

FEBRUARY 2013

ISSUE 39



JERSEY DEVIL PRESS

JERSEY DEVIL PRESS

February 2013, Issue 39

ISSN 2152-2162

Online Editor: Mike Sweeney

Production Editor: Samuel Snoek-Brown

Associate Editor: Laura Garrison

Founding Editor/Publisher: Eirik Gumeny

All stories and other contributions are copyrighted to their respective authors
unless otherwise noted.

www.jerseydevilpress.com

Table of Contents:

Editor's Note	3
Brace, Jackson Burgess	4
Death Valley, Cheryl Diane Kidder	6
Correspondence, Amber Rambharose	9
How to be a Celebrity, Peter DeMarco	13
Us: A Retrospective, Dan Purdue	20
The Fall, Leanne Gregg	29
Blanket of Ash, Stephen Koster	36
Godzilla Reading Haiku, Christopher DeWan	38

Editor's Note:

Most literary magazines? They'd be content for their special Valentine's Day issue to feature either a story about a guy who can only masturbate to ducks *or* a piece that ends with someone hugging Godzilla.

At JDP, though, we believe you deserve both.

Welcome to Issue 39 in which those two wondrous stories bookend another half-dozen great tales about the strangeness, terror, pain, and occasional triumph of love. We've got a couple breaking up to a John Carpenter movie, a (sort of) love story (sort of) co-written by Nietzsche, a guy obsessed with Gig Young, a very peculiar museum, a cheerleader channeling *Pride and Prejudice*, and a man and a woman facing a decision at the end of their world.

It's the February Issue of *Jersey Devil Press*. Let it float. It floats back to you.

— Mike Sweeney

Brace

Jackson Burgess

So I didn't start out with ducks. It's not like that. It was when S left for Chicago for her year-long internship. I was so in love, and I convinced myself doing it to anybody else would somehow taint my feelings for her, so I made a rule I could only do it to her. Masturbate, I mean. She never gave me pictures of that sort or anything because we weren't that kind of a couple. You understand. She did, however, have a surfeit of Facebook photos. That's what I came to rely on. She had 735 photos, about 300 of which had been taken in the last couple years. Felt weird jacking off to anything older than that. Like pictures of her when she was a kid. Very creepy. So I had about 300 photos to work with. And they lasted me quite a while—about five months. But eventually they got old, and she was so busy with her internship and such that we hardly talked. And she rarely posted new photos of herself. Hardly ever. So one day I was doing the deed and looking out my window at the park, and there wasn't much going on. It was raining a little, like usual. There was a clown selling balloon animals. Yeah, in the rain. And I was working it and working it, and right when I was about to come, my eyes just happened to fall upon a brace of ducks—that's the correct term: a "brace." There were about six or seven of them. And something about their little feet waddling, their little tails plip-plopping back and forth just made me . . . happy. Then I came and it was great. Now those ducks were almost always out there—maybe not the same ones, but some always were—and that day felt so good that the next day I waited until I had an ideal vantage point of another brace and then I masturbated. Didn't even need any photos of her or anything. And it was just as good the second time. Their silky, sleek feathers and innocent little eyes . . .

intoxicating. I wasn't doing it *to* the ducks; it was more *at* them. Though I suppose that sounds just as strange. But that's how I survived the year of her absence. Fapping at the ducks. It was when she returned home that I started having problems. I couldn't come with her. It's like without the reassuring presence of my ducks, doing it just didn't feel right. I tried to fix it. I put up pictures of mallard ducks around my desk and on the ceiling, so no matter what position we were in I could see them. It worked, but just barely. It was never the same. Eventually I couldn't stand it anymore, so I spilled my guts. She took it surprisingly well. Looking back, her acceptance was quite a testament to her feelings for me, and she was even willing to try and do it together, *while* looking at the ducks out the window. We moved the bed over and everything. It was . . . it was the single most sexually gratifying experience of my life. *And she felt the same.* Our duck-fapping became a regular thing. We never told anybody. But one day I walked in and found her. She was alone, doing it herself, looking out at the ducks just like I used to. She had the same glaze-eyed euphoric look. That's how I knew: I was going to be replaced. Now that she'd done it without me, there was just no way I could compare to the ducks' avian charm, their smooth and subtle allure. I knew the ducks' power. She'd realized she didn't need me. And the weirdest part? The only part that worries me? I was okay with that. Being replaced, I mean. So I walked over and sat down and started doing it at the ducks, too. And we did it together. That's how it goes most days, now. We just sit there and masturbate, looking out at the ducks, and we hardly even speak to each other at all. And it feels just as good every time.

JACKSON BURGESS is a writer, painter, and student at the University of Southern California. His work has been or will be published in places, including recently *Corvus Magazine*, *Petrichor Machine*, and *Subliminal Interiors*. You can find him wandering around South Central LA, often with paint-stained hands. To see his full publishing history or to make sure he's still alive, visit his personal blog: jacksonburgess.wordpress.com.

Death Valley

Cheryl Diane Kidder

"God, this is great," he tells me, plopping the suitcases by the window, stretching and breathing in with a huge lung expansion.

"You've got to be kidding." I couldn't move. It was two in the morning and the air temperature inside the motel room had cooled down to 106 degrees, maybe.

We'd driven all night to get here from San Francisco. It'd been 120 degrees outside, and they told us there was no air in the rooms. The corridors were no relief either, incredibly long, strewn with hot mustard carpeting.

When I got in the room I went for the faucet first, but only got lukewarm water, so I threw all my clothes off, turned the bed down, and collapsed, spread eagle on the musty warm sheets.

"I love the heat," he reiterated.

"Say that one more time and I'll put my fist through your face," I managed through clenched teeth. "Just like in *Alien*."

He came over and sat on the edge of the bed. I could feel the heat from his jeans seeping toward me.

"No, no. That was *The Thing*. In *Alien* it came out of the guy's chest. In *The Thing* the doc tries to revive the guy and puts his arms straight into his chest and he gets stuck there and then all of a sudden, the guy's stomach grows teeth and snaps his arms right off. It was great." He started to untie his shoelaces.

"I can't move. I think I'm starting to hyperventilate." I start hyperventilating.

He drops one shoe, languidly pulling the other foot up on one knee. "Great special effects. Remember the dogs?"

I try to lift an arm to punch him one, but I can't move.

"The guy who kept the dogs was this real sweet-faced guy. You could tell they were his best friends. And then it all started going wrong."

I can only see the back of his head, bent over, concentrating on his second shoe. I think if I could just lift my arm and sock him, I would die happy.

"The dogs start to change shape, see. Their muzzles get really long and the fangs grow out and slime comes out and the arms and legs kind of grow together, then sprout other arms and legs and then they grow three heads each until the whole thing barely looks like a dog anymore at all and it hisses and spits this sort of acid slime shit and it's there, just waiting there for the poor sweet-faced guy to come back and pet it and you know he's going to come back with their dinner, right, and all you can do is sit there and watch and the guy comes walking into this big cage, singing a little song, real innocent like, and you know all the time this huge thing is there in the corner of the cage, just waiting, and all you can do is sit and watch it happen."

He drops the second shoe on the floor, displacing the heat noticeably. I'm sure it's all gravitating upward to my position on the bed and I can't move and I have to. I'm dead certain that if he doesn't shut up, if he keeps going with this bullshit I will materialize a gun and shoot him square in the face.

He goes over to the curtains and throws them all open.

"So, one by one this monster takes over the bodies of each crew member and one by one it wastes every guy until there's only two guys left."

I realize I've lost the ability to speak. My mouth has melted together and it's impossible to move. I decide a knife would be more satisfying; maybe a nice ten-incher.

"And the two guys don't know who to trust, so they just sit there, staring at each other. Did I say it takes place in the Arctic?" He walks over to the air conditioner and fiddles with the dials. "It's

freezing and these two guys are staring each other down, sitting in the snow while the whole place burns down around them.”

He finds the knob and suddenly the room is filled with slowly moving lukewarm air. I have no choice now. My hand twitches, the blade is there, shiny, wet and incredibly sharp.

“So they wait and wait. Sitting there until they freeze to death, not able to trust each other.”

I’m standing behind him, tall, lean, naked, without a mouth, the blade gripped tightly. I advance and wait. Advance and wait. He doesn’t sense me behind him. The room is swirling now with hot air. He hasn’t even taken his jacket off. My arm swings back and I plunge the blade straight into his jacket. It goes in easy, real easy, so I pull it out and do it again. He drops to the floor.

I figure that’s enough. He’s quiet now, lying down, quiet.

The activity has made me sweat like crazy. I switch off the a/c and go back to the bed. I pick up the remote control and switch on the TV.

A small group of scientists mourns the death of a sled dog. They all wear arctic parkas. Suddenly, all the other sled dogs start changing shape.

CHERYL DIANE KIDDER’s award winning work has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She was also short-listed on storySouth’s Million Writer’s Award. Her work has appeared in two anthologies: *Ava Gardner: Touches of Venus*, and Meg Files’ *Write From Life*. Her blog is: Truwest - <http://cheryldkidder.blogspot.com>, and she is at Poets & Writers here: http://www.pw.org/content/cheryl_kidder.

Correspondence*

Amber Rambharose

We meet on the internet, the Jackal and I. I had fallen asleep with my laptop open and dreamed of a devil, sitting in a bathtub, smoking a clove cigarette and crying his pithy heart out. I dreamed the lavender smoke left deep claw marks in the nicotine-stained tile. I dreamed the mildew shrank from it. When I woke up, it was not yet morning and my computer was blinking at me signaling an email.

Subject line: When I saw my devil I found him serious, thorough, profound, and solemn: it was the spirit of gravity.

I don't know how he latched on to my contact information—I don't have many friends. I don't go out much—but he began his email with such antiquated politeness that I felt an impulse to respond. His words are so deeply sick, each syllable a pixelated cancer. The two of us are trapped, in too small apartments, in a sinking, stinking city, in a myriad of tiny hells with doors to other hells. There are no exit signs. This sulky demon, banished from a balmy hell into meat locker lower Manhattan writes to me once or twice a week and I feel for him, I really do. We email back and forth about our daily lives. I have told him about

Subject line: the terrible ones who carry about in themselves the beast of prey, and have no choice except lusts or self-laceration. And even their lusts are self-laceration...

the wounds I find raised up on my arms like flea bites in the morning, the same shape but much

larger than the motes of caustic morning light in the dead eyes of handsome strangers that stich themselves into my sheets, often, for weeks at a time. The Jackal, as he signs his toxic letters, makes his feeble living pressure-washing murder scenes in the kind of disco dungeons you would think only exist in the very bottom layers of Amsterdam red light silt and ash but really flourish in Alphabet city. He spends business hours in the places where cheap velvet furniture is lust-stained and the furtive moaning behind doors, shackled to keep their starving secrets to themselves, is never really quieted, even after a pretty twenty-something has had her swooning throat slit. He has described to me, in detail, the girl skin in the dust on the plastic chandeliers. The flecks of blood that spackle the smeary crystals catch more light than the cheap, swaying prisms do. He told me that he hates himself sometimes, when flakes of their pretty faces fall around him like ash or rain.

Subject line: Adequate was he for his deed when he did it, but the idea of it, he could not endure when it was done. Evermore did he now see himself as the doer of the deed.

Once I asked him why New York, why the service industry? Why only the aftermath of massacre and not the execution? Afterwards, I didn't hear from him for weeks, nearly forgot him, and then one night, he sent me a despairing mess of an email. In it, he confessed that he had been condemned to his messy nine-to-five drudgery by his higher power because he has been caught—not suffocating infants while they slept or whispering atrocities into the ears of sleeping virgins, his hands wrist deep in their innocence—dropping the change from his morning coffee into the quaking cup of a homeless man on one of his first mornings in Manhattan. He had come to New York City, as most do, for

Subject line: The dream—and diction—of a God; coloured vapours before the eyes of a divinely dissatisfied one,

greatness. He had come with the admirable task of stripping the sanity from affluent metropolitan politicians and to ready the world for evil's ascent from its crystalline abyss. He had come to paint the walls of midtown penthouses with blood, to scorch the skins of socialites to ash and write juvenile obscenities on the walls of Saint John's Cathedral with their charnel dust. He had come with such high hopes for himself. It was almost a shame that a few dirty coins would count as an act of goodness to his God. When I finished reading his sorry letter, I poured myself a glass of wine and wrote him back.

My email smeared across the flickering computer screen, changing my apartment into a blue, goldfish bowl hell, illuminating the silvery twenty-something sinking into my bed, the line of his razor wire jaw distorted by the tangle of my sheets, his tongue thick, his fingers splayed and curved like the cracks in his lips. I had no idea when he had arrived, how long he had been there or when he would be leaving. I wrote to the Jackal about fire, about ardent fire, the necessary kind that consumes and cools and leaves, in its aftermath, a smoldering promise in its charred, cracked womb. I understood his sadness and why his hands were always cold, why his memories of home and his upwards fall from gore and grace, were blurred, the sound of his own weeping slurred in his mind. I still can't remember if, in one of my silent rages, I had turned the gas burners on and locked my family in.

Subject line: a long, long cry, which the abysses threw to one another and passed on; for none of them wished to retain it: so evil did it sound.

But, as I told the Jackal, you never remember what started the fire. You remember the warmth of

the flames and the gentle press of death on your shoulders, as your whole world blossoms into

frothing flowers and reaps a harvest of cinders. He is a dear confidant of mine; for all that he came from a dream, into my waking world without permission. For my birthday, he sent me a buxom subway rat with its lights pulled out and strung around its neck. It was the best gift I received that year. As it were, our birthdays—I had asked once how devils are born, and his description beggared reason—are only a week apart. For his, I had sent him a William Sonoma gift card. I am quite sure he used it to purchase the flaying blade that smeared red stains on the cardboard gift box left on my seedy doorstep that, although it attracted the ardent attention of a thriving family of flies, did not startle my landlord.

"Life is only suffering": so say others, and lie not.

After all, this is New York City.

*All italicized text attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

AMBER RAMBHAROSE is finishing her final year as an undergraduate at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia. Originally from Brooklyn, NY, she spends much of her time searching—unsuccessfully—for a sound in the Southern United States that is as soothing as the screech of subway trains. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *The Virginia Literary Review*, *Cicada Magazine*, and *Camroc Press Review*.

How to be a Celebrity

Peter DeMarco

Is that an Academy Award, Henry asks Janet, a woman he met in a bar two hours ago. Yes, it's Gig Young's Oscar. He was my third cousin or something; I'm not good with the lineage thing.

Wow, Gig Young, Henry says, stunned.

You've heard of him, she asks.

Of course.

I don't meet many guys who know about him.

I like movies, Henry says, staring at the gold figure in the mahogany curio.

She tells Henry she still hasn't seen the movie.

It's a depressing film, Henry says. Gig got the supporting actor Oscar for it.

Henry can't believe he's face to face with an Academy Award. He thinks it's almost sacrilegious of her to have possession of one when she hadn't even seen the film.

I also read the book, Henry tells her. The last line is the title. This guy is asked by the Jane Fonda character to shoot her because she's depressed and hates life and when the cops ask him why he did it he says, they shoot horses, don't they. Great line, and a great last line.

My mother said that Gig also did a *Twilight Zone* episode.

Yes, it was called "Walking Distance." He plays a guy that's similar to who he was in real life. Tired and forlorn, yearning for some peace of mind. He goes back into his past to the town he grew up in, which was walking distance from the gas station he stopped at to have his car repaired.

You sound like a promotion for the show.

I like movies.

Henry and the woman are a little drunk. He'd met her at a martini bar a few blocks away when she complimented his hair. He was used to compliments about his hair. His mother had once said it was so fine and golden that it looked like Rumpelstiltskin had something to do with it. You could be a movie star with that hair, she'd told him.

In the bar, Henry and Janet had slow-danced to the Bee Gees song I've Gotta Get a Message to You, even though the place lacked a dance floor. She had a pretty face but an extremely large body. Henry wondered how often someone like her danced with a guy. Then again, he hadn't been in the company of a woman since he paid for a prostitute in Amsterdam five years ago.

Her apartment is small. The walls are covered with movie posters from famous musicals, like *Top Hat* and *Singin' in the Rain*. She tells Henry that she moved to New York to be a singer.

Janet excuses herself and goes to the bathroom. Henry is alone with the Oscar and thinks about picking it up. He remembers Dustin Hoffman's acceptance speech about how the award lacked genitalia, which got a big laugh. Hoffman should've had two of those damn things by then, Henry says aloud.

Did you say something, Janet asks when she returns.

Everybody always says that the Oscar is heavier than they imagined it to be.

Would you like to hold it?

I know this sounds silly but I feel like it would jinx my chances of winning one if I touched it now.

Are you an actor.

No, but I was thinking of taking some classes.

It is heavy, Janet says. She asks Henry if he wants coffee. Only if it's strong, he says.

While she's in the kitchen Henry thinks he can steal the Oscar and be on a train home before she reported it stolen. Janet had no idea where he lived.

He imagines her telling the police that the only thing she knew about him was that he wanted to win an Oscar. This thought makes him laugh.

Are you talking to yourself again, she calls out.

I was just rehearsing my acceptance speech, he says. You're funny, she calls back.

Henry gets second thoughts about asking for coffee and wonders if he should've kept her drinking. Maybe she only likes me when she's drinking, he thinks, like the millionaire in Chaplin's *City Lights* who only befriended the Little Tramp when he was drunk.

He sits on a couch and stares at the Oscar. He wants to hold it. Would he take it in one hand, as a symbol of triumph, or with two hands, modest, a kind of self-effacing I don't deserve this pose.

Henry had thought about acting classes. When he imitated scenes from movies in his house he felt he was a natural performer, earnest and believable, and that an Academy Award was his destiny.

Janet brings in two cups of coffee. Smells good, Henry says.

She opens the glass door and picks up the Oscar. Don't be superstitious, she says, offering it to him. Henry takes it with both hands.

Who would you like to thank, she laughs.

I guess I would thank my mother, he says, for believing in me.

That's sweet. Hey, would you like to call her right now and tell her what you're holding. She's dead.

I'm sorry.

A long time ago, it's alright.

He puts the award back in the curio and says he has to catch a train back to the suburbs. He thanks her for the coffee.

Janet tells him she has a cousin who casts extras for movies. She gives him a card and says to mention her name.

Henry thanks her again from the hallway. They maintain eye contact until the door closes. The harsh click of a lock sounds final, as if they're never going to see each other again.

On the train back to the suburbs, Henry thinks about Gig Young. Five wives, alcoholic, a suicide by gunshot. A hell of a life, and a hell of an irony in that, like the character in the movie, he shot himself to forget about the pain.

Henry thinks about his father, who worked six days a week in a plumbing supply store, his own business, and took care of Henry when his mother died. That was a hell of a life, but he endured.

These celebrities treated their lives like a piece of candy, Henry thinks.

Janet was from Nebraska. It made him think of waking up on a farm, the smell of hay in the air. A quiet landscape. Henry thought he could enjoy that kind of life. Simple tasks. No stress.

Many celebrities came from the midwest to the city. Maybe they sought adventure and wanted to make up for too many uneventful nights in a small town. Henry couldn't stand the city with its smell of urine in the subways and crowds on sidewalks and in elevators.

He wished he'd been born in a place like Nebraska instead of the suburbs, which were getting more crowded. He couldn't go to the supermarket without his cart getting boxed in down every aisle he browsed.

At home Henry turns on the TV. If he was fated for celebrity after touching the Oscar, a Gig Young movie would be on now, maybe one of those conspiracy ones from the 70s where Gig usually played an unctuous bureaucrat. Henry flicks through the channels. Nothing.

He makes himself a martini with leftover gin and vermouth from when his uncle once visited. These were the real martinis, not this apple martini stuff which Gig and his cognoscenti would look down upon.

The martini is what they used to call a stiff drink and Henry can see why. He can barely get it down. Hard drinks for hard lives.

He takes out the Casting Director's card. They called it background casting. Maybe he'd be singled out because of his hair and placed in a shot with the star.

The start of his career.

The next morning, Henry goes to his temporary office job with a sense of purpose. He imbues each task as if it were a crucial procedure. His father once said not to do a job unless you could do it with pride. Henry files papers with accuracy and collates sales reports in the copy room, hand delivering each one to its respective executive.

He leaves a message with the casting director.

After lunch he calls Janet. He hadn't called a woman for a date since he worked at Home Depot. A co-worker set him up with his sister. They'd gone to the movies, which was a mistake, because the woman didn't appreciate film like Henry did. For her, it was something to do, and movies were not just something to do. He couldn't even get her to talk about the movie, which was the best part, to keep the memory and images alive. She didn't even remember the first movie she'd ever seen in a theater, and to Henry, that was also sacrilegious.

Janet sounds happy to hear from him and they set up a date. Henry thinks how she'd be happy to hear from anyone.

After work Henry buys a pack of cigarettes. If he was going to be part of the movies, he figured he should take up smoking. Cigarettes made for a great shot in a scene. He decides on Marlboro. What the hell, he figured, all those damn ads had to mean something.

Janet meets him for a dinner at an Italian restaurant in the Village. Henry orders a martini and Janet orders a white wine. Going for the strong stuff, she asks.

The kind Gig Young would drink, Henry smiles.

He asks her if it's alright to smoke. I didn't know you smoked, she says. He tells her he's trying to quit. Henry coughs on the first

few inhales. He extinguishes the cigarette and tells her that he's got a sore throat.

They go back to her apartment and kiss on the couch. Henry's hands roam over her large body and he makes eye contact with the Oscar. He thinks about Gig Young in the *Twilight Zone* episode. That's Homewood, I used to live there, Gig's character had said to the gas station attendant when he saw a sign on the road that led to the town he grew up in.

What was that about home, Janet asks, kissing his ear.

I'm just glad I got to take you home, Henry responds.

They continue to kiss and Henry rubs his body against her. He climaxes in his pants and sits up. I just came, he tells her.

Oh, good for you, she says, seeming pleased that she's aroused someone to that point. She makes coffee and Henry walks over to the curio. He takes out the Oscar and holds it with one hand.

He leaves the apartment while Janet is in the kitchen. On the street he lights a cigarette. He takes a cab to Penn Station, and stops in a nearby Irish pub. A fireplace burns. A fake fire. He orders a martini and keeps his backpack, holding the Oscar, on his lap.

The smoke from the cigarette doesn't feel harsh anymore. He orders a martini. Three women at the bar play a trivia game with cards.

Henry listens in. A question about movies stumps them. John Garfield, Henry says, smoke streaming from his mouth. Good one, they say. Then they tell him that he looks like a celebrity.

I get that a lot.

He orders another martini. Two of the women wear wedding rings. The third makes eye contact and smiles. I guess you know your movies, she says.

A little.

He buys a round of drinks for the women. The one without a ring slides over and compliments his hair.

You don't have an Oscar at home, do you, he says.

She looks confused, then asks him what his favorite movie is.

They Shoot Horses, Don't They.

Never heard of it.

It was a book, Henry tells her, with a great last line. I like stories with memorable last lines.

I saw a film in college, she says, I can't remember the name, but the last line is, I steal.

Great movie, Henry says, it's got a long title, *I Am a Fugitive...*

He drops the knapsack. It thuds against the bar rail at his feet.

The woman is distracted by her friends who continue to play the trivia game. Henry picks up the knapsack and stares at her in the mirror, all blonde hair and soft cleavage, the kind that would break his heart after his witty one liners and movie mentality began to bore her, when she realized there were better looking guys with motivation and real jobs out there.

And he'd be left alone, sitting at a bar like this, an empty martini in front of him, an ashtray full of cigarettes, and perhaps some pills to wash down later that night, and if that didn't work, who knows what else.

Would you like to get some coffee, he asks.

Sure. If you're not a serial killer we could go back to my place.

Okay. I'll get us a cab.

It's walking distance.

PETER DEMARCO teaches high school English and film in New York City. He was first published in *The New York Times* when he wrote about hanging out with his idol, writer Mickey Spillane. His stories have appeared online in *Prime Number Magazine*, *decomp*, *Red Lightbulbs*, *Monkeybicycle*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *Flashquake*, *Verbsap*, *Pindeldyboz*, and *Dogzplot*. Peter's debut collection of short stories, *Background Noise*, was published in November by Pangea Books. Peter lives in New Jersey with his wife Charmaine, and two boys, Dexter and Sammy.

Us: A Retrospective

Dan Purdue

1. *"For Want of a Nail..." Bronze resin; 2003*

At first, neither of us can work out what it's supposed to be. It's cylindrical, two meters tall by a meter across, tapering to a screw thread. It looks something like an upturned bottle, only huge and made of metal.

Cassie gasps. "I know – it's from the lock! The, um, the little handle piece that connects to the slidy bolt thing."

I look at her. "Slidy bolt thing?"

"From the bathroom door."

I shrug.

She waits. Her eyes widen and she pinches her bottom lip between her teeth. She's itching to tell me. I shake my head.

"It's hard to recognise because in real life it's only this big." She holds up her hand with a small gap between her finger and thumb. "But that's it, the bit that was missing. Remember? If it'd been there, I could've locked the bathroom door, and you wouldn't have..."

"Blundered in," I say, suddenly understanding. No wonder I didn't recognise it; I'd been on the wrong side of the door. "Yeah, I suppose that really is how it all started. Aaron's New Year's Eve party. God, I was so embarrassed. I backed out so quickly I practically fell down the stairs."

"You were embarrassed? You weren't the one with your knickers round your ankles."

We smile, the way we smiled whenever anybody asked how we met. At a party, we'd say, grinning helplessly. What a ridiculous start to a relationship.

I gaze at the sculpture, this tiny, mundane thing made significant by a trick of scale and the events its absence set in motion. I try to think of something clever to say to Cassie about our relationship beginning with a door that couldn't be locked, but I can't quite marshal my thoughts before she pulls me away.

2. *"Love Potions" Vodka, Rum, Pernod, Lemon Juice, Tizer, Unknown, Glass; 2003*

"Look, look," she says, hauling me towards the next piece. "Your 'apology cocktails.'" She picks one up and sniffs it. "Jesus. What did you put in these? No wonder I couldn't remember getting home."

"I recall Aaron's party dramatically improved after we drank them." I glance over my shoulder. "I'm not sure we're allowed to touch things in here. Maybe you should put that down."

"Relax," she says, in that soothing, infuriating way of hers. She smiles a demon grin and takes a sip. "Urgh! It's Las Vegas in liquid form."

Somehow she forces the other glass into my hand. I take a hesitant sip; a riot spills into my mouth. I look at her, her lips pursed around the straw, her cobalt-blue eyes sparkling, and I remember how she was the most beautiful girl I'd ever met.

3. *"Back Row" Velour, Plastic, Digital Video; 2004*

Behind a heavy black curtain, we stumble over a dimly lit row of cinema seats. We sit down. The room is too warm and smells of popcorn and melted cheese. On a screen a couple kisses in a Hollywood rainstorm. Concealed speakers pump out an overwrought ballad, underscored with stifled coughs and rustling sweet wrappers.

"Our first date," she says. "Can you believe we were such a cliché?"

I laugh. We didn't deliberately set out to see a schmaltzy rom-com, but it was the best of a poor selection. I can't remember the name of the film, although potentially it had Sandra Bullock in it. The film itself was largely irrelevant; the important bit had been the chance to quietly assess one another for irritating habits and hygiene issues, without the need to say anything for two hours. I had been anxious about meeting again after the party, worried the few things I could remember about Cassie would turn out to be alcohol-fuelled invention.

"Come on," I say after a minute or two, "let's get out of here."

As we leave I notice we're holding hands. I don't remember whether I reached for her hand or she for mine, but it feels natural, and good.

4. *"Nesting" Paper, ink; 2005*

Initially the fourth room appears empty. The floor is bare but the walls are covered with slips of paper, each tacked in place with a nail. They're receipts, and above or beside them all are little pen-and-ink sketches of the items drawn onto the walls, detailing everything we bought in that first year, things with which we filled our lives and the draughty little flat we rented. The receipts rustle gently as we move through the room. It sounds like the sea, or leaves on a tree.

We find the beginning and work our way around. It's like a treasure hunt - among the records of banal, everyday transactions like groceries and taxi fares are more telling glimpses of our relationship. We reach our first Valentine's Day, and I recall the decidedly unromantic discussion we'd had about whether we were "doing" Valentine's or not and how much we would spend. We'd only reached our fourth or fifth date and were cautious of making

too grand a gesture. I bought her a book of poetry; she got me a CD. Nice, safe, dull presents.

"We got a bit more daring as we went, though, didn't we?" Cassie says, seemingly reading my thoughts. She's found the receipt for the vibrator I bought for her birthday. A blush ignites across my face. It had been the most mortifying purchase of my life. I could never have faced going into a shop and buying one – thank god for the internet – but still I spent the best part of a week breaking into cold sweats at the prospect of them trying to deliver the thing while I was out and having to collect it from the sorting office.

It was well worth it, though. I can't help smiling to myself.

"What are you thinking about?" Cassie asks, raising an eyebrow.

"Nothing."

"Yeah, right." She play-punches my arm. "You and your one-track mind."

We move on. Occasionally one of us points something out with a, "Hey, do you remember that?" or a, "I forgot we'd had one of those." Basking in nostalgia, we shuffle along with our arms wrapped around one another.

Just as we're leaving I notice the receipt from the bottle of Rémy Martin I gave her for Christmas that year. I don't think Cassie spots it but for some reason I can't think of anything other than how annoyed I'd been when I found it had all gone by New Year's Eve.

5. *"Look, Look, Look" Perspex; 2006*

For the next piece, we're directed to stand on opposing sides of a huge Perspex lens. The device magnifies our faces, like we're watching each other through binoculars. I'm uncomfortable looking at this giant version of Cassie, it feels too much like an intrusion, but I can't help gazing at her beautiful eyes, the perfect

domes of her cheekbones. Even the way a little of her hair falling across her face looks as though it's following some elegant law of aesthetics.

"Hello, Gorgeous," I say. She rewards me with a coquettish smile, a meter wide.

We pull faces and laugh. As time passes I begin to notice things I'd rather not. Before long all I can focus on are her flaws and blemishes. There's a clot of mascara at the corner of one eye. She has blackheads on her chin. One of her teeth is chipped and she shows too much of her gums when she smiles. A sense of unease takes hold. I should be able to overlook these things, I tell myself. But I can't, and I end up trying not to look at the lens, while simultaneously trying not to look like I'm not looking.

"This is weird," she says.

"Yeah," I reply. "I'm not sure I like it. Shall we go?"

She looks offended. Immediately I realize I've said the wrong thing. "Sorry," I say, sheepishly. "I didn't mean it like that. We can stay if you want."

"No. It's fine."

In an instant, she's gone from the lens and I hear the door to the next room swing open.

I follow her, my hands thrust into my pockets.

6. *"He Said / She Said"* Gramophones, Acrylic Paint, Digital Tape; 2006

I catch her up in a long, high-ceilinged room. An old-fashioned gramophone is painted pink and installed in one corner. A blue one is positioned diagonally opposite, facing it. The gramophones produce sound one after the other, mimicking a conversation. The noises are our voices – that much is obvious – but the words are distorted and unintelligible, no matter where we stand. We crane our necks and frown as we try to interpret the noises flung back and forth between the two sets.

Initially the gramophones “speak” in turn, but they soon begin to overlap. The tone changes. There’s a shift towards aggression as the exchange becomes an argument, each voice trying to drown out the other. Eventually, it disintegrates into a kind of white noise. The speakers can barely cope. It’s so loud and ragged it’s painful to listen to. It’s a relief when, after a near-hysterical shriek from one (or possibly both) of the gramophones, the room falls silent.

Cassie is impatient. “Okay, I get the point. Come on,” she says, although she doesn’t really direct it at me. Her impulsiveness is infuriating. I want us to stay. There must be a clue to what went wrong, somewhere in that muddled blizzard of sound. I want the recordings to begin again. I’d really pay attention this time. Perhaps I could pinpoint the exact moment we stopped talking, or stopped listening, or whatever it was.

At the very least, I imagine that if I wait long enough the blue gramophone will say something conciliatory, admit defeat, try to smooth things over. That was usually how it worked.

I stand listening to the ringing in my ears until I realize I’m alone.

7. “*Found Items*” *Found Items*; 2007

Cassie stands at a glass cabinet. Inside are two foil pouches, their ring-shaped contents obvious even without the kitemarks and the Durex logo. My heart sinks.

When she turns to look at me her eyes are wet. “I still don’t understand why you took them with you.”

I sigh. We’ve been through this a thousand times. “I didn’t take them with me. Not deliberately, anyway. I just grabbed my wash-bag and they must have been in there – from before we, well, before you went on the Pill. I honestly didn’t know I still had them.”

"How could you not notice them?" She points at the condoms. "The packets are bright red."

I can't think of a useful reply, so I just nod. I'm telling the truth, more or less. I didn't intend to sleep with anybody at the conference. With things the way they were with Cassie, I had been weighing up the possibility of starting afresh with somebody else. But that's as far as I'd got. I certainly hadn't set off for Barcelona with the goal of cheating on her. And despite the exotic surroundings and the open bar, not to mention a willingness for my fidelity to be tested, the opportunity hadn't arisen. I still don't know whether to be grateful or disappointed.

"Why were you going through my things, anyway?" I say, sounding like a petulant teenager.

"I wasn't 'going through' them," she snaps, "I was tidying up after you! If you want to keep secrets you should learn to put things away."

"Secrets?" I say, throwing my hands up. I'm about to roll out my well-worn protestations of innocence, point out the packets are unopened, unused, probably well past their use-by date, but I don't have the energy. It all seems so futile.

Instead I say, "When exactly did you stop trusting me?"

She looks surprised at the question. She pushes a strand of hair behind her ear. "I don't know. Do you really just stop, like flicking a switch? Sometimes I think I trusted you the whole time. It was difficult to find a reason not to. But I kept looking. Maybe that was the problem."

I shrug. We're subdued, lost in thought. The air feels empty, wrung-out.

I gesture towards the display. "It's not like we broke up because of this," I say. I'm not sure what difference it's supposed to make.

"No," she says, "but it's this that made me realize we were breaking up."

* * *

8. *"Love Sublime" Carbon Dioxide; 2006*

The last room is draped in black velvet, walls and floor, and on four pedestals stand the letters L, O, V, and E, formed from blocks of dry ice. At room temperature, carbon dioxide becomes a vapor, and the letters are slowly dissolving into a white mist.

We stand together and watch for a while, following the vapor as it drifts away from the surfaces of the letters and trickles down the folds in the cloth. The floor is already ankle-deep in vapor; the blocks shrink imperceptibly with every passing moment. The mood between us has changed; the anger and bitterness have burnt themselves out. In their place are a quiet sense of loss and the first, fledgling stirrings of regret at a path not taken.

"It really is beautiful," Cassie says wistfully.

"Sorry?"

"Love. For all its shortcomings, it's still beautiful, when you think about it. I suppose that's what the title's referring to."

I curl my lip. "Sublime doesn't just mean that. In chemistry it describes something solid evaporating into thin air. There's only so much you can do to prevent it, if what you start with isn't stable enough in the first place."

"You always did over-analyze everything." She smiles, a sad, tired kind of smile. "Maybe that's enough for today. What do you reckon?"

I look around the room. She's right. We've reached the end of our shared past, and although I don't want to leave, there's nothing to be gained from loitering here. "Okay," I say.

We walk out together, close but not too close, into the sunlight.

Outside, we stand on the steps and say goodbye.

Cassie tilts her head to one side and gives me a look worryingly close to pity.

"Are you going to be alright?" she says.

I start to answer but my throat tightens up. I nod instead.

She hugs me and I find it hard to let go, but she gently pushes me away. She looks behind me, at the gallery.

“You shouldn’t keep going over and over this,” she says. She holds my hand and strokes my forearm with her free hand.

“I know,” I say.

Then she turns and I watch her walk down the steps, her hair shining in the sun. I wait until she has disappeared around the corner before I sit down on the steps. After a while I get back up and walk towards the gallery entrance, to where I know I’ll find her, by the first exhibit, waiting for me.

“Us: A Retrospective” previously appeared in print in the anthology, *The Graft*.

DAN PURDUE lives and writes in the West Midlands in the UK. His short stories have been published in numerous places online and in print, including *Writers’ Forum*, *Defenestration*, *The View From Here*, and *The Waterhouse Review*, and have won prizes in various competitions, most recently the 2012 Seán Ó Faoláin Short Story Competition. His blog goes a little like this: <http://Lies-Ink.blogspot.com>

The Fall

Leanne Gregg

Dear Angelo,

You looked lovely today in your pink pinstripe polo shirt that you wear with the collar flipped up. It's quite jaunty. I hope I am not being too forward in saying that.

Best,

Maya

Dear Diary,

I wrote a short post card to Angelo today. He looked very fetching as always. He has the eyelashes of a cherub, which are only outshone by his honey brown irises. I almost waved to him, but when he looked I pretended to bat away a passing gnat. Love is imminent.

Best,

Maya

Dear Diary,

Bad news. It turns out that our yearly Promenade is drawing nigh at South Fork School of Higher Learning and there is quite the competition for Angelo's arm. I must "up my game" as Lisa so bluntly put it. She insists that all the Jane Austen novels I had been reading before my fall from the top of the pyramid has affected my personality in some fashion. She told me that I should stop wearing lace collars and petticoats at the very least. I don't want Angelo to view me as some sort of strumpet, but I shall consider her advice.

Best,

Maya

Dear Angelo,

I would be honored if you would agree to be my escort to the "80's Night of Lovin'" promenade in a fortnight's time. I do hope that you agree. Just send word with your messenger post haste. I will be eagerly anticipating your reply.

Best,

Maya

Dear Diary,

I wrote to Angelo again, this time in earnest. I sent my letter to him via Kathy. She advised that I did not send it to him via carrier pigeon as I had earlier intended. She also advised that I did not put my family seal on it. I did, however. A lady must keep up appearances after all.

Best,

Maya

Dear Diary,

I did not receive word yet from Angelo's messengers. I worry that my letter was lost on its passage. Kathy assures me it was not. Today, she advised me to use lip rouge to make my lips appear "pouty" and "kissable." I looked like a woman of the night. I did get extra corn chowder from the indentured cafeteria servant today, however. Perhaps I am missing out on something.

Best,

Maya

Dear Diary,

I still have not heard from Angelo. Lisa suggests I try to "text" him. I doubt the reliability of this technology. She also suggested that I try wearing denim pants. Granted, they are easier to

maneuver through the hallways than petticoats, but I feel very masculine in them.

Best,
Maya

Dear Maya,

What the fuck is wrong with you?
Angelo

Dear Diary,

I am shocked and appalled at Angelo's response to my query. It was vulgar, it was perverse, and it was very late. I do not even desire to go to the Promenade with him. I shall find another suitor—one with more gentlemanly graces. Today Trish loaned me her form-fitting sweater to wear with my new denim pants. Lisa also insisted I wear the lip rouge. Michael Donaldson said that he "would tap that." Lisa explained that this meant I looked quite fetching.

Best,
Maya

Dear Angelo,

I feel as if your obscene response to my query was vastly unwarranted. I would normally not even deign that sort of smut with a reply; however, I want you to know that you cannot be allowed to write things of that ilk to a lady without harsh penalty. Therefore, Scott VanSnyder will be obliged to fight a duel with you at daybreak to defend my honor. You may use either revolvers or rapiers. Choose wisely and be prepared for tomorrow.

Best,
Maya

Dear Diary,

Lisa refused to let me challenge Angelo to a duel with Scott VanSnyder. She aptly pointed out that Scott had not agreed to fight to the death. She also mentioned that “someone would die,” and it would most likely result in my expulsion from this institution. I do not wish that. Lisa also suggested that I stop “being so damn weird” and “start talking like everybody else.” Word. Went to see Dr. Fitzsimmons again—he and my mother spoke for some time alone. She then took me to Dr. Shu for “acupuncture.” It is a Chinese therapy I do not very much enjoy.

Best,

Maya

Dear Diary,

Promenade—“prom” is less than a fortnight—two weeks away. I still am “a dateless loser.” I do not know what to do. Kathy was kind enough to offer the companionship of her younger brother Ted. Ted is a “nice kid,” but he is only 12 years of age. I would be a laughingstock. I believe I am getting better with my speaking abilities. People don’t look at me with as much confusion as of late.

Best,

Maya

Dear Diary,

Only five days until the prom. I’m beginning to give up hope. I did wear some new clothes today that I got at the shopping mall. I noticed Angelo staring at me in study hall again. I looked away. I’m glad I never challenged him to a duel, even though he is a “jackass” as Lisa would say.

Best,

Maya

Hey Maya Baby

“Wat up? Are we still down for the prom? My date got mono and you’re damn fine now—it’s hard to believe you were acting like such a dork after you fell on your head. Hit me up with your digits.”

Peace,
Angelo

Dear Diary,

Today I got a note from Angelo asking me to attend the prom as his date. I do not think I will. He is a jerk. I would rather not attend prom at all than appear on the arm of such a Neanderthal. He is pretty though. Quite pretty. His dark hair curls just above his pink earlobes in the most becoming manner. Dr. Fitzsimmons gave me a prescription today. He claims it will help me. I don’t know about him.

Best,
Maya

Yo Maya,

“Why the silence? You goin’ with me to prom or wat? Kimmie’s got her sister’s I.D. We’re gonna do this shit up right.”

Peace,
Angelo

Dear Diary,

Today I received another note from Angelo. I don’t know what to say. I have the opportunity to attend prom with the socialites of the school. It would really be quite the evening. It’d be “pretty sweet” as Lisa told me. I am a little concerned about Angelo’s

intentions, however. I worry he will become intoxicated with spirits and try to ravish me—I mean “get drunk and try to get some” as Lisa says. I have much to consider.

Best,
Maya

Dear Diary,

I decided not to accept Angelo’s offer to escort me to the prom. Even though it was my one chance to go to the prom with someone that is a member of an elite social group. Lisa told me that I used to be part of this group before my alleged “fall” from the pyramid. I don’t know about that, but then again, I don’t remember much. Instead I asked Wally Masterson to take me to the Prom. He was very sweet to me today when he helped me with my homework. English seems to be getting harder and harder. I think it’s these pills or something. Lisa says that going with Wally will ruin my reputation even more, but he is much nicer than Angelo. Besides, I invested heavily in taffeta.

Best,
Maya

Dear Diary,

Whoa. So, I went to bed last night and when I woke up today I had a killer headache. I feel like I had a huge-ass hangover, but mom told me I went to bed at 8 p.m. like I had been every night! I think the pills Dr. Fitzsimmons gave me finally kicked all the way in. I can’t believe that I was actually going to go to Prom with the Wallster. He is such a tool. I’m totally going with Angelo now. Coach says I can cheer with the squad again now that I’m “normal.”

Luvs,
Maya

Dear Diary,

Last night was Prom and it kinda sucked. It started out great. My dress was killer. Angelo looked hot in his tux. Everybody was watching us the whole night, which was great—until Angelo, and Jessica started making out in the corner! I guess she didn't let mono keep her away from Prom 'cuz she showed up with Keegan. I hope that Angelo gets mono. He deserves it. I was so humiliated! Wallster was there though with some of his friends. He said that he wasn't mad about me going with Angelo, which was cool of him. He's actually kinda funny and kinda adorable when he's wearing long-enough pants. Turns out he actually likes Jane Austen. I think I'm going to re-read *Pride and Prejudice*.

Luvs,

Maya

LEANNE GREGG's most recent work has been published in *Bartleby Snopes*, *Used Furniture Review*, *Linguistic Erosion*, and *Eskimo Pie*. When she's not working as fiction editor of *Literary Orphans*, you can find her training her two cats to do her chores.

Blanket of Ash

Stephen Koster

They made love in the rain in a field without fences after their house burned down to its foundations. The remains looked more like black termite mounds than anything else. All it was as ash.

They watched the whole thing burn. There was nothing, realistically, that could've been done.

Afterwards, lying on the ground in silence and halfway between comfort and despair, they decided to walk. Starting the long journey to the next house. The gravel of the road was littered with black shreds of things.

Like ancient Trojans crossing deserts away from fiery ruin, fearing former good fortune and especially unexpected gifts, they kept to the roads they knew.

In the pantry all the labels had burnt off the cans so they couldn't tell between products. All the books had gone too and turned to ash or fallen into a pile of mismatched literacy that was reduced to random words and thoughts. The TV had fractured and what internet there had been was disconnected.

Technically they still owned the land. But that was like still having a stump after an amputation.

"We could stay here for the night," the husband had said.

"We could," she had said.

"But it will be cold." He waited. "I think we'd be better off walking." He waited. "We should walk."

He looked at her face. He felt detached when he noticed she was crying—it was strange because she wasn't making any sounds. She usually shook. He forgot about walking.

They had been on the verge of insanity when they had calmly discussed a simpler solution. There was a way to merge dreams with waking endlessly. The fire had left them enough ways to do it.

After sharpening the spade he found in the garden to a killing edge he asked if she wanted to do it in the field or in the house. The field was a nicer place now, as most of it was untouched by the ash, but they had an unspoken consensus that the place it was done in didn't really matter.

It was funny because they'd never actually used the spade for gardening. They'd never touched the garden. It was funny that the fire had left it for them to use. Maybe something would grow from the blood.

After passing what was now a blade to her, because he couldn't do it for her, she would have to do all the work for herself, she felt a glimmer of something deep in her belly that swished and writhed and remembered—suddenly wanting to be released and not to die. Soon they could be afraid to die, but why did they have to start now? All that was left on the calendar that had survived only in their heads was to find something to eat in the morning. The schedule of duties they had kept together was only a black-edged remnant now.

Taking their clothes off hadn't felt strange, as it usually did. It almost made sense.

So they lay down in the field with the spade set beside them and the sky overhead, and when they came together in the downpour they weren't at all angry that the rain was too late.

STEPHEN KOSTER was born in the Ottawa valley in the imaginary land known as "Canada." He resides in a fictional house, with a fictional wife, and four make-believe cats named Who, Where, What, and Why. He is recently graduated from University and only twenty-two, so there's still plenty of time for him to get a real job, Mom.

Godzilla Reading Haiku

Christopher DeWan

"Are you gonna eat those?" He was eying up my pancakes.

"Of course I'm going to eat them. I wouldn't have ordered them if I wasn't going to eat them."

"Oh. I just thought maybe you weren't going to eat all of them."

No way was I going to eat all of my pancakes, but no way was I going to share them with him, either. "You want me to get the waitress, so you can order your own pancakes?"

"No, that's okay. I'm not that hungry."

The trouble with Godzilla is he's always hungry. And he breaks things by accident. And he scares people. It's kind of a drag.

"Here." I cut my pancakes down the middle. "Take half."

"You gonna eat that sausage?"

"You wanna come up?" I ask my girlfriend on the stoop.

She nibbles gently at my ear. "Dunno. Is your roommate home?"

My roommate, Godzilla, is home. I play with the button on my girlfriend's shirt but don't answer.

"I think I'm just gonna go home," she says.

The alarm clock goes off and I stumble out of bed toward the bathroom. I pass Godzilla, coming out. "Don't go in there!" he warns.

And he's used up all the toilet paper.

"Sorry!"

* * *

Sometimes we sit in our apartment in the dark, in the quiet, though it never gets completely dark or completely quiet because Tokyo leaks in through the windows. The lights flicker off the walls, and horns bleat, and sirens, and sometimes through acoustical miracles, conversations carry up from the street to our window. But things feel mostly muted and far away, and it's relaxing. We enjoy it when we can afford to.

Godzilla has a little plastic lamp clamped to the cover of the book he's reading.

"Summer grasses—all that remains of soldiers' dreams."

"That's a good one," I say.

"Sad, right?"

"And not sad, too. Just, you know, true."

He's got little Post-It notes sticking out of his favorite pages, and he turns to another: "'Clouds—a chance to dodge moon-viewing.'"

"Ha," I laugh.

"Yeah," he says. "Yeah..."

"Okay, one more."

He flips pages. "Here's one." He clears his big throat. "'Not one traveler braves this road—autumn night.'"

"Hmm. I don't know about that one."

"I like it because it's quiet," Godzilla says.

I nod. "I get that," I tell him.

"What did you do today?" I ask Godzilla as he walks in the door. But he shrugs and looks at me kind of sheepishly and lumbers off to his room, and I decide it's probably best if I don't watch the news tonight.

* * *

“What’s it like?” I ask him once. “All the killing.” He frowns at me and looks like he wants to spit, and I’m sorry I asked. He absent-mindedly picks up our salt shaker and crushes it and then looks embarrassed.

“It’s not like that,” he finally answers. “The guy who gets off on destruction, on being big and strong and powerful—I’m not that guy.”

“I know you’re not that guy.”

“It’s lonely being a monster.”

“I guess it probably is.”

“I’m glad you’re my friend,” he tells me, and I hug him the best I can with my little arms and his big body, a real hug, tight, so he knows I mean it.

CHRISTOPHER DEWAN has written numerous short stories, recently featured in *Apocrypha and Abstractions*, *Bartleby Snopes*, *Bewildering Stories*, *Fractured West*, *In Between Altered States*, *MicroHorror*, *Necessary Fiction*, and *Niteblade*. In 2012, was a contributor at the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, and his short story “The Garden” was nominated for a 2013 Pushcart Prize.

On the cover:



"Deconstructing Poe" Jennifer Boulden

JENNIFER BOULDEN is a writer and director of social media for Aristotle Interactive in Little Rock. Despite this photo, she's been a fan of Edgar Allan Poe since her father bought her a 15-pound book of his complete illustrated, annotated works to help with her 8th grade book report. Follow her @bouldengal on Instagram and Twitter.