. I think of my mother. She was worried that I wouldn't be loved, and I've got the best of friends but

it isn't always enough. I want a good man to hold me; I don't want to be slapping around some expensively moisturized banker. This will be the last time, Mom. I was short on rent last month and asked Dillon to loan me

... some whitish larvae have eaten through the plastic, and squirmy creatures are crawling all over.

a hundred bucks and he said that would be a bad idea. But I bet if I shoved my ass in his face and shit down his mouth he'd swallow it like raw oysters.

When I fuck him we don't use condoms. I've had it with that kind of protection. Skin-

to-skin, cock shaft against his dirty insides. I use my spit for lube. Are you gonna mark me? he says, and I say yeah sure. If I was sick and horked into his ass the snot would make my dick slide even better and he'd love it.

After he leaves I smoke up and make pancakes and in the cupboard where I keep my overly organic bran flakes some whitish larvae have eaten through the plastic, and squirmy creatures are crawling all over. I throw out the sugar, the cheap spices, the Mexican vanilla. I get rid of everything. I coat the shelf in a blanket of Comet and scrub it out, and then I do it again. I slaughter every last maggot. Some fall to the black counter and start writhing



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away and I have to get those ones, too. I have to kill them all.

I'm glad Dillon didn't see that.

I saw him at that big gay Christmas party at the Carlu with his A-list posse; he smiled hello with those white, white teeth but looked so scared in his velvet dinner jacket. I have friends who are professors and doctors, I wanted to say. I'm allowed to say hi. And don't worry—I'll pee in the urinal. But we're all old enough now; I get it. All these guys have co-signed on mortgages. They have wine-tasting cruises booked and paid for and

five-hundred-dollar tickets for gala fundraisers and they don't want any upheaval and anyway there are other guys who can take my place and it's easier than figuring out who gets to keep the cottage.

A few weeks after the Carlu I am at an afternoon open house hosted by nice well-intentioned friends. There are some cute guys here but I am hungover and having trouble moving. I get stuck in a corner with this smug financial comptroller guy. Rakish and polished. Tailored dress shirt and tight-fitting cashmere V-neck.

First thing he says is, that's my partner over there. He points vaguely across the room. I look around and see a guy who looks like Dillon but I'm not sure. He's gym-built, with a conservative haircut, nice bleached smile, and pointy shoes, but there are a dozen guys here fitting that description and *I really don't fucking know*.

Do you have a boyfriend? asks the guy.

No, I say.

Why not?

Because I'm the guy who pisses on your boyfriend when you're at work, I say. And he looks a little startled, but maybe that's because he can't tell if I'm speaking in generalizations.

A FEW MINUTES WITH THE HOUSEKEEPER AT MY HOTEL, WHICH HAPPENS TO BE ON THE MOON

by Curtis Edmonds

NO, IT'S not that different here. A dirty toilet is still a dirty toilet. The design isn't the same, of course, because we can't waste water here, but they still have to be cleaned every

day. It all goes out to the surface, did you know that? They showed us the waste treatment plant as part of the orientation. They expose it to vacuum, and that kills all the bugs, and then it gets turned into fertilizer.

The low gravity makes it a bit easier. The cart weighs a lot less, for one thing, and it isn't anywhere near as hard to do all the stooping and bending that you have to do. But it works against you, too. When you change the sheets, you toss the top sheet over the bed, like so, and see? It can take forever to drift down. But you get used to it. You can get used to anything. That's the lesson about living here.

I don't have to clean windows, so that's a

plus. The original design had windows in every room, but they were concerned about pressure leaks and radiation. So they sealed up the rooms and put all the windows in the rooftop lounge. There's radiation shielding up there; it's not supposed to be any worse to work in there than it is to be an airline flight attendant, or so they say. All I know is that I don't have to clean windows or futz around with curtains, so that's something nice.

And of course there aren't TV sets in here, so one less thing to dust. You brought your iPad, same as I did, so who needs to watch



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TV? TVs are big and heavy and expensive to ship up here, despite all the advances in rocket science. That's why all the furniture in here is aluminum, because that's something we can mine and manufacture right here. It's a lot cheaper to do that than it is to bring up wooden furniture from Sweden or wherever. Maybe one day they'll have trees growing here but I kind of doubt it.

Some people miss the trees. I don't. I'm allergic to all that stuff. Before I came here I worked at a resort in the Bahamas, which was great, because palm trees don't give off the same kind of pollen you get back home. And there was water everywhere you looked. I miss water. I mean, I miss having

it cheap and available. I would give a lot to be able to go swimming, just for a while, or even to take a long, hot shower. But all I have to do is wait two more years until I can leave. I can wait that long, I think.

It's a five-year contract. The way it works, if you get picked, you spend six weeks doing training. How to work the airlocks, what to do if there's an emergency, that kind of thing. Then they send you up on the rocket, and you stay here for five years. When they send you back home, they have to put you through six months of rehab. But it's nice. It's set up like a spa, and you get to eat pretty much whatever you want and get massages and spend your time working out to build

up your strength. Once you're cleared, you can get a transfer anywhere in the company where there's a job open.

I need to get to the next room. If you want to follow me, you can, but I can't stay here and talk all day. I have to finish this pod up before lunch, and then get to the next pod before I can get out of here.

They do the contracts for five years because they figured out that's the most you can stay up here and still be able to function once you get home. If they rotate staff in and out of here any faster than that, they start to lose money. If you fall down and break your leg and they have to send you home, that's a loss on the books. So they

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want you to stay for as long as you can because it costs so much to train your replacement and put them on the rocket.

You can make money here, though. Part of that is because there isn't anything to buy, but the pay is good. I'm going to get out of

make enough money to pay back the loans.

Once my contract is over, and I get paid, I am not coming back. Nobody wants to stay up here full-time, not even the scientists. Outside of them, we have three industries here: mining, manufacturing, and tourism.

You don't want to work in any of those jobs long-term if you can avoid it.

My friend Neil works here as a bartender. He has an economics degree, and he was telling me that the Moon is a Third World country. Did you know that? We're like an island in the Caribbean. We import nearly everything and export raw materials, and then use the tourist trade

to make the trade balance more even. Neil says there are exploitation colonies and settlement colonies, and this is an exploitation colony because nobody wants to settle here.

The problem with exploitation colonies is that everyone is trying to make money and nobody is trying to build a stable society or develop institutions. We don't have anything close to an institution. There isn't a government because nobody wants to stay up here long enough to run it. There aren't any laws because they can't pay people enough to come here and enforce them. So gambling is legal here, that and prostitution.

They didn't tell you about that? It's true.

*You can get used to anything.
That's the lesson.*

here not owing any money on my college loans. I was at the University of Memphis, but I didn't graduate. I was working on my degree in hotel management when my mom got sick. I dropped out, and I was able to support her and my little sister, but not

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*But here I
am, on the Moon,
and here you are, on the
Moon, and all either one
of us is thinking about
is sex.*

Two of my suitemates are prostitutes. They're nice people; they just got into debt back on Earth and this was the best way they had to get out of it. They work for the mining company. Technically, they're support staff, but they don't do anything but go over to the miners' R&R compound—it's the next set of pods over from here—and have sex with them three days a week.

The miners have it worse than anyone. They're all single guys. A lot of them are Chinese who couldn't get wives back home. They have to be single because they can't have kids—you have to agree to get a vasectomy in that kind of job because of the radiation and the kind of long-term exposure

you get from being on the surface all that time. They have the same five-year contract we have, and you can't expect them to go without for five years. So they brought up

women. Paula and Ashley—those are my suitemates—they make good money from the mining company, but they also freelance over here in the tourist area on their days off. It's very lucrative, or so they say. I wouldn't know.

Not that I don't have sex or anything. I have a boyfriend. His name is Tom. He's a sous-chef, and he works nights, so I hardly ever get to see him, but when we do get around to it, it's something. Acrobatic, almost. You can do positions in the low gravity that you'd have to be a gymnast to do back home.

Look. This is my suitemate's card. If you're really that hard up, send her a text

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if you want. I'm not interested, thank you very much.

No, I don't think you're weird. I don't blame you for being curious. It's a new experience. The whole thing is weird, when you think about it, having sex on the Moon. Think about it. Up until ten years ago, when they figured out how to build the advanced rockets, there had been just ten people on the Moon, total, and they were dying off. I never thought I would make it to the Moon, and here I am. My sister's kid thinks I'm some kind of hero, an astronaut or something. And maybe I am. But here I am, on the Moon, and here you are, on the Moon, and all either one of us is thinking about is

sex. I think that's amazing. We haven't advanced all that much as people, or I don't think so.

Sure, the sex here is great, but it's not what you'd call romantic. It's not a romantic place, the Moon. You'd think it would be, but it isn't. It was my birthday last month, and Tom took me up to the rooftop lounge for dinner. I borrowed a dress from Paula, and all I could think about the whole time I was wearing it was how many times it had been wadded up on the same floors that I clean every day.

But it was a nice dinner. The whole time, we sat there, staring at the Earth. It's beautiful. And you get to see it the way the

astronauts saw it, the original explorers. We danced for a while, and then Tom showed me some of the other stars. One of them he said was Jupiter, but I kind of had to take his word for it. He said that was where we'll be going next, to the moons of Jupiter. I don't know about that, but if we get there, not too long after, there'll be somebody like me that has to clean up after them. I don't know what that says about humanity, but to be honest with you, I think it's kind of comforting. We need each other, even out here.

This story was first published in Chicago's Untoward Magazine and appears here as part of the Dragnet–Untoward cross-border fiction exchange.

WE BELIEVE IN ETERNAL LIFE

by Ellie Anglin

THE HUBSTER and I held a séance in our apartment and my great-grandmother spoke through me. The Hubster said that she said something like the following:

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“...I got my waxen white tapers
We gather all beauty around us
Our cave on the Northern land over the seas
By and by, the buffeting rains pelt down
By and by, bitterly chill winds blow
But soon we see you, Cedar.

The bones of an antelope,
the wings of an albatross,
the pied and painted birds and bears
the junk and bangles, twisting shells
the level humming of the cave floor.

Other where, as birds we are beguiled.
Cedar, what if now
You would nestle these lapwings in your
needles?

Here in your pit our woven nest is fixed
A nice room to sleep and hear the wind
whistle,
While below our phantom bodies file
through the night...”

I would never think of anything like that,
so now we believe in Eternal Life.

FREEDOM

by Ellie Anglin

AT A family gathering when I was fourteen, my uncle Walter dissociated and thought he was back in jail. I was annoyed at him at the time because I would have liked to dissociate to get out of making small talk and pretending to be sane and explaining for the millionth time why I dropped out of school, but I didn't. At the time I thought he was faking it. I thought he just wanted sympathy be-

cause his mail-order bride had left him. I wanted to tell him to stop being so selfish, because we all want attention.

Later I changed my opinion, because I learned to get attention in better ways, and I enjoy the freedom of an adult to lie to get out of family gatherings. Uncle Walter wasn't faking it. Now he's in the loony bin and I don't think he gets much attention from anyone anymore. If he hadn't done those nasty things to his step-daughter Becky, I would take pity on him—but as it is, I don't visit.

MAINTENANCE TO SIX

by Michelle Winters

YOU KNOW how I know it's Paula? She makes me think of the toilet. The brown smudge on her white pants, the *foody* smell around her cubicle, and I can't tell you the number of times I've seen her head off down the hall with a magazine. She's fecal. She's always got food on her somewhere, on her face or in her teeth, and while that doesn't directly involve the toilet, it makes you think about the whole system and that's what Paula is. A system.

Food goes in and food goes out.

I can't even use the washroom here anymore. Brian insists I drive home.

The other way I know it's her is she's a child. The way she yells when she talks and gets too excited about things that aren't exciting. She's childy. And when I think about children, I think about helplessness, and when I think about helplessness, I think about bedpans, and when I think about bedpans? And Paula? Ew.

But she's going to get caught. She can't keep doing it forever. Someone's got to walk in one time. I mean, how is it no one has yet?

And what about her hair? It's like the only reason she gets it cut is to keep it out of her

eyes. Grown-ups get their hair cut because they want to look good. I spend a hundred and eighty bucks on my hair, with the colour and the straightening, and she puts a bowl on her head and goes at it with the shears. She's childy. She doesn't care one bit what she looks like. Doesn't even shave her legs. Just puts on a skirt and leaves the house. Can you imagine? I spend a hundred and sixty-five bucks every three weeks getting my legs, back, arms and bikini waxed.

I shouldn't have told Brian. Well, you know how he is.

The other morning we're watching TV at breakfast and that shaving cream commercial comes on with the kid learning to shave.

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His dad, who's gorgeous, is standing behind him in the mirror and they're laughing and he dabs shaving cream or whatever on the kid's nose, which I guess is supposed to be a dad-and-son moment. And they're both just wearing towels, which is fine for the dad because he's hot, but the kid... is fat. Fat and Italian. *And he's only wearing a towel.* Brian couldn't finish his breakfast. He picked up his plate and threw it in the sink. He came back a minute later with a pad and pen and started writing a letter to the shaving cream company. He said if they're going to show that kind of thing, wait 'til people aren't eating. He didn't go in to work. He spent the whole day writing that letter.

Well, if it isn't Paula, I don't know who it could be. Everyone else here is a normal

he sees Paula. Like I'm fecal by association.

It was weird. Just after Brian sent that let-

... is it like a disgusting game, or maybe a hobby? Does she plan it based on what she eats? And how does she time it?

grown-up. I don't think anyone else could even think about it, let alone do it. God. Imagine getting in there with your whole hand....

Brian's different with me since I told him about it. I catch him sometimes looking at me from the kitchen and I don't know if it's just me, but when he looks at me now, it's like

ter? I was in line at the Guardian picking up his prescriptions and there was a fat Italian kid and his hot dad ahead of me in line—exactly like in the ad. While I was standing there behind them, the dad reached out and tickled the kid under the chin. The kid squealed and smacked the dad's hand, so he

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reached around and tickled the kid's ribs and the kid just split his guts laughing. It was the strangest thing.

I know they're not going to the police because HR says it's delicate and Paula's been here so long and everyone likes her, but if they did go to the police, there'd be the DNA right there. She knows that. She watches *CSI*.

I wonder what she gets out of it. Is it something she can't control, or is it like a disgusting game, or maybe a hobby? Does she plan it based on what she eats? And how does she time it?

She must know when it's going to be one of her days. When she's on the bus, she must be looking around all smug, like she's got a

secret. Like she just got laid. When she gets here and flaps her hand around and says good morning, she knows. She gets her coffee and while she's standing there in the kitchen telling you how tired she is, she's really not tired at all. She's all fired up. On the inside, she's laughing just like that Italian kid.

Then when we get to our desks and start coding, she's sitting there. Percolating.

I'll bet she goes into the Ladies' to check first if there's anyone around, then when she's sure there isn't, her heart gets all light, like when you're about to rag someone out who really deserves it. Smearing it on the walls must be the best part, so she wants to take her time and get into it. It must make her happier

than anything in the world and at any moment it could get taken away from her. When she's finished (I wonder how she knows), she must stand back and look at it, and sometimes she feels she could have done better, but sometimes she's just overwhelmed with the sense of accomplishment. She wants to hug herself and stand there admiring it, but she has to wash up and get out and make like everything's normal. Then once she's back at her desk, coding, she waits, like a spider, for the next person to go in and come out screaming.

Look at her chewing away over there. Thinks she's so hot.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

by Nicole Baute

WE'RE IN costume, playing the night. We smell like beer and sweat or vanilla body spray and vomit. We are touching and every time the streetcar lurches we touch more. This is the only way home. The year has just begun and already we are disappointed.

Tonight we danced and got in a fight and agreed with our friend's musician friend that art and procreation are the only ways to live forever. We loved and then we questioned our love and then we decided not to question our love until tomorrow. We can't see out the windows. We don't know where we are.

We hope we're going home.

We yell at the people trying to squeeze up the steps. We yell at the people stopping the doors from closing stopping the streetcar from moving even though we were those very people three stops ago. We wonder if this is what giving birth feels like.

We don't notice the girl in the red coat because we're too busy clinging to each other and swearing and explaining that even though we are technically standing up right now we're so drunk that we're actually on the floor, do you understand me? The girl in the red coat is going home alone. She has a piece of cheese pizza folded in her mittened hand but she can't move to eat it. She's humming the prettiest song.



EARL'S GIRLS

by Brooke Lockyer

SOME PEOPLE at Riverdale boarding school don't like Earl Bradley's "unusual" coaching techniques.

Mr. Bradley says, "You wanna be 'usual'? You wanna be like everyone else? Then you'll never be a winner."

They call us Earl's Girls because we row for Mr. Bradley and almost always win. We wear black-and-red knee socks and two long braids tied with twine.

"Ribbons are for pansies," says Mr. Bradley. Some people think Earl Bradley shouldn't

be coaching "impressionable young girls." That's what guidance counselor Ms. Morano tells us in the weight room today. She watches from the treadmill as we raise our chins over metal bars.

"He uses you," she insists, trotting on curvy spandexed legs. We finish our last set before swinging carefully to the ground.

"You know what people call you?" She presses a button and the treadmill plummets.

"Earl's *machines*."

"Don't worry, ma'am," we say. "Everything's great."

We form a circle. Pressing our palms to the floor, we thrust our legs back into a plank position and do a push-up. We jump our feet

back to our hands and spring up as high as we can, our shadows leaping up the walls.

"You're smart young women. Don't let him control you. Don't let him get away with it. There's something not right about him."

Mr. Bradley says Ms. Morano is a feminist. She teaches empowerment classes on weekends. "What she needs," says Mr. Bradley, "is a man."

"I just don't want to see you girls get broken like some of his past crews. It's not worth it. You should be preparing for university, not spending all of your time in a boat, with that *man* shouting. I'm worried about you. I really am."

We lift our right arms in unison and arch

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our spines to the left. There are five of us: Melanie, Charlie, Mythri, Jessica, and me.

Mr. Bradley formed our crew last year. He recruited Melanie as his coxswain after the speech contest, impressed by her loud voice and small body. He chose the rest of us at the annual cross-country race, finding something promising in our big feet and brawny thighs that no one else did. "What I detected," Mr. Bradley told us then, "was grit."

After Ms. Morano leaves, Mr. Bradley pokes his head in the room and snaps his fingers. "It's boat o'clock," he says. "Get the shell. Let's boogie."

Before every major race Mr. Bradley's old mom calls her son to see "how his girls are doing."

"Great, Ma," says Mr. Bradley each time, winking at us. "These are good girls, I got. Good girls." He likes to pull us into him one by one, nuzzling our heads into his armpit.

Mr. Bradley doesn't allow us to ride the school bus with the other rowers. Instead we ride in his old Buick that spews dirty clouds. Sometimes Jeff Cooper drops his pants to moon us, streaking the bus window with his big white cheeks.

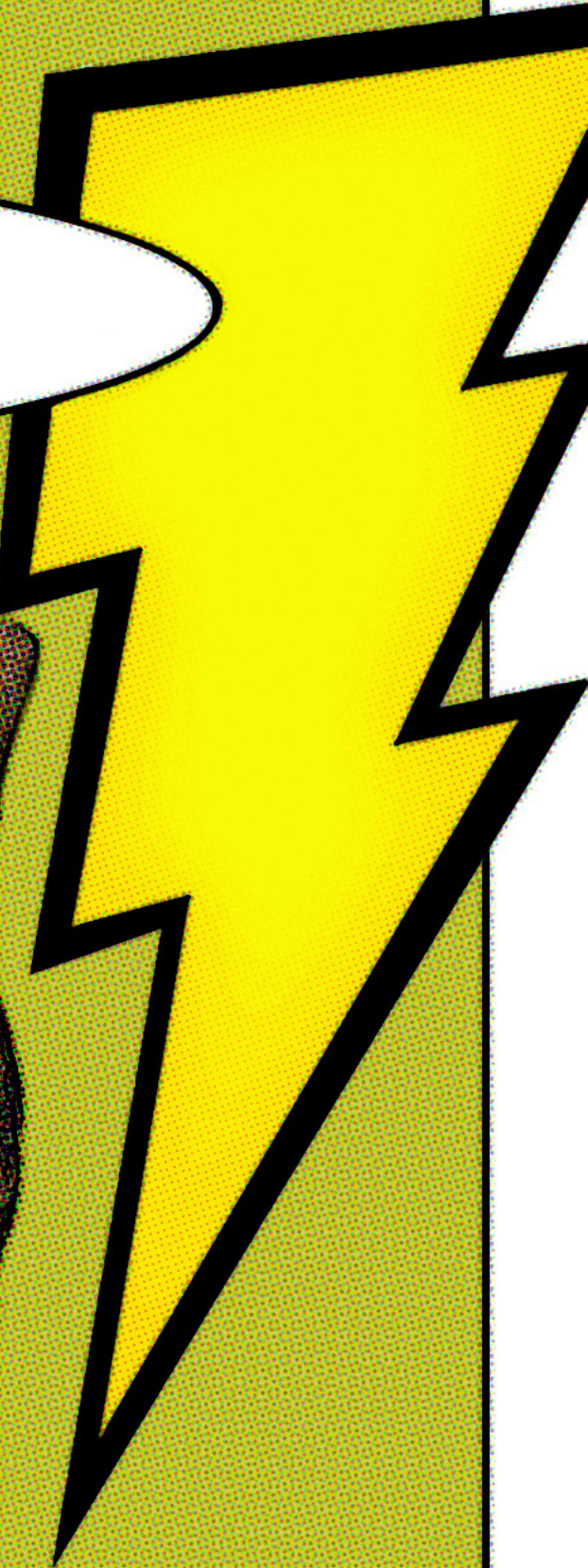
Mr. Bradley lives in a cramped house overlooking the river. Every morning he wakes up at 4:30 and looks out of his window at the finish line. He holds team meetings at his house. He likes to take us into a small bright room covered with newspaper clippings, medals, trophies, and photographs of past sweep rowing and sculling crews. Rows of girls gaze victoriously at us, their golden legs rippled with muscle.

"Thunder thighs!" crows Mr. Bradley.

In the center of the wall, Olympian Silken Laumann stares without blinking, trapped inside a large, burnished frame. We look up at

MEANWHILE...

THUUUNDDDER THIGHS!



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her in wonder. There are no chairs or couches in the Winner's Room.

"Don't want you girls to get too comfortable or complacent," Mr. Bradley whispers, his voice hushed under Silken's spell. "Gotta keep you on your toes."

"You know, everything I do, girls, I do for you. When you're a thirty-five-year-old housewife with seven kids: Bobby, Billy, Mary, Willy..." He rubs his knuckles in our hair.

"When your husband, potbellied old Frank, hollers at you to get him another Bud while he watches hockey from the couch...

then you'll realize. You may not believe it now, but someday you'll wish you were back here, sweating it out on the river with me."

Sometimes he calls me late at night, all liquored up. My roommate Toshiko tosses in bed when the phone rings. "Is 4:30 in the a.m.," she says. "Let's enjoy sleeping!"

"Sorry, Tosh," I say as I take the receiver and pull the covers over my head.

"Katie," he says. "How's it going?"

"Great, sir," I whisper, knowing exactly how to answer.

Mr. Bradley once pulled us into the corner

of the boathouse and told us this: if anybody asks you how your row was, you say "great."

You won the race—great. Your oarlock came loose—great. You lost your timing—great.

"No matter whether you lose or win, I want the same answer. The same expression on your face. The real stuff only you tell me."

"How's it feeling in the boat?" he asks now, over the telephone.

"Faster," I answer.

"Why's that?"

"Our timing's improved. We're moving together."

"Why?"

"Practice."

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“And?”

“We’re hungry.”

“Hungry for the gold. Good. What else?”

“Visualization. “

He waits.

“Lots of visualization.”

“And?”

I can’t think of anything else. I coil the phone cord around my fingers, waiting.

“Okay,” he says. “That’s okay. We’ll talk more about it tomorrow. Team meeting.”

“Great.”

“Great. You know, last night I had a dream about her.”

“Who, sir?”

“Shelly. Shell-y.” A hiccup. “Sweeping

Beauty.”

“Sleeping—”

“No. Sweep-ing Beauty.” He takes a swig.

“Sweep— Get it?”

“Are you talking about the boat, sir?”

He cackles.

“Now, Katie, get to sweep.”

The next day after practice he pulls me away from the others while we’re fetching the coach boat. “What happened at the beginning of the season, Katie? What happened at Early Bird?”

“We already talked about it, sir.”

“No, we didn’t. Not really, Katie.”

It had been raining at Early Bird. We’d hovered our blades over the rippling water, tingling for the hot snap of the starting gun.

“Something happened at the start. We faltered. Then we caught a crab.”

“No. I warned you girls before the race but you didn’t listen. Too many fucking chiefs and not enough goddamn Indians!” He paces. “That’s why Marymount got so close at Early Bird. You girls. Thinking separately. Not trusting. Listening to too many voices. You listen only to my voice. Only mine. I told you that.”

“I remember, sir.”

“Now you remember. Well, at least you’re

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starting to listen. Rowing isn't just about following the movements of the person in front of you; it's about being a team. You're little parts of something bigger. Like spokes on a bicycle's wheel."

Mr. Bradley pats my hands. When he grabs the back of my head I ready myself for the weave of his sweater, the salty, old-man smell.

After the armpit nuzzle he's quiet and I am too, just listening to his breath go in and out, trying to unsynch mine from his.

In Mr. Bradley's house there's an old telephone that you have to dial slowly and press

tightly against your face. Mr. Bradley uses it to call our parents. He doesn't care if they live in Bombay, like Mythri's do. He says it's important to have support in the home. Especially when there are so many troublemakers at Riverdale. "People say bad things at this school," says Mr. Bradley now. "They want you to fail."

My head throbs and I want to get out of there. I want to get away from Mr. Bradley's mood swings, from his pickled breath and liver-spotted hands. "Tell your mother about the team lunch we had yesterday. Tell her how we told the restaurant it was Jessica's birthday so we could get a free birthday cake, but they charged us anyway."

He stares at me. "Tell her how good the boat feels."

"Being a winner can be lonely, Katie," whispers Mr. Bradley, before pushing the phone against my mouth. "When you're at the top, everyone wants to take you down."

Today we rush down to the dock with extra speed so we can get out on the water before they raise the black Storm Warning flag.

"My girls are like luggage," Mr. Bradley likes to say. "Compact, weatherproof, portable."

We say the punch line in unison: "First on, last off." I roll my eyes when he's not looking.

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Melanie crouches in the stern, trying to steer the boat through the choppy water. She's trembling like the sashimi Toshiko orders downtown.

"This is good practice, girls," Mr. Bradley yells through his bullhorn. "You never know what the weather will be like the day of the race."

I concentrate on Jessica's back, trying to synchronize my movements with hers. The wind snaps our braids against our heads like shiny whips.

Lightning blisters the water, and the boat lurches from side to side.

"Keep rowing!" screams Mr. Bradley as he guns the coach boat towards us, a rainbow of gasoline in his wake. "Get control of the goddamn boat, Mel!"

"In one, let it run!" I shout. We feather our blades at the end of the stroke.

"Why are you stopping, girls? Why are you listening to her? She's not even the goddamn coxswain."

"There's lightning!" I hear my voice shouting back. "Can't we go to the dock?"

"Do you see what she's doing, girls? Do you see how she's trying to sabotage things?"

I reach over and undo the oarlock, anger exploding in my chest like firecrackers. I think of some of the things I've given up to

be on this team: Friday pizza dinners, school dances, make-outs in the backseats of day students' cars. I pull the oar into the boat.

"Katie, what are you doing?"

I can see the shore from the boat. Twenty, maybe twenty-five strokes to the dock. Close enough to leave this lightning-bait boat and take my chances swimming.

The lightning quickens and the reeds in the water glow on and off like punk-rock mermaid hair. I take my feet out of the shoes and crouch on the seat. When Mr. Bradley yells my name again, I dive. Underwater, each stroke I make is mine. I loosen my hair as I come up to breathe, the air electric with danger and possibility.

POEMS

by Andrew Faulkner

THE LOBBY

The Holiday Inn sign issues the kind of light
you inhale through a dollar bill.

On the fringe of the parking lot, it's a lot like
the Wild West: a grave Corrolla rusts,

and someone pisses on an oak at dusk
as if their urine was an axe.

I commission a new scent to enter
rooms before me and pat down its occupants,

confiscating cell phones and sketch pads.
It's not paranoia if your interest is academic.

I'm flannel-mouthed. Produce a sweat that lingers
like a waxy second skin. In the corner, the last American-made

pinball machine grazes on quarters.

But the concierge doesn't care. His yawn is wide and full

as a luscious lash arcing over the eye of finance.

That's a mouthful, over the phone. Can you say that again?

The piped-in music swells like teen acne.

The concierge nods solemnly. He can, he can.

WING

The east wing of my heart rises like a hot
air balloon. The west wing descends like bad
news on the oblivious. The radical wing
of my heart sets fire to the stock exchange.
The silent wing gestures like a museum.
The wings of hope trade away several promising prospects.
Winging it at the press conference,
despair tells fans the team wouldn't
have made the playoffs anyway. As a right-winger
I've scored several goals and lowered
your taxes. As a left-winger, I'm here for you.
Attention all passengers, this is the captain speaking:
That thing on the wing is the old god, the small god,
all the thieves and lawyers, every good deal you've made.
Ladies and gentlemen, this is what keeps us aloft.

HOT MESS

It is noon in the sweat glands of the gorgeous
and the pheromones are doing their thing.

But we are hungover and have to work in an hour.

And you're a tall drink of water because we're so fucking thirsty,

as lonely and out of reach as a balloon beached on the ceiling.

Dear heart, tensored by spandex, uttering a saint's lament,

shiny side of a dime in the corner of a pickpocket's eye. Well then.

The boiler room has sprung a leak and it's getting hot
in here. We could click the like button on you all day.

PARTY

This party is awesome. It's doped up. Def.

Dumb. I'm rocking this party like Sisyphus.

Broadly speaking, this party is an animal
that escapes from the zoo, has its photo captured
on the cover of several major newspapers,
and is quietly euthanized a few weeks later.

Narrowly speaking, this party is as novel as a new tattoo.

Parliamentary democracy, journalistic responsibility,
and this party: these are the pillars that hold society up
like a bandit. With its mickey of vodka and Day-Glo heart,
this party embodies seven fun facts about fun.

By a bed of roses this party lays me down. Its hand
at my belt. This party tugs gently.



LIKE CANCER

In response to a common theme, my moustache grows.

Regarding irony, my moustache curls at its ends.

I walk, then I walk some more. Thus my days are filled.

It's true what they say: If you've been around the block
you know the block rather well. Billboards rise
like stubble. After a while, the block resembles
the middle distance in a high school art project.

I shave and I shave. Thus my washbasin is filled.

In response to my face, I weep and wonder.

Oh how the lines of your face
draw such pretty little pictures.

Sharpen your crayons, there's some shading to be done.

With gears dense as headaches we chug along.

Like cancer we're full of ourselves and make our own fun.

INCIDENTAL

I was a stranger in a dream. From a high window,
I looked down. A bass line with legs to its tits
and tits to its chin took a long walk out of town.

I was as lonely as the first Jew in America,
as the last dollar in a wallet.

Some nights I could drown in fun.

This is about the economy adrift as a kid
in his dad's suit. It's a wide-open continent
and the Kool-Aid here's the best.

This is about what just happened.

This is about what's next.

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CONTRIBUTOR
BIOS

Andrew Faulkner co-curates The Emergency Response Unit, a chapbook press. He is the author of the chapbooks *Mean Matt and Other Shitty People* and *Useful Knots and How to Tie Them*, which was shortlisted for the 2009 bpNichol Chapbook Award. *Need Machine* (Coach House Books, 2013) is his first full-length collection.

Andy Sinclair has written for such publications as the *Globe and Mail*, the *United Church Observer*, and the *Moose & Pussy*. This is his third *Dragnet* story. Andy is a newly minted

yoga instructor and he recognizes the value in keeping clean cupboards.

Brooke Lockyer is a graduate of the University of Toronto's MA in Creative Writing program. Her short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in the *Hart House Review*, *Geist.com*, *Toronto Life*, *Toro*, *House & Home*, and *Spacing*. In her spare time, she enjoys thinking about cats and rocking out to Prince and Kate Bush in her living room.

Curtis Edmonds is the author of *Rain on Your Wedding Day*, a novel available on Amazon.com. He is a frequent contributor to *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*. He lives in New

Jersey and has heard all the jokes, thank you very much. Other short fiction is available at curtisedmonds.com.

Ellie Anglin is a Toronto-based writer of prose and poetry, as well as a visual artist who works mostly in collage. Her work has been published in the *Hart House Review*, *Steel Bananas*, *Broken Pencil*, *Papirmasse*, and *Little Brother*. Her first book, *Tender Buttons*—a fusion of fiction and collage—is available now!

Michelle Winters is a translator and technical writer from Saint John, N.B. She was a nominee for the 2011 Journey Prize and her work has been published in *THIS Magazine* and *Peter*

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O'Toole: A Magazine of One-Line Poems. She has just completed a novel called *I Am a Truck*.

Mike Sauve has written non-fiction for the *National Post*, the Toronto International Film Festival Group, *Exclaim! Magazine*, and other publications. His online fiction has appeared everywhere from *Feathertale*, *Pif Magazine*, *Monkeybicycle*, and *McSweeney's*, to university journals of moderate renown. Stories have also appeared in print in *M-Brane*, *Criminal Class Review*, *Filling Station*, and elsewhere.

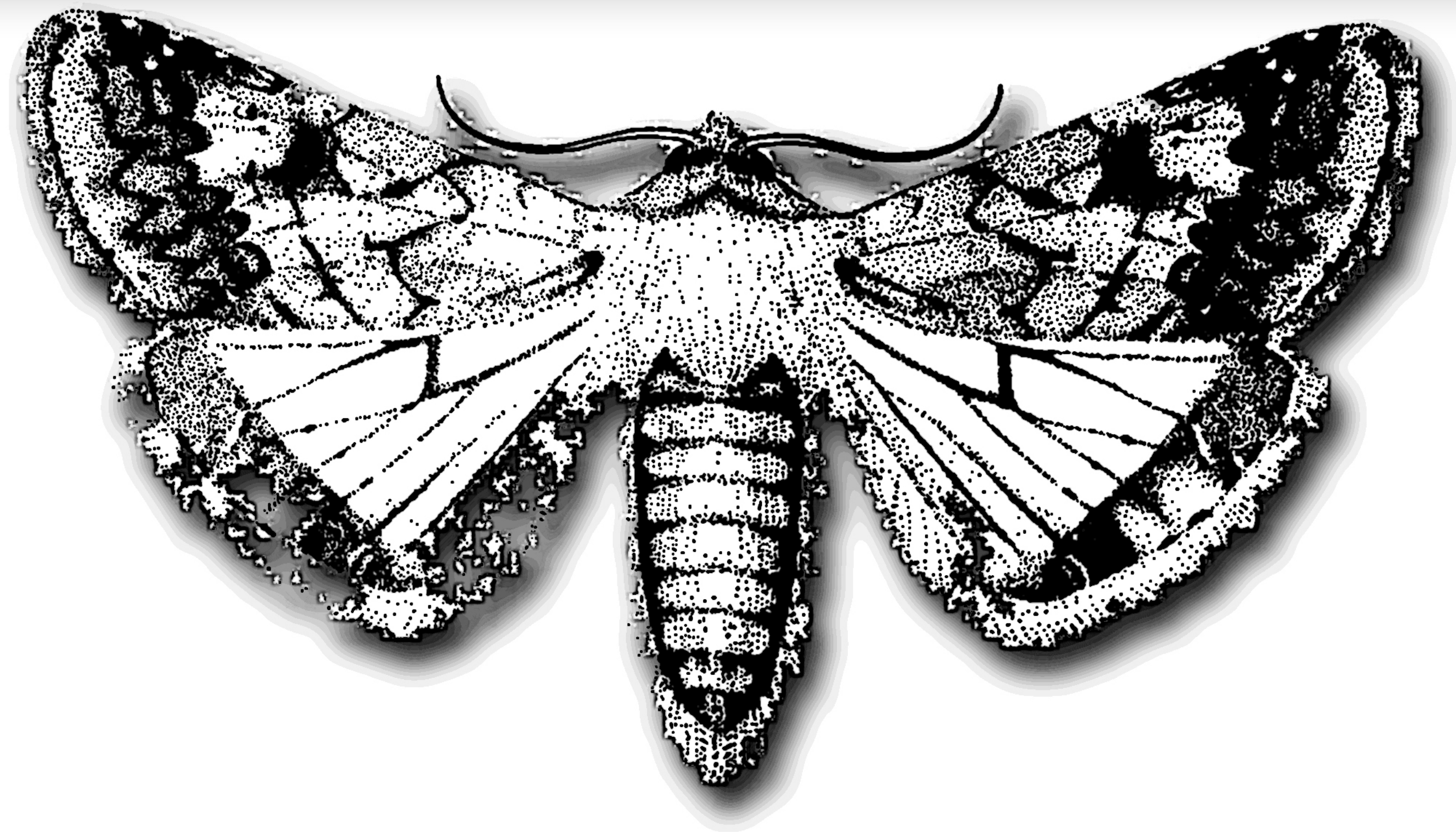
Molly Lynch is a writer from the mountains of western Canada. Her stories have appeared in *Joyland* and the *Puritan*. She has non-fiction

forthcoming in the *Walrus* and has recently completed her first novel. She's a 2013 Journey Prize nominee and is doing her MFA in fiction at Johns Hopkins. mollylynch.ca.

Nicole Baute is a writer living in Toronto. She's the co-editor of *Eat It*, a collection of women's writing on food and gender politics due out this year, and her fiction has been published in *Joyland Magazine* and the *Feathertale Review*. Her journalism has appeared in *Toronto Life*, *Open Book: Toronto*, and several Canadian newspapers including the *Toronto Star*, where she spent three years as a staff reporter.

Seyward Goodhand's work has appeared in *Echolocation*, *PRISM International*, and *Journey Prize Stories 23*. In 2011 she was a finalist for the Journey Prize.

Stephanie Coffey is a Toronto-based photographer and cinematographer whose work focuses on elements of the human experience blended with the surreal. Her work is often ethereal married with dark undertones. She has recently worked on several photo-based projects for publications like *Spindle Magazine*, as well as the funded short film *Kate*.



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